



Newfriars
COLLEGE



Head of People

Candidate Pack

Welcome

Dear Candidate,

Welcome. We are delighted to introduce a truly unique opportunity at Newfriars College—one that lies at the heart of our future.

This is a pivotal moment for our College. We are fundamentally reshaping how we nurture our greatest asset: our people. For the first time, we are bringing our HR function fully in-house, which means we are creating a strategic, forward-looking People function entirely from the ground up.

As our inaugural **Head of People**, you will be the architect of this essential new department. This is far more than a leadership role; it is a chance to build. You will design and implement a bespoke people strategy that reflects our core values—innovation, community, and academic excellence—into every stage of the employee journey. Your mission will be to lay the cultural and operational foundations that empower our dedicated staff to thrive, and in turn, to better support our students.

We are looking for a visionary yet hands-on People leader who is energised by a blank canvas. You will partner directly with the College's leadership to cultivate an environment where every faculty and staff member can grow, contribute, and feel deeply connected to our transformative educational mission. From talent acquisition and development to fostering inclusivity, wellbeing, and performance, your influence will be immediate, meaningful, and lasting.

If you are driven by the challenge of building something significant, shaping strategy from the outset, and leaving a permanent imprint on a vibrant academic community, we invite you to step into this moment.

Join us at Newfriars College. Lead the charge in making this a truly outstanding place to work, to grow, and to learn.

Rob Millington,
CEO/Executive Head Teacher



The Opportunity

The Opportunity – Build Our People Function From the Ground Up

Newfriars College is a dynamic, ambitious, and transformational specialist **SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Further Education college**. Our long-standing commitment to the community stretches back through our historical connection to Blackfriars. In 2018, we incorporated as an independent specialist college, launching a bold new chapter of autonomy, innovation, and transformative growth.

Since our independence, we have flourished, growing to support **225 young people** with moderate to complex learning difficulties across three bespoke pathways—Vocational, Independent Living, and Supported Living—empowering them to shape their futures.

Our mission, “**Together we raise aspirations and transform lives,**” is lived every day. Rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted with ‘Outstanding’ features, we are a community where learners thrive, staff are deeply committed, and innovation is the norm—from our Community Junction café and Trades Centre, to Supported Internships with partners like UHNM Hospital and Tesco.

Now, we begin our next pivotal chapter. We are bringing our People function in-house for the first time, transitioning from a centralised model with a connected Trust. We are not just creating an HR department; we are **embedding a strategic, people-first culture** at the heart of our college.

This is the opportunity to be our inaugural **Head of People**, reporting into our Finance and Operations Director. With transitional support from our existing HR provider, you will architect and lead a brand-new function, directly enabling our education mission. You will translate our approved 3-year HR Strategy into reality, building the systems, culture and capability that allows our **c. 180** staff to deliver exceptional outcomes.

This is a legacy-building role for a proven builder.



The Context

The Context – Why This Role is Essential

You will be joining at a critical point of sustainable growth and strategic evolution. The foundations are strong, and the mandate from our Trustees and Leadership is clear.

Your Impact Will Be Directly Linked to Our Key Priorities:

- **Building Modern Foundations:** Implementing a new HRIS, designing a contemporary pay and reward framework, and establishing clear policies to replace outdated structures.
- **Enabling Educational Excellence:** Your work will directly support our teaching staff—reducing administrative burden (like streamlining EHCP processes), enhancing CPD, and fostering the performance culture that underpins our ‘Outstanding’ pastoral care.
- **Driving Structural Reform:** You will partner with leaders to optimise our organisational design, addressing current challenges like excessive management spans and introducing vital middle-management layers to support our growing, complex operation.
- **Mitigating Strategic Risk:** You will lead on critical projects, from managing long-term absence (a key financial and operational priority) to reviewing our pension strategy (LGPS), ensuring we are a sustainable and attractive employer.
- **Cultivating Our Culture:** Championing our new **INSPIRE** values, you will enhance staff engagement, wellbeing, and recognition in a setting where 99% of staff are proud to work and 100% enjoy their role.

You Are: A strategic HR leader with a proven track record in **designing and implementing a modern people function** and leading complex organisational change. You are pragmatic, resilient, and build trust effortlessly. While experience in Further Education is desirable, your expertise in **HR transformation, change management, and building high-performance cultures** is paramount.



Our College

Our College – A Community That Inspires

Our Reality (By The Numbers):

- 225 learners, following personalised pathways to employment, further education, and independent living.
- 180 staff, whose dedication is reflected in 99% pride in their workplace.
- **Ofsted 2022:** ‘Good’ with ‘Outstanding’ for Behaviour, Attitudes & Personal Development.
- **Our Reach:** Based in Bucknall, Stoke-on-Trent, with vibrant offsite provision including our Community Junction café, a new Trades Centre, and extensive work placements.

What You Will Feel Here:

This is not a typical college. The emotion in our recent near-200 nominations for a National Diversity Award captures our spirit:

- *“They have helped us to really grow and improve in learning and in life and friendships and just to have fun...”* – A Learner
- *“An incredible college where young adults with SEND thrive and become valued members of the community.”* – A Stakeholder
- *“The support & help given to students & their families is fabulous. Everyone is accepted, supported, encouraged...”* – A Community Nomination

You will be a key leader in this story. Your role is the essential enabler of our next strategic phase: **“Invest, Evolve, Improve.”**

Join Us.

