

Principal

The Principal is the most senior leader within the academy and holds overall responsibility for driving its strategic direction, academic performance, operational efficiency, staff development, and community reputation. As the lead professional and figurehead of the school, the Principal provides purposeful, inspiring leadership that secures a culture of high aspiration, achievement, and inclusion. They are tasked with ensuring that all pupils, regardless of background, have access to the highest possible standards of education and personal development in a safe and nurturing environment.

Crucially, the Principal leads the embedding and promotion of the academy's own distinct vision, ethos, and values, ensuring that these are lived and visible in all aspects of school life—from curriculum design and teaching quality to pastoral care and relationships with families. They work to foster a sense of pride, belonging, and shared purpose among students, staff, and the wider school community, building an academy culture that reflects its unique identity while delivering excellence for all.

At the same time, the Principal plays a pivotal leadership role within Leigh Academies Trust, contributing meaningfully to the collective mission of the Trust. This includes shaping Trust-wide strategy, participating in cross-academy collaboration, and upholding the shared values that underpin the Trust's vision for inclusive, evidence-based, and future-focused education. The Principal is expected to work in close partnership with other leaders across the network, ensuring that their academy benefits from—and contributes to—the strength, expertise, and innovation of the wider Trust community.

This role requires a visionary and credible educational leader who combines deep moral purpose with strategic acumen and operational excellence. The successful post-holder will be an experienced and resilient system leader, committed to continuous improvement, equity in education, and the transformational power of learning. They must be capable of inspiring others, building capacity, and delivering sustained impact—both within their own academy and across the Trust as a whole.

Core Purpose

- **Provide exceptional strategic leadership** that ensures consistently high standards of teaching, learning, and achievement for all students, underpinned by a clear and ambitious vision for the academy's future.
- **Establish and sustain a high-performance culture** built on trust, collaboration, mutual respect, and shared accountability—driving excellence through high expectations for both staff and students.

- **Lead continuous school improvement** by using data and evidence to inform decisions, evaluate impact, and implement timely, effective strategies—always guided by a strong moral purpose to improve life chances for every learner.
- **Design and deliver a forward-thinking curriculum and wider school experience** that prepares students to succeed in a diverse, digital, and rapidly evolving global context—fostering personal growth, academic achievement, and future readiness.
- **Promote and uphold the ethos, values, and strategic objectives of Leigh Academies Trust**, ensuring alignment with Trust-wide priorities while contributing actively to its ongoing development, innovation, and collaborative success.

Key Areas of Responsibility

1. Strategic Leadership and Vision

- Articulate and deliver a compelling, future-focused vision for the academy that is ambitious, values-driven, and clearly aligned with the strategic aims of Leigh Academies Trust.
- Develop, implement, and review a robust school improvement plan based on accurate self-evaluation and pupil performance data.
- Build a culture of excellence and collective ownership among all staff, pupils, and stakeholders.
- Be outward-facing and proactive in seeking new opportunities to enhance the reputation, performance, and sustainability of the academy.
- Participate in Trust-level initiatives, research, and leadership development to ensure alignment with best practice and innovation.

2. Educational Performance and Curriculum Excellence

- Ensure the academy delivers a broad, balanced, and ambitious curriculum that meets the needs of all learners and prepares them for future education, employment, and life.
- Lead on the development of curriculum pathways, including digital learning, vocational education, SEND provision, and literacy/numeracy interventions.
- Monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning across all departments, ensuring pedagogical excellence, effective differentiation, and rigorous assessment.
- Drive improvement in academic attainment and progress through the intelligent use of performance data and diagnostic tools.
- Champion high standards of literacy, oracy, and numeracy across the curriculum.

3. Staff Leadership and Professional Culture

- Recruit, retain, and develop a talented, motivated, and diverse workforce that reflects the values and vision of the academy.
- Model principled and professional leadership, setting the standard for integrity, transparency, and emotional intelligence.

