



Candidate Pack

Executive Headteacher (Secondary)



PONTEFRACT
ACADEMIES TRUST



Welcome From our CEO

Thank you for your interest in the new role of Executive Headteacher (Secondary) 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 particularly 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 through Department for Education RISE school improvement work.

The Trust has recently publicly announced an exciting development – a proposed merger with Ark Schools from September 2026. This would see Pontefract Academies Trust becoming the founding base of a northern hub for Ark. The strong alignment, shared ambition and complementary strengths of the two trusts will bring even stronger support, greater collaboration, and more opportunities for pupils and staff. We are excited for what's ahead and we hope that you'll be a part of shaping that future with us.

Currently, the Trust is in a strong place; back in 2018 the Trust was named the 11th lowest attaining trust for key stage 2 outcomes and one of the secondary schools was in special measures. Our primary outcomes at key stage 2 now sit some 24% above the national average, with five out of the seven being in the top 5% of the country for combined outcomes. Equally, our secondary schools have seen significant progress in recent years sitting well above national average with successful visits from Ofsted in 2024 and 2022. After 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 to make sure all our children access a continuously great education.

The Executive Headteacher for secondary will play a pivotal role and have the potential opportunity to develop our growing external school improvement and partnership work. 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. Candidates will recognise that excellent judgment is an important attribute in the role, as is the ability to develop others so that ownership amongst leaders becomes self-sustaining.

As mentioned earlier, the future is an exciting one for the Trust. We wish to appoint positive people who want to make a difference. 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.

