



Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Candidate Pack





Welcome Letter

Dear Candidate

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Executive Officer for Aspire Schools. The role has become available following the recently announced retirement of our founding CEO after a long and successful career. We are at an exciting point in the development of our Trust and we want to find someone who will continue to build on our recent successes, but also love their work, and continue to ensure that our Trust is developed on the ethos of 'leading with love'.

I am exceptionally proud of the work that we do at Aspire. Over the last 20 years, Aspire has grown from a single Local Authority PRU to a trust comprising of a variety of diverse schools and services that account for the majority of Alternative Provision in Buckinghamshire. We deliver education that is responsive to, and meets the needs of the young people that we serve.

Aspire Schools is comprised of a family of three Alternative Provision schools, two permanent-stay SEMH schools, one short-stay SEMH school, an outreach provision and a primary forest school intervention. We also run a creative arts charity, Aspire for Young People, providing opportunities beyond the traditional statutory education offer. The CEO sits at the heart of this community and holds the effective leadership of our schools and provisions as key to their success.

You will be joining us at a very exciting point in our development journey, with the opportunity to lead a wide variety of projects related to the strategic growth and sustainability of our Trust. As CEO, you will provide inspirational leadership to our schools and provisions as well as being a figurehead representing the needs and rights of our students at local, regional and national level.

Aspire is a wonderful place to work, where everyone understands how their day-to-day work improves the life chances of the disadvantaged young people and communities that we serve. If you feel that our values align to yours, we very much look forward to hearing from you.

We change lives. Our work matters. Join us!

Mark Shaw
Chair of Trustees



At Aspire we will create the conditions to support students to learn and flourish in and through love.

We change lives.

Our Aspire values can be seen in the quality of our relationships which are based on respect for all and an understanding that we are all valued.

At Aspire our values are “lived not laminated”. We live them every day, which means we can never be silent about challenging things.

OUR VISION



OUR VALUES



ASPIRE STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 - 2027





CSEC, BLUEPRINT, & THE WYCOMBE GRANGE

Our Alternative Provision schools in Chesham, Aylesbury and High Wycombe, are short-stay provisions for students who have been permanently excluded or who are at risk of exclusion.

Students come to us for a short period of time while we work with them, their families and their mainstream school, to identify strategies that will help them manage their emotions and be successful at school.

Sometimes our assessments indicate that mainstream is not the right place for a student, and in this case, we will work with them, their families and the local authority to help them move into a specialist setting.

The aim of Aspire's AP schools is to help students rediscover a love of learning, to help them learn and use strategies to regulate their emotions and manage their behaviour, and to help them identify and work towards a positive destination for their next steps in education and life.

If students join us in year 10 or 11, we think carefully about whether focusing on a return to mainstream is right, or whether a student would benefit from a stable and consistent placement until the end of KS4. If the family and all professionals working with a child agree, we will keep a child until the end of their year 11. In this situation, we focus instead on finding a positive post-16 destination and giving that student a supportive and successful transition into it.

ORCHARD HOUSE

SHORT-TERM SEMH PROVISION

Orchard House in Chesham provides support for young people in years 7-11 whose mental health needs are currently preventing them from engaging with their existing school. Placements at Orchard House are short term and enable students to access core subjects within a small, inclusive setting. Students are referred to Orchard House via their clinicians at CAMHS (the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service).



OUTREACH AND REINTEGRATION

Aspire's Outreach service works with every secondary school in Buckinghamshire. It is an Early Intervention Programme designed to be introduced when a student's behaviour has reached a level where a Pastoral or Behaviour Support Plan is being considered. All schools can directly refer students to the Outreach team.

Our team works with students on a weekly basis, one-to-one, for an agreed period of time. We build a bespoke programme for each student that we work with, depending on the challenges they are facing and the aims that they, their family and school have.

Our reintegration programme supports students before, during and after transitions between schools, whether that is as part of a direct managed move between secondary schools, or as a result of an exclusion and/or placement at Aspire.

Our SEMH Special Schools are located across sites in Chalfont St Giles and Aylesbury.

Shortenills Forest and Shortenills Abbey

Our long-stay secondary special schools are for students in Years 7-11 with EHCPs for SEMH difficulties. We believe that these students need and deserve a loving, nurturing approach, clear and high expectations of their behaviour, social development and academic work and carefully planned support and intervention that enables them to meet and exceed those expectations. We enable young people to manage their SEMH difficulties in school, and in the world, and to study a broad and balanced curriculum in order to create exciting and fulfilling futures for themselves.



