

PATHWAYS EDUCATION

CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR EVERY LEARNER TO FLOURISH

Deputy Headteacher

Candidate Application Pack

Churt, Surrey

Welcome from the Headteacher

Thank you for your interest in the role of Deputy Headteacher at Pathways Education.

Pathways Education exists for young people who have not always found a home in formal schooling. Many have experienced difficult educational journeys before they arrive with us. They are at the heart of everything we do, not simply the reason we exist, and we build their voice and agency into how we shape both their own learning and the school around them. Our whole community is built around three values: Wellbeing, Connection and Empowerment.

This is a genuinely exciting time to be joining us. Human flourishing is becoming the model at the centre of everything we do here, not something we apply to one part of school life alone. Our curriculum is one expression of it, built on the project-based, trauma-informed approach that already sits at the heart of what we do. It also shapes how we support and develop our staff, build genuine partnership with families, design and use our spaces, and connect learning to community and adult life.

We are not trying to recreate a conventional model of specialist education. We are building an ambitious model around the conditions young people need to flourish: strong relationships, belonging, high expectations, authentic learning, real-world experiences, independence, contribution and meaningful futures.

As our provision develops locally, including the development of a new site, there is real scope for the successful candidate to grow their leadership responsibility alongside the organisation. We are looking for someone who can dream boldly about what a school rooted in human flourishing could become and then work with us to make it real.

If that excites you, we would love to hear from you.

Leeha Watney

Headteacher

At a glance

School	Pathways Education, Churt, Surrey
Learners	Young people aged 9-16 with SEMH as a primary need; all hold an EHCP
Our approach	Small, relational, trauma-informed, personalised and project-based
Our ambition	Meaningful adult lives, with a presumption of employment for every learner
The opportunity	To help shape a developing school and a distinctive model of specialist education

Salary	Contract	Closing date	Start date
L7-L12	Full-time, term-time only	21 September 2026	From January 2027

Pathways Community Trust

Pathways Education is one part of Pathways Community Trust, a registered education charity working to build connected pathways into long, happy and prosperous adulthoods for children and young people who may otherwise become disconnected from education, community and opportunity. Our ambition is bigger than any single school or service. We are developing place-based ecosystems in which education, families, employers and communities work together so that young people are known, supported, challenged and connected to meaningful futures.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES. BRIGHTER FUTURES.

Our integrated model

PATHWAYS EDUCATION

Small, trauma-informed specialist schools that act as community hubs, placing personalised education, families, employers and community at the heart of learning.

FUTURE PATHWAYS

Alternative Provision and real-world environments that re-engage learners, build confidence and develop skills through authentic enterprise, employer and community experiences.

PATHWAYS TOGETHER

Family and community support that builds confidence, strengthens understanding of systems and connects people to the right help, networks and opportunities.

What connects us

- Every child and young person deserves to belong.
- Families are experts in their own lives and are partners in the work.
- Communities already possess extraordinary strengths.
- Schools can become the natural heart of their communities.
- Employment should be designed into education from the very beginning.
- Sustainable change happens when services work together around families rather than expecting families to navigate fragmented systems.

Our schools therefore do not sit in isolation. Pathways Education is the specialist-school expression of a wider Trust model in which education, alternative provision, family support, employers and community are deliberately connected.

Why Pathways Education is different

We believe every learner can flourish when the right conditions are intentionally created around them. Our purpose is not simply to educate learners. It is to help them build the confidence, knowledge, relationships, identity, skills and opportunities that enable them to lead meaningful adult lives.

EMPLOYMENT IS NOT THE STARTING POINT. IT IS THE OUTCOME OF FLOURISHING.

A presumption of employment for everyone

Across Pathways Community Trust we start from a presumption of employment: we believe every learner can work and contribute. This is not a prediction about a particular job or a narrow employability programme. It is an expression of ambition. It means we do not wait until Key Stage 4 to begin preparing young people for adulthood. From the earliest point in a learner's journey, curriculum, relationships, projects, community experiences, employer encounters, independence and transition planning should be building the capabilities, confidence and social capital that make meaningful adult life possible.

