



VACANCY INFORMATION PACK

APPRENTICE GARDENER

FIXED TERM FOR
DURATION OF
APPRENTICESHIP
(17 TO 24 MONTHS).



READING BLUE COAT

INTRODUCTION

Reading Blue Coat School is a leading independent day school for students from ages 11 to 18. As at September 2023, the School has circa 800 students and has welcomed our first co-educational intake into Year 7 with the intention of being a fully co-educational independent day school from September 2027 onwards. The School has been co-educational at Sixth Form for over 30 years and this continues.

The School was founded in 1646 by Richard Aldworth, a Master of The Skinners' Company, and a Governor of Christ's Hospital. The School was established near St Mary's Minster Church in Reading and was originally known by its historic name of Aldworth's Hospital. In 1947, Reading Blue Coat School moved to the magnificent estate of Holme Park in the Berkshire village of Sonning, where it remains today.

The ethos of the School derives from its Christian foundation and traditions, fostering care and concern within the community and enabling all students to develop their full potential. The School aims to provide a stimulating and friendly atmosphere in which each student can realise his or her full intellectual, physical, and creative potential. Students are encouraged to be self-reliant and adaptable, and the School intends that they will learn the basis of good citizenship, founded on honesty, fairness and understanding of the needs of others. The curriculum provides a balanced blend of academic and co-curricular activities that combine to meet these objectives.

The School employs more than 200 salaried staff, of whom about 50% are academic. Reflecting the character of our co-educational sixth form, nearly half of our academic staff are female.

FACILITIES

Reading Blue Coat is located four miles from the centre of Reading, in the Thames-side village of Sonning. It is also three miles from Twyford, which is located on Crossrail, with fast train service across London. Set in 46 acres of land for students to enjoy, the facilities are very well maintained, and the School continues to invest in the site to add to an impressive infrastructure of buildings.

Planning permission has been obtained for a new Performing Arts Centre.



ACADEMIC LIFE

The academic curriculum at Reading Blue Coat is based on the principle that all students should experience a broad and balanced range of basic subjects and skills. From Year 9 onwards, this range is gradually modified, by elements of choice, enabling both the interests and aptitudes of individual students to be reflected. Most lessons are taught initially in classes of mixed ability, although setting occurs in Mathematics in Year 7, in Languages in Year 8, and Science in Year 9. Geology is also a thriving subject. In Year 11, all students take qualifications in English, Maths and Science (all IGCSE) and a Modern Foreign Language. They also take three GCSEs from a broad range of eleven subjects. All students take a GCSE in Religious Studies (full course) in Year 10.

In the Sixth Form, students can choose from a range of 24 subjects, including subjects most will not have studied before, such as Economics, Politics and Psychology. Enrichment opportunities in the Sixth Form include the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), and a weekly schedule of visiting speakers. Reading Blue Coat always seeks to stretch and challenge students and the School's Learning Support Department ensures that students with specific learning needs are supported effectively. The School's Learning Research Group ensures a sustained focus on developing teachers and pedagogical enrichment.

2023 academic results were impressive; the results were amongst Blue Coat's best with 74.4% achieving A*- B at A Level, and at GCSE 78.1% gaining Grades 9 to 7.

The majority of Year 13 leavers proceed to degree courses at universities of which approximately 78% go to the Russell Group Plus universities. Each year over 75% of our students attain places at their first choice university, whilst others are successful in securing future learning opportunities in their chosen career.

PASTORAL

Pastoral care, focused on the individual, is at the heart of the School. Reading Blue Coat's pastoral structure is based around the tutorial system, within the framework of the House system. In September 2021, we increased our houses from four to six: Aldworth, Hall, Malthus, Rich, Norwood and West.

All students are part of a tutor group that is overseen by a member of staff who is responsible for their well-being and for personally overseeing the development of their character and intellectual curiosity. At the heart of the School are the values of aspiration, courage, compassion, integrity and service and all activities seek to re-enforce these. The House system enables students to take part in activities that foster the development of these ideals through a variety of opportunities that include dance, drama, music, public speaking and sport.