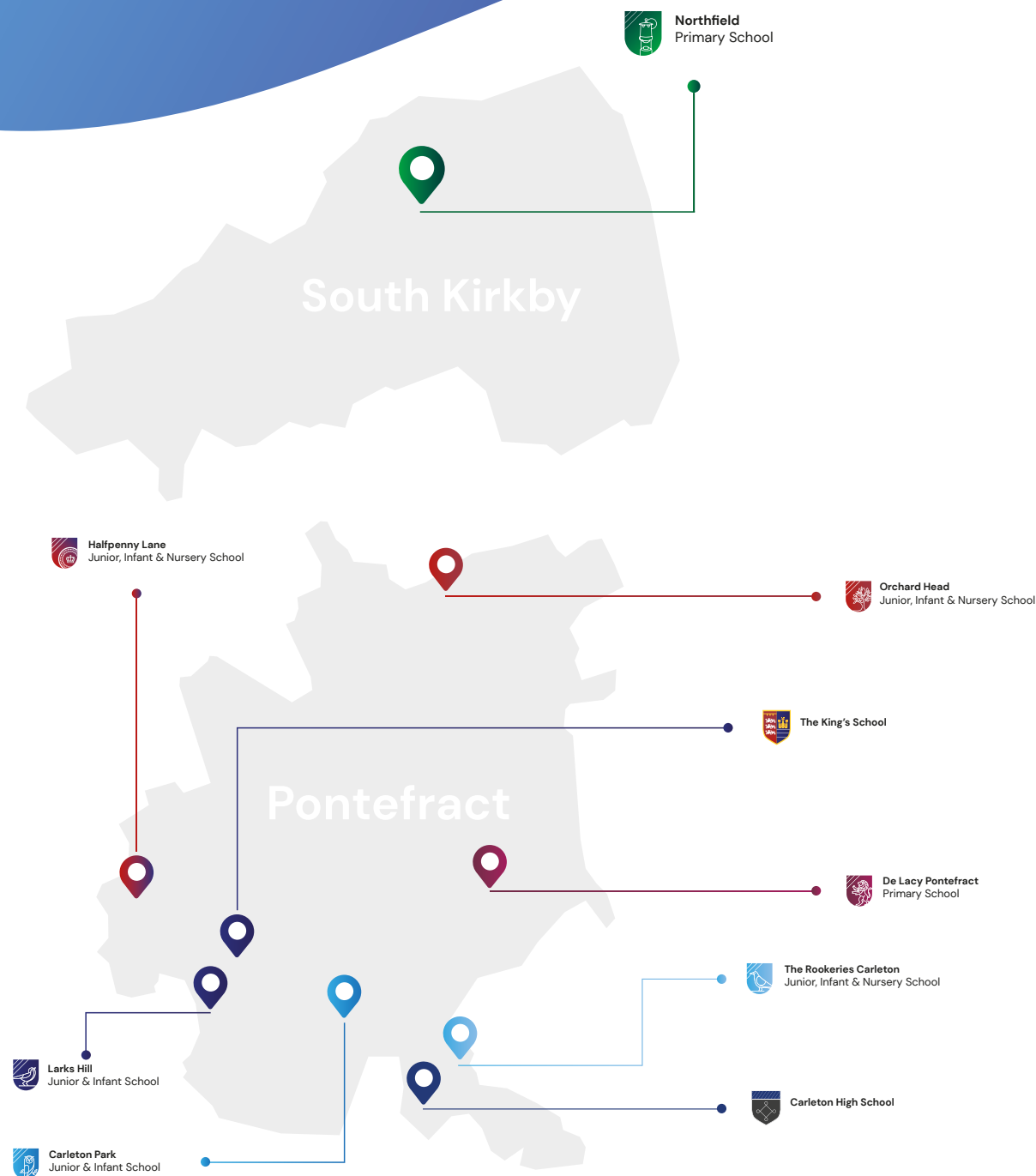


Our Family of Schools.

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.



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 wellbeing

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.

Role Overview

The Executive Headteacher for secondary schools is a pivotal role. It offers a real opportunity to build on the foundations and current practices within the Trust and help shape the future of our secondary schools over the medium to long term. As the Trust continues to grow and evolve through the proposed partnership with Ark Schools, the role also brings the chance to lead and expand our external school improvement and partnership work.

You will develop a deep understanding of the local context of each school under your leadership. You will also champion a model where common approaches are delivered to a high standard as a baseline, so 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 believe the best people want to do!

We are looking for someone who is collaborative, influential, and thrives in a team environment. Working closely with headteachers and senior leaders you'll support a consistent approach to high-quality provision across schools, while encouraging innovation and creativity in leadership and practice.

We value leaders who take ownership of challenges, think critically, and use sound judgment to make decisions. We want someone who can grow leadership in others and build a culture where responsibility and ownership are shared and sustained. This role is ideal for a proven secondary school leader with a track record of long-term sustainable school improvement who is ready to influence outcomes at scale.



Accountable to:	Chief Executive Officer
Salary:	We offer a competitive salary alongside a comprehensive benefits package and opportunities for professional development.
Hours:	Permanent – Full time
Location:	Trust Central Office and Schools
Start date:	April 2026 or as soon as possible

Job Description

The Executive Headteacher will line manage the headteachers in our secondary schools and work with the senior leadership teams to establish outstanding teaching and learning, a strong school culture and to secure excellent pupil outcomes. The Executive Headteacher will report directly to the CEO.

Key Responsibilities and Accountabilities

- Strategic leadership of the Trust designated secondary schools, to achieve an excellent quality of education, attainment and extremely high standards of teaching, learning and behaviour.
- Monitoring of the implementation and coordination of the vision, ethos and strategy for designated secondary schools.
- Strategic management of effective stakeholder relationships including the local community, families and other stakeholders.
- In partnership with the headteachers and senior leadership teams, ensuring the safeguarding of all pupils and that the safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff is promoted at all times.
- Contribution to the overall direction and success of the Trust family of schools.

Strategic Leadership

- Support the Headteacher in maintaining strong working relationships with the community, agencies and stakeholders including parents, primary schools, the School Performance Review Boards and other stakeholders.
- Strategic oversight of staffing allocation across the school, including support staff.
- Work with headteachers to ensure that each school has an efficient curriculum model and works within curriculum-led financial planning targets.
- Work in partnership with the central team, headteachers, and executive leaders to oversee school budget and facilities across each school.
- Develop partnerships with other local schools and the local authority to ensure that the vision for regeneration in the area is realised.
- Strategic oversight of staffing allocation across the school.
- Ensure robust operational systems are in place that support the schools' efficient functioning.
- Work with the Central Trust Finance Team to oversee the school strategy for finance, and resources.

Development of the Family of Schools, Partnership and School Improvement Work

- Collaborate with others across the family of schools to develop good practice and share innovation.
- Help to shape or lead education initiatives across the Trust.
- Work alongside the Trust and other local schools' leadership teams.
- Work with the CEO and Executive Primary Headteachers to agree specifics of external school support and identify and provide additional support as needed to deliver this work.
- Undertake any other responsibilities as directed by the CEO.



Person Specification.

The skills, qualifications and associated professional experiences essential for the role of Executive Headteacher..

