Job Description: Director of Digital and Technology

Reports to: Chief Operating Officer
Location: West London – currently operating an agile working policy with two core 'together days' (currently Mon and Weds) in the Ark office
Salary: Up to £150,000 (depending on experience)
Contract type: Permanent, full time
Start date: June 2024 or as soon as possible, depending on availability.

Introduction

Ark is an education charity that exists to make sure that all children, regardless of their background, have access to a great education and real choices in life. Starting with just one school in 2006, Ark has grown into a network of 39 schools that serves over 30,000 children. Through our ventures we work to reach even more. We are currently opening nurseries through Ark Start and over 300,000 children learn using an Ark curriculum. Last year, despite having more than double the national average of children in receipt of free school meals, our students outperformed the national average at every age and stage. We want to do even more.

Ark operates a centralised approach to IT with all schools supported by centrally run and managed infrastructure, systems, and services. An opportunity now exists for a dynamic, strategic, and operationally experienced Director of Digital and Technology to join the Senior Team and build on our solid foundations in IT, Systems and Data to create a sector leading approach to digital transformation.

The successful candidate will have proven success in at least one of these areas, with a vision for how they can deliver impact and ensure that digital opportunities can truly enhance the learning experience, boost outcomes for pupils and streamline processes for our staff. There is flexibility to shape the role and spheres of influence based on the experience of the successful candidate.

The Role

The Director of Digital and Technology will have the opportunity to lead on all technology aspects for the trust. This includes strategy, systems, cyber security, school-based technology, including the in-house provision of the IT services for all our 39 schools, (serving 30,000 children with over 4,000 staff) as well as supporting the Ark Central team and its ventures, providing data and insights to all key stakeholders and IT project transformation across the organisation.

This role will support the creation of our new education hub in White City where Ark will relocate in the summer of 2024.

The current technology budget at trust level is £4.6m per annum. Within this, the people budget equates to £3m (circa 80 staff) with a further £1.6m currently provided for the IT, Systems, Data and MIS service provided to our schools. Capital spend is in addition to this. In 22/23, our IT capital spend for the network was £6m. The Director

of Digital and Technology will influence, inform, and support the management of this spend.

The ideal candidate will lead a high performing team of technology, data, information, and service specialists. They will have a passion for technology and a belief in the difference it can make to education and operations.

To be responsible for the formation and delivery of an effective and efficient technology and data strategy that supports our schools and ventures.

- Lead the trust from a technological perspective, acting as spokesperson and representative internally and externally.
- Be responsible for all key technical supplier relationships, leading all major technology tenders and building strong partnerships.
- Oversee the development of a new data warehousing and reporting solution building on the work done with the creation of a new Azure platform.
- Create and maintain a systems strategy defining a balance between centralised controlled systems and school autonomy. This will include a detailed roadmap, integrations, data flows, and a resource model.

To develop sector leading innovative technologies

- Develop a structured way to onboard Trust wide technologies that offer evidenced value to the teaching and learning process.
- Continue to develop and deliver the Trust wide Digital Strategy, working alongside Education Leaders and the Director of Strategy, to develop sector leading technologies to support teachers, reduce workload, improve efficiencies, and raise standards in schools, making use of new AI technologies where appropriate.
- Bridge the gap between industry and the sector, giving the Trust the opportunity to explore and exploit new innovations.

Provide the tools, support, and expertise to enable the Trust to constantly leverage data to improve decision making

- Own the approach to on-line Knowledge Management to enable secure and effective communication across the Trust.
- Develop the insights function with the capability to bring triangulations, insights and visualisation of Trust and school level data to key stakeholders.
- Be responsible for the School's Management Information Systems to ensure we comply with statutory responsibilities and provide Principals and Network staff with the information required to lead effectively and efficiently.
- Digitalise the Trust's education and operational processes where it offers value to do so, including assessment and monitoring of key performance indicators.

Deliver technology foundations (infrastructure, support, and service)

- Ensure that all parts of the Trust, including pupils and staff, are served with an appropriate device, excellent connectivity, and leading technology and support.
- Support the IT Service Delivery to our schools, ensuring it continues to be well-led and resourced, with the correct balance of in-house and external provision and continues to deliver to the needs of our schools, balancing service with value for money.
- Enable the Trust Leaders in users of technology to support teaching and learning.
- Determine the right balance of the Cloud-First relative to on-premises infrastructure, systems, and software, delivering maximum value for money.
- Continuously monitor, manage, and minimise the risks to the organisation including all aspects of technology, systems, and cyber security
- Play a key role in establishing Ark's base in our EdTech hub in White City.

Knowledge and Skills
- Understands both the education and the Multi Academy Trust sector (desirable)
- Minimum of 10 years' experience in a senior IT role in a complex organisation (essential)
- Proven track record of leading successful digital transformation projects (essential)
- Understand core business processes and associated technical solutions (essential)
- Have an innovative mindset, looking at new technologies and digital opportunities and be prepared to problem solve and present solutions (essential)
- Passionate about technology and the opportunities it presents (essential)
- Experience managing and leading a large and diverse technology team (essential)
- Proven influencing and collaboration skills (essential)
- Significant specialist technical background in IT/data and/or digital leadership (essential)
- Expertise in digital transformation and adoption of cloud/SaaS (desirable)
- Experience of shared service and/or customer service delivery (desirable)
- Experience in building and maintaining strong working relationships at a senior executive level. (essential)

Personal characteristics and qualities
- Highly approachable, very grounded and makes sensible judgments
- Relishes accountability and takes personal responsibility for their own actions
- Excellent critical thinking skills; has intellectual curiosity and rigour
- Able to build trust and mutual respect between team members, MT and wider organisation
- Strong interpersonal, written and oral communication skills.