



# Appointment of Chief Strategy Officer

May 2026 | RBQPE

# Welcome Letter from our CEO

**Dear Applicant,**

Thank you for your interest in joining Unity Schools Partnership (Unity).

Having taken up the post of CEO at the start of this year, I've been impressed with the strength of leadership and consistently good provision that children receive across the Trust, testament to the great work that has gone before. As the Trust and times move on, the challenges that we must meet in the coming years will be different and will require different things from those of us working from the centre to support schools. For that reason, I have worked with our Board to reshape the Executive team that is at the heart of our decision making. The post of Chief Strategy Officer (CSO) forms an important part of this team, and I am looking for an exceptional individual to fill the post.

The CSO will be pivotal to turning our ambition into reality for our schools. We have no shortage of great ideas, but the task of reliably transforming them into sustainable change requires expertise, experience, focus and the skill to work through others in a complex organisation. The role carries the potential to be more impactful than almost any other in the organisation, such is the scale of our ambition and the benefits of change that we are pursuing.

This is an opportunity to contribute at the top of an organisation that has the momentum, appetite and talent to create enduring excellence in education for the East of England – I hope you can see yourself playing a part of this.

**Dominic Norrish**  
**Chief Executive Officer**



*Dominic Norrish*  
*Chief Executive Officer, Unity*  
*Schools Partnership*



# We Are Unity

## Characterised by ethical leadership and ambition for improvement at pace

---

Unity is a family of 40 schools; 9 secondary, 26 primary and 5 special schools, located predominantly in Suffolk, but also in Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Romford in East London.

Beyond our schools, our work extends through a range of initiatives, including our Unity Teaching School Hub, our Unity Research School, and our Curriculum with Unity (CUSP).

We share the same values and face similar issues, whilst providing a close network of support and challenge. We recognise the unique characteristics of each of the communities we work in and how they are reflected in distinctive school cultures. We are committed to a partnership that respects, sustains, and supports.

We encourage cultural diversity, celebrate the special qualities of each of our schools and understand that communities must develop and grow to become sustainable. Our model is about creating interdependence, schools that are more self-sustaining than stand-alone academies, less dependent than local authority schools and more independent than schools in corporate chains.

We all subscribe to a set of shared values, principles and operational processes that ensure quality education for all our young people. Our central belief is that every young life is special, open to possibility, gifted with the potential to change the world for the better. Our ambition is to unlock the potential of all pupils, remove the barriers that limit aspiration and ensure that all our pupils succeed. This approach is already improving the life chances of pupils in primary, special and secondary schools throughout the Trust.

# Unity Vision and Values

## – Making Remarkable Change Happen – – Unity Schools Partnership transforms lives –

Unity's Executive Team is formed of its Chief Executive Officer, Chief People Officer, Chief Strategy Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Learning Officer and Chief Education Officers for Mainstream and SEND schools.

Through geographical hubs of like-minded schools and a vision of excellence that is shared by all, Unity works collaboratively to deliver the highest standards of education.

Unity is a family of interdependent schools with a shared ambition to transform lives. The vision of Unity Schools Partnership is to achieve the highest standards of education in its primary, secondary and special schools. It is our intention that all Trust schools, and the Trust as a whole, be recognised locally and nationally for the exceptional quality of its educational provision.

We are committed to the development of a high-quality, evidence-informed model of how excellence is achieved. Our work is fostered by geographical hubs of schools in close proximity that understand their specific communities.

The Trust expects its work to be characterised by its values:

**INTEGRITY**

**INCLUSION**

**KINDNESS**



# Strategy & Supporting Schools

The Trust has a strong central team. The Trust's strategy has been for this team to work with Heads on developing common strategies across schools whilst being clear that each Head runs their school. This is an important tension and requires constant attention to get the right balance of commonality across schools and individuality of each school that leads to the most rapid development and improvement.

The Central Team has expert teams in safeguarding, governance HR, finance, IT and procurement that aim to provide excellent service to schools. It also has an extensive school improvement team, of curriculum expertise and former heads who each oversee a group of schools. We have also created a Chief Strategy Officer role who will oversee the growth, data and impact and marketing and comms across the Trust. Each school is allocated a Director of Education who works alongside the school leadership team to quality assure self-evaluation judgements, agree priorities and facilitate support from across the Trust and our external partners.

Closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils is a particular focus. Given its importance Unity invests in and benefits from the Unity Research School (URS), which is instrumental in informing Unity School Partnership's strategy, which is itself rooted in research evidence.

