



Candidate Pack

Director of
Education



PONTERFRACT
ACADEMIES TRUST



Welcome From our CEO

Thank you for your interest in the new role of Director of Education at Pontefract Academies Trust.

Pontefract Academies Trust is a cross-phase Multi-Academy Trust of nine schools. Currently, our schools are located within Pontefract and South Kirkby, with pupils drawn from the local community, including different catchment areas.

Founded in 2013, the Trust has moved forward at some pace since 2018. The turnaround in the performance of all our schools and the development of a culturally aligned organisation has seen the Trust reputation grow locally and regionally. The Trust is financially solid and sustainable. The Trust is external facing and works with local and national partners, as well as engaging in Department for Education school improvement work with schools in West and South Yorkshire.

Within this brochure, you will find more information about the Trust, our vision for education, and details about this new role. As Director of Education, you will be joining the Trust at a critical time in our development, as we continue to improve educational outcomes for our pupils and seek to challenge ourselves and push the boundaries of what it means to be an inclusive education provider running schools in 21st Century Britain.

Both our Primary Director of School Improvement and Secondary Director of School Improvement will be stepping into new roles outside of the Trust later this year. Our Primary Director will be advancing his career at the end of March, while our Secondary Director will be taking on a new role at the end of June. As a result, we are taking the opportunity to review and enhance our executive leadership structure. We have recently internally appointed two exceptional executive primary headteachers, who will drive the continued success and improvement of our high performing primary schools. This strategic move has paved the way for the creation of a newly formed position, Director of Education. The Trust is in a very strong place; back in 2018 the Trust was the 11th worst academy trust for key stage two combined outcomes and one of the secondary schools was in special measures. Our primary outcomes at Key Stage 2 now sit some 27% above the national average, with five out of the seven being in the top 5% in the country for combined outcomes. Our secondary schools have equally seen significant progress in recent years sitting well above national average with successful visits from Ofsted in 2024 and 2022.

Reading the above, you may think there is no heavy lifting to be done. Whilst it is true to say the last five or six years have seen a planned cultural change programme take shape and reap rewards, there is much further to go over the next five years to make sure all our children access a continuously great education. We all appreciate that the external environment is tough, especially in the medium term, however, the challenge remains as to how we can deliver an even better deal. Our mission is clear and is as relevant today as back in 2018, however, building on our strengths, we have the chance to decide what we will do in delivering our mission and looking at what type of impact we want to have. The Director of Education will play a pivotal role in leading and shaping the educational direction across our Trust, taking responsibility for driving excellence in all aspects of educational performance.

We are looking to onboard a real team player. Someone who can influence, is collaborative, and who works well with colleagues at all levels. As a Trust, we are keen to encourage our leaders to take ownership intellectually when solving problems and addressing challenges. As such, candidates will recognise that excellent judgment is an important attribute in the role, as is the ability to develop other people so that ownership amongst leaders becomes self-sustaining. Being able to build on our effective systems and practices, but have the flair to innovate and take aspects of our provision to the next level presents a great opportunity for the right person.

There remains much to do to realise our vision, but we are motivated by the challenge and opportunity that lies ahead of us. We wish to appoint positive people who want to make a difference. We want to hear from flexible people who, with 100% backing and support, will get fully involved with driving forward our strategy. As a Trust with a great family of schools serving Pontefract and South Kirkby, we are proud of the work we do. The moral dimension drives us.

We look forward to hearing from you and exploring your future with us through our selection process.

Best wishes,

Julian Appleyard OBE
CEO

Our Guiding Principles.

Our guiding principles set the standards for our behaviours and attitudes within the Trust.

Our guiding principles are important because they shape our decision making and how we carry out our daily work. Although aspects of the Trust and its schools may change over time, our guiding principles keep us anchored to the important values that we embody.



Our people matter.

We know that our people make a difference to the lives of our 3-16 year olds. We want to make our schools places where great teachers want to teach, lead and build a career. Investment in the recruitment, development and retention of the best people is a top priority.

We aim to provide professional work environments where our people have the support and tools to do a great job and push our children and young people to scale new heights in a safe and secure environment.



Excellence as standard.

We set high standards. "Good enough" is simply not. We do not accept second best from our pupils or ourselves. The Trust aims to be a highly reliable school improvement organisation that is disciplined in its approach to improving performance. A Trust with clear plans and simple and precisely executed systems that not only develop and sustain excellent performance, but never stifle individual flair.