If you are inspired by the chance to build something meaningful from the ground up, to put people strategy at the centre of an outstanding educational community, and to see your work directly transform lives, we would be delighted to hear from you.



Job Description

Job Title:	Head of People
Reports to:	Finance & Operations Director
Salary:	Up to £75k (+c20% LGPS Employer Contributions)

Scope:

As a strategic leader, the Head of People is responsible for the design and execution of the people agenda during a significant period of organisational growth and transformation.

The role owns the development and implementation of a future-focused People Strategy, driving the modernisation of all people-related policies, processes, contracts and systems.

The post-holder will act as the organisational expert on people matters, building capability and leading change to directly support the achievement of Newfriars College's long-term strategic objectives.



Job Description

Key Responsibilities

1. Strategic People Leadership & Business Partnering:

- Develop and execute a multi-year People Strategy that is fully integrated with the college's development and transformation plans, for approval by the Finance & Operations Director and CEO
- Act as the strategic people partner to the Finance & Operations Director and Senior Leadership Team (SLT), providing expert insight and guidance on all people-related aspects of operational and strategic plans.
- Lead the review and redesign of organisational structures to enhance agility, efficiency, and support future growth, presenting business cases and recommendations to the Operations Directorate.
- Champion cultural transformation initiatives that embed the college's values and foster a high-performance, inclusive environment.

2. Transformation, Change Management & Systems:

- Lead the end-to-end review, redesign, and implementation of new HR policies, processes, and systems, managing the project plan and stakeholder engagement under the direction of the Finance & Operations Director.
- Develop and execute robust change management plans to ensure the successful adoption of new people initiatives and systems across the college.
- Identify and mitigate people-related risks associated with the college's period of rapid change.

3. Talent, Resourcing & Succession Planning:

- Design and implement a strategic talent acquisition and retention model, including employer branding and proactive pipelines for hard-to-fill and SEND specialist roles.
- Develop and implement a robust succession planning framework for critical roles across the college, ensuring business continuity.
- Oversee the evolution of the onboarding experience to accelerate integration and performance for all new staff.



Job Description

4. Employee Relations & Performance Culture:

- Provide expert counsel to the SLT on complex employee relations cases, ensuring legal compliance and minimising organisational risk.
- Lead the evolution of the performance management framework to drive a culture of continuous feedback, development, and high performance.
- Oversee the development and delivery of advanced training for line managers in performance management, employee relations, and leading teams.

5. Reward, Analytics & Reporting:

- In consultation with the Finance & Operations Director, lead the review of the total reward strategy to ensure competitiveness and support the attraction and retention of top talent.
- Develop a sophisticated HR analytics capability, providing the Operations Directorate and Trust Board with insightful data on workforce trends to inform strategic decision-making.
- Take ultimate responsibility for the accurate and timely preparation of the monthly payroll for processing by the college's third-party provider.
- Oversee the preparation and submission of all statutory workforce reporting.

6. Policies, Compliance & Governance:

- Ensure all HR policies, procedures, and practices are legally compliant, reflect best practice, and support the college's strategic direction.
- Act as the designated organisational expert on employment law, GDPR, and safeguarding compliance within the HR context.
- Maintain overall governance and accountability for the Single Central Register and all other regulatory compliance standards.



Person Specification

Area of expertise		Essential	Desirable
Education & Qualifications:	Educated to degree level or equivalent	■	
	Chartered Member of the CIPD (MCIPD) or equivalent postgraduate qualification is essential	■	
Experience & Knowledge:	Proven experience in a senior strategic HR leadership role (e.g., Head of People, HR Senior Business Partner), with direct accountability for delivering a people strategy	■	
	A demonstrable track record of successfully designing and implementing new HR policies, processes, and systems	■	
	Significant experience in leading large-scale change projects and managing complex employee relations cases	■	
	Strong financial acumen, with experience in managing departmental budgets and contributing to business cases	■	
	Expert knowledge of employment law and best practice	■	
	Familiarity with safeguarding, child protection, and safer recruitment protocols in an educational setting	■	
	Prior experience within the education sector and knowledge of SEND		■
Skills & Abilities:	A strategic thinker with the ability to translate operational and business needs into effective people solutions	■	
	Exceptional influencing and stakeholder management skills, with the credibility to challenge, engage, and build strong relationships with the SLT, managers, and trade unions	■	
	Resilient and able to lead and sustain change in a dynamic, fast-paced environment	■	
	Excellent analytical and problem-solving skills, with the ability to use data to drive decisions and demonstrate ROI to the Operations Directorate	■	
	Outstanding communication and interpersonal skills	■	



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 Neil Massie at Academicis, our recruitment partner, on **nmassie@academicis.co.uk** or by phone on **07818 875514 / 01223 907979**.

CLOSING DATE:

Friday 20th February 2026 at 12 noon

SHORTLISTING:

Monday 23rd February 2026

INTERVIEWS:

Friday 27th February 2026

We reserve the right to shortlist and interview earlier than the stated closing date, should an appropriate application be received.

Newfriars College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Appointment is subject to an enhanced DBS check and satisfactory references.



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