



Virginia Episcopal School Head of School Search

POSITION STATEMENT
START DATE: JULY 1, 2026



INTRODUCTION

Rooted in a strong sense of community and a deep commitment to the character development of its students, Virginia Episcopal School blends long-standing tradition with forward-thinking innovation. VES now seeks a new Head of School who will embrace its values, honor its storied history, and carry forward the momentum of recent years. Founded in 1916 by the Reverend Dr. Robert Carter Jett, VES's first headmaster and later the inaugural Bishop of Southwestern Virginia, the School was established with the mission to draw out that which is noblest and finest in its students. The School's motto, Toward Full Stature, reflects Bishop Jett's enduring values – high character, well-furnished minds, healthy lives, and a spirit of selfless service. With determined vision and persuasive leadership, Bishop Jett secured gifts from prominent philanthropists of his day, acquired land, and oversaw the construction of the original campus buildings, laying the foundation for the vibrant community that thrives today.

Among the many compelling attributes of this 70% boarding, 30% day school, a strong sense of community stands head and shoulders above all else. Parents, alumni, trustees, students and faculty talk glowingly about the strong relationships that bind faculty and students together. In addition, students actively support one another, fostering a culture that invites them to be their authentic selves, pursue their passions, and develop their talents. This supportive culture is reflected in the results of the most recent AIM survey that indicated that both student morale and a sense of belonging were well above the average for NAIS schools. This symbiotic relationship in which individuals contribute to the community creates fertile ground for individual growth – this is the very DNA of Virginia Episcopal School.

The School's educational philosophy is clearly reflected in the thoughtfully designed *Portrait of a VES Graduate*. Rooted in the mission and values of VES, this portrait serves as a guiding framework for trustees, school leaders, and faculty as they shape the student experience and advance the School's vision. It articulates the essential qualities VES seeks to cultivate in every student.

VES graduates are:

- Curious, innovative thinkers, and producers
- Mindful leaders with courage and compassion
- Focused on community
- Self-aware
- Ready to navigate and continue their personal growth in a dynamic world

The Portrait of a VES Graduate provides a powerful and compelling expression of the School's purpose, clearly articulating the "why" behind all that VES does. Anchored in this vision and guided by thoughtful execution, the School has experienced a period of remarkable growth and momentum. Since 2011-12, enrollment has increased from 176 to 260 students. Student achievement has reached new heights, fundraising has continued its recent meteoric rise, and the campus has been renewed with new and renovated facilities. Yet even amid this success, the Board of Trustees and School leadership remain motivated and steadfast in their commitment to further advance the institution. The current Strategic Plan (<https://www.ves.org/support-ves/strategic-plan>) includes significant investment in facilities and an even stronger commitment to recruiting and retaining exceptional faculty. The quiet phase of the next capital campaign is already underway, signaling the School's continued determination to build on its success and strengthen its foundation for generations to come.

From its founding, Virginia Episcopal School has embraced a spirit of progress and leadership among independent schools in Virginia. In 1967, Virginia Episcopal School became the first boarding school in Virginia and among the first in the South to integrate. Dr. Marvin Barnard '71, a member of the Head of School Search Committee and current Trustee, and Dr. William A. Alexander, Jr. '71, a former Trustee, were the first African-American students to enroll at VES. Both men distinguished themselves as outstanding students and leaders, and they are remembered with great admiration for their courage, character, and lasting contributions to the School. VES continued to lead among its peers by becoming the first traditionally male boarding school in Virginia to enroll female students and become coeducational in 1986.



CAMPUS AND LOCATION

Virginia Episcopal School is situated on a beautiful 160-acre campus in Lynchburg, Virginia. At its heart stands Jett Hall, the School's original building, which today houses administrative offices and a student residence hall. Langhorne Memorial Chapel hosts weekly traditional Episcopal chapel services and school-wide assemblies. Together with Jett Hall and Pendleton Hall dormitory, it forms the architectural and symbolic foundation of the campus. Garmey Theater, located within the William King Center, serves as a venue for the performing arts, guest speakers, and community gatherings. Surrounding these central spaces are dormitories, academic buildings, faculty homes, and athletic facilities, including multiple playing fields and an outdoor recreational swimming pool. Adjacent to the Chapel, the recently renovated Robert Carter Jett Memorial Head of School House provides a comfortable and welcoming residence for the Head of School and their family.

