

Active
Learning
Trust

Candidate Pack
Department Leader
February 2026

A close-up photograph of a young child with blue eyes and freckles. The child is wearing a blue superhero mask with yellow lightning bolt patterns around the eye holes. They are also wearing a purple hooded jacket. The background is blurred.

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Dear applicant

“ ”

Thank you for your interest in joining the Active Learning Trust. I know that choosing where to build your career is a big decision, and before I share the details of the role, I want to tell you why this is such a special place to work.

At ALT, we do things differently. We are a values-led organisation that believes our people are our greatest strength. We invest deeply in the adults who work with us, because when we help our colleagues grow, our pupils thrive. Ours is a community built on trust, care and ambition – where every member of staff is encouraged to discover their strengths, take opportunities, and know that their work is shaping brighter futures for the children in our care.

We don't see education as just a system; we see it as a moral mission. Every day, our staff bring energy, compassion and commitment to their roles, united by the belief that every child deserves the very best. We stand alongside you with high expectations, professional development, and unwavering support so that together we can achieve extraordinary things.

If you share our values and our passion for making a difference, we would be delighted to hear from you. I look forward to the possibility of welcoming you into our Trust – a place where people matter, potential is nurtured, and purpose drives everything we do.

With warm regards,



Lynsey Holzer
Chief Executive Officer

Active Learning Trust

Overview

Our multi-academy Trust was originally established in 2012 and is currently made up of 1,600 staff across 19 schools in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, serving nearly 8,500 young people and their families. Our shared Trust mission of delivering excellence to ensure our young people can thrive and prosper is at the heart of everything we do.

Our trustees fulfil their duties through our Trust Leadership Team, which includes our central team and school leadership teams, working together as one unified organisation with joint accountability. We have an established central team that is not only knowledgeable but also driven by an imperative to deliver the very best for the young people in our care.

At Active Learning Trust, we are restless for excellence and improvement so that our children can thrive and prosper. Deeply rooted in the heart of our communities, people choose to join our trust because we make a difference. We explore the art of the possible to find the right solutions for our children, our people and the wider education sector.

Our Team

Our team is made up of experts across all specialist areas, including education, finance, HR, communications and marketing, estates, governance, procurement, data and IT. Their skills allow us to deliver shared savings and, more importantly, provide essential services to schools, enabling school-based leadership to focus on improving outcomes for pupils in the broadest sense.

- We know our schools exceptionally well and we offer both honest reflection and evaluation of our strengths and areas for improvement.
- We have clear and appropriate plans for continuing to improve the quality of education and pupil achievement.
- We encourage and celebrate the individual characteristics of each of our schools and provide them with a good balance of autonomy central oversight and accountability.

Our Values

At the heart of our Trust are five core values that shape our culture and guide every aspect of our work. They influence our interactions, decisions and strategic direction, and they unite our school communities.



-  **I aspire, we achieve**
-  **We're curious, creative and bold**
-  **A family, not a house share**
-  **Comfortable being candid**
-  **Humour, humility, humanity**



“

ALT has put a lot of work into developing genuine shared values which you can see starting to come through all the schools. This feels very powerful. Despite the geographical distance between schools, there is real sense of the greater good with school leaders constantly supporting one another where needed. It is a particular privilege in my role to be able to identify and spread excellent classroom practice from school to school. People in this Trust are happy, and there is a widespread feeling of exciting times ahead.

