THE SIXTH FORM BOLTON

Principal



CANDIDATE BRIEF

November 2026

FEA FE ASSOCIATES × SFA SIXTH FORM ASSOCIATES



“ACHIEVE YOUR POTENTIAL“

01 WELCOME

A message from our Chair

Dear Candidate

Thank you for your interest in the position of Principal at The Sixth Form Bolton.

Following almost ten years of exceptional leadership by Stuart Merrills, we are seeking an inspiring and visionary leader to build on the College’s considerable strengths and continue its journey of excellence. This information pack has been compiled to provide you with valuable insights into the College, its culture and ambitions and the exciting opportunity offered by this pivotal role.

Based in Bolton , Greater Manchester, The Sixth Form Bolton is a further education college that provides the next steps from school to university and employment. We operate from one site serving a student community of over 1800 students from across Bolton and neighbouring boroughs. We work extensively with key stakeholders such as the local authority, parents and carers, our funding body, employers/industry partners, partner schools and the local community to help meet skills needs.

You will find a College with strong foundations. We were judged ‘Good’ for Overall Effectiveness in our last Ofsted inspection (October 2023). We have invested significantly in our campuses to develop the best learning facilities amongst sixth form colleges in the north west. At the same time have maintained our financial discipline, with our financial health rated “Outstanding”.

Guided by our Mission to deliver high-quality academic and technical education transforming lives for university, apprenticeships and employment, students are placed at the heart of everything we do. You will find a staff team very clearly focused on students and supporting them to achieve their potential.

Within this context, we are looking for a leader who can:

- Create the conditions for further sustainable improvements in all areas of College activity for the decade ahead;
- Sustain and improve the quality of education as well as student outcomes and destinations;
- Ensure the College maintains its position as a trusted partner for employers and key stakeholders across Bolton and Greater Manchester to meet local skills needs and lifelong learning opportunities;
- Provide an inclusive approach to leadership that engages all of our community of students, staff and external partners.

As a candidate, you will find that the Board of Governors at The Sixth Form Bolton is passionate, skilled and fully dedicated to supporting our institution. We are committed to working collaboratively with our Principal and supporting their professional development and well-being.

We invite you to explore our College further and encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to visit us, gaining firsthand experience of our vibrant community. Your leadership will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of The Sixth Form Bolton and we look forward to receiving your application.

Please do get in touch with our lead consultant from Sixth Form Associates, Jo.Johnston@sixthformassociates.co.uk to find out more about this opportunity.

Thank you once again for considering The Sixth Form Bolton as your next professional venture. We are eager to witness the positive impact you could bring to our community.

Best regards,

Nick Horsfall
Chair

Strategic Plan

At The Sixth Form Bolton, we are proud to serve our diverse local community and support young people to achieve ambitious futures. As a large, specialist 16–19 provider in Bolton, we are committed to raising aspirations, improving outcomes, and ensuring every student progresses to a positive destination.

Our Strategy

Sets out how we will strengthen academic excellence, deliver exceptional student support, and respond to local and national priorities, including skills development and social mobility across Greater Manchester.

Our Vision

To be an exceptional Sixth Form College at the heart of our community, where every student achieves and progresses to ambitious destinations.

Our Mission

To deliver high-quality academic and technical education that transforms lives and supports progression to university, apprenticeships and employment.

Our Values

- Ambition
- Inclusion
- Excellence
- Integrity
- Community



The Opportunity

The Sixth Form Bolton offers a distinctive opportunity to lead a successful specialist sixth form college with strong foundations, experienced senior leadership and an established reputation within its local community.

The College has maintained Financial Outstanding status for more than 20 years and benefits from an experienced Deputy Principal/CFO with responsibility for its Corporate Services, alongside an established Vice Principal Curriculum.

The successful candidate will combine educational ambition, strategic vision, strong financial and analytical understanding, and collaborative leadership with a genuine commitment to the everyday life of the College.

This is an opportunity for a Principal who enjoys combining strategic leadership with operational understanding, who values the expertise of colleagues and who is passionate about delivering an outstanding experience for students and staff.



