



Information Pack
Chief Executive Officer

**Ambition
Education
Trust**


Ambition
Education Trust

Pack Contents

	PAGE NO:
Welcome from our Chair of Trustees	3
Welcome from our CEO and Co-CEO	4
Vision & Values	5
About Us	6
Our Team	8
The Role	11
The Person	13
Benefits, How to Apply	14



The foundations of our Trust are to build a collaborative partnership of schools that provide an exceptional educational experience for all

Welcome

From our Chair of Trustees

Thank you for your interest in Ambition Education Trust.

Dear Candidate

We are delighted by your interest in joining the Ambition Education Trust. Formed in 2024 through the merger of two exceptional Trusts in Hertfordshire we have reached an exciting point in our journey and are now seeking an outstanding individual to lead us into the next chapter.



We are a values driven organisation, committed to the highest standards of integrity, governance and professionalism. We are seeking a CEO who shares our ambition and is motivated to lead with purpose. The role requires a leader who combines strategic clarity with humanity; someone who understands that sustainable success is built on a foundation of trust and high expectations. We are seeking an inspirational leader who fosters a culture that empowers others and brings people with them through their leadership.

Our Trust is an inclusive, cross-phase community of ten schools, with 750 dedicated colleagues serving over 7,500 students aged 3–18 across St Albans, Welwyn Garden City, and Hemel Hempstead. Spanning infant, junior, primary, and secondary phases, our schools are supported by a professional central team comprising experienced educational practitioners as well as specialists in HR, admin, IT, operations and finance.

We believe that every child deserves the best opportunity to succeed academically, socially, and personally. By embracing collaboration and innovation, we ensure the sum of our parts makes us greater. Our strong track record of improving standards is consistently reflected in our student outcomes and inspection results.

Our values are encapsulated in 'Educational Excellence for All' - Respect, Equity, Aspiration, Community and Honesty. We want every student in our care to feel included and supported, and to emerge as excellent citizens and scholars: well-rounded, guided by positive values, and equipped to meet the challenges of a changing world.

We are looking for a leader who understands that how a decision is made is as important as the decision itself. Ambition is embedded in our name, and we see this as collective responsibility, to stretch boundaries, challenge the status quo and seek better outcomes for students, colleagues and communities. But we place equal importance on fairness and respect, building cultures where people can speak freely and contribute meaningfully.



Welcome

From our CEO and Co-CEO



A Journey of Excellence and Ambition

Since its formation, the Ambition Education Trust (AET) has embarked on an extraordinary journey of transformation and growth.

From day one we established our mission which is simple yet profound: Educational Excellence for All and this is underpinned by our agreed five core values (**REACH**):

Respect:

Fostering a safe, supportive environment where everyone is valued

Equity:

Actively promoting fairness at every level

Aspiration:

Driving for excellence so every child and adult succeeds

Community:

Cultivating a culture of collaboration and shared best practices

Honesty:

Building trust through openness and integrity

We don't just state these values; we live them. Our goal is for every AET school to be a beacon of outstanding practice, ensuring no child is left behind and every young person has the best possible start in life.

In just under two years, our achievements have been considerable. We have already:

- Established an inclusive and trusting leadership network of heads and central executives who meet regularly to drive school improvement
- Strengthened our curriculum, with 2025-26 reviews showing that all schools are delivering ambitious, fit-for-purpose education that meets diverse pupil needs
- Cultivated a "thriving" staff culture through the Ambition Academy, our dedicated training arm which provides superb CPD and leadership pathways for staff
- Invested heavily in pupil voice and participation across the Trust
- Provided opportunities for professional development across the Trust
- Built a strong governance structure that supports the work at both school and Trust level
- Promoted strong self-evaluation systems including annual pupil, staff and parent questionnaires, and peer reviews
- Offered high-quality CPD and improvement services both internally and through our key partners, Herts for Learning and The Alban Teaching School Hub
- We are continually investing in our infrastructure and estates to ensure high-quality learning environments
- Modernised our IT resilience by migrating to a cloud-based infrastructure, supporting our digital transformation goals
- Expanded our horizons, with another academy set to join us in September 2026, marking an exciting new chapter in our measured growth plan

The AET is now at a pivotal and exciting stage. We have worked hard to establish our central services, particularly with Finance, IT and Operations teams, allowing our school leaders to focus on what matters most: the students.

Our recent staff and pupil surveys show a rising trend in satisfaction and a genuine sense of belonging across the Trust. Our future plans are highly ambitious as we seek to continue this journey of working together for the benefit of all.

