Cognus
No Limits on Learning

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Head of Inclusion

Full Time: 37 hours per week - permanent
Salary: Cognus Band 5, SP73 to SP86 from £64,032.21 to £77,312.60 per annum
Location: Cognus Office, London Borough of Sutton and hybrid working

Cognus Limited is a Local Authority Traded Company, which is commissioned by the London Borough of Sutton to provide education services to early years providers, mainstream schools and specialist education settings in Sutton. Wholly owned by the local authority, we deliver a wide range of high-quality services to deliver excellent practice that improve the lives of children, young people, and families in Sutton and beyond.

Cognus Limited is seeking to appoint an experienced and innovative Head of Inclusion to join the Strategic Leadership Team and to contribute to the day-to-day operational leadership of the company and management across a range of services. Reporting to the Managing Director, this role oversees and is responsible for multiple service areas, providing statutory functions that support access to learning and inclusion, and that provide information, advice, and guidance as well as support through direct delivery and partnership development.

Statutory functions within the Head of Inclusion portfolio currently include:

- School Attendance and Child Employment
- Exclusion and exclusion prevention
- Education Other than at School (EOTAS),
- Elective Home Education (EHE),
- Children Missing Education (CME)
- Sutton Information, Advice and Support Service (SIASS)

The post holder will also be responsible for the delivery and oversight of designated non-statutory services within the scope of the role.

Specific statutory and non-statutory functions may be amended, added or removed from time to time to reflect changing service requirements and business needs.

As a member of the Strategic Leadership Team, the post holder will provide exceptional motivational leadership across the organisation and will have responsibility for securing, managing, and influencing senior-level partnerships within the public, private and voluntary sectors. The post holder will have powerful communication and influencing skills, strong contract management experience and have proven analytical expertise. Proven ability to support income generation through identification of opportunities, bidding for contracts and increasing traded sales to customers. They are also responsible for managing related contracts and third-party partners, with support from the Cognus Managing Director and Operations Director.

The Head of Inclusion will be responsible for contributing to the formulation and implementation of Cognus' strategic direction, driving business growth, business planning, prioritising workloads and driving continuous improvement. They ensure the organisation is well-placed to deliver relevant and responsive education services. They will have experience in leading organisations through significant change and be able to demonstrate effective delivery of services and a high level of customer satisfaction.

They support the Managing Director and Operations Director in the creation and agreement of the Cognus Business Plans and budgets in line with the company's vision and strategy and will be responsible for a

delegated budget for their area of responsibility. Heads of Service support the review and implementation of company policy and ensure all policies are understood and implemented within their service area.

They carry delegated responsibility from the Managing Director and Operations Director for the delivery of the Cognus Business Plan relating to the services they are responsible for. This includes quality, safeguarding, customer satisfaction and all aspects of people management including recruitment, performance management and professional development.

Cognus Limited is at a very exciting moment in its evolution and growth, and is now looking for a professional and experienced individual who is passionate about equality of opportunity for all children and young people in education and society; an individual who enjoys a varied workload, is self-motivated and reflective, with strong written and presentation skills, a good understanding of duties in relation to the job description and is committed to delivering with excellence and pride.

You will give us great commitment and in return we offer an excellent package including:

i) Starting salary from £64,032.21 to £77,312.60 per annum (Cognus Band 5, SP73 to SP86)
ii) Workplace pension scheme 4% to 8% matched contributions
iii) 28 days annual leave pro rata (plus Bank Holidays)
iv) Regular manager support and supervision
iv) Hybrid and flexible working
v) Staff benefits package; currently including Employee Assistance Programme, life insurance, employee benefits platform and (upon completion of probation) health care *[Cognus reserves the right to adjust these additional discretionary benefits to improve quality of their services provided, maintain affordability for the Company and to ensure benefits remain fit for purpose with staff needs.]*
vi) Staff EDI group
vii) Cognus Coaching Programmes
viii) An ambitious culture with friendly and supportive colleagues

Read more - Why work for us? Cognus Recruitment Information

If you are interested and would like to be considered for this role, please apply to recruitment@cognus.org.uk with the completed application form, which can be downloaded from our website,, outlining your suitability. The deadline for receipt is **Midnight** and **Sunday 6th December 2026.** Candidates are requested to be available for interview **Wednesday 16th December 2026.**

For an informal conversation about the role, please contact Helen Gasparelli, Operations Director, at helen.gasparelli@cognus.org.uk.

All offers of employment are subject to successful completion of recruitment formalities which includes an enhanced DBS check. These checks must have been completed before the commencement of employment. We expect our staff to have due regard for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and to follow the child protection procedures adopted by the Company and Sutton's Local Safeguarding Partnership.

We are an equal opportunity employer and value diversity at our company. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, colour, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability status.

JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION:	**Head of Inclusion**
REPORTS TO:	**Managing Director**
GRADE/PAY:	**£64,032.21 to £77,312.60 per annum (Cognus Band 5, SP73 to 86)**
LOCATION:	**Cognus Office, First Floor, Cantium House, Wallington, SM6 0DZ**

JOB SUMMARY

We are seeking an experienced and dynamic Head of Inclusion to join our Strategic Leadership Team and play a key role in shaping the future of our inclusion strategy. This individual will also be a vital member of the Emergency Response team under the company's Business Continuity Plan. As Head of Inclusion, you will oversee the day-to-day operational delivery of the Inclusion teams, ensuring that all children and young people are fully engaged in learning, regardless of their needs. Your leadership will ensure the removal of barriers to education, empowering children and young people to achieve their full potential.

In addition to this, the Head of Inclusion will carry delegated responsibility from the Managing Director for key aspects of the company's Business Plan, including service delivery, quality assurance, safeguarding, customer satisfaction, business development, and delivery team management. You will also play a pivotal role in staff development, including appraisals and Continuous Professional Development (CPD), to ensure the team's growth and success.

PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES for Head of Inclusion:

- To have due regard for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and to follow the child protection procedures adopted by Cognus Limited, the School and Sutton Council's Safeguarding Children's Board.
- To lead multiple Inclusion services which Cognus Limited deliver that meet statutory duties. Ensuring the local area achieves its strategic aims for children, young people and families with additional education needs by improving outcomes for all children and young people within mainstream education and to be accountable for the service (including line management and leadership of delegated team and functions.
- Accountability for team budgets, delivering within commissioned contract and meeting expected trading targets for services and CPD and managing customer satisfaction and resolution of any complaints.
- The post holder will support the Company's corporate approach to revenue generation, driving the future growth of the business using structured business development and sales techniques. Specifically, to identify funding sources, contribute to bidding and proposal generation and support the implementation of projects as appropriate.
- The post holder will be a role model of the professional behaviours outlined in the company Code of Conduct documents.
- The post holder will take direct responsibility for shaping and developing Sutton's Inclusion Offer, ensuring that the local area partnership is working together to deliver against strategic plans and priorities that meet local needs. Taking a proactive approach with local providers, the Head of Inclusion will play a vital role in shaping how children and young people in Sutton receive appropriate education in a mainstream environment wherever possible.
- The Head of Inclusion takes direct responsibility for ensuring that the Sutton area has clear processes and systems (co-produced with education settings, parents & carers, appropriate Cognus and London Borough of Sutton teams) for delivering statutory responsibilities.
- This role will support the Managing Director and Operations Director in setting the company vision and strategy, and the creation and agreement of the Annual Business Plan.
- The post holder may be required to undertake such other duties as may reasonably be assigned from time to time, consistent with the responsibilities and grading of the post.

Specific statutory and non-statutory functions may be amended, added or removed from time to time to reflect changing service requirements and business needs.

Competencies

a) **Leadership and Team Management**: Exceptional leadership skills to inspire and motivate high-performing teams, ensuring the successful delivery of services for children, young people, parents, carers, and settings. Experience in leading teams through significant cultural and operational change while maintaining performance, morale, and efficiency. Ability to develop, motivate, and set performance objectives to foster a culture of high-quality organizational performance.

b) **Communication and Stakeholder Engagement**: Strong communication and influencing skills to ensure alignment across functions, driving collaboration and breaking down silos. Ability to manage senior-level partnerships within the public, private, and voluntary sectors. Skilled in providing key information to stakeholders, including the Cognus Board, commissioners, and funders, to monitor and deliver objectives effectively.

c) **Strategic and Operational Leadership**: Experience in leading the strategic development and operational delivery of services to meet agreed quality, cost, and outcome targets. Ability to manage discrete projects to ensure they are delivered on time, within budget, and to agreed standards.

d) **Financial Management and Budget Oversight**: Proven experience managing substantial budgets (c. £1.6 million), ensuring that spending aligns with strategic priorities and demonstrates value for money. Monitoring expenditure, providing financial reports, and supporting informed decision-making across the leadership team and Board.

e) **Business Development and Growth**: Support the company's business growth plan, including bidding for contracts, prospect management, and increasing traded sales. Identify and implement opportunities for service improvement, including changes to business processes to ensure cost-effectiveness and high-quality outcomes.

f) **Safeguarding and Compliance**: Act as Safeguarding Lead for the service and ensure compliance with company policies, including Health and Safety, Safeguarding, and Equality. Champion Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), ensuring equity of opportunity for all and promoting positive change.

g) **Continuous Improvement and Professional Development**: Ensure the ongoing professional development of self and others, including setting professional objectives, conducting appraisals, and fostering a learning culture. Apply best practices to operational plans and service delivery, continuously improving processes and performance.

h) **Data and Reporting**: Oversee the use of Cognus systems to support reporting requirements, providing analysis and commentary for the leadership team and Board.