Pupils come first.

Our schools are run for the benefit of children and young people, not the ease of adults. Their achievement comes first and staff in schools and the central Trust office work to this end. The Trust aims to keep low priority tasks away from front line teachers and leaders so that they can focus explicitly on our core business of teaching and learning.

Vision.

Where every child and young person makes outstanding progress.

Mission.

Running top-quality, high-achieving schools that give our children and young people the chance in life they deserve.



Stronger as one.

We take collective responsibility for each other and the results of all of our children and young people. We enjoy sharing our success as a Trust while recognising the strengths of individuals and each school. To this end, collective accountability is rooted in a "if one fails we all fail" mentality.

As a family of schools we collaborate with each other, challenge each other and share best practice. We do not let competition get in the way of our desire to get the best outcomes for all.



Achievement without excuses.

We have an unwavering focus on achievement. This is paramount so that all of our children and young people enjoy greater life chances. We take responsibility for ensuring that they succeed. We own our own performance and do not rest on our laurels or seek to blame others.

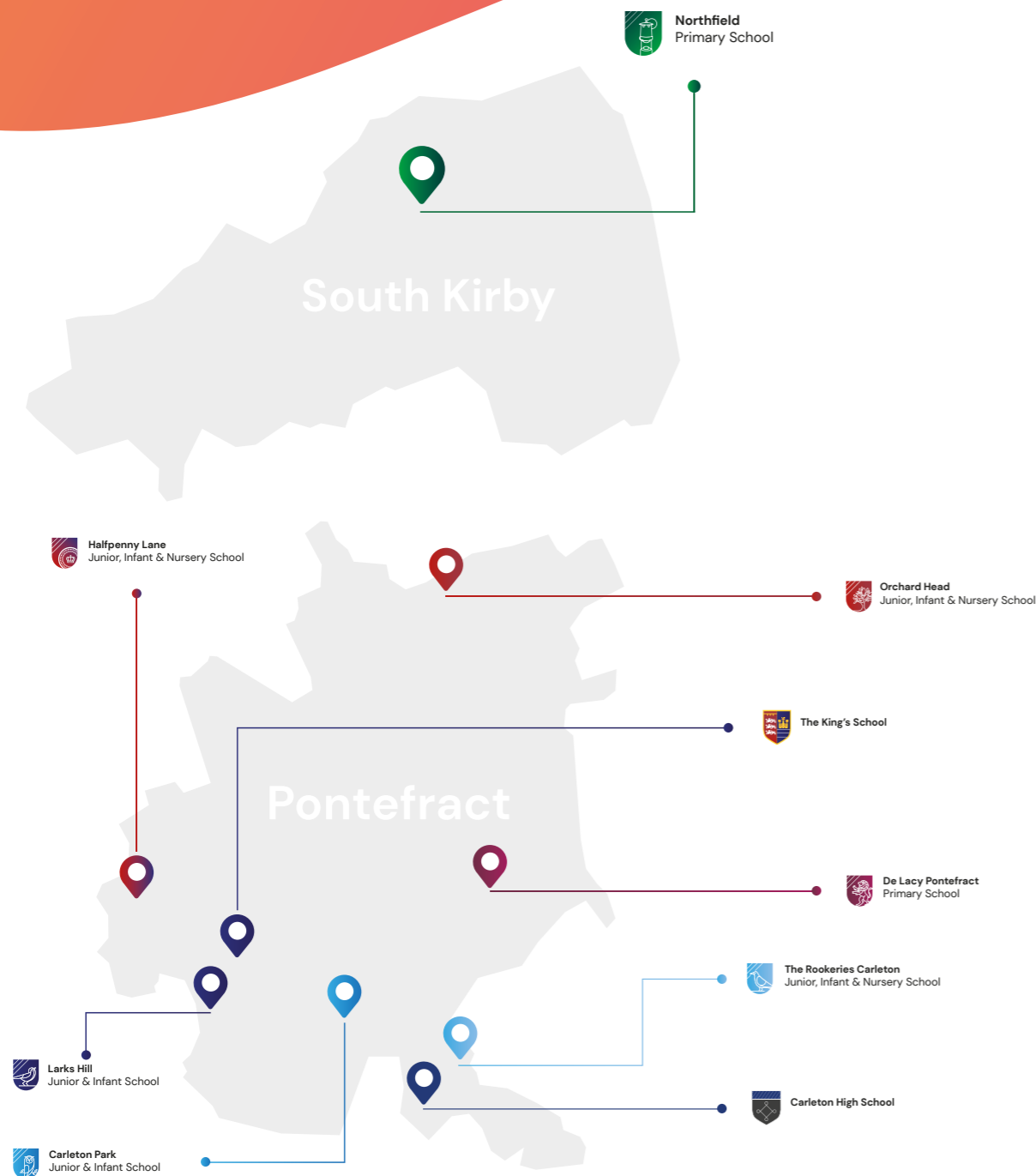


Our Family of Schools.

Serving our community.

Our schools work collaboratively as one entity to raise educational standards for our pupils and local communities. As an education charity we strive to give all our children and young people a better future. To us, a better future for our young people means a rounded education. We want our pupils who leave us at sixteen to be well prepared with the qualifications and experiences that will allow them to thrive in modern Britain.

We are very proud to be a locality based trust. We have nine schools and a central office all within eight miles. However, the Trust is not the central office or a school building; the Trust is every pupil, parent, carer, colleague, governor, trustee associated with and belonging to our family of schools. The shared sense of purpose in making a real difference to the communities we serve is what drives us. We know that our schools are at the centre of the communities they serve and we take our civic responsibility very seriously.



How we Develop our Strategy.

Our approach to developing a strategy at Pontefract Academies Trust is influenced by the work of Richard Rumelt, one of the world's most influential thinkers on strategy development.

We approach our strategy as problem solving. Leaders across the Trust and schools look at the issues, problems and obstacles of where our schools currently are and what we want to achieve for the pupils and communities we serve.