Mission, Vision and Values

Our Mission is to create a partnership of schools with Educational Excellence for All.

Vision

ensuring that every young person has the best possible start in life; aspiring to become successful, confident and responsible individuals

provide safe, stimulating and aspirational environments to enable all young people to flourish and realise their full potential

ensure that all families are confident that every young person is receiving a high quality fully inclusive education

grow a supportive and sustainable Trust which serves the diversity of our local communities

be an employer of choice; where all are valued and thrive in the richness of opportunities available and are proud to be a member of our Trust

Values



RESPECT

Maintaining a culture of high aspiration and self-belief within a safe and supportive environment where everyone is valued and respected



EQUITY

Actively promoting equity at all levels across our Trust



ASPIRATION

Ensuring that every child and adult succeeds as we drive for excellence in all that we do



COMMUNITY

Cultivate a sustainable community of collaboration and sharing of best practice to ensure the highest quality learning experiences for all



HONESTY

Creating a culture of openness which enables everyone to thrive, fostering trust and integrity

OUR SCHOOLS WILL BE BEACONS OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE, FOCUSED ON COMMUNITY, SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS AND PARTNERSHIP

About Us

Our Vision of Excellence

We aspire for every school within our Trust to become beacons of outstanding practice through our commitment to Community, Sustainable Progress and Partnership.

By fostering strong relationships and a culture of shared learning, we ensure that success is not isolated but collective – strengthening outcomes for all learners across our schools.

Through a dynamic and supportive network, we provide an exceptional educational experience both within and beyond the classroom where curiosity, creativity, and challenge are at the heart of learning. We celebrate diversity, champion inclusion, and cultivate environments where every child can achieve their potential and thrive.

Our ultimate goal as a Trust is that no learner is ever left behind. We are relentless in our pursuit of equity and opportunity, ensuring that all pupils are fully prepared for their future lives.



Beech Hyde Primary School and Nursery

Nurseries Rd, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL4 8TP
Ms K Thomas
Headteacher



Garden Fields JMI School

Townsend Drive, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL3 5RL
Mr P Sutton
Headteacher



Ridgeway Academy

Herns Lane, Welwyn Garden City,
Hertfordshire, AL7 2AF
Mrs S Mitcherson
Headteacher



Sandringham School

The Ridgeway, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL4 9NX
Mr A Gray
Executive Headteacher



Skyswood Primary and Nursery School

Chandlers Road, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL4 9RS
Mr B Bridle
Headteacher



St Albans Girls' School

Sandridgebury Lane, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL3 6DB
Mr P Kershaw
Headteacher



The Adeyfield Academy

Longlands, Hemel Hempsted,
Hertfordshire, HP2 4DE
Ms D Mason
Headteacher



Verulam School

Brampton Road, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL1 4PR
Mr F Moane
Headteacher



"love learning"

Wheatfields Infants' and Nursery School

Downes Road, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL4 9NT
Miss C Cockburn
Headteacher



Wheatfields Junior School

Downes Road, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL4 9NT
Mrs J Tearle
Headteacher

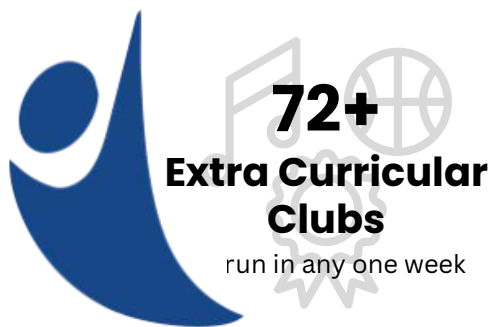
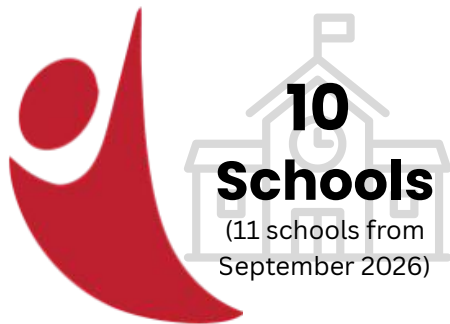


Alban City School

7 Hatfield Rd, St Albans,
Hertfordshire, AL1 3RR
Mrs G Stray
Headteacher

(from September 2026)

