

The Athelstan Trust



CEO Applicant Pack

Caring, Collaborative and Excellent



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“ My teachers work hard to help me, and I know I will achieve well with their support. ”

- Student



Welcome Letter from the Chair

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) position at the Athelstan Trust. We hope the information in this pack inspires you to consider this exceptional opportunity to lead a thriving and ambitious organisation.

As our founding CEO, Tim Gilson, prepares to retire in August 2025, we are seeking an outstanding leader to guide the Trust into its next phase of growth and transformation. This is an exciting time to join the Athelstan Trust, a family of schools that has consistently demonstrated resilience, progress and excellence in education.

At the Athelstan Trust, we are united by our commitment to providing an outstanding education that prioritises students' needs. Our new CEO will be someone who embodies these values, with a strong background in educational leadership, exceptional interpersonal skills, and a proven track record of advancing standards in teaching, learning, and pastoral care. This role requires an unwavering dedication to safeguarding and inclusivity and a commitment to our ethos of respect, community, and aspiration.

The Athelstan Trust currently serves five secondary and two primary schools across Wiltshire, South Gloucestershire and Gloucestershire, and each school plays a central role in its community. We view our Trust as a cornerstone for our students, families, and communities—a place where every individual is valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Our next CEO will understand the importance of this role within the community and have the vision to expand our influence and impact in a sustainable way.

All our schools are at least an Ofsted grade of 'Good' anchored by the reconfirmation of 'Excellent' for Malmesbury School, a testament to our shared commitment to school improvement. With the support of the Trust, The Dean Academy has risen from Special Measures to achieve a 'Good' rating, while both Chipping Sodbury and Bradon Forest Schools have left behind their previous triple 'Requires Improvement' designations to also secure 'Good' grades. These achievements reflect our unwavering dedication to improvement and our belief in the life changing power of education.

If you are a driven leader with a passion for transformative education and a vision for how the Athelstan Trust can continue to flourish, we would be delighted to hear from you. Thank you again for your time, consideration, and interest in joining us on this journey.

Warm regards,

Keval Shah
Chair of Trustees





Mission Statement

The Athelstan Trust is a community of comprehensive schools that work together to ensure that all our students and staff feel valued and are challenged to fulfil their potential.

We are absolutely committed to raising educational standards for all the children in our schools. We believe in developing the talents and skills of all our staff and students.

Our Multi-Academy Trust is an organisation in which children, staff and parents can feel part of a caring, collaborative and excellent community.

We respect and value the individual nature and ethos of our schools while believing we are more effective when we work together and support each other. We believe that successful schools are rooted in their local community. We aim to celebrate spiritual and creative diversity, success, and lifelong learning. We are inclusive and collaborative and promote a culture of openness and integrity.



Our Core Values

Our Academy Trust is an organisation in which children, staff and parents should feel part of a **caring**, **collaborative** and **excellent** community.

Our Strategic Aims

1. Raise standards in all aspects of school life across the Trust.
2. Deliver an excellent comprehensive education for all the children served by the schools within the Trust.
3. Develop and value all the staff within the Trust.
4. Strengthen the Trust to secure its future.

“ We are delighted to be part of a supportive Trust that encourages progression and work life balance. It is empowering to be part of a bigger team and this is motivating. ”

- Staff





About our Trust



Since the creation of the Athelstan Trust in March 2015 we have had a clear strategic aim to grow the Trust in a cautious and considered way within our geographical area of Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. We believe that considered growth will ensure the financial strength of the Trust and enhance our capacity to provide high quality education for all our students. In the period that the Trust has been in existence it has grown from 1 to 7 schools with student numbers increasing from 1276 to over 4500 students.

We aim to grow within our geographical area (approximately one hour travel from the Trust office in Tetbury). In line with this it was agreed by the Trustees in October 2020 that we grow to seven schools with Chipping Sodbury School joining the Trust in April 2021, Leighterton Primary School joining in April 2023 followed by Avening Primary School in September 2023.

On 2nd December 2021 Trustees approved the adoption of Church minority articles if a Voluntary Controlled School was to join the Trust. In November 2023 they further agreed to move to equality articles. These have not been adopted as we currently have no church schools seeking to join the Trust.

In 2023 the Trustees approved a new growth project based in Chippenham. Three Chippenham schools applied formally to join the Trust in September 2024 following a comprehensive consultation process. We are aiming for the February 2025 Advisory Board to receive the outcome of these applications.

