



Application Pack: Chief Executive Officer for Orchard Learning Alliance

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Welcome from the Chair of Trustees

Dear Candidate,

Welcome to the **Orchard Learning Alliance Multi-Academy Trust**.

The children, staff and communities will be thrilled to welcome you on-board to our family of 10 schools within the Trust.

Our schools came together through choice, autonomy and co-design to form our Trust in 2022. Born from a group of over 35 local schools, we have been working in partnership for collaborative self-improvement since 2018. All are locally based in Wokingham and Reading.

As our current CEO retires to spend more time with family, we are excited to offer this position for the next journey of our Trust. Together, we will navigate the challenges and opportunities in the modern educational world.

We are seeking an experienced CEO or educational leader who shares our Trust's values, vision and ethos where everyone matters, everyone has opportunities and everyone can thrive. Our CEO is in the heart of our community, supporting our inspired leaders and teams whilst balancing the financial responsibilities.

We all look forward to meeting you in person, if, after reading through our information pack, you feel this is the next step in your journey.

Chair of Trustees

Application Timeline



ORCHARD
LEARNING ALLIANCE



Ethos and Development

The Orchard Learning Alliance was formed in May 2022, when the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of all 10 founding schools agreed a Vision, Mission & Values statement, and made a commitment to form a new multi-academy trust. From the outset we agreed the following guiding principles:

- Autonomy: respecting and celebrating what makes our students, staff and school communities unique
- Co-design: innovating through collaboration and consensus and sharing best practice to enhance provision
- Excellence: empowering our school communities to constantly strive for improvement, placing it at the heart of our culture

With support from the Regional Director, we began a phased growth plan. While waiting to take their turn and while due diligence was underway, each school signed a Trust Partnership Agreement, so even before schools had formally converted, we began to operate as a MAT.

Waingels, which was already constituted as a multi-academy trust, took the lead and in April 2024, Waingels was joined by Churchend (a stand-alone academy in Tilehurst, Reading) South Lake and Hawkdon Primary schools. A year later – April 2025, Highwood, Hillside and Willow Bank Infants and Juniors came on board, and finally our last two founding schools – Lambs Lane and Radstock – joined us on November 1st, 2025.

We are now a multi-academy trust of 10 schools (1 secondary, 8 Primary 1 junior & 1 Infants). We also have a Trust Partnership Agreement with three other schools which are all keen to join us. We serve a community of 4,600 students and 750 staff. All our schools in their most recent Ofsted have been judged as Good. Our schools are high-performing – with outcomes that are consistently above, and in many cases significantly above national outcomes.

While each of our schools is unique and while we celebrate each school's unique identity within its own community, all our schools embrace inclusion and belonging. Three, and soon to be four of our schools include a Resource Base for children with Special Educational Needs.

We have retained school improvement as a core function of our Trust and our Headteachers and School Leaders are committed to collaboration, peer led support and challenge and professional development.

Job Description

Orchard Learning Alliance is committed to creating a diverse workforce. We will consider all qualified applicants for employment without regard to sex, race, religion, belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, age, disability, marriage or civil partnership.

Job details

Salary: this position will attract a competitive salary, benchmarked using the CST/ Brightmine benchmarking report, and will take into account the successful candidate's experience.

Hours: 37 hours per week. Some flexible and home working. There will be a requirement to attend Trust Board and other meetings, often in the evening.

Start: September 2026	Contract type: full-time, permanent
Base: Currently based at Waingels, Woodley	Reporting to: Chair of Trustees

For further details please contact hr@orchardlearningalliance.com.

Main purpose

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the key leadership role of the Trust and is responsible for:

- Leading and inspiring the Orchard Learning Alliance Multi-Academy Trust, developing strong relationships with the ten founding schools of the Trust and building capacity across the Trust team.
- Working closely with the Chair of Trustees and the Board to inform and support their work, including the Board's setting of the Trust's vision and strategy.
- Delivering the agreed strategy; overseeing all operations of the Trust – including enabling educational and organisational improvement at scale; ensuring sustainability, compliance, and mitigating risk.
- Building strategic partnerships with a range of stakeholders to ensure both strong educational outcomes for pupils and the sustainable development of the Trust.