Key Stage 2 Forest School Intervention

Aspire recognises that early intervention is key for children who are facing challenges in succeeding in mainstream schools. In order to offer mainstream primary schools much needed support, we have developed a unique and brand new KS2 provision at Shortenills: 'Finding my Voice'. FMV is rooted in the principles of nurture and forest school and is a 1-day per week intervention for children in Key Stage 2 to run alongside a mainstream offer. Pupils experience the beauty of the outdoors and unleash their true potential.

Shortenills For Post-16 Students

From September 2025, Aspire will offer a bold new start for post-16 education at Shortenills Forest. Students will take classes in English and Maths alongside vocational learning in grounds maintenance, horticulture and hospitality. Our first class of students will be the founding members of an on-site garden centre and café, giving each student first-hand experience of business development, teamwork and project management, all within a loving and nurturing environment.

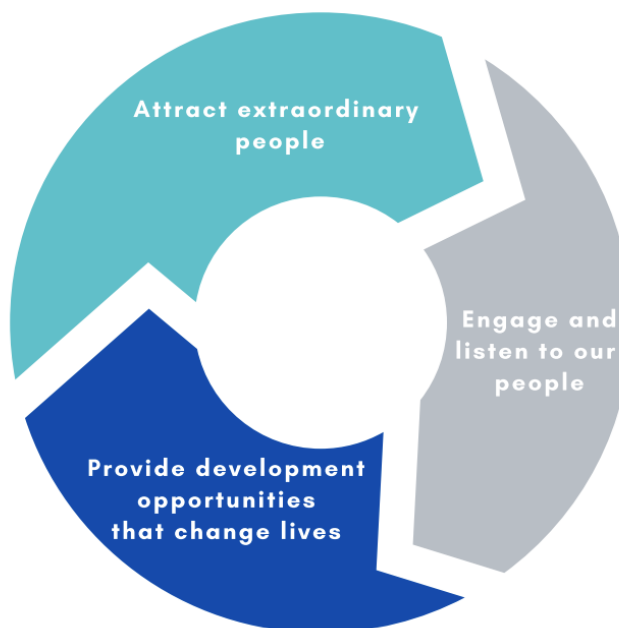




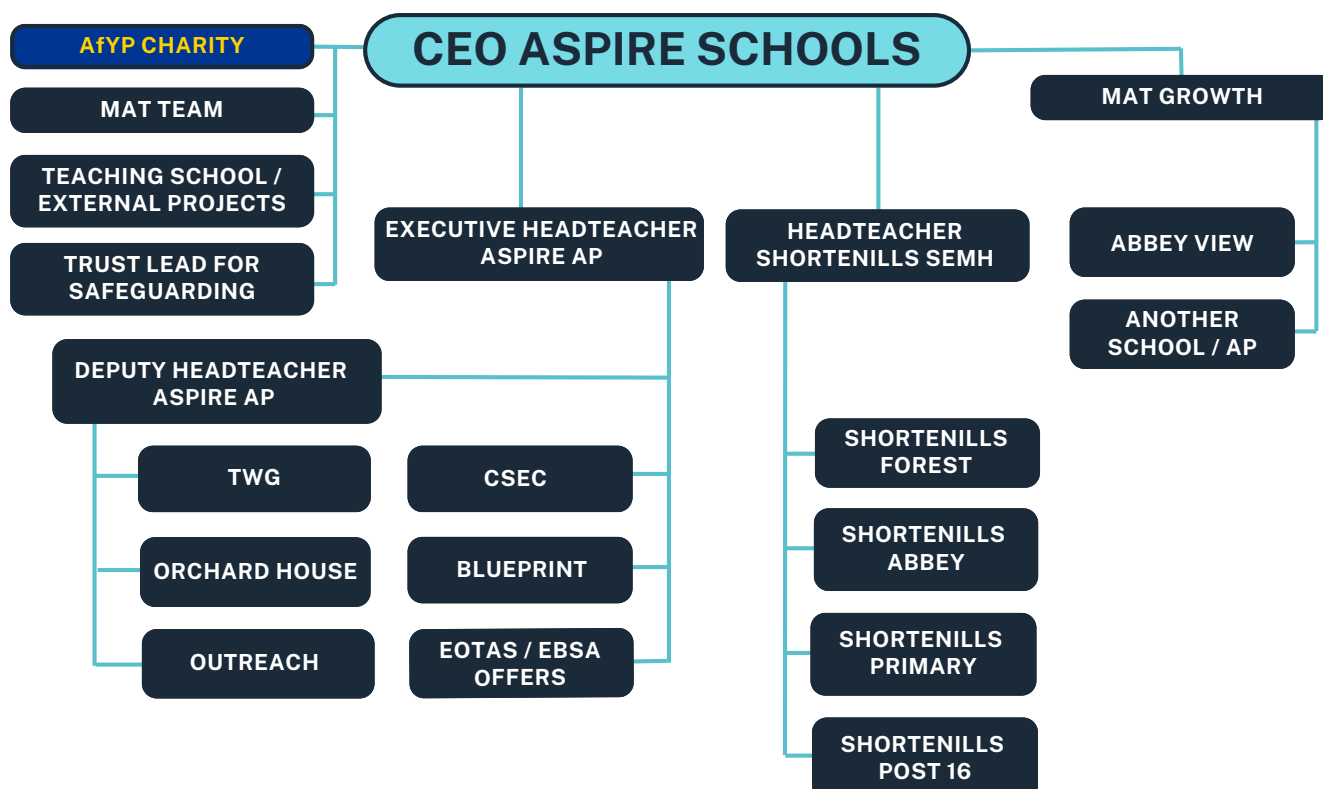
Our People

Everyone Matters

At Aspire, we change lives. We cannot do this without attracting, engaging with and developing extraordinary people. We value the contribution that each individual makes to the lives of vulnerable children and to the development of our Trust. **'Everyone Matters'** is the title of Aspire's new people strategy, which has been developed using the ideas of every Aspire employee. Our new CEO will be pivotal in further developing our strategy to ensure that it underpins all of our people activities.



Our Structure



Post:

Chief Executive Officer

Responsible to:

Aspire Schools Trust Trustees

Line manages:

The Executive Headteacher, the Chief Finance and Operations Officer, the Executive Assistant to the CEO.

Salary:

£135 - £145K. 'The starting salary will be determined within this range by the Board of Trustees, taking into account the experience and suitability of the successful candidate.'

The CEO will be a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

**Statement of Purpose**

The CEO is responsible for creating a vision for the future and setting the overall strategic direction of the Trust, ensuring that the vision is well communicated to all stakeholders to secure educational success through highly effective strategic planning.

