

Spring Conference Programme - Thursday 7 May 2026

PROGRAMME

08.45 - 09.30

Arrival and registration

Coffee and refreshments available amongst the exhibitors

The Lutyens Suite

09.30 - 09.35

Welcome and opening remarks

Speaker: Philip Britton MBE, HMC Chair and Head of Foundation, Bolton School

The Great Hall

09.35 - 10.20

Leadership in a complex and rapidly changing world

Speakers: Matthew Syed, Author

Matthew will explore what great leadership looks like in the world today, emphasising what it takes to be successful. He will focus on the impact of leaders staying humble and curious enough to seek out new perspectives and avoid 'group think', while also showing the conviction needed to act decisively when it matters most. He will look at the impact and influence of AI on leadership and consider how to maximise the benefit of the opportunity it brings. He will also highlight the importance of being bold and embracing failure as a learning opportunity, fostering a mindset and culture that drives continuous improvement and innovation and being prepared for leadership where complexity is the norm and challenges evolve faster than ever.

The Great Hall

10.20 - 11.00

Panel 1: Leadership trends in HMC schools

A chaired panel exploring the evolving landscape of leadership across HMC schools. Members will gain insight into emerging challenges, innovative leadership models, and the strategic priorities shaping the future of independent school leadership.

Panel Speakers:

- Richard Harman, CEO, AGBIS
- Antony Spencer, Chief Executive Officer, The Mill Hill School Foundation
- Heather Styche-Patel, CEO, RSAcademics
- Leigh Webb, CEO, ISC Research

Chair: Lisa Kerr, Principal, George Watson's College

The Great Hall

11.00 - 11.30

Networking and refreshments

Refreshments available amongst the exhibitors

The Lutyens Suite

11.30 - 12.00

Member discussion on the future shape of the sector

Chair: Philip Britton MBE, HMC Chair and Head of Foundation, Bolton School

The Great Hall

12.00 - 12.40

HMC Updates

A fast-paced session in which HMC colleagues provide concise briefings on key projects and priorities. Members will gain a clear overview of current initiatives, emerging developments, and areas of focus across HMC, helping them stay informed about the work shaping the Association's direction.

The Great Hall

12.40 - 12.50

Autumn Conference 2026 Launch

Speaker: Anne Cotton, HMC Chair-Elect and Head, King's College School, Wimbledon

The Great Hall

12.50 - 13.45

Lunch and networking

Lunch available amongst the exhibitors

The Lutyens Suite

Breakouts: CPD seminars

A choice of focused, expert-led seminars offering Members the opportunity to explore specific areas of professional learning and development. Each session provides practical insights, strategies, and examples designed to support leadership development, understanding and enhance practice in Members' own school contexts.

i. Community Campus – Partnership Development and engagement opportunities.

Speaker: Geoff Thompson, Founder & Chair, Youth Charter and HMC Board Member

The Youth Charter's Community Campus is a youth engagement model that celebrates partnerships of sport, art and culture enrichment activity between state and independent schools through a multi-agency approach that delivers Social Coach leadership, mental, physical and emotional health and wellbeing and life resilience. The Community Campus provides an equitable, diverse and inclusive approach.

In this session, HMC Board member and Youth Charter's Chair, Geoff Thompson MBE, will present the initiative and engagement activity with the independent and state schools to date. He will also present the art of the possible and next steps that deliver, not just for the 7%, but for the 100% of children and young people in the independent / state eco-system.

ii. Governance – developing the relationship between the Head and the Board

Speaker: Richard Harman, CEO, AGBIS and George Hartley, Head, The King's School, Chester

A practical CPD session exploring effective governance through the strengthening of the Head-Board partnership. Members will consider approaches to building trust, aligning strategic priorities, and navigating shared responsibilities to support confident, cohesive leadership and sound school stewardship.

iii. School Mergers and Acquisitions – current trends and calls to action

Speaker: Barney Northover, Partner, VWV

An informative session examining the latest patterns in school mergers and acquisitions across the sector. Members will gain insight into the drivers behind current activity, the implications for school leadership, and the practical steps Heads should consider when evaluating partnership, merger, or acquisition opportunities.

iv. Diversity, equity and inclusion – inclusive leadership and staff representation

Speaker: Karl Guest, Head, St Columba's College

A session exploring how inclusive leadership shapes recruitment, retention and staff progression in HMC schools. Members will consider practical strategies to broaden representation, reduce barriers, and foster equitable pathways for leadership development across all staff groups.

v. Pedagogy for the digital age – using AI to enhance teaching and learning

Speaker: Jenny Parkinson-Mills, Director of Digitally Enabled Learning, Warwick Schools Foundation

A session full of practical examples of how AI can be used in and out of the classroom, with applications and ideas to enhance the teaching and learning already happening in classrooms. A deep dive to not just save time for staff, but with the learning and progress of every pupil at the centre – going beyond the often superficial use of AI.

Networking and refreshments

Refreshments available amongst the exhibitors

The Lutyens Suite

15.00 - 15.45

Panel 2: Exploring Global partnerships

A chaired discussion featuring leaders from HMC's international schools. This panel will explore how global partnerships enrich school strategy, broaden educational horizons, and create opportunities for collaboration, cultural exchange, and innovation across borders.

Panel speakers:

- Nigel Brown, Head, The English College in Prague
- Robin Macpherson, Head, Robert Gordon's College
- Nicola Sparrow, School Director, Aiglon College, Switzerland

Chair: Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster, Royal Grammar School, Newcastle upon Tyne

The Great Hall

15.45 - 16.25

Panel 3: Exploring School Contexts within HMC

A chaired panel featuring current Heads from a range of HMC school settings. This session will highlight how different contexts shape leadership approaches, priorities, and decision-making, offering Members a broader understanding of the diversity and shared challenges across HMC schools.

Panel Speakers:

- David Morton, Headmaster, The King's School Gloucester
- Helen Jeys, Head Mistress, Manchester High School for Girls
- Andrew Gordon-Brown, Head, Kingswood School, Bath
- Nick Hammond, Headmaster, The British School of Paris

Chair: Lorraine Earps, Executive Head, The Grange School

The Great Hall

16.25 - 16.30

Closing Remarks

Speaker: Philip Britton MBE, HMC Chair 2025-2026 and Head of Foundation, Bolton School

The Great Hall