DRAMA, MUSIC & THE ARTS

Reading Blue Coat has a reputation for drama and musical performances of the highest quality, with an extensive programme of performances throughout the year. Students' endeavours in the arts are highly successful and widely acclaimed. Music is at the heart of the School, all students are auditioned for the choir and many learn a musical instrument. The School Musical or Play is one of the highlights of the cultural calendar and there are further opportunities to perform on stage throughout the academic year. The breadth and depth of musical and dramatic talent at the School is evident in the wide range of plays, concerts, and exhibitions that take place throughout the year.



Further information is available on the School's website at www.rbc.org.uk

SEE ALSO THE GOOD SCHOOL GUIDE:

<https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/schools/102976/reading-blue-coat-school>

AND MUDDY STILETTOS SCHOOLS REVIEW GUIDE:

<https://berkshire.muddystiletto.co.uk/kids-2/school-reviews-kids-fashion-2/reading-blue-coats-sonning/>

SPORT

The School has a strong reputation for the high quality of its sporting teams. Sport plays a key role in developing every student's potential whilst embodying the principles of Respect, Belief, Commitment and Sportsmanship (team RBCS). Sports are coached to a very high level while providing for, and encouraging those, for whom participation rather than excellence is important.

The core sports are athletics, cricket, football, netball, hockey, rowing, and rugby. The School competes with great success at local, regional, and even national level. We have recent national competition winners in rowing and cross country running, and cricketers, netballers and rugby players who have been selected to international age group teams and gone on to play professionally. Other sports on offer include cross country, golf, tennis, swimming, and touch rugby.

ACTIVITIES

The activities programme is designed to enable students to develop practical and social skills such as communication, leadership, and teamwork. Reading Blue Coat offers a number of exciting options from which students can choose for their weekly activities session, including Adventure Education, Combined Cadet Force (Army, Navy, RAF), Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Model United Nations and Enterprise Champions.

COMMUNITY

Reading Blue Coat students are encouraged to be aware of their place in the wider world and to show consideration for all those with whom they come into contact. These principles are based on the ideas handed down by Richard Aldworth who founded the School in 1646.

In recent years the School has greatly enhanced its links with the wider community under what is now called the Aldworth Partnership. One example is the Primary Schools Placement programme which gives students the opportunity to assist with tuition in English, Maths and Modern Foreign Languages in local primary schools. We also have our own community garden which produces fresh produce for a local foodbank charity and our students have recently begun a project to convert a horse trailer into a community café.

Internationally the School has a strong relationship with the charity Brass for Africa and our students support their work amongst disadvantaged children and young people in Uganda through music. As the Aldworth Partnership continues to grow, the long-term aim is that all Blue Coat students have the opportunity to be involved in transformative service projects in the local and wider community at some point in their school career.

GROUNDS DEPARTMENT

The School estate covers 46 acres of rural Berkshire. It is located on the banks of the River Thames in Sonning-on-Thames.

The grounds consist of a large number of prestige sports pitches; formal lawns and gardens; and extensive woodland. The Grounds Department are a highly motivated team consisting of the following:

Grounds Manager
Deputy Grounds Manager (i/c Gardens)
Senior Groundsperson
Groundsperson (x2)
Assistant Groundsperson
Apprentice Gardener (vacant)

The School has a significant ongoing development programme with new facilities, buildings and playing areas, with substantial new landscaping planned.

The Grounds Department is situated in a purpose built Grounds and Maintenance building incorporating workshops, storage and staff rest area.

The department uses a variety of professional equipment, ranging from tractors of varying sizes; a pedestrian fleet of mowers; and a maintenance fleet of handheld equipment.

This is a busy department responsible for the maintenance and improvements of the school estate and outstanding visual presentation of the school facilities. The team work together to produce well-presented grounds and gardens that receive frequent accolades and are enjoyed by parents, students and visitors.

The Apprentice Gardener will develop practical skills and knowledge across the full range of the school's grounds maintenance including formal lawns and gardens (including sports pitches on occasions); amenity areas and woodlands, leading to a professional qualification and a longer term career.

The Apprentice will follow a programme of workplace study (no day release) with an accredited training provider leading to the Horticulture Operative Level 2 award (duration between 17 and 24 months). You will also receive ongoing in-house mandatory training.

It is expected that, upon completion of the Apprenticeship at the Level 2, and demonstration of high standards of work performance, the Apprentice may be offered employment with the school as a professional Gardener, or be well placed to grasp similar career opportunities within other schools or organisations.



