



Candidate Pack

Principal

Accrington Academy



Accrington Academy
The best in everyone™
Part of United Learning



Welcome

Thank you very much for your interest in becoming Principal of Accrington Academy.

Accrington Academy is an 11–16 secondary school at the heart of its community in East Lancashire. With a committed team, a caring ethos, and well-equipped facilities, the school provides students with the chance to flourish through a wide range of experiences that nurture character and creativity. Many pupils work hard and want to do their best, and there is a sense of pride in the school within the community.

At the same time, we know the school is not yet where we want it to be. The appointment of a new Principal provides an exciting opportunity to reshape priorities and deliver rapid, sustained improvement so that every child achieves well. We are looking for a leader who sees challenge as an opportunity to make a lasting impact: someone with the vision, determination, and ability to unite staff, students, and families behind a shared purpose.

This is an opportunity to transform a school and change lives. If you believe that young people can achieve extraordinary things and have the drive to build a team that will make this a reality, we would be delighted to hear from you.

United Learning is a big group of schools – with over 75,000 pupils and more than 10,000 staff – so we have the capacity to support you

educationally and operationally. At the same time, we are values led and base all that we do on good relationships, so you will be joining a big family. Reporting directly to the Regional Director, you will be supported both personally and professionally, benefitting from the strength of a national group who will support your development and that of your staff and school.

We are committed to fairness, diversity and inclusion. We are currently working hard to improve representation of black, Asian and minority ethnic leaders at headship level and to raise our proportion of women leaders to match their representation in our wider workforce. Whoever you are, if you have a strong track record of improving young people's education and a drive to do more, we very much look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Jon Coles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sir Jon Coles, Chief Executive

The Academy

Accrington Academy is an 11–16 secondary school located in the heart of Accrington, in the borough of Hyndburn, Lancashire, with over 950 pupils on roll. As part of United Learning, the Academy shares the group's commitment to bringing out "the best in everyone."

The school benefits from modern facilities, including specialist spaces for science, technology, performing arts, and sport, creating an environment where students can explore their talents and develop confidence. A broad and balanced curriculum is underpinned by the Academy's core mission: "Building Character, Creating Learners, Transforming Lives". Students also enjoy a strong Education with Character programme, offering enrichment opportunities such as enterprise projects, outdoor challenges, and leadership roles.

Accrington Academy is ready for a new chapter – one that demands bold leadership and a relentless focus on improvement to build a culture where ambition and achievement thrive. Standards and outcomes must rise rapidly and be sustained over time. This will require focused leadership and a relentless drive for improvement. We expect the successful candidate to have an immediate impact on the culture of the school and to secure significant gains in student achievement. In return, we will provide strong support to ensure the highest academic standards, where exemplary behaviour allows teachers and pupils to focus on learning.

The Academy is part of our Lancashire Cluster alongside The Hyndburn Academy and Marsden Heights Community College. Schools work

collaboratively, sharing expertise and benefiting from joint services, including an Executive Business Manager.

This is an exciting opportunity for an ambitious and dynamic leader to take strong foundations and establish a culture of high achievement, care, and respect. Above all, we are seeking substantial and sustainable improvements under the leadership of a Principal committed to the long-term success of Accrington Academy's students.

United Learning will support you with the expertise of a Regional Director, as well as a highly effective team of subject advisers. You will also benefit from our knowledge-rich mastery curriculum which includes a package of common assessments, enabling school leaders to gain a deeper understanding of their students by comparing performance against the thousands of students in other United Learning schools.

We fully recommend that you take the opportunity to make an informal visit prior to making your application to see the school for yourself. If you would like to arrange a visit or discuss the role in further detail, please contact Geoff Morris at geoff.morris@unitedlearning.org.uk or by phone on 07811 345 638.



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The Community

The town of Accrington offers a welcoming community and plenty to enjoy outside of work. The area is surrounded by green spaces and Pennine landscapes, ideal for walking, cycling, and outdoor activities. Just a short distance away, the Ribble Valley offers picturesque villages, peaceful countryside, and a strong sense of rural charm, making it a particularly lovely place to live.

Cultural highlights include Haworth Art Gallery and the historic Market Hall. Local leisure centres, sports facilities, and regular community events add to the sense of connection and make it easy to feel part of the area.

Day-to-day life is practical and well-connected. Accrington has good transport links, with rail services to Manchester, Leeds, and other destinations, as well as easy access to the M65 for travel across Lancashire and beyond. This makes commuting and exploring the wider region straightforward.

For those considering relocation, the cost of living in the area is generally lower than many parts of the UK. Housing is affordable, with a range of homes available at competitive prices, and everyday expenses are typically below the national average. This combination of lifestyle, connectivity, and value makes Accrington a location worth considering.