Once leaders have diagnosed challenges we face as a group of schools, we focus the way forward by identifying the ones that are most critical and addressable.

As a result, we are then able to focus on these issues and not spread resources or ourselves too thinly. Our approach simply means that we try to put the biggest challenge we face at the heart of our Trust strategy, we then focus in on that and avoid distractions.



Identify our most important challenges.

Which of our challenges are the most critical and addressable?

Focus our energy and resources and do not spread ourselves too thin.



Diagnosis

The problem we are trying to solve. What are we trying to overcome?



Strategy

Our overall high level approaches. How we deal with the challenge.



Coherent actions

We are going to focus on doing these things. Our co-ordinated steps to carry out the strategy.

"At the core, **strategy is about focus**, and most complex organisations don't focus their resources. Instead, they pursue multiple goals at once, not concentrating enough resources to achieve a breakthrough in any of them."

— Richard P. Rumelt

Our Strategy on a Page.

The outcome of our strategy will further enhance the high-performance and quality provision that exists across our schools, whilst allowing us to grow the Trust, but without compromising the success of our current family of schools.

Vision

Where we want to get to.

Where every child and young person makes outstanding progress

Our guiding principles

Set the standards for our behaviours and attitudes within the Trust.

Our people matter Achievement without excuses Pupils come first Excellence as standard Stronger as one

Priorities

Tackling our biggest challenges.

Social justice and closing the disadvantage gap
 Teacher development
 Attendance
 Curriculum
 Reading
 Family engagement

People and organisational development
 Our culture and ways of working
 Attracting and growing talent
 Development, leadership & coaching
 Performance & reward
 Employee health and well-being

Coherent actions

Focused on our priorities.

The co-ordinated steps and tasks to carry out the strategy operationally owned by Trust leaders.

Enablers

What supports our priorities.

Financial sustainability Estates Technology
 Communications & engagement Governance Civic & social responsibility

How we Measure Success.

As an educational charity we have a single legal and moral purpose, and that is to advance education for public benefit. Like all organisations, we have a range of performance indicators and measures on which we are judged and how we evaluate ourselves. We judge ourselves by how well all of our pupils achieve their potential, but the real test is how our most vulnerable pupils succeed in our primary and secondary schools.