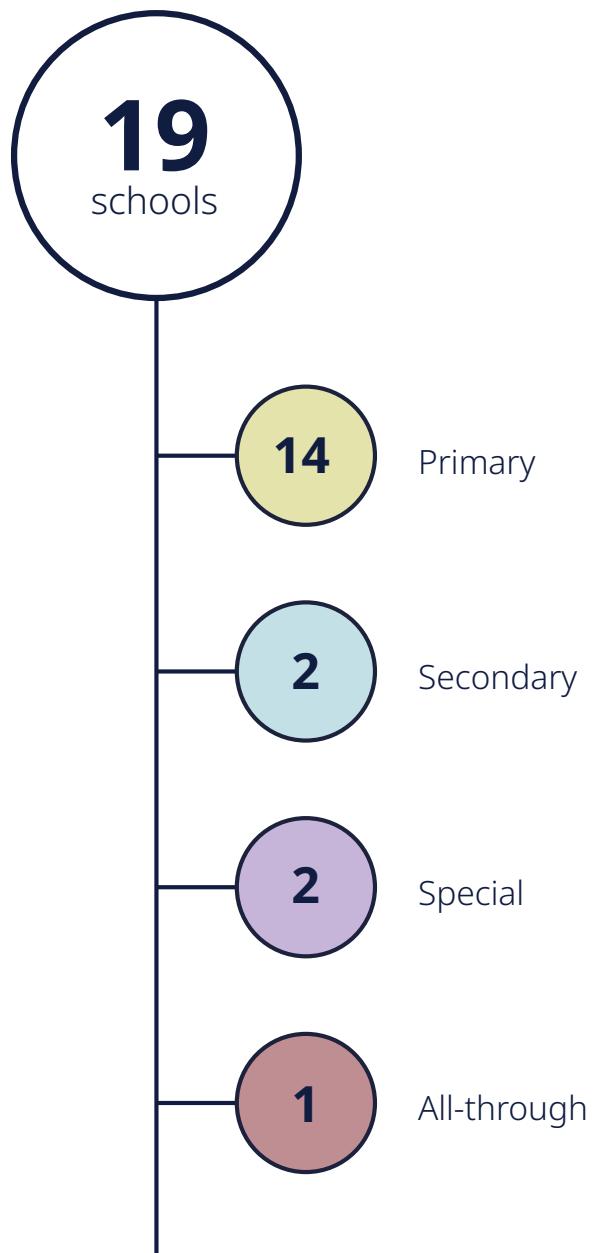
Lisa Corby
Academy Improvement Lead

Our Schools

Active Learning Trust encompasses 19 schools – eight in Cambridgeshire and 11 in Suffolk – including two special schools, two secondary schools, one all-through school and 14 primary schools. Of these, one special school and four primaries converted to academy status, while the remaining 13 operate as sponsor-led academies. Four of our schools opened as new establishments, gradually increasing their pupil intake year by year.

Our schools fall naturally into three designated geographical sub-regions – Ipswich, the Lowestoft area, and mid Cambridgeshire. This allows the Trust to apply so-called 'hub' level school-to-school support and collaborative working along with other mutually supportive arrangements. The synergy this creates has become a key way of working for Active Learning Trust teams and continues to develop further over time.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the Trust is above that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with an Education Health Care Plan is in line with national averages.
- The proportion of our pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities and who speak English as an additional language are below national average.



Job Vacancy

Department Leader

Join our team and help make a positive impact on the lives of our students!

Highfield Ely Academy is a vibrant SEN school in Cambridgeshire, dedicated to empowering students with diverse needs. We foster a nurturing and inclusive environment where every learner can thrive, achieve independence, and develop lifelong skills.

Summary of Key Responsibilities

- Works as part of a close leadership team with the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher
- Is highly visible in classrooms and learning spaces
- Coaches, mentors and develops teachers and support staff
- Models excellent practice for pupils with complex SEND
- Creates a culture of open classrooms, professional dialogue and shared practice

Our People-First Philosophy

At Active Learning Trust, we invest in you from day one. We love working with specialists who are united by their skills and passion for shaping the future of education. We provide tailored coaching, leadership training and clear progression pathways that turn roles into fulfilling, lifelong careers. Guided by our values of open dialogue, bold thinking and supportive teamwork, we put your growth and well-being at the heart of everything we do - so that you can focus on making a real difference in our schools and beyond.

Why Join Our Trust?

- Belong to a compassionate and inclusive trust that values you and the role you play.
- Gain access to our VivUp employee benefit system, Cycle to Work scheme and Teacher pensions.

Contact

If you wish to discover more about this exciting opportunity and our Academy, then please contact Pippa Edwards (School Business Manager) on 01353 662085, or email pedwards@highfield.cambs.sch.uk



Highfield Ely Academy

Location

Ely, Cambridgeshire

Contract

Full time, Permanent

Salary

Leadership L6 - L10
£58,569 - £64,691

Job description

Department Leader

Salary: Leadership L6 – L10

Academy Site: Highfield Ely Academy

Reporting to: Headteacher

Main purpose

This is a leadership role about developing adults so that children with complex SEND thrive. The Department Leader joins the school's leadership team and works closely with the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher to shape teaching, culture, expectations and professional practice across the school. This is not a paperwork or compliance role. It is a visible, people-centred leadership role. The successful candidate will spend significant time in classrooms, supporting, coaching, modelling and developing teachers and support staff so that high-quality practice for pupils with SEND is consistent and continually improving. You will lead a department, but your impact will be felt across the whole school through your contribution to staff development, school improvement and the lived experience of our vision and values.

What this role looks like in practice

At Highfield, a Department Leader:

- Works as part of a close leadership team with the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher
- Is highly visible in classrooms and learning spaces
- Coaches, mentors and develops teachers and support staff
- Models excellent practice for pupils with complex SEND
- Creates a culture of open classrooms, professional dialogue and shared practice
- Leads by example through positivity, energy and care for both pupils and adults
- Contributes directly to school development priorities and whole-school improvement
- Supports staff to feel valued, confident and continually improving
- Ensures that pupils experience engaging, purposeful and well-structured learning every day

Key leadership responsibilities

Leadership of Teaching and Learning

- Lead and develop the quality of teaching within your department so that pupils with SEND experience consistently engaging, appropriate and purposeful learning
- Support, challenge and develop staff through coaching, modelling and professional dialogue
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching on pupil progress and wellbeing
- Contribute to whole-school self-evaluation and improvement planning

Developing People

- Act as a coach, mentor and role model for staff
- Line manage and performance manage staff within your department
- Support staff wellbeing while maintaining high professional expectations
- Identify and share excellent practice across the school
- Contribute to the long-term professional development and INSET programme

Department and Curriculum Leadership

- Provide professional leadership of delegated areas of the curriculum
- Lead behaviour, routines and expectations within your department
- Ensure strong and effective communication with families
- Contribute to the shared curriculum offer across school sites where relevant

Contribution to the Leadership Team

- Play an active role within the school's leadership team
- Contribute to the development of systems, processes and culture across the school
- Work collaboratively with colleagues across the Active Learning Trust where appropriate
- Support the strategic direction of the school through leadership of agreed priorities

The kind of person we are looking for

We are looking for a leader who:

- Is hardworking, positive and brings energy to their role
- Genuinely cares about children with special educational needs
- Genuinely cares about the adults who work with those children
- Has a strong understanding of complex SEND
- Has clear evidence of developing other people's practice
- Has evidence of impact in previous roles
- Is someone that colleagues naturally want to work with and learn from
- Is reflective, open and committed to continual improvement
- Can balance warmth and support with clear expectations and accountability
- Enjoys being part of a team and contributing to a positive school culture

Previous leadership experience is desirable but not essential. What matters most is evidence that you can lead, influence and develop others.

Teaching responsibilities

As a qualified teacher, you will carry out the professional duties as set out in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and meet the Teachers' Standards.

Systems, safeguarding and professional expectations

As part of the leadership team, you will:

- Promote a safe, calm and well-ordered environment for pupils and staff
- Uphold safeguarding responsibilities at all times
- Support effective performance management and professional conduct
- Contribute to transparent, efficient and purposeful school systems

Responsibilities of all Active Learning Trust employees

- Uphold the Trust's aims, vision and values
- Work cooperatively and professionally with all stakeholders
- Promote and safeguard the welfare of children and young people
- Engage positively with professional development and review processes

The Active Learning Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people. All appointments are subject to safer recruitment checks including enhanced DBS clearance.

Time allocation

The role includes up to **1.5 days per week** allocated to Department Leader and leadership responsibilities.

