



ATHENA LEARNING TRUST

Head of Catering, Health and Wellbeing

Applicant Pack

Closing date:

12th February 2026

Interview date:

24th February 2026



Join Athena - Inspiring World-Class Education Together!

At Athena, we are a passionate and forward-looking educational organisation committed to providing world-class education and helping individuals **lead great lives**. Our core values of "**dream big, take responsibility, and be kind**" guide our mission to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment where everyone can excel and grow.

Job Title:	Head of Catering, Health & Wellbeing
School Base:	Dunheved House/Hybrid
Closing Date:	12/02/2026
Interview Date:	24/02/2026
Vacancy Start Date:	ASAP
Contract Type:	Permanent
Salary:	£47,307.91 - £52,538



A Message from our CEO: Transforming the Future of School Food

Dear Candidate,

At Athena Learning Trust, we believe that education does not stop at the classroom door. We are on a mission to prove that high-quality nutrition and holistic wellbeing are not add-ons to a child's education, they are the very foundation of it.

We are looking for more than a manager; we are looking for a pioneer.

The link between what a child eats and how they learn, behave, and grow is undeniable. Yet, for too long, school catering across the sector has been treated as a peripheral service focused solely on compliance and cost-cutting. At Athena, we are turning that model on its head.

We want our schools to be regional hubs of nutritional excellence. We want our kitchens to be learning labs where students discover the journey of food from farm to fork. We want our dining halls to be spaces of dignity, social connection, and health.

Why this role? Why now?

As our Head of Catering, Health and Wellbeing, you will have the mandate to innovate. You will not be constrained by the way things have always been done. Instead, you will be empowered to:

Build a Brand: Define what Athena Food looks and tastes like.

Influence Policy: Use our scale to set a new national standard for school nutrition.

Drive Sustainability: Lead our charge toward a zero-waste, low-carbon food future.

Impact Lives: Directly improve the health outcomes and life chances of thousands of young people.

We are looking for a visionary leader who possesses the grit to manage complex operations and the heart to advocate for our students' wellbeing. You will have a seat at the table where strategic decisions are made, reporting into our executive team and chairing our new Wellbeing Advisory Board.

If you are a self-starter with a passion for nutritional science, a flair for culinary excellence, and the leadership drive to make Athena a national leader in this space, we want to hear from you.

Join us, and let's nourish the next generation together.

Ben Parnell

Chief Executive Officer Athena Learning Trust

Being an Athenian

At Athena, we believe in the power of education to transform lives and shape a brighter future. We are dedicated to fostering a strong sense of community, where students, educators, and parents collaborate to achieve academic excellence and personal growth. Our commitment to "**dream big, take responsibility, and be kind**" underpins everything we do, inspiring our students to aim high, take ownership of their learning, and treat each other with respect and compassion.

We are inspired by wisdom, creativity and learning. Determined to create a world where all children get to go to great schools, our mission is to provide the knowledge and education to bring opportunities, choices and freedom.

If you want to be part of an inspirational team of big thinkers who will support you to develop your full potential and value your knowledge, passion, wellbeing and commitment, it sounds like you could be on your way to joining us and becoming an Athenian.



What makes Athena different

Our Commitment to you

We recognise that all of our people have a role to play in ensuring our students have access to world-class education and so each one is valued. We are committed to creating an inclusive and supportive work environment that promotes both personal and professional growth. We put staff wellbeing first and here are some of the benefits and perks you can enjoy as a member of our team:

Impact: positive outcomes for our students

Leaders: we see everyone as a school leader

Wellbeing: ensuring your time off is for you

Generous pension: the local government pension scheme

Employee Wellbeing Initiatives: support your physical, mental, and emotional health

Benefits: Enjoy access to various discounts, benefits, and rewards to enhance your lifestyle.

Join us on this journey to inspire greatness in ourselves and others. Together, we can create a brighter future and make a lasting difference in the lives of our students and the communities we serve.