- Establish a culture of continuous professional development, peer collaboration, and reflective practice.
- Lead performance management processes effectively, setting clear objectives, recognising excellence, and addressing underperformance swiftly and fairly.
- Build leadership capacity at all levels through coaching, delegation, and structured succession planning.

4. Inclusive Practice and Pupil Development

- Champion an inclusive ethos in which all students—regardless of background or ability—feel safe, respected, and empowered to succeed.
- Promote pupils’ spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development through a values-led approach and enriched curriculum offer.
- Oversee and enhance pastoral care, behaviour management, and student wellbeing, ensuring early intervention and high-quality support systems are in place.
- Ensure strong provision for pupils with SEND, EAL, and other additional needs, working in collaboration with parents and external agencies.
- Foster student leadership, voice, and participation in academy life, embedding democracy and a sense of shared responsibility.

5. Parental and Community Engagement

- Develop meaningful, transparent, and regular communication with parents and carers, including academic reporting, consultations, and digital platforms.
- Build strong relationships with families, respecting their diverse contexts and fostering a sense of shared purpose in student learning.
- Act as a key ambassador for the academy, promoting its work, celebrating its achievements, and maintaining its standing within the local community.
- Develop strategic partnerships with employers, further/higher education providers, voluntary organisations, and public services to enhance student opportunities.
- Ensure the academy contributes positively to local cohesion and reflects the diversity of its community in policies and practice.

6. Governance, Accountability and Compliance

- Work closely with the Local Governing Body to ensure strategic alignment, robust challenge, and statutory compliance.
- Provide governors and Trust leaders with accurate, timely, and insightful reports on performance, risk, and improvement planning.
- Ensure that the academy complies with all statutory and regulatory obligations, including Ofsted, safeguarding, GDPR, health and safety, and equalities legislation.
- Maintain clear boundaries between governance and operational leadership while fostering a culture of transparency and collaboration.

7. Safeguarding and Student Welfare

- Be the strategic lead for safeguarding, ensuring a culture of vigilance, openness, and accountability is embedded across the academy.
- Ensure all safeguarding policies are up to date, well understood, and consistently applied by all staff.
- Lead regular safeguarding audits, training, and self-assessments in line with statutory guidance (Keeping Children Safe in Education).
- Champion student mental health and wellbeing, ensuring access to high-quality pastoral support and early intervention.

8. Operational and Financial Management

- Oversee the efficient use of all school resources, ensuring financial sustainability and value for money.
- Work closely with Trust finance teams to ensure accurate budgeting, procurement, and forecasting.
- Ensure facilities and operations support a safe, effective, and inclusive learning environment.
- Develop and monitor contingency and risk management plans, ensuring compliance with legal and Trust requirements.
- Maintain effective systems for IT, information governance, and infrastructure development, acting as the academy's Information Asset Owner (IAO).



Person Specification – Principal

This section outlines the essential and desirable attributes expected for the role of a Principal.

Qualifications and Training

Essential:

- Honours degree in a relevant subject area.
- Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).
- Extensive and recent professional development relevant to educational leadership and school improvement.

Desirable:

- Postgraduate qualification in education, leadership, or business (e.g. NPQH, Master's, MBA).
- Formal accreditation in coaching, mentoring, or leadership development.

Experience

Essential:

- Significant experience of senior leadership within a secondary school setting.
- Proven track record of raising achievement and improving student outcomes.
- Successful experience of leading curriculum and/or pastoral strategy at whole-school level.
- Demonstrated experience in line management, staff development, and performance improvement.
- Experience of working in diverse, multi-ethnic, or disadvantaged settings.
- Understanding and experience of safeguarding and statutory responsibilities.

Desirable:

- Experience as a Headteacher, Principal, Deputy Head, or equivalent.
- Experience of working within a Multi-Academy Trust or collaborative school structure.
- Experience of leading through Ofsted inspections or external reviews.
- Proven success in turnaround or improvement contexts.
- Experience in managing school finances or operational systems.

