



Head Chef

Location	Mercia School
Salary FTE	Grade 5 (£31,015 - £33,673 FTE)
Actual salary	£26,677 - £28,963 (with under five years' service)
Contract term	37 hours, 39 weeks, permanent
Responsible to	Head Chef
Start date	As soon as possible
Closing date	Midnight Sunday 31 May 2026

Mercia Learning Trust

Mercia Learning Trust is a successful partnership of four primary and three secondary schools located in the south-west of Sheffield. Established in 2012, with one secondary school, our trust has grown to serving over 5000 pupils, with 650 staff.

Why do we exist?

- To empower everyone in our communities, especially the most disadvantaged, to succeed.

How do we behave?

- We are kind - showing care and supporting each other.
- We have integrity - doing the right thing and always putting children first.
- We work with diligence - overcoming obstacles and having no excuses.

What do we do?

- We run schools that focus on academic excellence, cultural capital and the development of character.

How will we succeed?

- A culture of excellence – high standards shaped by clarity, not control.
- Academic focus – empowering all children through an exceptional curriculum.
- Purposeful collaboration – relationships built on trust, reducing sub-optimisation and driving collective success.

Our staff are a crucial part of our trust, just like our pupils. We are devoted to recruiting, training, retaining and taking good care of our highly skilled and dedicated team.

Mercia School

Mercia School (11-18) opened in 2018 in a brand-new building. Leaders and governors have an ambitious vision for the school and are determined that all pupils, irrespective of background will thrive and achieve well. The school has secured a strong reputation for educational excellence and during the last three years, has been the most over-subscribed school in the city.

In February 2023, Ofsted inspected the school and graded all aspects of provision, and its overall effectiveness, to be 'Outstanding'. Mercia School published exceptional GCSE results in the summer of 2023, achieving the highest Progress 8 score for disadvantaged pupils, this high-level of performance was repeated in 2024.

Mercia Collegiate Sixth Form opened in September 2023. As the school continues to grow, it is crucial that we sustain our culture and effectiveness, and this role is central to our continued success.

The role

We have an exciting opportunity for an experienced, multi-talented and highly skilled head chef to join our friendly and supportive team at Mercia School.

The head chef will support operations in all areas of the kitchen assisting with preparation and cooking to consistently present food to the highest standards.

The right candidate will have:

- a genuine passion for food
- the ability to lead, mentor and coach the kitchen team and deliver high standards in all areas
- knowledge about what it takes to be a successful head chef
- a high level of communication skills and the ability to relate positively to children and adults
- the talent to adapt to changing situations
- a keen eye for ensuring the health & safety of our pupils and staff
- strong principles that are aligned with our school & trust
- the skills ensure full compliance with food hygiene, health & safety, HACCAP & all food allergens
- the ability to develop new dishes, writing up to date menus within current healthy eating trends, ensuring consistent high standard food quality and presentation

We welcome applications from talented, ambitious individuals who can dedicate themselves to the implementation of our school's vision.

Job description

Purpose

To empower everyone in our communities, especially the most disadvantaged, to succeed.

Key responsibilities

- Lead and manage the day-to-day catering provision within the school, ensuring high standards of food quality, presentation and customer service.
- Plan, organise and oversee catering operations for all service periods and school events.
- Support the development of nutritious, seasonal and financially sustainable menus.
- Ensure catering provision supports a positive dining experience for pupils, staff and visitors.
- Deliver themed catering events and activities linked to the school curriculum and wider enrichment opportunities.
- Ensure all kitchen, dining and storage areas are maintained to the highest standards of cleanliness, hygiene and safety.
- Ensure compliance with all relevant food hygiene, health and safety, fire safety and statutory regulations.
- Ensure safe operation, maintenance and use of catering equipment.
- Maintain accurate records relating to cleaning, food safety, temperature checks and statutory compliance.
- Ensure appropriate stock management processes are in place to minimise waste and ensure effective use of resources.
- Order food, consumables and catering supplies in line with agreed budgets and trust purchasing procedures.
- Monitor stock levels, deliveries and quality of supplies, ensuring any issues are addressed promptly.
- Promote value for money and support the efficient operation of the catering service.
- Develop and maintain systems and procedures that support high standards of catering provision and service.
- Seek and respond to feedback from pupils, staff and visitors to improve the catering offer.
- Ensure catering services operate in an efficient, welcoming and professional manner at all times.
- Lead, support and develop catering staff, promoting high standards of performance and professionalism.
- Support recruitment, induction and probation processes for catering staff in line with trust procedures.
- Manage staff performance and professional development through effective supervision, training and coaching.
- Promote positive working relationships and effective teamwork within the catering team.
- Ensure catering staff are appropriately trained and operate equipment safely and correctly.
- Ensure trust policies and procedures are implemented consistently across the catering team.