People

passionate about making a difference in the lives of each other and our students

Development

investing in our employee's growth and development



No burn out

cut low-impact workload and champion staff wellbeing

Support

valuing our employee time and impact by investing it well and providing wrap around support

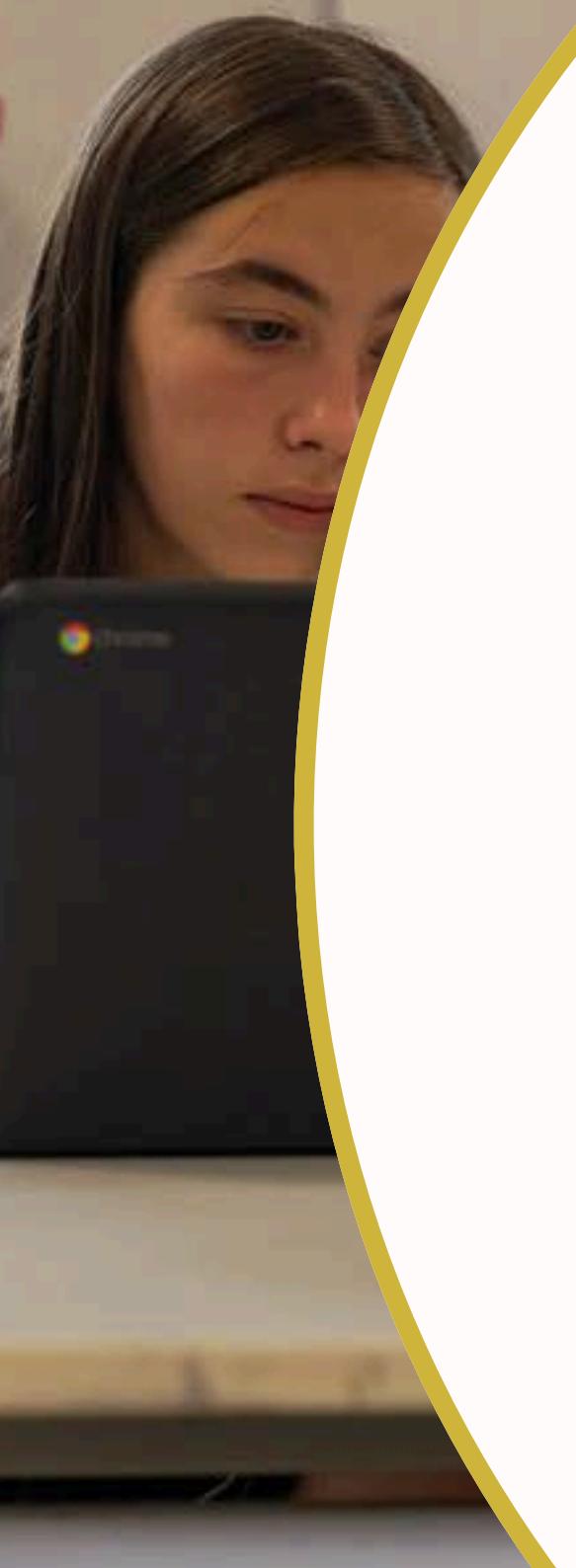
Flexibility

flexible working to promote work-life balance where possible

Role Summary

To provide visionary, sector-leading leadership for the catering and wellbeing function across Athena Learning Trust. You will position Athena as a national beacon of excellence, where healthy, sustainable, and high-quality food is a fundamental pillar of the educational mission.

You will be a motivated self-starter and thought leader, responsible for bridging the gap between the kitchen and the classroom. Your goal is to drive innovation that ensures the catering service is not only financially sustainable and compliant but serves as a primary vehicle for improving student health outcomes, cognitive performance, and environmental stewardship.



