



Park School

Council / Governor

Recruitment Pack



CHILD-CENTRED HUMAN-SCALE EDUCATION
FOR CHILDREN AGED 3 - 11



About Park School

Park School was founded by a group of teachers and parents in 1987. It is now one of the longest established alternative primary schools in the UK, providing child-centred human-scale education. We say that we are a '*human-scale*' school, a school where education is designed around the person, at a scale which allows for the full flourishing of the individual as well as their relationships with their community and their environment.

Children are at the heart of the school; Park is built around the needs of its children. Teaching is at the child's own pace and structured in a way which helps them to reach high standards. Children have a voice in the school and options and choices are available from the start. We look to seek their views, ideas and thoughts on how they learn, how the school is organised and any other matter that might concern them. Our weekly school meetings provide an opportunity for any child to raise a matter for debate.

Teaching is enhanced wherever possible by providing opportunities for the children to engage with people and places beyond the school environment. Parents also share their skills with children, offering contributions as varied as singing workshops, computer skills or reading with children.

The community of parents and teachers working together for the benefit of the children is a vital part of the strength of Park School.

Set in the historic and spacious grounds on the 1,200-acre Dartington Hall Estate in South Devon, the children have the opportunity to play and to explore. They experience and learn to care for, and to respect, the natural environment. The estate which dates back to the 12th Century is rich in history as well as being a diverse, natural resource which underpins much of the learning and curriculum at Park School.

Welcoming children of all cultural backgrounds and beliefs, the school provides an alternative, holistic learning environment nurturing the whole child and developing their sense of wellbeing, their social and emotional resilience along with their physical, intellectual and spiritual self, helping them to realise their unique potential. Our vision Park School exemplifies the very best in how a school can design education around the child, allowing children to flourish as an individual as well as in their relationships with others, in their community and their environment.

Our mission

To provide alternative, child-centred education for children between the ages of 3 – 12 years old that will enable them to develop a strong and positive sense of self and empowerment; building healthy relationships with others, inspiring and helping them to flourish, achieve and exercise agency in their world.

The three principles of our community

At Park School, we have three fundamental questions that we ask of the children; are you looking after yourself, are you looking after each other and are you looking after the place that you are in?

If they are doing these things, then we often don't need too many other rules.

The school is large enough for healthy social groups but small enough to ensure every child's talents can be developed and ensure that all adults and children can be heard and contribute to the functioning of the school.

Our values





Love of learning: We value and love learning.

Children each have unique paths of development and we create inclusive, responsive, happy environments that help them grow in their own way. By prioritising curiosity and playfulness, we try to help children to become confident and joyful learners.

Our curriculum aims to support all our children to become:

1. **CONFIDENT LEARNERS:** children have the skills and knowledge to become confident, successful and enquiring lifelong learners
2. **ADAPTABLE AND RESILIENT:** with the adaptability for life in an ever-changing world
3. **CREATIVE:** holding onto curiosity and playfulness and developing the ability to think laterally
4. **COMPASSIONATE:** as responsible and compassionate citizens with care and love for themselves, each other, and the world around them
5. **EMPOWERED:** articulate, effective communicators with agency

Relationships: We value our relationships with each other and to the world around us.

We recognise that we can only have good relationships with others if we value and care for ourselves. We make opportunities to help children develop emotional maturity, good communication skills, and self-confidence.

We nurture our relationships to one another, including between

- Adults and children. At our school adults prioritise, celebrate, trust and respect children.
- Children and other children. We prefer collaboration to competition, behave inclusively, and share decision-making where possible.
- Parents and the school. The active engagement of parents is a necessary and joyful feature of how the school operates.
- School and the wider world. We support children to grow as responsible and giving members of a local and global community.

How we relate to nature matters deeply to us. Our wellbeing is linked to nature and we try to live harmoniously with our environment. We learn from, and in, the natural world. More specifically, the history and identity of the school is shaped by our beautiful, wild, inspiring

location at Dartington. We help children to explore how to care for places, and understand their own place in the world, locally and globally.

Flourishing: We value and want our children to flourish.

We believe this helps make a better world because flourishing children contribute to flourishing communities and a flourishing planet. Park School is a microcosm of how we would like society more broadly to be: big change starts small.

