



ATHENA
LEARNING TRUST

Interim Head of HR

Applicant Pack

Closing date:

Ongoing until a suitable candidate is appointed

Interview date:

As required



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.

Location: Hybrid: remote with regular travel to schools across Cornwall and Devon

Job Title: Interim Head of HR

Closing Date: Ongoing until a suitable candidate is appointed

Interview Date: As required

Vacancy Start: As soon as possible

Contract Type: Fixed, with the possibility of extension depending on the trust's need

Salary: Competitive, commensurate with experience



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



About Athena Learning Trust

Athena Learning Trust is a multi-academy trust operating nine schools across Cornwall and Devon: three primary schools and six secondary schools. Our shared service team supports all nine schools from a central base, covering finance, operations, IT, estates, governance, people and HR, catering, and communications.

We are a trust that believes in doing things well. We have strong schools, committed staff, and high ambitions for the young people in our communities. We are also at a point of transition in our leadership, and we are looking for someone who can help us keep the people function running effectively and confidently while we plan for the longer term.

About the Role

This is a hands-on leadership role, not a strategic redesign project. We need someone who can step in quickly, get to know the team and the trust, and provide steady, experienced HR leadership during a period of change.

The interim head of people will have day-to-day oversight of the people and HR function, supporting a small and capable team, managing live casework, and ensuring the trust remains legally compliant and operationally safe. You will work closely with the CFOO and, where relevant, with the interim trust leader and the board.

The right person for this role is calm under pressure, experienced in HR casework and employee relations, and comfortable working in a complex multi-site organisation. You do not need to have worked in education before, but you will need to learn quickly and build trust with school principals and colleagues across the shared service.



Key Responsibilities

People team leadership

- Provide day-to-day line management and support to the shared service people and payroll team, along with school-based HR leads
- Maintain team morale and stability during a period of transition, acting as a consistent and reassuring presence for the team.
- Work closely with the CFOO to review role pressures, capacity, and retention risks within the team.

Casework and employee relations

- Hold and manage a portfolio of live HR casework across the nine schools, including investigations, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and absence management.
- Provide expert advice and support to school principals and line managers on HR matters, ensuring consistent application of trust policies and procedures.
- Liaise with Browne Jacobson (the trust's employment law advisers) on complex legal matters, including any ongoing restructure or redundancy processes.
- Ensure all casework is documented thoroughly and handed over appropriately at the end of the appointment.

Payroll oversight

- Provide oversight of the payroll function, supporting the payroll manager and deputy payroll manager and ensuring payroll runs accurately and on time each month.
- Provide transition support for the payroll team as roles and responsibilities are re-allocated between the payroll manager and the deputy payroll manager.

Policy and compliance

- Ensure the trust's HR policies and procedures are up to date, legally compliant, and consistently applied across all nine schools.
- Maintain awareness of changes in employment law and ensure the trust responds appropriately.
- Support the CFOO and interim trust leader and school principals with union relations, including engagement with recognised workplace organisations and any collective consultation processes.

Transition and handover

- Work with the outgoing director of people to ensure a thorough handover of all live matters, institutional knowledge, and ongoing projects before her departure in early July 2026.
- Support the trust's longer-term thinking about the people function by providing an informed view of what a permanent structure might look like, without pre-empting future decision

Person Specification

Essential

- Significant experience in a senior HR or people leadership role, with a strong track record in employee relations and casework management.
- CIPD level 5 or above, or equivalent professional experience.
- Experience managing HR in a multi-site organisation.
- Confident and effective communicator, able to build trust quickly with a range of stakeholders including senior leaders, school principals, and trade union representatives.
- Calm, organised, and able to hold multiple priorities without losing attention to detail.
- Comfortable working independently and remotely, with the discipline and judgement that requires.
- Experience overseeing or working closely with a payroll function.

Desirable

- Experience working in an academy trust, school, or other public sector organisation.
- Experience of TUPE processes and collective consultation.
- Familiarity with HR information systems and an interest in how technology can improve HR service delivery.
- Experience working at or alongside board level.

Additional Information

This role is subject to an enhanced DBS check. Athena Learning Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and all staff are expected to share this commitment.

The hybrid working pattern will include regular travel to schools across Cornwall and Devon. A driving licence and access to a vehicle are therefore required. Whilst every effort has been made to set out the main responsibilities of the role, each individual task may not be identified. The post-holder will be expected to undertake any reasonable request consistent with the level and nature of the role.



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.