Job Description

Leadership and Vision

The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for the Trust's strategic design and development and will lead their teams to deliver on the strategy by:

- Articulating a clear narrative for the Trust's purpose in the community and consider its growth and development. Working with the Board this will reflect the Trust's ambition of delivering excellent learning and social justice through exceptional schools.
- Developing a clear organisational strategy and goals (created with the Board) that reflects the Board's vision and the CEO's leadership narrative.
- Undertaking regular and meaningful engagement with staff (at all levels), stakeholders including the local community, Ofsted and other end-users to both share the narrative and to inform and refine it where appropriate.
- Identifying opportunities to communicate the leadership narrative – externally and internally – through speeches, blogs, media (including social media), external meetings and otherwise.
- Accessing opportunities to develop and stretch their own thinking by engaging with thought-leaders, sector-specific and wider research and trend analysis, and appropriate professional development. This informs their ongoing work on strategy.
- Ensuring a healthy balance between central strategy and accountability, and the ability of each school to develop a sufficient sense of individuality and maintaining the agility to respond to local needs.
- Modelling and actively promoting commitment to the Trust's values and, more broadly, commitment to ethical governance, leadership, and practice across the organisation. The CEO will adhere to and embody the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education and the Seven Principles of Public Life (The Nolan Principles).
- Identifying opportunities to celebrate and share practice within the Trust that contribute to furthering the Trust's vision, values and strategy.



Job Description

Strategy and Governance

The CEO will deliver a strong strategic and governance structure by:

- Investing sufficient time in developing relationships with the Board; including regularly meeting with the chair and keeping them informed of key developments, successes, opportunities and risks.
- Ensuring clear processes for their own role in formulating strategy and how the Board engages with this process and endorses strategy.
- Ensuring they and the executive team have developed and implemented clear and appropriate reporting mechanisms that contribute to efficient governance of the Trust.
- Welcoming accountability from the Board and robust performance management, while encouraging the Board to discharge this across all aspects of organisational delivery and performance.
- Embracing the support and advice of the Board, recognising the value of good governance.
- Supporting the Board to meet their duties as company directors and as Trustees of a charitable body, working with the Board to ensure operational compliance and fulfilment of all statutory responsibilities.
- Ensuring awareness of and adherence to the scheme of delegation in the work and responsibilities of the executive team, committees and local governing bodies.
- Ensuring the implementation of high-quality benchmarked surveys and other engagement mechanisms to achieve routine accountability to communities (based on metrics set by the Board) – including to parents, pupils and to staff.





Job Description

Quality of Education

The CEO will deliver excellent learning provision through all academy schools, ensuring school improvement is central to the purpose of the Trust by:

- Ensuring that OLA children receive excellent teaching and experiences throughout all schools through the promotion of high-level professional standards, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching quality and pupils' achievement.
- Ensuring there is high quality dynamic curriculum provision and related assessment procedures in each academy school to meet the needs of all pupil groups.
- Working collaboratively with School Support Partners and Headteachers to deliver robust data management to ensure that assessment procedures, attainment and progress measures within every school are accurate and consistent.
- Taking responsibility for ensuring that all stakeholders receive appropriate and necessary reports on the development, progress and attainment of all pupils.
- Ensuring there are clear and transparent mechanisms which inform parents and pupils about the curriculum, attainment and progress, as well as the contribution they can make in supporting their child's learning and achieving the school's targets for improvement.
- Ensuring the effective use of technologies, both in teaching and learning, and in operational matters to enhance provision, develop efficiencies and secure value for money as appropriate.
- Ensuring that strong relationships are developed and maintained with educational partners and other stakeholders to enhance educational provision and widen opportunities for all pupils within the Trust.
- Cooperating fully and transparently with external agencies and bodies, including Ofsted, to ensure they can acquire an accurate view of the structure, management and performance of the Trust and its schools.
- As the leader of the Trust, keep up-to-date with developments and news in the education sector.



Job Description

People Matter

The Chief Executive Officer will ensure that people matter, and that OLA strives to be an employer of choice by;

- Building and developing an executive team of experts – across a range of appropriate disciplines – through whom they can adequately develop and deliver strategy and ensure organisational delivery, improvement and compliance across the Trust's operations.
- Ensure a strong succession planning model is in place across the Trust, including supporting the growth of future leaders at all levels within the organisation, ensuring a commitment to equity, parity, inclusion and respect in doing so.
- Line managing the senior executive leadership team and, through them, ensure high performance and effectiveness across each aspect of the Trust's operations.
- Confidently and sensitively addressing under performance or behaviours that are inconsistent with the values and culture the organisation stands for.
- Establishing an 'employer of choice' culture, with a strong sense of purpose, nurturing, recruiting and retaining staff through commitment to talent management and development, sustainable workload, flexibility, and other key employment benefits. The CEO will role model a positive and sustainable workplace culture.
- Fostering a cultural and operational commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in order to thrive, setting an example from the top down and acting as a catalyst for achieving inclusion at all levels.
- Bringing about organisational change and improvement through a careful approach to engaging and involving staff, ensuring a collaborative model as far as possible.