A Snapshot of Ambition





Our Team

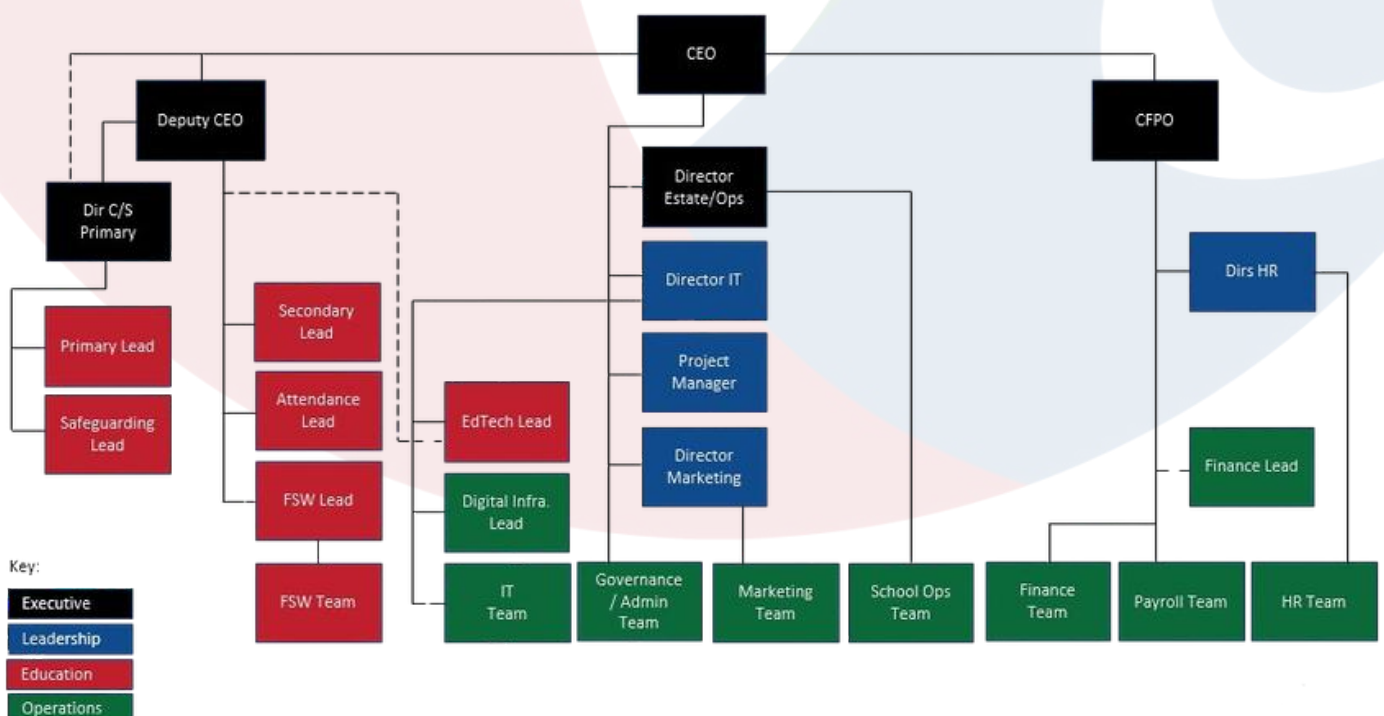
We are immensely proud of the high-quality support provided by our central team and the significant progress achieved since combining our collective forces in 2024. Looking ahead, we are excited to further enhance this service offering, ensuring our schools feel the tangible benefits of being part of a strong, collaborative Trust.

Leadership & Governance

This dedicated central team is currently directed by our CEO and Co-CEO. Moving forward, the incoming CEO will oversee and shape this team to drive our shared vision of delivering exceptional support to our schools.

Positive relationships and regular communication with our Trustees regarding school progress, strategic intent, risk, and opportunities are integral to our Trust’s operating style. Governance is structured around half-termly whole Trust Board meetings, alongside dedicated committees including Educational Standards, Resources, Risk and Audit, and Pay.

The executive leadership also maintains informal, bi-weekly touchpoints with the Chair of Trustees. To unite our vital volunteers, we regularly facilitate wider governance sessions, including our Chair of Governors Forums and whole Governing Board training sessions, allowing us to share experience and embed best practices across the Trust.



Our Team

Our team currently includes:

Alan Gray

Alan brings over three decades of distinguished senior leadership experience to his role as CEO. A passionate educator, his career includes highly successful headships at both The Hemel Hempstead School and Sandringham School, leading the latter to national prominence as an Ofsted 'Outstanding' institution for over 21 years.

