

Candidate information pack

Chief Executive Officer



Closing date for applications	26 th January 2026 at noon
Interview dates	9 th and 10 th February 2026

Great Schools at the Heart of our Communities

Learning together, making the difference

Welcome from Chair of Trustees

Thank you for your interest in the role of CEO with Focus-Trust

Focus-Trust is a charitable primary schools trust established in 2012. We are based in the North-West of England and are dedicated to working with our 15 primary schools and welcome the opportunity for further growth. It is the core purpose of Focus-Trust to continually strive to be a learning organisation where the learning of all children and adults is valued and promoted.

We passionately believe equity of opportunity starts with education; irrespective of where you were born or where you live, a high-quality education in one of our great schools will make a fundamental difference to all our children's lives, career prospects and social mobility.

The Focus-Trust team is committed to providing a great educator in every class with a strong moral purpose, high quality pedagogy and a broad and balanced curriculum. We aim to provide inclusive and inspirational environments where our children thrive and build the social and cultural capital they need to make aspirational choices about their future, overcoming any barriers they may encounter.

We are commencing the recruitment process for our next Chief Executive Officer. After eleven years of outstanding service, our current CEO has decided that the time is right to step aside as the Trust continues to evolve.

We are immensely proud of all that has been achieved under Helen's exceptional leadership. She leaves an extraordinary legacy, having shaped the Trust through her clear vision, dedication, and unwavering commitment. As she moves on from this role, Helen is keen to continue giving back to education and wider society and will take time to consider the next chapter of her career, likely in a consultancy capacity.

This transition presents an exciting opportunity for a dynamic, values-driven and forward-thinking leader to guide the Trust into its next chapter of development and impact.

We are seeking an inspirational CEO with the ambition and moral purpose to build on our strong foundations, continue our growth, and lead the Trust confidently into the future.

The successful candidate will demonstrate the following qualities:

- A proven track record of sustained school improvement
- Extensive experience of leading and motivating people and building effective relationships at all levels
- Credibility with staff, parents, children, and external partners
- A proven track record of strategic and successful business planning and financial management
- A clear understanding of the current educational and political landscape
- A leader who will epitomise our ethos, communicating and sharing our vision and purpose with energy, commitment, and passion

We have a thriving partnership of schools who are driven to do the best for our children. As a team we believe in 'Collective efficacy' and have a shared commitment to work together on the things that matter to improve outcomes for all.

We are proud to have a great team of people working in our schools who always put children at the heart of our practice. We are committed to providing excellent professional development

opportunities for all our staff and always aim to be an employer of choice.

Our next CEO must therefore be an exceptional leader who is committed to moving the Trust forward in the next phase of our strategic development. If you feel you are the person who is able to continue with making our mission a reality: 'Learning together, making the difference' and can demonstrate how we build upon our vision of 'Great schools at the heart of our communities, we look forward to hearing from you.

Should you have any questions about the role or would like to arrange a visit to any of our schools, please contact Janet Berry, Executive Assistant via email j.berry@focus-trust.co.uk or by calling 07867 423 870. Janet will arrange for you to speak with either myself or Helen Rowland, our current CEO. We can also arrange a visit to one of our schools and our Head Office if this would be helpful.

I wish you well in your application.

Paul Spencer - Chair of Trust Board



Chief Executive Officer - Job description

Job title	Chief Executive Officer
Salary range	£125k - £135k
Responsible to	Focus-Trust Board of Trustees
Holidays	35 days + statutory bank holidays
Pension	Local Government pension
Line Manager to	Headteachers/Principals Central Team – Deputy CEO/Education Director, COO, CFO, Executive Assistant

Purpose of the role

- To support the Focus-Trust Board in the efficient and effective delivery of the Trust's vision, strategic aims and corporate plan.
- To articulate and live out the vision, values and strategic aims for Focus-Trust and ensure all decisions are made in the best interests of our children, colleagues and school communities.
- To uphold the Trust's values, and to provide visible, effective, inspirational and compassionate leadership across the organisation.
- To ensure that Headteachers and Local Governing Boards continue to be highly aligned, with agreed autonomy, in line with the scheme of delegation. Each school will retain its own character with shared goals and core values that bind them together for the benefit of whole trust family. A family steered, guided and supported by CEO.
- To ensure the Board of Trustees receives appropriate advice and information to enable them to fulfil their governance responsibilities.
- The CEO is accountable to the Board of Trustees for continuous school improvement and ensuring the educational and overall success of the schools within the Trust.
- Working with all stakeholders to secure a commitment to the vision and direction of travel for the Trust, whilst managing change, is an essential part of the role.

