

Information 2020

At Serle Court we regard the recruitment and training of able pupils as vital to maintaining our position as a leading chancery commercial set. Our pupils are our tenants of the future, and we know our clients value our strength in depth at all levels in chambers, particularly when building teams for substantial cases.

This leaflet includes information on how to apply for pupillage, what we offer, and insights regarding pupillage and junior tenancy at Serle Court. If you have any further questions and would like to chat to someone here, we would be happy to help. You will find contact details for appropriate people on the back page.

Philip Jones QC
Pupillage Committee Chair

Mini-pupillage

WE ENCOURAGE PROSPECTIVE PUPILS TO UNDERTAKE A MINI-PUPILLAGE WITH US THOUGH THIS IS NOT A PREREQUISITE FOR PUPILLAGE.

Mini-pupillage at Serle Court is designed to be an enjoyable and useful experience. Our mini-pupils experience various aspects of life as a practising barrister, which may include court work, conferences and paperwork. Mini-pupillage is also a valuable opportunity to experience at first hand our informal and friendly atmosphere. Mini-pupillages last for one day and are not assessed or funded. We offer about 30 mini-pupillages each year to individuals who have completed the first year of a law degree or at least one term of the GDL

or equivalent. These are available all year, but tend to be heavily over-subscribed. We therefore ask that applicants who have already completed at least one year of a law degree or one term of the GDL apply as early in the academic year as possible. We will reimburse reasonable travel expenses. Applications for mini-pupillage should be made on a Serle Court application form (available from Christina Allen or our website).

Tenancy at Serle Court

OUR POLICY IS ONE OF CONTINUING PLANNED EXPANSION, AND WE RECRUIT OUR JUNIOR TENANTS EXCLUSIVELY FROM OUR OWN PUPILS.

16 of the last 19 pupils are now tenants. New tenants at Serle Court pay no rent in their first year of practice, and no chambers expenses until their earnings exceed £50,000 per annum. We provide an income guarantee worth up to £120,000 over the first two years of practice.

We work hard but also believe it's important to have a balanced life. Tenants choose their own working hours and approach and our clerks are not slave drivers but work with our barristers to assist them in building the practice they want.

Facilities support

OUR STAFF TEAM, LED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE JOHN PETRIE, IS FIRST CLASS.

Our clerks have considerable clerking experience, and we also have specialist staff to support members with finance, marketing and general administration.

We occupy one of the finest buildings in the Inns. It is a spacious 17th century premises which has undergone extensive refurbishment

to enable us to provide excellent facilities for members and clients.

We have access to the best on-line research material and all our IT facilities are accessible remotely, enabling members to work from home, or indeed any location in the world.

“one of the very best commercial chancery sets”

“offers a variety of skill sets that others can't provide, and houses some of the biggest names at the Bar”

“Serle Court has a very strong intellectual base. Its members are highly intelligent, user-friendly, approachable and supportive”

“a plethora of talented QCs and juniors at all levels of call”

Chambers & Partners 2017/2018

How to apply

SERLE COURT HAS NOW JOINED THE ONLINE PUPILLAGE APPLICATION SCHEME, THE PUPILLAGE GATEWAY. APPLICATIONS MUST BE MADE THROUGH THE PUPILLAGE GATEWAY.

Equality and diversity

SERLE COURT IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER AND IS COMMITTED TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AMONGST ITS STAFF, PUPILS AND MEMBERS. SEVERAL MEMBERS ARE INVOLVED IN SCHEMES TO INCREASE DIVERSITY AT THE BAR. WE ENCOURAGE AND WELCOME APPLICATIONS FROM WOMEN, PEOPLE OF MINORITY ETHNIC ORIGIN AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS CANDIDATES FROM OTHER GROUPS WHICH ARE UNDERREPRESENTED IN THE LEGAL SECTOR.

Further information

PUPILLAGE SECRETARY: DAN MCCOURT FRITZ
MINI-PUPILLAGE SECRETARY: PAUL ADAMS
ADMINISTRATOR: CHRISTINA ALLEN

PUPILLAGE@SERLECOURT.CO.UK

We aim to recruit up to three pupils each year with awards of £65,000 for 12 months (of which up to £22,000 can be drawn down during the BPTC year). We offer:

- An excellent preparation for successful practice
- A genuinely friendly and supportive environment
- The opportunity to learn from some of the leading barristers in their field
- A real prospect of tenancy

What we are looking for

WE ARE INTERESTED IN WELL-ROUNDED CANDIDATES FROM ANY BACKGROUND.

Chambers looks for highly motivated individuals with outstanding intellectual ability, combined with a practical approach, sound judgment, an ability to develop good client relationships and the potential to become excellent advocates.

Serle Court has a reputation for 'consistently high quality' and for having 'responsive and able team members' (Legal 500) and seeks the same qualities in pupils. Chambers generally requires a degree classification of a good 2:1 as a minimum.

Life as a pupil

PUPILLAGE AT SERLE COURT IS A DEMANDING, BUT THOROUGHLY REWARDING EXPERIENCE.

