



V E N N

EDUCATION GROUP

Founding Principal

Wragby Academy, Doncaster Road,
Wakefield, WF4 1QG

Appointment: Autumn 2026

KS2–KS4 Specialist School (SEMH & SLCN)

Salary: L18–L24 (£78,700–£91,156)

Full time, Permanent



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Welcome

Dear Colleague,

Wragby Academy is not simply a new school. It is a strategic commitment to reshape specialist provision in Wakefield.

Too many children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs and Speech, Language and Communication needs are currently educated out of area, or in provision that does not fully meet their needs. Wragby Academy is being established to change that.

We are seeking a Founding Principal who understands that opening a school is not an administrative exercise. It is a moral responsibility. You will design the culture, shape the curriculum, recruit the team and build the systems that will define this school for the next decade.

This is not a turnaround role. It is a build from first principles.

Wragby Academy will open in September 2026 on a fully refurbished site in Nostell. It will grow to 120 pupils across Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4. The school will specialise in SEMH and Speech, Language and Communication needs, with a smaller highly personalised pathway for pupils with more complex learning needs.

You will work directly with me and with the Executive Team at Venn Academy Trust. You will not be isolated. You will be supported by established central finance, HR, estates and school improvement capacity. You will also have access to our Institute of Learning and to trust-wide leadership networks.

However, support does not dilute expectation.

We expect Wragby to become a centre of excellence within three years. We expect a disciplined culture, a carefully sequenced SEND curriculum, strong reintegration pathways and rigorous safeguarding systems from day one.

If you are looking for comfort, this is not the role.

If you want to build something that will matter for children, families and the wider system, then I would welcome a conversation.

Dr Simon Witham

Chief Executive Officer



Venn Academy Trust and Venn Education Group

Venn Academy Trust was established in 2015 through the partnership of two Headteachers determined to build something different: a trust rooted in inclusion, discipline and high expectations.

Since then, Venn has grown to fourteen settings across four local authorities, spanning mainstream, specialist and alternative provision. Wragby Academy will become our fifteenth setting and our first school within Venn Education Group, extending our work into a fifth local authority, Wakefield.

Venn Education Group has been created to enable growth in specialist and independent provision where local sufficiency demands flexibility, pace and commissioning confidence. It allows us to respond decisively to SEND need while retaining the infrastructure, governance and operational strength of an established multi academy trust.

Our schools are independent in character and design. Each academy is shaped around the needs of its pupils and community, with its own curriculum model, staffing structure and operational approach. What binds them together is clarity of culture, disciplined safeguarding, strong behaviour systems and an unwavering belief that every child deserves a high quality education.

Venn has established a strong reputation for specialist provision across a broad range of need. This includes Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs, Speech, Language and Communication needs, Autism, Moderate and Severe Learning Difficulties, medical provision and alternative pathways. Our expertise lies not in one category of need, but in building environments where complex learners can succeed.

Across our settings, we combine:

- Clear behavioural frameworks grounded in consistency and relational practice
- Carefully sequenced, ambitious curricula adapted to specialist contexts
- Strong pastoral and therapeutic systems
- Robust safeguarding and attendance processes
- Ongoing professional development through trust-wide leadership and training networks

From early years to post-sixteen, our work is built on the principle that inclusion must be academically ambitious. Support does not mean reduced expectation.



Our Values

Pioneer	We design provision that meets need rather than convenience. Where existing systems are insufficient, we build new ones.
Inspire	We develop resilient, confident learners who are equipped to navigate challenge and embrace opportunity.
Achieve	We expect strong progress and meaningful personal development for every pupil, regardless of starting point.
Collaborate	We work alongside families, commissioners and communities to secure sustainable outcomes.
Create	We build cultures where all pupils are welcome, known and supported to achieve their full potential.

Wragby Academy sits firmly within this ambition. It represents the next phase of our specialist development, grounded in experience, strengthened by infrastructure and driven by high expectation.

This is not an experimental venture. It builds on more than a decade of trust-wide work in specialist and complex provision, including the successful establishment and turnaround of settings serving pupils with significant additional needs. The systems, training and leadership capacity already exist within Venn. Wragby benefits from that foundation from the outset.

At the same time, Wragby is not simply a replication of existing models. It has been shaped in direct response to Wakefield's sufficiency needs and to the increasing complexity of pupil profiles across the region. It has been designed to combine structured behaviour frameworks with a carefully sequenced SEND curriculum, strong therapeutic support and clear reintegration pathways where appropriate.