The CEO will provide inspirational leadership to Aspire Schools. The CEO will continue to grow the Trust and ensure that Aspire continues to be proud of what staff achieve together. The post holder will ensure that successful Academy Committees and Heads of Schools continue to be highly aligned and have a great deal of autonomy. Each school will maintain its own character with shared goals and core values that hold them together for the benefit of the whole family. A family steered and guided by the CEO.

The CEO is accountable to the Board of Trustees for school improvement and ensuring the educational success of the academies within the Trust. The post holder ensures capacity and sustainability whilst holding true the values and mission of the Trust itself and its schools and local committees.

The CEO ensures that the Trustees receive appropriate advice and information to enable them to fulfil their governance responsibilities. The post holder will ensure the continuing engagement of members to further the visions and aims of the Trust.

The CEO will lead and be responsible for our registered charity "Aspire for Young People". The post holder will continue to grow the charity and its impact on young people within and beyond Aspire.

The CEO will lead with love.



Key Responsibilities

- Lead on the growth strategy for the Trust and for Aspire for Young People
- Continue to build a collaborative and supportive culture across Aspire Schools
- Actively support the Board to fulfil its role and deliver its functions effectively
- Work with all stakeholders to secure a commitment to the vision and direction of Aspire
- Promote a culture of common accountability in all staff for pupil outcomes and destinations
- Plan for the future needs and further development of Aspire Schools within the local and national context
- Work with the Executive Headteacher to ensure that quality assurance, self-evaluation and development plans are meaningful and in line with Aspire School values and ethos

- Maintain the individual ethos of each school within its local context, aiming for high levels of both autonomy and alignment

Strategic Leadership

- Establish and sustain the Trust's values, culture, and strategic direction in partnership with the Board of Trustees
- Provide leadership that enables the Trust to achieve its strategic objectives and secure its future sustainability
- Create a safe, inclusive and positive culture across the Trust and its schools
- 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





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.