Key responsibilities

Strategic educational leadership and performance management

- Provide strong and effective leadership, vision and strategic direction to Focus-Trust staff to achieve the highest levels of performance and ensure a culture of continuous improvement. This includes leading the formation of the corporate plan and delivering on the strategic objectives to secure the Trust's future sustainability.
- Ensure that education and, in particular, the transformation of performance of Focus-Trust schools is central to what Focus-Trust does and is delivered successfully.
- Ensure that appropriate performance management and wider administrative and governance arrangements are in place to ensure the effective implementation of the organisation's Corporate and Business Plans.
- Continue to build a collaborative and supportive culture across the Trust, which is safe, inclusive and positive across all schools
- Maintain the individual ethos of each school, within its local context, aiming for high levels of both autonomy and alignment
- Lead on the growth strategy for the Trust

Quality of Education

- Tackle educational inequality, upholding and securing ambitious educational and behavioural standards for all pupils
- Promote further support for the most disadvantaged and those with additional and special educational needs and disabilities within a safe and secure environment
- Enable the Trust to establish and sustain a broad, rich and coherent curriculum entitlement for all pupils, supported by effective curricular leadership and delivered through high-quality teaching in all our schools
- Ensure the Trust has high quality expert teaching in all our schools, built on an evidence-informed understanding of effective teaching and how pupils learn
- Ensure that priority areas for improvement are identified and acted upon in line with the strategic plan
- Enable the Trust and its schools to engage with appropriate evidence-based strategies for improvement and ensure their effective implementation

Financial accountability

- As Accounting Officer, ensure robust systems are in place so that the funds available to Focus Trust are used properly, efficiently and effectively
- Take personal responsibility for propriety and regularity in the management of public funds and in the day-to-day operations of the organisation.
- Ensure rigorous approaches to identifying, managing and mitigating risk
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of the Trust through effective financial and estates management
- Direct the Trust's activities to achieve the most efficient, effective and sustainable provision of education to the highest quality, prioritising and making the most effective use of resources available
- To fulfil all accounting officer responsibilities as outlined in the Academy Trust Handbook, including;
 - adhering to the seven principles of public life,
 - having oversight of all financial transactions,
 - completing annual statements on regularity, propriety and compliance
 - advise on Trustee intent or action of incompatible with the articles, funding agreement or handbook and notifying the DfE if it is considered that the Trustees are in breach of these.

Operations and People

- Manage Focus-Trust's strategic operations and the delivery of key objectives, with accountability to the Board.
- Take responsibility for the institutional development of Focus-Trust and the implementation of the annual work plans and long-term strategies.
- Provide direction and management oversight to all Focus-Trust operations, including overall line accountability for safeguards and security.
- Take responsibility for the safety, health and environmental performance of all academies and offices under the direction of Focus-Trust.
- Lead and effectively manage the activities and performance of the Trust's central team
- Enable a people strategy that identifies talent, supports and develops all staff and sustains a culture of staff wellbeing and professionalism
- Ensure the Trust has high quality employment practices that promote equality, diversity and inclusion, including ethical practices of recruitment and retention of staff
- Ensure staff have access to high quality professional development, aligned to balance organisational and individual needs and has systems in place to manage talent and succession planning

Board management and stakeholder relations

- Support the Board in the formulation and development of strategy, and ensure that all decisions made by the Board are recorded and implemented.
- Work effectively across the full range of external stakeholders, including government, funding and regulatory bodies.
- Actively support the Board of Trustees to fulfil its role and deliver its functions effectively
- Promote and enable ways in which the Trust's schools engage meaningfully with their communities and are responsive to the wider needs
- In line with the Trust's civic responsibility, work with partners and other stakeholders in the local area, region and beyond to contribute to the wider agenda

Communication

- In partnership with the Chair, ensure that an effective internal and external communications strategy is in place.
- Communicate effectively with academy principals, teachers, pupils, parents and governors.
- Represent Focus-Trust effectively to key external partners, the media and the public on a national platform.

