



RECRUITMENT PACK

Principal, City of London Academy Southwark



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City of London Academy Southwark is a large, mixed secondary academy with a thriving sixth form, for students aged 11–19 in Bermondsey, South East London. The school serves a culturally and socio-economically diverse intake; over 55% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, and many speak English as an additional language. Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum and a supportive culture that prioritises academic achievement, personal development, and high aspirations.

The academy has celebrated improved results in recent years. In the most recent GCSE cohort, 57.4% of pupils achieved grade 5 or above in both English and Mathematics. The school also achieved its highest-ever A level results, with 61% of students securing A*-B grades and 84% achieving A*-C. Students have progressed successfully to highly competitive universities, including Oxford, LSE, and Imperial College. Performance data further highlights above-average attainment and progress measures, with strong Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores (+0.48 in 2024), alongside positive post-16 progression.

Through purposeful leadership combined with the Trust's educational philosophy and approach, there is significant potential to transform the school and secure exceptional attainment and progress.



A warm welcome from our CEO, Mark Emmerson



“Our care for staff means that we invest in our people, enabling them to grow and achieve their career goals with the Trust or beyond.”

I am delighted that you have chosen to apply for the role of Principal at City of London Academy Southwark (COLAS).

City of London Academies Trust is driven by an ambition to deliver exceptional educational outcomes for the young people we serve. We combine the heritage and traditions of the City of London Corporation with a consistent, Trust-wide approach across our academies.

Our expectations are high for both our students and our staff. As such, we work to three core values: integrity, professionalism, and care. We demonstrate genuine care by insisting on the highest expectations of behaviour in every phase and setting. Our bookletised curriculum is being developed by our expert subject leads to ensure it is high-quality and knowledge-rich, so that every young person is afforded the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. We promote and support excellent and consistent classroom pedagogy through our Trust-wide **Playbook** and **Learning and Teaching Framework**, while also ensuring common and consistent approaches to assessment and

intervention. This is how we care for our young people, enabling them to achieve the highest possible outcomes and counter the many aspects of disadvantage experienced by them, their families, and our wider communities.

Our **Foundations of Excellence** which run through all Trust schools, have provided the framework for our success to date. These core principles led to the City of London and the Trust being recognised as the best-performing academy chain for the progress and attainment of disadvantaged children ('Chain Effects,' The Sutton Trust). This recognition fuels our determination to continue developing our work, while remaining focused on our ambitions for our schools and on making a significant difference to children's lives. In striving for excellence in all aspects of our work, we are acutely aware that this can only be achieved through hard-working and motivated staff. Our care for staff means that we invest in our people, enabling them to grow and achieve their career goals within the Trust or beyond.

If becoming a Principal within our Trust is something you aspire to, we encourage you to read on for more information about the Trust and City of London Academy Southwark.

We hope to meet you at one of our open events or, if you wish to have an informal conversation about the role, please contact us.

We look forward to receiving your application.

Mark Emmerson OBE
Chief Executive Officer



We believe in the power of education

“Our schools maintain exemplary standards of behaviour. Our systems, rituals and norms that instill strong habits, create environments where teachers can teach and students can learn.”

City of London Academies Trust believes strongly in the transformational power of education, particularly when operating schools in areas of significant disadvantage. We know that strong academic outcomes lead to improved life chances for our students. As a result, we are unashamedly academic and unapologetically results-driven. Our Trust is driven by a relentless ambition to be the best. We believe that exceptional leaders and teachers, aligned to the Trust's approach and educational philosophy, create exceptional schools, transform lives and shape futures.

Each of our schools operates a 'warm/strict' approach. Our model includes aspects such as line-ups, silent corridors, and rigorous uniform expectations. There is an increasing adoption of family dining to strengthen community and culture, alongside a commitment to direct instruction pedagogy. We aim for all our schools to achieve a minimum Progress 8 score of +1. Where schools are already close to this benchmark, we push further, striving to match the performance of the very best schools in the country. Our leaders deliberately establish, reinforce, and sustain strong school cultures.

Our commitment to care is expressed through high expectations. We never lower standards or expectations because of background or

circumstance, ensuring that no student is denied excellence. Our schools maintain exemplary standards of behaviour, underpinned by systems, rituals and routines that instil strong habits. This creates environments where teachers can teach and students can learn without disruption. We take great pride in cultivating exceptionally positive learning environments and are committed to safeguarding our ethos and culture to maintain uncompromised high standards for our students.

We take a clear and principled stance on behaviour. We believe that explicit expectations, well-established routines, adult authority, consistent consequences, and rewards best support pupils to succeed academically and develop character. Calm, predictable, dignified and structured environments are empowering and inclusive, particularly for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable students.