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, effective 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 a 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 Trustees are ultimately responsible and accountable for the Trust's work
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with the Trustees, recognising their key role in holding the CEO and executive team to account
- Ensure the Trustees receive quality information in the level of detail needed to make informed decisions and fulfil their functions and legal obligations
- Ensure positive communications that promote the Trust and its work, and present the Trust effectively when dealing with the media
- 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.

Accounting Officer Responsibilities

The Accounting Officer responsibilities are given the Academies Trust Handbook sections 1.37 – 1.44. The designated responsibilities are:

- 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 Trustees
- Advise on Trustee intent or action if incompatible with the articles, funding agreement or handbook
- **Notify the ESFA if it is considered that the Trustees are in breach of the articles, funding agreement or handbook.**

System Leadership and Civic Responsibility

- Promote and enable ways in which the Trust's schools 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

CEO PERSON SPECIFICATION



	Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	Good Honours Degree or equivalent	•	
	Qualified Teacher Status	•	
	Evidence of professional study in the field of education and/or leadership	•	
	Masters level qualification		•
	NASENDCo		•
	NPQH or NPQEL		•
Experience	A proven track record of successful corporate leadership within a multi-disciplined organisation including the formulation and delivery of corporate strategies, policies and objectives	•	
	Experience of successfully establishing and sustaining a strong performance management culture that drives up standards and performance	•	
	Experience of successfully leading and managing change, translating organisational ambitions into real and measurable achievements	•	
	Experience of leading in mainstream and alternative provision settings		•
	Strong record of educational leadership: raising standards, achieving outstanding results and having a personal impact on staff and students	•	
	Experience of developing and delivering successful school improvement programmes across a whole school(s)	•	
	Track record of achieving high levels of professional credibility with other leaders in education	•	
	Experience of creating, developing and maintaining effective working relationships with key stakeholders including the Local Authority	•	
	Experience of working with students with learning, challenging, emotional or behavioural difficulties	•	
Knowledge	Knowledge of current secondary practice, including the National Curriculum and educational developments	•	
	Knowledge of legislation and practice in the field of education and Special Educational Needs	•	
	Knowledge and experience of devising, developing and monitoring programmes to support the needs of young people with SEMH difficulties	•	
	Knowledge of models of effective leadership and organisational structures	•	
	Knowledge and understanding of people, governance and budget management and financial systems	•	



	Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Skills	Ability to prioritise, plan and organise yourself and others	•	
	Ability to work efficiently and accurately, particularly under pressure, to deadlines and using own initiative	•	
	Effective partnership working skills – able to build and draw on the strengths of others to generate outstanding results	•	
	Skilled in developing a culture of outstanding performance and supporting improvements in standards, in teaching and learning and in behaviour	•	
	The ability to lead and form trusting teams that set the highest standards in the curriculum and provide effective curriculum leadership	•	
	The ability to identify and nurture talent so that teachers and leaders are developed	•	
	Strong verbal and written communication skills, including excellent report writing skills	•	
	The ability to collate, analyse and interpret complex data to inform school development	•	
	Excellent interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence: with the ability to build strong working relationships with trustees, local headteachers/principals and other stakeholders; and to always be approachable to staff at all levels	•	
	Excellent IT skills, including the ability to use social media to enhance the Trust's reputation and improve pupil/students' learning	•	
Personal Qualities	Highest levels of integrity and a commitment to highest levels of effort, endeavour and compassion	•	
	Confident and calm in difficult situations	•	
	Personal resilience and tenacity – the ability to see things through and work through challenges	•	
	Loving and warm personality	•	
	Strong interpersonal, communication and presentation skills, including warmth and empathy whilst holding others to account	•	
	Creative, dynamic approach anticipating and solving challenges	•	
	Able to motivate, inspire and challenge others	•	
Other Factors	A commitment to Equal Opportunities	•	
	Drivers Licence essential as is access to a vehicle	•	



How to Apply

If you wish to discover more about this exciting opportunity, need any further information or would like to have an informal discussion, please contact Ross Laird at Academicis, our recruitment partner, on rlaird@academicis.co.uk or by phone on **07901 585959 / 01223 907979**.

Closing date:

29th September 2025

Shortlisting:

2nd October 2025

Interviews:

8th & 9th October 2025

Aspire is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share the same commitment. The appointment will be subject to an enhanced DBS check as well as a health questionnaire.



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