



Candidate Information Pack

Chief Executive Officer



A specialist Trust of SEND schools, based in Essex



Welcome to the SEAX Trust

Dear Candidate,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank you for your interest in this key leadership position. It is an exciting opportunity to join The SEAX Trust during a crucial phase of its strategic development and growth.

With a strong and respected voice across the education sector, the SEAX Trust is a proactive organisation, dedicated to discovering the most effective ways to support the differing and evolving needs of our pupils. Every endeavour at the Trust is anchored in our fundamental responsibility to do our absolute best for the pupils in our five Essex-based special schools; pupils whose formative years and future opportunities are placed in our hands.

We are seeking a dynamic and visionary leader with a strong understanding of education, finance and operations. They will work with a team of skilled and supportive staff and Trustees to manage the opportunities and risks of a growing MAT, whilst maintaining our reputation for excellence. The successful candidate will share and be committed to the vision that our Trust . . .

- puts no limits on what young people can achieve; creates opportunities and meets individual needs so that our young people can live rich and fulfilled lives*
- values staff and commits to providing an environment which creates opportunities for professional growth and development*
- has the courage and drive to challenge and champion change to enable equal opportunity and equity for all*
- influences, respects, listens and acts, and in turn is known as a voice to listen to, act upon and respect*

I trust this candidate pack provides a clear and comprehensive overview of the role and its potential to make a meaningful contribution to the field of SEND education. I welcome applications from experienced and transformational leaders who are eager to seize the opportunity to shape the future of a forward-thinking group of good and outstanding schools, whilst remaining committed to the Trust's core purpose: providing excellent education and unwavering support for every one of our pupils.

Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss the role further.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Lockyer
Chair of Trustees

The SEAX Trust

The SEAX Trust is a partnership of special school academies which span Essex from Brentwood to Colchester. The Trust was formally established in September 2025 and has grown to become the largest special school multi-academy trust working solely within Essex. We believe in the power of collaboration to unlock every child's potential and have a 'no limits' approach to what we can offer young people and to what they can achieve. Our network of five academies, and our close ties with others, fosters a supportive learning environment where curiosity thrives, diversity is celebrated and resilience is built.

We are working closely with the Mid Essex SCITT team to provide an exciting postgraduate ITT offer to students who wish to teach in special schools. The first cohort will begin their training in September 2025. We see this as a great opportunity to influence the training of this cohort and to ensure a regular supply of well-trained and dedicated new teachers for our own schools, and other special schools across Essex and beyond.

The SEAX Trust now consists of over 700 pupils, approximately 300 staff and an annual income of over £20 million. The relatively small size of the Trust allows extensive joint working to take place and provides huge opportunities for staff and students alike. A key focus of our future plans is to grow, broaden our influence, and strengthen our commitment to our students and their families.

We are dedicated to providing outstanding educational experiences by nurturing our exceptional staff and fostering partnerships with the local authority, other Trusts and the DfE, who hold the work of the Trust in high regard. We are committed to professional development for all our staff which ensures that we follow best practice and remain at the forefront of educational innovation. Driven by our collaborative approach and absolute commitment to preparing young people for a good life beyond education, we continue to grow, innovate and develop, keeping the evolving needs of our young people at the heart of everything we do.



Our Academies

The SEAX Trust is a multi academy trust of five academies, each with their unique style and specialism. Our schools are located across Essex, following the A12 corridor from Brentwood through Chelmsford to Langham, just north of Colchester.

Grove House School

Brentwood

Grove House School was the first specialist school for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties (**SLCN**) to open in the eastern region. It opened in September 2015 as a Free School and is based on a 'best practice' model, staffed by a collaborative team of teachers, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists.



Kingswode Hoe School

Colchester

Kingswode Hoe School is a special school catering for pupils between the ages of 5 and 16 years with moderate learning difficulties (**MLD**). It joined the Trust in September 2017.



Langham Oaks School

Langham, north of Colchester

Langham Oaks provides places for boys between the ages of 10 and 16 years with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (**SEMH**). The school has a facility for boarding and joined SEAX in April 2015.



The Hawthorns School

Chelmsford

The Hawthorns opened in January 2023 in temporary accommodation, then moved into its new, purpose-built building in Chelmsford in March 2025. The school caters for pupils with **Autism** and other complex needs, and will shortly be offering a number of residential places.



Thriftwood School and College

Chelmsford

Thriftwood School, situated in the village of Galleywood two miles south of Chelmsford, opened in November 1975 as a purpose-built provision for pupils from the age of five with moderate learning difficulties (**MLD**) and additional complex needs. Thriftwood College provides education for MLD students aged 14-19 and is based in the Melbourne area of Chelmsford.



The Central Team

The SEAX Trust Office is based at Grove House School in Brentwood, where the CEO leads a central team of nine staff.

The location qualifies for Fringe Area Allowance and has excellent transport links. The office is less than five minutes' drive from both the M25 and the A12 and is within walking distance of Shenfield and Brentwood mainline stations, with links into London Liverpool Street and London Paddington via the Elizabeth Line. The role is accessible whether living in London, Essex, Suffolk or Hertfordshire and a relocation package would be available for the right candidate.



Ruth Sturdy
CEO



Kim McWilliam
Director of Education



Ruth Bradbury
Interim CFOO



Kate Stannard
Director of HR



Catherine Burnside
Director of Governance
and Compliance



Irina Brown
Director of Finance
and Procurement



Mike Bevan
Estates Manager



Darren Mussenden
Communications Manager



Mikaela Weller
PA & HR Admin



Jana Kemal
Finance Assistant

The Work of the Trust

Strategic Direction

We are a Trust with bold ambitions for the futures of our young people and their families.