For an informal telephone conversation about the role, contact Darren Seward, Deputy Grounds Manager, on **0118 933 5850** or email DPS@rbcs.org.uk



MAIN PURPOSE OF THE JOB:

Training and working under the supervision and guidance of an experienced professional Grounds team, to ensure that the grounds and gardens of the school campus are maintained to the highest standard. This will include the upkeep and preparation of all the formal gardens, woodland, amenity areas and sports surfaces within the site.

The main purpose of the role will be to complete the Horticulture Construction Operative Level 2 qualification and work primarily within the gardens as well as occasionally assist with sports turf. In addition, the role will support the wider maintenance and operations of the schools building, facilities and equipment where possible and appropriate.

DUTIES:

- To assist in the preparation and maintenance of the sports grounds, gardens, woodland and amenity areas to the standards set out by the Grounds Manager and Deputy Grounds Manager.
- Horticultural operations to include soil cultivation, digging, forking, mulching, watering, raking, weeding, edging, pruning, seed sowing, bed preparation and planting.
- Assist with the planting of trees, shrubs and seasonal bedding.
- Assisting the Deputy Grounds Manager on landscaping projects.
- Assisting the maintenance department on occasions with the day-to-day maintenance of the site as required and as agreed by the Grounds Manager and Maintenance Manager.
- Assist with maintaining the gardens of the Headmaster's house on the estate.
- To undertake grounds maintenance duties, e.g. grass cutting, hedge trimming, shrub pruning, lawn maintenance and cultivation.
- Cleaning equipment stores and associated washdown areas.
- To operate powered hand tools including mowers, strimmers, leaf blowers and hedge cutters.
- Use and maintenance of hand tools and basic light machinery and plant.
- Use of cylinder and rotary mowers.
- Adjustments of mower height and quality of cut, etc. Oil level checks and checks for damage to any mower.



**LINE MANAGER:**

Grounds Manager/Deputy Grounds Manager

DEPARTMENT:

Grounds.

CONTRACT STATUS:

Fixed term for duration of apprenticeship (17 to 20 months).

SALARY:

Intermediate Level 2 Horticulture Construction Operative Apprenticeship: starting salary - £13,312 per annum, rising in accordance with NMW upon completion of first year of apprenticeship.

- Using machinery in renovation of grass areas.
- To undertake the general maintenance of machinery on a day to day basis.
- Ensure work areas are kept clean, tidy and secure at all times.
- To carry out gritting, salt spreading, snow cleaning, as necessary, including highway footpaths through the school.
- Learn through formal /in-house training how to operate safely and professionally a range of machinery required for grounds care operations.
- On occasion, to work alongside other departments to facilitate school functions and events.
- To follow all Health and Safety Policy guidelines and policies as stated within the school's Health and Safety Policy.
- To act professionally and with good conduct at all times.
- To undergo work based training as required.
- To undertake such other duties, as detailed by your line manager, that may from time to time be required to ensure the smooth running of the school.
- To complete all education based learning and training and achieve the standards required at all times.
- To promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils at the school.
- To use technical and operational knowledge to ensure a safe environment.

Please note that this Job Description is not exhaustive and the employee may be expected to undertake additional duties if required.



For an informal telephone conversation about the role, contact Darren Seward, Deputy Grounds Manager, on **0118 933 5850** or email DPS@rbcs.org.uk



APPRENTICE GARDENER

The person specification focuses on the knowledge, skills, experience and qualifications required to undertake the role effectively. It is expected that the successful applicant will have and can demonstrate:

Knowledge And Experience:	Essential	Desirable
Interest in plants.	✓	
Interest in sports and sports ground maintenance.		✓
Experience of using different types of equipment.		✓
Previous gardening experience.		✓

Skills and Personal Attributes:	Essential	Desirable
An enthusiasm to learn.	✓	
Able to follow verbal and written instructions.	✓	
To act politely and professionally at all times.	✓	
Hard working with attention to quality and detail.	✓	
Good team worker.	✓	
Able to work independently when required.	✓	
Trustworthy, punctual and reliable.	✓	
Prepared to work outside and in all weathers.	✓	
Physically fit and able to handle/carry heavy items and work at heights.	✓	
Flexible approach to work and willing to work extra hours when required (including some Saturdays).	✓	

Qualifications:	Essential	Desirable
GCSE passes in English and Maths at grade 4 / C or above to meet entry requirements or you will need to complete Functional Skills Maths and English tests.	✓	
Full valid driving licence or commitment to attain one as soon as possible.		✓
Willingness to take on further training opportunities and relevant occupational qualifications.	✓	

Closing date for applications: Monday 29 April 2024 at 09:00.