Capacity for growth

We have taken the strategic decision to build our central team to ensure that we have the capacity to provide strong, effective and efficient central services to all our existing schools and any potential partners. We have a highly effective central finance team, including experienced primary school finance staff, led by an excellent CFO. As a Trust of seven schools, we now access direct capital funding. There is a programme of just under £1 million of capital works underway or planned for this year. We employ external consultants to support Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning (ICFP) and to carry out regular safeguarding audits in each of our schools.

“ We have had so much more support, at all levels, for our school since joining the Athelstan Trust and we are very happy to be part of a much bigger team. ”

- Headteacher





About our Trust

All Senior Leaders within the Trust work together to share best practice and ensure that there is capacity for continuous improvement. Our CFO and the highly skilled school finance teams work together to ensure the financial security of the Trust.

Working closely with our CFO is an experienced, effective COO who manages the sites and compliance across the whole Trust and we have a shared resource of site managers working across our schools. We also have a very strong central IT network team, together with a central HR Lead and HR staff in each school. A highly skilled Trust Governance Professional with experience of working with primary and secondary schools, supports the Trust Board.

We have a team of committed School Improvement Leads (SILs) and a Primary School Improvement Partner to support classroom practice focussing on raising standards and supporting colleagues. The SILs work flexibly to respond to changing need and ensure that school leadership is appropriately supported. This academic year the SILs are based in schools in the Trust in leadership roles.

The Athelstan Trust Board consists of experienced Trustees, most of whom have been involved in school governance for several years. They are drawn from a wide range of business backgrounds and bring a valuable set of skills to their role. The Trustees provide strong, ethical, strategic leadership to the Trust and they work closely with the Local Governing Bodies of the schools to provide support and challenge to the schools.

The Athelstan Trust is delighted to be the Flexible Working Ambassador Multi-Academy Trusts and Schools (FWAMS) for the South-West. We are proud of the culture of flexible working that the Trust exemplifies. In order to recruit and retain the very best staff, schools need to be responsive and flexible to individual needs and this is evident in all our schools.

School Improvement

We believe that school improvement is the responsibility of us all.

In the Athelstan Trust we are constantly refining and improving the way we support, challenge and improve our schools. Each school has an individual identity that is rooted in their community but works collaboratively to deliver a high-quality and inclusive education for all the students we serve.



“ I am proud to be a member of our Happy, Caring and Excellent school community, and the Trust in a wider sense. It has offered me opportunities for career development and opened up a subject community that is otherwise very hard to find. ”

- Staff



About our Trust

As a Trust, we offer differing degrees of support to schools which is based on need and not entitlement; resources are flexible and deployed across all schools as necessary. Each school continues to have its own plan based on individual circumstances and risk assessment.

We are guided by the principle that school improvement makes the biggest difference to the life chances of the students in schools.

Our Trust provides a clear vision, that is supported by local governors, school leaders, staff, students, parents / carers, as well as the wider community. This vision underpins all leadership decisions and reflects the wider culture of the Trust. Embedded within a culture that is motivating and ambitious for all, the potential for all students, including disadvantaged children and children with SEND, is enabled.

Our team of centrally employed SILs are all experienced school leaders, working across the Trust to support each school's development plan priorities. Through this team we deliver a central Trust Continuing Professional Development programme (CPD). We work closely with our primary school senior staff to deliver primary specific training and to offer training that is relevant cross phase.

Effective CPD is at the heart of our work to engage, develop and retain talented staff in the schools within our region. Each school will aspire to a high performing working culture for all staff that champions the profession whilst promoting collaboration, aspiration and support. We enhance this with two Athelstan Trust Days each year, coordinated by our CPD Manager and School Improvement Team, where all staff from across the Trust come together for a day of CPD opportunities and collaboration.

We also make very extensive and effective use of the National College online training which covers all phases and many non-teaching roles. We employ a highly experienced Primary School Improvement Partner to support our primary schools and work with our in-house School Improvement (SI) team. We provide 3 School Improvement Partner visits per year in addition to the visits from the CEO, COO and our SILs. There is an agreement to scale this offer up to support additional primary schools if needed.