			Assessed by	
No.	Categories	Essential or desirable	Application form	Interview or task
Qualification criteria				
1.	Degree educated.	E	✓	✓
2.	Qualified to teach and work in the UK.	E	✓	✓
Experience				
3.	Substantial experience of secondary school leadership (at least at headteacher level or equivalent) where sustainable improvement has been evident.	E	✓	✓
4.	Experience of having led or significantly contributed to the success of a school through its leadership, ethos, teaching and outcomes.	E	✓	✓
Behaviours				
Leadership				
5.	Effective leadership style which encourages confidence, participation and innovation.	E	✓	✓
6.	Motivation to continually improve standards and achieve excellence.	E	✓	✓
7.	Ability to lead staff within a performance management framework, including professional development and effective management of underperformance.	E	✓	✓
8.	Ability to develop the leadership skills of others.	E	✓	✓
9.	Resilience and motivation to support the headteachers in leading the schools' through day-to-day challenges while maintaining a clear strategic vision and direction.	E	✓	✓
10.	Commitment to the safeguarding and welfare of all pupils.	E	✓	✓
11.	Excellent organisational skills and ability to plan strategically.	E	✓	✓
Vision and Strategy				
12.	Vision aligned with the Trust's high aspirations and high expectations of self and others.	E	✓	✓
13.	Clear vision and understanding of how to implement and sustain high quality education in schools with a similar context.	E	✓	✓
14.	Clear understanding of the strategies to establish consistently high standards of behaviour and commitment to instilling these strategies relentlessly.	E	✓	✓
15.	Ability to blend support and challenge, holding others to account with honesty and integrity.	E	✓	✓
16.	Effective use of data to inform and diagnose weaknesses that need addressing.	E	✓	✓
Leading Stakeholder Relationships				
17.	Skilful management for maintaining and developing the school's effective working relationships with parents, governors and stakeholders.	E	✓	✓
18.	Ability to inspire and work collaboratively with partner stakeholders, agencies and peers across the family of schools.	E	✓	✓
Personal Characteristics				
19.	Genuine passion and belief in the potential of every student.	E	✓	✓
20.	Relishes accountability, has sound judgement and takes personal responsibility for their actions.	E	✓	✓
21.	Excellent critical thinking skills; has intellectual curiosity and rigour.	E	✓	✓















			Assessed by	
No.	Categories	Essential or desirable	Application form	Interview or task
22.	Ability to build trust and mutual respect between pupils, families and staff.	E	✓	✓
23.	Strong interpersonal, written and oral communication skills.	E	✓	✓
24.	Enjoys working within a busy school setting.	E	✓	✓



Professional Development & Benefits.

Pontefract Academies Trust (PAT) offers a broad range of benefits for all employees, and some extend to family and friends as well. A summary of the offer is below. 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 to help support work/life balance:

-  Exciting career and leadership pathways supported by outstanding CPD opportunities.
-  Everyday Development (EDD) Framework: A simple, personal and flexible goal-based approach to continuous learning, career growth and wellbeing.
-  For the 2025/26 academic year, we will be providing staff with three Everyday Development (EDD) days. These development days will offer you self-directed time away from the workplace to recharge and reflect on your personal and career goals.
-  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.

Next Steps.

Further Information and School Visits

Candidates are strongly encouraged to contact our Chief Executive Officer, Julian Appleyard OBE, for an informal conversation about the role. Please contact Philippa Dykes (adminsupport@patrust.org.uk) to arrange an appointment.

Potential candidates are also welcome to visit our schools. This is a great opportunity to explore our facilities, meet our dedicated staff and get a feel for the vibrant community we have built. We look forward to welcoming you and answering any questions you may have.

Key Dates

Application deadline: Monday 3rd November 2025
Interview date: Thursday 13th November & Friday 14th November 2025
Start date: April 2026 or as soon as possible

Application Process

Please complete an application form via our [website](#).

Important Links

[Pontefract Academies Trust website](#)
[Trust Strategic Plan 2025-2028](#)

Contact Information

Tel: 01977 232146
Email: adminsupport@patrust.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from you.

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
The Barracks Business Centre,
Wakefield Road Pontefract,
WF8 4HH.

Tel: 01977 232146

Email: adminsupport@patrust.org.uk

✕ @PontefractAT

in Pontefract Academies Trust

Registered Company: 08445158

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).