Confidentiality

- Ensure that confidentiality is maintained in line with agreed policies and protocols.

Safeguarding, Data protection and Information Security, Health and Safety

- Comply with Trust policies and procedures on safeguarding and child protection
- To undertake the role of SIRO, support the work of the COO and be a point of contact for all GDPR queries. Be the named person with responsibility of Information Asset Owner (IAO)
- Ensure the Trust as a whole complies with all statutory and legal requirements including safeguarding, data protection and Health and Safety

Equality and Equity

- Ensure that the Trust reflects a vibrant and inclusive ethos which actively values and promotes diversity, unity and community cohesion, and supports pupils to become successful integrated citizens.
- Actively challenge and address discrimination.
- Ensure a continual focus on equity as measured by pupil outcomes.

The post holder is expected to:

- Actively support the vision, values and work of Focus-Trust
- Respect confidentiality of colleagues, pupils, families and visitors and not breach this trust
- Participate in arrangements for appraisal and in the identification of areas in which s/he would benefit from training and undergo such training
- Proactively keep abreast of developments in relation to the post, and whenever possible and appropriate, attend professional development opportunities

- Comply with and support all policies of Focus-Trust and the schools.
- Ensure that all statutory requirements are met.
- Undertake such additional duties as may reasonably be requested by the Trustees

Key relationships

- Trust Board
- Central Team
- Principals and school leaders
- School business managers
- Trade Unions
- Local governing boards
- External organisations
- Community groups
- Charities
- Local and national businesses
- Local Authorities
- DfE, Ofsted

This job description is neither exhaustive nor exclusive, and it may, after consultation with the postholder, be subject to modification and amendment in accordance with the needs of the Trust.

This job description details responsibilities but does not direct any priorities or amount of time to be spent carrying out these duties.

Chief Executive Officer – Person Specification

	Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	Good honours degree or equivalent	•	
	Qualified Teacher Status /PGCE		•
	Evidence of ongoing professional study in the field of education and/or leadership	•	
	Masters level qualification		•
	NPQH or NPQEL		•
Experience	Experience as a Headteacher in at least one school, with a strong track record of sustained school improvement		•
	Detailed knowledge and experience of primary sector education		•
	Proven track record of successful leadership within a multi-disciplined organisation including the formulation and delivery of strategy, policies and objectives	•	
	Proven track record of strategic and successful business planning and financial management	•	
	Experience as a CEO/Executive Leader in a relevant sector, e.g. HR, Finance, Business, Education	•	
	Proven track record of leading and managing change, translating the Trust's ambitions into real and measurable achievements	•	
	Experience of leading an organisation, ensuring all statutory and legal requirements are met	•	
	Experience of leading, managing and motivating teams of people, building effective relationships at all levels within an organisation.	•	
	Experience of creating, developing and maintaining effective working relationships with key stakeholders, including Local Authorities	•	
	Strong record of educational leadership, raising standards, achieving outstanding results		•
	Experience of growing a Trust and onboarding new schools		•
Knowledge	Knowledge of current primary practice, including the National Curriculum and educational developments	•	
	Knowledge of legislation practice in the field of education and Special Educational Needs	•	
	Knowledge and experience of devising, developing and monitoring programmes to support the needs of all young people	•	
	Knowledge of models of effective leadership and organisational structures	•	
	Knowledge and understanding of people, governance, budget management and financial systems	•	

