

## Director of Finance

The Director of Finance is a key member of the Trust's senior leadership team and is central to ensuring the ongoing financial resilience, sustainability and long-term viability of the Trust.

The postholder will provide strategic and operational leadership across the full breadth of the Trust's finance function, ensuring that planning, budgeting, financial control, reporting, assurance and compliance arrangements are robust, proportionate and aligned to the Trust's strategic priorities.

Reporting directly to the Chief Finance & Operations Officer (CFOO), the Director of Finance will support the Executive Team, Trustees, Headteachers and other leaders by providing high-quality financial analysis, advice and challenge, enabling informed decision-making and the effective stewardship of public funds.

The role is responsible for leading a high-performing finance function that delivers accurate statutory and management reporting, strong internal controls, value for money, effective risk management and continuous improvement across the Trust.

<b>Grade:</b>	16 (Point 47 – 50)
<b>Hours:</b>	37 hours per week, 52 weeks per year
<b>Responsible to:</b>	Chief Finance & operations Officer (CFOO)
<b>Key Relationships/ Liaison with:</b>	Senior Finance Business Partners, Senior Finance Assistant and wider finance team

## Main duties and responsibilities

### Strategic Financial Leadership

- Provide strategic financial advice to the CFOO, Executive Team, Trustees, Headteachers and senior leaders on all aspects of finance, resource deployment and financial sustainability.
- Contribute fully to Trust-wide strategic planning, ensuring that financial strategy, educational priorities and operational plans are aligned.
- Lead the development of the Trust's annual budget, medium-term financial plan and longer-term financial modelling to support sustainable decision-making.
- Promote a culture of financial accountability, probity and value for money across all schools and central services.
- Support the development, implementation and review of Trust strategies, policies and plans through the provision of insightful financial analysis and options appraisal.
- Act as a visible senior leader, building effective relationships across the Trust and contributing to wider organisational leadership beyond finance.

### Financial Planning, Budgeting and Forecasting

- Lead the Trust's annual budget-setting process from planning through to approval, ensuring that assumptions are evidence-based, prudent and clearly linked to strategic priorities.
- Prepare and maintain rolling forecasts and medium-term financial plans, including scenario modelling, sensitivity analysis and options appraisal to inform strategic decisions.

- Work closely with schools and central leaders to support robust school-level budgeting, challenge assumptions where required, and ensure plans are financially viable.
- Monitor in-year financial performance against budget, investigating variances and recommending corrective action where necessary.
- Develop and use benchmarking, KPI reporting and financial analysis to assess performance, identify trends, drive efficiency and support resource allocation decisions.
- Support the Trust's approach to pooled funding and strategic resource allocation, ensuring that financial leadership reflects the principles of equity, need, and value for money.

### **Financial Control, Governance and Compliance**

- Ensure that the Trust complies with all relevant financial, statutory and regulatory requirements, including the Academy Trust Handbook, funding agreement, charity and company requirements, and internal financial regulations.
- Maintain and continuously improve the Trust's financial procedures, systems and controls to safeguard assets, ensure propriety and support effective financial management.
- Oversee the integrity of the accounting system, chart of accounts, reconciliations and month-end and year-end processes, ensuring timely and accurate reporting.
- Provide high-quality financial reports, dashboards and papers for the Board of Trustees, Finance & Resources Committee, Audit & Risk Committee, and Executive Team.
- Ensure that records are maintained to the required standard and that key financial decisions are supported by appropriate audit trail, documentation, and evidence.
- Interpret changes in legislation, guidance and sector practice and ensure that policies, systems and working practices are updated accordingly.

### **Statutory Reporting and External Returns**

- Lead the preparation and submission of all financial returns to the Department for Education and other bodies within required timescales and to the required standard.
- Take responsibility for the preparation and delivery of the Trust's statutory annual accounts and supporting working papers, ensuring compliance with applicable accounting standards and reporting requirements.
- Oversee the production of monthly management accounts and other performance reports that provide meaningful financial insight to leaders and Trustees.
- Act as a principal point of contact for external agencies in relation to financial returns, funding matters and reporting requirements.
- Ensure that all reporting deadlines are planned, monitored and achieved, with robust quality assurance arrangements in place.

