
INFORMATION PACK FOR APPLICANTS

Headteacher

Duncombe Primary School Holloway,
Islington



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Duncombe at a glance

381	children on roll
2 to 11	age range, including our 2 year old provision
25%	of children have special educational needs
9%	have an Education, Health and Care Plan
60%	eligible for pupil premium
58%	eligible for free school meals
80%	reach the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2
1878	the year the first school opened on this site

Ofsted: Good, February 2023. Outstanding for personal development.
Artsmark Gold. Primary Science Quality Mark Silver. Eco-Schools Silver.
A 2 form entry community primary school, maintained by Islington Council.
Merged with Montem Primary School in August 2024.

What makes Duncombe special

Duncombe is a school that knows exactly what it is. It sits on the same Holloway street it has occupied since 1878, it takes the children who live around it, and it does a great deal with them.

Strong outcomes, particularly reading and maths

Around 80% of children reach the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2.

Rated Good overall, Outstanding for personal development

This is a school with a solid foundation and 1 area of real distinction. Personal development is not a bolt-on, it is the thing this school is best at, and the foundation everything else is built on.

An intake we are proud of, not apologetic about

1 in 4 children has a special educational need and 9% have an EHCP. Our staff are experienced, calm and unfazed by complexity.

9 years with each child

We take children from age 2. By the time they leave in Year 6 we have known them, and their families, for the best part of a decade.

Arts and science that go deep

Artsmark Gold, Primary Science Quality Mark Silver and Eco-Schools Silver. Music, drama and environmental projects are part of the ordinary week here.



Our values

Six words, chosen by this school, that the children can all name. They shape the curriculum, the behaviour policy and the way adults speak to each other here.

Ambition

We expect a lot, of the children and of ourselves.

Self-esteem

Children who believe they can do it, do it.

Perseverance

Difficult is not the same as impossible.

Independence

We are preparing children for the day we are not there.

Respect

For each other, for difference, and for this place.

Enthusiasm

Bringing joy. A school you want to be in.

ASPIRE



Ambition



Self-Esteem



Perseverance



Independence



Respect



Enthusiasm

Where we want to be in 5 years

We asked ourselves what a successful first 5 years would actually look like. This is the opportunity we envisage, with key standards we will hold you to.

01

Improvement that compounds

We are already building from a Good Ofsted and a lot of good practice. What we want next is for that improvement to compound: incremental, consistent and sustained, not a dramatic year followed by a flat one.

02

Embedding the merger

2 communities fully joined into 1. We want that to be reflected everywhere: in shared systems, a shared identity, and a staff team that has stopped thinking of itself as 2 schools.

03

Genuinely ambitious for every child

Outcomes that stand comparison with the strongest schools serving a similar community, with inclusion as the route to that rather than an excuse against it.

04

Embedded in the community

Duncombe chosen rather than allocated. We would like to double the number of families naming us as their first preference.

05

A staff team that drives growth

Retention built on people feeling connected to a vision they helped shape.



Opportunities and challenges

You can build on

- An Outstanding personal development judgement to build academic ambition on top of
- An experienced staff team who have already done hard work and want it recognised
- Two school communities now joined, with real scope to become one
- A governing body that is clear about what it wants and will back the person who does it
- Arts, science and environmental provision already recognised nationally
- Genuine headroom to raise the school's profile and grow first preference applications
- Strong Islington networks and a borough that takes its primary schools seriously

Challenges

- Consolidating after the 2024 merger, while some families are still settling into it
- Rebuilding profile and confidence so that Duncombe is chosen rather than defaulted to
- Meeting a high level of need, 25% SEND and 60% pupil premium, against a tight budget
- Holding expectations and boundaries with a parent body that is engaged and vocal
- Settling and retaining staff after a period that has asked a great deal of them
- Doing all of that without losing the wider curriculum that makes this school what it is

ABOUT THE ROLE

Headteacher

Salary range L18 to L23 (£91, 594 - £102,193 pa)
January 2027 start date · Full time, permanent

Duncombe is a primary school in Holloway that believes high need and high aspirations belong together. A lot of our children face real disadvantage, and a lot of them have additional needs. They also do well here. Both of those things are true at the same time, and holding them together is what this school is about.

That belief is not a slogan on a wall. It is the daily work, and it is what we need our next headteacher to protect and build on. If it sounds like the kind of school you have been looking for, you will already recognise Duncombe.

The last few years have asked a lot of Duncombe. We merged with Montem Primary in August 2024, and the staff team held the school together through it and kept standards up. We are not looking for somebody to tear that up and start again.

We are looking for somebody to settle it, build on it, and make Duncombe the school that families in Holloway choose first.

