



THE MERCIAN TRUST



THE **LADDER**
SCHOOL
Redefining alternative provision



Headteacher The Ladder School

Required for Easter 2026 but
earlier start date negotiable.

Permanent, Full-Time.

Competitive Salary
(Leadership L21 to L27)

CANDIDATE PACK



WELCOME TO THE LADDER SCHOOL



The Ladder School is a pioneering Alternative Provision Free School located in the heart of Walsall. As part of The Mercian Trust, we offer a second chance to young people for whom mainstream education has not been the right fit. Our mission is clear: to provide a safe, structured, and nurturing environment where every student is supported to realise their potential, re-engage with learning, and prepare for a successful future.

Our school is built on the belief that every young person deserves access to high-quality education and meaningful opportunities. We deliver a broad and balanced curriculum that includes GCSEs and vocational qualifications, supported by a strong careers programme and a bespoke Sixth Form offer. Our staff work tirelessly to foster a culture of praise, encouragement, and high expectations, helping students to grow in confidence and self-worth.

The Ladder School is proud to be part of The Mercian Trust, a forward-thinking and inclusive multi-academy trust committed to social mobility and educational equity. As we move into the next phase of our development, we are guided by our Trust's Vivid Vision for 2030—a bold and ambitious strategy that places belonging, opportunity, and excellence at the heart of everything we do. This vision is not just aspirational; it is actionable, with clear priorities for students, staff, and community engagement.

What makes The Ladder School truly unique is its place within the educational landscape of Walsall. We are becoming the “go-to” provider for alternative provision in the borough, offering a distinctive model that combines academic rigour with pastoral care, small class sizes, and specialist facilities. Our purpose-built environment is designed to help students thrive, and our commissioning model ensures that we work in close partnership with local schools to meet the needs of learners at risk of exclusion. We are now seeking a visionary and compassionate leader to take The Ladder School into its next chapter. This is a rare opportunity to shape the future of a school that is making a real difference — and to lead a team that is deeply committed to transforming lives.



WELCOME TO THE LADDER SCHOOL

October 2025

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in The Ladder School and our Headteacher vacancy for Easter 2026 – or sooner. The Mercian Trust and the Local Governing Body are seeking to appoint an ambitious and inspirational leader who shares our commitment to transforming lives and raising aspirations for young people in Walsall and the surrounding area. The Ladder School is a unique alternative provision setting, dedicated to supporting students who have found mainstream education challenging, by providing a nurturing and personalised learning environment where every pupil is encouraged to re-engage, achieve, and succeed.

The Mercian Trust and Local Governing Body are looking to appoint an ambitious and inspirational leader with a commitment to our Trust's mission of social mobility and social justice, in line with our Trust's Blueprint for leadership and culture. We are looking for a leader with a proven track record of leading innovation and development, who can embrace and further our ethos of inclusion, care, and high expectations. In 2023, Ofsted inspection recognised the good standard of education at The Ladder School and we are ambitious to continuously drive improvement in all areas of our school to ensure the best for our pupils.

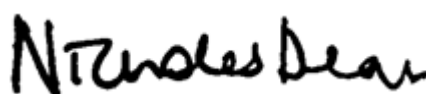
The successful candidate will be supported by our Trust's Executive Team, School Improvement experts, and Trust Professional Services, as well as our dedicated local governors and trustees. Together, we are focused on building upon the strong foundations at The Ladder School and continuing to deliver high-quality education that opens doors for all our students.

