



**SECONDARY SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE  
PARTNER (WITH SPECIALISM)  
CANDIDATE PACK**

## FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Thank you for your interest in working with us at River Learning Trust. You will see from our website that we are a flourishing Multi-Academy Trust with 20 primary schools, 10 secondary schools, an Alternative Provision and a Teaching School Hub both serving Oxfordshire, and a large SCITT working across Oxfordshire, West Berkshire and Swindon. We are also continuing to grow and whilst a large Trust, we are geographically well-connected in Oxfordshire and Swindon.

As we look towards the next chapter of our development, we are seeking a highly effective Support and Challenge Partner to work within the Central Team. This is a role for a headteacher, a former headteacher or a senior leader with considerable secondary school experience. We are looking for a track record of improving schools, and a deep ambition to ensure that school leaders are enabled to flourish and excel in their work.

We are intentionally inclusive, aiming for all our young people, regardless of their background or starting point, to lead successful, empowered lives. If you are passionate about education founded on evidence-based curricula and pedagogical brilliance, and you have the relational and leadership skills to support a range of Headteachers and senior leaders to flourish in their roles, then we would welcome your application at River Learning Trust.

Working as part of our secondary school strategic team alongside the Director of Secondary Education, Deputy Director of Secondary Education, and the Director of Inclusion, you will play a key role in supporting several schools as their Support and Challenge Partner.

You will also take a strategic lead on an element of cross-trust strategy, enrolling colleagues, leading networks, overseeing implementation and bringing meaningful change at scale.

Our current priorities of People-First, Equity and Community provide a framework within which we are aiming for both continuous improvement and a significant impact on the experiences and outcomes of our most disadvantaged pupils.

Furthermore, we have exciting priorities in progress in relation to Character Education, and building further the sense of authentic connection and belonging of students and staff across our schools. You will have the opportunity to contribute to the development of strategy in these areas, both at whole Trust and individual school level.

We ask a lot of the people that work with us, and we think we offer a lot in return. Most importantly we have a real commitment to training and professional development for everyone that works with us. It's busy, it's stretching, and it's incredibly rewarding. If you think this might be for you, then we would love to hear from you.

Applications should be made online through MyNewTerm.

If you have any questions, please contact Tom Boulter, Director of Secondary Education, on [tboulter@riverlearningtrust.org](mailto:tboulter@riverlearningtrust.org), to arrange a convenient time to talk through the role.

Thank you again for your interest and we look forward to hearing from you. Paul James  
Chief Executive

# SECONDARY SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE PARTNER (WITH SPECIALISM)

STARTING SEPTEMBER 2026

SCALE POINT L20-L23

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## THE ROLE

The Support and Challenge Partner (SCP) is a pivotal leadership role designed to drive school improvement through a dual approach of empowerment and accountability. You will be a Headteacher, a former Headteacher or a senior leader with considerable secondary school experience.

Your primary aim is to provide Headteachers and school leaders with support of the highest quality and impact, alongside appropriate, accurate and meaningful challenge. The post holder will work closely with Headteachers, offering the external perspective necessary to navigate the complexities of school leadership, and contributing strongly to their flourishing. You will gain a strong contextual understanding of each school, and be able to flex your approach to fit what is needed.

Your focus will be to ensure that strategy, capacity and momentum are maintained in every assigned school. By blending high-level dialogue and coaching with robust interrogation of data and practice, you will help schools identify barriers to success and co-implement realistic, high-impact solutions.

Beyond individual school support, you will serve as a Trust-wide expert in a specific specialism (e.g., SEND, Disadvantaged Outcomes, or Curriculum Design), contributing to the strategic evolution of the River Learning Trust at a senior level.