Alan's leadership is defined by a genuine commitment to system wide collaboration and professional excellence; he holds a BSc, PGCE, M.Ed, NPQH, and NPQEL, alongside being a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA). He is a passionate advocate for partnership to ensure exceptional provision for all young people; he co-championed the 2024 merger of two successful local Trusts to create the Ambition Education Trust, and continually facilitates the sharing of best practice beyond our organisation through additional roles as Hertfordshire Schools Forum Chair, an Ofsted inspector, and a Trustee for the Saracens Multi-Academy Trust.

Deeply invested in nurturing the next generation of educators, one of the true highlights of Alan's tenure remains fostering staff development and working closely alongside the Alban Teaching School Hub to support teachers at every stage of their career.

Margaret Chapman

Margaret began her teaching career in 1988, quickly transitioning into senior leadership as Deputy Head of The Priory School. There, she drove institutional growth securing a 'Good' Ofsted rating, and engaged in school improvement work with the London Challenge and the local authority which she continues to do today.

In 2010, Margaret was appointed Headteacher of St Albans Girls' School, leading the school to an 'Outstanding' outcome in 2013. Her success led to her appointment as a National Leader in Education and National Pupil Premium Assessor, providing strategic support to multiple schools to raise standards and challenge underperformance. Margaret leads the Higher Needs allocation for the local area for all young people aged 0-25, in addition she is a Governor at a Local PRU Academy, a Board Member of the local Teaching School's Alliance and Education Advisor with the DfE.

Margaret's role as Co-CEO at Ambition Education Trust has focused on Standards and the Quality of Education across all of our schools. Supported by a very experienced and skilled team of professionals the core ambition is to ensure that every child achieves their full potential and that schools are supported in making this happen. Additionally, support for school leadership and training to governing bodies has extended our area of focus, not least with the new Ofsted Framework and updates to Curriculum, Assessment and SEND. Margaret leads the DfE RISE programme as we are recognised as a Trust that is able to nurture and sustain school improvement.





Our Team

Richard Found

A career educator at heart, Richard began his journey in 2001 as a Science teacher in South London. Since then, he has built a distinguished career spanning the UK, South Africa, and New Zealand, holding pivotal leadership roles across pastoral care, curriculum development, and pedagogy.

Having previously served as Headteacher of The Stockwood Park Academy in Luton, Richard now balances his executive duties as Deputy CEO with a focused leadership role at Ridgeway Academy. He is dedicated to fostering academic excellence and driving systemic improvement across the Trust.

Gilly Stray

Gilly brings over 25 years of rich experience in primary education to her role as Director for Curriculum and Standards (Primary) in the Trust. She began her career in London, training as a professional dancer and earning a degree in Theatre Dance - a background that instilled a lifelong appreciation for the arts and creativity in education. After gaining her PGCE from the University of Hertfordshire, Gilly built an extensive portfolio of school leadership, serving as a Class Teacher, SENCO, and Deputy Head before being appointed Headteacher of Alban City School in 2018.

Joining the Trust's executive team in 2026, Gilly focuses on strategic collaboration with colleagues to ensure our infant and primary schools stand as beacons of excellence, championing both academic standards and children's wellbeing.

Phil O'Neill

Phil is an experienced operations professional with over 25 years of senior leadership experience across education, the public sector, and complex multi-site organisations. Having operated at executive and board level for more than a decade, he currently oversees the Trust's estates strategy, capital development, procurement, compliance, and organisational risk. A calm, delivery-focused leader, Phil has a proven track record of driving significant growth, delivering multi-million-pound capital programmes, and building high-performing teams that align infrastructure with educational outcomes.

Amy Barclay

Amy is qualified as a ACMA CGMA accredited finance professional. Over a 15-year civil service career, she oversaw the financial management of a diverse portfolio of complex projects and programmes spanning homeland security to aircraft carrier delivery, holding roles in Bristol, London, and Afghanistan. Amy joined our Trust in 2023 to lead the Finance and People functions and aims to establish supportive teams that contribute meaningfully to the furthering of our schools' and the Trust's strategic mission of Educational Excellence for All.

The Role

Purpose of the Role

The AET CEO is responsible for the education of all the young people in the Trust's Academies. They lead the executive team of the Trust, ensuring that all its schools are successful over time in a sustainable way. They provide high level strategic leadership and management across all aspects of the Trust's activities ensuring high quality education for all its pupils through the effective and efficient use of resources and people.