Our ambition is that every learner encounters employers and workplaces, learns through authentic projects and real audiences, develops essential transferable skills, contributes to their community, experiences choice and leadership, and leaves with a credible destination plan and real opportunities.

Education delivered differently

Our learners often need something different from the education that has previously been available to them. We therefore organise learning around the young person rather than expecting the young person to fit a conventional system.

- Relationships before learning: every learner should be deeply known and have a trusted adult.
- Strengths before deficits: we identify potential, interests and aspirations alongside need.
- High expectations without losing safety, compassion or personalisation.
- Project-based learning and authentic, real-world contexts rather than learning that exists only for the classroom.
- Curriculum, EHCP outcomes, emotional wellbeing and preparation for adulthood treated as one connected journey.
- Family partnership, employer relationships and community connection built into the educational model.
- Skills for life, independence, contribution and employment developed throughout the learner journey.
- Learner voice and agency used as evidence that actively shapes provision.

About our Churt school

Set in the Surrey Hills near Churt and Farnham, Pathways Education is a specialist independent school for young people aged 9 to 16 with a primary need of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), all of whom hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Many of our learners are at risk of becoming NEET without the right support.

Our approach is trauma-informed and relational throughout. Learning is delivered through thematic, project-based units rather than a conventional subject timetable, giving pupils tangible outcomes to work towards and repeated, low-stakes opportunities to practise regulation, collaboration and communication alongside subject knowledge and skills.

Curriculum and EHCP are treated as one connected journey, with a shared graduated approach through Assess, Plan, Do and Review. Our young people have a genuine voice in shaping their learning, not only in how it is delivered to them.

Our Trust's alternative provision and enterprise ventures, including The Cookie Bar and The Bike Hub, are based locally rather than on the school site but are part of the connected Pathways offer. They create opportunities for genuine enterprise, employer engagement and real-world experience rather than simulated work-related activity.

Our values

WELLBEING

Young people and adults need to feel safe, supported and able to flourish.

CONNECTION

Relationships, belonging, family and community are fundamental to learning.

EMPOWERMENT

Voice, agency, high aspirations and opportunity shape meaningful futures.

The Pathways learner journey

Our aim is that every learner will follow a personalised pathway through a consistent methodology. The six stages are interconnected rather than a linear checklist; together they describe the experience we want every learner to have.

1. KNOW ME

We build trusting relationships and understand every learner as a whole person.

Flourishing Profile; vocational profile; learner voice; trusted adult

2. DESIGN WITH ME

We co-design an ambitious, personalised learning journey towards adulthood.

EHCP outcomes; personalised learning plan; goals; preparation for adulthood

3. GROW ME

We develop knowledge, skills, confidence and independence through high-quality teaching and coaching.

Academic learning; Skills Builder; emotional wellbeing; coaching; reflection

4. CHALLENGE ME

We learn through authentic experiences that build resilience and real-world skills.

Project-based learning; employer challenges; enterprise; community projects; outdoor learning; public exhibition

5. CONNECT ME

We build relationships, belonging and social capital that open doors.

Family partnership; careers education; mentoring; workplace encounters; community connection

6. BELIEVE IN MY FUTURE

We prepare for adulthood and help every learner transition with confidence and hope.

Destination planning; transition passport; supported employment; independence; celebration of learning

EVERY LEARNER WILL LEAVE WITH A DESTINATION PLAN, REAL OPPORTUNITIES AND THE BELIEF THAT THEY CAN SHAPE THEIR FUTURE.

What every learner should experience

The Deputy Headteacher will help us turn our ambition into a consistently excellent lived experience for every learner. We are working towards a model in which every young person can expect:

- A trusted adult who believes in them.
- A safe, nurturing and trauma-informed environment.
- High-quality, personalised education.
- Project-based learning and real-world experiences.
- Multiple encounters with employers and workplaces.
- Family partnership and learning that connects beyond the school day.
- Skills for life, independence and emotional resilience.
- Opportunities to contribute to their community.
- High aspirations from day one.
- A pathway to a meaningful adult life.