Our curriculum is knowledge-rich and deliberately ambitious. We believe that teaching 'powerful knowledge', the best that has been thought and said, is essential to providing students with the strongest possible foundation for success in life. For pupils to thrive in modern Britain, our curriculum and, by extension, their school experience, must develop an appreciation of our country's rich cultural heritage and its positive influence on the wider world. We are developing a standardised curriculum in most subjects to reduce teacher workload by providing high-quality bookletised resources and assessments. This enables our expert teachers to focus on delivery and mastery.

Our teaching approach is strongly influenced by the work of educationalists such as Doug Lemov and is rooted in explicit direct instruction, clarity, and precision. We are confident in what works for schools in our context and have carefully codified our approach, while still allowing teachers to bring personality and dynamism to their classrooms. We are deeply committed to the professional growth of our staff, providing comprehensive training and development programmes, alongside clear and rewarding career progression opportunities across our expanding Trust.

Our approach ensures that staff at every stage of their career have access to the guidance, mentorship, and resources they need to excel. We actively nurture leadership potential, fostering a culture where talent is recognised, developed, and retained. Through these initiatives, we aim to create a motivated workforce that drives exceptional outcomes for our pupils.

We want you to help us achieve

“School culture will be the cornerstone of their leadership.”

School culture will be the cornerstone of the successful candidate's leadership. They will be fully aligned with the Trust's educational philosophy, founded on a 'warm/strict' approach. They will take professional satisfaction in implementing the Trust's routines, rituals and frameworks, and, within the principles of the Trust's approach, will remain curious about how school practices can be refined to increase efficiency and impact. They will value developing systematised solutions to address school-specific challenges and take seriously their responsibility to maintain the effectiveness of established routines and the school's culture.

They will share the Trust's clear stance on behaviour, and will prioritise excellent outcomes for all pupils, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged. Their decisions will consistently be informed and guided by Trust principles and approaches to behaviour, assessment, curriculum, and pedagogy, with a strong emphasis on direct instruction as the most effective route to pupil success. They recognise the curriculum not only as a vehicle for academic development but also as a means of cultivating cultural literacy, character, and an understanding of, and respect for, the traditions and history of the country in which they live. They deliberately leverage the school's artefacts, routines and norms to shape pupils' values, behaviours, and mindsets, preparing them for long-term success.

They will ensure implementation of Trust policies, procedures, and frameworks with fidelity, creating predictable systems that enable teachers to deliver highly effective lessons and for pupils to learn uninterrupted. They will establish and maintain a 'warm/strict' environment in which pupils are taught,

and consistently expected, to demonstrate respect, politeness, and self-discipline, and where teachers can teach without disruption. They will act decisively to uphold standards, and will lead with unwavering confidence and resilience.

They will be acutely aware of and attuned to the negative social pressures affecting pupils, particularly those in disadvantaged contexts, and will implement Trust approaches to foster a scholarly, aspirational culture - they will replace limiting norms with habits that support learning, character development, and long-term achievement.

Help us achieve:

- A school culture where pupils work hard, are kind and have the ambition to succeed academically
- A COLAT 'Excellence' school rooted in the 'warm/strict' model
- A Progress 8 of +1 and beyond
- Full implementation of Trust policies, curriculum structure, frameworks, results strategy, and academy microscripts
- Exemplary behaviour, character, and politeness by all pupils
- A 'knowledge rich' traditional curriculum with direct instruction pedagogy that uses high quality booklets
- Highly efficient and effective systems, routines, habits, norms, and practices which mirror and surpass Trust expectations

As Principal, you will receive:

- support from Trust leadership when implementing the Trust's frameworks, policies, and standard operating procedures
- training to support you to implement the COLAT models and frameworks
- opportunities to be mentored by an experienced member of the Trust central team
- leadership workshops on school improvement delivered by highly experienced Trust leaders
- opportunities to participate in Trust-wide reviews to develop professional experience
- visits to exemplary schools across the country

Join us in uplifting and empowering young Londoners

Interested candidates are invited to submit an application form along with a personal statement (maximum of two sides of A4, font size 11) addressing the following question:

As Principal, how would you lead a school to a Progress 8 score of +1 and beyond?

If you require additional information, would like an informal discussion about the role, or would like to book a place at one of our open events for prospective candidates, please email: enquiries@cola.org.uk.