In 2022, VES approved a new Campus Master Plan. In keeping with leadership's thoughtful and intentional approach to change, the Board approved five core principles to guide future construction:

- A place of community where students and faculty make lifetime connections
- A campus where students come first
- A campus where faculty and administrators love to live, work, and grow
- A campus of timeless character, preserving and translating the Jett/Brooke vision into a modern preparatory school
- A responsible steward of fiscal and physical resources

Over the past five years, the VES campus has undergone a stunning transformation, with more than \$25 million invested in facilities and infrastructure since 2020. Opening in 2023, Pannill-Smith Hall offers beautiful, spacious classrooms and collaborative learning spaces dedicated to the humanities. Jett Hall has experienced a recent facelift through thoughtful efforts to restore its historic

character, while a new garden complete with an outdoor fireplace, and an entertainment lawn now grace the east end of the campus center, serving as welcoming venues for student, parent, and alumni gatherings.

Three of the six student dormitories have been recently renovated, providing updated and comfortable living environments. The Thomas Student Center, located above the dining hall, offers students a relaxed setting to gather informally and enjoy expanded dining options. The Costas Wellness Center marks a significant enhancement of the school's health and wellness services, and the newly constructed Frank H. Craighill III '57 Tennis Center is the first in a series of planned upgrades to the athletic facilities. In addition, the School has made substantial progress in addressing long-deferred maintenance, ensuring the historic campus remains a vibrant and welcoming place for generations to come.

Located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Lynchburg is a city of 80,000, with a metro population of approximately 266,000. Like many former manufacturing centers, Lynchburg experienced economic challenges during the nation's industrial decline. In recent years, however, the city has seen a remarkable resurgence fueled in large part by the presence of two universities and a college. Downtown Lynchburg is now a vibrant hub, home to a thriving restaurant scene, a growing arts community, and the beautifully restored Academy Center of the Arts, which reopened its historic theater in 2018 and now offers a robust calendar of cultural events. Just an hour from both Charlottesville and Roanoke, Lynchburg residents enjoy convenient access to broader entertainment options while benefiting from the charm, safety, and slower pace of life that a smaller city offers. With a temperate climate and easy access to the outdoors, the area supports an active lifestyle nearly year-round.



OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

In addition to offering 20 rigorous Advanced Placement courses, VES provides students with meaningful opportunities to pursue individual passions and deepen their academic experience. The Advanced Studies Program is designed for students who have completed the most advanced coursework within a subject and are ready for an even greater intellectual challenge. Under the guidance of a faculty mentor, these students engage in in-depth, independent research on a topic of their choosing, culminating in a formal presentation to the VES community. For ninth-grade students, the required ARCH Collaborative introduces an interdisciplinary approach to learning and personal development. Through four quarter-long courses in the Arts, Reasoning, Computer Science, and Health & Life Skills, students build foundational skills that prepare them for success at VES and beyond.

Academic achievement at VES is both measurable and impressive. VES graduates are admitted to many of the nation's most selective colleges and universities ([matriculation list](#)), and in the past three years, 83 students have earned recognition through the Advanced Placement Scholars Program. Recent accomplishments further highlight the promise and potential of VES students: in just the last two graduating classes, two graduates were named Morehead-Cain Scholars by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, one graduate was named a Jefferson Scholar by the University of Virginia, and two graduates were named Johnson Scholars by Washington & Lee University.

At VES, participation in an afternoon activity is an essential part of the student experience, with athletics and the arts offering meaningful opportunities for personal growth and development beyond the classroom. Students can participate in 17 competitive sports, typically at a junior varsity or varsity level. This year, the football program returns to traditional 11-man play, reflecting both student interest and program momentum. VES teams typically compete against same-size schools, and many student-athletes have continued their athletic careers at the collegiate level, including in NCAA Division I programs. The arts at VES engage students in a wide range of disciplines including drama, choral and instrumental music, and the visual arts. These offerings are woven into both the academic curriculum and the afternoon program. In both athletics and the arts, and in keeping with the mission of the School, students of all experience levels are encouraged to explore and take risks.

Leadership is a cornerstone of the VES experience, with students encouraged to serve in a variety of elected roles, including the Counselor Body, Honor Committee, Student Council, and Junior Resident Assistants. Central to this commitment is the School's Honor Code and Statement of Community, which shape community expectations and guide student conduct.