We create space for imagination, hope, and wonder to enable us to envision how the world could be better than it is. We jointly act in the direction of our values and visions to make them more real over time.

We are unafraid to be pioneers, as the School often has been in its history. We are educational innovators who want to be a model of alternative excellence that other schools can learn from.

Inclusive, a school for the community

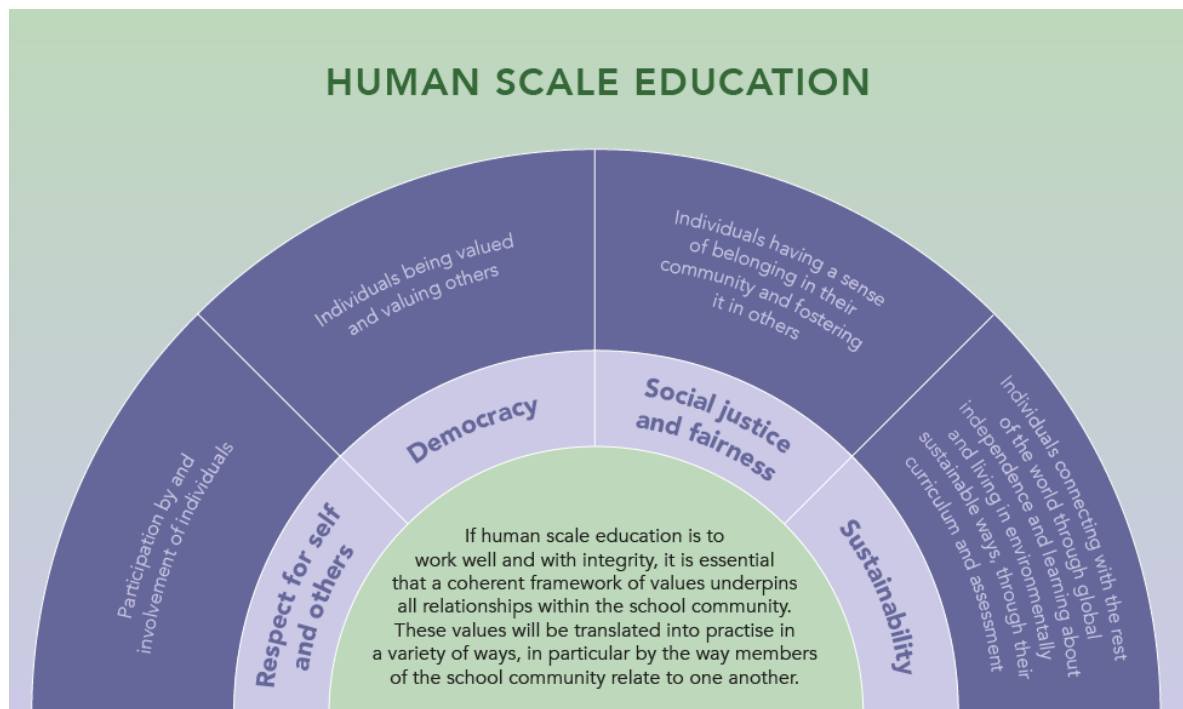
Park School was established by a group of parents and educators to be a school *for the community* one where individual children are valued and nurtured by a community with *shared values and principles*. It has held on to this fundamental principle.

The school welcomes families from a wide range of backgrounds and children with a broad range of needs, learning, emotional and social. The ethos and approach to learning proves particularly successful for many children who have struggled in other school settings, the smaller classes and open space, access to nature, pace of learning and child-centred approach all provide a powerful context for all children to learn, and especially those with additional learning and social needs.

A defining feature has always been to enable the school to be inclusive, to minimise the impact of exclusion through finances. Whilst operating a fee structure, parents self-assess and pay what they can afford on a sliding scale of fee options with some fee bands significantly below the cost of a place in the school. For parents already with children in the school, we offer financial bursaries for those who might be experiencing difficulties in paying fees.



Human Scale Education



www.HumanScaleEducation.c

Respect for Self and Others

Learning is enabled in flexible ways that centre on each child and young person's needs.

Staff, parents and children and young people are actively involved in their own and other's learning.