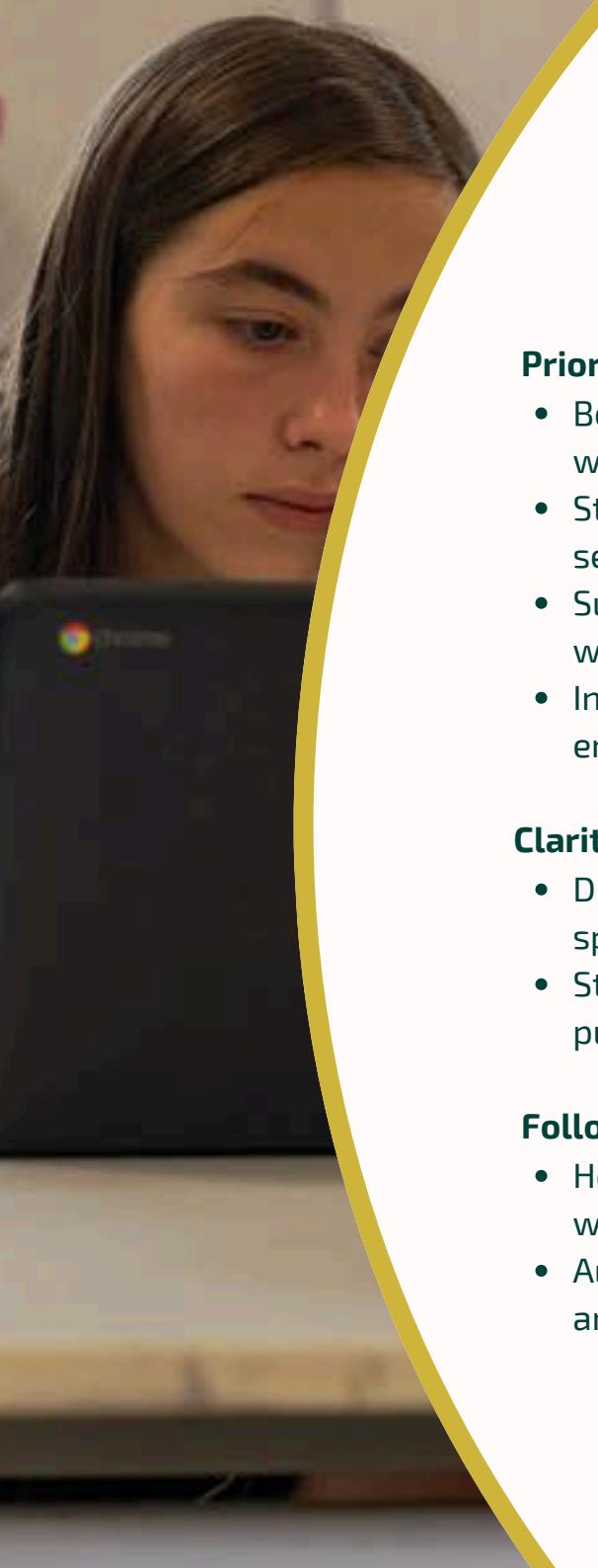
What you will be doing

Build Knowledge

- Sector Leadership: Develop and execute a catering strategy that sets a national benchmark for the link between nutrition, student behavior, and educational attainment.
- Curriculum Integration: Partner with Directors of Education and Heads of PE/Science to integrate Food Literacy and Farm to Fork concepts into the formal curriculum.
- Evidence-Based Practice: Lead Research and Development by visiting world-class organisations and translating innovation into Trust-wide practice.
- Advanced Analytics: Use data-driven insights to evaluate meal uptake, food waste, and nutritional trends, producing an Annual Health and Wellbeing Impact Report.
- The Culinary Academy: Design and lead an internal training academy to upskill kitchen staff in advanced nutrition and culinary excellence.

Build Trust

- Executive Influence: Act as the Trust's lead health expert, advising Shared Service Leadership and Trustees to champion the Health First agenda.
- External Representation: Represent Athena at national forums and policy groups, shaping the future of school food in the UK.
- The Wellbeing Advisory Board: Establish and chair a board of students, parents, and health professionals to co-create the Trust's food culture.
- Gold Standard Compliance: Implement and maintain a HACCP-based food safety system, ensuring a mandatory 5-star environmental health rating across all sites.
- Total Safety: Ensure full compliance with the Food Safety Act, Natasha's Law (allergens), and all statutory risk assessments.

