



HEAD OF SCHOOL

Start Date: July 2026

Upland Country Day School

Chester County, Pennsylvania | uplandcds.org



Carney
Sandoe
& ASSOCIATES

MISSION AND VISION

Upland Country Day School, a thriving PK-9 located in Kennett Square (PA), describes its mission and vision this way:

“At Upland Country Day School, we believe each student should feel known, loved, and valued. We believe children rise to high expectations and thrive on meaningful challenges. We believe that a quality, private school education should be accessible to all learners. We believe that a great education is the adventure of a lifetime.

Together, these beliefs have created a wonderful school — a place of exploration and possibility. They have shaped a wonderful school community, too, in which children flourish because they know they belong.”

At a Glance



1948
established



187
total enrollment
(plus 33 BeeSchool)



9%
students of color



52
total faculty and staff



\$1.35M
financial aid
awarded



6.5:1
student-faculty ratio



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OVERVIEW

To visit Upland Country Day School (Upland) is to witness a school whose time is now. Founded in 1948, Upland has always offered a unique educational experience for its students and faculty: one of discovery, challenge, inclusion, creativity and joy. Today, it is a well-established PK-9 school of 220 students, set on a beautiful campus, staffed by passionate and caring teachers, marked by a coherent philosophy and welcoming culture, and guided by a committed Board of Trustees.

Upland's recent history is important. A decade ago, its accreditation process revealed the school's real weaknesses: it was under enrolled, running budget deficits, saw significant faculty attrition, and had leadership turnover. Significant progress has been made, while challenges remain. For an inspiring, energetic and visionary leader, Upland offers a singular chance to help a strong school reach its full potential.

There is much to be inspired by at Upland, especially its commitment to community. This is a school of close, warm relationships. It's not only that faculty know and care for the students very well; it's the fact that relationships among all members—teachers, students, administrators, staff, parents—are close, supportive and empathic. The small things are noticeable: eye contact, smiles, greetings.





The campus itself, consisting of 23 acres at the end of a tree lined drive and located in beautiful rural southwest Chester County, approximately an hour from Philadelphia and a half hour from Wilmington DE, affirms and makes possible the palpable feeling of community, safety and welcome. The buildings—a mix of old and new, each clean and well maintained—connect students and faculty together and seamlessly support the educational experience. Upland has always valued the importance of the outdoors in its teaching: lower school classrooms stream in natural light and provide easy access to the outdoors so that a class might have students at work and play inside and out. Remaining true to the philosophy of its founders 75 years ago, children play outside. As one Preschool teacher says, “There is no poor weather to prevent children from playing outside, just poor gear.” On this campus, learning happens everywhere. In the upper school, students converse around Harkness tables about U.S. history, while outside, a kindergarten class might be meeting in and exploring JP’s Treehouse. The entire school gathers twice a week in its spacious library, built to evoke a soaring barn (the architect intended a sanctuary) with classrooms on the perimeter arranged to resemble stables.

The school’s educational philosophy is rooted in the “Four A’s”: Academics, Athletics, Arts and Attitude. Many schools speak to the first three; Upland’s addition of “Attitude” signals its commitment to character, conduct and growth. Students are offered an academic education that is intentional, coherent and challenging—one that asks students to try new things and stretch themselves as they become digitally prepared and problem-solving global citizens—and enables them to leave prepared to succeed at rigorous public and private schools. Pedagogy and curriculum are both traditional and innovative. Its Kleberg IDEA Center—a wonderful STEAM and maker space used by all grades—and its commitment to the Harkness method reflect the School’s willingness to embrace new and innovative methods of instruction.

The athletic program is strong. Upland has a gym, hockey rink and playing fields, and students participate in all levels and with varsity teams playing competitive schedules. The hockey program is known regionally for its history of competitive excellence: it attracts a deep pool of talented student-athletes, many who go on to play at leading private and public schools. The arts are thriving: students create in spacious sunlit rooms, 2D and 3D works are displayed in the local community, performing groups put on concerts, and dramatic performances stage annually. Faculty see their work around attitude as undergirding all they do. Each day and in all places, students are asked to reflect, to think about their perspective, consider the views of others—in short, to be metacognitive. All this work happens because Upland has a faculty of caring and committed teachers.