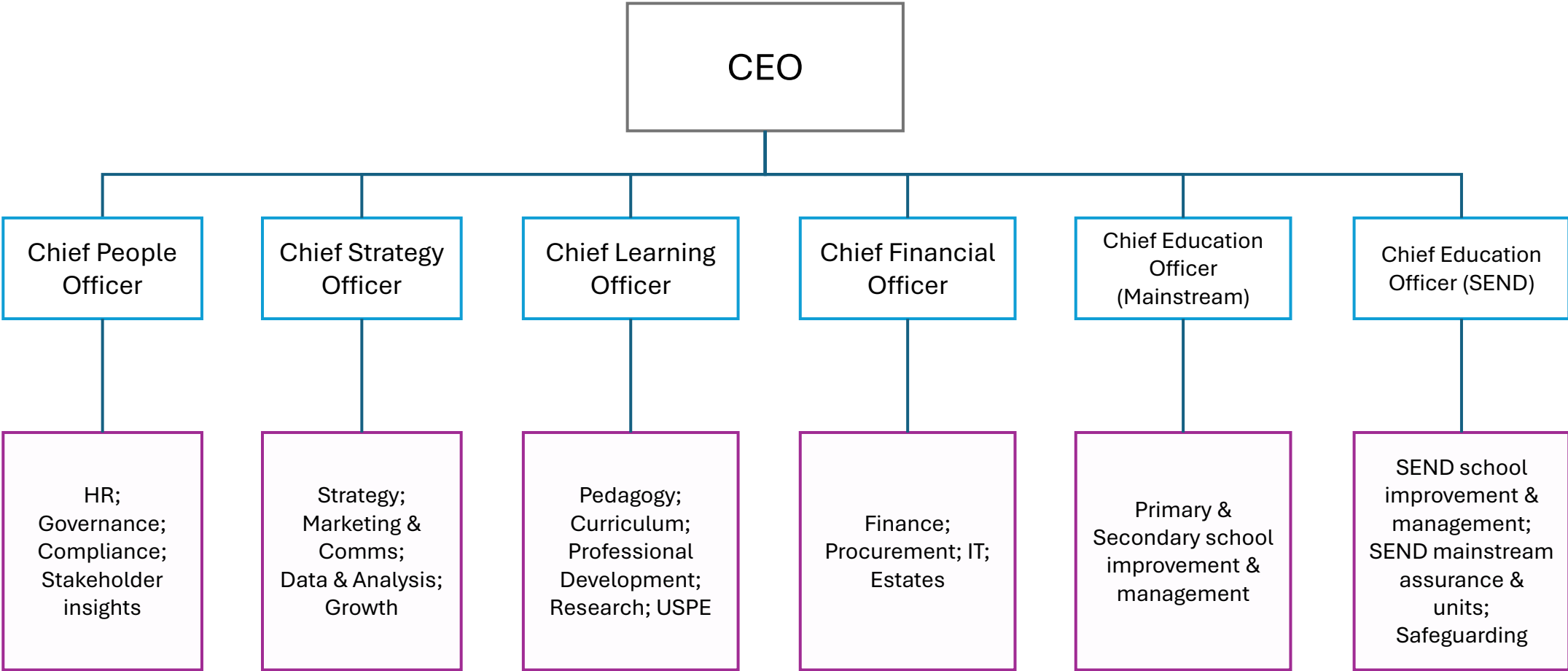
The Trust supports schools to:

- Audit their provision
- Benchmark against key principles
- Collaborate and share good practice in context
- Share collective responsibility for the outcomes of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds

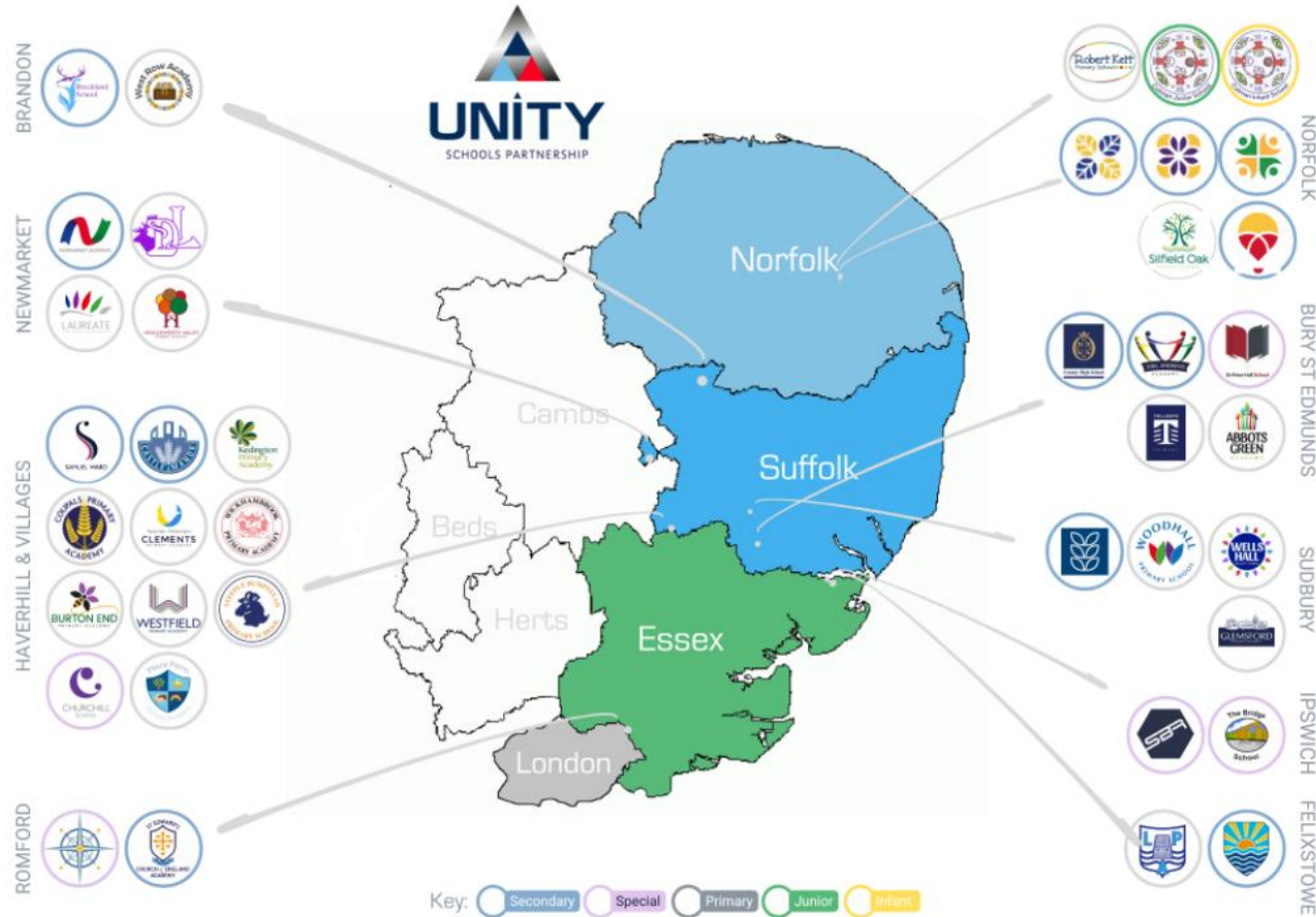
Unity places a high value on local governance and brings together Chairs each term and holds an annual conference for all governors. Education directors work with Chairs of local governing bodies on performance management arrangements for heads.



# Our Structure



# Our Schools



The vast majority of the Trust's schools are successful and well-performing, judged 'Good' and 'Expected Standard' by Ofsted. The ambition over the next three years is that schools across the Trust become routinely 'Strong' characterised by top quartile performance and with the capacity to support additional schools in the area that would benefit from being part of the Trust.

In order to achieve this ambition, the Trust will focus on:

**Excellent education** – Our plans at secondary and primary aim at top quartile outcomes for pupils, with very high parental and external approval ratings of our special schools.

**Excellent staff** – We are committed to recruiting, developing and retaining great people, creating clear pathways for internal progression and ensuring Unity Schools Partnership is an excellent place to build a career in education.

**Excellent support for schools** – at the core of our success is the support provided across the Trust for Heads and staff working in Unity schools, from a range of experts at the centre and in our schools.

# Our Curriculum & Pedagogy

We strive for best practices across the Trust, with Trust Leadership, Headteachers, and the Central Team collaborating to enhance each school's curriculum. Our primary objective is to ensure that all students, irrespective of their backgrounds, needs, or abilities, have equal access to opportunities. The school improvement team, including subject advisers, works across phases to promote consistency and drive forward improvements, particularly in our special schools, where we aim for pupils to achieve their full potential through a well-rounded and tailored curriculum.