We welcome applications from all educational settings, including those working in alternative provision, mainstream, or further education. We strongly encourage interested candidates to contact the Trust to arrange an informal conversation about the role and to register for one of our tours. This is an exciting opportunity to make a significant difference, not only within The Ladder School but also across the wider Mercian Trust. We hope the information in this pack gives you a real insight into our work, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,



Dan Parkes
CEO, The Mercian Trust



Nick Dean
Chair, Local Governing Body



ABOUT YOU

You will:

- Align with our Trust's Blueprint for Leadership and culture and demonstrate this in your values and professional behaviours.
- Be committed to our mission of social mobility and social justice, with an unwavering commitment to those students who are disadvantaged, have SEND or are more likely to face discrimination.
- Work with all stakeholders to create a school culture of safeguarding, belonging and inclusion.
- Be able to confidently and effectively safeguard your own wellbeing and that of your colleagues.
- Share our passion and belief that our students deserve only the best.
- Be well respected for your authenticity of character.
- Lead with care, courage and candidness and demonstrate accountability through your leadership values.
- Lead by example and be passionate about constantly driving improvement with innovation and a pioneering spirit.
- Be positive in your outlook, and also resilient and determined in your approach.
- Have an acute understanding of curriculum and how to develop it.
- Have experience of leading curriculum, teaching and learning practices that have delivered an impressive impact on securing exceptional student outcomes.
- Work with accuracy and precision to deliver effective strategic business planning and budget management.
- Be committed to a distributed leadership model and make your leadership style responsive to those being led, demonstrating a commitment to your own professional development and that of others.
- Be prepared to lead from the front with strong communication and team building skills.
- Be keen to work collaboratively with peers within and outside of our Trust.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2030

The Mercian Trust's Strategic Plan for 2025–2030 marks an important transition from our pioneering chapter to a confident, maturing stage of development. Rooted in our commitment to social mobility and social justice, the strategic plan sets out a bold and innovative vision for the next five years—one that builds on our distinctive identity and shared values across a diverse family of schools.

Our strategy is anchored in three long-term priorities: purpose, people, and place. We aim to increase opportunities and improve outcomes for all students, recruit and retain exceptional staff, and deepen our engagement with communities and external partners. This is underpinned by a culture of inclusive leadership, continuous improvement, and purposeful innovation—ensuring every school flourishes and every learner experiences “life to the full.” As we move forward, we are thinking in decades, not just academic years, and we are excited for innovative and aspirational leaders to join us in shaping the future of education across Walsall, Sandwell and the Black Country.


THE MERCIAN TRUST
Who we are is not changing...



Solidifying Our Identity

	Our Mantra	Life to the full in pursuit of what is good, right, and true.
	Our Mission	Our social mobility and social justice mission to increase opportunities and improve outcomes.
	Our ambition for students	Children and young people who fulfil their potential , go on to thrive in the world of work and make a positive contribution to the local, national, and international community.



All Trusts' long-term 'expectation'



Strengthening Our Foundations



Continuously Improving

Ensure continuously improving **schools, leaders, teachers, and student-facing support staff**. Ensuring continuously improving **professional services** to and for schools, **business support staff**, and **systems**.



Sustainable and resilient

Build **capacity** and **resilience** within **sustainable operating models** for all our schools, services and partnerships. Maximise **use of digital, data and AI** to **strengthen professional practice** and **reduce administrative workload**.



A Participant and Contributor

Take responsibility for **contributing** to **system and sector improvement** in our local communities.



Our long-term strategy (not just the next 5 years)



Securing Our Anchors



Equitable Education

Expertly preparing **each student** for life and work regardless of social, economic, or personal circumstances. Developing **transferable knowledge, understanding, skills, and character** in children and young people to enable each to succeed in school, outside of school, and beyond school.



Distinctive Schools

Developing and sustaining a **diverse family of schools** that meet the needs, aptitudes and aspirations of **all children and young people**. **Leveraging our distinctive nature and USPs** so that pupils, parents and communities choose our schools.



Leading Improvement & Innovation

Strengthening our **capacity** to be **flexible** and **agile** as we **pioneer with purpose** and **innovate pragmatically** for the benefit of children and young people in our region.



**THE LADDER
SCHOOL**
Redefining alternative provision





How we will be recognised by 2030...



Seeing Our Vivid Vision 2030



Purpose

Increasing Opportunities and
Improving Outcomes for students

We will be recognised as a trust of **exceptional schools** of all phases, key stages, and settings by providing a **home for everyone** – the right school place and provision for every child and young person so that they **succeed in school** and move into **sustained, ambitious destinations**.