“ The focus on the whole child, their mental and physical well being as well as their academic results is such a good approach to education and I am so pleased this is the Bradon way. ”

- Parent



Key Information

Status	Multi Academy Trust
Year Trust was established and founding school	2015 – Trust with Malmesbury School
Number and type of schools currently in the Trust	5 secondary schools 2 primary schools
Number and type of schools likely to join the Trust within the next twelve months	1 secondary school 2 primary schools
Date of last Ofsted and the Ofsted judgement for each school	Avening Primary School – Good, 2020 Bradon Forest School – Good, 2023 Chipping Sodbury School – Good, 2022 Leighterton Primary School – Good, 2021 Malmesbury School – Outstanding, 2024 Sir William Romney’s School – Good, 2020 The Dean Academy – Good, 2021
Forms of entry (range across the Trust)	Reception – Y13
Number of students on roll (Trust total)	4,648
% of SEND Students (Trust %)	19.4%
% of EHCP Students (Trust %)	3.7%
% of EAL Students (Trust %)	5.8%
% FSM Students (Trust %)	16.3%
% of Pupil Premium Students (Trust %)	19.9%
Trust website	www.theathelstantrust.org





Person Specification

	SPECIFICATION	ESSENTIAL (E) DESIRABLE (D)		ASSESS AT APPLICATION OR INTERVIEW
		E	D	
A	EDUCATION & TRAINING			
1	Educated to degree level	✓		A
2	Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)	✓		A
3	Relevant higher degree and / or NPQH and / or NPQEL		✓	A
4	Ability to demonstrate recent commitment to own continuing professional development in preparation for a senior leadership role		✓	A
B	KNOWLEDGE & EXPERIENCE			
5	Extensive experience of successful leadership in education	✓		A
6	Extensive experience of leading school improvement resulting in strong and improved outcomes for young people	✓		A
7	Experience of Senior Leadership in a School Trust	✓		A
8	A deep understanding of the workings of a MAT landscape and clear knowledge of both primary and secondary phases	✓		A, I
9	Proven ability to build strong working relationships with all stakeholders and good networking skills	✓		A, I
10	Extensive knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning in secondary education, with a sound knowledge in primary education	✓		A, I
11	Evidence of having developed and delivered successful school strategies for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating school improvement	✓		A, I
12	Familiarity of working with Trust Boards and managing experienced non-executives		✓	I
13	Experience of managing school budgets and an understanding of the legal, financial, and auditing requirements of a School Trust, including the ESFA handbook.		✓	A, I



	SPECIFICATION	ESSENTIAL (E) DESIRABLE (D)		ASSESS AT APPLICATION OR INTERVIEW
		E	D	
14	A sound appreciation of the civic duty of Multi Academy Trusts in supporting communities, delivering wider public benefit		✓	I
15	Knowledge and understanding of the teaching and learning for young people with SEND and those in alternative provision and the challenges surrounding this	✓		A, I
16	Knowledge of schools with onsite specialist provision		✓	A, I
C	PROFESSIONAL SKILLS & QUALITIES			
17	Ability to inspire and motivate at all levels and promote unity and common purpose across the Trust	✓		I
18	A track record of demonstrating high level analytical, strategic planning and organisational skills relevant to the management of a School Trust.	✓		A
19	An effective manager of managers, good decision maker and ability to delegate.	✓		I
20	Excellent communicator: values the power of clear communication both inside and outside the organisation	✓		I
21	A visionary leader with strong evidence of creative thinking in the educational sector		✓	I
22	Commercial acumen to deliver the growth strategy and cost-effective practices.		✓	I
23	Flexibility, openness and commitment to collaborative leadership	✓		I
24	Demonstrates a commitment to ethical leadership	✓		I
25	Demonstrates an understanding of why and how different schools require bespoke support plans		✓	I
26	Experience of identifying school improvement factors that address underperformance, and which lead to sustained improvement	✓		A, I



	SPECIFICATION	ESSENTIAL (E) DESIRABLE (D)		ASSESS AT APPLICATION OR INTERVIEW
		E	D	
27	Demonstrates a commitment to supporting professional growth, retaining and developing talent	✓		I
28	Skills and commitment to Keeping Children Safe in Education	✓		I
D	PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES			
29	Recognises and respects the importance of creating a positive, inclusive culture to ensure the best outcomes for all students	✓		I
30	Ability to empathise with stakeholders and factor this into strategic decision making	✓		I
31	An ability to be reflective and self-aware, and to welcome challenge when developing ideas, strategies and plans	✓		I
32	Optimistic and enthusiastic outlook	✓		I
33	Demonstrates stamina and resilience in handling challenging situations	✓		I
34	Values aligned with the Athelstan Trust	✓		A, I
35	Professional and personal integrity	✓		I

Key: A = Application | I = Interview and Assessment Tasks



“As a parent I could not ask for more than this from a school setting, I therefore just wanted to reach out and say thank you.”