About United Learning

United Learning is a group of schools which aims to provide excellent education to children and young people across the country. We seek to improve the life chances of all the children and young people we serve and make it our mission to bring out ‘the best in everyone’ – pupils, staff, parents, and the wider community. We uniquely comprise schools in both the state and the independent sectors.

As a group, we can offer more to both staff and young people than any single school could offer alone. The growing range of outstanding group-wide activities that we can provide will mean that more young people will have truly exceptional and inspiring experiences.

We believe that our group contains the most developed relationships and practical interaction between independent and state schools in the country, creating benefits for all the schools involved.

United Learning comprises both United Church Schools Trust, which operates our fee-paying independent schools, and United Learning Trust, which operates our state-funded academies.

To find out more about United Learning, please visit the website www.unitedlearning.org.uk

As part of United Learning, Accrington Academy will share the objective of bringing out ‘the best in everyone’, enabling each student to become a balanced, happy and articulate person with intellectual freedom, confidence, compassion, integrity and a lifelong love of learning.



Our Ethos

Our approach to education is underpinned by a sense of moral purpose and commitment to doing what is right for children and young people. We believe in supporting our colleagues to achieve excellence and in acting with integrity in all our dealings within and beyond the Group. We believe the safety and welfare of all children and young people is paramount. We summarise this ethos as ‘the best in everyone’ which underpins our core values:

Ambition – to achieve the best for us and others.

Confidence – to have the courage of our convictions and to take risks for the right cause.

Creativity – to imagine possibilities and make them real.

Respect – of ourselves and others in all that we do.

Enthusiasm – to seek opportunity, find what is good and pursue talents and interests.

Determination – to overcome obstacles and achieve success.

As a single organisation, we seek to bring together the best of independent and state sectors, respecting both traditions and learning from each other. We believe that each of our schools is and should be distinctive – committed to developing its own strengths and identity while sharing our core values to promote service, compassion and generosity.

Continuing Professional Development

We believe that successful organisations make a priority of developing their staff; all the more so in education, where the people of the organisation are its most important asset. While the development of all staff is important, we make the support and professional development of Heads and senior leaders a particular priority, given the impact that leaders have on the life of staff and pupils alike.

We work on the basis that each of us, however effective, can always improve. The successful candidate of Accrington Academy will be set personal development objectives with the Regional Director each year and will be supported to achieve them.

The Principal will also be asked to take a role in supporting the leadership of the whole organisation, working with other Heads in the

Group, and sharing ideas and practice with one another.

They will also have the benefit of accessing a range of networks, including the Group Education Forum, which brings together Heads from across the Group six times a year. United Learning are passionate about staff development, for example we provide 360-degree feedback as part of professional development, and we have also commissioned training programmes from major universities.

We believe that schools are at their best when they are autonomous and able to develop a distinctive ethos, reflecting the needs of their pupils and the context within which they work. The Group can get behind the work of Heads and leaders in schools through creating strong networks, providing outstanding educational support and professional development, and by taking the strain of professional functional support. We aim to ensure that the technology, finance, HR and data support is provided more effectively and efficiently than would otherwise be possible, so that Principals can focus on educational leadership.

The newly appointed Principal at Accrington Academy will also benefit from a comprehensive induction programme which has recently been reviewed to ensure it is effective and to promote success.

Our Framework for Excellence

To achieve our mission, our schools prioritise five key principles:

- 1** The best from everyone
- 2** Powerful knowledge
- 3** Education with character
- 4** Leadership in every role
- 5** Continuous improvement



Our aim is to bring out 'the best in everyone'. So, we must expect the best from everyone, all the time. Every child is a special individual, capable of extraordinary things. Who can know the limits of any child's potential?



Our Framework for Excellence

'The best from everyone'

Our aim is to bring out 'the best in everyone'. So, we must expect the best from everyone, all the time. Every child is a special individual, capable of extraordinary things. Who can know the limits of any child's potential? So, we expect unreasonably – we constantly challenge children to do what they think they can't, to persist, to work hard and to be at their best.

From every adult we expect the same: that they are at their best, expect unreasonably of themselves, are determined and resilient and pass those expectations on to the children in all they do. We act with the utmost love, care and good faith – the highest standards come with the greatest attention to the wellbeing of all.

'Powerful knowledge'

Our most important purpose is to teach young people things they would not learn outside school, which free them to think and act more powerfully in their lives. Words and numbers are our most powerful ways of representing the world. Mastery of language and fluent mathematical skills are therefore our top priority. We aim to prepare young people to make a success of their lives: a core entitlement to subject-based learning; the development of talents; an understanding of work and society.

Worthwhile learning is often hard. Inspiring teaching is what gives access to difficult concepts and the thrill of intellectual discovery. Powerful knowledge is not static or backward-looking. It includes the ability to critique, challenge the status quo, think and learn.