## CUSP:

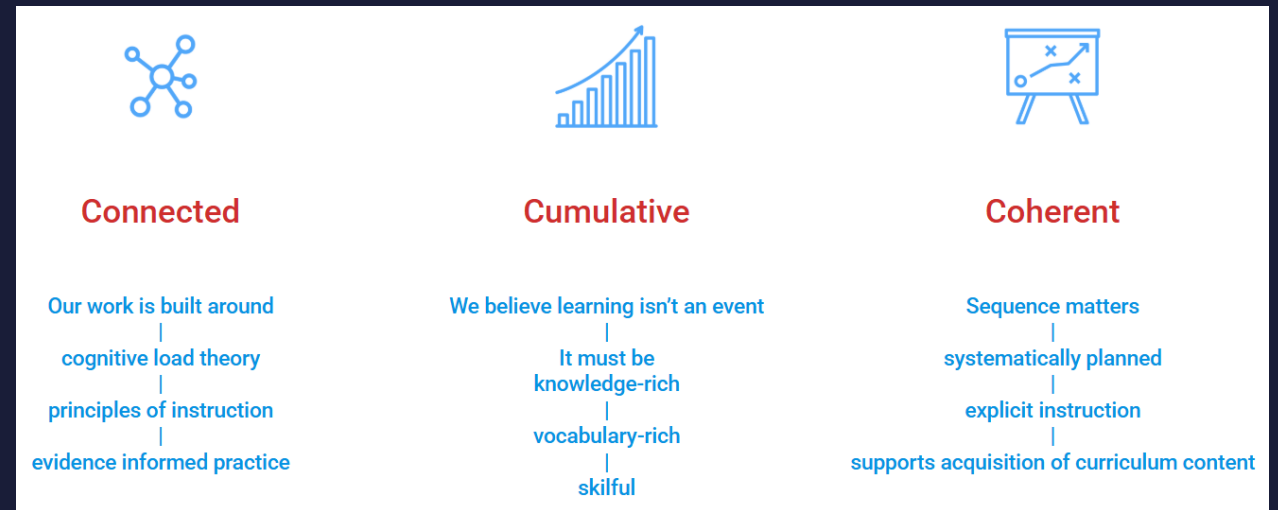
In line with our vision of making remarkable change happen, Unity is proud to have its own curriculum, Curriculum with Unity Schools Partnership (CUSP).

CUSP is underpinned by evidence, research and cognitive science. The curriculum is deliberately sequenced to activate prior learning, build on skills and deepen knowledge and understanding, enabling robust progression for every pupil. There is an emphasis on vocabulary acquisition, retention and use to break down learning barriers and accelerate progress. Specific skills are discreetly taught and practised so that they become transferrable. Learning, vocabulary and content is cumulative; content is learned, retrieved and built upon.

Although the curriculum was developed for schools in the Unity Schools Partnership, we have been pleased to share it with 850 schools nationally and internationally – and this number is growing every day.

## Unity Research School:

Unity Research School is proud to be part of the Research Schools Network, aiming to support schools to bridge the gap between research and practice. We work with classroom practitioners, school leaders and system leaders to engage, unite and reflect around the use of research evidence to address educational disadvantage. We disseminate evidence-informed practice through communications, articles, video, exemplification, training and publications. We work with experts within our research school network and beyond, as part of a mission to help all pupils, irrespective of background and starting points, to thrive.



[Read more about CUSP  
Early Foundations](#)

[Read more about CUSP  
Primary](#)

[Read more about CUSP  
Secondary](#)

# The Role



**The CSO is responsible for shaping and delivering the Trust's strategy – turning ambition into reality across our schools.**

The CSO will guide the Executive's strategy design and review process, lead the development of concrete plans for delivery, and oversee the implementation of change across the organisation. They will own our plans for mindful Trust growth, shape our Data and Analysis capacity, and lead how we communicate to internal and external audiences.

