

ASPIRE SCHOOLS

# CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

**WITH OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

We are seeking an exceptional executive leader to work with us at Aspire, an Alternative Provision Academy Trust in Buckinghamshire (including projects in other counties). This is a fantastic opportunity to join an ambitious and innovative trust, where you will have the opportunity to contribute to meaningful and lasting change in the lives of some of the most vulnerable students in Buckinghamshire and beyond.

**We change lives. Our work matters. Join us.**

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For more information, or to arrange a visit or conversation with our CEO, please contact [hr@aspireap.org.uk](mailto:hr@aspireap.org.uk)

# WELCOME FROM OUR CHAIR OF TRUSTEES



Dear Candidate

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Finance Officer for Aspire Schools. This role will form a vital part of our Executive Leadership Team, working closely with our founding CEO Debra Rutley. We are at an exciting point in the development of our Trust and we want to find someone who will continue to build on our recent successes, but also love their work, and continue to ensure that our Trust is developed on the ethos of 'leading with love'.

I am exceptionally proud of the work that we do at Aspire. Over the last 20 years, Aspire has grown from a single Local Authority PRU to a trust comprising of a variety of diverse schools and services that account for the majority of the alternative provision in Buckinghamshire. We deliver education that is responsive to, and meets the needs of the young people that we serve.

Aspire Schools is comprised of a family of three Alternative Provision schools, three permanent-stay SEMH schools, an outreach provision and a primary forest school intervention. We also run a creative arts charity, Aspire for Young People, providing opportunities beyond the traditional statutory education offer.

You will be joining us at a very exciting point in our development journey, with the opportunity to lead a wide variety of projects related to the strategic growth and sustainability of our Trust. As CFO, you will lead the stewardship of Aspire's resources, providing inspirational leadership to our teams in the areas of finance, HR, operations and information technology.

Aspire is a wonderful place to work, where everyone understands how their day-to-day work improves the life chances of the disadvantaged young people and communities that we serve. If you feel that our values align to yours, we very much look forward to hearing from you.

We change lives. Our work matters. Join us!

Mark Shaw  
Chair of Trustees



# OUR VISION AND VALUES



At Aspire we will create the conditions to support students to learn and flourish in and through love.

We change lives.

Our Aspire values can be seen in the quality of our relationships which are based on respect for all and an understanding that we are all valued.

Our values are “lived not laminated”. We live them every day, which means we can never be silent about challenging things.

## OUR VISION



## OUR VALUES



### Growth Mindset

- I am a learner.
- I take risks.
- When there is a setback, I am able to identify key learning for development.



### Love

- I practise kindness.
- I am generous in my interpretation of others.
- I am empathetic.
- I try to bring out the best in others.



### Hope

- I practise gratitude with my colleagues.
- I have aspirations & high expectations of all.



### Commitment

- I show up every day.
- I do not give up on students and others.
- I work towards the vision of Aspire.



### Integrity

- I own my mistakes in an open & honest way.
- I do what I say.
- I understand how my emotions affect my behaviour.



### Forgiveness

- Every day is a fresh start.
- I do not hold grudges.



### Respect

- I am clear and calm in all my communication.
- I listen to others.
- I always consider “What if this was my child?”

## ASPIRE STRATEGIC PLAN

2025- 2027



### GREAT SCHOOLS

- Curriculum
- Teaching & Learning
- Environment
- Buildings



### GREAT PEOPLE

- People Strategy



### EXTENDING OUR REACH

#### Changing more lives

- Training Offer
- New Schools
- Post-16 Offer
- EOTAS Packages



### ENRICHMENT

- Duke of Edinburgh
- Aspire for Young People
- Careers & Cultural Education Partnerships

# OUR AP SCHOOLS



Our Alternative Provision schools in Chesham, Aylesbury and High Wycombe are short-stay provisions for students who have been permanently excluded or who are at risk of exclusion.

Students come to us for a short period of time while we work with them, their families and their mainstream school, to identify strategies that will help them manage their emotions and be successful at school.



Sometimes our assessments indicate that mainstream is not the right place for a student, and in this case, we will work with them, their families and the local authority to help them move into a specialist setting.



The aim of Aspire's AP schools is to help students rediscover a love of learning, to help them learn and use strategies to regulate their emotions and manage their behaviour, and to help them identify and work towards a positive destination for their next steps in education and life.