As an organisation that has a focus on continuous improvement, we look to uncover what is working and where we need to improve. Leaders look at what needs refining, or even changing, so that we can be sure we are making progress towards our priorities. We acknowledge that academic outcomes need to be part of how we judge what we have achieved. However, if we are to make the biggest difference, our success will not only be measured by examination performance, but also on the wider enrichment experience that we provide to each individual child. We want our children to leave us at sixteen as great citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

Leaders across the Trust are held accountable for performance through our Trust Board. Trustees and the various sub-committees receive structured evaluations of the key elements of the strategy, including quantitative and qualitative KPIs. Our School Performance Review Boards (local governors) are made up of and chaired by people from the local community. These boards closely track the evaluation of each individual school performance.

Measuring Success Against Our Strategy

Social Justice and Closing the Disadvantage Gap

We understand the importance of measuring and evaluating ourselves against the full range of educational key performance indicators.

- These include:
- Disadvantaged pupil performance
 - Academic attainment
 - Pupil progress

Performance in our primary schools being at or above the expected national standards in reading, writing and maths for 11 year olds, as well as Year 1 Phonics screening tests being above the national average.

In our secondary schools, we judge our success on the delivery of pupil outcomes that place our schools to be consistently placed in the top 10% nationally for progress. As well as comparing attendance and behaviour, NEET (not in employment, education and training) indicators against national benchmarks.

We also ensure that all schools are subject to annual external safeguarding and SEND reviews to benchmark against best practice and provide external checks and balances. In terms of family engagement, we measure qualitative and quantitative information from parental surveys.

People and Organisational Development

We measure our success through a range of people metrics, including, but not exhaustively:

- Percentage of roles filled by internal promotion
- Staff participation in individual performance and development conversations
- Staff absence data
- Percentage of leaders engaged in our development programmes
- Well recognised and defined career pathways for support staff and teachers
- Appropriate reductions in agency staff and staff turnover
- Positive staff engagement surveys and positive 360 degree style evaluations

Measuring Success Against Our Enabling Plans

Each of our enabling plans are evaluated against a range of qualitative and quantitative performance metrics.

Director of Education

Role Overview

The Director of Education is a new role within the Pontefract Academies Trust family of schools. It presents an exciting opportunity to build on the strong foundations and current practices within the Trust and help shape the educational delivery across our schools over the medium to long term. There is scope for our 4-16 offer to progress further as we navigate through external challenges and ensure our locality-based hub of schools delivers for our communities.

You will appreciate and develop a strong understanding of the local knowledge and context of our schools. Additionally, you will believe in a model where common approaches are delivered to a high standard as a minimum. This way, we know that our schools have the foundational pillars in place to secure high quality everyday provision. Beyond this we expect our school leaders to innovate – that is what we feel the best people want to do!

This role will expose you to all aspects of strategic MAT leadership and with that, the role will provide excellent preparation for those who aspire to become a MAT CEO in the future.



Accountable to:	Chief Executive Officer
Salary:	£130 – 140K (negotiable for exceptional candidate)
Hours:	Permanent – Full time
Location:	Trust Central Office and Schools
Start date:	September 2025

Key Responsibilities

Educational leadership

To work with the CEO, executive team and wider leadership to ensure that the Trust mission of “running high achieving top quality schools that give our children and young people the chance in life they deserve” is a consistent reality. To ensure that the Trust offer is universal in that it delivers for all children, with our disadvantaged and most vulnerable pupils explicitly focused upon (“a rising tide lifts all ships!”). To this end, to work on building upon a strong educational model and strategy that ensures the Trust curriculum, approaches to teaching and learning and inclusion reflect our focus on social justice.

Ensure that all components of the Trust school improvement model are explicitly and consistently applied within each school. After which, strongly encourage individuality and innovation that are well implemented and held by Trust standards, values and principles.

Create, develop and support networking, networks, and collaboration across the Trust to support Headteachers and leaders to lead well. Enable Headteachers access to expertise, experts and other support to improve their school.

Executive leadership

To be part of an Executive Leadership Team that has a team contract and shared guardrails. Be part of a team that contracts with each other to commit to the principles of:

- Having the team first – remembering that saying it does not make it happen
- Building trust and having each other’s back
- Staying connected and celebrating each other’s success
- Making each other better
- Working east to west before escalating
- Dealing with the “elephants in the room” and natural tensions so that they are introduced and discussed together
- Debating like we are right and listening like we are wrong. Once done we then decide, commit and lead
- We listen and do not just hear.