As a system leader, the CEO, together with a wide range of stakeholders and partners, enables the Trust to fulfil its civic responsibilities. They are the Accounting Officer, responsible for ensuring that all statutory and legal requirements are met.

Strategic governance, expert and ethical leadership

- **Strategic Oversight:** Delivers the Trust's long-term vision through a robust, high-performing operating model
- **Accountability:** Ensures the Executive Leadership Team operates effectively within the Board's delegated authority
- **Educational Excellence:** Drives the strategic direction for teaching, learning, and continuous improvement across all schools
- **Inspirational Culture:** Fosters an ethos of high achievement and innovation to ensure long-term sustainability
- **Corporate Environment:** Establishes the infrastructure and systems necessary for every school to achieve excellence
- **Welfare & Safeguarding:** Champions the safety and well-being of all pupils and staff in line with statutory guidance

High-Quality Inclusive Education

- **Curriculum Design:** Implements ambitious, well-sequenced, and knowledge-rich curricula across all schools
- **Inclusive Excellence:** Champions high-quality outcomes for all learners while actively tackling educational inequality
- **Teaching Standards:** Maintains accountability for expert, evidence-informed teaching and high behavioural standards
- **Targeted Support:** Prioritises disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND within safe, secure environments
- **Statutory Compliance:** Ensures all educational delivery meets legal requirements and provides robust support for Ofsted inspections

Finance, Risk and Compliance

- **Financial Accountability:** Acts as Accounting Officer, ensuring the efficient, ethical, and effective use of public funds
- **Strategic Finance:** Utilises data to establish a stable long-term financial strategy and robust monitoring systems
- **Risk & Compliance:** Ensures full statutory and legal compliance while leading proactive risk mitigation across the Trust
- **Resource Management:** Accountable for large-scale asset management and the continued development of high-quality central services
- **Growth & Sustainability:** Drives revenue generation and monitors admissions and pupil numbers to secure ongoing financial stability

Communications

- **Reputational Leadership:** Protects and promotes the Trust's reputation through positive, strategic communications
- **Community Engagement:** Values the voices of pupils, parents, and partners to ensure the Trust remains responsive and accountable
- **Board Advisory:** Provides expert insight and professional advice to the Trust Board and its committees to support strong governance
- **Executive Reporting:** Delivers comprehensive reports on performance, risks, and strategic priorities to keep Trustees fully informed

[View a copy of the full job description online](#)

The Role

People

- **Culture & Collaboration:** Creates a high-performing, supportive culture that utilises Trust-wide flexibilities to provide opportunities for all staff
- **Professional Development:** Empowers staff and governors through evidence-based training, mentoring, and shared expertise across networks
- **Talent Management:** Drives robust succession planning and champions the teaching profession to ensure long-term organisational strength
- **Inclusive Practice:** Implements ethical employment, recruitment, and retention practices that promote equality, diversity, and inclusion
- **Performance Leadership:** Manages the performance and pay reviews of the Executive Team and Headteachers to ensure high standards
- **Strategic Staffing:** Optimises staffing structures to meet curriculum needs while maintaining financial sustainability

Public benefit and civic duty

- **Ambassadorial Leadership:** Promotes the Trust's ethos and values outwardly, acting as a key representative to elevate its national and regional profile
- **Strategic Communication:** Effectively conveys the Trust's strategy, achievements, and future plans to all stakeholders
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Builds strong, productive relationships with the DfE, Regional Directors, Local Authorities, and civic partners to ensure organisational success
- **External Influence:** Actively engages with regulators, policy makers, and industry leaders to exert influence and stay at the forefront of the sector
- **Ethical Standards:** Operates with unwavering integrity, adhering strictly to the Seven Principles of Public Life (The Nolan Principles)

Growth

- **Strategic Growth:** Advises the Board on sustainable expansion aligned with the Trust's vision, values, and capacity
- **Partnership Building:** Pursues strategic collaborations and partnerships with other Trusts, local authorities, and sector organisations
- **Academy Conversion:** Leads the application process and coordination for new schools joining the Trust
- **Risk Management:** Oversees rigorous due diligence and risk assessments for all potential growth opportunities
- **Project Oversight:** Manages project briefs, budgets, and reporting to ensure the seamless integration of incoming schools



[View a copy of the full job description online](#)