Job description

Job Title:	**Principal**
Responsible to:	**The Corporation, through the Chair of Governors**
Responsible for:	**The strategic leadership, educational performance and overall management of the College**
Senior Post Holder:	**Yes**
Salary:	**Competitive**
Start date:	**Commence employment on 1 August 2027**

Purpose of the Role

The Principal is the Chief Executive and senior educational leader of The Sixth Form Bolton, accountable to the Corporation for the strategic direction, educational performance, financial sustainability and effective management of the College.

The Sixth Form Bolton is a successful, specialist sixth form college with a relatively compact organisational structure. The Principalship combines strategic leadership with active involvement in the operational life of the College, requiring a visible, approachable and collaborative leader who engages directly with students, staff, senior colleagues and external partners.

The Principal will work particularly closely with the Deputy Principal/Chief Financial Officer and Vice Principal Curriculum, ensuring that educational, financial, corporate and operational priorities are aligned to deliver the College's mission, values and strategic objectives

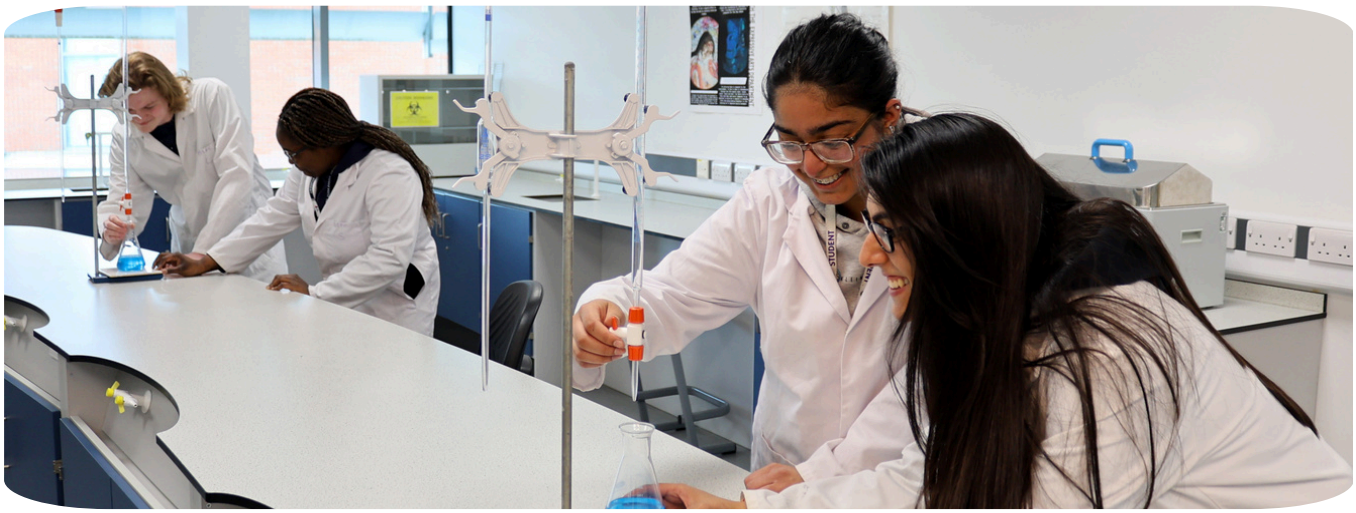


Strategic Leadership and Development

- Lead the development, implementation and review of the College's strategic vision, priorities and objectives.
- Translate government policy, sector developments, local demographics and changing student demand into effective College strategies.
- Ensure that strategic priorities are supported by appropriate curriculum, financial, workforce and operational plans.
- Lead organisational development and review structures and resources to ensure alignment with strategic priorities.
- Use data, evidence and analysis to inform decisions, evaluate performance and identify opportunities and risks.
- Contribute directly to the preparation of strategic plans, reports, proposals and papers for the Senior Leadership Team and Corporation.
- Lead the College's response to changing recruitment patterns, oversubscription, capacity and curriculum requirements.