- Parent



Job Description

Job Title	Chief Executive Officer
Contract	Permanent, full-time
Reporting to	Board of Trustees
Responsible for	See flow chart (page 15)
Salary	L44 - L50 (£141,021 - £158,108 per annum)

Job Purpose

The Trust CEO is responsible for the education of all the young people in the Trust's schools, leading the Executive Team, ensuring the Trust and all its schools are successful over time, in a sustainable way. The CEO provides strategic leadership and management across all aspects of the Trust's activities and ensures that the Trust provides high quality education for all its students through the effective and efficient use of resources and people. Accountable for ensuring the Trust meets its statutory and legal requirements, the CEO is responsible for ensuring the Trust's core values of Caring, Collaborative and Excellent are upheld at all times. The CEO represents the Trust with a wide range of stakeholders and partners and enables the Trust to fulfil its civic responsibilities. The CEO is the Accounting Officer for the Trust.

Strategic Leadership

- Establish and sustain the Trust's values, culture, and strategic direction in partnership with the Board, providing leadership that enables the Trust to achieve its strategic objectives and secure its future sustainability
- Support the Trust Board in the formulation and development of its strategy, taking responsibility for the creation and implementation of key documents such as the business plan, long-term strategic plan, self-evaluation and improvement plans
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with key partners and stakeholders including the Regional Director, the Department for Education (DfE), the Education and Skills Funding Agency, local authorities, the wider local community and other local schools
- Create a safe, diverse, inclusive and positive culture across the Trust and its schools where all can flourish and build a brighter future
- Develop operational objectives that are appropriate, deliverable and aligned to securing a sustainable future through the Trust's strategic direction
- Enable the Trust's organisational design and operational systems to meet its current and future requirements and manage change effectively
- Lead the growth and development of the Trust, building upon collaborative approaches, including due diligence and supporting converting schools





Quality of Education

- Tackle educational inequality, upholding and securing ambitious educational and behavioural standards for all pupils
- Promote further support for the most disadvantaged and those with additional and special educational needs and disabilities within a safe and secure environment
- Enable the Trust to establish and sustain a broad, rich and coherent curriculum entitlement for all pupils, supported by effective curricular leadership and delivered through high quality teaching in all its schools
- Ensure the Trust has high quality, expert teaching in all the Trust's schools, built on an evidence-informed understanding of effective teaching and how pupils learn
- Ensure that priority areas for improvement are identified
- Enable the Trust and its schools to engage with appropriate evidence-based strategies for improvement and ensure their effective implementation

The Athelstan Trust has played a pivotal role in strengthening leadership and management, at all levels in the school, over the last two years

- Ofsted

Finance, sustainability and compliance

- Ensure that sound financial management systems are in place
- Prioritise and allocate financial resources appropriately, ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and probity in the use of public funds
- Ensure rigorous approaches to identifying, managing and mitigating risk
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of the Trust and its schools through effective financial and estates management
- Direct the Trust's activities to achieve the most efficient and sustainable provision of education to the highest quality, prioritising and making the most effective use of the resources available
- Ensure the organisation complies with all statutory and legal requirements including safeguarding and health and safety

People strategy

- Lead and effectively manage the activities and performance of the Trust's Executive Team
- Enable a people strategy that identifies talent, supports and develops all staff and sustains a culture of staff well-being and high staff professionalism
- Ensure the Trust has high quality employment practices that promote equality, diversity and inclusion, including ethical practices of recruitment and retention of staff
- Ensure staff have access to high quality professional development, aligned to balance organisational and individual needs
- Ensure the Trust has strong talent management and succession planning programmes across all areas of the organisation's work



Accountability and Governance

- Promote a culture of accountability that is recognised and accepted as an essential element of improvement at all levels and across all aspects of the Trust's work
- Understand the role of relevant regulatory bodies and ensure the Trust and its schools respond to their requirements
- Understand and welcome the role of effective Trust governance, upholding the obligation to give account and recognising that Trust Boards are ultimately responsible and accountable for the Trust's work
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with the Trust Board recognising their key role in holding the CEO and Executive team to account
- Ensure the Trust Board receives quality information in the level of detail needed to make informed decisions and fulfil its functions and legal obligations
- Ensure positive communications that promote the Trust and its work, and present the Trust effectively when dealing with the media