Excellent adult practice

Culture is created through adult behaviour. We expect our adults to model the practice we want learners to experience:

- Relational practice
- Trauma-informed practice
- Restorative practice
- High expectations
- Coaching before telling
- Inclusive practice
- Reflective practice
- Evidence-informed practice

These expectations are supported through professional standards, coaching, observation, professional development and a culture of continuous improvement.

The role: Deputy Headteacher

Responsible to: Headteacher

This is a rare opportunity to join at a formative stage in the school's development and help shape not only what we teach, but how and where we teach it. The successful candidate will work as a close strategic partner to the Headteacher, with particular leadership of curriculum development, safeguarding, emotional wellbeing, staff development and the design and use of physical space as our provision grows locally.

THIS IS A BUILDER ROLE, NOT A CARETAKER ROLE.

We are looking for a leader who can hold ambition and implementation together: someone who can help translate a distinctive educational philosophy into excellent daily practice, strong systems, measurable outcomes and an experience that feels coherent to learners, families and staff.

The role will grow in scope and responsibility as Pathways Education develops. We are looking for someone who wants to build a career here over the medium to long term, not simply fill an immediate vacancy.

Strategic leadership and curriculum development

- Work alongside the Headteacher to further develop a curriculum in which human flourishing sits at the centre of decision-making, building on the school's existing thematic, project-based approach.

- Lead the ongoing development of project-based learning, ensuring authentic, real-world projects remain a primary vehicle through which learning is brought to life.
- Help translate the Pathways Education Model Fidelity Framework into excellent everyday practice, contributing to the development of the wider Pathways operating model.
- Champion a whole-school culture in which curriculum, emotional wellbeing, EHCP outcomes, essential skills and preparation for adulthood are treated as one integrated journey.
- Ensure our presumption of employment is visible throughout curriculum design and learner experience, not confined to careers activity or later key stages.
- Build learner voice and agency into curriculum and school development as genuine structural practice.

Safeguarding

- Act as a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, working closely with the Headteacher on the school's safeguarding culture.
- Bring a strong, practised understanding of contextual safeguarding, recognising that risk to our learners may sit outside the school gates as much as within them.
- Support the delivery and ongoing development of safeguarding training and ensure safeguarding remains the first consideration across school life.

Emotional wellbeing and trauma-informed practice

- Champion trauma-informed principles, including safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment, across school life.
- Support staff to use emotional wellbeing information meaningfully as part of personalised planning.
- Support staff in understanding and responding to behaviour as communication, in line with the school's relational and therapeutic ethos.

Team development

- Line manage and develop staff through coaching, supervision and clear accountability.
- Identify and champion high-quality professional learning, including for colleagues new to SEMH and trauma-informed practice.
- Model the relational, restorative and reflective practice expected of every adult in the organisation.

Estates, space and development

- Play a leading role in shaping how physical space is designed and used as Pathways Education develops locally.
- Work with the Headteacher and Trust colleagues to translate curriculum vision into environments that support authentic learning.
- Bring creativity and practical thinking to workshops, exhibition spaces, outdoor learning and community-facing areas.

Partnerships, employment, enterprise and community

- Develop family partnership and our wider community offer so that flourishing is supported beyond the school day and school gates.
- Build creative and sustainable partnerships with employers, local organisations and education providers.
- Work closely with Future Pathways and Trust enterprise ventures so that learners experience genuine employer and workplace exposure throughout their journey.
- Champion meaningful preparation for adulthood and supported pathways towards employment, independence, contribution and belonging.
- Share knowledge, practice and, over time, spaces generously with other provisions and communities.

