

Recruitment Pack

Trust Peer Review - Lead Reviewer 2026



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About Challenge Partners

Challenge Partners is a national partnership of schools and trusts who believe the best way to reduce educational inequality and enhance the life chances of children is through collaboration, challenge and leadership development. We work together to ensure every school community can benefit from the combined wisdom of the education system.

Our national partnership currently reaches more than 419,000 pupils in over 488 schools and 133 trusts across the country. All fervently believe that working together is the best way to reduce educational inequality and increase the life chances of all children.

Trust leadership plays a significant role in pupil outcomes, and our practitioner-led programmes and networks offer unique continuing professional development (CPD) for leaders at all levels - from classroom teachers to CEOs.

And our approach works: pupils in our partner trusts consistently achieve higher outcomes and faster progress than national averages, despite higher levels of disadvantage. Inspection and peer review evidence shows that sustained participation in Challenge Partners drives long-term improvement.

By rapidly sharing innovative practices across the country, we ensure that the most effective support reaches the children who need it most.

You can read our 2030 strategy [here](#) and our latest impact report [here](#).

Mission and Values

Our mission is to reduce educational inequality and improve the life chances of all children. Through collaboration, challenge and professional development, we are working to ensure every school community can benefit from the combined wisdom of the education system.

We were founded by practitioners and their leadership is built into our constitution. This keeps us at the cutting edge and enables us to meet the real needs and aspirations of schools and trusts, while keeping excellent practitioners where they should be – in classrooms, schools and trusts.

The Challenge Partners' values underpin everything we do:

- **Excellence:** We are always looking for ways to improve because we are determined to achieve the best for every child, staff member, teacher and leader
- **Equity:** We treat each other fairly, with trust, care and respect. We seek the best for every child, and know that those who have the least need our combined expertise the most
- **Courageous Leadership:** We speak up and take responsibility for all children, making sure that we do not harm others in doing our best for our own schools

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- **Challenge:** We expect the best of ourselves and each other, and value challenge which helps us improve
- **Collaboration:** We listen to, share with and learn from each other, developing our practice together so that every child benefits from our combined wisdom and creativity
- **Innovation:** We use and generate research, we innovate with discipline and evaluate intelligently in pursuit of better outcomes for all children, especially the most disadvantaged

**Excellence****Equity****Collaboration****Challenge****Innovation****Courageous
Leadership**

About the Trust Peer Review

The Challenge Partners Trust Peer Review (TPR) is a professionally-led, expert-facilitated review designed to enable development and improvement in host trusts through challenge and collaboration. It evaluates how a trust ensures the pupils it serves achieve better than they might otherwise, capturing and sharing examples of effective practice across the system.

Built on the experience of over 3,500 school reviews, the TPR was independently evaluated by [NFER in 2018/19](#) and has been aligned since 2023 to the CST's Strong Trust Assurance Framework - a benchmark Challenge Partners actively helped develop. The programme follows a "done with, not to" ethos, where the review team - comprising executive leaders from the host trust and visiting peer reviewers - engages in rich professional dialogue to evaluate organisational impact and identify strategic areas for development.

Aims of a Trust Peer Review:

- **Host Trust Development:** To foster improvement through rigorous challenge and high-level collaboration.
- **System Leadership CPD:** To provide visiting reviewers with unique insights and personal reflection that benefit their own trusts.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** To identify and spread evidence-based practice on trust-led school improvement.

What makes this opportunity exceptional?

1. **Advanced System Leadership:** Join Challenge Partners' innovative programme designed to evaluate the strategic impact and sustainability of multi-academy trusts. In this role, you will influence more than just school improvement; you will evaluate how a trust's entire operating model and central services function collectively to drive outcomes across a diverse range of trusts nationwide. As a Lead Reviewer, you will play a pivotal role in shaping sector capacity, helping executive teams navigate systemic growth challenges, and spreading leading organisational practice to build a stronger, trust-led education system.
2. **Bespoke Training and Professional Development:** You will receive training in Challenge Partners' highly regarded Trust Peer Review methodology, designed to develop expert facilitation, evaluation, and leadership skills. As a new Lead Reviewer, you will receive ongoing support through training days and join a network of experienced Lead Reviewers.
3. **Real Impact:** Make a tangible difference by answering the question at the heart of every trust: *what is the organisation doing to ensure children achieve better than they might otherwise?*. By leading Trust Peer Reviews, you contribute to a system-wide catalyst for development and positive change.

Trust Peer Review Lead Reviewer

Fees for Leading Reviews: Remuneration is aligned to a scaled fee model which takes into account programme delivery and travel requirements. Further details will be discussed with applicants.

Commencement date: This role will commence at the start of the 2026/27 academic year.

Time Commitment: Able to commit to a minimum of two Trust Peer Reviews per year.

Contract: Contracts are reviewed on an annual basis

About the Role

As a Lead Reviewer on the programme, you play a pivotal role in ensuring the Trust Peer Review is both developmental and rigorous. You create the environment for high-quality professional learning, enabling trust and other leaders to share best practice and engage in constructive discussion and challenge. This ensures the process benefits both the host trust and the external review team, supporting reviewers' professional development beyond their own trust's context.

Key Responsibilities

- Attend a virtual Lead Reviewer induction session during the Autumn term 2026.
- Attend annual Trust Peer Review training sessions (next academic year: **in person on Thursday 21 January 2027**).
- Prepare thoroughly for each Trust Peer Review by:
 - Undertaking pre-reading to gain insight into the host trust.
 - Communicating clearly and proactively with visiting reviewers.
 - Leading a planning call with the host trust.