System leadership and civic responsibility

- Promote and enable ways in which the Trust's schools and their local boards engage meaningfully with their communities and are responsive and accountable to them
- In line with the Trust's civic role, work with civic partners and stakeholders in the local area, region and/or nationally to contribute to the Public Good, ensuring the value of the child and coherent public service for children and families
- Foster and engage in the collective leadership of the sector, building strong local systems to address disadvantage and improve the quality of education for all pupils
- Exert external influence on behalf of the Trust by active engagement with sector organisations, regulators, policy makers, local and national government, industry and other partners
- Give public assurance of high standards of probity





Safeguarding and compliance

The CEO is accountable for the Trust, and its academies, meeting its legal and statutory responsibilities by:

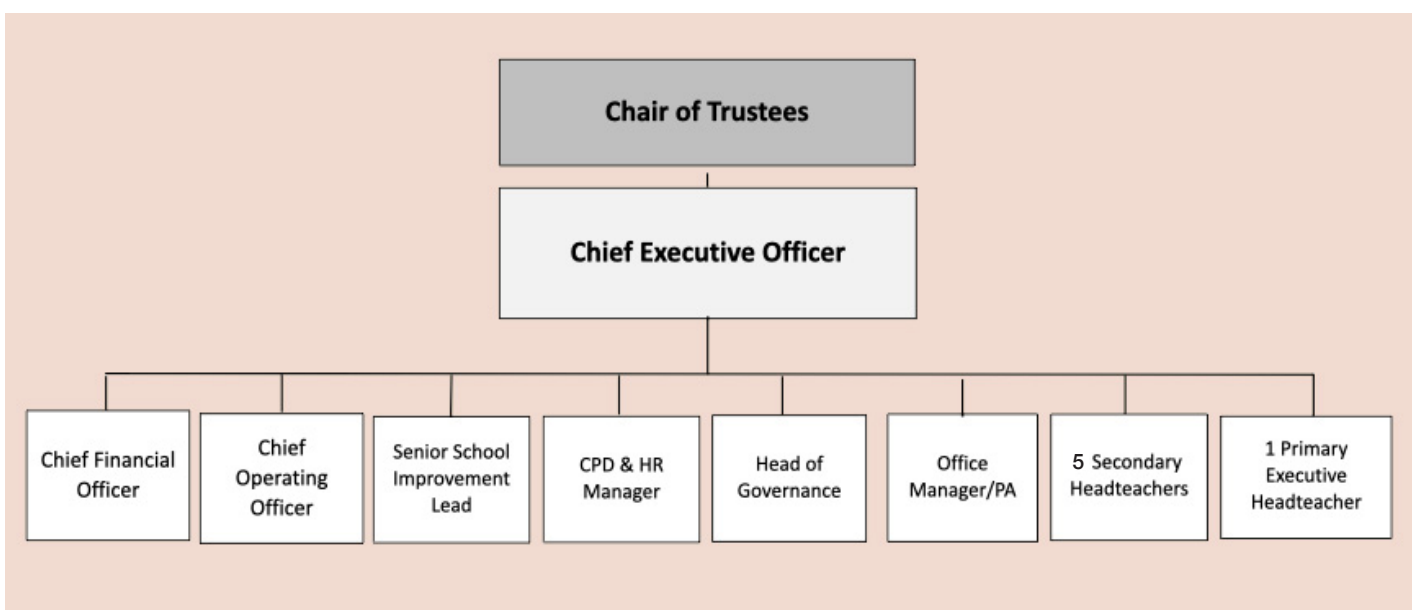
- Ensuring that the Trust, and each school within the Trust, meets its safeguarding responsibilities in line with current legislation
- Ensuring that the Trust meets requirements related to health and safety and data protection
- Ensuring the Trust meets requirements set out by Companies House, the Charity Commission, the Department for Education (DfE), and the Education and Skills Funding Agency
- Embedding Trust-wide accountability and quality assurance procedures to achieve compliance
- Acting as a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) for the Trust

Accounting Officer responsibilities

- Give assurance (to Parliament and the public) of high standards of probity in the management of public funds, particularly regularity, propriety and value for money
- Adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life
- Have oversight of financial transactions (under Trustees' control, measures to prevent losses or misuse, multi-person operation of accounts and records, accurate accounting records)
- Complete annual statement on regularity, propriety and compliance
- Take personal responsibility for assuring compliance to the Board
- Advise on Board intent or action if incompatible with the articles, funding agreement or handbook
- Notify the ESFA and / or successors if they consider the Board is in breach of the articles, funding agreement or handbook

The duties and responsibilities listed above are indicative of the tasks the CEO will perform and are not intended to be an exhaustive list. The post holder will be expected to take on additional responsibilities appropriate to the role as they arise.