'Education with character'

Academic success is very important. Exam passes are an important aspect of that. But there is more to a good education. Our schools also aim to develop character, compassion and service. Young people are expected to contribute to their school and to society; to try things which they think they cannot do; to persist in the face of difficulty; to become resilient in overcoming obstacles; to manage themselves; to

work independently on things which challenge them; to work with others and in teams; to be courageous and caring; to lead.

We want young people to look back on a joyful schooling which has inspired and challenged them, given them wide opportunity and prepared them for the ups and downs of life.

'Leadership in every role'

Our children are leaders of the future. We expect them to start today – taking advantage of structured opportunities to lead and taking responsibility for themselves and others. Every adult in the school is a leader. In every word, tone and gesture, they set direction and expectation. We expect every adult to take responsibility and the initiative to do what is right for the children.

All those in formal leadership positions create the climate in which others work. They demand the highest standards, build a performance culture, develop their teams and create the space for others to lead. All leaders listen, grow relationships, act with integrity and care and expect the best from themselves and others in building a happy, confident school.

'Continuous improvement'

However good we are, we can be better. We constantly look for improvements and implement them with pace. We look for ideas for improvement inside the organisation and out; we observe one another; we steal good ideas with pride and look to make them better; we work together to improve.

We always look at the evidence and are rigorous in evaluating impact. We stop or change things which aren't working; we improve things which are. We aim for high leverage, high impact for low effort and low cost. We constantly look to have more impact for less cost and effort and to spend every pound wisely.

Job Description

The Principal will lead and inspire excellence throughout the Academy. They will work with all staff to ensure success for all pupils at every stage of their education and provide them with the skills and confidence in their future life and work.

As a senior leader within United Learning, the Principal, together with the Local Governing Body (LGB), will be responsible for establishing and implementing the vision and direction for all staff and pupils throughout the school. In leading the school, the Principal will ensure that United Learning's ethos and values are deeply embedded and visible, securing 'the best in everyone' for all stakeholders.

Broadly, the responsibilities of the role are as detailed below:

Educational Leadership and Management

- Ensuring excellent academic outcomes in all key stages;
- Developing outstanding teaching and learning for all pupils;
- Embedding an aspirational and innovative culture of learning;
- Implementing a rigorous system of monitoring to evaluate the work of the school;
- Securing and maintaining high standards across the whole school;
- Embedding a fulfilling and enriching curriculum for all children;
- Setting and achieving aspirational targets for all pupils that ensure rapid progress to becoming an outstanding school;
- Ensuring the welfare and safety of all pupils from all groups, including their safeguarding.

Strategic Leadership and Management

- Leading the implementation of The United Learning Way, which outlines the guiding educational principles of our Trust, throughout Accrington Academy.
- Defining and delivering the vision and objectives of the school and the School Strategic Plan as agreed with the LGB and the Regional Director;
- Leading the school in partnership with the LGB and United Learning senior leaders;
- Developing and maintaining the values of United Learning within the school;
- Contributing professionally to the broader United Learning agenda.

Job Description

People Leadership and Management

- Leading on all staffing issues, including the appointment and development of staff;
- Ensuring a culture of working together to achieve high standards throughout the school;
- Promoting staff well-being within the Framework for Excellence;
- Managing performance and ensuring that staff receive appropriate support in order to achieve excellence;
- Leading reflective practice and inspirational professional development that enables all members of staff to flourish;
- Promoting equality and fairness for all staff;
- Taking responsibility for one's own professional development as the Principal.

Financial and Business Management

- Working closely with the Executive Business Manager and finance colleagues to ensure budgets are set and managed within guidelines agreed with the LGB and the Group through the Regional Director and Chief Financial Officer;
- Monitoring actual spending against budget;
- Monitoring and evaluating the impact of funding to support the progress and achievement of priority groups including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those eligible for pupil premium funding;
- Implementing key group-wide policies and strategies (e.g. in relation to Compliance, Finance, HR and Technology);
- Ensuring that efficient administrative systems are implemented and managed;
- Managing, maintaining and utilising the site and facilities to their full value to the Academy, the Group and the community;
- Ensuring that health and safety and safeguarding policies are managed and implemented.

Links with Community and Business

- Developing strong and effective partnerships with parents;
- Developing a thriving sense of school community to include present and past pupils and parents;
- Creating proactive, entrepreneurial and effective links with the wider community;
- Making a strategic contribution to the development of the Group;
- Developing strong and effective partnerships with local primary schools, colleges and universities;
- Ensuring that the school contributes to United Learning cluster initiatives.