Because of the fiscal discipline of the last decade, the school's financial architecture is solid, but Upland knows it has work to do to create the kind of foundation that ensures sustainability. At 220 students (this number includes students in the three year old program BeeSchool, some of whom are part-time), there is room to grow. Operating a \$5 million budget, it projects to have a balanced budget in FY27 for the first time in several years. A recent capital campaign of \$7.5 million was used to offset deficits, support operations, for capital improvements, additions to endowment, and for campus maintenance. The endowment of \$3.6 million (with another \$.5M pledged) has been prudently managed; the school has not drawn from it in years. The school's marketing is creative and robust, with real efforts to get the school story "out there," but Upland knows that it needs to deepen its admissions pool and improve student retention.

Upland finds itself at an exciting moment. Both the casual campus visitor and the next leader would see a school that seems poised to reach its full potential. In a moment when studies tell us students are experiencing mental health challenges, report high levels of anxiety and stress, and spend the majority of their hours on a screen, and when parents are concerned about safety in schools and feel overwhelmed by demands, Upland feels centering, secure, and happy. Upland remains true to its founding spirit and ethos, while embracing new methodologies and approaches. The school is doing what it has always done well. As one parent noted, "With all that's going on, you drive by the trees and see the head of school greeting everyone each morning, on a campus where kids and teachers are learning in classrooms and outside, where I know my child is being challenged but is safe, and where it's a community that feels more like family."



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Like any good school, Upland faces real challenges and has great opportunities. For an ambitious and talented leader, the school offers a unique chance to shore up its foundations and accelerate its growth. Led by a Board of Trustees which has ambition and commitment to excellence in governance practices, Upland knows what it does well and what it wants to do better. The next leader will have a newly adopted Strategic Plan to implement and a number of challenges and opportunities to embrace, including the following:

Financial Stability and Sustainability: That Upland is in a position very different than a decade ago is clear. However, any number of micro and macro challenges would present real challenges to the school. An economic downturn, a decrease in applications, a major capital expense—each could present the school with very hard choices around sustainability. The next leader will need to work with the Board of Trustees, CFO and Advancement Office to raise funds to grow the endowment in order to allow strategic choices around financial aid, faculty compensation, employee headcount, new programs, and ongoing capital expenditures.

Balance and Alignment of the “Four A’s”: Academics, Athletics, Arts and Attitude serve as the fundamental blocks of an Upland education. Finding the balance among these and ensuring that they are aligned with the school’s mission and aspirations, is a complex and difficult task, especially given the emphasis on athletics in our society as well as the expectations of an exceptional academic preparation. The next head will need to lead a discussion around the school’s strategic priorities in the four A’s and what it means to commit to excellence in all four.





Enrollment Management: Upland’s small size is both asset and liability, and enrollment is highly dynamic, with students entering and leaving the school at different points and for diverse reasons. In addition, like any day school, Upland has a geographic limit to its market: increasing admissions demand is not simple. The school’s history shows that even a modest decrease in admissions demands can have very real consequences. The next head will need to work with the Board of Trustees, CEO and Director of Enrollment to analyze and understand the market, attract a more diverse student population, set institutional strategy, plan strategically, —and strengthen the school’s place in the market.

Recruiting, Retaining and Supporting Faculty: Upland’s faculty are passionate and caring. For the next head, recruiting, retaining, evaluating and supporting a diverse and talented faculty and administration will be critical, as will strategic thinking around compensation and benefits, professional growth and evaluation, and administrative support.

Student Support and Conduct: That the challenges faced by schools around student health, support and behavior have become more complex is obvious and well known. Upland’s communal culture—a happy place where students treat others with respect and inclusion—is clear. But so, too, are the difficulties presented by students who occasionally struggle to meet community expectations. The next head will need to work with the faculty and division heads to ensure that the school balances nurture and accountability.

QUALIFICATIONS & PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES



Education and Experience

For this July 2026 appointment, Upland seeks a Head of School who will have at minimum a bachelor's degree and preferably an advanced degree. In addition, the ideal candidate will have experience in senior leadership in an independent school, preferably elementary and/or middle, and experience in or aptitude for

- managing faculty and teams
- academic curriculum design and implementation
- effective relationship building and fundraising
- strategic planning and Board partnership
- budget building and management



Professional and Personal Attributes

Upland seeks a leader who will be

- an empathic and deep listener
- a confident and decisive decision-maker
- a visible, enthusiastic, and positive presence in the community
- an effective and genuine relationship builder
- a seasoned educator with a passion for teaching and learning
- a thoughtful strategic thinker capable of partnering with all constituents
- a tireless worker with a growth mindset
- a visionary leader with the communication skills to inspire others to follow
- a compassionate and inclusive community builder
- and a wise and caring steward of school culture

LEARN MORE

- [School Website](#)
- [Academic Philosophy](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [About Chester County, Pennsylvania](#)





TO APPLY

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants 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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