Skills, Knowledge and Abilities

- **School Improvement Expertise:** Strong grasp of evidence-informed strategies to raise standards.
- **Curriculum and Assessment Knowledge:** Confident in national curriculum, Ofsted expectations, and assessment frameworks.
- **Inclusive Education:** Deep understanding of SEND, pupil premium, and equality policy and practice.
- **Inspiring Leadership:** Able to influence, motivate, and build positive relationships across the school community.
- **Excellent Communication:** Skilled in written and verbal communication, including public speaking and formal reporting.
- **Data-Informed Decision Making:** Strong analytical skills and the ability to translate data into impact.
- **Change Management:** Experienced in leading innovation and organisational change in complex settings.
- **Strategic Thinking:** Competent in planning, project delivery, and risk management.
- **Digital Leadership:** Confident in using digital tools to enhance teaching, learning, and leadership.

Personal Qualities and Attributes

- **Visible and Empathetic Leader:** A confident, approachable presence within the school community—highly visible to staff, students, and families. Leads with emotional intelligence, compassion, and authenticity, building trust and fostering a sense of belonging. Listens actively and responds with empathy, ensuring all voices are heard and valued.
- **Resilient and Calm Under Pressure:** Demonstrates the ability to remain composed, solution-focused, and optimistic in the face of challenges. Models calm, measured decision-making during times of uncertainty or change, instilling confidence and stability in others.
- **Driven by Equity and Social Justice:** Deeply committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of background, has the opportunity to succeed. Champions inclusion, diversity, and fairness, taking proactive steps to identify and dismantle barriers to learning and opportunity.

- **Reflective and Open-Minded:** A lifelong learner who embraces feedback, seeks out diverse perspectives, and continuously strives for self-improvement. Encourages a culture of professional curiosity and collective learning across the academy.
- **Collaborative Ethos:** Values and nurtures positive relationships with all stakeholders—including staff, students, parents, governors, and wider community partners. Builds effective teams, fosters mutual respect, and leads through collaboration rather than control.
- **Purposeful and Passionate about Education:** Demonstrates a genuine belief in the power of education to change lives. Brings energy, enthusiasm, and a sense of mission to the role—motivating others through a clear moral purpose and a shared commitment to excellence.
- **Professional Integrity and Credibility:** Leads with ambition and high standards, while remaining grounded, humble, and principled. Acts with transparency, honesty, and fairness in all interactions, earning the respect and trust of colleagues, pupils, and the wider community.
- **Strategically Visionary, Yet Practically Grounded:** Balances big-picture thinking with a strong grasp of operational detail. Capable of translating strategic vision into practical actions that deliver real-world impact.
- **Culturally Intelligent and Community-Minded:** Values and celebrates diversity, engaging meaningfully with the cultural richness of the school community. Acts as a unifying presence who brings people together around shared values and aspirations.

Safeguarding of students and Duty of care

All staff, regardless of role, level of seniority and location, have a responsibility to ensure the highest levels of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our pupils, and we expect all our staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We must collectively create an environment where children feel safe to learn, play, and grow. Children should feel comfortable in their surroundings and know that they can approach any responsible adult with any problems or concerns.

All staff must be able to identify any children who are at risk of harm, and know the characteristics of abuse or neglect. If you suspect or confirm harm then it's essential you know what actions to take.

Annual safeguarding training is offered to all staff at Leigh Academies Trust, and it is the staff member's responsibility to be aware of the most up to date guidance documented in the [Keeping Children Safe in Education document](#) ([Department of Education](#)).

Notes

The job description allocates duties and responsibilities but does not direct the particular amount of time to be spent on carrying them out and no part of it may be so construed. This job description is not necessarily a comprehensive definition of the post. It will be reviewed at least once a year and may be subject to modification or amendment at any time after consultation with the holder of the post.