People

Recruiting, retaining and developing
staff and volunteers

We will be recognised for our **purpose-driven people**; an **employer of exceptional staff** supported by dedicated volunteers. Our team **embraces change**, invests in **professional growth** and masters the use of **digital technologies and AI** for the benefit of children and young people.



Place

The communities we serve through
our work and our partnerships

We will be recognised for **leading collaboratively in our region** – deeply rooted in the towns of the Black Country. We will be known for our **reciprocal, meaningful partnerships** with parents, alumni, employers, charities and other schools and school trusts **working together** to support children and young people.



**THE LADDER
SCHOOL**
Redefining alternative provision





OUR TRUST BLUEPRINT FOR LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

OUR PURPOSE

Increasing opportunities, improving outcomes.

OUR MANTRA

Life to the full in pursuit of what is good right and true

OUR PRINCIPLES

[P1]

**Social Mobility
and Social Justice**

[P2]

**Belonging and
Inclusion**

[P3]

**Innovation and
Improvement**

[P4]

**Safeguarding and
Wellbeing**

OUR VALUES (WHO WE ARE)

[V1]

We Care

We are:
Kind
Compassionate

We are uncompromising
in our pursuit of:
Excellence
Rigour

[V2]

We are Courageous

We are:
Ambitious for all our
students and staff

We are:
Agile, flexible and bold
in our decision-making
(including taking the
'difficult decisions')

[V3]

We are Candid

We are people of:
Honesty
Sincerity

We welcome:
Clarity
Feedback
Critique

[V4]

We are Accountable

We model:
Leadership
Integrity

We demonstrate:
Objectivity
Openness

OUR PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOURS

In our work:

We work with accuracy and precision; we are inquisitive and professional
We demonstrate positivity, resilience and determination.

In our relationships:

We uphold and embrace fairness, equitability and teamwork.
We collaborate respectfully, and demonstrate commitment to each other.

In our development:

We engage with quality educational research.
We develop ourselves and others through tailored professional learning.

In our approach:

We are outward looking with a pioneering spirit.
We navigate change with a commitment to serve our local communities.



**THE LADDER
SCHOOL**
Redefining alternative provision

MERCIAN

THE MERCIAN TRUST

The Mercian Trust is one of the largest and leading regional Trusts in the West Midlands with 12 schools and over 10,000 students. We are making strategic investments of time, focus, and resources into realising our Vivid Vision for 2030, alongside the development of our strategic foundations and anchors. This is all set alongside our identity and mission to increase opportunities and improve outcomes for children and young people. Our Vivid Vision for Purpose, People and Place articulates our ambitious plans for our students, our staff and our local communities.

The Mercian Trust was incorporated in January 2018 and currently governs nine secondary schools, comprising selective grammar schools, large comprehensive schools, an alternative provision free school and a 14-19 specialist studio school. In 2021, the Regional Schools Commissioner approved the merger between The Mercian Trust and Q3 Academies Trust. The formal merger transfer was completed on 1st May 2022 when all nine academies of the two Trusts became part of the same family of schools governed by The Mercian Trust. In summer 2025, our first Primary School and our first Special School joined our Trust, along with a Pupil Referral Unit bringing our family of schools to twelve.

- Aldridge School (11-18)
- Rushall School (Primary School)
- Oakwood School (Special School)
- New Leaf School (Pupil Referral Unit)
- Q3 Academy Great Barr (11-18)
- Q3 Academy Langley (11-16)
- Queen Mary's High School (11-18, selective)
- Queen Mary's Grammar School (11-18, selective)
- Shire Oak Academy (11-18)
- **The Ladder School (Alternative Provision)**
- Q3 Academy Tipton (11-18)
- Walsall Studio School (14-19)

The Members of The Mercian Trust include The Vine Trust and the Queen Mary's Foundation. Both are charitable organisations focussed on improving the futures of local young people.