Job Description

Trust Sustainability

The Chief Executive Officer will ensure the sustainable future of the Trust by:

- Discharging their financial responsibilities as accounting officer, including ensuring financial compliance, robust checks and balances, a commitment to achieving value for money, and financial probity always across the organisation.
- Working with the Chief Financial Officer and the executive team to ensure that the Trust's strategy is supported by effective, responsive and integrated central services, as well as high-quality operational delivery across all schools.
- Engaging the Board on sustainability issues, including strategic discussions and decisions as to how to invest resources to best serve the Trust's medium to long-term needs and ensure value for money over time.
- Seeking economies of scale, considering scaled procurement and a culture to maximising internal talent, deploying resources strategically, supporting savings on external costs and building internal capacity in doing so.
- Building relationships with other local and regional MATs to share expertise, resources and to embark on shared procurement where appropriate.
- Developing a culture that values, encourages, and ensures compliance for volunteerism, fundraising and sustainable income generation to further enhance the educational offer for pupils' and contributes to improved outcomes.
- Ensuring that risk management systems and compliance monitoring systems are in place so that the organisation can anticipate and plan for risks and fulfil all its statutory duties and responsibilities.
- Encouraging the Board to play their part in building and maintaining key stakeholder relationships, while also ensuring their impact on pupils and benefits of all external partnerships are demonstrable and relate sufficiently to core business.
- Creating a sense of openness and proactive engagement with local, regional and national stakeholders. Prioritising external relationships with reference to strategy and potential impact.



Job Description

Annex A – The responsibilities of the Accounting Officer

The Chief Executive Officer is the accounting officer of the Multi-Academy Trust. The responsibilities and duties of the accounting officer are currently (July 2023) set out in sections 1.28 – 1.38 of the [Academy Trust Handbook 2025](#). These sections, as they currently stand upon publication of this document are:

What does the accounting officer do?

1.31 The accounting officer role includes specific responsibilities for financial matters. It includes a personal responsibility to Parliament and to ESFA's accounting officer for the Trust's financial resources.

1.32 Accounting officers must be able to assure DfE's accounting officer, Parliament and the public, of high standards of probity in the management of public funds, particularly regularity, propriety, feasibility and value for money, including economy, efficiency and effectiveness – the 3 elements of value for money.

1.33 Accounting officers must adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life.

1.34 The accounting officer must have oversight of financial transactions, by:

- ensuring the academy Trust's property and assets are under the Trustees' control and measures exist to prevent losses or misuse
- ensuring bank accounts, financial systems and financial records are operated by more than one person
- keeping full and accurate accounting records to support their annual accounts.

The accounting officer's annual statement

1.35 The accounting officer must complete and sign a statement on regularity, propriety and compliance each year and submit this to DfE with the audited accounts. The accounting officer must also demonstrate how the Trust has secured value for money via the governance statement in the audited accounts.

The accounting officer's duty to raise concerns

1.36 The accounting officer must take personal responsibility (which must not be delegated) for assuring the Board that the Trust is complying with the funding agreement and handbook.

1.37 The accounting officer must advise the Board in writing, if action it is considering is incompatible with the articles, funding agreement or handbook. This includes where such actions conflicts with the duties of the accounting officer, to ensure regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility.

1.38 Similarly, the accounting officer must advise the Board in writing, if the Board fails to act where required by the funding agreement or handbook. Where the Board is minded to proceed, despite the accounting officer's advice, the accounting officer must consider the Board's reasons and if the accounting officer still considers the action proposed by the Board is in breach of the articles, the funding agreement or handbook, the accounting officer must notify ESFA's accounting officer immediately in writing.



Job Description

Annex B: The Seven Principles of Public Life

The Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles) as set out on the government website (as of June 2024):

The Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles) apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the Civil Service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The principles also apply to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

1. Selflessness – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
2. Integrity – Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
3. Objectivity – Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
4. Accountability – Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
5. Openness – Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
6. Honesty – Holders of public office should be truthful.
7. Leadership – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

The full text of the Seven Principles of Public Life can be accessed on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-seven-principles-of-public-life).



