



Director of People

Recruitment Pack
May 2025





Welcome

Thank you for your interest in joining South Downs Education Trust. As a cross-phase multi-academy trust based in the heart of West Sussex, we are proud to offer a unique blend of pastoral care and high-quality, inclusive education. We believe every child and young person reaches their full potential—regardless of their starting point.

Our core values guide everything we do:

- **Community** – By working as one, we share expertise and achieve more for our schools.
- **Resilience** – We prioritise the wellbeing of students and staff, fostering a culture of care, balance, and strength.
- **Integrity** – We act with honesty and stay true to our values in all that we do.
- **Respect** – We celebrate individuality and encourage everyone to bring their unique strengths and perspectives.
- **Excellence** – We are committed to delivering the very highest standards in education.

We are excited to welcome passionate and dedicated professionals who share our vision and values. Whether you are at the start of your career or looking for your next challenge, South Downs Education Trust offers a supportive, ambitious, and collaborative environment where you can truly thrive.

We look forward to the possibility of welcoming you to our team.

Warm regards

Pan Panayiotou

Chief Executive Officer
South Downs Education Trust





Job Description

Job title	Director of People
Salary	Competitive, commensurate with experience
Location	South Downs Education Trust, Worthing High School, South Farm Road, Worthing BN14 7AR Principally based at South Downs Education Trust c/o Worthing High School but opportunity to work remotely and within partner schools
Contract	Full-time, Fixed term, an opportunity for flexible working - under constant review
Reports to	Chief Finance and Operations Officer and ultimately Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Role description

South Downs Education Trust has an exciting opportunity for a suitably qualified and experienced professional to lead on Human Resources.

We are seeking a candidate who:

- Can provide leadership on the Trust's HR function and its future development
- Can demonstrate excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- Is proactive and shows exceptional organisational and time management skills
- Shows a meticulous attention to detail
- Can provide professional support and guidance to School Leaders, continuing to enable the Trust to operate at a high standard
- Has a CIPD Level 7 qualification (or willingness to undertake the training) and suitable Human Resources experience

Job purpose

The Director of People will lead the Trust's HR function, ensuring effective management of all people-related processes and strategies. This pivotal role involves cultivating a positive, inclusive, and high-performing culture across all schools in the Trust, particularly during our expansion phase.

The role will require adaptability to address both strategic and immediate HR concerns, from advising on sensitive staff matters to planning trust wide initiatives. Due to our small size, the people manager can adopt a highly personalised approach, working closely with school leaders to understand and address unique challenges.

The role is currently advertised as fixed term but will be under constant review as our Trust seeks to grow and develop.



Key Responsibilities

Strategic HR Leadership

- Working with the Trust Executive Team and Academy Leaders, develop, execute, and continuously improve the Trust's people strategy, aligning it with our vision, values, and growth plans
- Provide strategic advice to the CEO and senior leadership team on all matters relating to workforce planning, organisational structure, and people management
- Lead the HR function in preparing for and successfully integrating new schools into the Trust
- Monitor and ensure compliance with employment legislation, safeguarding requirements, and HR policies across all schools
- Oversee the smooth running of HR administration functions in all Trust schools

Recruitment and Onboarding

- Design and implement innovative recruitment strategies to attract high-quality teaching, support, and leadership staff who align with the trusts values and vision
- Manage the entire recruitment lifecycle, from talent identification to appointment
- Develop onboarding programs that foster engagement and a strong understanding of the Trust's strategic and operational direction

Employee Relations

- Act as the principal advisor on employee relations matters, including disciplinary processes, grievances, and conflict resolution
- Oversee staff absence procedures and management
- Foster a culture of mutual respect, collaboration, and equity across all schools
- Promote and embed diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives that align with the Trust's strategic goals

Professional Development

- Identify skills gaps and coordinate comprehensive training and development programs tailored to staff needs
- Build programmes to retain and develop staff, implementing robust career progression pathways and succession planning strategies in line with the future strategic development of the Trust
- Facilitate professional development opportunities that empower staff to excel in their roles and prepare for future opportunities
- Help identify and nurture future leaders within the trust to ensure long term sustainability



Key Skills and Experience

- Significant experience in a senior HR leadership role, ideally within an education, non-profit, or public sector environment
- Comprehensive knowledge of employment law, safeguarding requirements, and HR best practices
- A proven track record of managing organisational growth and change successfully
- Strong leadership and influencing skills, with the ability to engage and inspire stakeholders at all levels
- Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to build rapport and trust quickly
- Demonstrated expertise in fostering inclusive and equitable workplace environments.
- A Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) qualification (Level 5 or higher) is desirable

About us

South Downs Education Trust (SDET) is a dynamic and growing Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) committed to delivering exceptional educational outcomes across our schools. Currently comprising two schools, we have ambitious plans to expand by incorporating at least two additional schools in the near future. We are seeking a skilled and proactive People Manager to drive our people strategy and support our growth.

What We Offer

- A unique opportunity to shape the people strategy of a growing Multi-Academy Trust
- A collaborative and supportive working environment, with access to senior leadership and decision-making processes
- Opportunities for professional development and career advancement
- The chance to make a lasting impact on the lives of staff and students
- Competitive salary package and benefits aligned with sector standards
- An opportunity for flexible working

Benefits

- A friendly and supportive environment
- The opportunity to work with well-motivated students and supportive parents and staff
- A location on the coast very close to main line railway services and road networks
- Free well-being and medical support cover
- The opportunity to be part of the South Downs Education Trust MAT
- Free use of our fitness suite



How to apply

If you feel you have the necessary skills for this position and would like further information please email vacancies@sdetrust.net. An application form can be downloaded from the links provided on the school website at www.worthinghigh.net/vacancies.

Completed application forms should be sent to Mr Panayiotou, CEO at the address below or emailed to vacancies@sdetrust.net.

Closing date for applications is Wednesday 21 May 2025 at 9am, an early application is advised as we reserve the right to close the vacancy early if sufficient suitable applications are received.

Interviews will be held w/c 2 June 2025.

NOTE FOR RECRUITMENT AGENCIES: We prefer to hire people directly but we do have a preferred supplier list for when we need a helping hand. We will be in touch if we need you.

Please note, because of the nature of this job, if you are successful in your application, you will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service with barred list check. This will be done by means of applying for a DBS certificate through the Disclosure and Barring Service. Disclosures include details of cautions, reprimands or final warnings as well as convictions, spent or unspent. Clearance will be obtained before employment commences. We will also complete media searches as part of due diligence and safeguarding checks in line with KCSIE guidance.

- South Downs Education Trust (SDET) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.
- Worthing High School & Clapham and Patching C of E Primary school are part of SDET, which is an academy trust and a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales with company number 8276210. The Registered Office is at: South Farm Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 7AR
- We recognise continuous service from academy/non-academy schools