The Active Learning Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people. We expect all staff to actively share this commitment. All adults working in our Trust in whatever capacity will be part of a thorough safer recruitment process. All appointments will be subject pre-employment checks including the taking of satisfactory references and enhanced criminal record clearance (via the Disclosure and Barring Service) in line with the need to create and maintain a safe culture.

Please note that this is illustrative of the general nature and level of responsibility of the role. It is not a comprehensive list of all tasks expected to be carried out. It will be reviewed annually in conjunction with the appraisal process and planning for the next academic year. It will be reviewed, and it may be subject to modification or amendment at any time after consultation with the holder of the post. The duties may be varied to meet the changing demands of the Trust at the reasonable discretion of the Reports to Manager.

Person Specification

Department Leader

E = Essential / **D** = Desirable

Qualifications & Training		
Degree	E	
Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)	E	
Relevant National Professional Qualification (NPQ)		D
Experience		
At least 2 years of special school teaching experience	E	
At least 2 years of leadership experience		D
Teaching experience in different Key Stages and Pathways	E	
Managing curriculum development	E	
Evidence of leading and line-managing others successfully and with impact	E	
Evidence of leading CPD to a range of stakeholders		D
Participation in external reviews		D
Management of ECTs and their development		D

Skills and Knowledge		
Show evidence of vision, initiative and leadership in managing change to enhance and raise standards	E	
Dealing and communicating effectively with parents	E	
Strong communication skills using a range of communication methods	E	
Be able to effectively manage student behaviour	E	
Demonstrate a detailed understanding of effective teaching	E	
Understand how an effective curriculum is constructed	E	
Demonstrate a detailed knowledge of Highfield behaviour and attendance strategies	E	

Personal Qualities		
Embodies of the Active Learning Trust's values: - I aspire, we achieve - We're curious, creative and bold - A family, not a house share - Comfortable being candid - Humour, humility, humanity	E	
Commitment to uphold the seven principles of public life (the Nolan principles) at all times	E	
Commitment to maintaining confidentiality at all times	E	
Demonstrate initiative, self-motivation and a growth mindset		
Ability to lead and manage colleagues sensitively		
Equal Opportunities		
Commitment to inclusion, equality and diversity	E	
Safeguarding		
Commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.	E	

Application Process

How to Apply

You can browse and apply for all Active Learning Trust vacancies by clicking the link below to access our recruitment platform. Once you have found the corresponding vacancy, click on the 'Apply Now' button to begin your application. You can save your application and return to it at any time. Please ensure you have completed and submitted your application before the deadline shown on the job advert.

View current vacancies

Hints and Tips

To increase the chance of your application being considered for the role, please follow these steps:

- Use the Person Specification document to write your application. Consider using the headings and give examples where possible.
- Check for punctuation and grammar errors.
- Ensure your first referee is from your current or most recent employer. If you are employed within a school or academy, ensure you list your Headteacher as your first referee.
- All gaps in employment history must be explained. This should start from the date you left full-time education, including the summer holiday.



Useful Information

As an equal opportunities employer, we welcome applications irrespective of race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation and/or age. We value the individuality and creativity that every worker potentially brings to the workforce.

