ORCHARD
LEARNING ALLIANCE

WHERE EVERYONE THRIVES

Director of Finance Job Description

Message from the CEO

The Orchard Learning Alliance is a new multi-academy trust (MAT) based in Berkshire. We are still in the process of forming, with nine local primary schools joining one secondary school (Waingels) with an established culture of collaboration and trust coming together. Plans are at an advanced stage and Academy Orders have been issued and our growth strategy has been approved. We are a family of schools and work in partnership to co-design and co-construct our Trust for our community. Our mission is to achieve excellence and social justice through exceptional schools.

Once fully formed, the Trust will hold responsibility for the life chances and education of close to 5,000 young people; it will employ approximately 700 people and it will have an annual revenue of close to £30m. We are seeking to appoint, as soon as possible, a Director of Finance for our Trust. This is a perfect opportunity for a suitably qualified accountant who has education sector experience. The ideal candidate will have experience as a Director of Finance or CFO in a multi-academy trust and will already be familiar with the way MATs operate.

The successful candidate, working with the CEO, executive team and Trust board, will establish from scratch a business plan and financial management systems ready for schools to start joining the Trust in the autumn of 2023. Immediate priorities will include gaining a good understanding of the relative strengths of the 10 schools and getting to know the key personnel in each school before then beginning to assemble a shared services finance team.

The Director of Finance will be an integral part of a leadership team, alongside the CEO, Director of Operations, Director People and School Support Partners, working together on the long-term strategic development of the Trust; stabilising and embedding the founding schools and considering opportunities for future growth, and delivering an operational service to ensure exceptional education and development outcomes and inclusion and social justice for our communities.

These are exciting times for the Orchard Learning Alliance, and this is a vital appointment. Secure and strategic management of the Trust's finances will ensure that our schools can run efficiently, allowing teachers and support staff to concentrate all their energies on teaching and learning experiences, in a safe and rich environment. Setting up the systems that support this, building the team that will implement them and ensuring a culture that reflects our values underpins it all is a unique and exciting challenge. We look forward to reading your application.

Orchard Learning Alliance is committed to creating a diverse workforce. We will consider all qualified applicants for employment without regard to sex, race, religion, belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, age, disability, marriage or civil partnership.

Job details

Salary Range:	£70 000 to £80 000 depending on experience
Hours:	37 hours per week. Some flexible and home working. There will be a requirement to attend Trust board meetings from time to time, often in the evening.
Start:	June 2023 or as soon as possible thereafter
Base:	Currently based at Waingels, Woodley
Contract type:	Full-time, Permanent
Reporting to:	Chief Executive Officer
Responsible for:	Finance Team (not yet assembled)

Main purpose

The Director of Finance is responsible for:

- Financial development and sustainability of the Orchard Learning Alliance, and for the financial probity of the organisation.
- Providing the leadership and management of the Trust's finance and business functions, enabling the Trust to work effectively towards its aims.
- Supporting the CEO in their role as the Trust's accounting officer.
- The initial set up and implementation of a finance package that will provide the trust and its schools with the capacity to operate a centralized group finance function

Duties and responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities listed below are indicative of the tasks the Director of Finance of the Orchard Learning Alliance will perform and are not intended to be an exhaustive list. The postholder will be expected to take on additional responsibilities appropriate to the role as they arise.

Strategic leadership and trust development

The Director of Finance will be accountable for supporting the Trust's strategic development and aims through effective financial planning and management, in line with regulations.

The Director of Finance will:

⇒ Advise the CEO, board and other Trust leaders on all matters relating to financial strategy

⇒ Contribute to the development and implementation of the Trust's strategy, providing financial analysis and guidance on all activities, setting financial objectives and monitoring performance

⇒ Conduct financial due diligence on schools applying to join the Trust, and report to the board and other trust leaders with recommendations

⇒ Contribute to the Trust's risk management efforts, including identifying strategic and operational financial risks, taking steps to mitigate these risks, and, working with the Director of Operations, maintain the Trust's risk register

- ⇒ Develop, implement and monitor the Trust's business plan, using effective financial and budget modelling and benchmarking to support strong decision-making
- ⇒ Through careful and prudent finance & resource management, ensure the Trust maximises spending on resources that have a positive impact on improving learning experiences and outcomes for pupils

Financial management and control

The Director of Finance will be accountable for maintaining robust financial management of the Trust and its schools.