If students join us in year 10 or 11, we think carefully about whether focusing on a return to mainstream is right, or whether a student would benefit from a stable and consistent placement until the end of KS4. If the family and all professionals working with a child agree, we will keep a child until the end of their year 11. In this situation, we focus instead on finding a positive post-16 destination and giving that student a supportive and successful transition into it.



# OUR SEMH SCHOOLS



## Shortenills Forest, Shortenills Abbey and Orchard House

Our long-stay secondary SEMH schools, located in Chalfont St Giles, Aylesbury and Chesham, are for students in Years 7-11 with EHCPs for SEMH difficulties. We believe that these students need and deserve a loving, nurturing approach, clear and high expectations of their behaviour, social development and academic work and carefully planned support and intervention that enables them to meet and exceed those expectations. We enable young people to manage their SEMH difficulties in school, and in the world, and to study a broad and balanced curriculum in order to create exciting and fulfilling futures for themselves.



## Shortenills For Post-16 Students

From September 2025, Aspire has begun to offer a bold new start for post-16 education at Shortenills Forest. Students take classes in English and Maths alongside vocational learning in grounds maintenance, horticulture and hospitality. Our first class of students will be the founding members of an on-site garden centre and café, giving each student first-hand experience of business development, teamwork and project management, all within a loving and nurturing environment.



## Key Stage 2 Forest School Intervention

Aspire recognises that early intervention is key for children who are facing challenges in succeeding in mainstream schools. In order to offer mainstream primary schools much needed support, we have developed a unique and brand new primary provision at Shortenills: 'Finding my Voice'. FMV is rooted in the principles of nurture and forest school and is a 1-day per week intervention for children in Key Stage 2 to run alongside a mainstream offer. Pupils experience the beauty of the outdoors and unleash their true potential.



## OUTREACH AND REINTEGRATION

Aspire's Outreach service works with every secondary school in the county. It is an Early Intervention Programme designed to be introduced when a student's behaviour has reached a level where a Pastoral or Behaviour Support Plan is being considered. All schools can directly refer students to the Outreach team.

Our team works with students on a weekly basis, one-to-one, for an agreed period of time. We build a bespoke programme for each student that we work with, depending on the challenges they are facing and the aims that they, their family and school have.

Our reintegration programme supports students before, during and after transitions between schools, whether that is as part of a direct managed move between secondary schools, or as a result of an exclusion and/or placement at Aspire.



# THE ROLE OF CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER



This is an exciting opportunity to play a pivotal role in our ambitious and innovative Alternative Provision Academy Trust. From September 2026, we wish to appoint an experienced candidate to lead the financial and operational management of the Trust on a full-time basis.

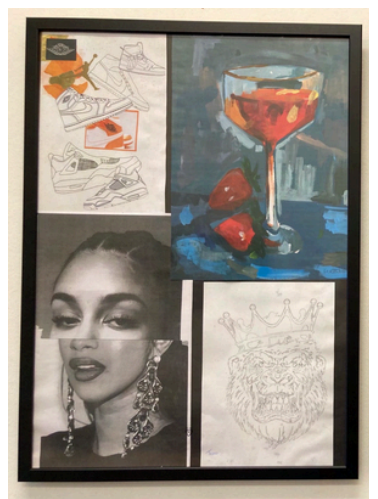
The CFO will play a critical role in providing clear and balanced expert advice to the CEO, the Executive Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees. As a member of the Executive Leadership Team, the CFO will report to the CEO. Working closely alongside her and the Board of Trustees, the new post holder will have the opportunity to shape, support and lead strategic change, as well as ensuring optimal day to day operational management of the Trust.

Aspire is geographically spread across Buckinghamshire, and the CFO will travel regularly to our different sites. The Finance Team is based in Aylesbury and the central Trust team is largely based in High Wycombe. We are also currently supporting other schools in Gloucestershire and Outer London.

The CFO will oversee the areas of Finance, Operations, Human Resources and Information Technology, assisted by an experienced team of managers who lead each area. There are four members of staff who report directly to the CFO as follows:

Finance Team	Operations Team	Human Resources	Information Technology
Finance Manager Finance Assistant Finance Administrator	Facilities Manager 1 Senior Site Officer 2 Site Officers 3 Chefs 1 Kitchen Assistant	1 HR Manager 1 HR & Compliance Officer	ICT Network Manager Turn IT On ICT Support

Whether you have developed your career in education or another field, you will have a deep moral purpose and a passion for securing the best possible outcomes for children and young people.



# WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?



## WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

The successful candidate will be a strategic leader who balances financial rigour with a deep-seated passion for improving outcomes for some of the most vulnerable students in our community.

### **Strategic Leadership & Vision**

We are looking for a strategic thinker who can work closely with the CEO and Board of Trustees to shape the future of our Trust. You will:

- Provide high-level financial guidance to support the growth and sustainability of our six "outstanding" sites.
- Offer commercial insight to inform critical decision-making and long-term capital planning.
- Lead with a personable style that promotes a culture of integrity, accountability, and collaboration.

### **Operational Excellence & Compliance**

As our CFO, you will ensure our financial "foundations" are as strong as the education we provide. We require:

- A Qualified Professional: A background in finance (ACA, ACCA, CIMA or equivalent) with experience in senior leadership within education or a similar multi-site environment.
- Regulatory Rigour: Detailed knowledge of the Academy Trust Handbook, ESFA requirements, and statutory reporting (desirable).
- Risk Management: The ability to manage the Trust's financial risk register and ensure robust internal controls.
- Value for Money: A focus on ensuring every penny is spent judiciously to maximise resources for our students.

### **Culture & Values**

Our values are "lived, not laminated". We are looking for an individual who embodies our core principles:

- Child-Centred: Someone who reflects on our "red thread" questions: "What is best for the child?" and "How can we make that happen?".
- Collaborative: A leader who thrives in a highly collaborative culture and can communicate complex financial data clearly to non-financial colleagues.
- Compassionate: An understanding of our trauma-informed pedagogy and the unique challenges faced by our pupils.

If you are a financial leader who wants their work to matter and has the drive to ensure our Trust remains a safe, loving, and learning environment for all, we would love to hear from you.

## A VALUES-LED ACADEMY TRUST

At Aspire, we provide a range of alternative education provision and support for students who are unable to access mainstream school for a variety of reasons. Students attend full or part-time and are referred to us by schools and the Local Authority.

Our focus is on supporting young people, together with their families and schools, to achieve their full potential and enable them to flourish by developing positive behaviours, attitudes and aspirations.

Aspire's vision is to support young people, whatever their background and circumstances, to **build strong foundations, and open new doors.**

We are led in everything we do by two 'red thread' questions: **"what is best for the child?"** and **"how can we make that happen?"**

And we encourage staff to reflect on these questions at all times, and to always ask themselves: **"how would I feel if this was my child?"**



# WHY WORK FOR ASPIRE?

ASPIRE SCHOOLS IS COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING STAFF TO FLOURISH. WE WORK HARD TO CREATE THE CONDITIONS THAT SUPPORT STAFF WELLBEING AND CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES BELONGING.

WE UNDERSTAND THAT WELLBEING CAN BE ACHIEVED WHEN WE FEEL WE HAVE THE SKILLS TO DO OUR JOBS, HAVE AUTONOMY WITHIN OUR ROLES AND FEEL WE BELONG

Skills	Autonomy	Belonging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to staff development and learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision making based on our values and red thread 'what's best for the child'</li> <li>• Having a voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A warm and welcoming environment.</li> <li>• I can be myself</li> <li>• I am part of something greater than me</li> </ul>

ASPIRE IS ALSO COMMITTED TO ENSURING OUR WORKING ENVIRONMENT ALLOWS US TO DO OUR JOBS AND CONCENTRATE ON SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO FLOURISH. WE DO THIS BY:

	Flexible working where possible, including leadership roles		Optimise - a health and wellbeing app available to all employees		Coaching available for every member of staff
	Dedicated leadership time for ALL leadership roles		Access to an online 'Workplace Wellbeing' platform (Bucks Council)		Open door policy of all SLT
	Half-termly wellbeing commitment meetings		Access to an online CPD library which includes courses focusing on wellbeing (Tes Develop)		Complimentary tea, coffee, sugar and milk at all sites
	Career development opportunities		Benefits for all staff including UNiDAYS staff discount, discounted gift cards by 'Extras' & a Cyclescheme		Working from home where job tasks allow, including PPA
	Flexible approach to enable attendance to family events etc.		Annual Revival Days		2-week October half-term
	Access to an Employee Assistance Programme (TP Health)				

# **JOB DESCRIPTION - CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER (WITH OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY)**

## **Key Responsibilities**

- Work with the CEO/Deputy CEO, Board of Trustees and other key stakeholders to ensure that the Trust's vision is reassessed and refined and clearly articulated, shared, understood and translated into real and effective action by all
- Translate the vision into agreed objectives and produce operational plans which will promote and sustain continuous school improvement
- Provide vision, strategic direction and leadership in delegated areas and manage the recruitment, performance and development of the managers in these areas
- Work closely with the CEO and Deputy CEO to ensure the growth and sustainability of the Trust including due diligence and management of change
- Oversee all aspects of financial systems and controls, ensuring compliance with financial regulations at all times
- Negotiate and liaise with local government authorities on matters of business and future planning
- Represent the Trust at any external forums, creating opportunities to enhance the profile of Aspire Schools within the education sector and local communities
- Oversee the risk management strategy
- Deputise for the CEO when required.

## **Culture and ethos**

- Lead with love
- Demonstrate the vision and values of the Trust in everyday work and practice
- Motivate all staff to create a shared culture and positive climate
- Put children and young people at the heart of everything you do
- Work with mission integrity for the benefit of all within the school community
- Develop the respectful and inclusive ethos of our Trust
- Engage with the Trust vision and values
- Always be a learner: engage with reading and research, best practice and new ideas from other schools, and other forms of professional development.

## **Finance**

- Ensure that financial management across the Trust complies with the requirements of the Academy's Financial Handbook and other relevant financial regulations
- Define and implement all operational financial policies and procedures in such areas as budgeting, cash management and monthly financial reporting
- Ensure the financial health of the Trust
- Identify and secure additional sources of funding and other income for the Trust and maximise asset utilisation and value for money

- Provide professional leadership and support for all members of the Trust community in terms of finance
- Ensure best value through contracts/ procurement
- Oversee the processing of all payroll information to ensure that our payroll provider pays all staff accurately and on time
- Hold the role of Chief Financial Officer and Company Secretary to the Trust.

### **Operations**

In conjunction with the Facilities Manager:

- Ensure that the security, maintenance, upgrade and development of all school premises and facilities are managed effectively, including the preparation of ongoing maintenance schedules, in order to provide the optimum learning environment for pupils
- Ensure that catering and cleaning services are provided efficiently and to a high standard
- Oversee negotiations on all aspects of contracting with third parties, including outsourcing
- Maintain a critical incident and disaster recovery strategy for the Trust, with detailed operational plans in relation to each academy and provide training and support on the same
- Oversee the strategic asset management plan for the Trust and ensure that projects and priorities support educational plans and requirements.

### **Human Resources**

In conjunction with the Human Resources Manager:

- Oversee the recruitment of staff across the Trust including adherence to safer recruitment legislation and the maintenance of the Single Central Register of appointments
- Oversee the formulating, updating and communication of all people-related policies, alongside processes and procedures to ensure that they are followed by all staff
- Oversee the maintenance of all personnel records in accordance with data protection legislation
- Oversee staff health and wellbeing initiatives across the Trust in order to ensure that staff are in the best place possible to support our vulnerable students
- Evaluate the school's strategic people objectives and ensure that strategic workforce planning is in place, including succession planning.

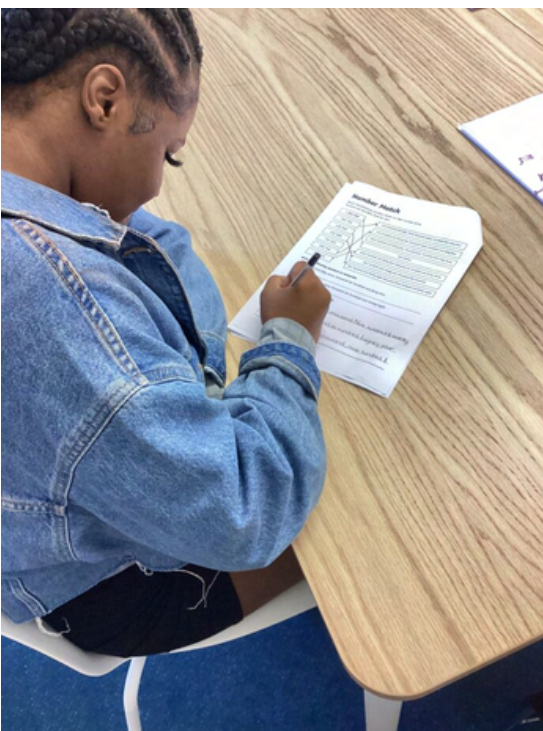
## ICT and Communications

In conjunction with the IT Systems Manager:

- Oversee all ICT and communications systems management, in regular consultation with our external ICT consultancy service
- Oversee the development and maintenance of appropriate ICT infrastructure and systems to support the objectives and aims of the Trust and ensure systems are in place to monitor and report on the performance of technology within the Trust
- Oversee the maintenance and delivery of a rolling ICT strategy which aligns with educational and development plans, and supports the Trust's growth plans
- Ensure contingency plans are in place in the case of technical failure
- Oversee the recording and maintenance of all hardware and ICT assets.

## Regulatory Compliance

- Ensure that the Trust meets its legal, corporate and statutory responsibilities and provide advice, direction and support to Executive Leaders and the Board of Trustees
- Embed Trust-wide accountability and quality assurance procedures to achieve regulatory compliance in all areas
- Oversee the provision of legal advice on a wide range of property, contract, data protection, employment law and other issues and ensure effective procurement of other specialist advice where needed
- Oversee the formulating, implementing and monitoring of the Trust Health and Safety Policy, ensuring compliance with the relevant health and safety legislation and best practice.



## PERSON SPECIFICATION

### Qualifications

- Educated to degree level or equivalent
- Qualified Accountant (CIMA or ACCA)
- Recognised qualifications or significant strategic experience in project management, change management, facilities management, and health & safety
- Professional qualification or significant experience in business management
- Commitment to all CPD offered.

### Experience

- Significant experience of leading the strategic planning for a developing organisation
- Experience of monitoring a range of contracts such as Facilities Management and ICT Managed Services to ensure KPI requirements are met, including Value for Money
- Evidence of successful management and leadership of diverse teams
- Experience of working as a member of a Senior Team
- Successful track record of managing complex projects from inception to completion
- Experience of working with Trustees and a range of external partners to achieve organisational aims.

### Knowledge and Skills

- The ability to work strategically and to seek and implement creative solutions
- Strong skills in analysis, risk management and impact evaluation
- Grasp of MIS systems principles and competent use of IT within the workplace
- The ability and motivation to review and improve practice continuously
- Full working knowledge of relevant safeguarding, child protection, equality and health and safety policies, codes of practice and legislation
- Highly effective administrative and organisational skills
- The ability to prioritise workloads and to work to given deadlines
- Knowledge of Premises Management requirements of a large site
- Knowledge of Health and Safety legislation
- Understanding and appreciation of working in a school context and how the role contributes to safeguarding and positive outcomes for pupils
- Excellent communication skills and the ability to act as a professional and positive ambassador for the Trust
- Ability to work collaboratively with the team and partners to ensure a broad approach to planning and improving service delivery
- Effective communication skills, both verbal and written, in order to maintain accurate records and documentation and provide written reports as requested
- Ability to maintain high levels of professional integrity and confidentiality.

## Personal Qualities and Attributes

- Confident and calm personality
- Creative and dynamic approach, anticipating and solving challenges
- Motivates, inspires and challenges others
- Positive role model
- Energy, drive, commitment and enthusiasm
- Highly organised and able to prioritise and adapt quickly to change
- Earns respect and demonstrates appropriate levels of authority
- Manages change effectively, building a sound team ethos
- Entrepreneurial and able to bring others on board
- Strong team player with the ability to work collaboratively as a member of a variety of teams
- The capacity to work well under pressure, remain calm, and to cope with the unexpected
- Reliable, discreet, honest and trustworthy
- Willing to commit to the Trust's vision and to 'go the extra mile' in order to achieve it
- Ability to draw upon a range of communication skills, and negotiate at multiple levels successfully
- Evidence of a commitment to own professional development
- A commitment to equal opportunities
- A commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

## Other Factors

- Driving licence essential as is access to a vehicle.



# HOW TO APPLY

If you would like further information, or to arrange a visit or informal conversation with our CEO, please contact our HR Manager via [hr@aspireap.org.uk](mailto:hr@aspireap.org.uk).

To apply for this role, please click 'Apply Now' via MyNewTerm.

Aspire is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share the same commitment. The appointment will be subject to an enhanced DBS check as well as a health questionnaire.

**Closing date: 1 June 2026**

**Interviews: 11 June 2026**

