



ORCHARD
LEARNING ALLIANCE
WHERE EVERYONE THRIVES

February 2025

HR Business Partner Job Description and Person Specification



The Orchard Learning Alliance is committed to creating a diverse workforce. We will consider all qualified applicants for employment without regard to sex, race, religion, belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, age, disability, marriage or civil partnership.

The Orchard Learning Alliance is a new Academy Trust, that has already grown to four schools and is due to increase to ten schools by the end of 2025. As part of this growth we are looking to appoint an HR Business Partner to support our schools with a range of people matters and timely strategic advice. The role will be busy and varied, and join a passionate team who firmly believe in the unique culture of our schools and the Trust.

Job details

Salary range: Grade 9 SCP 35-40 (£44,711-£49,764 FTE)

Working hours per week: 30 hours (though hours in the range of 25-37 would be possible for the right candidate).

Hours of work: Flexible to meet the needs of the business, to include the core working day of 9am to 3pm.

Location: Hybrid. 50% of time will be at the Central Office located in Woodley. Role will require travel to schools on occasion (currently Woodley, Early, Spencers Wood and Tilehurst) and some home working is also possible.

Contract type: Permanent, term time only plus 15 additional working days (role necessitates some work outside of term time, to be discussed with the successful candidate).

Reporting to: Chief Financial Officer

Responsible for: n/a

Main purpose

The HR Business Partner will:

- Work with schools to implement and use the Trust HR policies, providing guidance on best practice and coaching managers to this level
- Support schools with all performance management, disciplinary, grievance issues, advising on use of policy and process and where necessary support in formal meetings
- Work with schools to proactively deal with absence concerns, reducing the impact of absences on schools
- Working with the Executive team to review, update or create (where required) Trust wide policies



- Proactively identify, develop and implement improvements to systems and procedures to enhance the HR service.
- Work with the Payroll team to resolve any pay related issues
- Liaise with unions as required
- Work with the Executive team to advise and guide on the managing change process, including consultation and related meetings
- Manage relationships with external organisations, for example DBS providers
- Understand the multiple variations of terms and conditions of staff, in addition those driven by TUPE and ensure compliance.
- Be responsible for processing statistical information from the school's database system/s for personnel matters, for reporting to the Executive team.
- Actively share knowledge with more junior team members, contributing to a culture of continuous improvement
- Keep up to date with legislation and guidance from the CIPD, central government (particularly the Burgundy book and Green book, ICO and other relevant sources and advise the Executive team of any material changes and any actions required)
- Be committed to a culture of continuous improvement, proactively generating ideas for improvement and always looking for “what’s next”

Whilst the main responsibilities are outlined here, these are not exhaustive. The role is senior in nature and thus is responsible for ensuring all reasonable actions are taken to achieve the overall role objective above, especially as Trust needs change.



Peron Specification

	Essential	Desirable
Education and Training	Excellent literacy and numeracy skills	Associate member of the CIPD (or working towards)
Knowledge and Experience	Up to date knowledge of employment law and best practice HR Proven tack record of handling complex employee relations and casework	Previous experience as an HR Business Partner Experience of working within the education sector (preferably within schools)
Skills	The ability to build effective relationships, utilising influencing skills to enable change Flexible, adaptable and an agent to change Demonstrates sound judgement and is able to prioritise conflicting demands for a range of areas Excellent communication skills	An understanding of the current Educational environment
Personal qualities	Innovative personality, keen for change and “what’s next?” Willingness to travel within the Reading area mostly, and further afield rarely Enthusiastic, professional team leader and player, able to display humour and strong resolve Respects confidentiality, deals sensitively with people and resolves conflicts Supports and demonstrates commitment to the vision of the Trust Able to work with minimum supervision and as part of a team Able to work to tight deadlines and under pressure	



Safer Recruitment & Safeguarding

Introduction

The Orchard Learning Alliance is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in its schools. The Trust complies with the statutory legislative requirements and guidance that seeks to protect children, including 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance. In order to meet this responsibility, we follow a rigorous selection process to discourage and screen out unsuitable applicants.

Safer Recruitment

Job descriptions and person specifications make reference to safeguarding and child protection. All posts are subject to satisfactory completion of enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate (DBS) checks. All advertisements include a safeguarding statement and commitment.

Application Stage

All applicants are scrutinised to verify identity and academic qualifications, and professional references are requested using our standard pro-forma for short-listed candidates. As a minimum, references should be from the two most recent employers. References are checked against previous employment history and gaps in employment. Professional references must be obtained from work email addresses. Our standard reference proforma makes reference to suitability to work with children and young people. The application form requires applicants to complete a disclosure of any criminal convictions.

Short-listing

Only those candidates meeting the criteria outlined in the person specification will be short listed. All short-listed candidates will be subject to an online search as part of our safer recruitment due diligence.

Interview

Shortlisted candidates will take part in an interview and selection process. Candidates will be asked to address any discrepancies or gaps in their employment history. Candidates will be reminded of their responsibility to disclose any criminal convictions if they have not already done so. Proof of identity, qualifications and right to work in the UK must also be provided at interview.

Appointment

An enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate (DBS) will be required for all appointed posts. Other pre-employment compliance checks will be carried out. This post is subject to satisfactory references which will be requested prior to interview, an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, online searches, medical check, evidence of qualifications plus verification of the right to work in the UK. For teaching positions, barred list checks and prohibition from teaching checks will also be carried out. For leadership positions, section 128 checks will be performed. All staff will receive a comprehensive induction programme covering all aspects of safeguarding and health and safety.

Probation

All new staff will be subject to the trust probation procedures for a period of 6 months. The probation period is to enable the assessment of an employee's suitability for the job and which



includes a review of the performance of new staff in relation to duties, skills, qualifications and experience outlined in the job description and person specification. This will also include an employee's suitability to work with children and young people and their commitment to safeguarding and child protection.

Equal opportunities

OLA recognises the value of, and seeks to achieve, a diverse workforce and takes positive steps to create an employment culture in which people feel confident of being treated with fairness, dignity and respect, irrespective of their differences. The Trust is committed to the elimination of unlawful discrimination and to the promotion of good relations between all.

General Data Protection Regulation

OLA is committed to ensuring that the privacy of an individual is protected. By signing a contract of employment, the employee is agreeing to the Trust processing their personal data, including 'sensitive personal data' as defined in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), for the purposes of the operation, management, security and/or administrations, as well as complying with applicable laws, regulations and procedures. The information you provide (except Equality Monitoring Information) may be shared with partner organisations that provide services to the Trust. A full list of these organisations is available on request from the CFO.