Person Specification

1. Qualifications & Professional Background

Essential

- Degree-level education or equivalent professional experience.
- Evidence of continued professional development in leadership, education management, or organisational development.
- Proven senior leadership experience within the education sector (e.g., Headteacher, Executive Headteacher, Director of Education, COO/Deputy CEO in a MAT).
- Demonstrated success in improving outcomes across multiple schools or complex organisations.

Desirable

- Postgraduate qualification in education, leadership, or business (NPQEL, MBA, MEd).
- Experience of working with Trustees/Governors at strategic level.
- Experience of leading organisational growth, mergers, or multi-site operations.

2. Leadership & Strategic Skills

Essential

- Visionary leadership with the ability to articulate and execute a compelling long-term strategy for the Trust.
- Demonstrable ability to lead improvement across diverse school contexts, phases, and communities.
- Ability to inspire, motivate, and develop high-performing teams, including senior leaders and principals.
- Strong decision-making and problem-solving skills with evidence of sound judgement under pressure.
- Experience in building a strong organisational culture rooted in values, collaboration, and high expectations.

Desirable

- Experience in change management at scale, including cultural transformation.
- Track record of fostering innovation in teaching, learning, and curriculum design.

3. Educational Expertise

Essential

- Deep understanding of school improvement strategies, pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment.
- Knowledge of statutory frameworks, Ofsted requirements, and accountability measures.
- Ability to analyse and interpret data to drive performance across the Trust.
- Proven ability to support school leaders in raising standards and closing attainment gaps.

Desirable

- Experience in SEND, alternative provision, and inclusion strategies.
- Understanding of early years through to post-16 pathways.

4. Financial & Operational Competence

Essential

- Strong financial acumen with experience of managing large, complex budgets.
- Understanding of MAT operational frameworks, including HR, estates, compliance, safeguarding, and risk management.
- Ability to ensure financial sustainability and value for money across the Trust.
- Experience in ensuring robust governance, accountability, and audit processes.

Desirable

- Experience in capital projects, estates planning, or large-scale resource management.

Person Specification

5. Stakeholder Engagement & Communication

Essential

- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to influence, negotiate, and build trust.
- Experience working with a range of stakeholders including Trustees, local authorities, unions, parents, and community groups.
- Ability to represent the Trust externally and build strategic partnerships.
- Ability to work effectively with trade unions and employee bodies.

Desirable

- Experience engaging with regional/national education bodies, policymakers, and sector networks.

6. Personal Qualities

Essential

- A collaborative mindset, balancing autonomy and consistency across schools.
- Commitment to the highest standards of pupil achievement, wellbeing, and safeguarding.
- Integrity, transparency, and a values-driven leadership style.
- Resilience, adaptability, and the ability to manage competing priorities.
- High levels of emotional intelligence and the ability to handle sensitive issues with discretion.

7. Safeguarding

Essential

- A thorough understanding of statutory safeguarding requirements (KCSIE, DSL responsibilities).
- Commitment to promoting the welfare and safety of children and young people.
- Willingness to undertake enhanced DBS and relevant safeguarding training.



Thoughts from our Community

We asked our OLA Headteachers and Chairs of Governors about the traits and experience they would like to see in our next CEO, and this is what they said:

The confidence to make difficult decisions, but the willingness to reflect and adapt

A collaborative facilitator

Honesty Integrity Consultative Decisive with a sound moral compass

Ability to build a strong sense of belonging and an ethos which matches that of our Trust

A 'big picture' thinker and a growth mindset

Visionary Strong communication skills and able to build effective relationships

A team player with a deep understanding of the values of OLA and committed to working in partnership

Leadership experience across secondary and primary educational settings

Experience Business and operational capability to deliver our Strategic vision

A relationship-centred leader—warm, authentic, highly emotionally intelligent, and able to build trust at every level

Collaborative, supportive, focused, ambitious and decisive

Experience of successful senior leadership across varied educational contexts, with a strong track record of school improvement

Believe in making a difference for the better for our community; having the moral integrity to do the right thing, even when it is hard

Demonstrate strategic and visionary thinking, calmness and resilience under pressure, and strong emotional intelligence that enables them to build trust and positive relationships across the Trust