What to expect from chambers

As a modern commercial chancery set, Serle Court fields barristers across the spectrum of commercial and chancery work. Pupils have four supervisors for a three-month period. My supervisors each practised in a different area so that I got to experience the full range of work and find out which areas I wanted to specialise in. Over the pupillage year, the cases I was involved with ranged from shareholder disputes and insolvency proceedings to large-scale commercial contract disputes, from fraud and asset tracing to substantial offshore trust litigation.

Pupils are made to feel very welcome in chambers from day one. As soon as I accepted my offer, I was invited to a celebratory drinks reception, followed by chambers lunches once a term, which allowed me to meet members of chambers and bridge the gap between offers and the start of pupillage.

Chambers is a very supportive environment in which to learn. Supervisors offer feedback on all work as well as being generous with tips, war stories and advice for life at the bar. If I felt I had a particularly silly question, I often quizzed more junior members of chambers who were happy to help. Members of chambers are always ready to share their wisdom over lunch or chambers tea, and the clerks and administrative staff are uniformly helpful and friendly. It was also made very clear to all pupils on day one that we were not in competition with each other for tenancy, which meant that my co-pupils were a valuable source of friendship and support throughout the year.

What is expected of you

The work of a pupil is extremely varied, and much depends on your supervisor's practice area and current caseload. However, there is always a balance between producing your own written work and observing and assisting with your supervisor's cases. A typical day might involve spending the morning working on a draft pleading, whilst fielding points of research for an ongoing case. Then, over to the Rolls Building in the afternoon to observe an application for a freezing injunction. With any luck, court would be finished in time for chambers tea. Pupils are not



expected to work outside of normal business hours, and although there were inevitably some exceptions to that rule, those occasions were a result of my volunteering to get more heavily involved with a case or help with an urgent deadline. Supervisors were always genuinely interested in my opinion and input, and it was gratifying to feel I was contributing towards a case as well as learning.

Although pupils do not practise in the second six, there is plenty of opportunity to observe the full range of advocacy that might be expected of a junior barrister. I frequently saw applications before Registrars and Masters, as well as more extensive hearings, including an 8-day High Court fraud trial and two appeals before the Court of Appeal. Pupils are also encouraged to work with other members of chambers. This was a great way of broadening my exposure to new practice areas and developing working relationships within chambers.

Assessment and the tenancy decision

Serle Court takes a more relaxed approach to assessment than other sets, with the emphasis on ongoing training and feedback with your supervisor rather than numerous formally assessed pieces of work. After each three-month period, pupils have a review with their supervisor to identify areas for improvement, as a result of which I felt on-track and knew what to work on going forward.

Although pupillage is inevitably demanding, everyone involved in the pupillage process made my year as enjoyable and rewarding as I could have hoped, and I felt well prepared to tackle life as a junior tenant.

⊕ SOPHIA HURST,
PUPIL 2015 - 2016

Life as a tenant

MY FIRST YEAR AS A TENANT CONFIRMED WHAT I HOPED WOULD BE THE CASE WHEN I DECIDED TO CHANGE CAREERS AND BECOME A BARRISTER: THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A STANDARD DAY AT THE BAR.

As a junior tenant at a leading commercial chancery set like Serle Court, you might one day be drafting a section of a skeleton argument for your leader on a large piece of litigation in the High Court, and the next be on your feet making an application in the County Court or High Court in your own case.

Personal highlights from my first twelve months included my first appearance on my feet in the High Court, acting for the respondent to an application for a freezing injunction; cross-examining my first witness in a High Court trial; and receiving my first repeat instruction.

Following pupillage, I spent three months on secondment at a firm of solicitors with whom Chambers has an excellent relationship. This opportunity is often available to new tenants and, while there was no pressure on me to take it up, I found the experience invaluable and I have subsequently been instructed by the firm on several interesting cases.

Upon my return to Chambers, I spent the next few months working predominantly on my own cases, typically in the County Court or smaller matters in the High Court. The areas of law which these cases covered are as varied as Chambers' breadth of practice areas, ranging from insolvency to civil fraud, company law to probate, and more general contractual disputes. During that time, I probably appeared in court on average twice a week, with the remainder of my time spent advising in conference or on paperwork, drafting pleadings, skeleton arguments and opinions.

More recently, I have been led by a silk in Chambers at the trial of a high-value probate dispute, and am now working as part of a team of members of Chambers on a large fraud claim, the trial of which took place over twelve weeks in 2017. One of the great advantages of being a junior at Serle

Court is the opportunity to become involved in some of the largest and most high-profile commercial chancery cases of the day, and to learn from more senior members of Chambers.

Whilst I no longer have a pupil supervisor to check over my work, Serle Court is very collegiate and I have found that there is always a member of Chambers ready to lend an ear and offer advice on the various legal, procedural and strategic questions that routinely crop up in junior practice. This is, in my view, one of the real strengths of Serle Court as a set of chambers.

This supportive ethos extends beyond members of Chambers to the clerks and wider staff. The clerks, in particular, are extremely supportive and are on hand to help junior members shape, manage and grow their practices in the direction they wish.

Practice as a junior at Serle Court is demanding and at times high-pressured, but it is also varied, interesting and incredibly rewarding. For my part, I look forward to seeing what the next twelve months bring.



⊕ OLIVER JONES,
TENANT SINCE 2015

What we do

Chancery
Civil Fraud
Commercial Litigation
Company
Insolvency
Offshore
Partnership and LLP
Property
Trusts and Probate