Curriculum, Quality and Student Outcomes

- Maintain overall accountability for the quality of education, student experience, achievement and progression.
- Work closely with the Vice Principal Curriculum to ensure high standards of teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum delivery.
- Ensure that robust and consistent quality assurance and improvement systems are embedded throughout the College.
- Understand curriculum performance and use relevant data to support continuous improvement.
- Maintain a strong understanding of post-16 funding methodologies, learner programmes and curriculum planning.
- Work collaboratively on curriculum and staff resource modelling, including student numbers, group sizes, staffing requirements, delivery costs and financial viability.
- Recognise the wider educational and strategic value of curriculum provision alongside its financial contribution.
- Ensure that the curriculum remains responsive to student needs, local demographics, government priorities and the College's mission.



Financial and Corporate Leadership

- Work in close executive partnership with the Deputy Principal/Chief Financial Officer, a professionally qualified CIMA accountant responsible for Compliance, Health and Safety, Finance, HR, Estates, IT, MIS and the College's wider Corporate Services.
- Maintain a strong understanding of the College's financial position, funding, budgets, forecasts, financial risks and investment priorities.
- Ensure that strategic, curriculum, financial and workforce planning are effectively integrated.
- Support the continuation of the College's established record of strong financial management, having maintained Financial Outstanding status for more than 20 years.
- Work collaboratively with the Deputy Principal/CFO to ensure effective communication, shared organisational knowledge and coordinated decision-making.
- Ensure that resources are deployed efficiently and that investment supports strategic priorities, educational quality and long-term sustainability.
- Maintain appropriate oversight of corporate functions, compliance, risk management and organisational effectiveness.

Leadership, Staff and Organisational Culture

- Lead and develop an effective, collaborative and accountable Senior Leadership Team.
- Build strong professional relationships with the Deputy Principal/CFO, Vice Principal Curriculum and other senior leaders, recognising their expertise and delegated responsibilities.
- Promote open communication, constructive challenge, collective responsibility and effective sharing of information.
- Provide clear leadership and maintain a detailed understanding of College performance and operations.
- Promote a positive, inclusive and supportive working environment in which staff feel valued and are encouraged to develop.
- Work with HR and senior colleagues on workforce planning, organisational development, staff wellbeing, retention and succession planning.
- Participate actively in significant staff recruitment and selection activities.
- Lead effective SLT meetings, ensuring that strategic and operational matters are supported by appropriate reports, data and analysis.

Student Engagement, Marketing and Admissions

- Maintain a visible, approachable and accessible presence across the College.
- Engage regularly with students and staff, promoting a positive College culture and student experience.
- Play an active role in the College's marketing, student recruitment and admissions activities.
- Develop strong relationships with partner schools and personally deliver assemblies and presentations to prospective students.
- Participate in open events, course discussion interviews and the main student enrolment process.
- Understand student recruitment, application and conversion trends and their implications for curriculum and strategic planning.
- Champion student achievement, inclusion, wellbeing and progression.

Governance, Partnerships and External Representation

- Develop a strong and constructive relationship with the Corporation and Chair of Governors, including regular meetings and effective communication.
- Ensure Governors receive accurate, timely and meaningful information to support effective governance and decision-making.
- Work collaboratively with the Governance Professional and senior colleagues to support effective governance and regulatory compliance.
- Develop productive relationships with the local authority, partner schools, universities, employers and other key organisations.
- Identify partnership opportunities which benefit the College, its students and the wider community.
- Represent the College effectively within relevant local, regional and national forums.
- Maintain an informed understanding of government priorities and sector developments, attending relevant conferences and networks and translating emerging opportunities into College strategy.

General Responsibilities

- Promote and safeguard the welfare of children and young people.
- Champion equality, diversity, inclusion and the College's mission and values.
- Ensure compliance with relevant statutory, regulatory and governance requirements.
- Promote high standards of professional conduct, integrity and accountability.
- Undertake other duties commensurate with the responsibilities of the Principal and Accounting Officer.



Person specification

Qualifications

Essential

- Degree or equivalent higher-level qualification.
- Evidence of substantial continuing professional development relevant to senior educational leadership.

Desirable

- Postgraduate or recognised leadership qualification.
- Teaching qualification or equivalent professional educational qualification.