### **Audit, Risk and Assurance**

- Lead the Trust's financial assurance framework and support the CFOO in ensuring that internal scrutiny arrangements are fit for purpose and add value.
- Manage relationships with internal scrutiny providers, external auditors and other assurance partners, planning work effectively and coordinating responses across the Trust.
- Oversee the preparation for internal and external audit, ensure the timely completion of audit recommendations and monitor progress on actions arising.
- Support the development and maintenance of the Trust's risk management arrangements, including the financial elements of the Trust risk register.

- Ensure that financial risks, control issues and irregularities are identified promptly, investigated appropriately and reported through the correct governance channels.
- Promote strong governance, transparency and compliance through a disciplined and proportionate approach to assurance and risk management.

#### **Cashflow, Treasury, Tax and Financial Sustainability**

- Actively manage the Trust's cashflow position, ensuring that liquidity is maintained and that cash resources are deployed effectively.
- Oversee banking arrangements, cash management processes and treasury activity, ensuring appropriate controls and value for money.
- Support the CFOO with investment, reserves and treasury matters, including analysis of options, risk and compliance with Trust policy and delegated authority.
- Plan and coordinate the Trust's tax arrangements, including VAT, business rates and other claims, ensuring that entitlements are maximised and returns are submitted accurately and on time.
- Monitor financial risks affecting sustainability, including cost pressures, funding changes, staffing affordability and demand-led pressures, and develop mitigation strategies.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen the Trust's financial resilience through efficiency, income optimisation, improved processes and better use of data.

#### **Procurement, Contracts and Value for Money**

- Lead the Trust's procurement approach, ensuring that purchasing, tendering and contract management arrangements are compliant, efficient and proportionate.
- Oversee major procurement exercises and Trust-wide contracts, supporting robust option appraisal, market testing and tender evaluation.
- Ensure that contract management arrangements are in place to monitor performance, compliance, renewal dates and value for money.
- Work with colleagues across the Trust to identify opportunities for aggregation, standardisation and other approaches that improve purchasing efficiency.
- Contribute to the development of commercial thinking and income generation opportunities where appropriate and aligned to the Trust's charitable objects.

#### **Payroll, Pensions and Employee Financial Systems**

- Provide strategic oversight of payroll services across the Trust, ensuring that employees are paid accurately and on time and that appropriate controls, reconciliations and checks are in place.
- Manage the relationship with payroll providers and ensure that service standards, reporting arrangements and process improvements are maintained.
- Oversee pension administration processes for TPS and LGPS, ensuring accurate data, timely submissions and compliance with statutory and scheme requirements.
- Ensure that payroll and pension processes reflect current legislation and sector guidance, with changes implemented promptly and effectively.
- Work collaboratively with HR and other services on matters relating to pay, pensions, employee benefits, establishment control and employment cost reporting.
- Oversee associated compliance requirements, including P11D and other related returns where applicable.

### **Capital Planning, Fixed Assets and Estates Finance**

- Support the financial planning and oversight of capital investment across the Trust, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities, estate need and available funding.
- Contribute to the development of rolling capital plans and support the financial aspects of major capital projects, bids and grant applications.
- Ensure that capital funding is appropriately monitored, accounted for and reported.
- Oversee the Trust's fixed asset accounting arrangements and ensure that asset records are accurate, complete and regularly reviewed.
- Work effectively with estates and operations colleagues to ensure that capital decisions are informed by affordability, value for money and long-term sustainability.

#### **2.10 Leadership of the Finance Function**

- Lead, develop and manage a high-performing finance function that delivers responsive, accurate and customer-focused support to schools and central teams.
- Provide clear line management, coaching and professional development for direct reports and contribute to succession planning within the finance team.
- Ensure that team structures, roles, systems and ways of working remain fit for purpose as the Trust grows and evolves.
- Drive continuous improvement, standardisation, automation and the effective use of financial systems to improve efficiency and reporting quality.
- Develop strong collaborative working relationships with Headteachers, school business teams, HR, estates and other central functions.

### **Trust Growth, Due Diligence and Organisational Development**

- Support the CFOO and wider Executive Team in relation to Trust growth, including financial due diligence, review of joining school information and transition planning.
- Contribute to the integration of new schools into the Trust's financial systems, controls, policies and reporting frameworks.
- Review financial structures and service models periodically to ensure they remain appropriate for the Trust's scale, complexity and ambitions.
- Identify opportunities for collaborative working, shared services and improved operating models across the Trust and with external partners.