	Knowledge and understanding of the current educational landscape including issues relating to academies and the national agenda.	•	
Skills	Ability to prioritise, plan and organise yourself and others	•	
	Ability to work efficiently and accurately, particularly under pressure, to deadlines, and using own initiative	•	
	Effective partnership working skills – able to build on and draw on the strengths of others to generate outstanding results	•	
	Skilled in developing a culture of outstanding performance and supporting improvements in standards, in teaching and learning and in behaviour	•	
	The ability to lead and form trusting teams that set the highest standards in the curriculum and provide effective curriculum leadership	•	
	The ability to identify and nurture talent to that all leaders and staff are effectively developed	•	
	Strong verbal and written communication skills, including excellent report writing skills	•	
	The ability to collate, analyse and interpret complex data to inform school development	•	
	Excellent interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence; with the ability to build strong working relationships with trustees, headteachers/principals, and other stakeholders; and to always be approachable to all staff at all levels	•	
	Excellent IT Skills, including the ability to use social media to enhance the Trust's reputation and share pupils' learning	•	
	Strategic thinker who can analyse and process complex information and data rigorously in order to inform decisions	•	
	Demonstrate sound judgement, assess risk, prioritise issues effectively	•	
Personal Qualities	Confident and calm in difficult situations	•	
	Integrity and a commitment to ensuring the highest levels of quality, effort, endeavour and compassion from all across the Trust	•	
	Personal resilience and tenacity – the ability to see things through and work through challenges, whilst having a deep understanding of context and people.	•	
	Compassionate and warm personality – optimistic and enthusiastic	•	
	Strong interpersonal, communication and presentation skills, including warmth and empathy whilst still holding others to account	•	
	Ability to line manage Headteachers and members of the executive team, and motivate, support, challenge and inspire high levels of performance in all staff	•	
	Creative, dynamic approach to anticipating and solving challenges whilst identifying opportunities	•	

	Shows concern for impact – identifies the most important concerns and issues of others and adapts to achieve the required outcomes	•	
	Able to effectively engage and communicate at all levels, be visible, bring presence and gravitas to the role whilst remaining approachable and professional at all times	•	
	Willingness to take measured risks and challenge accepted behaviours and beliefs	•	
	Self aware, able to learn and committed to ongoing professional development	•	
	A highly effective networker who can demonstrate a variety of leadership styles and approaches, with a capacity to influence others.	•	
Other factors	Able to work flexibly, including any service hours necessary to achieve Trust objectives.	•	
	A commitment to Equal Opportunities. Valuing diversity and equity.	•	
	Drivers licence essential as is access to a vehicle (Travelling to multiple locations is a key requirement of the role)	•	
	Must not be disqualified by law from holding directorships and must undergo an Enhanced DBS check	•	
	Demonstrate a firm commitment to the concept of multi-academy trusts and a desire to see the Trust flourish and grow in a sustainable manner. The ability to articulate and defend a clear vision and plan for future success.	•	

The panel will assess an applicant against the person specification through;

- Application
- Interview
- Assessment activities
- References and other employment checks

What you might want to know about Focus Trust

Who are we?

Focus-Trust was incorporated in May 2012 as a primary trust. The Trust was originally sponsored by Focus Education, however the DfE decoupled this arrangement in 2024 and the Focus-Trust remains an entirely separate legal entity. As with all academy trusts, the Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. The Trust's offices are situated in a newly converted historic mill conversion in Chadderton, Oldham with excellent motorway networks to access our schools.



The defining feature of Focus-Trust is that it is a specialist primary phase trust. This means that the work of the Trust is driven by the distinctive needs of primary schools. Whilst the Trust has robust systems for accountability, each school has their own distinctive identity, ethos and culture, and this is a commitment to every school when they convert and join the Trust.

Focus-Trust currently has a small centrally employed team. The members of the team are highly skilled and committed to the mission, vision, culture, values and moral purpose of the Trust.

All the schools within the Trust are willing partners who have actively chosen to join Focus-Trust and there is a very high degree of consensus, cooperation and commitment from within the group.

