

POETRY SCHOOL

Artistic Director & Joint CEO
(Maternity Cover)

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in The Poetry School and the Artistic Director & Joint CEO (Maternity Cover) role. This is an opportunity to work alongside the Finance and Operations Director & Joint CEO, to deliver our vital work.

The Artistic Director & Joint CEO (Maternity Cover) will take responsibility for delivering The Poetry School's artistic and educational vision and mission, developed by the Joint CEOs, ensuring we continue to enable and inspire audiences to create and experience poetry. They will deliver the ambitious creative plan which is currently in place and ensure The Poetry School's team continue to be fully supported to deliver their objectives.

The Joint CEOs have shared responsibility for the overall strategic direction of the organisation and together, shape the organisation's priorities to ensure it has sufficient resource to deliver on that strategy. The Artistic Director also has specific responsibility for artistic and creative programming, partnership management, fundraising, team management and setting and safeguarding the organisation's tone of voice and brand identity.

The Artistic Director is someone who can act as a senior ambassador for the organisation as well as someone with the ability to deliver the creative programme, raise funds, and lead a team to ensure a sustainable future for The Poetry School.

We are looking for someone to take on the Artistic Director & Joint CEO role for a 12-month period as maternity cover for Artistic Director & Joint CEO, Isabella Mead.

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About The Poetry School

Founded in 1997 by a diverse group of three renowned women poets – Mimi Khalvati, Pascale Petit, and Jane Duran - The Poetry School exists to ‘make poetry happen’. Over the last 28 years it has become the centre for poetry education in the UK nurturing much of the best talent in the country whilst providing an inclusive and accessible environment for in-person and online training to learn the craft and art of poetry. With a mission to enable and inspire audiences to create and experience poetry, the organisation provides inspiring tuition and opportunities for poets and poetry audiences across the UK and internationally.



The Poetry School has the unique ability to reach and support poets at all stages in their development across the world as well as offering poetry audiences the opportunity to engage with the artform. Over the years the School’s mission has been refined to reflect the organisation’s growing reach and a commitment to diversity is at the heart of the organisation’s work with a particular focus on breaking down all barriers to access for those wishing to engage with poetry.

The Poetry School’s current main office is 1 City Square, Leeds, while the MA accredited by Newcastle University is taught in-person at Somerset House in London. The School also has hubs across the country with in-person courses taking place from Exeter to Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Birmingham and many more. Online courses run throughout the year with engagement from participants across the UK and the world.

The School and courses operate on an academic year, but the organisation engages with poetry audiences across the year through the Laurel Prize and festivals such as Verve Festival in Birmingham, where the School contributes to the programming.

The organisation is a proud member of Arts Council England’s National Portfolio, currently until 31 March 2028. The Activity Plan and Investment Principles have been devised by the current Artistic Director and thus the Maternity Cover role will take a lead on delivering and reporting on these targets set in place.

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Main Purpose of the Role

The core purpose of the Artistic Director & Joint CEO (Maternity Cover) role is to uphold and deliver the current Artistic Director's artistic and educational vision for The Poetry School and, with the Finance and Operations Director & Joint CEO, hold final decision-making responsibility over all aspects of public programming, creative development, community activity, artistic support, and major projects. The postholder will work hand-in-hand with the Finance and Operations Director to deliver the organisation's strategic plan and will take the lead on partnership management, fundraising, and team management. They will act as ambassador for The Poetry School and its mission and will seek to maximise opportunities to grow the School's position as the centre for poetry education in the UK, particularly in the North of England where there is a strategic priority to grow impact.

The Artistic Director & Joint CEO (Maternity Cover) postholder will report to the Chair of Trustees and will represent the organisation externally with participants, poets, funders, partners, and other key stakeholders.

MAIN DUTIES OF THE ROLE

Strategy and Leadership

- With the Finance and Operations Director & Joint CEO and Board of Trustees ensure the organisation fulfils all statutory responsibilities as a charity and as a National Portfolio Organisation;
- With the Finance and Operations Director & Joint CEO hold responsibility for setting and maintaining the organisation's culture, including management and wellbeing of staff and freelancers, and sharing decisions of recruitment, grievance and disciplinary procedures;
- With the Finance and Operations Director & Joint CEO, conduct appraisals and manage performance for The Poetry School team;
- Maintain a strong working relationship with the Board and attend all Board meetings to report on organisational artistic and partnership activity;
- With the Finance and Operations Director & Joint CEO, conduct appraisals and manage performance for The Poetry School team.

Fundraising, Partnership Engagement, and Income Generation

- Lead on all key external partnerships, including with Newcastle University, Arts Council England, and the Poet Laureate's Laurel Prize 2026;

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- Ensuring the highest level of relationship management and partnership development;
- With the Finance and Operations Director & Joint CEO deliver the fundraising strategy to support the delivery of key activity throughout the year;
- Lead on raising funds from a range of sources including individuals, trusts and foundations, statutory sources and campaigns as identified in the fundraising strategy (with input and support from the Finance and Operations Director & Joint CEO and wider team);
- With the Finance and Operations Director & Joint CEO, manage the relationship with Arts Council England ensuring The Poetry School remains an exemplary organisation within the National Portfolio, and maintain relationships with other major funders.

