Head of Education

Council Offices, School Place

ORK09659

Key information:

Hours: 35 hours per week

Salary: £96,823 per annum

Application deadline: 10/09/2025

Interview: 01/10/2025

Contact:

James Wylie, Director (Education, Communities and Housing)

james.wylie@orkney.gov.uk

For application support contact **hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk** or call **01856 873535 ext.2250**

Our Vision

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the post of Head of Education at Orkney Islands Council.

This is a pivotal time to join our organisation as we continue to invest in our leadership team and drive forward our ambitions for excellence in education. The Head of Education is a critical senior role within our Extended Corporate Leadership Team, responsible for shaping the future of lifelong learning across our islands.

We are proud of our strong educational foundations, our inclusive ethos, and our commitment to delivering high-quality learning experiences for all. This role offers the opportunity to lead and inspire a dedicated team of professionals, working collaboratively to ensure that every child and young person in Orkney has the opportunity to thrive.

As a Council, we are committed to continuous improvement and innovation. We have some of the finest facilities in Scotland, and our vibrant, forward-thinking community is regularly voted one of the best places to live in the UK. Our quality of life is second to none, and our staff share a deep sense of community responsibility.

We are looking for an exceptional leader - someone who brings strategic vision, knowledge, empathy, and a passion for education. You will be a strong communicator, a collaborative partner, and a champion for children and young people. If you are ready to take on a rewarding challenge and share our vision for educational excellence, we would be delighted to receive your application.

Warm regards,

Oliver Reid

Chief Executive

Orkney Islands Council

Why Orkney?

Community and Culture

Orkney consistently tops national surveys for quality of life, happiness and community spirit. With the lowest unemployment rate in the country and a rising population, these aren't just beautiful islands - they're a thriving, forward-thinking community where your work has genuine impact.

In our close-knit population of just over 22,000 people, you'll quickly feel part of something special. Neighbours become friends, everyone pulls together to make communities thrive, and you'll see the direct results of your work whilst being part of a place where everyone feels genuine responsibility for their community.

Step outside your office to discover breath-taking beaches, rolling countryside and some of the world's most important archaeological sites. From our world-renowned St Magnus Cathedral and Neolithic sites to vibrant local arts, music and festivals, Orkney punches well above its weight culturally. The local creative scene is thriving, with renowned jewellery, knitwear and food producers.

With hundreds of miles of coastline, you're never more than a few miles from the sea. Whether you enjoy walking, cycling, kayaking, fishing, diving or simply exploring, extraordinary experiences are on your doorstep. Orkney has one of the lowest crime rates in Scotland - children play safely, communities look out for each other, and you can truly relax and unwind.

Island Life

Despite our island location, we're surprisingly well-connected. Our inter-island ferry and flight services connect communities daily, with Kirkwall Airport offering regular flights to Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and beyond. Many people walk or cycle to work - the islands' gentle landscape and quiet roads make this a pleasure rather than a chore, whilst high-speed broadband and 4G coverage across most of Orkney mean you stay connected for work and leisure.

The Gulf Stream keeps our climate surprisingly mild. While it can be windy, we rarely experience harsh winters you might expect this far north. Short, dark winter days give way to glorious summer evenings where you can read outside at 11pm.

Living here means adventure is always within reach providing exciting opportunities out with work. Whether it's coastal walks after work, exploring 5,000-year-old Neolithic sites at weekends, sports culture, or simply enjoying the peace of wide-open spaces, Orkney provides the perfect backdrop for both professional growth and personal fulfilment.

The Role

As a Head of Service, you will be a key member of our Extended Corporate Leadership Team, sharing responsibility and accountability for the Council's successes and challenges. You will provide the critical link between operational service delivery and strategic planning, connecting day-to-day requirements with organisational strategy at Corporate Management Team level.

You will create and maintain a culture of openness and trust where people work in line with our values. This includes recognising staff achievements, promoting innovation, and encouraging people to challenge how we work. Reporting to a Director, you will act as strategic lead for key services and core outcomes, ensuring all activities focus on agreed council objectives while providing expert advice across the organisation.

Working closely with the Corporate Management Team and wider Chief Officer Group, you will develop and implement integrated change and transformation programmes across Council services. You will drive cultural, behavioural and organisational change aligned to our values, encouraging new ways of thinking and working with the Council and partner organisations to deliver better outcomes for Orkney's communities and service users.

You will need a comprehensive understanding of partnership working arrangements and must seek opportunities to integrate digital solutions for current and future service needs. You will challenge existing practices and lead initiatives for more efficient resource use through effective leadership that contributes to continuous improvement.

You will provide high-quality, responsive professional support to the Corporate Management Team and wider chief officers, helping implement corporate priorities and statutory responsibilities. This includes working collaboratively across the organisation to deliver strategic outcomes, effective partnerships and an effective response to operational demands.