Experience

Essential

- Substantial and successful senior leadership experience in post-16 education or a closely related educational environment.
- Experience of strategic planning, organisational leadership and managing change.
- Experience of curriculum leadership, quality improvement and improving student outcomes.
- Experience of financial planning, budget management and resource allocation.
- Experience of leading senior teams and working collaboratively with specialist professional colleagues.
- Experience of governance, accountability and developing effective external relationships.

Desirable

- Principal, Deputy Principal, Vice Principal or equivalent executive leadership experience.
- Experience within the sixth form college sector.
- Experience of curriculum modelling, workforce planning and student recruitment.

Essential Knowledge and Understanding

- Strong understanding of the post-16 education sector, government policy and funding methodologies.
- Understanding of curriculum planning, learner programmes, staffing models and curriculum financial viability.
- Understanding of quality assurance, student performance and continuous improvement.
- Strong financial literacy and understanding of strategic financial planning and sustainability.
- Understanding of the contribution of Finance, HR, Estates, IT, MIS, Compliance and other Corporate Services to organisational success.
- Understanding of governance, safeguarding, risk management and statutory responsibilities.
- Ability to interpret educational, financial, workforce and demographic data to inform strategic decisions.
- Understanding of student support, including pastoral services, SEND, Learning Support and Careers/IAG.

Essential Leadership and Personal Attributes

- A strategic thinker with strong operational awareness and sound judgement.
- An inspirational, visible and approachable leader with a genuine commitment to students and staff.
- Highly developed analytical, communication and decision-making skills.
- Ability to work effectively with an experienced Deputy Principal/CFO, Vice Principal Curriculum and other senior colleagues.
- A collaborative leadership style which values professional expertise, open communication and shared accountability.
- Ability to balance educational ambition, curriculum breadth, financial sustainability and organisational priorities.
- Commitment to staff development, wellbeing and a positive organisational culture.
- Confidence in representing and promoting the College, including direct participation in student recruitment and admissions.
- High standards of integrity, resilience, professionalism and commitment to the College's mission and values.



How to Apply

We have retained Sixth Form Associates to support us in finding an outstanding individual to inspire excellent practice across our organisation. The application process is outlined below.

1

Initial Discussion

Prior to submitting an application, interested parties should arrange an initial conversation with our Sixth Form Associates lead consultant, by emailing **Jo.Johnston@sixthformassociates.co.uk,** to discuss the role before the closing date.

2

Recorded First-Stage Teams Interview

Once you have obtained the full information, had an informal discussion with the lead consultant and it is agreed for you to proceed with an application, the lead consultant will schedule a first-stage interview via Teams with you which will take place before the closing date and will be recorded. Once this interview has been scheduled, you should submit your application.

3

Apply Online

Please visit **www.sixthformassociates.co.uk/job/sfb-prin/** and complete the registration form to access the online application form and the equality and diversity form. At Step 2: Submitting your application, click Apply now.

4

Shortlisting and Invitation to Interview

After the closing time/date, our lead consultant will send all applications and recorded first-stage discussions to the College for shortlisting. Once the shortlist has been agreed, candidates will be notified by the lead consultant and shortlisted candidates will be invited to a formal interview/selection process with the College.

5

Safer Recruitment and Due Diligence Checks

Applicants are advised that, as part of the statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education, colleges/training providers are advised to make arrangements for an online search as part of due diligence on shortlisted candidates. The searches are aimed to assist in identifying things said or done that may harm the organisation's reputation or make the candidate unsuitable to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Where a cause of concern arises from the online search, a risk assessment will determine whether the concern is of such a nature that it is appropriate to exclude a candidate from the process or whether a clarification discussion, before or during an interview, is needed.

Key Dates

Closing date for applications: 9am on Thursday 14 January 2027.

Interviews to take place on Monday 8 and Tuesday 9 February 2027.

THE SIXTH FORM BOLTON



Thank you for your interest

in joining The Sixth Form Bolton and considering us as the next step and destination in your career.

To discuss the role, contact SFA's lead consultant **Jo.Johnston@sixthformassociates.co.uk**

www.sixthformassociates.co.uk/job/sfb-prin/

FEA FE ASSOCIATES × SFA SIXTH FORM ASSOCIATES