



Cygnus  
Academies Trust

Chief Executive Officer  
Application Pack

*Collaboration*   *Citizenship*   *Sustainability*   *Achievement*



# Chief Executive Officer Application Pack

Cygnus Academies Trust is seeking to appoint a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who will take up the post on 1st September 2023. This pack sets out information about our Trust; key responsibilities of the role; the personal qualities, skills, experience and qualifications required to undertake the role; and the application process.

## Welcome - Message from the Board of Trustees

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Executive Officer of Cygnus Academies Trust. This is a very special role where we are looking for the right person to take forward the Trust's vision, building on the exceptional progress that has been made to date.

We are recruiting a new CEO because our founder CEO, David Lloyd, is retiring. Since the formation of the trust in 2016, David has built the Trust from modest but strong foundations to the thriving Trust of eight primary schools it is today. A key feature of his leadership has been to raise standards across each school whilst recognising the unique nature of each of the communities they serve. Recent successes include the merger with Unity Academy Trust and the transformation of vulnerable schools.

First and foremost, we are looking for an experienced and exceptional leader who has experience in the fields of education, finance and management. We require someone with the vision, leadership and passion to improve educational standards within existing schools whilst taking a considered and measured approach to Trust expansion.

As Chief Executive, you will use your excellent interpersonal skills to build open, transparent and effective relationships with Headteachers, Governing Committees and the communities the Trust serves. You will have the support of a diverse Trustee Board with experience from a range of professions. Together with the Trustees you will develop the strategy, implement the Trust development plan and as Accounting Officer manage the organisation's financial and operational performance.

It is an exciting time to be part of Cygnus so if you are confident that you have the skills, drive and vision to become our next CEO, we sincerely hope that you will apply.

We look forward to meeting you.

**Larissa Cesar**  
Chair of Trustees



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# About Cygnus Academies Trust

Cygnus Academies Trust is a growing group of eight friendly, like-minded primary schools that we nurture, challenge and support to be the best that we can be. Everyone in our Trust is our responsibility and we value how unique every individual and school is.

We provide the tools, strategies and knowhow to enable everyone to flourish. Our vision is to give everyone in our Trust, irrespective of background, the learning and experience needed to realise their ambition.

We realise that ambition through:

## Collaboration

- Build mutual respect, integrity and moral purpose, school to school partnerships and support
- Secure outward facing partnership, working with parents, staff and the community
- Demonstrating and modelling best practice leadership
- Empowering Leaders at all levels to develop the necessary leadership knowledge and skills to drive high quality learning
- Access to pedagogy and research to improve teaching and learning through high quality professional development

## Citizenship

- Keeping children safe, creating a strong culture and moral purpose
- Setting high aspirations and attitudes to learning for pupils – local, national, and global
- Ensure proactiveness and positive attitudes

## Sustainability

- Effective recruitment and retention, attracting only the very best talent
- Build schools to sustain pupil numbers, efficiencies and effectiveness
- Alignment of systems that ensures a consistent approach with expert support from skilled members of staff to reduce workload
- Development of individual career pathways for all staff
- Exposure to high quality practice, improving provision for all staff

## Achievement

- Set high standards and challenge to secure outcomes
- Promote wider experiences, quality CPD and teaching and learning
- Build staff progression and innovation
- Promoting high quality achievement through social mobility, enhancing aspiration

and ambition for all

- Setting high aspiration and dedication to excellent teaching, learning and education.

## Strategy

Central to the Trust's strategy is knowing our schools well and maintaining their unique identity. This is achieved through our Shared Services model which includes Education, Finance and Operational support.

The Education Team support and challenge leaders on a weekly basis to be highly effective. This is further enhanced through collaboration and tailored CPD.

Finance and Operational support aims to enable Headteachers to focus the majority of their time on teaching and learning.

Strong relationships are essential in making this model work which in turn drives our measured approach to growth.

Our optimum size is large enough to enjoy a rich talent pool and economies of scale, but small enough to maintain strong relationships.