Standards, evidence and improvement

- Oversee effective use of Evidence for Learning so that every learner has a clear, evidenced journey across curriculum, wellbeing, essential skills and EHCP outcomes.
- Support rigorous and honest self-evaluation, including model fidelity review.
- Ensure practice is evidenced against the Ofsted inspection framework and Independent School Standards while retaining the Trust's ambition beyond compliance.
- Contribute to a learning culture in which challenges and mistakes are surfaced, understood and used to improve practice.
- Deputise for the Headteacher as required, including representing the school externally.

Person specification

We are interested in the person behind the experience as well as the experience itself. We need strong professional credibility, but we also need curiosity, courage, warmth, reflection and a genuine desire to build something different.

Area	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).	NPQSL or equivalent leadership qualification; Designated Safeguarding Lead training.
Experience	Significant leadership experience in a school setting; experience working with learners with SEMH needs and/or EHCPs; curriculum design and development.	Project-based learning; specialist or alternative provision; estates/capital development; employer, community or enterprise partnerships.
Knowledge and understanding	Strong practical understanding of safeguarding, including contextual safeguarding; emotional wellbeing and trauma-informed practice; SEND Code of Practice and EHCP processes.	Skills Builder, Functional Skills, ASDAN or NCFE frameworks; inspection and regulatory requirements in a specialist setting.
Skills and abilities	Ability to design and lead an ambitious values-led curriculum beyond a traditional academic model; strong team leadership and staff development; excellent relational communication with learners, families, staff and partners.	Experience leading change within a growing or developing organisation.
Personal qualities	A genuine belief that every young person can flourish and contribute; commitment to a presumption of employment; high expectations; real learner voice and agency; calmness and resilience; collaborative relational leadership; reflective practice; entrepreneurial mindset.	Experience creating external partnerships or generating opportunities from limited resources.

Belonging at Pathways

Belonging is central to what we want for our learners, and it matters just as much for the adults who work with us.

WE WANT OUR WORKFORCE TO REFLECT THE DIVERSITY OF THE COMMUNITIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE WE SERVE.

Pathways Education and Pathways Community Trust are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds and particularly encourage applications from groups that are under-represented in education leadership.

We welcome applications regardless of age, disability, sex, gender identity or gender reassignment, race, ethnicity or nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, caring responsibilities, socio-economic background or any other aspect of a person's identity or lived experience.

We value different perspectives and recognise that strong leadership can be shaped by a wide range of professional and lived experiences. We are interested in what you can bring to Pathways, as well as where you have worked before.

We are committed to making our recruitment process accessible and inclusive. If you require reasonable adjustments at any stage of the application or interview process, please let us know. Requests for adjustments will be treated respectfully and will not disadvantage your application.

We select candidates on the basis of their skills, experience, values and ability to fulfil the requirements of the role. Our commitment to inclusion sits alongside our unwavering commitment to safeguarding children and young people.

Safeguarding

Pathways Education is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Our recruitment process follows safer recruitment practice throughout. This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check, satisfactory references, identity and right-to-work checks, and all other pre-employment checks required in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Independent School Standards.

How to apply

To apply, please send:

- A full CV, including a complete record of your career history.
- A personal statement in place of a conventional covering letter.

Tell us about you

What gets you up in the morning, and what does human flourishing actually mean to you?

Tell us what draws you to a role like this and how your lived experience, alongside your professional experience and skills, will help you contribute to something genuinely different.

We would also like to understand what a presumption of employment for every learner means to you in practice, and how you would help us ensure that preparation for adulthood is woven through a young person's whole educational journey rather than beginning at the point they are ready to leave.

We want to hear your voice, not a template. Tell us in the way that feels most authentic to you.

Applications to	Leeha Watney, Headteacher
Email	leeha.watney@pathways-education.org
Closing date	21 September 2026
Interviews	Week commencing 28 September 2026

FLOURISHING LEARNERS. STRONGER COMMUNITIES. BETTER FUTURES.

Opportunities for all. Ambition without limits.