Trust ethos & values

Our name is rooted in history and expresses a geographical identity and ambition. The ancient kingdom of Mercia encompassed much of what we now recognise as the West Midlands – and crucially for us it included what we now call the Black Country. It was in Mercia that St Chad established an association of small monasteries which fostered unity through bonds of kinship. Now, a thousand years later, we look to demonstrate the same spirit in our approach. We are a family of schools committed to each other – diverse in nature, proud custodians of our history and success, but together, one charitable trust with a common purpose.

Our Trust exists to equip our students to:

- Realise their potential
- Thrive in the world of work
- Make a positive contribution to the local, national and international community.

Our mission is **increasing opportunities and improving outcomes**. Our mantra is ***Life to the full*** in pursuit of what is ***good, right and true***.



JOB DESCRIPTION

Purpose

In conjunction with non-executives (local LGB), set, lead and develop the school's overall vision, values and ethos for the school to provide an education for students which increases opportunities and improves outcomes for all, especially those who are disadvantaged or more likely to face discrimination, ensuring that the vision aligns with our wider Trust vision and mission.

Lead the school in accordance with our Trust's Blueprint for leadership and culture, ensuring that our Trust principles underpin all decision making in the school and that the school culture is one which embodies our Trust's values and professional behaviours.

Our Principles

- To ensure that the school reflects our Trust's mission of social mobility and social justice for staff and students.
- To embed a school culture of belonging for all staff and students to ensure that everyone who works or studies at the school can flourish and thrive.
- To seek out opportunities to be innovative in strategy and delivery to ensure that the school continues to improve and develop.
- To uphold and embed a culture of safeguarding and wellbeing for staff and students.

Strategic Leadership

- Articulate, develop and embed the school's culture to reflect the school community and deliver the school's and our Trust's mission.
- Provide strategic leadership, with others, to develop appropriate and specific school improvement and quality assurance plans to deliver the school's direction, vision, values and priorities. This will also embrace aspects of our Trust priorities which includes embedding a digital transformation of how we teach, lead, learn and operate.

Safeguarding

- Deliver school specific safeguarding arrangements which include an effective safeguarding policy and ensure that there is a culture of safeguarding embedded within the school including reporting on these arrangements and their impact to the LGB.
- Deliver, through the designated safeguarding lead, policies and procedures to safeguard staff and students, working with external agencies where required.
- Deliver, in conjunction with colleagues at our Trust, an appropriate and robust response to safeguarding concerns raised about school staff.

Education and Standards

- In order to increase opportunities and improve outcomes in KS4 and KS5, especially for vulnerable groups (disadvantaged students, students with SEND and those more likely to face discrimination) ensure that students experience:
 - a broad and balanced curriculum, that prepares them for ambitious destinations, supported by high quality and appropriate CEIAG and delivers experiences beyond exam specifications including through their personal development.
 - exceptional teaching practice throughout all subject areas of the school
 - assessment practices that are appropriate to their age and used meaningfully by teachers to help them improve.
 - learning that takes place in a positive, respectful environment where all students are valued and feel safe and as a result, participate in all aspects of school life.
 - rich and varied opportunities for learning outside of the classroom, utilising our 'up to 5 day scheme' to ensure the delivery of extra-curricular provision.
- Deliver the school's strategy for supporting pupil premium students including the use of pupil premium funds, monitoring the impact on student outcomes and evaluating progress towards our Trust's mobility measures, reporting on these to the LGB.
- Articulate, develop and deliver the school's approach to maintaining the highest standards and expectations for students to ensure that there are clear expectations of student behaviour, supported by clear policies and procedures which are understood by all and embedded with the school's culture.
- Ensure that there is a robust approach to attendance in school working with all stakeholders to monitor and improve individual and whole school attendance data, including ensuring that the school is represented at our Trust's attendance network.
- Deliver, through appointing a designated teacher, the arrangements for supporting CIC and formerly CIC children, and report on these arrangements to the LGB.
- Develop the school's approach to supporting students with SEND, including the publication of the SEND Information Report ensuring that this is in line with our Trust's strategy for SEND.
- Ensure compliance with statutory requirements relating to suspensions and exclusions and discussing any permanent exclusions with the Executive Director for Education prior to the decision being taken.