Applications should be submitted by School employment Application Form, which can be downloaded from our website "Vacancies" page www.rbcs.org.uk/vacancies/

This should be submitted with your letter of application, by email to: recruitment@rbcs.org.uk

Contact for questions about the application process should be addressed to Mrs Inga Gregory, Head of HR, Reading Blue Coat School, Holme Park, Sonning Lane, Sonning-on-Thames, RG4 6SU. Email: rig@rbcs.org.uk



PLACE OF WORK

Reading Blue Coat School, Holme Park, Sonning Lane, Sonning on Thames, Berkshire, RG4 6SU.



MEALS

Lunch and refreshments are provided free by the School.



SPORTS FACILITIES

Free membership of the School Sports Centre with access to fully equipped gym and swimming pool.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)

Confidential independent support service available to staff when you most need it.



WORKING HOURS

Core hours of work 40 hours per week. Monday to Friday, from 08:00 to 16:30, with a 30 minute unpaid meal break (with allowances for summer and winter daylight when working hours may be varied).

In addition, some Saturday working is required (usually on a one weekend in three rota during the summer term) for which overtime payment or time off in lieu is provided.



PARKING

Free Car parking is available on site.



LEAVE ENTITLEMENT

28 days' paid annual leave plus 8 public holidays, increasing to 30 days after two years' service. 3 days from the annual leave entitlement must be retained for the period between Christmas and New Year during which the school is closed. Holiday year runs from 1 September to 31 August annually. This entitlement is pro-rated for part-time staff.



CYCLE SCHEME

Tax-free Cycle to Work Scheme is offered by salary sacrifice.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Strong commitment to support professional development, overseen by Deputy Head (Staff Development), with a dedicated people development budget.



PENSION

Membership of the RBCS Group Personal Pension Scheme (employee contribution of 5% of salary and employer contribution is 8% of salary).



CAR SCHEME

Leased cars scheme offered by salary sacrifice affording large savings.



THE BLUE COAT BENEFIT HUB

The Blue Coat Benefit Hub: you can access discounts, rewards, and perks on thousands of the brands that you love to shop with including travel; motoring; electronics; clothing; education; entertainment; restaurants; health and wellness; beauty and spa; insurance; sports and outdoors.

DISCOUNTS



Employee car scheme offered by salary sacrifice affording large savings on new cars.



50% reduction for all full time staff (pro-rated for part time staff).



Fees (from 1 September 2023) are £6,655 per term.

MEET THE STAFF

All staff, both teaching and support, form part of a qualified and experienced team, which functions at its best in being mutually supportive in a common goal: to provide the best possible education for all Blue Coat pupils.

Relationships between staff and pupils at Blue Coat are often remarked upon by visitors and parents for being warm, relaxed and mutually respectful.

Click on the link to find out more about some of our staff. Can you see yourself as part of the Blue Coat team?

www.rbc.org.uk/the-school/meet-the-staff/



GETTING HERE

BY CAR

We are located in the village of Sonning-on-Thames, just off the A4, between Reading and Twyford.

We are about 15 minutes' drive from Junction 10 of the M4 motorway. From there, take the Reading / Bracknell turnoff at Junction 10 on to the A329M to Reading. At the roundabout by the flyover take the third exit (A4) towards Maidenhead. Follow the dual carriageway over the next roundabout and up the hill. Over the railway bridge, turn left into Sonning Lane. The School is about ½ mile on the left.

BY BUS

The School and village of Sonning is served by local bus services 128 and 129 (operated by Courtney) from Reading to Wokingham.

Also by service 850 (operated by Arriva Bus) from High Wycombe, Marlow, Henley, Twyford to Reading. Alight at the junction of Sonning Lane and Bath Road, from where it is a short walk.

