

# HEAD OF LOWER SCHOOL SEARCH

## THE JOHN COOPER SCHOOL

The Woodlands, Texas

[johncooper.org](http://johncooper.org)

Start Date: July 2026

The John Cooper School  
**Cooper**



**Carney  
Sandoe**  
& ASSOCIATES

[CARNEYSANDOE.COM](http://CARNEYSANDOE.COM)

# Mission Statement

The John Cooper School is an independent, non-sectarian, co-educational, college preparatory day school. The School’s mission is to provide a challenging education in a caring environment to a diverse group of select students, enabling them to become critical and creative thinkers, effective communicators, responsible citizens and leaders, and lifetime learners.

The mission is a deeply meaningful statement in the daily life of the School that has been consistent throughout its history.

## At a Glance



Established  
1988



Lower School enrollment  
508



Financial aid awarded  
\$2.1M



Student-teacher ratio  
11:1



Students of color  
47%



Faculty in the Lower School  
70



Faculty with advanced degrees  
71%



Campus size  
43 acres

Enrollment: 1,380  
Total faculty: 166  
Students receiving aid: 13%

Endowment: \$17.7M  
Annual operating budget: \$46.3M



## Overview

The John Cooper School seeks a visionary, mission-driven leader to serve as its next Head of Lower School, beginning July 1, 2026. Joining a strong administrative team and working closely with Head of School Stephen Popp, Ed.D., now in his fourth year, this leader will help shape the school's next chapter of growth, innovation, and impact through its youngest learners.

Located in The Woodlands, a vibrant, master-planned community north of Houston, John Cooper sits on a 43-acre campus designed for discovery, creativity, and connection. Since its founding in 1988, the school has evolved from a bold idea shared by corporate leaders, private benefactors, and dedicated parents into a nationally respected independent school with exceptional faculty and a diverse, globally minded student body. Today, Cooper is poised to build on its strong foundation - healthy enrollment, sound finances, and state-of-the-art facilities - by embracing new educational opportunities that prepare students for an interconnected, rapidly changing world.

The Lower School is a hub of curiosity, joy, and foundational learning for 508 students guided by 70 committed faculty and staff. The next Head of Lower School will play a pivotal role in strengthening this environment, leading with a blend of tradition and innovation. Key priorities will include advancing curriculum alignment across grades, deepening development-appropriate pedagogical practices, and ensuring that every child is known, challenged, and inspired. As a culture carrier, this leader will champion both the values that define Cooper and the forward-thinking practices that will sustain its excellence for decades to come.



## Opportunities and Challenges

The next Head of Lower School at The John Cooper School who oversees the day-to-day operations of the division (Prekindergarten through Grade 5) will enter a community that is both thriving and poised for thoughtful renewal. With a strong academic foundation, committed faculty, and joyful student culture, the Lower School presents significant opportunities for a strategic and emotionally intelligent leader to make a lasting impact. The following areas represent essential focal points:

- Strengthen faculty culture and collaboration by cultivating a sense of shared purpose, professional growth, and open communication within the Lower School while fostering cross-divisional partnerships that enhance continuity in academics, student support, and assessment practices.
- Assess and understand the overall Lower School program to ensure integration across academics, arts, extracurriculars, and social-emotional learning and smooth developmental transitions between Prekindergarten, Lower, and Middle School.
- Review and refine the Lower School schedule to optimize student learning and program delivery, addressing challenges created by differences from the 8-day cycles of the Middle and Upper Schools.
- Ensure the curriculum reflects The John Cooper School's educational philosophy, balancing creative initiatives with externally sourced programs such as Reading and Writing Workshop, Foundations Phonics, and Origo Math. Thoughtfully incorporate inquiry-based models and new technologies as developmentally indicated.
- Strengthen student support services by expanding literacy and mathematics offerings, partnering with specialists, and ensuring inclusive practices that meet the needs of all learners.
- Serve as the Lower School's advocate and storyteller by effectively communicating the division's mission, culture, and value to parents, prospective families, donors, and the broader community.
- Recruit, develop, and retain a mission-aligned faculty who reflect the diversity of the student body and foster a dynamic, inclusive learning environment.
- Partner with the Director of Admission to strengthen coordination, champion community relationships, and build mission-aligned classes that reflect the diverse perspectives of the community.



## Qualifications and Personal Attributes

Across conversations, a portrait of the ideal leader emerged—one rooted in empathy, strategic thinking, and genuine joy for working with young children and the educators who teach them. The community seeks someone who is:

- An experienced educator and visionary leader with teaching and leadership experience in a Lower School setting, a wide-ranging understanding of child development from PreK through Grade 5, and a deep appreciation for the opportunities of a multi-division independent school.
- Joyful, approachable, and highly visible throughout the school day—an upbeat presence who delights in the rhythms of school life, engages with students and teachers alike, and models optimism in ways that create a happy and thriving learning community.
- Collaborative and respectful of faculty, listening well, honoring the professional expertise of educators, and fostering an inclusive and collegial culture where teachers feel supported and valued.
- Decisive and courageous, demonstrating fairness and moral clarity in making difficult choices while balancing empathy with a strong sense of responsibility for the well-being of students and the division.
- A clear communicator who provides consistent, respectful, and timely information to faculty and families, especially during periods of change, thereby building trust and understanding.
- Skilled in operations and comfortable with technology, using systems and tools that streamline processes, strengthen communication, and serve the needs of students, faculty, and parents.
- Culturally responsive and community-focused, embracing inclusion, celebrating diverse perspectives, and sustaining Cooper's family-oriented culture through meaningful engagement with students, colleagues, and parents.
- Academically accomplished, holding an advanced degree in education or a related field, and bringing the intellectual grounding to lead with both expertise and vision.

# Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about The John Cooper School.

[School Website](#)

[Virtual Tour](#)

[School History](#)

[Lower School Academics](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

[About The Woodlands, Texas](#)



## To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultant in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

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