The Trust has robust policies and systems in place to govern and guide its work. These have been gradually implemented as the Trust has grown. The Trust has well-established productive relationships with trade unions and meets half termly with a group of national trade union representatives to discuss policy development. This has enabled us to introduce and change a range of policies in a streamlined and cooperative way.

Equity of opportunity

Focus-Trust is an equal opportunity employer, dedicated to a policy of non-discrimination in employment on any basis including age, gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, gender, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation and/or medical condition.

Safeguarding

Focus-Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people. There is an explicit expectation that all employees share this commitment and adhere to all safeguarding policies and procedures. Applicants should be aware that the recruitment process will include an assessment of your suitability to work with children.

Right to work in the UK

Under the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, it is a criminal offence to employ anyone who is not entitled to live or work in the United Kingdom. Applicants can expect us to ask for proof of this at interview stage, where you will be asked to provide some original documentation to confirm that you are eligible to work within the UK. Photographic proof of identity will also be required.

Validation of qualifications and identity

All shortlisted candidates will be asked to bring original certificates or relevant qualifications and identity documents to interview. These will be photocopied and kept on file and, if appropriate, may be confirmed as genuine with the relevant awarding bodies. The copies of the successful candidate will be retained on their personnel file. The copies of unsuccessful candidates will be treated as confidential waste and disposed of appropriately.

References and Social Media Checks

If you are shortlisted, we will take up references before the interview date, unless you state otherwise on your application form. However, two satisfactory references must be received before we can confirm any offer of an appointment. One of your referees must be your current or most recent employer. The information we request will relate to salary, length of service, skills and abilities, suitability for the job, disciplinary record and suitability to work with children. Copies of references or open references will not be accepted. On receipt of references, your referees may be contacted to verify any discrepancies, anomalies or relevant issues as part of the recruitment verification process.

In line with our safer recruitment policy, on-line presence checks will be undertaken if you are shortlisted. This check is designed to complement the range of standard recruitment checks and allows us to identify a candidate's online presence which potentially could damage the organisation's reputation.

Disability

To comply with the Equality Act 2010, we are legally required to consider making reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged in the recruitment and selection process. We are therefore committed to meeting, wherever possible, any needs you specify on the application form. Please contact the named person on the advert, if you need to discuss this in any detail. We will consider any reasonable adjustment under the terms of the Act to enable an applicant with a disability (as defined under the Act) to meet the requirements of the post.

Disclosure of a criminal record

Employment in this role is subject to an enhanced check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Checks will also be made against the lists showing people barred from working with children. All checks must be satisfactory before any offer of employment can be confirmed and before commencement of work can take place.

Dress code

We expect all staff to dress professionally and appropriately for the roles undertaken. We pride ourselves on the high standards of dress of both our pupils and staff; these standards are led by our staff who we expect to set an example.

Knowledge and skills profile

This is an important part of your application and is your opportunity to explain how you meet the person specification for the post. You should demonstrate, using no more than 2000 characters, your skills, knowledge and experience and give short examples. Describe how you match the requirement of the job; include experience gained from previous jobs, community or voluntary work. Ensure that the information you give is well organised, relevant and brief. You may find it helpful to use sub-headings in order to keep your statement well focused. If you do not submit this profile, you will not be considered for shortlisting.

Policies

Focus-Trust and the schools have a range of policies and handbooks that help to make clear our expectations and ways of working. These are always shared openly with staff and are accessible to everyone. There are several policies that prospective employees should be aware of when making an application. These can be found on the Trust website www.focus-trust.co.uk and school websites. All members of staff will be asked to sign a declaration as part of the induction process to acknowledge that they have read and understand the Code of Conduct and some of the key policies, e.g. Safeguarding and Child Protection, Health and Safety, Acceptable use of IT.

Pensions

Focus-Trust contributes to Teachers' Pensions and Local Government pensions in the same way and with the same level of contribution as local authorities.

Employer Relations

Focus-Trust has a Trade Union agreement which recognises the teacher and support staff unions. This is further supported by an ongoing and productive relationship with key trade union officials. Thank you for taking the time to read this information pack. We wish you every success in any application you may make.





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