



Stephenson MK Trust

Stephenson Academy Principal Recruitment Pack



Welcome from the CEO at Stephenson (MK) Trust

Thank you for your interest in the role of Principal at Stephenson Academy. Within this recruitment pack, you will find all the details you need about this exciting opportunity.

Stephenson MK Trust (SMKT), on behalf of Stephenson Academy, is seeking an inspiring, compassionate, and visionary Principal to lead our SEMH academy while collaborating across the Trust, including our Alternative Provision (AP) Academy. Candidates with experience in both SEMH and AP are particularly welcome.

The Trust is deeply committed to inclusivity and to maximising every student's potential. Stephenson Academy values its reputation as a welcoming and supportive environment, placing equal importance on pastoral care and personalised academic learning which are at the heart of what we do.

We are seeking a Principal who demonstrates an unwavering commitment to student progress, employs innovative and creative approaches to teaching and learning, engages in reflective practice to consistently enhance outcomes for pupils, possesses ambition for and dedication to the most vulnerable young people, and is confident in leading a SEMH setting while remaining flexible in contributing to Trust-wide initiatives, including supporting the AP Academy when required.

This role ensures that all students within the Trust have access to outstanding leadership and the opportunity to develop their talents, equipping them to contribute positively to the world beyond our care. We are determined to appoint an exceptional candidate because all children deserve the very best leaders and teachers.

About Stephenson Academy

Stephenson Academy is a successful SEMH special school, which opened in 2012. It has a main site in Stantonbury, which caters for 11–16 year-olds and a primary department was introduced in September 2023 for Years 5 and 6 (ages 9–11), which increased our capacity to 117 students. We also have an associated independent sixth form provision for 16–19-year-olds within the Trust located at Manor Road.

We specialise in supporting students with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) who have a primary need of SEMH, many of whom also display challenging behaviours. Many students have additional needs, including speech, language and communication difficulties, Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and mental health challenges.

We serve Milton Keynes and the surrounding local authorities when places are available.

While this role primarily focuses on leading Stephenson Academy, the successful candidate may also be asked to work collaboratively across the Trust, supporting the Alternative Provision academy and contributing to high-quality leadership across both settings.

What We Offer

- The opportunity to lead an exceptional school and work with experienced, successful executive leaders.
- The chance to be part of a forward-thinking and growing Trust, offering wider future opportunities.
- Extensive support to develop your leadership potential at an exciting time in our growth.
- The experience of working within an inclusive, values-driven organisation alongside a skilled, dedicated, and hardworking team.

We warmly welcome visits to Stephenson Academy and look forward to receiving your application.

Kathie Hughes

CEO/Executive Principal, Stephenson (MK) Trust

About Stephenson (MK) Trust (SMKT)

Strategic Aims

The Stephenson MK Trust (SMKT) is a Trust supporting the most vulnerable and challenging children in Milton Keynes and local schools to ensure every child can strive for success.

We endeavour to create personalised, ambitious opportunities for all within our Trust family creating a community which is forward thinking and aspirational, contributing positively to the Milton Keynes community in which we live.

Each Academy within the Trust has their overarching Aim:

- At Stephenson Academy we are '**On Track to Success**'
- At Bridge Academy we are '**Building Brighter Futures**'
- At Stephenson MK Trust Post-16 Centre we are '**On Track to Brighter Futures**'

At SMKT we strive to achieve this through our commitment to the "**7 steps to Success**" in all that we do:

The 7 steps to Success:

1. **Support and care for each other**
2. **Understanding and acceptance for all**
3. **Character building**
4. **Challenging and stretching**
5. **Exploring possibilities and nurturing talent**
6. **Safe environment to flourish**
7. **Striving for success**

As Leaders within SMKT we demonstrate this in the following ways and agree to:

1. **Support and care for each other**

- Respect each other.
- Be personal but professional at all times.
- Show genuine interest in others.
- Treat others how you wish to be treated.

2. **Understanding and acceptance for all**

- Be mindful of how others work.
- Avoid gossip and always maintain confidentiality, respecting the privacy of sensitive information.
- Understand your work environment and keep it clean, tidy and safe.

3. **Character building**

- Encourage constructive feedback and address any conflicts or concerns in a respectful manner.
- Be respectful when sharing feedback with each other.
- Do the right thing instead of what's easier.
- Adhere to the 7 Nolan Principles of Public Life.

4. **Challenging and stretching**

- Provide autonomy for team members over their respective roles or tasks.

- Encourage each other to step out of their comfort zone.
- Be diverse in your job roles by understanding and supporting both areas of development in others and effectively using your strengths to upskill others.

5. *Exploring possibilities and nurturing talent*

- Seeking opportunities to develop team members.
- Modelling what you expect from others.
- Be brave in informed decision making.