## The Journey So Far

Cygnus Academies Trust was established in 2016 as a Multi Academy Trust, with sponsor status. Since then the Trust has extended to include eight primary schools, serving vibrant and diverse communities across South East London, Dartford and Tonbridge.

The track record of school improvement is strong, with the Trust often approached by the DfE, local authorities or governing bodies to sponsor vulnerable schools

GAG Pooling and centralisation of business functions was introduced in 2020 allowing funds to be distributed fairly to ensure that every child across the Trust receives the best educational offer possible.

Establishing our Shared Services team provided the infrastructure to facilitate our growth strategy and as a result, the Trust has developed high quality educational and operational services which free up school leadership teams to focus on teaching and learning. The Trust is responsible for c£19 million of public funding, 3300 children and 450 staff.

## The Future

Having laid strong foundations and established a positive reputation in the local area, Cygnus Academies Trust is well-equipped to face the challenges ahead. These include:

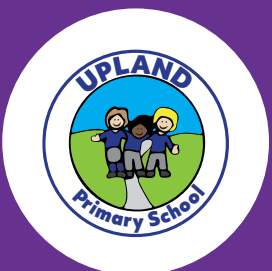
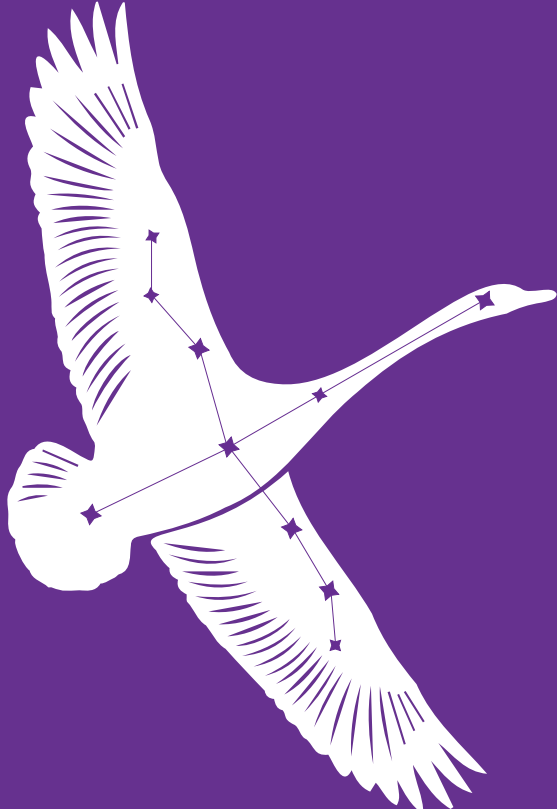
- Maintaining consistently high standards across Cygnus Academies Trust both educational and operational;
- Supporting our communities to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Ensuring that Cygnus Academies Trust is promoting equality, diversity and inclusion through ensuring that every individual has equal opportunities regardless of their background, identity or experience;
- Ensuring resources are shared equitably across the organisation and that their distribution is responsive to need;

Working with our talented Executive Team, supported and challenged by a committed and skilled Board of Trustees, the CEO will be charged with leading Cygnus on the next stage of our exciting journey.

More information about Cygnus Academies Trust can be found at [www.cygnus.org.uk](http://www.cygnus.org.uk)



# Our Schools





## CEO Job Description

### Core Responsibilities

Academy Trusts are education charities that run schools to give children a better future. Every Trust has a single legal and moral purpose: to advance education for the public benefit.

The CEO is the Trust's strategic leader, responsible for upholding and articulating the vision, values and ethos of the Trust and for inspiring and empowering others to deliver the Trust's strategic aims. The CEO is accountable for both the educational and financial performance of the Trust.