Flowchart showing CEO's Direct Reports 2024-2025





Letter from our Founding CEO

Dear applicant,

I am delighted that you are considering applying for the role of Chief Executive Officer of The Athelstan Trust.

Having spent ten years in the role I know that this is an excellent, collaborative Trust to work in, with the most incredibly dedicated, professional and caring colleagues. You will also be fortunate in having a great team of Trustees, Members and Local Governors, all of whom are committed to supporting you and the team deliver the very best for our students and staff.

We are privileged to have seven great schools in the Trust, all serving their local communities as inclusive, comprehensive schools, determined to provide the best education for our students. I hope you will take time to find out more about our Trust, our students and our communities.

I am proud of what we have achieved in the first ten years of The Athelstan Trust's existence and I am sure that the next phase will be exciting, stimulating, challenging and rewarding for the new CEO and successful for our students.

If appointed, I can assure you that you will be in the most fulfilling and professionally satisfying role of your career.

Tim Gilson



“ *Our school is a brilliant place to work- the school community is supportive, we have fun and lots of laughter.* ”

- Staff



Living and Working in the Area

The South West is full of natural beauty, and boasts stunning natural landscapes and picturesque countryside. From the Cotswolds' rolling hills to the serene Wiltshire plains, the area can provide a peaceful escape from city life.

Bristol, Bath and Cheltenham are also close by, offering vibrant alternatives, with venues that provide opportunities to see national theatre tours, concerts and performances.

Excellent transport links make commuting and travel convenient. The M4 and M5 motorways, along with well-connected rail services, ensure easy access to major cities like London, Cardiff and Birmingham.

Compared to major UK cities, the cost of living in the area is more affordable, offering excellent value for money. Lower housing costs and everyday expenses mean you can enjoy a higher quality of life without financial strain.



With easy access to outdoor activities like hiking, cycling, and water sports, the region promotes a healthy and active lifestyle. The abundance of parks, nature reserves, and scenic trails contributes to overall well-being and a balanced lifestyle.

Living here means being surrounded by history and culture. Explore ancient sites like Stonehenge, visit charming market towns, or enjoy local festivals and events. The region's rich cultural heritage provides endless exploration and community activities.

Distances from Tetbury:

Malmesbury 4 miles | Cirencester 12 miles | Bath 18 miles |
Cheltenham 25 miles | Kemble 5 miles (London Paddington in 75 minutes) | Bristol 29 miles | Swindon 21 miles

“The Athelstan Trust is a great family. Under the guidance and support offered by the Trust, each school has been given the space to develop their own identities, to improve and develop in a way that fits the individual communities in which they sit. I believe that the caring approach that the Trust have adopted has allowed Malmesbury School to be truly Happy, Caring and Excellent.”

- Governor



The Process and How to Apply

Full details of this post can be found on the [Trust Vacancies – The Athelstan Trust](#).

All applications should be submitted through MyNewTerm on the following [link](#).

Included in your application should be: **a supporting statement of no more than 2 sides of A4 detailing how your knowledge, skills and experiences meet the criteria on the person specification.**

Our Consultant, **Bal Kaur-Pierpoint of ASCL's Leadership Appointment Service**, is providing professional support to the Trustees throughout the selection and appointment process.

If you would like to find out more about this exciting opportunity, **please contact Bal on: 07492 353368** or by email: Bal.Kaur-Pierpoint@ascl.org.uk for an informal conversation, or further information.

Candidates are warmly encouraged to take an informal opportunity to have a video call with the Chair of Trustees Keval Shah, between 6th and 17th January 2025 by prior arrangement. Please contact Bal (details above) in the first instance to arrange this.

Closing date for applications is: 12 noon on Monday 20th January 2025

Shortlisting will take place on: Wednesday 22nd January 2025

Interviews will be held on: Wednesday 29th and Thursday 30th January 2025

References will be taken up shortly after shortlisting and prior to the interview using the contact details you supply on your application form.

A pre-interview written assessment will be sent out to shortlisted candidates.

The Athelstan Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. The successful candidate will be required to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. References will be sought for shortlisted candidates before interview. Please also be aware that you will be subject to an online check and that you may be questioned about the findings of such a check at your interview.