The faculty at VES is widely seen as the heart and soul of the school. Teachers embrace their roles not only as classroom instructors but also as mentors, advisors, coaches, and club sponsors. The faculty culture exudes warmth and collaboration. Parents laud the connections between teachers and their children. Students are effusive in their praise of teachers who not only have high expectations for them but also work with them outside of class to provide extra help. The Dean of Teaching and Learning oversees the academic program and provides support and counsel to the faculty.

Virginia Episcopal School has been ably led by Garth Ainslie since 2020. Under his leadership the school has strengthened alumni connections, adopted a new strategic plan, and significantly expanded campus facilities. Mr. Ainslie, with the help of a skilled administrative team, deftly navigated the twists and turns brought on by the pandemic. The Head is supported by an experienced team of direct reports that includes the Associate Head of School, Director of Community, Diversity, and Values, Assistant Head for Advancement, Chief Financial Officer, Dean of Teaching and Learning, Dean of Students, and Director of Admissions.

The VES Board consists of 24 trustees, 18 of whom are alumni. The Board meets three times a year. Trustee committees are active, and traditionally, the Board has provided substantial leadership and support in raising funds for the school.

For more information about VES, please visit the school's website at www.ves.org.





NOTABLE STRENGTHS

- Positive momentum reflected in robust fundraising and new facilities
- Strong sense of community
- Commitment to the moral growth of students
- Beautiful campus setting
- Loyal and supportive alumni body
- Faculty and staff committed to meeting the needs of each student.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITES

While Virginia Episcopal School has achieved full enrollment for the past several years, the recruitment of domestic boarders (particularly boys) is an annual challenge. In addition, the unstable international market represents a potential threat to revenue streams. Developing a multi-prong strategy for VES to address these concerns will require close attention to several key areas: target markets, program quality and breadth, the role of athletics, faculty development, and the distinctive strengths the School seeks to be known for. These and other factors must be thoughtfully examined in order to shape and implement a vision and plan that strengthens the VES brand and broadens the admissions pipeline.

VES has made remarkable strides in improving campus facilities in the past several years. It will be important for the next Head to maintain this focus as a critical table stake in the recruitment of students.

Relatedly, the Head and the Board must continue their strong efforts in fundraising. These funds will allow the school to continue and expand its upward trajectory.

Like all independent schools in the country, VES faces headwinds in recruiting and retaining excellent faculty. Robust salary increases over the last few years represent a solid initial step in attracting outstanding teachers. But the next Head will need to lead a more comprehensive effort to devise a plan that will attract and retain the kinds of teachers VES seeks.

Although it can be difficult in a boarding-day school to foster a sense of parent community, a number of stakeholders indicate a desire for more parent involvement with the expressed purpose of strengthening parental bonds to the school. The new Head will need to assess parent involvement and determine how the school can include parents under the umbrella of an already existing strong sense of community.

Mutually beneficial ties between Lynchburg and the school can provide a plethora of opportunities for VES. The next Head of School will need to devise strategies to make the school a more prominent part of the Lynchburg community.

The school has made great strides recently in establishing summer programs that provide auxiliary income. It will be critical for the new Head to continue these efforts to supplement revenue and leverage these programs to expand the admissions funnel.



KEY QUALIFICATIONS

Given the challenges and opportunities, VES seeks a Head of School who has not only the baseline of leadership and management skills needed to be an effective head but also specific skills that include the following:

- The capacity to think strategically and establish a comprehensive vision that will inspire stakeholders and strengthen the school's position in the market; a leader who can honor the traditions of VES and at the same time, boldly face the future
- A superb communicator who will provide stakeholders a compelling message about the unique value of VES
- The desire to embrace fundraising in all its facets
- The ability to embody the values of the school, especially its emphasis on a strong sense of community; a leader who enthusiastically embraces the role of "face of the school"
- An educational leader with boarding experience, who can inspire faculty and staff and create systems and structures to ensure their high performance.

APPLICATION PROCESS

To be considered, a candidate must submit the following:

- Cover letter of no more than one page detailing your interest in the school and the qualifications that make you a compelling candidate,
- Resume,
- Statement of educational or leadership philosophy,
- Five confidential references with contact information

Candidates should upload their application on the RG175 website:
<https://rg175.com/candidate/signup>

APPLICATION DEADLINE: OCTOBER 3, 2025 (NOTE: CANDIDATES ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO APPLY EARLY AS THE SCHOOL INTENDS TO SELECT ITS NEXT HEAD BY THANKSGIVING)

INTERESTED CANDIDATES MAY CONTACT:

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