Qualifications & Professional Status

- **Academic:** Degree-level qualification and a post-graduate degree in Education Leadership, Management, or a related field E
- **Professional:** Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or equivalent E
- **Leadership:** NPQEL, NPQH, or evidence of significant senior leadership development D
- **Regulatory:** Experience as an Ofsted Inspector D

Experience

- **System Leadership:** Substantial experience at Executive (CEO/Director), Executive Head, or MAT senior leadership level, ideally across multiple phases (EYFS–KS5) E
- **School Improvement:** Proven track record of leading change and improving outcomes across multiple organisations E
- **Strategic Growth:** Ability to lead Trust expansion while maintaining educational quality, operational stability, and staff wellbeing E
- **Resource Management:** Experience managing significant public sector budgets; operating at or preparing for Accounting Officer level E
- **People & Culture:** Experience leading workforce strategies, including recruitment, retention, performance appraisal, and professional development E
- **Governance & Stakeholders:** Extensive experience working with Boards/Trustees and managing relationships with the DfE, Ofsted, and Local Authorities E

Professional Knowledge

- **Statutory Frameworks:** Comprehensive knowledge of UK education legislation, the Academy Trust Handbook, and the statutory duties of an Accounting Officer E
- **Safeguarding:** Ability to lead a robust safeguarding culture and ensure total compliance across the Trust E
- **Governance & Risk:** Deep understanding of effective governance, risk management, and business planning E
- **Operations:** Familiarity with estates compliance, health and safety, and the role of digital technology in organisational efficiency D

Professional Leadership Skills

- **Strategic Vision:** Ability to define and embed a clear vision, culture, and long-term strategic direction E
- **Team Leadership:** Skills to build and develop high-performing executive teams while holding self and others to account E
- **Communication:** Highly developed interpersonal, public speaking, and influencing skills to build trust with diverse stakeholders E
- **Operational Oversight:** Expert balance of high-level strategic planning with effective operational monitoring and succession planning E

Personal Qualities & Ethics

- **Integrity:** Strong moral purpose and commitment to the Nolan Principles (Seven Principles of Public Life) and civic responsibility E
- **Resilience:** An adaptable, reflective leader with high emotional intelligence and the ability to remain calm under pressure E
- **Inclusivity:** Deep commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion E
- **Presence:** An approachable, inspirational leader who commands credibility at Board, system, and community levels E

[View a copy of the full person specification online](#)

Benefits & Remuneration

We offer a competitive package designed to support both your professional and personal life and your wellbeing and work-life balance is important to us. We are committed to equity of opportunity and encourage a supportive working environment across all areas of the Trust.

Benefits

- A competitive salary package
- Generous Pension Package
- Generous holiday entitlement
- Employee Assistance Programme and access to a comprehensive wellbeing portal
- Professional Development (Free access to all National College online training, NPQ support, Alban TSH)
- Relocation costs considered where applicable



How to Apply

Applications must reach the Trust by **9am Monday 15 June** and be submitted via [MyNewTerm](#).

Prospective candidates are very welcome to meet the Chair of Trustees to discuss the opportunity further. Please contact [Michelle Quinn](#) to arrange.

Interviews are scheduled for **Wednesday 8 July 2026** with successful candidates invited back for day 2 **Thursday 16 July 2026**.

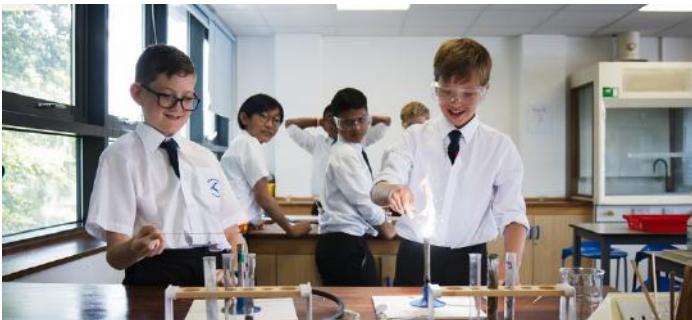
If you are a dynamic, forward-thinking leader with the passion, integrity, and expertise to inspire others, we would be delighted to hear from you.

**Ambition Education Trust is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes all applications*

**Your privacy matters, at AET we are committed to protecting your privacy and being transparent about how we use your data during the recruitment process*

**All applicants are subject to enhanced DBS and references*





Ambition Education Trust
 c/o Sandringham School
 The Ridgeway
 St Albans
 Hertfordshire
 AL4 9NX
info@aetrust.uk