**Reporting to:** Chief Executive Officer

**Responsible for:** Strategy planning & implementation; Data and Analysis; Marketing and Communications; Growth

**Hours:** Full time, 52 weeks per year

**Location:** Hybrid; regular attendance at Trust offices in Haverhill, with travel to schools as required

**Salary:** Salary, dependent on experience and expertise

**Pension:** Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

# Key Responsibilities



## Strategy & Delivery

- Lead the Trust's process and cycle of designing and reviewing strategy, working with the Executive, Board and stakeholders to translate the organisation's vision into delivery on the ground.
- Build and manage a team of project delivery professionals to implement Trust strategy across operations, working closely with Trust Directors and middle leaders responsible for delivery.
- Define effective processes and tools for the routinely successful and sustained delivery of change.

## Data, Analysis & Communications

- Manage the Trust's central Data and Analysis function, ensuring it maximises the value of data to create actionable, insightful knowledge for leaders working with and in schools.
- Collate and reshape the Trust's marketing and communications capacity so messaging is aligned with strategy, planned, effective, and supports pupil and staff recruitment.

## Growth & Policy

- Analyse and document the scope for Trust growth across the region, identifying potential joining schools and developing the coherence of educational clusters.
- Lead all new joiner processes, advising the Board and working with departments to successfully onboard schools joining the Trust.
- Remain abreast of policy developments – locally and nationally – and ensure senior leaders are well briefed and operating in a flexible environment that is responsive to change.

# Further Responsibilities

- Support the CEO and Executive team in setting and delivering the vision and purpose of the organisation.
- Ensure the organisation reflects and lives the ethos and values set by the Board of Trustees and delivers its strategic goals.
- Work in close partnership with the CEO, Exec, Extended Leadership Team, Board and Headteachers through relationships based on openness, transparency and absolute integrity.
- Ensure the staff Performance and Professional Growth policy is applied consistently across the team.
- Contribute to robust policies, procedures and systems for the collection, analysis and interrogation of education performance data at every level – pupil to Trust.

## Role Interfaces

- **Chief Learning Officer** – leads the Trust's learning strategy within the strategic framework set by the CSO.
- **Chief Education Officers (Mainstream & SEND)** – translate Trust strategy into school-level improvement and outcomes.
- **Chief Financial Officer** – works with the CSO to prioritise and resource strategic initiatives.
- **Chief People Officer** – ensures people strategy is aligned to and enables delivery of the Trust's overall strategic ambitions.



# The Person

You will be a leader who can bring clarity, discipline and momentum to delivery in large organisations. You will focus relentlessly on impact: shaping clear plans and ensuring delivery through others. You will be highly organised, intellectually sharp and experienced in turning ideas into sustained action through distributed teams. You will understand what good implementation looks like and how accountability is built. A strategic enabler, you will thrive on seeing things through and keeping Unity focused on what makes the greatest difference for its pupils.

## Knowledge

- A firm understanding of the schools' sector and education more broadly, with a strong grasp of contemporary educational and policy issues.
- Expert knowledge in strategy design, implementation, project processes and tools.
- Working knowledge of data and analysis within education, with a good understanding of its potential to impact pupils, staff and Trust decisions.
- Working knowledge of marketing and communications, sufficient to effectively manage colleagues expert in these fields.
- Strong understanding of the potential for digital tools and AI to enhance and redefine existing processes and practices.

## Experience

- Demonstrable track record of leading strategic change across a complex, distributed organisation, evidenced by sustained, positive changes to outcomes and culture.
- Strong track record of performance managing professional staff – driving morale, raising standards and promoting a team ethos.
- Proven success in building effective partnerships with schools, commercial organisations and Local Authorities to maximise networks and opportunities.
- Successful experience of promoting inclusion, equality and diversity.



## Qualifications

- Educated to degree level, with evidence of continuing professional development.
- Qualification(s) in relevant project delivery processes.

## Skills & Aptitudes

- Highly organised, efficient and productive.
- Able to cope in pressurised situations, delivering in short timescales without compromise to quality.
- A reflective mindset, willing to have their thinking challenged and mind changed.
- Socially adept, able to work with people from any background or level.
- An inspirational leader others want to learn from and work with.
- A corporate mindset, making decisions right for the wider organisation.
- A strategic thinker who can work with schools, Trust leaders and the Board.
- Committed to ethical leadership, doing the right thing for children in any circumstance.
- Well-developed presentation, writing and public speaking skills.
- An effective leader who builds positive culture, delegates, builds teams and inspires staff.



# Why be part of the Unity Team?

At Unity Schools Partnership, we break barriers to create remarkable change, putting pupils first and supporting the vulnerable and disadvantaged. We are dedicated to fostering a positive work environment where employees can grow, valuing collaboration, wellbeing, diversity, equality, and work-life balance. Across our schools and central hub, we nurture talent at all career stages, offering a wide range of roles.

## PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

We recognise the importance of providing professional development opportunities and support all our staff with a CPD programme to equip them for their current role and next steps. Our aim is to retain talent and so we actively encourage and facilitate movement within the Trust. In fact, several members of our executive team originate from internal promotions, and we have enabled a number of staff to follow their passions and embark on new careers within the Trust. From apprenticeships to leadership training, we offer open doors, not glass ceilings.

## MEANINGFUL WORK THAT MAKES A REAL CONTRIBUTION

All roles within the Trust contribute towards ensuring our pupils receive the education they deserve so that they can achieve their potential. We rely on our teams to take the initiative to make things better, to work smarter, to collaborate within and across teams to be the best we can be, so that our pupils can be the best they can be. We facilitate collaborative working across schools and multi-disciplinary projects to share best practice and maximise our skills, talent and knowledge sharing.

## WELLBEING & SAFEGUARDING

Of course, as an educational organisation, safeguarding is front and centre of what we do. But our care extends to our employees too. We value every member of staff as a person in their own right, everyone needs support in different ways and at different points in their lives. We have invested in wellbeing systems to ensure that staff get the right support at the right time and whenever needed.

## FAIRNESS & FLEXIBILITY MATTERS

We pride ourselves on being fully committed to equality and diversity best practice. We follow Teachers' Pay and Local Government pay scales for fair compensation and transparency. Our benefits package includes final/average salary pensions, wellbeing service, an employee assistance programme, cycle to work scheme, flu vouchers and EV leasing. In addition, we recognise the need for, and benefits of flexible working and hybrid working and are pleased to offer these where appropriate for the job role.

# Staff Benefits & Wellbeing

We aim to recruit and retain top talent, recognising that every team member contributes to improving pupil outcomes. Our primary focus is on breaking down barriers to facilitate remarkable change, empowering teachers to teach and leaders to lead. Supporting staff wellbeing and professional growth is crucial; we want everyone to feel valued and have opportunities to progress within the Trust. Our team fosters a culture of belonging, enhancing staff happiness and service delivery.

We prioritise inclusive working practices and welcome diverse teams, offering flexible arrangements for a healthy work-life balance. Our commitment to equal opportunities is evident in our initiatives celebrating diversity.

Professional development is a cornerstone of our approach, supported by our Teaching School and access to national experts. We offer talent management programmes, executive coaching, and an extensive CPD framework, including:

- Instructional coaching
- Funded professional courses (up to Level 7)
- Internal CPD opportunities
- Strong ties with the Unity Teaching School Hub for NPQs

**Join us to work, learn, and grow together.**

## Staff Wellbeing

We prioritise wellbeing through the DfE Wellbeing Charter, offering benefits such as workload reduction commitments, discounted gym memberships, and mental health support via TELUS.

Our Pluxee package includes discounts on shopping, holidays, and leisure activities, enhancing overall wellbeing.

Eligible staff can also join the Blue Light Card discount scheme for exclusive savings.

## Unity Schools Partnership Education (UE)

We have established UE as a subsidiary trading company to independently trade with commercial organisations, generating additional income for the Trust. This initiative has already returned over £1 million to Unity Schools Partnership schools through tutoring and consultancy, providing staff opportunities to develop their ideas and work on a commission basis.





# How to Apply

## Application Process:

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to Unity Schools Partnership on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role via [www.saxbam.com/appointments](http://www.saxbam.com/appointments) using code **RBQPE**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter, addressed to Dominic Norrish, and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring\* form. An application form will be requested for final round candidates.

\* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application

The closing date for applications is 5pm on **Monday 15 June 2026**.

## Key dates:

- Shortlisting: **Thursday 25 June** (*For information only, candidates not required*)
- Informal one to ones with Dominic Norrish (CEO): **Wednesday 1 July**
- Panel Interviews date: **Tuesday 7 July in Bury-St-Edmunds, Suffolk**

## Due diligence:

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.

## Safeguarding:

Unity Schools Partnership is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at all times. You will be responsible for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of all children with whom you come into contact, in accordance with the Trust's and the schools' Safeguarding policies.

The post holder is required to hold a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

## References:

We will seek one written reference for each shortlisted candidate and a second and final written reference for the preferred candidate

## GDPR personal data notice:

According to GDPR guidelines, Saxton Bampfylde Ltd are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