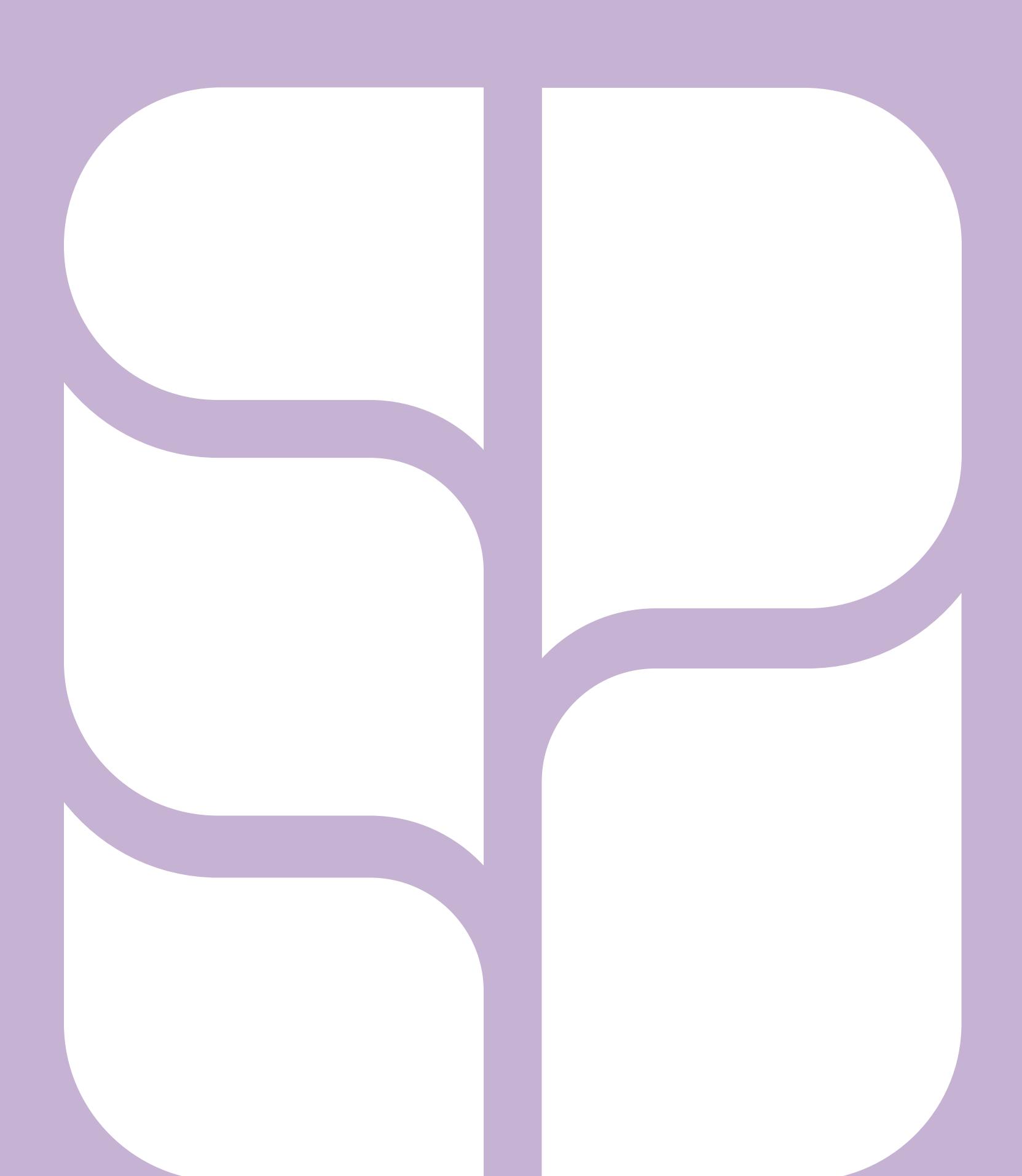
No CVs are accepted in line with requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education, therefore all applications are required to be completed using the MyNewTerm platform.

The Active Learning Trust reserves the right to interview and appoint prior to the advert closing date. With this in mind, we encourage you to apply as soon as possible.

The Active Learning Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people. We expect all staff to actively share this commitment. All adults working in our Trust in whatever capacity will be part of a thorough safer recruitment process. All appointments will be subject to pre-employment checks including the taking of satisfactory references and enhanced criminal record clearance in line with the need to create and maintain a safe culture. Please be advised that references may be requested prior to interview for roles within our academies, where permission has been given to do so via MyNewTerm.

Candidates are advised that, if shortlisted for interview, they will be subject to an online search of information in the public domain.

This post will come under the requirements of the Childcare (Disqualification) 2009 Regulations and the successful applicant will be required to complete a declaration form to establish whether they are disqualified under these regulations.



www.activelearningtrust.org