The creation of Venn Education Group enables this provision to operate with the responsiveness required for independent specialist commissioning, while remaining anchored to the governance, financial discipline and school improvement capacity of Venn Academy Trust. This combination of autonomy and infrastructure is deliberate. It reduces risk, strengthens accountability and ensures that growth is sustainable.

For the Founding Principal, this means you will not be starting from scratch in isolation. You will be building within an established system that understands specialist education at scale. You will have access to experienced executive oversight, operational support and professional networks from day one. At the same time, you will have the responsibility and the authority to shape the identity, culture and curriculum of Wragby as it grows to full capacity.

This is a school being built to last.



Founding Principal

Wragby Academy, Doncaster Road,
Wakefield, WF4 1QG

Appointment: Autumn 2026

KS2–KS4 Specialist School (SEMH & SLCN)

Salary: L18–L24 (£78,700–£91,156)

Full time, Permanent



Advert (*Founding Principal*)

Wragby Academy, Nostell, Wakefield | KS2–KS4 Specialist School

Start Date	1 September 2026 (earlier start or secondment from May 2026 welcomed)
Contract	Full time, permanent
Salary	L18–L24 (£78,700–£91,156)
Location	Nostell, Wakefield
Closing Date	Tuesday 14 April 2026 at 9am
Interviews	Tuesday 21 and Wednesday 22 April 2026

Wragby Academy is a new 120-place independent specialist provision opening in September 2026 on the former Wakefield Independent School site. The school is being established through a strategic partnership between Venn Academy Trust, Venn Education Group and Wakefield Council as part of the local authority's long-term SEND sufficiency planning.

The academy will grow to full capacity over three years. It will serve pupils aged 8 to 16 across Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

The core designation of the school will be Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs and Speech, Language and Communication needs. Alongside this, a small highly personalised pathway will support pupils with more complex learning profiles, including Moderate Learning Difficulties, Severe Learning Difficulties and Autism.

Wragby is not intended to be a holding provision. It is designed to become a high quality, locally delivered specialist school that combines structured behaviour systems, a carefully sequenced SEND curriculum and strong pastoral support.

An early release or seconded period between May and the end of the summer term would allow the successful candidate to:

- Lead stakeholder engagement with families, commissioners and partner schools
- Recruit and induct the founding staff team
- Shape the curriculum model and daily structures
- Finalise safeguarding and operational systems
- Ensure the school opens with clarity and confidence in September



The Role

We are seeking a Founding Principal who understands that opening a school is both strategic and operational.

You will lead every aspect of the pre-opening phase, launch and early growth of the academy. You will define the culture from day one and set the standard for behaviour, safeguarding, curriculum design and staff development.

You will:

- Establish a disciplined, ambitious culture where pupils are safe, known and expected to achieve
- Design and implement a high quality SEND curriculum across Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4
- Embed robust safeguarding, attendance and multi-agency systems
- Build and develop a skilled and cohesive staff team
- Work confidently with Wakefield Council around commissioning and place planning
- Create the foundations for sustainable growth to 120 pupils

This is a leadership role that requires clarity, resilience and credibility.

You will bring

- Significant SEND leadership experience, with strong experience in autism specialist provision or complex neurodivergent profiles
- A strong record of improving outcomes for vulnerable learners
- Experience of leading organisational change and building high performing teams
- Confidence in financial oversight, compliance and operational management
- A secure understanding of expectations, particularly for new specialist schools

You will be comfortable balancing strategic development with day-to-day execution.

What We Offer

- The opportunity to found and shape a new specialist school from first principles, defining its culture, curriculum and long-term direction
- Direct strategic support from the CEO and Executive Team of Venn Academy Trust, with clear lines of accountability and experienced oversight
- Established central infrastructure including finance, HR, estates, safeguarding and specialist school improvement capacity, ensuring operational stability from day one
- A strategic partnership with Wakefield Council aligned to SEND sufficiency priorities and long-term place planning
- Access to Venn's structured professional development offer, including leadership programmes such as Aspirant Leader and Artisan Teacher, alongside specialist SEND and Autism-focused training
- Use of the Venn Institute of Learning as a hub for professional development, collaboration and system leadership
- Opportunities to contribute to wider SEND development work across the trust and region, shaping practice beyond your own setting

Wragby Academy sits within a wider specialist infrastructure. You will not be isolated, but you will be accountable.