The five most significant areas of focus for the role are:

- 1. Self-Evaluation and Validation:** To interrogate school self-evaluation and quality assurance processes, ensuring that school leaders' perceptions of their performance align with objective evidence and national benchmarks.
- 2. Strategic Capacity Building:** To provide or broker coaching and mentoring to empower school staff, ensuring that improvement is sustainable and that leadership capacity is grown from within the school.
- 3. Narrowing Achievement Gaps:** To maintain a sharp focus on the progress and experience of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, considering academic performance, holistic personal development, and sense of connectedness with school.
- 4. Specialist Trust Improvement:** To lead a specific strategic area of school improvement across the trust secondary schools, researching best practices and disseminating high-impact strategies to all member schools.
- 5. Evidence-Informed Change Management:** To bridge the gap between identifying "what" needs to change and "how" to implement it, providing the practical wisdom from outside to navigate school culture and barriers to change.

## JOB PURPOSE AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

**Reports to:** Director of Education (Secondary)

**Responsible for:** Providing high-quality support and challenge to 3-4 schools; leading a Trust-wide specialist school improvement strand

**Working Hours:** 0.6 FTE

**Salary:** L20-L23

**Location:** Hybrid (RLT Central Team Office at Rose Hill Primary School, Home, Schools)

**Disclosure level:** Enhanced DBS

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### SCHOOL PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY:

- **Assessment & Scrutiny:** Discuss and assess school self-evaluation, quality assurance processes, and School Improvement Plans against available evidence.
- **Objective Review:** Provide an objective review of performance, including national test results, internal trends, and holistic pupil well-being data.
- **Target Setting:** Ensure school priorities and annual targets are sufficiently ambitious, realistic, and aligned with Trust values.
- **Governance Reporting:** Provide clear, transparent reports to Governing Bodies and the Directors of Education regarding school performance and trajectory.

### STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP & SPECIALIST IMPROVEMENT:

- **Trust Strategy:** Contribute to the senior-level strategic direction of the Trust.
- **Specialist Lead:** Take a Trust-wide lead on a specific element of school improvement, to be agreed post-appointment (e.g. Raising Standards, Pupil Premium, or Character Education).

### COLLABORATIVE SUPPORT & COACHING:

- **Coaching / Mentoring:** Use high-level coaching skills to support Headteachers and SLT, helping them lead change while building long-term internal capacity.
- **Brokering of support:** Identify, research, and secure relevant school improvement support from within the Trust and wider networks.
- **Practical Implementation:** Support schools in the implementation of change, including action planning and practical support for delivery.

### GENERAL DUTIES:

- Contribute to the overall ethos/work/aims of the River Learning Trust.
- Appreciate and support the role of other professionals.
- Attend and participate in relevant meetings as required.
- Participate in training and other learning activities and performance development as required.
- Follow the Trust's Health and Safety rules and procedures and adhere to safeguarding principles.
- Whilst every effort has been made to explain the main duties and responsibilities of the post, each individual task undertaken may not be identified.
- All staff 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.

*The River Learning Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and preventing extremism; all staff must ensure that the highest priority is given to following the guidance and regulations to safeguard children and young people. The successful candidate will be required to undergo an Enhanced Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and obtain any other statutorily required clearance. Employment will also be conditional on the receipt of at least two acceptable references (one from current/latest employer) and evidence of the formal qualifications required for the role.*

# PERSON SPECIFICATION: SECONDARY SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE PARTNER (WITH SPECIALISM)

## REQUIRED SKILLS, EXPERIENCE, AND KNOWLEDGE

SECTION	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Qualifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).</li> <li>• NPQH or equivalent leadership qualification (<i>desirable</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful track record in secondary school headship or a significant period of senior leadership.</li> <li>• Experience in coaching and mentoring senior leaders.</li> <li>• Experience of planning and implementing strategies for school improvement and raising standards.</li> <li>• Experience of working with or in a multi-academy trust central team (<i>desirable</i>).</li> <li>• Experience leading a specialist area (e.g. SEND/PP) across multiple sites (<i>desirable</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep understanding of school culture and change processes.</li> <li>• Expertise in curriculum design and pedagogy.</li> <li>• Understanding of school self-evaluation and data analysis.</li> <li>• Understanding of school governance and statutory frameworks.</li> <li>• Knowledge of current DfE and Ofsted inspection frameworks and trends.</li> </ul>