Your Responsibilities

As a member of the Extended Corporate Leadership Team, you will ensure effective service delivery aligned with the Council's priorities and vision, acting as the principal adviser for education services. You will provide strategic leadership, management and development of Child Protection, Safeguarding and Health and Wellbeing, Early Learning and Childcare, Primary Education, Secondary Education, Tertiary Education, Support for Learning and Inclusion Services, Educational Psychology Service, Education Quality Improvement and Development, the Getting it Right strategy, planning and implementation, attainment and achievement, monitoring and improvement, high quality learning and teaching, Curriculum Development, Staff Professional Development, supported study, pupil, parent and school support.

You will provide strategic management and corporate leadership whilst promoting change and innovation that places learner and family needs at the centre of decision making. You will demonstrate resilience and integrity, leading through challenging circumstances and taking initiative to achieve effective educational outcomes.

You will develop new ways of working to support continuous improvement across education services and maintain the Council's core values, ensuring they are effectively communicated to staff. You will actively support and implement Council and education objectives, taking accountability for their delivery in accordance with Best Value principles whilst ensuring compliance with education legislation, inspection requirements and accreditation standards.

Working cooperatively with nurseries, schools, UHI Orkney, education partners and external organisations, you will meet Council objectives whilst actively promoting equality of opportunity for learners, families and staff. You will proactively manage health and safety within education settings, ensuring effective safeguarding and risk management systems are in place.

You will value others by delegating responsibility and demonstrating trust within agreed boundaries, creating a culture where educational innovation and managed risk-taking are encouraged alongside sustained performance. You must ensure the Council fulfils its Corporate Parenting duties and use education resources appropriately to achieve Best Value, balancing cost, quality and educational outcomes.

When required, you will act as Lead Professional Adviser on education matters to the Council, and provide specialist educational advice and guidance to the Corporate Leadership Team. You will also undertake any other reasonable duties as directed by the Council, Chief Executive or Director.

You will manage a service team of four Service Managers (QIM) with defined remits of: Early Learning and Childcare; Primary Education; Secondary and Tertiary Education; and Additional Support Needs and Inclusion. Together with the four Service Managers you are responsible for six stand alone nurseries, fifteen integrated nurseries, eighteen primary schools, three junior high schools, two senior secondary schools and UHI Orkney. All units are spread across eleven separate islands. In addition, there is one Quality Improvement Officer focusing on attainment and achievement.

Additional Responsibilities

Communication

You will engage with a wide range of stakeholders including members of the public, service users, external agencies, elected members, senior management, Scottish Government Inspectorates, CoSLA and other statutory bodies.

Employee Management

You are responsible for effective direction and management of all employees within your area of operational responsibility. This includes ensuring employees are consulted, engaged and kept well informed about Council and service objectives and priorities. You will enable employees to contribute their ideas and views in pursuit of Council objectives, apply fair recruitment processes to deliver high quality skilled employees, and manage the effective implementation of the Authority's HR policies, procedures and practice. You will actively contribute to creating a flexible, agile and learning organisation.

Financial Management

You will ensure the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are adhered to and have overall responsibility for budgets within your remit. You hold budget responsibility and are accountable for effective management of service budgets within the scope of the role, balancing budgets at year end. You will participate in the budget setting process, monitor agreed budgets ensuring value for money is achieved, and ensure spending is allocated in accordance with agreed priorities whilst ensuring budgets are not overspent and expenditure is justifiable.

Working Environment

You will be predominantly office-based but required to travel to other locations as needed.

Information Systems

You will use a range of computer packages including Microsoft Office, email and related software, SEEMIS and be responsible for considering current and future information systems requirements within the context of the services you manage.

Our Requirements

Essential

- At least 7 years strategic management experience in a complex organisation
- Experience of leading and delivering transformational change with proven successful outcomes
- Ability to demonstrate a track record of achievement
- Experience of working at a senior level in a political environment
- Experience of building effective partnership working with trades unions, internal and external parties
- Senior level experience of Inspection and Audit processes
- Significant and relevant experience in strategic and operational budget management
- SVQ4, HND, general degree or equivalent SCQF level 8/9 qualification
- Registered with GTC Scotland as a Teacher
- Ability to evidence a commitment to Continuing Professional Development
- Ability to travel efficiently and effectively between various work locations both within and outwith Orkney
- Significant experience of leading quality assurance and quality improvement programmes

Desirable

- Programme/Project Management experience
- Experience of communicating constructively and successfully with the media
- Experience of working successfully in a multi-disciplinary environment with proven successful outcomes
- Experience of working in a senior public service management position
- Senior management development and training
- Recognised Management qualification
- Demonstrable commitment to ongoing CPD

AYRE HOTEL

About Us

Orkney Islands Council is Scotland's smallest local authority. We're proud to be more than just a traditional council - we're the harbour authority, we run marine and transportation services including six island airfields, and we manage UHI Orkney in collaboration with UHI.

What Makes Us Different

Our island location means we deliver services that mainland councils never touch. From emergency services at our airfields to inter-island ferries, we keep our communities connected and thriving.

We're delivering ambitious projects including community windfarms, major offshore wind infrastructure at Scapa Flow, cruise industry growth, a significant house build programme and the Islands Growth Deal. We think big and act boldly.