Our Seven Key Drivers

1. Ensuring an excellent education with a focus on meeting individual needs, and where no limits are placed on achievement.
2. Young people are prepared for the future; for meaningful and suitable employment, self-advocacy and independent living
3. Leadership at all levels including governance supports our academies and challenges them to better meet the needs of our children and young people
4. Investing in our staff means that they are well-equipped and passionate about providing the very best for all our young people
5. Providing a safe, sustainable and stimulating environment in which we push the boundaries of what is possible through harnessing the power of edtech
6. Collaboration and sharing are central to our belief that we all learn from each other

Our recent developments have included:

- The opening of a new free school: The Hawthorns, in Chelmsford
- Significant expansion of current provision including 30 new places at Thriftwood School and College and a planned satellite provision in Burnham for September 2026
- The possibility of new schools joining the Trust following requests from the DfE with due diligence currently underway
- Being asked to take on the role of a RISE school co-ordinator with access to significant funds to bring about school improvement
- Significant investment in staff, including access to National College training and NPQ courses in all areas, with significant uptake across the schools and central team
- CEO being a member of Challenge Partners' SEND Steering group

The Work of the Trust

School Improvement

Our school improvement team works in close partnership with our schools to ensure all pupils have access to a high-quality education. By using research-led approaches, they help to raise achievement, strengthen safeguarding and drive continuous improvement across all areas of school performance.



Trust level executive directors provide strategic leadership for a wide range of school improvement areas including:

- Safeguarding
- Teaching and Learning
- Curriculum and Assessment
- IT
- Finance
- Estate Management
- Governance and compliance
- HR
- Leadership Development and Professional Learning



School Improvement Meetings

Teams within the Trust meet with varying frequency, according to the needs of their particular areas of development

- Headteacher Group meetings
- Fortnightly Trust Executive Team meetings
- Termly 'Team around the school' meetings
- Termly CEO and Headteacher meetings
- DSL meetings
- Cross trust collaborative groups in a range of subject areas:
 - Curriculum teams
 - Business & Finance
 - Data Protection
 - HR
 - Estates
 - Data Protection
 - Staff Wellbeing
 - Equality and Diversity

Teaching and Learning strategy

Our Teaching and Learning strategy is at the heart of the school improvement work in all of our schools. It delivers our mission, vision and aims through our rich curricula offer which provides a wide range of opportunities for our young people. We ensure that every young person is given the opportunity to achieve academically. Equally important is the development of social communication skills and self-belief, which will lead to them being active participants in the world beyond education. All our schools deliver a curriculum that is aligned with the SEAX curriculum statement.

All our schools have a sequenced curriculum which has been designed to develop knowledge and skills progressively and is tailored to the needs of our young people.

The Work of the Trust

Our Staff Team

We have an incredibly stable and committed team of staff in all of our schools, and as a trust, we work hard to ensure they feel supported and valued.

The Trust's approach to people development is proactive and ever-evolving. Recent initiatives include:

- Access to National College training and development programmes
- Encouragement to attend NPQ courses in all areas
- Education Mutual for all staff with access to 24/7 GP service, free physio sessions, occupational health referrals and more
- The development of video-based training using Iris Connect
- An annual conference with high quality speakers as well as the sharing of the excellent practice across the Trust
- A coordinated approach to training which has shared principles, but is linked to each school's development needs
- Supportive and developmental meetings for key teams across the Trust, including Headteachers, HR, Finance, Safeguarding and Professional Development
- The development of a staff 'curriculum offer'
- A 'career pathway' approach
- Staff swaps and coaching



What do our staff say?



The supportive atmosphere makes it a joy to come to work

Every day presents a new opportunity to make a difference

I feel completely valued & heard which is so rare

The positive impact we have on our students' lives is deeply fulfilling

There is a genuine sense of care for staff wellbeing & personal growth

The positive impact we have on our students' lives is deeply fulfilling

The team spirit here is incredible. We all pull together for our students.

I've grown so much professionally thanks to the development opportunities on offer

We recognise that a diverse workforce brings a richness of knowledge and skills, therefore we strongly encourage applications from minority groups



The Work of the Trust

Governance

Our governance structure consists of Members, Trustees and Local Governance Groups. All are essential to the effective running of the Trust and we greatly value their commitment and service as volunteers.



We have five members (details on the SEAX Trust Website) who are akin to shareholders. They meet annually at the annual general meeting and take an 'eyes on, hands off' approach to their role.

We have eight trustees who meet six times a year. They hold the ultimate responsibility for every major decision taken by the Trust and are accountable in law for this. The board delegates many of its duties to the CEO and Board committees to ensure the effective management of operational matters. The main role of the Trustees is setting the strategic direction of the Trust, defining a clear vision and ethos and holding the CEO to account.

The Trust believes in strong local governance, where there is a focus on the quality of education in each school, and engagement with local stakeholders. Local Governance Groups meet three times a year, and as committees of the Board, feed information up to Board meetings.

The Work of the Trust

Finance

The Trust maintains a robust and stable financial position and is consistently recognised for its sound financial management during annual audits and reviews. The Trust's financial strategy ensures that its financial resources are used in a way that supports the achievement of its overall goals.

In order to achieve this, we:

- have a sustainable business model which ensures high quality education for all of our young people
- have good governance and compliance, so that trustees can monitor the trust's financial health
- provide transparent information to stakeholders regarding financial performance and how we are using our resources
- make informed decisions by tracking our academies' financial performance over time, benchmarking spend against other schools, and using this data to identify areas where efficiencies can be made and value for money can be ensured
- ensure that purchasing decisions are efficient, effective and economic, and that efficiencies do not lead to a reduction in quality of provision
- maintain adequate reserves (5-8% of revenue) to support our financial stability and protect our ability to deliver high-quality education.
- make decisions that reflect and align with the trust's appetite for risk