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## REQUIRED SKILLS, EXPERIENCE, AND KNOWLEDGE

SECTION	REQUIREMENTS
<p><b>Skills &amp; Abilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills, both through conversation and in writing.</li> <li>• Highly analytical; able to synthesise complex data into actionable plans.</li> <li>• Ability to gain immediate professional credibility with experienced Headteachers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Personal Qualities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactivity: A positive and enthusiastic outlook, with the energy, drive and determination to succeed.</li> <li>• Resilience: Calm under pressure and able to respond positively to challenging situations.</li> <li>• Learning Agility: An avid learner who stays abreast of educational research.</li> <li>• Able to build supportive and constructive professional relationships with others.</li> </ul>



# RIVER LEARNING TRUST

## WHAT WE CAN OFFER

Education has the power to change lives, communities and society for the better. At RLT we believe that we can achieve more for our pupils, trainees, staff and communities by working together rather than alone. Schools in RLT are united by a common belief in the benefits of working together, and by our commitment to shared principles.

**OUR VISION** is for our schools and SCITT to improve rapidly, continuously and sustainably: to be better faster together.

**OUR 'WHY?'** is that children and young people 'only get one go' in school and therefore as part of RLT we aim to ensure the best possible 'go' for our pupils.

**OUR 'HOW?'** is through the highest support and challenge for our schools and each other, underpinned by our principles.

Our employees benefit from a wide variety of support including extensive continuing professional learning and development opportunities, wellbeing and staff networks and access to Defined Benefit Pension Schemes (TPS and LGPS) for all staff. For more information on what it is like to work for the Trust, and the benefits you could access, please see our "[Working in RLT](#)" guide. This role includes regulated activity relevant to children.



## HOW TO APPLY AND WHERE TO FIND FURTHER DETAILS

Online applications through MyNewTerm. Please ensure that in the 'Supporting Statement' of the application form that you outline both your understanding and experience of system leadership.

Please feel free to contact Tom Boulter, Director of Secondary Education, on [tboulter@riverlearningtrust.org](mailto:tboulter@riverlearningtrust.org), to arrange an informal discussion regarding the role.

**Closing date:** Monday 20th April 2026 at 9am

**Interview date:** Tuesday 28th April 2026

River Learning Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and preventing extremism. The Trust is required to conduct a variety of checks and online searches about you as part of their recruitment process in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance. It is an offence to apply for certain roles within schools if you are barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children.

For all RLT Safer Recruitment Documentation candidates should click on the following link [RLT Safer Recruitment Documents for Candidates](#). Please see our website for up to date policies including our Child Protection and Behaviour Policies. This post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020. For further guidance for applicants click on this link [List of offences that are not filtered](#).

# THE TRUST'S SCHOOLS

We currently educate more than 16,500 pupils and have more than 2,000 colleagues in the Trust. Our school-centred initial teacher training arm (OTT) trains around 150 trainees in around 50 schools in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Wiltshire.

## SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Cheney School  
Chipping Norton School  
Gillotts School  
Gosford Hill School  
Kingsdown School  
The Cherwell School  
The Marlborough CofE School  
The Oxford Academy  
The Swan School  
Wheatley Park School

Horspath CofE Primary School  
Larkrise Primary School  
Madley Brook Primary School  
Middle Barton Primary School  
New Marston Primary School  
Rose Hill Primary School  
Sandhills Primary School  
Seven Fields Primary School  
Tower Hill Primary School  
Witney Community Primary School  
Windrush CofE Primary School  
Wolvercote Primary School

## PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Barton Park Primary School  
Bayards Hill Primary School  
Beckley CofE Primary School  
Charlbury Primary School  
Cutteslowe Primary School  
Edith Moorhouse Primary School  
Edward Feild Primary School  
Garsington CofE Primary School

## ALTERNATIVE PROVISION (AP)

Meadowbrook College

## SCITT (TEACHER TRAINING)

OTT

## TEACHING SCHOOL HUB

Oxfordshire Teaching School Hub