Contact

For an informal and confidential conversation about the role, please contact: **Dr Simon Witham**, Chief Executive Officer, Venn Academy Trust by emailing info@venneducationgroup.org

What Success Looks Like in Year One

By July 2027, we would expect the Founding Principal to be able to demonstrate:

A School That Is Fully Established

- A cohesive, values-driven culture understood by staff, pupils and families
- Clear behaviour systems applied consistently across the school
- Strong safeguarding practice with confident staff and robust record keeping
- Stable staffing with high expectations and clear accountability

A High Quality Specialist Curriculum

- A carefully sequenced SEND curriculum across Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4
- Clear pathways for academic, vocational and personalised learning
- Assessment systems that demonstrate progress from individual starting points
- Reintegration plans in place where appropriate and evidence of successful transitions

Operational and Financial Discipline

- Secure financial management within agreed budgets
- Efficient staffing structures aligned to pupil need
- Compliance with independent school standards and trust policies
- Clear systems for attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and reporting

Commissioning and Stakeholder Confidence

- Strong working relationships with Wakefield Council
- Clear consultation and transition processes for new pupils
- Positive engagement with families and partner agencies
- A growing reputation as a credible specialist provision within the local system

Preparation for Inspection

- Independent School Standards met in full
- Self-evaluation that is accurate and evidence-based
- Staff who understand and can articulate the school's curriculum intent, implementation and impact

Success in year one is not about perfection. It is about clarity, consistency and confidence. The school should feel purposeful, safe and professionally led from the outset.



Job Description and Person Specification

Academy	Wragby Academy
Section	Venn Academy Trust
Job Title	Principal
Grade	L18–L24
Date Prepared	February 2026

Dignity at Work

To show, at all times, a personal commitment to treating all customers and colleagues in a fair and respectful way, which gives positive regard to people's differences and individuality (for example, gender, gender identity, nationality or ethnic origin, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age). To assist in ensuring equal access to services and employment opportunities for everyone and to promote the Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy adopted by the Venn Education Group.

Overview

This is a rare opportunity to establish and lead a new specialist school from first principles.

Wragby Academy will open in September 2026 as a 120-place specialist provision for pupils aged 8 to 16. The school will grow to full capacity over three years and will serve pupils across Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

The core designation of the school is autism and complex neurodivergent profiles, including pupils whose needs may also present through communication differences, sensory regulation challenges and associated social and emotional barriers to learning. The provision has been designed to combine structured environments, carefully adapted curriculum pathways and strong pastoral systems.

The Founding Principal will lead the school from pre-opening through to full establishment. This includes shaping the educational model, defining the culture, building safeguarding and operational systems, recruiting and inducting the founding staff team and ensuring the school opens with clarity and confidence.



An earlier start or secondment period prior to September 2026 would enable the successful candidate to:

- Lead stakeholder engagement with families and commissioner
- Finalise staffing structures and appointments
- Embed curriculum frameworks and assessment systems
- Oversee readiness against Independent School Standards
- Ensure a disciplined and coherent launch

This role requires a leader who can think strategically while delivering operational precision.

The successful candidate will build secure foundations that enable sustainable growth and long-term success.

Principal Accountabilities

1. Priorities Prior to Opening

- Ensure Wragby Academy is fully operational and compliant for the admission of its first cohort of pupils in September 2026, meeting all Independent School Standards and Trust requirements.
- Design and implement the founding staffing structure, recruiting, inducting and developing a high quality team aligned to the school's autism specialist designation, values and culture.
- Work in close partnership with Wakefield Council to ensure the provision reflects local commissioning need and is operationally and educationally fit for purpose.
- Lead consultation, transition planning and engagement processes with pupils and families to ensure appropriate placements and successful induction.

2. Core Purpose

- To promote and safeguard the welfare of children and young people at all times.
- To provide strategic and professional leadership of Wragby Academy, establishing secure foundations that enable sustainable growth to full capacity and strong performance across all areas of the schools work.

3. Strategy

- Lead the development of Wragby Academy as a coherent autism specialist provision with a clearly defined educational model.
- Translate the school's vision into daily practice, ensuring consistency of approach across classrooms, pastoral systems and operational procedures.
- Embed a structured culture that supports communication, sensory regulation and predictable routines.
- Ensure learning remains central to strategic planning, staffing design and resource allocation.
- Work closely with the Venn central team to align school development with trust-wide expectations and infrastructure.
- Plan and deliver the staged growth of the school to full capacity in collaboration with the Executive Team, trustees and Wakefield Council.
- Develop productive relationships with partner schools, agencies and commissioning teams to support place planning and appropriate admissions.