Team Management

- Line manage The Poetry School team acting as key day to day contact and taking responsibility for their delivery and development;
- Maintain a strong working relationship with the Board and attend all Board meetings to report on organisational artistic and partnership activity;
- With the Finance and Operations Director & Joint CEO, conduct appraisals and manage performance for The Poetry School team.

Branding and Marketing

- Manage the organisation's cultural voice through the presentation and communication of work in-person and across all digital channels with audiences, funders, partners, and stakeholders;
- Sign off on and monitor the impact of marketing campaigns across the School's programme of work.

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Who We Are Looking For

We are looking for someone with a proactive, dynamic, and strategic leadership style who is ready to take on a maternity position where delivering strategy is key to success.

You will be familiar with Arts Council reporting requirements, including the use of Illuminate, and wholly endorse, and are able to advocate for, the importance of the Investment Principles as part of the Let's Create Strategy.



You will be someone with a passion for the work of The Poetry School and an understanding of the broader challenges within the poetry and wider cultural sectors. You will be someone who can build trust, lead, and inspire others through your communication skills and who can develop clear, robust, and creative narratives.

Your experience and knowledge will include successful development and delivery of creative programmes within the cultural sector perhaps as an artist/practitioner, a producer or in another role. You will have experience of raising funds within the sector and an understanding of the importance of excellent partnership management. You do not need to have held an equivalent director role already – your understanding of the work of The Poetry School and the context within which we operate, your capacity for the duties of the role, and ability to deliver a strategy are the foremost considerations.

Most importantly you will be passionate about the power of poetry to bring about positive impact on people's lives.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential:

- A proven record of developing and delivering creative programmes and/or cultural activity;
- Ability to share the Joint CEO role in a transparent and supportive partnership with the Finance and Operations Director;

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- Leadership experience including managing and developing a highly skilled team and numerous freelance experts;
- Understanding of and ability to think strategically about the current context, challenges and opportunities for contemporary poetry and its varied and textured landscape;
- An understanding of The Poetry School's mission and a commitment to its values;
- Experience of developing and managing complex partnerships (including commercial and sponsorship) and maintaining strong and productive relationships with key stakeholders;
- An understanding of Arts Council England's Let's Create strategy and how The Poetry School's work aligns with it as part of the National Portfolio, including the use of Illuminate;
- Demonstrable experience of raising funds for the arts particularly from philanthropic sources;
- Excellent communication skills with the ability to engage with a wide range of people, including the ability to create and communicate a vision, build empathy, and embrace complexity;
- A commitment to centring diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and social impact in your work by demonstrable, practical means;
- Experience of applying to and managing funding relationships with Arts Council England and other major funders.

Desirable:

- Experience of working with online arts provision;
- Experience of website development and enhancement.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The Poetry School is committed to embodying diversity and inclusion at every level of our organisation. We will take positive action around this by guaranteeing an interview to any applicant to self-identifies as having a protected characteristic (as outlined by the Equality Act 2010) and who has demonstrable senior creative programming and producing experience. If you self-identify as having this background and experience, please state so in your supporting statement as outlined on the next page.

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Terms and Conditions

Reporting to	Chair of the Board.
Contract	Fixed term, 12 months, Part-time – 3 or 3.5 days.
Days	Flexible but with at least one day each week with the Finance and Operations Director & Joint CEO.
Location	At present the team work between home and the co-working space at 1 City Square in Leeds, or at Somerset House in central London, where we are members. We would expect this role to work at least 2 days a week from Somerset House or 1 City Square in Leeds (with at least one of those days to crossover with the Finance and Operations Director). If the candidate chooses 1 City Square as the main office, this role would visit Somerset House at least once a month; if the candidate chooses London for the main office, they would visit Leeds at least once a month. We are open to a conversation with interested candidates during the interview process about the best way to balance in-person/home working.
Salary	£60,000 - £65,000 per annum full-time equivalent (FTE) pro-rata for 3 or 3.5 days per week.
Annual Leave	20 days per annum pro rata plus bank holidays.



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How to Apply

To apply for the role of Artistic Director & Joint CEO (Maternity Cover) at The Poetry School please send a supporting statement (of no more than 2 pages) outlining why you want to work for The Poetry School and how you meet the requirement of the role along with your CV (of no more than 2 pages) to recruits@achates.org.uk.

Please note applications will be initially reviewed by the Achates team before being shared with The Poetry School team.

We guarantee first round interviews to candidates who self-identify as having a protected characteristic (as outlined by the Equality Act 2010) and have demonstrable senior creative programming or producing experience. If you see yourself as someone who meets these criteria, please say so in your supporting statement.

If you would like an informal conversation about this role, please contact Vicki Grace at Achates Recruits, who are supporting us with this process. You can reach Vicki by email on vicki@achates.org.uk. These conversations will not influence our selection process.

Closing date for applications: 9am Monday 22 September 2025

Interviews First round interviews will take place online during the week commencing Monday 29 September 2025.

If you require any of this information in an alternative format, then please email recruits@achates.org.uk.



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