There are eight interlinked areas of an Academy Trust CEO's core responsibilities. These are:

- Strategic leadership - Trust values, culture and strategy
- Quality of Education
- Finance, sustainability and compliance
- People strategy
- Governance and accountability
- System leadership and civic responsibility
- Accounting Officer Responsibilities
- Working with Trustees

### Strategic leadership

- Establish and sustain the Trust's values, culture, and strategic direction in partnership with the Trust Board
- Provide leadership that enables

the Trust to achieve its strategic objectives and secure its future sustainability

- Create a safe, inclusive and positive culture across the Trust and its schools
- Develop operational objectives that are appropriate, deliverable and aligned to securing a sustainable future through the Trust's strategic direction
- Enable the Trust's organisational design and operational systems to meet its current and future requirements and manage change effectively

### Quality of Education

- Tackle educational inequality, upholding and securing ambitious educational and behavioural standards for all pupils
- Promote further support for the most disadvantaged and those with additional and special educational needs and disabilities within a safe and secure environment
- Enable the Trust to establish and sustain a broad, rich and coherent curriculum entitlement for all pupils, supported by effective curricular leadership and delivered through high quality teaching in all its schools
- Ensure the Trust has high quality, expert teaching in all the Trust's schools, built on an evidence-informed understanding of effective teaching and how pupils learn

- Ensure that priority areas for improvement are identified
- Enable the Trust and its schools to engage with appropriate evidence-based strategies for improvement and ensure their effective implementation

### Finance, sustainability and compliance

- Ensure that sound financial management systems are in place
- Prioritise and allocate financial resources appropriately, ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and probity in the use of public funds
- Ensure rigorous approaches to identifying, managing and mitigating risk
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of the Trust and its schools through effective financial and estates management
- Direct the Trust's activities to achieve the most efficient, effective and sustainable provision of education to the highest quality, prioritising and making the most effective use of the resources available.
- Ensure the organisation complies with all statutory and legal requirements including safeguarding and health and safety

## People strategy

- Lead and effectively manage the activities and performance of the Trust's executive team
- Enable a people strategy that identifies talent, supports and develops all staff and sustains a culture of staff well-being and high staff professionalism
- Ensure the Trust has high quality employment practices that promote equality, diversity and inclusion, including ethical practices of recruitment and retention of staff
- Ensure staff have access to high quality professional development, aligned to balance organisational and individual needs
- Ensure the Trust has a strong talent management and succession planning programmes across all areas of the organisation's work

## Accountability and Governance

- Promote a culture of accountability that is recognised and accepted as an essential element of improvement at all levels and across all aspects of the Trust's work
- Understand the role of relevant regulatory bodies and ensure the Trust and its schools respond to their requirements
- Understand and welcome the role of effective Trust governance, upholding the obligation to give account and recognising that Trust Boards are ultimately responsible and accountable for the Trust's work
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with the Trust Board recognising their key role in holding the CEO and executive team to account
- Ensure the Trust Board receives quality information in the level of detail needed to make informed decisions and fulfil its functions and legal obligations
- Ensure positive communications that promote the Trust and its work, and present the Trust effectively when dealing with the media

## System leadership and civic responsibility

- Promote and enable ways in which the Trust's schools and their local governing committees engage meaningfully with their communities and are responsive and accountable to them
- In line with the Trust's civic role, work with civic partners and stakeholders in the local area, region and/or nationally to contribute to the Public Good, ensuring the value of the child and coherent public service for children and families
- Foster and engage in the collective leadership of the sector building strong local systems to address disadvantage and improve the quality of education for all pupils
- Exert external influence on behalf of the Trust by active engagement with sector organisations, regulators, policy makers, local and national government, industry and other partners

- Give public assurance of high standards of probity

## Accounting Officer Responsibilities

- Give assurance (to Parliament and the public) of high standards of probity in the management of public funds, particularly regularity, propriety and value for money
- Adhering to the Seven Principles of Public Life
- Having oversight of financial transactions (under Trustees' control, measures to prevent losses or misuse, multi-person operation of accounts and records, accurate accounting records)
- Completing annual statement on regularity, propriety and compliance
- Taking personal responsibility for assuring compliance to the Board
- Advising on Board intent or action if incompatible with the articles, funding agreement or handbook
- Notify the ESFA if they consider the Board is in breach of the articles, funding agreement or handbook

## Working with Trustees

CEOs work closely with their Trust Board, particularly the Chair. CEOs will recognise the responsibilities and statutory duties of Trustees and that the CEO operates under the oversight and direction of the Board of Trustees.