To apply for the role, visit <https://jobs.islington.gov.uk/>

Apply by 11:59pm on Sunday, 27 September 2026.



You may be right for us if you

- Have a proven track record of raising academic standards, ideally somewhere with a comparable level of need
- Are resilient, and have the steadiness to lead a period of consolidation rather than upheaval
- Understand SEND properly, as practice rather than as compliance
- Are emotionally intelligent, listen well, and think things through before you act
- Communicate boundaries and expectations with kindness and firmness in equal measure
- Are culturally curious and confident across the range of communities we serve
- Hold clear leadership values and are willing to say out loud what they are
- Build relationships with parents, children, staff and governors that survive a hard conversation
- Bring energy and optimism into a staff room on a wet Tuesday in February

What we can offer you

- A staff team that has already proved what it can do
- A governing body that knows what it wants and will support you to do it
- Children whose personal development Ofsted rated Outstanding
- Arts, science and environmental work recognised nationally
- A school with real room to grow, and a community worth growing it for

Come and see us

We would much rather you visited than took our word for any of this. Please book a visit through the school office on 020 7272 5620.

Friday 11 September	9:30 to 11:30
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Tuesday 15 September	13:30 to 15:30
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Thursday 24 September	9:30 to 11:30
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Job description

This job description should be read alongside the duties and responsibilities of headteachers set out in the annual School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. Candidates will be expected to have considered these in relation to Duncombe.

01

Purpose

- To lead and manage the school within an agreed strategic framework, so that it is effective, self-managing, self-evaluating and self-improving, with high achieving pupils and staff.
- To provide a strong educational vision, and to lead and co-ordinate staff to deliver the School Improvement Plan in full consultation with the governing body.

02

Accountability

- To be accountable to the governing body and to Islington Council for the overall performance of the school and its day to day operation.
- To provide governors with the information and analysis they need to hold the school to account, presented honestly and in good time.

03

Safeguarding

- To act as, or to line manage, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, and to maintain a safer culture throughout the school.
- To protect children from abuse and maltreatment, prevent harm to their health or development, ensure they receive safe and effective care, and act so that every child has the best possible outcome.
- To apply effective child protection strategies and procedures, and to work with relevant agencies to protect children.
- To ensure recruitment, selection, induction and training are conducted throughout with a safeguarding focus, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

04

Strategy and leadership

- To develop, with the governing body and other stakeholders, an agreed strategic plan and vision with short, medium and long term targets, grounded in realistic financial and resource planning.
- To lead the consolidation of the school following the 2024 merger, building a single culture and a single set of expectations.
- To manage complexity and competing demands, and to make decisions in a considered and consistent way.
- To show openness, ambition and optimism for children, and to make that visible every day.

05

Teaching and learning

- To implement and develop the whole curriculum agreed with the governing body.
- To sustain a broad, cross-curricular approach that is child centred and gives access to real experiences, including the arts, science and outdoor learning that Duncombe is known for.
- To develop, monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching for all pupils.
- To raise achievement and to set challenging, motivating targets for individual pupils and for the school.

06

Inclusion and SEND

- To provide strategic leadership and a continuous commitment to the inclusion of every child, in a school where 25% of pupils have a special educational need and 9% hold an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- To ensure the entitlement of all pupils to equal opportunity and access to every part of the curriculum.
- To ensure that provision for pupils with SEND is well resourced, well understood by staff and reviewed rigorously for impact.
- To promote equality of opportunity in the appointment and promotion of all staff.

07

Leading and managing staff

- To be responsible for the leadership and management of all school staff.
- To ensure staff understand the mission, values and ethos of the school, its current aims and their own part in achieving them.
- To develop, support and encourage staff to achieve the highest professional standards, while holding them to account through effective performance management.
- To maintain open and effective professional dialogue at every level, raising morale and protecting staff wellbeing and workload.
- To recruit, retain, reward and motivate staff, with retention treated as a strategic priority rather than an administrative one.

08

Resources and finance

- To be responsible for financial management, including the integration of financial, strategic and curriculum planning, the maintenance of secure procedures and systems, and adherence to all financial regulations of the council.
- To protect the wider curriculum offer through careful financial planning rather than allowing it to become the first casualty of a tight budget.
- To develop and oversee a plan for the effective and imaginative use of the school site and buildings, and to lead on improvements.

09

Parents, carers and community

- To establish and maintain professional and productive relationships with the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and carers, other schools, the local authority, businesses and community groups.
- To communicate the expectations and boundaries of the school clearly, kindly and consistently, and to hold to them.
- To build a school culture and curriculum that reflects the richness and diversity of our communities, and to understand the cultural differences within them.
- To create and promote positive strategies for challenging racial and other prejudice, and for dealing with harassment.
- To ensure learning experiences are linked into and integrated with the wider community, and to raise the profile of the school locally.