6. *Safe environment to flourish*

- Communicate openly and respectfully.
- Actively listen to others, seeking to understand their perspective and ideas.
- Allow others to share their thoughts/opinions and feelings safely.

7. *Striving for success*

- Come prepared to actively contribute to meetings and arrive on time.
- Ensure that meeting actions are followed up in a timely manner.
- Work collaboratively and share ideas for improvement.

Background

Stephenson (MK) Trust was founded in April 2012 to take responsibility for The Gatehouse School in Milton Keynes, which closed in March 2012 and reopened as Stephenson Academy. Stephenson Academy, an SEMH academy, was the first sponsored special school academy in the country, supported by St Paul’s Catholic School in Milton Keynes and SERCO, in close partnership with Milton Keynes Council and the DfE.

The Trust grew from the Milton Keynes Behaviour Partnership, established in 2007, through collaboration between secondary schools to improve SEMH provision. When The Gatehouse School faced closure, the Partnership worked with the Local Authority to develop future SEMH provision, with St Paul’s Catholic School leading the sponsorship of the new academy.

The Partnership manages PRUs, emergency placements, and the Alternative Education Panel, chaired by the CEEO/Executive Principal, with oversight by a half-termly Review Group of primary and secondary Headteachers and Local Authority representatives. Since 2020, the Behaviour Partnership has evolved into the Milton Keynes Inclusion Partnership, encompassing both primary and secondary sectors. The CEO/Executive Principal oversees the work of the Inclusion Partnership, supported by primary and secondary Pupil Referral Units, with the aim of eliminating permanent exclusion.

Stephenson (MK) Trust now operates two academies: Stephenson Academy and Bridge Academy, which provides a seamless all-through provision following the amalgamation of the Milton Keynes Primary PRU. Both academies continue to be rated “Good” by Ofsted. Stephenson Academy has grown from 22 students to 117, while Bridge Academy now offers education for primary through Post-16 students, providing a continuous and integrated SEMH curriculum for children and young people.

In September 2023, Kathie Hughes was appointed as CEO/Executive Principal, strengthening the Trust’s leadership and commitment to delivering high-quality SEMH education across Milton Keynes. The Trust continues to work closely with Milton Keynes Local Authority, neighbouring authorities, and local schools to ensure provision meets the evolving needs of young people in the city.



JOB PROFILE - PRINCIPAL

POST TITLE:	Principal
LOCATION:	Stephenson Academy
RESPONSIBLE TO:	CEO/ Executive Principal
SALARY:	Leadership 25 – 29 (£93,424 - £103,030)

JOB PURPOSE

The Principal is responsible for the overall leadership and management of Stephenson Academy, which operates as an independent academy within Stephenson (MK) Trust. The Principal oversees all students, staff, and the academy premises, providing day-to-day direction and leadership that embodies integrity, excellence, collaboration, and accountability.

The Principal will be fully accountable for the leadership, performance, and outcomes of Stephenson Academy, while working alongside the CEO/Executive Principal and collaborating across the Trust to support the Alternative Provision (AP) Academy and wider Trust initiatives.

PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES

Key accountabilities:

- Promote the vision, values and ethos of Stephenson (MK) Trust to students, staff, families and the wider community.
- Report to Governors and Trustees.
- Line manage senior staff and undertake annual appraisal and target setting.
- Motivate others to ensure a high expectation learning environment through distributed and collaborative leadership.
- Translate the vision into agreed objectives and operational plans for the academy.
- Maintain high standards in all aspects of academy life.

Leading teaching, learning and assessment:

- Have lead responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment, tracking interventions and inclusion data to ensure improved outcomes for children and young people.
- Drive a continuous and consistent focus on pupil achievement, using data and benchmarks to monitor progress and raise outcomes.
- Establish creative, responsive and effective approaches to learning and teaching within a SEMH setting and evaluate the effectiveness of those in place with flexibility and adaptation.

- Provide leadership to and implementation of the curriculum planning process, designed to assure the academy's ability to provide a broad, relevant and innovative educational experience for all students bespoke and personalised to our learners.
- Have oversight of timetabling in all areas of the academy's work ensuring this timetable provides flexibility, breadth and value for money.
- Carry out effective monitoring of standards across all aspects of Quality of education as agreed with the CEO/Executive Principal and report outcomes within the SIP framework.
- Develop and implement effective SIP to effectively monitor and evaluate the academy's progress

Developing staff and leading own growth:

- Develop, implement and maintain effective strategies and procedures for staff induction and professional development ensuring that there is effective change management, and forward planning.
- Ensure that there is a strong improvement culture in which all staff recognise their part in leading and delivering improvement, they are accountable for the success of the Stephenson Academy and for its standards of engagement, quality of teaching and pupil progress.
- Ensure that annual appraisals for all staff are effective and consistently monitored to ensure that staff held accountable for key targets and outcomes in relation to progress for children.
- Promote and maintain a culture of high expectations for self and others.
- Regularly review the typicality of standards, ensuring high quality feedback to colleagues including identifying and tackling under performance at all levels in a clear and consistent procedure.
- Regularly review own practice, set personal targets and take responsibility for own development, seeking advice and support where necessary adhering to and ensuring that they meet the excellence headteacher standards in all that they do.