The Academy Trust Handbook indicates that Trustees must comply with the Trust's charitable objects, with company and charitable law and with their contractual obligations under the funding agreement. As an organisation the Trust has a range of obligations under current legislation and statutory guidance.

This includes matters such as safeguarding, health and safety and estates management. The Academy Trust Handbook states that ensuring strong governance in these areas will be a key priority for the Board. The Academy Trust Handbook indicates that Trustees should focus on three core functions:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- overseeing and ensuring effective financial performance
- CEOs will recognise that in fulfilling these core functions

Trust Boards are ultimately responsible for approving and monitoring certain aspects of a Trust's work including the Trust's vision and strategy.

# CEO Person Specification

## Key Accountabilities

## Attributes & Person Specification

### Qualifications & Training

- Educated to degree level.
- Evidence of continuous professional development or training in preparation for leadership
- Hold, or working towards, a leadership qualification e.g., MBA, NPQH, NPQEL

### Strategic Business & Financial Planning

- Successful track record of strategic financial planning and resource management
- Secure knowledge of financial management
- Knowledge of developing central operational support

### Sustainable Growth & Engagement

- Experience of building successful partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders
- Flexible and resilient attitude with an ability to embrace change and spot opportunities.
- Commitment to wider system leadership, engaging with and supporting external partners.

### Leadership & Management

- Ability to provide motivational leadership and direction.
- Collaborative leadership style – a team player
- Champion a culture which is inclusive, supportive, promotes diversity and equality, and focuses on continuous improvement.
- Commitment to the Trust's values, inspire, respect, and engage others, acting as a strong visible presence.
- Ability to empower senior leaders within the Trust through appropriate delegation of authority, supporting skills development and encouraging cross-Trust working.
- Ability to critically evaluate situations and take a pragmatic approach to solving problems.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, with the ability to communicate and negotiate effectively with a range of stakeholders and speak confidently in public.

### School Improvement

- Ability to develop and lead a Trust-wide improvement strategy.
- Ability to negotiate, as required, the commissioning of external support from a range of providers.
- Commitment to improving the life chances of all children and pupil outcomes.

### Compliance & Quality Insurance

- Comprehensive understanding of the Trust's compliance and safeguarding responsibilities in line with relevant regulations
- Ability to embed across the Trust clear quality assurance systems that drive consistency and improvement in performance.
- Committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

# How to Apply

Cygnus Academies Trust seeks to identify the widest possible field of suitable candidates and to assist the candidates in understanding the requirements of the role.

Applicants should complete the online application form at [cygnus.org.uk/ceo](https://cygnus.org.uk/ceo) outlining how your skills and experience would make you suitable for this role. Please ensure that you refer to the competencies outlined in the Job Description and Person Specification in your application.

Visits to the Trust are encouraged; should you want to arrange a visit, discuss the role in more detail, or discuss any accessibility requirements, please contact Jenny Baker our HR Manager who will be happy to help:

[jenny.baker@cygnus.org.uk](mailto:jenny.baker@cygnus.org.uk) or 01322 224 201

Shortlisted candidates will be contacted with details of the interview process. If you have not heard from us within two weeks of the closing date, please assume your application has been unsuccessful.

## Safer recruitment

The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expect all staff to share this commitment. In line with Safer Recruitment guidelines, CVs will not be accepted, and you are required to complete the application in full giving details of all employment, training and gaps in employment. Cygnus Academies Trust reserves the right to reject incomplete application forms and any inconsistencies or anomalies will be explored at, or prior to, interview.

Any offer of employment is subject to pre-employment checks including a satisfactory 'Enhanced with Barred List Check' through the Disclosure and Barring Service.

We will require two satisfactory references; one of which must be your line manager in your present or most recent employment. References will be requested prior to interview so please ensure that your referees are available to provide a reference.

## Equal Opportunities

Cygnus Academies Trust is an equal opportunities employer committed to diversity and inclusion who welcomes applications from all sectors of the community.

All people who work and study at our Trust have the right to be respected and valued within a safe and secure environment and not to be discriminated against on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