- Co-constructing the review schedule and agreeing the areas of focus with the host trust and review team.
- Establish and uphold the Challenge Partners ethos, building strong, professional relationships between the host trust and the visiting review team.
- Understanding what the host trust and peer reviewers want to get out of the Trust Peer Review and ensuring the process delivers this.
- Facilitate high-quality professional dialogue between the host trust and visiting reviewers, fostering a culture of openness, challenge and mutual respect.
- Coach and support reviewers throughout the process, promoting their professional development.
- Quality assure the work of reviewers during the review, using insights to support their ongoing development.
- Produce clear, high-quality review reports in line with Challenge Partners' style and expectations.
- Provide feedback to Challenge Partners following reviews to support the continuous improvement of the Trust Peer Review programme.

Person Specification

We are seeking experienced CEOs and senior trust leaders with a deep understanding of trusts and the complex challenges they face

Candidates will bring significant system leadership experience and the ability to support and challenge host trusts through a collaborative, developmental peer review process. They will be credible at senior level and able to quickly understand organisational context, establish areas of focus, and facilitate high-quality professional dialogue.

Essential Experience and Skills:

- A current or recent Chief Executive Officer of a trust.
 - *If currently serving, the ability to demonstrate at interview how you will effectively manage the required time commitment alongside your executive responsibilities.*
 - *For former or recent CEOs, evidence of ongoing active involvement or advisory work within the trust sector is required.*
 - *Applicants who have not previously held a CEO role must be able to demonstrate significant trust improvement and organisational leadership experience, alongside a strong understanding of people, culture, and strategy.*
- Deep and current understanding of the trust landscape, including strategic leadership, governance and operational complexity.
- Proven experience of leading trust-wide improvement at scale.
- Strong ability to rapidly understand complex organisational contexts and identify areas of focus.
- Strong ability to synthesise multiple sources of evidence to form balanced, evidence-informed outcomes.
- Demonstrable experience in coaching and developing executive leaders, facilitating their professional growth during reviews

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- Experience leading teams, managing dynamics with unfamiliar headteachers and senior leaders, and quickly gaining trust and confidence
- Outstanding written and oral communication skills, including the ability to produce clear, concise, professional reports
- Experience in facilitating meetings, synthesising diverse evidence and perspectives, and reaching robust, agreed conclusions
- Understand the professional integrity and willingness to act as an ambassador for Challenge Partners.
- Ability and willingness to commit to a minimum of two Trust Peer Reviews per year.
- Ability and willingness to travel nationally to lead Trust Peer Reviews.

Desirable

- Previous involvement with Challenge Partners, or a strong understanding of its ethos, approach and programmes.
- Previous experience of peer review, external review, inspection or equivalent quality assurance processes.
- Experience of working across multiple trusts or wider education system organisations.
- Experience of facilitating leadership development or professional learning at senior level.

Application and induction process

1. Submit your application to trusts@challengepartners.org by **9:00 am Wednesday 10th June 2026**
 - a. Please submit a cover letter (maximum two sides of A4) and a CV, along with the details of two professional referees.
 - b. Your cover letter should outline why you would like to work with Challenge Partners on this programme and how your experience aligns with the role and person specification.
2. Interviews will take place virtually on **18th June 2026**
3. An offer to begin the induction process is subject to satisfactory references and an enhanced DBS check.

Induction Process

Once an offer has been made, all new Lead Reviewers are required to complete an induction process. The purpose of this process is to provide an opportunity for both Challenge Partners and Lead Reviewers to assess whether the role is the right fit. Each of the following stages forms an essential part of the induction:

- A one-day virtual induction session with the Challenge Partners central team and an experienced Lead Reviewer, taking place during the week commencing **14 September 2026**.
- Attend in-person Lead Reviewer **Training on 24 September 2026** in Central London.
- Attend annual Trust Peer Review Training: **in person on 21st January 2027**
- Shadow a Trust Peer Review led by an experienced Lead Reviewer (**likely in Autumn 2026**)
- Be quality assured by an experienced Lead Reviewer on your first review (**likely in Spring/Summer 2027**)

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Once you have satisfactorily completed the induction process, you will be formally added to the Challenge Partners Lead Reviewer pool and eligible to lead Trust Peer Reviews

A note on AI

At Challenge Partners, we are committed to a fair and inclusive recruitment process. We don't use Artificial Intelligence (AI) for recruitment - applications are reviewed by members of the team and we use blind shortlisting to mitigate potential bias and ensure all candidates are considered on merit.

Whilst we recognise that AI can be a useful tool for tasks like proofreading, we encourage you to share genuine examples from your own experience so we can better understand your unique skills and perspective. Authenticity is important to us and we want to hear your voice throughout the application process.

Our commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

At Challenge Partners, we are committed to strengthening diversity, equity and inclusion across our partnership. As part of this commitment, we are actively seeking to diversify our pool of Lead Reviewers to better reflect the schools and communities we serve.

We welcome applications from all suitably qualified individuals, regardless of race, gender, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or age. We particularly encourage applications from underrepresented groups, including individuals from Global Majority backgrounds and those with lived experience of disadvantage, as we recognise the value that diverse perspectives bring to peer challenge, collaboration and system leadership.

Our approach to recruitment is grounded in fairness, transparency and inclusion, and we are committed to creating an environment in which all partners feel valued, supported and able to thrive.

Safeguarding

Challenge Partners is committed to safeguarding children, beneficiaries and staff and to taking reasonable steps to protect all those who come into contact with our activities from harm.

All representatives of our organisation (this includes our Trustees, staff, contractors, volunteers, and all others) are required to uphold Challenge Partners' [code of conduct](#) and [safeguarding policy](#).

All offers of employment and voluntary positions will be subject to satisfactory background checks.