General/other

- Assist in the production and service of special functions, as required.
- Attend and participate in relevant meetings and training as required.
- Contribute to the overall development of our school and Mercia Learning Trust, ensuring both operate because of shared and collective responsibility, including, contributing to trust partnership activities to drive school and trust improvement.
- All schools in Mercia Learning Trust are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Therefore, all employees are expected to share this commitment.
- Be aware of and comply with the codes of conduct, regulations and policies of the school and its commitment to equal opportunities.
- Any other delegated roles as directed by the headteacher.

This job description is current at the date as shown, but in conjunction with the post holder, may be changed by the headteacher to reflect or anticipate changes in the role which are commensurate with the grade and job title.

Person specification

Role: Head Chef

Attributes	Essential	Desirable	Assessment
Qualifications and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2/3 Food Safety and Hygiene Certificate • Relevant catering or professional cookery qualification • Food Allergen Certificate • Willing to undertake any in-service training offered which is relevant to the duties of the post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other Catering qualifications • Training in allergen management or nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application • Interview • References
Skills and knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate patience when working with and serving food to young people • Strong understanding of food hygiene, health and safety and allergen requirements • Ability to take initiative • Ability to work effectively under pressure and meet deadlines • Good communication and interpersonal skills • Ability to lead, motivate and support a team effectively • Good record-keeping and administrative skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of nutritional standards for school meals • Knowledge of catering management systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application • Interview • References
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous experience of working in a catering environment for a minimum of 4 years • Experience of leading or supervising a catering team • Experience of maintaining high standards of food hygiene and health and safety • Experience of ordering supplies and managing deliveries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of working within a school or education setting • Experience of preparing and serving high-quality meals to large groups • Experience of budget monitoring and stock control • Experience of planning menus or themed catering events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application • Interview • References
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong moral purpose and drive for improvement • Flexible • Honest and reliable • Calm under pressure • Sense of humour and perspective • Patient • Team player • High personal and professional standards • Strong attention to detail • Aligned to values of our trust and schools 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application • Interview • References

Staff testimonial videos

Please take the time to watch these staff testimonial videos.

Working for Mercia Learning Trust

Staff wellbeing at Mercia Learning Trust

Chris Willmot, Head Chef

How to apply

All candidates must complete the following application process:

- Submit an application form [here](#).
- We do not accept CVs or council forms.

After your application has been submitted:

- In all cases written references will be taken up and made available to interviewers before the final selection stage.
- An email and/or letter will be sent to shortlisted candidates with details of the interview process.
- If you have not heard from us within two weeks of the closing date, please assume that on this occasion, your application has been unsuccessful.

Further information

- Visit [here](#) for more on what it's like working for our trust, what we offer you, and what we're looking for.
- Should you require any additional information about the role or the school or would like an informal discussion or out of hours visit, please contact us on 0114 553 9080 or gdarlow@mercia.school.
- For more information about the application process, please email recruitment@merciatrust.co.uk.

The closing date for applications is **midnight Sunday 31 May 2026**.

The small print

Mercia Learning Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare and safety of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. If you are shortlisted, your suitability to work with children will be explored, and this will include disclosing convictions. The information you disclose may be discussed with you during the interview.

The successful candidate will therefore be required to complete a DBS check in line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 and the Police Act Regulations.

In accordance with DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, an online search will be completed on all shortlisted applicants prior to interview. Any relevant information will be discussed further with the applicant during the recruitment process.

We are an equal opportunities employer. Our staff are recruited and promoted on the basis of their merits and abilities and no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of racial group, origin or nationality, sex, disability, marital status, age, sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs or trade union activity. Please indicate whether there are any reasonable adjustments or access requirements you would need to help you to attend an interview. If you wish to discuss your requirements prior to submitting your form, please contact our recruitment team on 0114 349 4230.