Application deadline

Monday 2 February 2026, 9am

Interviews

Tuesday 10 February 2026

Job description

Post: Principal

Accountable to: CEO-delegated Standards Lead and Chair of Local Board

Post Type: Permanent

Salary: L32 – L38 (£120,678 - £138,235 FTE)

Working Pattern: Full-time

Location: City of London Academy Southwark

Disclosure Level: Enhanced DBS

Job purpose

The Principal will be expected to:

- Ensure the vision of the academy is in line with the educational aims, ethos and values of the City of London Academies Trust (COLAT), providing exceptional leadership that establishes the academy as a leading provider of high-quality education for its pupils
- Deliver the highest possible educational standards, including exceptional outcomes and progress and create a high expectation culture in which pupils feel safe, valued and motivated to succeed
- In line with COLAT's standard operating procedures, lead and manage the academy on a day-to-day basis providing the consistent leadership necessary to ensure staff are supported, have high expectations and are fully committed to their pupils achieving exceptional outcomes
- Be the first point of contact for all stakeholders and external agencies in matters relating to the academy

Key Responsibilities

Be accountable to the CEO/delegated Standards Lead for:

- The learning, teaching, progress and outcomes for the pupils of the academy
- The effective day-to-day management of the academy, in line with COLAT's standard operating procedures, frameworks and policies
- The effective promotion and implementation of the agreed COLAT vision, principles, policies, frameworks, and standard operating procedures

Contribute (with other members of the academy Senior Leadership Team) to:

- Deliver exceptional outcomes and progress for all pupils
- Develop and implement an exceptional learning culture where the aspirations, conduct and work ethic of all pupils assure high quality learning, outcomes and progress
- Implement simple and effective COLAT systems, routines and rituals to embed consistency and deliver excellence in all areas of COLAT's Foundations of Excellence
- Evaluate outcomes and practice and consequent planning for improvement for the academy
- Ensure efficient and effective use of resources across the academy
- Develop strong productive relationships with a wide range of stakeholders

Lead teaching and learning through:

- Implementing with fidelity COLAT's pedagogical Playbook and Compendium ensuring all teachers are provided with training and development in COLAT's learning and teaching methodology
- Promoting excellence in teaching and learning, ensuring a continuous and consistent academy focus on pupils' achievement and development (moral, spiritual, physical and social, as well as academic)
- Ensuring that a high quality educational experience is available for all pupils that attend the academy
- Driving innovation, ensuring the academy is able to respond to a changing external environment and that the skills, learning and aspirations of pupils are developing and enhanced at all key stages
- Adopting and implementing COLAT's curriculum structure and content as well as any changes which may take place from time to time
- Developing and implementing strategies to ensure continuity of learning at all key stages
- Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing classroom practice against COLAT's pedagogical frameworks; celebrating and promoting excellence; challenging underperformance at all levels and ensuring appropriate action
- Ensuring that individual pupil progress is regularly assessed, recorded, reported and used to inform future teaching
- Adopt all common assessments set by the Subject Improvement Leads and work with the Executive Team to devise a carefully planned and rigorously implemented raising attainment strategy
- Providing a range of extra-curricular activities which will maintain the reputation of the academy and COLAT for providing a broad and well-rounded education.
- Creating a stimulating climate which will encourage all pupils to fulfil their potential, in the widest sense, and maintain a lifelong enthusiasm for learning and personal development
- Ensuring that the needs and aspirations of each pupil are addressed through personalised learning and mentoring
- Adopting COLAT's assessment calendar and schedule, ensuring that assessment data is used to set challenging targets
- Challenging practice to ensure a stimulating learning environment.
- Ensuring academy-wide priorities are consistently monitored and effectively implemented

Leadership of self and others by:

- Providing dynamic, consistent and motivational leadership for the academy and its staff, ensuring the successful delivery of COLAT's vision, values, ethos, aims and objectives
- Setting high standards and expectations for personal, pupil, and staff behaviours and actions in support of the achievement of the academy's intended outcomes
- Developing and maintaining respect across all stakeholders, inspiring individuals to contribute positively to shared ideas and plans for the academy
- Ensuring that Performance Management and Appraisal processes for all staff are robust, fit for purpose and effective in raising the quality of teaching, learning and service delivery
- Regularly reviewing own practice, setting personal targets and taking responsibility for own development
- Ensuring that systems are in place to encourage all teaching staff to be similarly active in their personal and continuous professional development
- Building a culture of high commitment, standards and drive for success through coaching, mentoring and motivating staff
- Maintaining open, professional dialogue with SLT about the academy's identification of strengths and weaknesses ensuring a proactive approach to sharing potential or existing difficulties

Management of the organisation to:

- Deliver effective operational management for the delivery of education within the academy's budget and in accordance with financial and organisational structures of the Trust
- Report to the Local Board on academy performance and the implementation of policies, thereby ensuring their full involvement in strategic planning, business activities, monitoring and building relationships with the wider community
- Work to, and report on, targets for achievement of the academy and personal targets as agreed with the Chief Executive Officer, delegated Standards Lead and Chair of the Local Board
- Work within a COLAT defined organisation framework which enables effective and efficient ways of working to support achievement of educational excellence
- Recruit, deploy, develop and motivate a committed, effective and diverse education workforce whose members have a clear understanding of the vision of the academy and the academy's strategic plan and of their personal role in enabling and promoting high quality learning and delivering exceptional outcomes
- Act in accordance with policies and legislation affecting the conduct of the academy, particularly those that govern health and safety matters and employment rights
- Monitor and evaluate pupil and organisational progress to ensure that objectives are being achieved
- Ensure all senior leadership appointments are approved by the CEO and that a member of the Executive Team is in on the interviewing panel for all senior leadership posts
- Undertake any other duties commensurate with the post as reasonably delegated by the Local Board and/or Chief Executive Officer

Supporting the work of the Trust:

- Maintain alignment with, and strong advocacy of COLAT systems including COLAT's 'warm/strict' approach
- Work with the CEO, delegated Standards Lead the Chair of the Local Board and the COLAT Board to ensure that there are robust and reliable mechanisms for appropriate accountability frameworks and risk management at the academy
- Develop strong, positive relationships with colleagues in the Trust, contribute to collaborative work and support other staff in participating in Trust work
- Participate in Trust and sector-wide activities in order to share best practice, contribute to the development of Trust strategies and policies and promote the academy and the Trust in a local and national context

Strengthening community:

- Develop, implement and maintain effective strategies to promote engagement of the whole academy community, particularly in establishing effective relationships with all parents/carers and promoting their involvement in their children's learning and academy activities
- Develop the academy's extended provision to support academic excellence and the wider development of pupils
- Actively support the diversity of the academy's communities and pupils

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children:

- Have substantial knowledge and effective experiences of addressing all statutory safeguarding issues
- Ensure a safe and supportive academy culture
- Ensure the welfare of children is safeguarded and promoted in line with current best practice and any relevant legislation
- Act as Child Protection Officer
- Identify key features of staff recruitment that help deter or prevent the appointment of unsuitable people

Other responsibilities:

- Ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils in order that they may achieve to the best of their ability
- Ensure equality of opportunity for all staff to facilitate their continuing professional development
- Be aware of and understand the duties and responsibilities arising from the Children's Act 2004 and statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children in relation to child protection and safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults as it relates to this role
- Ensure the Chair of the Local Board and Chief Executive Officer are made aware of and kept fully informed of any concerns arising in relation to safeguarding and/or child protection

Standards/Quality assurance and additional responsibilities:

- Support extended day activities to enhance pupils' learning experiences
- Adhere at all times to professional business standards of dress, courtesy and efficiency in line with the ethos and specialism of the academy
- Attend team and staff meetings
- Attend and participate in open evenings and pupil performances
- Uphold the academy's behaviour code and uniform regulations
- Participate in staff training and development
- Develop links with Local Board, LEAs and neighbouring schools/academies

Key organisational objectives

The postholder will contribute to the academy's objectives in service delivery by:

- Following Health and Safety requirements and initiatives as directed
- The academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and we expect all staff to share this commitment
- Ensuring compliance with Data Protection legislation
- At all times operating within the school's Equalities policies, demonstrating commitment and contribution to improving standards of attainment
- Adopting Customer Care and Quality initiatives
- Contributing to the maintenance of a caring and stimulating environment for pupils

Safeguarding Children

COLAT is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We expect all staff to share this commitment and to undergo appropriate checks, including enhanced DBS checks.

English Duty

This role is covered under part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016 and therefore the ability to speak fluent spoken English is an essential requirement for this role.

Confidentiality

We expect all staff to ensure that confidentiality is maintained and work in line with agreed City of London Academies Trust's policies and protocols. Staff are also expected to maintain statutory responsibilities e.g. Data Protection and Freedom of Information.

General

The above responsibilities are subject to the general duties and responsibilities contained in the Statement of Conditions of Employment.

The duties of this post may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the post or level of responsibility entailed. Undertake any other duties which may be reasonably assigned and regarded as within the responsibilities of the post, subject to the proviso that any changes of a permanent nature shall be incorporated into the job description in specific terms.

The post holder will be expected to have an agreed flexible working pattern to ensure that all relevant functions are fulfilled through direct dialogue with the CSO, CEO and Trustees.