4. Leadership and Management

- Provide confident and visible leadership, establishing professional standards from the outset.
- Develop and implement a robust School Development Plan with measurable milestones.
- Recruit, deploy and retain staff with appropriate autism specialist expertise and commitment to structured practice.



- Implement effective performance management systems that promote accountability and professional growth.
- Build leadership capacity within the school to support sustainable growth.
- Provide clear and accurate reporting to the CEO and Board, demonstrating progress against agreed priorities.
- Ensure communications internally and externally reflect the professionalism and ambition of the school.

5. Teaching and Learning

- Design and implement a carefully sequenced curriculum adapted to meet the needs of autistic learners and those with complex neurodivergent profiles.
- Ensure curriculum pathways across Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 balance academic, vocational and personalised learning outcomes.
- Establish assessment systems that track progress from individual starting points and inform responsive teaching.
- Embed structured behaviour frameworks appropriate to an autism specialist setting, promoting predictability and safety.
- Secure high quality classroom practice through regular monitoring, coaching and professional dialogue.
- Develop robust pastoral systems that ensure each pupil is known, supported and understood.
- Maintain high expectations for attendance, engagement and personal development.
- Remain current in SEND and Autism research and guidance, applying this knowledge in practice.

6. Finance, Procurement and Resources

- Ensure full compliance with Trust policies and financial regulations.
- Manage the school budget responsibly within agreed parameters, aligning expenditure to educational priorities.
- Work with the Trust to plan staffing growth in line with pupil numbers and funding.
- Oversee the effective management of the Wragby campus, ensuring a safe, structured and sensory-informed environment.
- Contribute to long-term estate planning to ensure facilities support the educational vision.
- Maintain strong internal controls and audit readiness.

7. Safeguarding and Health and Safety

- Ensure safeguarding practice is embedded, robust and understood by all staff.
- Maintain full compliance with statutory responsibilities relating to health, safety and data protection.
- Promote a calm, secure and emotionally safe environment for pupils and staff.
- Be the designated safeguarding lead for the provision.

8. Pre-Opening Activities

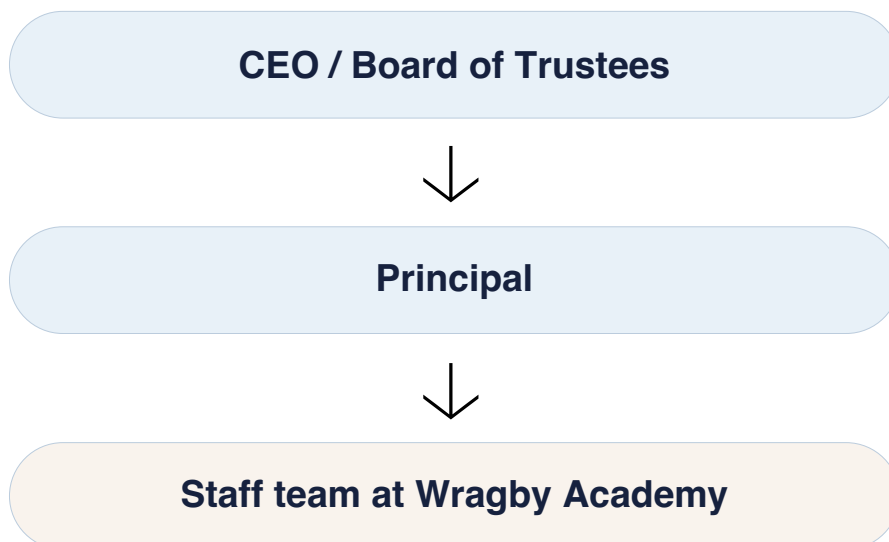
Following appointment, the Principal will lead the pre-opening implementation phase, including:

- Acting as ambassador for Wragby Academy across the local authority and partner network
- Recruiting and inducting the senior leadership team and founding staff body

In partnership with the Trust project team, the Principal will:

- Finalise staffing structures and induction programmes
- Embed trust operating systems including finance and management information systems
- Prepare detailed budgets aligned to growth projections
- Develop the school prospectus, website and communication materials
- Finalise timetabling, routines, transition arrangements and assessment frameworks
- Ensure readiness for Ofsted pre-registration and inspection requirements

Structure Chart



Person Specification

The information listed as essential (shaded column) is used as part of the job evaluation process. The requirements identified as desirable are used for recruitment purposes only. Codes: AF = Application Form, I = Interview, CQ = Certificate of Qualification, R = References (should only be used for posts requiring DBS), T = Test/Assessment, P = Presentation.