Dialogue (open, honest, reflective discussion) is encouraged and developed to enhance learning, and to understand the viewpoints of others.

The school experience is open to challenge and change as a result of the views of children and young people.

Democracy

Children and young people flourish because the school experience enables them to form excellent relationships with a smaller number of adults.

Schools ensure that all students are known well.

All members of the community are involved in decision-making. CPD is collaborative and encourages risk-taking and innovation

Children and young people are allowed to follow their passion and all learning is viewed as of equal value as a result.

Assessment is learning. It enables children and young people to affirm in a variety of ways (portfolios, exhibitions, presentations, student-led conferences).

Social Justice and Fairness

Parent and carers are in school on a regular basis both to support and recognise learning.

Leadership is distributed throughout the school enabling practitioner-led innovation to develop.

The school and community share experiences with a significant amount of learning in terms of both the process and the final outcome being publicly displayed in school and other venues.

Children and young people actively work to tackle issues in their local community that overcome disadvantage and inequality.

The local and broader community are actively involved on a regular basis both as experts and as an authentic audience.

Children and young people are involved and learn in the community

Sustainability

Cooperative and collaborative learning is emphasised.

Curricula is based around the spark of inspiration, big ideas, enduring questions, emerging interests and the concerns of teachers and their students.

Enquiry-based, experiential, active and practical learning is strong with products mirroring real-world craft.

Learning takes places in authentic and immersive environments.



Our Governance

Park School is a registered charity, Full Council Members are also trustees and company directors. They have legal responsibility for the organisation, for strategic oversight and leadership.

Who is on the council of governance

Our council of governance has between 4 – 8 members with the addition the headteacher, school business manager and staff representative. It is comprised of elected or nominated council members who are also trustees and company directors. Council members normally serve on council for a minimum term of three years after which they can stand to be re-elected to council if desired.

Council members are drawn from the parent body and others who have an interest in the school and progressive education. We are keen to ensure that we have a good balance between council members drawn from the parent body and others who can bring expertise and oversight from a truly independent and impartial perspective. As a minimum, there will be two council members elected from the parent body, others may also be nominated where it is recognised, they can bring valuable and specific skills to the council.

There are two key officer roles, the Chair and the Treasurer. The Council also has sub-committees which council members join reflecting their individual expertise and interests.

Nathan Gribble

I have been part of the governance of Park School for over 20 years. Both my children, now in their 30's, went to the school. Also, as a member of staff at Sands School in Ashburton, there is a strong synergy as many children from Park School will choose Sands as their next destination.

Over many years I have seen Park School evolve and change. Being a part of the council has meant acting as a critical friend when the school needs active advice and guidance; it has also meant keeping a sight of what makes the school special.

Although it can sometimes be described as 'just a nice, small school with lovely grounds', there are far deeper reasons why the school is so special.

Ultimately, it is based on respect of children, truly hearing the children's voices and helping them to find ownership of their learning.

Keeping this central to the practice of the school is one of the key responsibilities of council members and principles that always guides the governorship of the school.

OUR COUNCIL MEMBERS

Matt Whitton – Chair of Council



I am a new member of the community with my daughter Grace joining Squirrels at the beginning of term. I am keen to be a part of the community and so I have volunteered to become treasurer. I am a chartered accountant and Managing Director of a local software firm, Grey Matter.

Rebecca Giraud – Deputy Chair of Council



I have had two children at ParK School. I bring years of experience of working with families and a long association with Park school and Dartington.

I co-direct a national organisation that works and campaigns to better support families going through separation and divorce. My work involves reducing parental conflict and encouraging resolution through mediation and other routes that avoid the family courts.

I am very lucky to live on Dartmoor with my family and love walking and exploring the moors on my bike. I very much look forward to working with the school community over the coming months.

Nathan Gribble – Safeguarding, Health & Safety Committee



I work as a Maths teacher and the Safeguarding Lead at Sands School and have been involved with Park School since its inception and been part of Council for nearly all that time. I have oversight of the school's Safeguarding and am part of the Finance committee.

Originally educated at Dartington Hall (I was taught at the age of 8 in what is now Squirrels), I have degrees in Logic, Mathematics, Philosophy and Education; I am a qualified outdoor instructor (I work most summers as a climbing and caving instructor at Young Dartington).