Managing the academy and securing the future:

- Ensure that there is regular strategic planning to enable effective and efficient operational running of the academy developing key leaders to lead operations on a day-to-day basis.
- Responsibility for effective oversight of all operation of all academy events, academy related human resources issues, academy premises and facilities functions.
- Work with the CEO to recruit, retain and deploy staff appropriately.
- Chair the weekly SLT meeting and attend Trust SLT meetings as representative of the Stephenson Academy.
- Develop effective relationships and communications with parents and the local community which underpin a professional learning community that enables everyone in the academy to achieve.
- Review the use and impact of policies, priorities and targets of the academy and evaluate these with the CEO/Executive Principal and Governing Body driving improvement and change for the good of the academy.
- Implement established academy policies and collaboratively review and make recommendations for change ensuring all policies are consistently applied.
- Ensure evidence-based improvement plans promote continuous academy development, linked to the core priorities of the School Improvement Plan.
- Have oversight of budget planning and monitoring across the Academy, working closely with the CEO/Executive Principal and Chief Finance Officer to ensure financial compliance.
- Keep the CEO/Executive Principal fully informed of any critical need affecting the smooth operation of Stephenson Academy and the educational experience of the students and staff.
- Ensure compliance at every level with Stephenson Academy and Stephenson (MK) Trust policies

and procedures.

Safeguarding:

- Strategic development and implementation of all safeguarding policies.
- Implementation of statutory safeguarding guidance, including but not limited to, KCSIE and Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- Have due regard for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and to follow all the policies and procedures adopted by the Trust.
- Regular review of the SCR with all partners.

Strengthening relationships and reputation:

- Work collaboratively and effectively with mainstream, alternative and Special partners and the Local Authority to deliver academy focussed objectives across Milton Keynes.
- Promote cohesion across the Trust by working collaboratively with other academies and the central team to secure the effective management of the academy and its resources.
- Create and maintain effective relationships with parents to support and improve students' achievements and personal development.
- Develop effective links with the community to extend the curriculum, enhance teaching and broaden learning opportunities.
- Collaborating across the Trust and contributing to high-quality leadership across both settings.

Additionally, the Principal is responsible for performing or directing any other tasks as assigned by the CEO/Executive Principal, in accordance with the expectations of the Headteacher standards.

Stephenson MK Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This post is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, satisfactory references, and other pre-employment checks in line with statutory guidance, including KCSIE. We are an equal opportunities employer and welcome applications from all suitably qualified candidates.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

Post: Principal, Stephenson Academy

E = Essential, D = Desirable, A = Application Form, I = Interview, T = Task

CRITERIA		E/D	ASSESSED
Qualifications, experience and professional development	• Hold a first degree.	E	A
	• PGCE/QTS/Professional Qualification.	E	A
	• Demonstrable successful senior leadership experience with clear evidence of impact at Principal or Deputy Principal level.	E	A, I
	• Experience of challenging standards and acting decisively to address underperformance, including in SEMH settings.	E	I, T
	• Experience of successfully delivering transformational change and improvement.	E	A, I
	• Record of professional development relevant to senior leadership and a commitment to ongoing personal development.	E	A, I
	• Evidence of post-graduate management or leadership study.	D	A
	• Experience of working with governors and multi-agency stakeholders, including Local Authorities and SEMH partners.	E	A
	• Experience of dealing with complex staffing matters and working constructively with trade unions.		
Knowledge, skills and competencies	• Secure understanding of education legislation particularly as it relates to primary aged pupils.	E	I, T
	• Knowledge of pedagogic innovation in primary and SEMH settings, including personalised and therapeutic approaches.	D	I, T
	• Ability to drive vision, embed high expectations, and create a positive, inclusive culture.	E	I
	• Ability to delegate effectively and develop leadership capacity across academic and SEMH teams.	E	I, T
	• Excellent organisational and IT skills, including managing complex timetables and resources.	E	A, I
		E	I, T