Criteria	Essential	Desirable	How Identified
1. Education, Qualifications & Experience			
Degree and recognised professional teaching qualification	✓		AF/Q
A record of recent and relevant continuing professional development	✓		AF
Experience with specialist education	✓		AF
Significant experience as a senior leader in education (DHT/AHT or equivalent)	✓		AF
SEN experience	✓		AF
A proven track record of effective outcomes when working with vulnerable children	✓		I
A proven track record of successful partnership working with external stakeholders	✓		I/R
Experience in delivering outstanding teaching and learning	✓		I
Evidence of strategic planning and budgetary management	✓		AF/I/R
Clear understanding of the current educational landscape		✓	I
Post graduate educational or leadership and management qualification		✓	AF/Q
SEND qualification		✓	AF/Q
Leadership in a specialist or AP organisation		✓	AF
Work across a range of school types and sizes		✓	AF
Successful management of organisational change (HR/Finance)		✓	I

Criteria	Essential	Desirable	How Identified
2. Knowledge, Skills & Understanding			
Comprehensive knowledge of Ofsted's Schools Inspection criteria and processes	✓		I/R
Ability to communicate in a way that inspires others	✓		I
Understanding of the statutory educational framework	✓		A/I/R
Clear understanding and knowledge of Information Management Systems and technological digital platforms for education use	✓		A/I/R
Experience of strategic planning and financial management	✓		AF
Experience of risk management	✓		AF/I/R
Understanding of equality and diversity in employment and service delivery	✓		AF/I/R
Clear understanding of governance structures and processes within a Trust context	✓		AF/I/R
Clear knowledge and understanding of DFE / other external body monitoring visits and inspections of new schools	✓		AF/I/R
Ability to write contracts and negotiate	✓		AF/I/R
Motivation to work with children and young people and/or vulnerable adults	✓		AF/I/R
Ability to form and maintain appropriate relationships and personal boundaries with children and young people and/or vulnerable adults	✓		AF/I/R
A knowledge and commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and/or vulnerable adults	✓		AF/I/R
Clear understanding of contract management.	✓		AF/I/R
3. Personal Qualities			
Belief in and commitment to the over-arching values of the Trust	✓		I/R
Commitment to the highest standards	✓		AF/I/R
Ability to work flexibly and collaboratively as part of a team	✓		AF/I/R
Ability to build a positive organisational culture	✓		AF/I/R
A strategic and analytical thinker	✓		AF/I/R
Resilience	✓		I
Self awareness	✓		I
Commercially aware in the context of educational commissioning	✓		AF/I

Person Specification

Venn Academy Trust and Venn Education Group are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of its pupils and expect all staff and volunteers to share the commitment. Appointments will be subject to an enhanced DBS disclosure. Shortlisted candidates will be subject to an online search.

The requirements listed below are not considered during the job evaluation process, but are essential requirements for the role that will be assessed during the recruitment process.

Criteria	Essential	Desirable	How Identified
2. Additional Requirements:			
Driving licence and access to a vehicle	✓		AF
3. Disclosure of Criminal Record:			
The successful candidate's appointment will be subject to the Trust obtaining a satisfactory Enhanced and Barring List Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (if ticked as an essential requirement).	✓		DBS Disclosure
If the post-holder requires a DBS disclosure the candidate is required to declare full details of everything on their criminal record.	✓		AF (after short listing)

The information listed as essential (shaded column) is used as part of the job evaluation process. The requirements identified as desirable are used for recruitment purposes only. Codes: AF = Application Form, I = Interview, CQ = Certificate of Qualification, R = References (should only be used for posts requiring DBS), T = Test/Assessment, P = Presentation.

Venn Academy Trust is committed to achieving fairness and equality in employment and welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

Our Trust is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils and expects all staff to share this commitment.

The successful candidate will be required to undertake an Enhanced DBS check.

Online searches will be carried out as part of Venn Academy Trust's recruitment due diligence for all shortlisted candidates, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

