The Difference

Head of the Inclusive Leadership Course

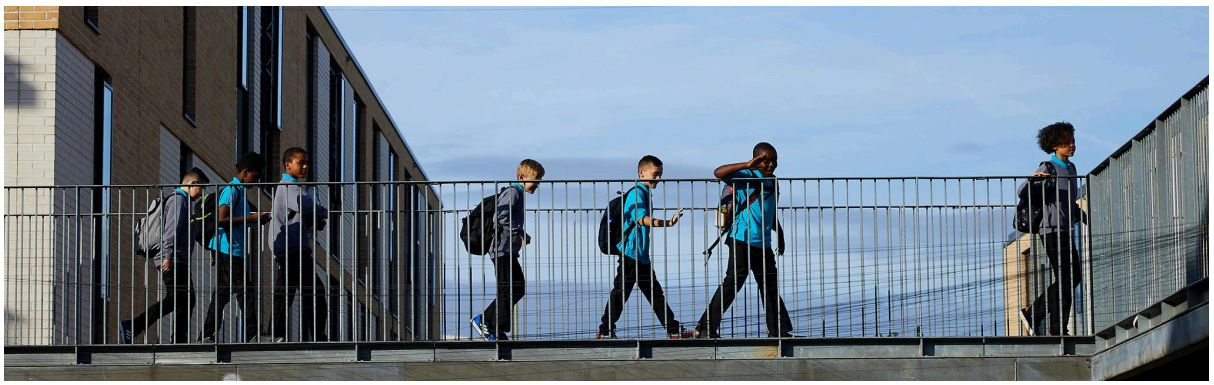
Reports to: Deputy CEO & Co-Founder of The Difference, Shaun Brown
Start date: September 2026 or sooner if possible
Location: 50% office presence in London (Bethnal Green) and travel nationally for delivery
Contract: Permanent
Salary: £60,000 - £70,000 depending on experience (+6% employer pension contribution and sector-leading parental leave policy shared with all applicants)
Closing date for applications: 9.00am on 20th April 2026
First round interviews will be held: week commencing 27th April 2026
Second round interviews will be held: week commencing 11th May 2026

Our Organisation: The Difference

Every day, the equivalent of 5,500 children are suspended from England's schools. Their likelihood of being NEET (not in education, employment or training) by 24 will then double. Lost learning like this is happening to those children facing the most crisis in their lives: children facing mental health challenges, living in poverty, with threats to their safety, neurodiverse or already falling behind in learning, facing discrimination inside and outside the school gates. These are the children who need school the most. Today, they're getting the least.

The Difference is a young education charity, founded to change this story on lost learning through whole school inclusion. Six years later, The Difference has shifted national inclusion through its three levers:

- **People -** Each year, The Difference trains 200+ headteachers, deputy and assistant headteachers through our two programmes, aiming to increase the will and skill of leaders to reduce lost learning.
- **Practice** - The Difference carries out our own research, and shares the latest research and practice through our IncludED conference (the biggest inclusion conference nationally), symposia and professional development sessions with Multi-Academy Trusts and Local Authorities.
- **Policy -** Our lean policy team turns frontline insights into policy recommendations. We lobby Ofsted and the Department for Education to improve funding and support for inclusion, and reduce perverse incentives.



The Difference's Vision is to see lost learning falling nationally by 2030.

It feels schools are at a national tipping point. With changes ahead from the White Paper and already underway in a new Ofsted framework's early implementation, this could be the moment that England's schools are supported to become more inclusive. But the path ahead is challenging:

- Inclusion leadership can be lonely and school leaders don't always have readily available frameworks and models of how to set strategy, measure inclusion and support their staff in the school change involved in improving inclusion.
- The white paper demands practice change but there is still little research and agreement on what good looks like.
- Ofsted isn't always celebrating the most inclusive work of schools, in their own contexts; and policymakers don't always hear inclusion leaders' voices.

The Difference is looking for a new Head of the Inclusive Leadership Course, working directly with our Deputy CEO, to drive our biggest programme to reach, connect and upskill school leaders; and to derive learning from the country's schools - The Inclusive Leadership Course.