Ethos

- To sustain a positive ethos in which individuals feel valued and personal endeavour and responsibility are encouraged.
- To develop high morale, confidence and professional pride, and to set an example of professional standards and leadership.
- To promote a suitable system of pastoral care for pupils and staff, including liaison with families and outside agencies.
- To maintain good behaviour, supported by policies and practices that promote self discipline and responsible attitudes.
- To promote and sustain a school environment that is safe, secure and conducive to learning.

ABOUT THE ROLE



Person specification

Candidates are asked to show how they meet these criteria in their application form, their supporting statement, and during the selection process.

01

Qualifications and experience

- Qualified Teacher Status, with evidence of appropriate subsequent training and professional development.
- National Professional Qualification for Headship, or a commitment to complete it.
- Substantial leadership experience in a senior post in a primary school.
- A proven track record of raising academic standards, ideally in a school with a comparable level of disadvantage or special educational need.

02

Knowledge

- A current understanding of national policy, curriculum development and the statutory framework within which a maintained school operates.
- Knowledge of what makes an effective school, and of the strategies that can be deployed for school improvement.
- Knowledge of what constitutes good teaching, and how to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- A sound working knowledge of SEND provision, the EHCP process and inclusive practice.
- An understanding of the impact of disadvantage on children and families, and of what schools can and cannot do about it.

03

Skills

- Strategic planning, and the ability to articulate a vision and direction that other people want to follow.
- The ability to develop people and hold them to account through both informal and formal processes, in the interests of the children.
- Management skills in respect of performance data, finance, resources and people, including delegation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Highly skilled listening and communication, with the ability to create confidence in children, parents, staff, council officers and governors alike.
- The ability to build partnerships and networks that produce tangible benefits for the school.
- The ability to develop strategies for, and to lead, a culturally and socially diverse school population.

04

Personal attributes

- Resilience, tenacity and steadiness under pressure, with the judgement to think things through rather than react.
- Emotional intelligence and empathy, combined with a clear willingness to lead.
- Clear personal values, and the confidence to state them and be consistent about them.
- Cultural sensitivity, and genuine curiosity about the communities we serve.
- The ability to communicate boundaries and expectations with both kindness and firmness.
- Warmth, optimism and the ability to spread it.
- A commitment to equality of opportunity, diversity, safeguarding and social inclusion.
- Approachability, and a visible presence in the daily life of the school.

How to apply

01

Application deadline

Completed application forms must be received by 11:59 pm on Sunday, 27th September 2026.

Please apply online at <https://jobs.islington.gov.uk/>.

02

Completing your application

Candidates are asked to complete all of the standard information required on the application form, and to submit a supporting statement addressing all of the criteria identified at application stage.

Please note that we are unable to accept applications that require visa sponsorship.

03

Visits

Visits to Duncombe are strongly encouraged, and can be arranged by contacting the school office on 020 7272 5620. The dates below are open for visits:

Friday 11 September	9:30 to 11:30
Tuesday 15 September	13:30 to 15:30
Thursday 24 September	9:30 to 11:30

Shortlisted candidates who are unable to visit before the closing date will have the chance to visit between shortlisting and interview.

HOW TO APPLY CONTINUED

04

Selection procedure

Shortlisting will take place on 1 October 2026, and the selection process on 12/13 October 2026.

This will be conducted by a panel of governors, assisted by Islington school improvement colleagues. Shortlisted candidates will be given full details immediately after shortlisting.

05

References

References will be taken up immediately after shortlisting, to be received before the interview process. Please make sure your referees know they need to respond within the timescale set.

At least 2 professional references are required. The post will be offered subject to satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks.

06

Safeguarding children

Prior to appointment, formal checks will be made in accordance with the current statutory requirements relating to child protection.

HOW TO APPLY





Duncombe Primary School is an equal opportunities employer. Our environment is diverse in character and in its pupil population, and we aspire to reflect that diversity in our staff. We positively welcome applications from minority groups. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and this is reflected in our rigorous approach to the recruitment and professional development of staff.

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and safer recruitment practice, the school will conduct an online search for all shortlisted candidates. The online search forms part of our safeguarding checks and will seek publicly available information on a candidate's suitability to work with children. Shortlisted candidates will be given further guidance and asked to clarify their online presence.

Duncombe Primary School

Holloway, London

020 7272 5620 · <https://www.duncombeprimary.co.uk/>