People Development

- Lead the strategic recruitment, retention and professional development of all staff in line with the values, principles and professional behaviours in our Trust Blueprint, including those colleagues who are new to the profession, to ensure that the school can deliver an outstanding educational experience for students and that our Trust is regarded as an employer of choice.



- Ensure that the school specific staff structure and pay grades, including the actioning of flexible working requests, are delivered in line with the approved budget and integrated business planning in accordance with our Trust's Pay Policy.
- Work with the central HR team to ensure that our Trust's policies and procedures regarding HR and staffing are delivered in line with our ethos and approach.
- Ensure that the school conducts professional growth management for all staff in line with our Trust's policy, ethos and approach.
- Manage your own and other's workload to ensure that appropriate work and home balance and wellbeing for all staff is maintained through a clear delegation of roles and responsibilities.

Operational Leadership

- Lead the development, monitoring and evaluating of the school's SEF and School Improvement Plan involving key stakeholders in this work.
- Work with our Trust finance team to plan and deliver a budget which manages expenditure, allocates funds to ensure value for money and grows GAG income through post 16 recruitment to support the overall quality of education in the school.
- Ensure that the school embeds the systems and processes for school specific financial transactions and is compliant with all ESFA requirements.
- Work with our Trust's operational team to ensure that the site is maintained and developed, and where appropriate plan and deliver strategic capital development which will improve the quality of the facilities for staff and students.
- Develop the school specific equalities statement and objectives and ensure that these are delivered for staff and students.
- Develop a school specific risk register, liaising with our Trust lead for risk, to control, mitigate and manage risk within the school environment.
- Ensure that the school site is compliant with statutory requirements for health and safety.
- Ensure that local governance arrangements and procedures are compliant with the Governance Handbook and our Trust's scheme of delegation.
- Develop school specific policies as per the policy schedule, ensuring that these reflect our Trust's values, principles, professional behaviours and mission.
- Ensure that our Trust's scheme of delegation is delivered adhering to the delegated responsibilities for a Headteacher.



Leading within our Trust

- Be an effective ambassador for our Trust promoting our mission and work locally and nationally, contributing to and influencing sector development.
- Work collaboratively with other Headteachers and leaders in our Trust to develop and deliver our Trust's strategic plan.
- Ensure that the school is represented at all Trust strategic network groups and that actions, learning and best practice from these groups are disseminated appropriately within the school.
- Contribute to the development of other leaders within our Trust through our leadership development opportunities and trust wide professional learning.
- Make an active contribution to leading our Trust as part of our Trust Strategic Board and Education Leaders' Forum.

Miscellaneous

- Any other duties as directed by the CEO.

Our scheme of delegation provides additional details about the specific delegated roles and responsibilities for our Headteachers.

<https://www.themerciantrust.org/about/governance/Scheme%20of%20Delegation%202023-2024.pdf>



PERSON SPECIFICATION

QUALIFICATIONS	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	EVIDENCE
QTS.	X		Application/ Cert
Honours Degree or Equivalent.	X		Application/ Cert
Postgraduate Qualification in Leadership / Management.		X	Application/ Cert
Recent Relevant Professional Development.	X		Application/ Cert

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	EVIDENCE
Understanding of and commitment to the principle of inclusion in an AP setting to support student behaviour and meet individual needs.	X		Interview
Demonstrate knowledge of and commitment to ensuring a culture of safeguarding across the School.	X		Application/ Interview
Update your own knowledge and expertise of evidence-based research relating to all areas of school practice and culture.	X		Interview
Ofsted framework and associated publications.	X		Interview
ESFA Academy Trust Handbook and other relevant regulation.		X	Interview
Safeguarding, pastoral and external agency support for all students including the most vulnerable.	X		Interview
An ability to articulate what excellence looks like and provide and vision and ambition to deliver it.	X		Interview

SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	EVIDENCE
A commitment to our Trust's Blueprint for leadership and culture.	X		Application / Interview
Intellectually rigorous approach to leadership with detailed understanding of what excellence looks like across all aspects of school performance.	X		Application / Interview
Able to see the 'big picture' and translate this into reality.	X		Interview



SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	EVIDENCE
Able to think and plan strategically at scale.	X		Interview
Able to demonstrate successful change leadership (across the whole organisation).	X		Application / Interview
Ability to inspire, challenge, motivate and empower teams and individuals to achieve high performance.	X		Interview
Ability to understand and analyse student, school and staff data / management information and insights to effectively raise school standards.	X		Interview
Presence and the ability to provide strong visible leadership.	X		Interview
The ability to set high and clear expectations, hold others to account for their performance and contributions they make to the school community.	X		Interview
Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to relate to people with understanding, humour and tact, to communicate effectively with a range of audiences and to listen to others' points of view.	X		Interview

EXPERIENCE WITH IMPACT	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	EVIDENCE
Substantial school senior leadership experience with impact over time.	X		Application
Experience of working or leading within an Alternative Provision		X	Application
Work within a Multi Academy Trust or multi-site environment.		X	Application
Leading whole school improvements in a range of areas including teaching and learning.	X		Application / Interview
Composing, implementing and evaluating strategic improvement and development plans.	X		Application
Experience of leading CPD training/mentoring/coaching, and staff appraisal.	X		Application / Interview
Effective work with executive leaders or governors including Self Evaluation and Improvement plans		X	Application / Interview
Work with external agencies, employers, voluntary groups and other stakeholders.		X	Application / Interview
Commitment to research and contribution to body of knowledge (e.g. through published work)		X	Application / Interview
Examples of sector-wide leadership and impact.		X	Application / Interview



OUR OFFER TO YOU

- A superb staff team committed to doing their absolute best for all in our school community.
- Support from our Trust central teams and other schools in our Trust to ensure you have the tools to deliver success (our schools are all located close to one another, and we work better when we are working together).
- A wealth of support for your ongoing continuing professional development, including a Trust-wide programme for leaders drawing on expertise from across the Mercian Trust and external professional coaches.
- A comprehensive employee assistance and staff benefits package including UKHealthcare (cash-back health plan and 24:7 video call and telephone access to GP and counselling) and a discounts portal (ranging from gym membership to discount cards and vouchers for online and high street retailers).
- There will never be a dull moment; we never stand still, every day offers new challenges and opportunities within an ambitious, forward-thinking team.

SAFEGUARDING AND SAFER RECRUITMENT

- The Mercian Trust is committed to equal opportunities, safeguarding, and promoting the welfare of children and young adults. We expect all staff to share this commitment. As this post involves working in regulated activity unsupervised with children all post-holders are subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks including an online search check, Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check.
- You are required to uphold all relevant policies in respect of child protection and safeguarding, which are based on KCSIE (2025) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018).
- You are required to demonstrate and model the Nolan Principles (The Seven Principles of Public Life): Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>
- You should demonstrate your commitment to our equality policy and all our related work to promote diversity, inclusion and belonging.



KEY INFORMATION – HOW TO APPLY

Post	Headteacher
Responsible to	Chief Executive Officer
Contract and Salary	Full time, permanent Competitive Salary – Leadership L21 – L27
Closing Date	10 th November 2026, 9.00am
Interview Dates	25 th and 26 th November 2026
Start Date	Easter 2026 but earlier start date negotiable
Informal Confidential Conversations and Visit of School	To speak to someone about this post and/or to arrange a school visit, please contact Lin Koo, Executive PA to the CEO on 01922 211388 Ext. 1211 or email Lin.Koo@merciantrust.org.uk
How to apply	Please complete the Online Application Form via our Mercian website.

Please ensure your supporting statement outlines the following:

- How your recent and relevant experience has prepared you to be successful in this post.
- How your vision and leadership align with the school and our Trust's Blueprint for leadership and culture.
- How the impact you have had in your career to date is an appropriate foundation for you to undertake this role.

Please note – your ability to communicate a wide range of information with appropriate examples and evidence clearly and concisely in your supporting statement will be assessed as part of the shortlisting process.