Staff Management

- Direct line management of c7 FTE members of staff.
- Influence and support the work of a diverse range of stakeholders involved in supporting vulnerable children. (e.g. Head-teachers, Governors, health providers, community groups/third sector and families).

Budgetary Accountabilities:

- Monitor and be accountable for expenditure on allocated budgets, providing regular reporting and oversight to ensure effective use of resources.

GENERIC OBJECTIVES:

Contribute to Cognus Limited's business objectives at the appropriate level by ensuring every child matters and has access to education and learning opportunities, including:

a) Health and safety
b) Safeguarding and protection of children
c) Equal opportunities and management of diversity
d) Data protection
e) Outstanding customer care

GENERAL:

SAFER RECRUITMENT:

Cognus is committed to safeguarding and protecting the children and young people that it works with. An offer of employment is subject to safer recruitment practices which include an enhanced DBS check, two professional references acceptable to Cognus Limited, proof of qualifications, proof of right to work in the UK, proof of personal address and employment history covering 5 years and, fitness to work with children (occupational health assessment). These checks must have been completed prior to commencement of employment. We have a range of policies and procedures in place which promote safeguarding and safer working practices across the organisation.

PROCESSING OF DATA:

a) You ("the employee") consent to the holding and processing of personal data provided by you to the Company ("the Company") for all purposes relating to your employment, but not limited to administering and maintaining personnel records, paying and reviewing salary and other remuneration and benefits, undertaking performance appraisals and reviews, the compulsory Disclosure and Baring Services check (DBS) details in line with its statutory responsibility to safeguard and protect children and vulnerable service users; maintaining sickness and other absence records and taking decisions as to your fitness for work.
b) You hereby acknowledge and agree that the Company may, in the course of its general and statutory duties as an employer be required to disclose personal data relating to you for legislative purposes during or after the end of your employment. This does not affect your statutory rights under the General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT:

a) During the course of your employment, you will have access to and knowledge of Company confidential information and trade secrets.
b) Disclosure of any of this confidential information and/or trade secrets could have serious financial consequences and/or create serious competitive disadvantages for the Company. There may be material damage, financial or otherwise, deliberate or otherwise, to the Company's legitimate business interest.
c) Under the terms of this confidentiality agreement, you agree to keep secret and shall not at any time, either during employment or post-employment, use, communicate or reveal to any person any trade secret or confidential information relating to the Company or any Associated Company.
d) You are aware of the Company's policies in relation to compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation and undertake to act in accordance with these at all times. Any breach of these policies will be dealt with under the Company's disciplinary procedure and action taken can include dismissal without notice.

This job description and person specification outlines the summary of key accountabilities and is not an exhaustive list of duties and, is subject to periodical review and changes in line with the business needs.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The main duties and responsibilities of the post holder are indicated below although other duties of an appropriate level and nature will also be required.

No	Description	Criteria
a.	Substantial experience in the field of Education or leading services for children, young people and families.	E, S, I
b.	Significant experience in a leadership role with a proven track record of developing and motivating diverse teams and organisations, delivering quality services with discernible impact	E, S, I
c.	Excellent analytical skills with the ability to interpret complex data to spot trends and drive effective decision-making	E, S, I
d.	Experience in implementing and/or operating within a quality framework to ensure operational delivery is continuously improved.	E, S, I
e.	Excellent communication skills, verbal and written, including making presentations to large audiences.	E, S, T
f.	Ability to think strategically, prioritising wider company aims to achieve collective goals, whilst effectively communicating the vision and gaining buy-in from teams and partners.	E, S, I
g.	Experience in leading projects from conception through to implementation	E, S, I
h.	Able to manage multiple devolved budgets and resources to support the delivery of services and achievement of intended outcomes whilst demonstrating the best use of resources and value for money	E, S, I
i.	High standard of professional behaviour, interpersonal skills and people management skills	E, S, I
j.	Possess a highly visible democratic leadership style that is underpinned by strongly held values around equality, diversity, and openness and is committed to the safeguarding and protection of children and understands and engages with all relevant internal and external policies and practices to achieve this aim.	E, S, I

Key:		**D**	**Desirable**	**I**	**Evaluated at interview**
E	**Essential**	**S**	**Short listing criteria**	**T**	**Subject to test**