I have climbed all over the world, most recently in Greenland and Arctic Norway. I also run Live Action Role-playing events (think re-enactment, meets living history, meets improvised theatre)

Patricia Gayá - Teaching and Learning Committee



I am an action researcher, writer, and educator (at the University of Bristol). In my teaching and research, I join others in imagining and experimenting with ideas and practices that support personal healing, social justice, and planetary regeneration. I bring to Council years of experience in education, pedagogy, collaborative processes, and multiple ways of knowing in support of human, more-than-human, and planetary flourishing. In addition, I have significant experience in

leadership and governance roles within Higher Education.

My son Orlando is in his third year at Park, and we are loving being part of this community, and committed to helping it continue to thrive. As a family we love spending time outdoors, often in the water.

I am from Argentina, of combined European and Indigenous ancestry, which still shapes me, although I have lived most of my life now in the UK and have happily put down roots in Devon.



Dan Janota – Leadership & Strategy committee

I grew up in Devon and live in Dartington with my 10 yearold son. My partner's son is in Foxes class. I am passionate about the environment and how people and communities' value and engage with the world around us.

I have a background in environmental science and spatial planning and am lucky to spend my working week looking after the landscape and communities of Dartmoor National Park. I bring to the council experience of policy and strategy, community engagement and a not-so-secret love of spreadsheets. You'll often find me in the river or on the cycle path, and on stage with my 9-piece funk & soul band.

Current vacancies on our council

We are looking to appoint a Chair of Council and three additional council members, including two parents nominated council members.

We are keen to find people **who** can bring experience in education and education leadership, risk, finance or equity, diversity & inclusion as these are areas that our skills audit has highlighted where we would benefit from more experience within the Board.

Chair of Council

We are particularly keen to recruit a council member willing to take on the role of Chair of Council.

The Chair of Governors holds the overall responsibility for guiding the governance of a school and for ensuring that there is a clear strategy. The Chair's role is to lead and manage the governing body and to provide support and advice to the Head, on behalf of the full governing body, whilst allowing the Head, as the Chief Executive, to run the school and deliver the agreed strategy.

Ideally the Chair will have a passion for providing choice within the education system, a recognition that the freedom to experiment which independent schools have can inspire other teachers and educators to find adopt a truly child-centred approach within schools in which we can educate our children in ways which enable them to retain a love and excitement for learning and a respect for themselves as individuals, for others around them and for the wider world, preparing them to be compassionate, engaged and responsible citizens.

We are looking to find someone with experience or good knowledge of schools and, or alternative approaches to education, who can bring a high level of strategic leadership to the council, assist us by spearheading and advocating for the school and able to work with the headteacher, staff and other council members to develop a long-term strategic plan that will secure an exciting and outward looking future for the school.

Parent Council Members

Parent Council members are appointed to Council and play an important role in bring a parent perspective to the discussions and decision making. As council members, they will be registered as a trustee of Park School with the Charity Commission and a director with

Companies House. As a trustee and director, they will hold collective legal responsibility for Park School.

Parent Council members are not there as representatives of the parent group, or to 'lobby' on behalf of individuals or groups of parents. At all times, they must hold the best interests of the whole school, and make decisions that balance the needs of all the different stakeholders, children, staff and parents.

Your commitments as a council member

Full council meetings take place usually six times a year. Currently meetings are held in the evenings and online, using MS Teams. We would like to develop a hybrid model which will return to some face-to-face meetings held at the school and continue with some being online.

In addition, council members join one or more committees. The frequency and timing of committee meetings vary according to the committee. Where possible these are held during, or immediately after the school day to minimise the impact on staff time.

Council members encouraged to make visits into the school at least once per year, but more frequently if possible. This means that you can feel a part of the school and see first-hand the work that is taking place, meet and share the enthusiasm of the children for their learning.

Rebecca Giraud

I am really enjoying being on the school council, having had both my children go through the school and loved it, it has felt so good to be able to give something back. It can be challenging but always rewarding, learning new skills and working with like-minded people collaboratively. Being part of this school community and helping it grow is a privilege and I feel lucky to have a small part to play in its future.