### **General Responsibilities**

- Uphold and actively promote the vision, values and ethos of the Trust.
- Maintain the highest standards of integrity, confidentiality and professional conduct.
- Work at all times in accordance with Trust policies, procedures and applicable legislation.
- Participate in performance management, professional development and relevant professional networks to maintain current knowledge and best practice.
- Undertake such other duties as may reasonably be required, commensurate with the seniority and broad remit of the post.



# DISCOVERY

## **SPECIAL FACTORS:**

**Subject to the duration of the need, the special conditions given below apply:**

- The nature of the work may involve the post holder carrying out work outside of normal working hours.
- The postholder may be required to attend, from time to time, training courses, conferences, seminars or other meetings as required by his/her own training needs and the needs of the school.
- Expenses will be paid in accordance with the Local Conditions of Service.
- This post is eligible for a DBS check under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (i.e. it involves certain activities in relation to children and/or adults) and defined as regulated activity under Part 1 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 before the coming into force of section 64 of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012. Therefore, **a DBS enhanced check is an essential requirement.**

**This job description sets out the duties and responsibilities of the post at the time when it was drawn up. Such duties and responsibilities may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the duties or the level of responsibility entailed. Such variations are a common occurrence and cannot themselves justify a reconsideration of the grading of the post.**

**Discovery is seeking to promote the employment of disabled people and will make any adjustments considered reasonable to the above duties under the terms of the Equality Act 2010 to accommodate a suitable disabled candidate.**

## Person Specification

**Job Title:** Director of Finance

**Grade:** 16

	Essential	Desirable	How assessed
<b>Qualifications, Experience &amp; Knowledge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully qualified accountant (ACA, ACCA, CIMA or equivalent recognised professional qualification).</li> <li>Relevant education, public sector or leadership qualification; evidence of continuing professional development.</li> <li>Significant senior finance leadership experience in a complex organisation, with responsibility for strategic planning, financial control and reporting. (education sector experience is beneficial but not essential).</li> <li>Proven track record of leading budget setting, medium-term financial planning, forecasting, scenario modelling and financial analysis.</li> <li>Experience of leading financial planning within a growing or multi-site organisation.</li> <li>Strong technical accounting knowledge, including statutory accounts, audit processes, management accounting, internal control and regulatory compliance.</li> <li>Experience of academy trust accounts preparation and DfE / ESFA financial returns.</li> <li>Experience of working effectively with Boards, committees, external auditors and assurance providers; strong understanding of financial governance and risk management.</li> <li>Experience of developing internal scrutiny arrangements and supporting audit and risk committees.</li> <li>Understanding of payroll controls, pensions administration and key tax / VAT principles relevant to organisational finance.</li> <li>Direct experience of TPS, LGPS, VAT recovery, business rates and related compliance within the education sector.</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>App</p> <p>App</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p>



# DISCOVERY

	Essential	Desirable	How assessed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of procurement, tendering, contract management and delivering value for money.</li> <li>• Experience of leading major Trust-wide procurements or commercial negotiations.</li> <li>• Strong understanding of finance systems, reconciliations, reporting processes and control frameworks, with the ability to drive improvement.</li> <li>• Experience of systems implementation, process automation or service redesign.</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p>
<p><b>Skills/Attributes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proven ability to lead, motivate and develop teams, set high standards and build positive relationships across a complex organisation.</li> <li>• Experience of leading finance teams through organisational growth or change.</li> <li>• Excellent communication skills, with the ability to explain complex financial matters clearly to non-financial audiences and provide constructive challenge.</li> <li>• Experience of presenting to Trustees, governors, senior leaders or equivalent audiences.</li> <li>• Highly developed analytical skills with the ability to interpret complex information, identify trends and translate analysis into practical action.</li> <li>• Strong experience of benchmarking, KPI development and wider business intelligence.</li> <li>• High levels of integrity, resilience, judgement, discretion and attention to detail; collaborative, solutions-focused and committed to public service and improving outcomes for children and young people.</li> <li>• A strong understanding of the education sector context and the challenges facing academy trusts.</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>Int/Pres</p>
<p><b>Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A commitment to the Trust's vision &amp; values</li> <li>• Hold positive values and attributes and adopts high standards of behaviour in a professional role.</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>		<p>App/Int</p>
<p><b>Factors not already covered</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be able to perform all duties and tasks with reasonable adjustment, where appropriate, in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p>		<p>Med</p>

**App = Application Form**

**Test = Test**

**Int = Interview**

**Pre = Presentation**

**Med = Medical Questionnaire**

**Doc = Documentary Evidence (E.g., Certificates)**