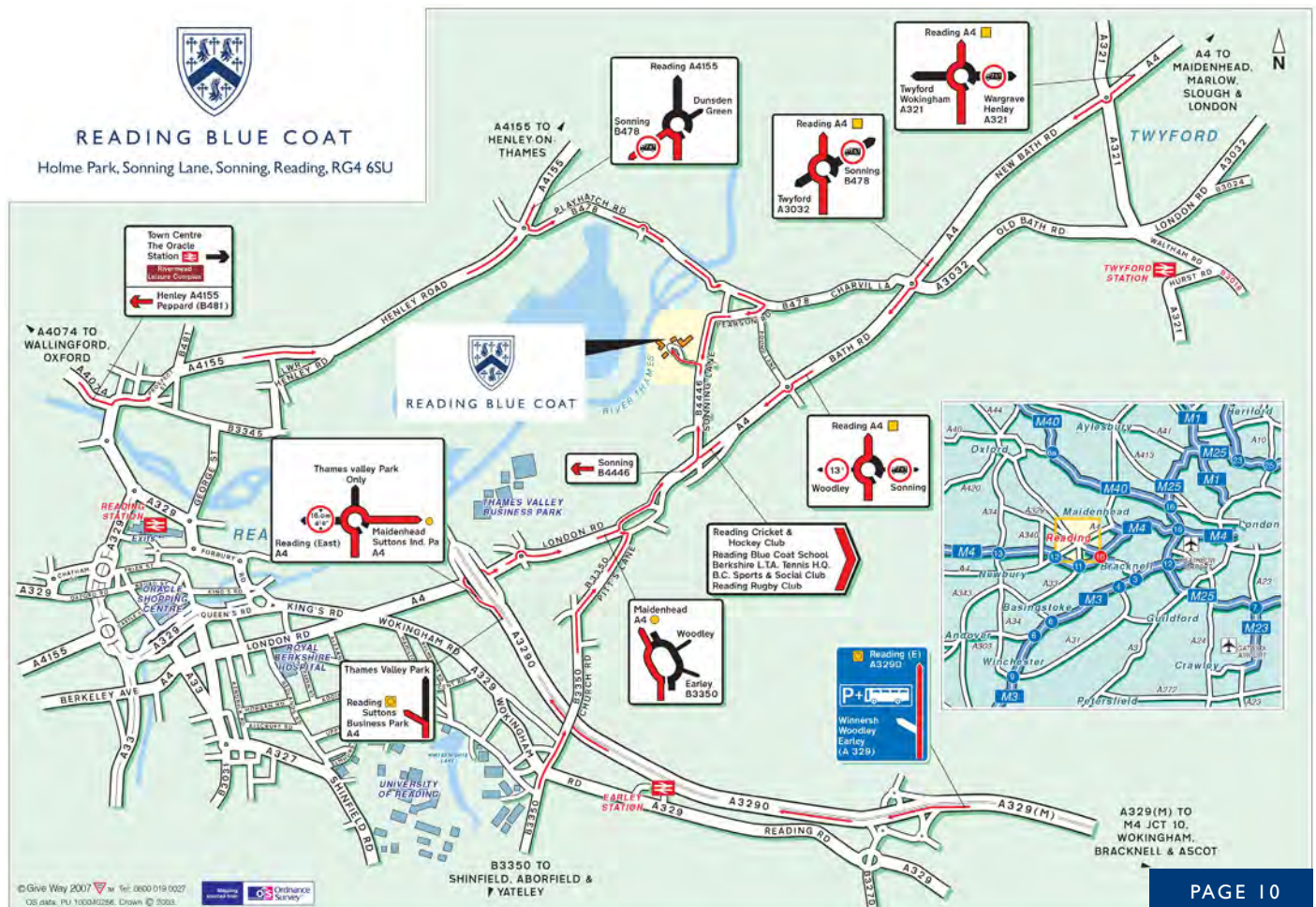
BY TRAIN

Our nearest rail links are at Reading central station (mainline to London, Wales and the West), which is about 5 miles from the School (about 15 minutes by taxi).

We are also served by local stations at Twyford, which is about 3 miles away (about 10 minutes by taxi), and at Earley, which is about 4 miles away (about 15 minutes by taxi).



For information, call Reception: **0118 944 1005**



ONE READING BLUE COAT

our community



Holme Park, Sonning Lane, Sonning-on-Thames, Berkshire RG4 6SU

Tel: 0118 944 1005 rbc.org.uk