



ST. MARGARET'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL



LOWER SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
Start Date: July 2027

St. Margaret's Episcopal School
San Juan Capistrano, California | [smes.org](https://www.smes.org)



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission at St. Margaret's Episcopal School is to educate the hearts and minds of young people for lives of learning, leadership, and service.

At a Glance



1979
established



1,234
total enrollment



398
Lower School enrollment



54%
students of color



132 *(45 in lower school)*
total faculty



56%
faculty with
advanced degrees



8:1
student-faculty ratio



OVERVIEW

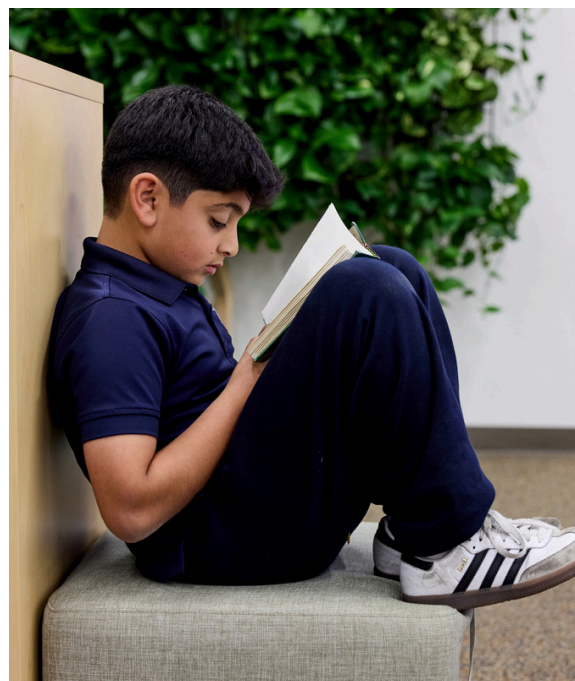
St. Margaret's Episcopal School (SMES) is a vibrant learning community where natural curiosity and academic pursuit flourish. As an independent, co-educational day school serving students in preschool through grade 12, SMES provides a vigorous college-preparatory program dedicated to educating the hearts and the minds of its students and nurturing the whole child. Students have unlimited opportunities to discover and explore new passions and curiosities. They are supported and cheered on by a diverse and welcoming community rooted in the Episcopal identity and values. Students and teachers are eager and enthusiastic to be here, to be together, to learn and grow, and that energy is contagious.

In 1979, the Reverend Canon Ernest D. Sillers opened the doors of St. Margaret's Episcopal School in pursuit of a mission to educate the hearts and minds of young people for lives of learning, leadership, and service. The school's mission is rooted in the development of five core values in its students: balance and breadth, character, community, equity and inclusion, and high expectations. While the landscape of education has changed over the last five decades, the school's mission and core values have remained constant. An example of that can be found in the stability of the school's leadership, as well. Dr. Jeneen Graham, who was appointed Head of School at SMES in 2023, has been employed at the school since 2012, first as the school's Academic Dean, then as Upper School Principal. And she is only the school's 5th Head of School in its 47-year history. There is similar stability in the senior leadership team, and the school is excited about going "from strength to strength" with this search.



St. Margaret's Episcopal seeks a relational, student-centered, collaborative leader to serve as its next Lower School Principal, beginning July 2027. This is a compelling opportunity to lead a division rooted in Episcopal values and delivering a program of academic excellence balanced with social emotional development. The next Lower School Principal will join an SMES team committed to joy and optimism and buoyed by the momentum of a new strategic plan.

As a member of the School's senior leadership team, the Lower School Principal is responsible for the overall direction of the division, including academic programming, faculty and staff leadership, student support, divisional operations, family engagement, and the continued development of a vibrant and student-centered learning community. Working closely with the Head of School and school leadership, the Lower School Principal ensures that the division's academic program, culture, and operations reflect the mission and core values of St. Margaret's Episcopal School. The Principal provides strategic leadership for the continued growth and development of the Lower School while fostering collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement across the division.



\$5.8M

financial aid
awarded



18.5%

students receiving
aid



\$35M

endowment



\$53M

operating budget



25 acres

campus size

THE OPPORTUNITY

St. Margaret's next Lower School Principal joins a strong division that has benefited from steady leadership and highly dedicated faculty. In shaping the division's next chapter, the Lower School Principal will:

Champion the SMES culture – the division culture is strong and rooted in the school-wide shared values. The next Lower School Principal will enter this culture with patience, humility, and a willingness to listen and learn from a faculty and leadership team who value collaboration and genuine dialogue.

Lead with relational warmth – the role requires empathy, kindness, and the ability to hold the line when necessary. An experienced and talented faculty, as well as parents with high expectations, look to the principal for partnership during the K-5 years.

Integrate data – the Lower School has a used data effectively to establish benchmarks, track skill development, target areas for curricular revision, and implement student supports. The Lower School Principal will balance data fluency with the professional wisdom to situate testing data in the context of whole child development.

Collaborate across divisions – situated between an Early Childhood Program which utilizes a Reggio Emilia philosophy, and the Middle School, the Lower School team works closely with both divisions to deliver a coherent, developmentally appropriate curriculum and a cohesive culture as students transition from one division to another. The Lower School Principal will continue the important collaborative work these teams have established.



QUALIFICATIONS AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES



Required

- Master's degree or higher in education or a related field.
- Minimum of five (5) years of successful full-time classroom teaching experience and three (3) years of educational leadership or administrative experience.
- Strong understanding of elementary education, curriculum development, child development, and effective instructional practices.
- Demonstrated ability to lead and develop faculty and staff, manage complex priorities, exercise sound judgment, and build productive relationships across a school community.
- Strong commitment to equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Exceptional communication, relationship-building, and organizational skills.
- Ability to successfully complete and maintain a Department of Justice (DOJ) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) fingerprint-based background clearance as a condition of employment.

Preferred

- California Administrative Services Credential or comparable educational leadership credential.
- Leadership experience in an independent school environment.
- Experience leading curriculum development, evaluations, professional development, and organizational change.

LEARN MORE

- [School Website](#)
- [Tartans Thrive](#)
- [Virtual Campus Tour](#)
- [Equity and Inclusion](#)
- [College Matriculation](#)
- [About San Juan Capistrano, California](#)





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:

JOHN FAUBERT

Consultant

john.faubert@carneysandoe.com

KAREN WHITAKER

Senior Consultant

karen.whitaker@carneysandoe.com

The full-time salary range for this position is \$180,000-\$210,000. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors which include years of experience, education background, and expertise.



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