The Director of Finance will:

- ⇒ Manage the budget process, from planning through to approval, working with other Trust leaders
- ⇒ Work with headteachers within the Trust to prepare and monitor individual school's budgets in line with school development plans and the Trust's strategic objectives
- ⇒ Provide accurate and timely information to the board and other Trust leaders to enable effective budgetary control
- ⇒ Develop, implement and monitor the Trust's financial policies and procedures on procurement, virements, asset management and disposal, etc. in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook, enabling robust financial management
- ⇒ Take appropriate action to address financial risks, problems and irregularities
- ⇒ Develop and maintain an effective internal audit procedure for the Trust and its schools, including producing audit reports and making recommendations for improvement
- ⇒ Manage the external audit procedures for the Trust and its schools and follow up on any recommendations resulting from audits
- ⇒ Establish and monitor effective procurement procedures in order to achieve financial efficiencies, including overseeing the tendering process
- ⇒ Oversee the Trust's commercial contracts, ensuring they represent value for money
- ⇒ Arrange and manage necessary insurance arrangements for the Trust
- ⇒ Manage the Trust's tax and National Insurance arrangements, including ensuring claims for VAT and business rates are submitted and refunds are received and appropriately accounted for
- ⇒ Manage the Trust's cash position at all times, including overseeing bank deposits
- ⇒ Support the income generation strategy for the Trust and its schools

Reporting and compliance

The Director of Finance will be accountable for ensuring that the Trust complies with its legal obligations, adheres to financial regulations, and submits accurate financial reports in a timely manner.

The Director of Finance will:

- ⇒ Complete and submit financial returns as required by the Department for Education, the Education and Skills Funding Agency, the Charities Commission and Companies House
- ⇒ Prepare and submit the Trust's financial returns and reports, including annual accounts and monthly management accounts
- ⇒ Maintain the Trust's accounts in line with the funding agreement and the Academy Trust Handbook

- ⇒ Monitor developments to legislation around payroll, pensions and benefits, implementing changes and adapting processes as required
- ⇒ Provide appropriate and timely reports to the Trust board and other Trust leaders to support effective leadership and governance

Leadership and management

The Director of Finance will be accountable for supporting the effective management of the Trust and its schools, and for providing motivational leadership at all levels of the trust's organisation.

The Director of Finance will:

- ⇒ Take responsibility for the Trust's financial management system, including managing user access, providing training, considering future system developments and generating reports
- ⇒ Working with staff currently deployed as School Business Managers, assemble and manage a shared services finance team, taking responsibility for the recruitment, appointment and professional development of staff
- ⇒ Develop the Trust's shared finance services, ensuring these are fit for purpose and provide a high-quality service to individual schools, helping the Trust achieve continuous improvement
- ⇒ Work with the Directors of People & Operations, to support the effective delivery of payroll services for the Trust and its academies
- ⇒ Develop effective relationships with the Trust's stakeholders and partners in order to support its development and operation
- ⇒ Act as a representative for the Trust in external networks and forums, raising the profile of the Trust, engaging with the wider sector, and ensuring that the Trust is alert to information, changes and opportunities that could affect its work

Promoting Safeguarding and welfare of children and young persons

- ⇒ Be aware of and comply with policies and procedures relating to child protection, health and safety and security, confidentiality and data protection, reporting all concerns to an appropriate person.

Notes:

This job description may be amended at any time in consultation with the postholder.

Last review date: March 2023

Next review date: July 2023

Line manager's signature: _____

Date: _____

Postholder's signature: _____

Date: _____

Technical Requirements

- ⇒ ICAEW, ACCA, CIMA, CIPFA or equivalent accountancy qualification
- ⇒ Significant experience as a Director of Finance or Chief Financial Officer in a multi-Academy Trust.
- ⇒ Experience in a management role
- ⇒ Demonstrable knowledge of financial regulations, legislation, and best practice
- ⇒ Knowledge of, and experience of the curation of and implementation and management of financial systems
- ⇒ Effective planning and organisational skills, with the ability to multitask and manage competing critical priorities
- ⇒ Experience managing internal and external systems of control
- ⇒ Ability to form working relationships with colleagues at all levels and in multiple locations
- ⇒ Emotionally intelligent, confident and decisive
- ⇒ Professional integrity and high level of confidentiality
- ⇒ Flexible, motivated, able to work unsupervised and an ability to deal with unpredictable situations
- ⇒ Composed under pressure
- ⇒ Excellent attention to detail
- ⇒ Prepared to challenge constructively and be solution focused