Guiding principles and culture

To uphold the guiding principles of the Trust, working in line with these principles to deliver on the mission. Model professional behaviour, promoting high expectations, challenging peers, and being a lead professional. Understand and demonstrate the importance of relational leadership. To support the CEO to further develop, embed, and sustain a high-performance culture that is inclusive, collaborative, and relational across the Trust and its family of schools.

School Improvement and impact

Be responsible and accountable for improving the Trust’s quality of education and provision for key stage 1-4 and children aged 4-16, securing performance in line with the Trust standards. Critically ensuring pupils achieve strong outcomes that support strong progression focusing particularly on children experiencing disadvantage and those with SEND, in line with the Trust strategic priority around social justice.

To work with leaders to drive improvement, reviewing evidence, identifying priorities, and ensuring exceptional standards. To ensure the Trust educational and school improvement model remains the pillars and foundation of what constitutes a Trust strong school. Work with leaders to ensure that these foundations and codified approaches are robustly in place, prior to working on the “nice to do’s”. Work with leaders to ensure that schools are fully supported to make continued improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, and student attainment, progress, and attendance.

To ensure that the Headteachers directly and indirectly, and the wider leadership colleagues have a clear improvement framework that is executed with precision. To ensure that the Trust monitoring, review and evaluation of schools, as well as the quality assurance and intervention systems are effective. Work with leaders to ensure timely diagnosis of challenges and barriers to achievement are tackled so that schools are not limited in their effectiveness.

Local knowledge and context

To demonstrate leadership that prioritises strategies that balance local leadership and the advantages of Trust wide scale. To be involved in the life of schools, leading by example through practical engagement in the Pontefract and South Kirkby hub and through deep local understanding.

Change management and School Improvement

To be accountable for school improvement and the education model. To ensure that effective listening/ change management processes are built into changes to the school improvement model design, ensuring that any overarching systems are appropriate and are impactful.

Education practice, evaluation and impact

To be on the front foot in understanding and bringing to the table the best in local, national and international practice when it comes to schools working in challenging contexts.

Keeping children safe

To be responsible for ensuring that pupils in Trust schools learn within a safe and healthy environment. To ensure that the highest standards of behaviour encourage effective learning and the wellbeing/social development of all pupils. To work with the Director of Inclusion and Safeguarding to ensure that systems in this area are implemented, monitored and evaluated to ensure this approach is reflected in practice.

Accountability to the Trust Board

To work with the CEO to communicate educational strategy and model, implementation, and impact (at a Trust and school by school level) to the Trust Board. To promote a culture of accountability within the education team that is recognised and accepted as an essential element of improvement at all levels and across all aspects of Pontefract Academies Trust’s work.

External engagement with the wider system

To work with the CEO to maintain the profile of the Trust so that the strengths of the organisation are understood across the sector. To work in collaboration with external partners, including schools, multi-academy trusts and organisations beyond the sector.



Person Specification.

The skills, qualifications and associated professional experiences essential for the role of Director of Education.

No.	Categories	Essential or desirable	Assessed by	
			Application form	Interview or task
Knowledge & skills				
1.	A strategic thinker who can work with the Executive Leadership Team, the Board and others to develop a compelling educational vision for the organisation, underpinned by a strong moral purpose.	E	✓	✓
2.	Committed to the highest standards in all areas of school life, including behaviour, academic, and enrichment.	E	✓	✓
3.	Committed to maintaining the ethos of Pontefract Academies Trust with empathy and understanding of the educational landscape.	E	✓	✓
4.	Well-developed presentation skills and comfortable with public speaking; the analytical ability to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences, acting as an effective ambassador for the Trust.	E	✓	✓
5.	Committed to state education 4-16 and the raising of academic standards among pupils.	E	✓	✓
6.	A leader who can analyse and process complex information and data quickly and rigorously, who can communicate this information clearly to others and thereby drive effective and timely improvement.	E	✓	✓
7.	A thorough knowledge of the policy environment in which Pontefract Academies Trust operates, with the capacity to make productive contributions to the national education debate.	E	✓	✓
8.	Knowledge of the strategies for raising students' achievement and advancing effective teaching and learning set within communities where there are higher-than-average levels of social disadvantage.	E	✓	✓
9.	A strong team player with excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to work collaboratively.	E	✓	✓
Experience				
10.	A proven record of secondary school improvement and successful leadership.	E	✓	✓
11.	Significant senior strategic leadership experience with a track record of effective operational delivery in a multi-school organisation of scale and complexity.	E	✓	✓
12.	A good understanding of the education sector, with a strong grasp of contemporary educational issues.	E	✓	✓
13.	A strong networker with evidence of reach across the education sector and other civic institutions.	E	✓	✓
14.	Track record of leading, coaching, directing and performance managing senior staff within a complex and diverse framework; driving morale, raising standards and promoting a team ethos across a multi-academy trust.	E	✓	✓
15.	A track record of building successful teams.	E	✓	✓
16.	Proven success in building effective partnerships and links.	E	✓	✓
Qualifications				
17.	Educated to degree level, with evidence of continuing professional development.	E	✓	✓
18.	Qualified Teacher Status.	E	✓	✓
19.	Recent and relevant leadership development.	E	✓	✓
20.	Postgraduate or Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).	D	✓	✓
21.	NPQH	D	✓	✓
22.	NPQEL	D	✓	✓