A photograph of a young girl with long brown hair, looking down at a tablet device. The tablet has a colorful circular logo on its screen. The background is a warm, out-of-focus indoor setting.

What you will be doing

Prioritisation

- Beyond Standards: Ensure all menus significantly exceed DfE school meal standards, prioritising whole foods, diverse plants, and Blue Zone nutritional principles.
- Strategic Procurement: Manage tenders and budgets to achieve Best Value while prioritising local, seasonal sourcing.
- Sustainability Leadership: Deliver Net Zero Catering objectives through low-carbon menus, zero-waste kitchens, and elimination of single-use plastics.
- Infrastructure: Lead the design and specification of kitchens for new builds and refurbishments, ensuring they are fully Classroom Ready.

Clarity and Energy

- Dining Dignity: Lead the Excellent Dining Experience initiative, creating calm, inclusive dining spaces that support positive mental health.
- Student Ambassadors: Develop and oversee a Student Food Ambassador programme, enabling pupils to shape menus and lead peer-to-peer learning.

Follow Up

- Health KPIs: Develop and monitor metrics that measure the impact of nutrition on student wellbeing, including energy, focus, and engagement.
- Auditing: Conduct regular internal audits and act on findings to ensure consistency, accountability, and continuous improvement as the Trust scales.

How you will be doing it

Dream Big

- Deliver value opportunities for world class education for all students

Take Responsibility

- To maintain confidentiality of information acquired in the course of undertaking duties for the department.
- Ensure Health and Safety and Safeguarding are at the centre of your approach.
- Take accountability for your own development and aspire to deliver the very best practice across all areas of your role.
- To attend staff meetings and school-based CPD days as required.

Be Kind

- To encourage acceptance and inclusion of all students.
- Support positive strategies for promoting equality and for challenging racial and other prejudice.

Whilst every effort has been made to explain the main duties and responsibilities of the post, each individual task undertaken may not be identified.

Employees will be expected to comply with any reasonable request from a manager to undertake work of a similar level that is not specified in this job description. You could reasonably be asked to work out of our partner sites to support where required.





Qualifications

Essential

- Level 4 Food Safety; Degree Level or equivalent in Nutrition, Dietetics, Hospitality, or Business.

Desirable

- *Professional recognition (e.g., Registered Nutritionist or Executive Chef status).*

Experience

Essential

- Senior multi-site catering leadership with a proven track record of transformational change.
- Ability to build a brand/vision from scratch; experience in large-scale sustainable procurement.
- Thought Leadership: Ability to present a compelling vision for school food to diverse audiences.
- Expert knowledge of HACCP, SFBB, and the School Food Standards.

Desirable

- Experience influencing national food policy or working with high-profile health/nutrition NGOs.
- Experience moving services from outsourced to in-house Gold Standard models.
- Experience in consumer research and behaviour change psychology.
- Proficient in advanced data analytics and impact reporting.

Values and Ethos

- Uncompromising Passion: A deep-seated belief that every child deserves access to elite-level nutrition regardless of their background.
- Innovation Mindset: A refusal to accept the status quo of school catering.
- Environmental Stewardship: Committed to the Farm to Fork journey and radical sustainability.

How to Apply

If you are passionate about our values and dedicated to making a meaningful impact on education, we invite you to apply. **Please complete the application form on My New Term** and tell us about how you connect with our values of "**dream big, take responsibility, and be kind**" and what you feel you can contribute to our team and our goal to deliver world class education.

Athena Learning Trust is committed to **safeguarding** and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All posts are subject to Enhanced DBS clearance and appropriate pre-employment checks.

We reserve the right to close this advert and interview and appoint earlier than the advertised closing date should there be a good response to the advert, so early applications are advised.

Apply now

and experience the difference in a rewarding and meaningful career in education.