The Difference Values

- **Relationships underpin success** - Strong relationships and the safety they bring are the foundation of achievement - for children, for school staff, in our workplace and in our collaborations. They enable higher trust, challenging feedback, bolder work and stronger impact.
- **We build stronger from assets** - Every child, family, school and community has strengths and successes. We avoid deficit-labels about teachers, children and families, and instead focus on building from what's strong.
- **Systems shape opportunities** - Actions always take place within systems. These can help or hinder individuals. We recognise the role of policy and structural inequalities and address them directly in our work.
- **Agency makes the difference** - Bold leadership by individuals can create significant and lasting change. We are proactive in addressing problems and seeking out opportunities.

The Opportunity:
Head of The Inclusive Leadership Course

The Inclusive Leadership Course is a 1 year, 6 day course for headteachers, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers. It balances developing personal practice expertise with strategic inclusion leadership to deliver direct impacts on student outcomes.

The Inclusive Leadership Course has been at the forefront of professional development for school leaders since 2019.

- **National Reach**: Since 2019 we have seen over 1000 school leaders from across England complete the Inclusive Leadership Course. We build a strong sense of camaraderie within cohorts, often building deeper relationships within geographies but also cross-national in a way which builds non-competitive and supportive peer groups.
- **New Learning:** 94% of those on the Inclusive Leadership Course report that their knowledge of inclusion shifts through the course, which includes practical delivery tasks.
- **Pupil Impact:** In the last 5 years, 64% of schools on the Inclusive Leadership Course subsequently saw suspensions data buck national trends.
- **Shaping the Policy Landscape:** The Inclusive Leadership Course has been the test bed for our foundational *Whole-School Approach to Inclusion*. The principles, frameworks and tools which underpin our work are now evident in the Schools White Paper; with case studies of alumni work highlighted by the Secretary of State and visited by policymakers. We are excited to build on this opportunity in the crucial years ahead.

Key Responsibilities

Leading the Inclusive Leadership Course

As the Head of the Inclusive Leadership Course you will work closely with the Deputy CEO to build cohorts of Inclusive Leaders, who are actively engaged across the year of the programme, delivering measurable outcomes for their students.

Your work will include:

- Planning, delivering and quality assuring the learning journey of our Inclusive Leaders
- Continuous development and design of course content for differentiation and impact
- Capturing implementation of course learning and its impact in leaders' schools
- Building and sustaining relationships with school leaders
- Engaging with MAT and LA leaders to scale understanding of our work
- Engaging with the DfE and Ofsted to shape White Paper implementation
- Supporting the wider Programme Team to develop and deliver relevant and impactful professional development

Design

- **Lead design of the Inclusive Leadership Course** to ensure leaders' full engagement across the year of the programme. Design should lead to improvement and capture of Whole School Inclusion practice and reduced Lost Learning in schools. The course should offer a learning journey which includes practice-sharing, problem solving and turning course content into practical in-school implementation.
- **Co-develop content for The Difference programmes**, working to the Deputy CEO, built upon The Difference pedagogy of Whole-School Inclusion, ensuring coherence between programmes that The Difference runs.
- **Stay informed and maintain sector-leading knowledge** of promising practice and concepts to ensure the Inclusive Leadership Course remains a sector-leading and groundbreaking Continuing Professional Development offer. Pilot new programmatic content before wider roll out in our programme
- **Collaborate with the Head of the Difference Schools Partnership and Head of Community to ensure a seamless learning experience** across all Difference programmes.

Delivery

- **Lead facilitation on 4 Inclusive Leadership Course core cohorts located in key regions across the country,** offering co-delivery support where needed.
- **Build 'cohort' buy-in and belonging** to ensure course content is accessible, relevant and engaging for participants at different stages of their leaderships and inclusion journey.
- **Manage the cohort experience** with clear and relational communication to maintain high levels of engagement and satisfaction
- **Lead a rigorous Quality Assurance process** to ensure high standards of delivery, and consistency of leader experience and satisfaction across all cohorts of the Inclusive Leadership Course
- **Embed a culture of reflective practice and ongoing development** within the programme delivery team, to create a culture of continuous improvement

Impact

- **Lead the design and execution of evidence capture** on the Inclusive Leadership Course to ensure that data collection is strategically planned designed, and consistently captured
- **Communicate the importance of data collection and evidence capture** to ensure expectations understood and met by course participants from the start
- **Collaborate with the Head of Impact** to ensure that mechanisms, structures and schedule of impact capture provides timely and valuable evidence for The Difference Impact Strategy
- **Lead on identification of exemplary case studies and marketing material** that show impact of the Inclusive Leadership Course for school leaders
- **Working with the Deputy CEO, develop and design of our digital platform** to improve user experience and efficiency of impact capture

Partnership

- **Support ongoing ILC alumni engagement with The Difference**, through effective comms and sustained connection to our work
- **Develop and manage relationships with sector experts, MAT leaders, and local authorities** to grow partnerships which support programme expansion.
- **Support wider partnership activity** through speaking engagements, conference opportunities and writing for social media and press.
- **Work closely with the Director of Business and Partnerships to refine strategic engagement with key stakeholders**, and ensure external contributions to the Inclusive Leadership Course are valuable from external orgs and add meaningful impact to the core offer

Other

- **Any other reasonable requested as directed** by the Director of Programmes, Deputy CEO or CEO

Person Specification

We know that some people, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, may hesitate to apply unless they meet every listed requirement. If this role excites you and you believe you could make a strong contribution, we warmly encourage you to apply.

Essential

We are looking for the following skills, aptitude and experience though you may be stronger in some areas than others:

- **Values** – Your experience evidences shared values with The Difference (see above) and a personal commitment to our mission to improve life outcomes for vulnerable people.
- **Leadership of others** – Experience of senior leadership in schools. Evidenced ability to build teams with strong identities to deliver against ambitious targets. Experience quality assuring the work of autonomous and creative staff in a way which is empowering but also delivers consistent outcomes.
- **Leadership of self** - A commitment to personal and professional growth and development including proactively diagnosing your own blind spots or continuous improvement points; making use of others' expertise to continually grow the skills of yourself and your team to make a success of tasks at hand and those on the horizon.
- **Strategic nouse** - Proven ability to juggle competing priorities to achieve the most strategically important outcomes, using delegation, delaying or decision-making to re-balance your own work and priorities. A track record of spotting and mitigating risks, including through empowering a team to triage and escalate risks within their own areas of delivery. And experience identifying and exploiting opportunities.
- **Partnerships credibility** – Proven ability to hold significant relationships for The Difference's sales and sector-influencing including with MAT CEOs, Directors of Children's Services and the Department for Education.
- **Programme credibility** – Track record in leading inclusive work in schools which gives credibility to your leadership and stakeholder relationships with our school partners. Experience of designing, developing and delivering professional development which has led to improved outcomes for students

Desired

You are likely to be more successful in this role if you have any one of the following additional experiences:

- **Insight** through work or life into school experiences of over-excluded young people, including young people with experience of the care system, of mental ill health, of special educational needs, of racism.
- **Product design experience** – You may have experience building business cases for new products or services to go to market and working with experts to develop these products towards the needs of customers, ideally in the school sector.
- **Early-stage social enterprise experience –** You may have specific experience growing charities or businesses for social good and at the early/start up phase.

Recommended Reading

If you'd like to understand more about The Difference and what we are trying to achieve, we would recommend the following:

- **Our research on the scale of the problem** Who is Losing Learning? (Sept 2024) and our recommendations, Finding Solutions to the School Engagement Crisis (March 2025)
- Our **2025-2030 Strategy** to reach our goal of lost learning, falling nationally
- 🎧The Spark - Kiran Gill and Excluded Pupils (2020) - **our founder Kiran Gilll explores the genesis and mission of The Difference** in conversation with Helen Lewis, BBC Radio 4
- Our recent **research on Internal Alternative Provision**
- **Our latest Impact Report**, sharing our work in 2023

How To Apply

Please click this link to access the application form.

Applications close at 9.00am on Monday 20th April.

For an informal and confidential discussion about the role prior to application, please contact Rebecca Onumah (rebecca.o@the-difference.com), with a brief summary of your experience and questions that you have.

We are committed to building a diverse team and strongly encourage applications from under-represented groups in the charity sector such as people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities and people with experience in the care system.

As part of our commitment to fairer recruitment, all applications will be assessed with names and any protected characteristics redacted, where possible.

Come join the team!