No.	Categories	Essential or desirable	Assessed by	
			Application form	Interview or task
Personal attributes				
23.	Passionate about teaching and learning.	E	✓	✓
24.	Ability to inspire with eternal optimism and resilience in the face of challenges.	E	✓	✓
25.	Professional with the ability to remain calm under pressure or in stressful situations and prioritise workloads to meet deadlines effectively, delegating as required.	E	✓	✓
26.	Inquisitive with the ability to stimulate improvement, galvanise teams, work creatively and collaboratively.	E	✓	✓
27.	Ability to pause and reflect and think before making an important decision and to make and justify difficult decisions.	E	✓	✓
28.	Ability to establish rapport and respectful trusting relationships with children their families, carers and other adults.	E	✓	✓
29.	Able to build and maintain successful and purposeful relationships.	E	✓	✓
30.	Open-minded, self-evaluative and adaptable to changing circumstances and new ideas.	E	✓	✓
31.	In possession of an unshakeable conviction that young people can be successful in spite of their circumstances or other external factors.	E	✓	✓
32.	The ability to respond positively to and deliver constructive criticism.	E	✓	✓
Equality				
33.	An understanding of acceptance and commitment to the fundamental principles of equal opportunities.	E	✓	✓
34.	Able to work in a way that promotes equality of opportunity and respect for diversity.	E	✓	✓
Safeguarding				
35.	Evidence of a commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.	E	✓	✓
36.	Able to work in a way that promotes the safety and well-being of children and young people.	E	✓	✓

Professional Development & Benefits of Working at Pontefract Academies Trust.

Pontefract Academies Trust (PAT) offers a broad range of benefits for all employees, and some extend to friends and family as well. A summary of the offer is below, and you will be provided with additional information during your induction and probation period.

We're passionate about employee benefits at Pontefract Academies Trust, offering the following as standard to all:

- Exciting career and leadership pathways supported by outstanding CPD opportunities
- EveryDay Development (EDD) Framework, including goals that are personal, flexible and professional development days to self-reflect and invest in personal development to aid staff engagement, boost wellbeing and enhance employee skills
- Energise and Engage Weeks throughout the year, where no meetings take place. These dedicated weeks prioritise personal professional development, support work-life balance, and allow for an early finish on designated days
- Generous employer pension (Teachers Pension)
- Laptop/tablet and mobile phone
- Fantastic family friendly policies with a focus on employee work/life balance
- Cycle to work scheme
- Blue Light card
- Discounted gym membership
- Free eyecare via Specsavers
- Childcare vouchers
- Employee wellbeing programme (including physiotherapy, personal or professional concerns on legal, health, finance, wellbeing, and other matters)
- Discounts at numerous retailers including O2
- Free flu vaccinations.



Application Process.

To apply

For further information about the role, or to discuss the process for making an application, please contact Martin Blair, Director at Hays Leadership.

Telephone: 07736 791138
Email: Martin.Blair@hays.com

Key dates

Closing date: Monday 24th February 2025 at 10am
Interview date: Thursday 6th and Friday 7th March 2025


*Candidates will be made aware of an outcome once shortlisting is completed.
**This will be a two-day interview process.




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Pontefract Academies Trust are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We will ensure that all our recruitment and selection practices reflect this commitment. All successful candidates will be subject to DBS checks along with other relevant pre-employment checks (including online checks).