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong oral, written, and interpersonal skills, adaptable to a variety of audiences including staff, families, governors, and external agencies. • Ability to use data and wellbeing indicators to diagnose weaknesses and drive improvement. • Ability to forge and sustain positive relationships with a wide range of stakeholders, including parents, carers, community partners, and Trust colleagues. • Thorough knowledge and understanding of educational developments in the primary phase and SEMH contexts. 	D	I, T
		E	A, I
		E	A, I, T
Personal attributes and characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a drive to overcome disadvantage and an unrelenting belief in the potential of all students and staff, particularly in SEMH contexts. 	E	I, T
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to drive forward change swiftly and effectively in challenging circumstances, including SEMH-specific environments. 	E	I, T
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an engaging presence, highly visible, and an excellent communicator. 	E	I, T
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate positive personal behaviour; be an enthusiastic, motivational, and emotionally intelligent leader. 	E	I, T
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be resilient and determined, while able to provide support, demonstrate empathy, and promote wellbeing for students and staff. 	E	I, T
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a personal commitment to inclusion, diversity, and equity. 	E	I
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a strong commitment to the professional development of self and colleagues, including SEMH/Trauma informed focused training. 	E	I, T
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show attention to detail, consistency of judgement, and high-level analytical skill. 	E	I, T

This Job Profile is a guide to the work that you will be initially required to undertake. It may be altered from time to time to meet changing circumstances. All members of staff are expected to carry out any reasonable instruction given by the CEO/Executive Principal or other such authorised person so as to allow for the effective running of the school. This Person Specification does not form part of your contract of employment.

The Recruitment Process

Indicative Timeline

- Advert Closing Date: Sunday 22 March 2026
- Shortlisting: Monday 23 March 2026
- Interview Dates: Thursday 16 April & Friday 17 April 2026

Further Information

If you would like to discuss the role in more detail, require any further information or request a site visit / informal conversation with the CEO/Executive Principal, please contact us via email at recruitment@Stephensonmktrust.org.uk on 01908 889400 ext. 1438.

Safer Recruitment

References

If you are shortlisted for this role, we will usually request references before the interview takes place. One of your referees must be your current or most recent employer. Please note that we must receive two or three satisfactory references before confirming any offer of employment.

The references we request will cover details such as your salary, length of service, skills and abilities, suitability for the role, disciplinary record, and your suitability to work with children. We are unable to accept open testimonials or references addressed “to whom it may concern.”

After receiving your references, we may contact your referees to clarify any discrepancies, anomalies, or other relevant matters as part of our recruitment verification process.

Disclosure & Barring Service Check (DBS Disclosure)

Employment is conditional upon a satisfactory enhanced criminal record check. This will include checks against the relevant barred lists (formerly List 99) and a Section 128 check. All checks must be completed and deemed satisfactory before any offer of employment can be confirmed.

In accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended), we are required to consider certain convictions, including those that are considered “spent,” for roles of this nature. All positions within the Trust fall under these provisions.

Please note that the disclosure of a spent and/or unspent conviction will not automatically prevent you from being appointed; each case will be considered on its individual merits.

Online and Social Media Checks

In line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* guidance, the Trust may carry out an online search, including social media checks, on shortlisted candidates as part of our due diligence process. This is undertaken to identify any incidents or issues that may have a bearing on an applicant’s suitability to work with children.

Online searches will only be conducted for safeguarding purposes and will be limited to information that is publicly available. The search is not intended to intrude on candidates’ private lives, but to ensure that the Trust is fulfilling its statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Any information identified through this process that raises concern will be discussed with the candidate and considered in line with our safeguarding and recruitment procedures before any final decision is made.

All such checks will be carried out in accordance with data protection legislation and the principles of fairness, proportionality, and transparency.

Validation of Qualifications

All shortlisted candidates will be required to bring original certificates of their relevant qualifications to the interview.

Right to Work in the United Kingdom

In line with the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, it is a criminal offence to employ anyone who does not have the legal right to live and work in the United Kingdom.

If you are invited to interview, you will be required to provide original documentation (such as your passport) as evidence of your eligibility to work in the UK. Photographic proof of identity will also be required at this stage.

Medical Assessment

A confidential pre-employment health declaration will need to be completed if you receive an offer of employment. A satisfactory medical assessment may be required before we confirm any offer of an appointment.

Child Protection

The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

We have designated senior leaders with responsibility for reporting and monitoring any concerns or suspected cases of abuse. All staff receive training in accordance with our child protection and safeguarding policies.

Code of Conduct and Personal Behaviour

The Trust believes that maintaining high standards of conduct is essential to delivering quality services and safeguarding the wellbeing of everyone in our community. All individuals working within our academies are viewed as role models for our students and are therefore expected to demonstrate integrity, impartiality, and honesty at all times.

Everyone working in our schools has a fundamental responsibility to promote and safeguard the welfare of children. Registered teachers are additionally required to adhere to the professional conduct and values outlined in Part 2 of the Teacher Standards. Although these Standards formally apply to registered teachers, the Trust expects all staff to uphold the same principles.

Equal Opportunities

The Trust is committed to promoting best practice in eliminating discrimination and fostering a working and learning environment where everyone is treated with fairness and respect.

We take positive steps to ensure that no individual is treated less favourably on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or age.