Reporting

- The Principal of Accrington Academy reports to the Regional Director who reports to the Director of Secondary Academies for United Learning, who is responsible to the overarching Charity Board through the Chief Executive.
- The LGB, and its Chair in particular, will also work closely with the Principal in relation to its responsibilities to act as a 'critical friend' to the school. This relationship with the Chair and LGB will be key to driving the school forward and further developing local partnerships.
- The Principal will keep the Regional Director fully informed on the progress of the school and will submit reports for consideration as appropriate. The Principal will participate in an annual performance review as part of the agreed appraisal process.

Person Specification

Education and Training

- Educational and professional qualifications appropriate for the role of Principal of the school. Such qualifications would normally include a degree from a recognised university, professional qualifications (for example PGCE) and ideally a further post graduate qualification;
- Evidence of professional development across career to date.

Experience

- Demonstrable success in a leadership role in a comparable organisation and through significant periods of development;
- A proven track record of securing excellence in an educational establishment;
- A proven track record in rapidly raising pupils' achievements;
- Evidence of the ability to develop excellent relationships with staff, members of the local community, parents and pupils (across key stages);
- Experience in leading and developing colleagues and effective teams.

Knowledge, Skills and Qualities

- An in-depth understanding of school leadership and school improvement needed to achieve outstanding pupil progress and personal development;
- The ability to create and implement effective management systems in which roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly articulated;
- An understanding of the importance of research in developing approaches to learning and curriculum design and the ability to put this into practice;
- An understanding of expectations of all phases of education, from early years through to Post-16;
- A thorough understanding of school markets, the analysis required to develop those and the skills to implement successful marketing strategies.

Personal Qualities

- A clear understanding of and commitment to the development of the United Learning values, the United Learning Way, and the Framework for Excellence;
- Belief in equality of opportunities for all pupils and staff regardless of culture, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religious identity;
- Clarity of vision with the ability to communicate it in a compelling and engaging way;
- An adaptable leadership style which encourages leadership from others and celebrates success;
- Determination and resilience;
- Sensitivity and wisdom in managing relationships with pupils, parents and staff;
- High level interpersonal and communication skills with the capacity to influence at all levels;
- High expectations of pupil achievement, conduct and behaviour;
- A commitment to collaborative working, both within the school and across the Group;
- Openness, sense of humour, energy and enthusiasm.

Terms & Conditions of Employment

Employer

United Learning

Position

Principal, Accrington Academy

Reporting Line

Regional Director, Secondary Academies

Location

Accrington Academy or such other nearby place operated by the school or to which the school may relocate.

Start Date

September 2026

Starting Salary

The salary will be commensurate with the significance and importance of the post and the experience of the successful candidate. Pay is above STPCD with additional increases for excellent performance.

Holidays

You are entitled to take holidays during the normal school holidays except where your presence is required for proper execution of your duties as Principal. United Learning would expect you would not have less than six weeks of the year without any work involvement. Staff are guaranteed one paid personal day off each year.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Principal is eligible to be a member of the TPS.

Health Insurance

The Principal is eligible to be a member of United Learning's medical insurance scheme, currently with BUPA. It is also possible for other family members to be included within the policy but, when this happens, there is a charge.

Ill Health

United Learning's sick leave and pay policy will apply. The policy allows for a three years' sliding qualification period, at the end of which you will be entitled to full pay for 100 working days and half pay for 100 working days.

Relocation

Assistance with relocation is negotiable and may be available up to a maximum of £8,000 on the basis of receipts relating to actual relevant expenditure.

Safeguarding

United Learning is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff to share this commitment. This appointment will be subject to an enhanced DBS Check, medical clearance, online checks and employment references, all of which are satisfactory to United Learning.

Benefits

We encourage flexible working and offer opportunities where it meets the needs of the role. We also have a wide range of benefits, including a Health Cash Plan which gives you money back on essential healthcare, discount schemes that save you money, as well as access to an Employee Assistance Programme, discounted gym memberships, cycle purchase and car leasing.

How to Apply

If you wish to discover more about this exciting opportunity, need any further information or would like to have an informal discussion please contact our Head of Leadership Recruitment, Geoff Morris on geoff.morris@unitedlearning.org.uk.

Visits are warmly encouraged and can be arranged through Geoff Morris.

All applications should be submitted online via our [website](#).

The closing date for receipt of completed applications is Monday 16 March 2026 at 11.59pm.

The Selection Process

We will treat all enquiries, formal and informal, in confidence. The selection process will be as follows:

All applications will be acknowledged by email. If you have not received acknowledgement that your application has been received within two working days of sending it, please contact **Philippa Beckett** on philippa.beckett@unitedlearning.org.uk

Shortlisting will take place on 18 March.

The selection process will take place on **Monday 23 March** and **Wednesday 25 March** at Accrington Academy. You do need to be available for both dates.

Candidates will be offered full feedback on their application and/or interview.



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