Our values and vision

City of London Academies Trust, sponsored by the City of London Corporation, aims to provide high-quality education for pupils and pioneer educational innovation. We are driven by the ambition to provide world-class experiences and deliver exceptional educational outcomes for the young people we serve.

All City of London schools and academies draw upon the traditions, institutions, heritage, and historical successes of London to furnish each of their diverse communities with life-transforming learning experiences. In doing so, we believe that the young people we serve develop into successful, compassionate young adults, who make a positive contribution to their local, national, and global communities.

Our schools are characterised by a common understanding of what makes exceptional schools, based on five key principles which are known as our 'Foundations of Excellence'.

Our staff

Our staff have high expectations, are consistent and driven to provide the best teaching and opportunities for our students. Teachers work in a well-disciplined environment where they are able to teach creative and engaging lessons, and all staff are given exciting opportunities to develop and learn from exceptional practitioners.

Equal opportunities

The postholder will be expected to carry out all duties in the context of and in compliance with the Trust's Equalities policies.

Person specification

	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications		
Educated to degree level or equivalent	✓	
Qualified teacher status	✓	
NPQH (or equivalent) achieved or underway		✓
Evidence of continuing professional development	✓	
Experience		
Experience at Vice Principal level (or equivalent)	✓	
Experience of having led, or made a significant contribution to, the success of an academy through its leadership, pupil outcomes and ethos	✓	
Experience of leading and training staff to be successful practitioners	✓	
Experience of supporting staff to optimise attainment and progress of pupils		✓
Experience of teaching in, or leading, more than one phase of education	✓	
Extensive experience of working with children with significant barriers to learning	✓	
Excellent organisational skills	✓	
Well-developed interpersonal and communication skills	✓	
Teaching and learning		
Demonstrate and understanding of exceptional classroom practice	✓	
Understanding of the importance of adult authority in schools as a cornerstone to developing, excellent behaviour, and strong attitudes to learning	✓	
Displaying the ability to construct relevant school structures, pedagogical systems and routines in order to secure the best possible pupil outcomes in line with COLAT expectations that challenge and inspire pupils	✓	
Vision and strategy		
Understanding how the academy's vision and values align to and reinforce the COLAT philosophy and approach	✓	
Understand how to create a strong culture based on high aspirations and effective strategies across all aspects of academy life including teaching and learning, accountability, curriculum, administration and communication		✓
Possess a clear understanding of approaches to establish and maintain high standards of achievement, behaviour and attitudes in socio- economically challenging contexts, with a relentless commitment to securing those standards	✓	
Meet national standards for headteachers	✓	
Leadership attributes		
Demonstrates the mindset, expertise, commitment, and proven track record required to lead a COLAT school to achieve a Progress 8 score of +1 or higher	✓	
Deeply committed to building a strong school culture, ensuring exemplary behaviour and highly effective pedagogy	✓	
Maintains a meticulous eye for detail, identifying and addressing any aspect of school operations that falls short of the standards of COLAT Excellence	✓	
Takes pride in implementing, refining, and perfecting systems that drive organisational and academic excellence	✓	
Exhibits an execution-focused approach, working with urgency and precision to deliver results efficiently and at pace	✓	
Shows resilience and determination when making significant, necessary changes to raise standards and secure success	✓	
Able to develop, empower and sustain individuals and teams	✓	
Ability to lead and inspire all pupils with a sense of the intrinsic joy of learning and their own ability to succeed	✓	
Rigorous use of data to inform and shape teaching and learning to secure exceptional outcomes for all pupils	✓	
Ability to delegate to others and hold them to account for outcomes without ambiguity	✓	

Leading relationships with stakeholders		
Commitment to working with others to secure the best outcomes for children	✓	
Skilful management and understanding of how to inspire and secure strong relationships with other academy staff, families, trustees and a very wide range of other external relationships	✓	
Work-related personal qualities		
Demonstrate personal enthusiasm and commitment to leadership aimed at making a positive difference to children and young people and raising standards	✓	
Demonstrate personal and professional integrity, including modelling values and vision	✓	
Commitment to support the aims of the Local Board and Trust	✓	
Flexible and able to manage competing deadlines, prioritising appropriately and maintaining good humour	✓	
Evidence of commitment to and understanding of collective responsibility	✓	
Other		
Commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people	✓	
Willingness to undergo appropriate checks, including enhanced DBS Checks	✓	
Motivation to work with children and young people	✓	
Ability to form and maintain appropriate relationships and personal boundaries with children and young people	✓	
An understanding of, and commitment to, Equal Opportunities, and the ability to apply this to strategic work and day-to-day situations	✓	



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