Our Council comprises 21 locally elected members representing six ward areas, and with 19 Independent Councillors and 2 from the Scottish Green Party, we focus on pragmatic solutions rather than party politics.

Our People and Culture

We employ approximately 2,200 staff who all share a genuine commitment to our communities. Working here means being part of something special - where everyone feels responsibility for making our services as good as they can be.

Our values of People, Unity, Trust, Ownership and Creativity are more than words on a wall. They guide how we work together and serve the people of Orkney.

What We Offer

We offer a competitive salary, membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme, and access to our Employee Assistance Programme. We're committed to helping you grow, with access to training opportunities and support for relevant professional qualifications.

Working for Scotland's smallest local authority means you'll have exposure to a breadth of services and projects that you wouldn't find elsewhere, making your role varied and impactful.

We understand the importance of work-life balance and offer flexible working arrangements where appropriate. If you are a candidate who requires to relocate we understand that moving to an island community is a big step, and we're here to support you through it. Our team understands the challenges and rewards of island life and will ensure you feel welcomed and supported as you settle into both your new role and your new home.

Our Strategy

Our Council Plan sets out our commitment to work tirelessly to safeguard our cherished islands and achieve the best possible outcomes for the people of Orkney. We've identified three key strategic themes that guide everything we do:

- **Growing our Economy:** We will reduce poverty and disadvantage, create favourable conditions for sustainable economic growth, and work towards becoming net zero.
- **Strengthening our communities**: We will support communities to develop local solutions, establish the highest standards of public support and protection, and widen access to opportunities for better learning, achievement and wellbeing.
- **Developing our Infrastructure**: We will invest in homes to support choice and economic growth, remove barriers to digital connectivity and vital transport, and invest in projects that further our economic ambitions.

Key Strategic Initiatives

- **Community Wind Farms**: Delivering renewable energy projects that will provide essential income and support our net zero ambitions.
- **Islands Growth Deal**: Securing investment from UK and Scottish Governments for ambitious development programmes across Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles.
- **Harbours Masterplan:** Identifying projects that bring significant opportunities for attracting investment into our islands.
- **House Build:** Delivering 1030 homes over the next 10 years at 60:40 affordable, private programme

Useful Links

About Orkney

General Information

- www.orkney.com - Official visitor information and island life
- www.orcadian.co.uk - Local newspaper for news and community updates
- www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/orkney - Tourism and attractions

Community and Volunteering

- www.vaorkney.org.uk - Voluntary Action Orkney
- www.orkneycommunities.co.uk - Community groups and activities

Housing and Accommodation

Property Search

- www.ohal.org.uk - Orkney Housing Association
- www.harcuslaw.co.uk - Local estate agents
- www.lowsorkney.co.uk - Property sales and lettings
- www.kallanproperties.co.uk - Property specialists
- www.dreverandheddle.co.uk - Local solicitors and estate agents

Transport

Travel to Orkney

- www.hial.co.uk/kirkwall-airport - Kirkwall Airport flights
- www.northlinkferries.co.uk - Ferry services from mainland Scotland
- www.pentlandferries.co.uk - Alternative ferry route

Local Services

Council Services

- www.orkney.gov.uk - All council services and information
- www.orkney.gov.uk/your-council/our-plans- Council strategy and plans

Social Media

- Facebook: @OICUpdates
- LinkedIn: @OrkneyCouncil
- YouTube: @OrkneyIslandsCouncil

Next Steps

How to Apply

Online Application

Apply at orkney.gov.uk/headofeducation using our online application system. Please note that CVs will not be accepted - a completed application form is required.

Application Requirements

Your application should demonstrate clearly how you meet the essential requirements and competencies outlined in this pack.

Accessibility

If you require an alternative format for your application, please contact hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk.

Key Dates

- Closing date - 10/09/2025
- Shortlisting – 12/09/2025
- Interviews - 01/10/2025

All correspondence regarding your application will be sent by email. If this isn't suitable, please let us know.

Selection Process

If your application is successful the selection process will be a presentation and a formal interview which will be conducted by an interview panel including the Chief Executive, Director (Education, Communities and Housing) and 2 Senior Councillors. They will be supported and advised by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

Candidates invited to interview will be required to attend in person in Orkney

Pre-employment Checks

All offers of employment are subject to:

- Satisfactory references
- Right to work verification
- Evidence of essential qualification
- Occupational health clearance
- Level 2 PVG (children)
- Registered with GTC Scotland as a Teacher

References will be sought for shortlisted candidates in advance of interviews. If you have concerns about early reference requests, please contact us when you apply.

Interview Expenses

Interview and relocation expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with our policy.

Informal Discussions

For an informal, confidential discussion about this role, please contact:

James Wylie, Director (Education, Communities and Housing)

- Email: james.wylie@orkney.gov.uk
- Phone: 01856 873535 Ext: 2401

We encourage candidates to have an informal discussion to learn more about the role and what working for Orkney Islands Council involves.

Application Support

If you have any questions about the application process, please contact our HR team at hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk.