[ Stephenson (MK) Trust](https://www.stephensonmktrust.org.uk/index.asp)

Chief Financial Officer

Recruitment Pack



 

**Stephenson MK Trust**

**A unique Trust of schools in Milton Keynes supporting vulnerable children across Milton Keynes to improve their chances of success and future life outcomes.**

**Trust Appointment**

Firstly, thank you for your interest in relation to our vacancy for a Chief Finance Officer (CFO) of Stephenson MK Trust. You will find all information you need contained within this recruitment pack.

The trust is seeking to appoint an inspiring, compassionate, and dedicated CFO who is eager to make an impact not only within the restraints of their finance role but also in support of improving the outcomes for vulnerable children.

The trust is deeply committed to inclusivity and enhancing the opportunities for our students. Stephenson MK Trust, as part of the trust, values its reputation as a welcoming and supportive academy Trust, placing significant importance on both pastoral support and personalised academic learning.

On a personal level we are looking for an exceptional candidate with ambition for, and commitment to, working with our CEO and Trustees to further develop our unique Trust ensuring that we are adhering to our strategic values and vision.

All children deserve access to the very best leaders and teachers, and we are no different to others in our quest to appoint an exceptional candidate that can support out Trust to further develop and grow.

**We are looking for an exceptional leader to join our Trust as Chief Finance Officer (CFO) to:**

* Provide financial and strategic leadership to the Trust and its schools
* Support the CEO in the successful delivery of our strategic plan
* Fulfil the role and responsibilities of the CFO of an Academy Trust.

This is a fantastic opportunity to join a values-driven Trust at an exciting stage in our development. You will be a key member of the Trust’s Executive Team, working closely with the CEO and other Leaders to develop and implement strategy and to resource and deliver the Trust's strategic objectives sustainably.

The Trust has grown since its inception from a single academy to three, creating exceptional life chances for many children, with a workforce of approximately 200 staffs and annual income of circ. £10 million. Further growth is planned in 2023/24.

The CFO is expected to bring a modern, commercial approach to the leadership of the finance function, running it as a highly competent and efficient service with an emphasis on a proactive and customer-focused service. As well as ensuring the financial health of our Trust, you will bring experience of lateral thinking when it comes to realising the financial opportunities that we have within our Trust.

The role is directly responsible to the Chief Executive, who is the accounting officer for the Trust, and ultimately responsible for the proper financial conduct of the organisation.

**In return our trust can offer you:**

* An incredible opportunity to work collaboratively with experienced and successful executive leaders.
* The chance to be part of a growing and forwarding thinking trust that will provide wider opportunities in the future.
* Extensive support to progress your potential at an exciting time in our development.
* An opportunity to work within an inclusive and values driven organisation and the chance to be part of a highly skilled, dedicated, and hardworking team.

We welcome visits to our Trust, and look forward to receiving your application.

Kathie Hughes

CEO, Stephenson (MK) Trust

**About Stephenson (MK) Trust**

**Strategic Aims**

All the Academies within the Stephenson (MK) Trust will:

* Have high aspirations and expectations for the achievement of every Student so that they are well prepared for their next steps in life.
* Ensure that all Students make progress individualised to their needs within a
framework that recognises that progress is measured and celebrated in a variety of equally valid ways.
* Provide ambitious and exciting opportunities through a well-designed curriculum that is supported by a range of measurably effective intervention programmes.
* Develop approaches to learning and wider life experiences that promote independence and confidence from its young people who then make a positive contribution to the community.
* Be committed to the development and maintenance of a range of positive relationships with parents and professionals to support young people.
* Have committed and forward looking leadership and staff that is supported and challenged to improve by Trustees and Governors that know the school well.

We aim to give every student here the best chance to succeed. The wellbeing of our students is our top priority and we have a dedicated multi-disciplinary therapeutic team to support students, their families and staff where appropriate.

We want our students to become happy, successful and independent young people who can make a positive contribution to society. Our students achieve well during their time with us and leave the academies with relevant qualifications and work experience, which supports them in gaining places in further education and employment.

**Background**

Stephenson (MK) Trust was founded in April 2012 to take responsibility for The Gatehouse School in Milton Keynes, which closed at the end of March 2012 and reopened in April 2012 as Stephenson Academy. Stephenson Academy, an SEMH academy in Milton Keynes, was the first sponsored special school academy in the country and the sponsors are St Paul’s Catholic School in Milton Keynes and SERCO. The sponsors worked closely and productively with officers from Milton Keynes Council and the DfE to launch the academy successfully. Dr Neil Barrett had been appointed Headteacher of The Gatehouse School in January 2012 and as the Principal Designate of Stephenson Academy.

The Trust grew from the strong partnership between secondary schools in Milton Keynes in developing the Milton Keynes Behaviour Partnership which opened in 2007 with Dr Neil Barrett as the Partnership Manager. All secondary schools were, and continue to be, committed to the Partnership. When The Gatehouse School, a secondary SEMH special school, was in danger of closing so the Behaviour Partnership worked closely with Milton Keynes Local Authority on the next steps for SEMH provision in Milton Keynes. St Paul’s Catholic School took the lead in sponsoring the new academy on behalf of the secondary schools. There are representatives from schools on the Trust Board and on local governing bodies which exemplifies the commitment to working closely with education partners in Milton Keynes. The Behaviour Partnership took responsibility for the PRUs and the arrangements for managed moves and emergency placements between schools. There is an Alternative Education Panel with senior representatives from each school which meets monthly to oversee admissions to Alternative Provision. This forum is chaired by the Executive Principal who is responsible for the agenda setting and working with mainstream schools, both primary and secondary. Oversight of the two partnership groups is undertaken by a Review Group which meets half termly and comprises primary and secondary Headteachers and senior representatives from the Local Authority.

The Behaviour Partnership is now the Milton Keynes Inclusion Partnership and includes, since 2020, the primary sector as well as the secondary sector. There have been no permanent exclusions from secondary schools in recent years and none from primary schools since 2021. The Executive Principal manages the work of the Inclusion Partnership where the primary and secondary Pupil Referral Units are pivotal in supporting the work of the partnership and its aim to eliminate the need for permanent exclusion.

Stephenson (MK) Trust became a multi-academy Trust when the Trust took responsibility for Bridge Academy in October 2013. Bridge Academy is the Alternative Provision for secondary age pupils in Milton Keynes. Neil Barrett became Executive Principal for both Stephenson Academy and Bridge Academy in October 2013.

Stephenson Academy has grown from a base of 22 students when The Gatehouse School closed to well over 80 students currently. Bridge Academy usually reaches its target of 195 students earlier in each academic year than the previous one. In September 2019, the Trust opened a joint post-16 provision for Bridge Academy and Stephenson Academy students.

The Milton Keynes Primary PRU became the third academy in the Trust in November 2022, it too sits on a good OfSTED judgement.

Stephenson (MK) Trust aims to continue to work closely with Milton Keynes Local Authority, other neighbouring Local Authorities, special schools in Milton Keynes, mainstream secondary schools and those interested in the good of the Trust and its work for the benefit of those that the Trust serves. The Trust is committed to the good of schools and young people in Milton Keynes because of its background and development. It has not sought schools to join the Trust from outside the city but is open to schools from within Milton Keynes who seek to do so.

The Trust responds positively to developments locally and works closely with the Local Authority to provide places to meet the needs of young people locally. Stephenson Academy has recently changed its age range from 11-18 to 9-16. This is to provide primary provision for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils from January 2023 as the current provision in Milton Keynes for SEMH pupils is fully utilised and acknowledges that Post-16 provision in the Trust is now based at Bridge Academy. The Local Authority has provided the funding for a new building to accommodate the primary pupils and this opened in September 2023.

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| **JOB DESCRIPTION**  |
| **Job Title**  | Chief Finance Officer  |
| **Salary**  | Stephenson (MK) Trust Range 12 point 59-13 Point 66, £68,367-£79,433 (FTE: 52 weeks),  (reduced pro rata if necessary)  |
| **Location**  |  Stephenson Academy Crosslands Stantonbury Milton Keynes MK14 6AX  (Travel around the Trust Academies in Milton Keynes is a requirement of the role and for which mileage is paid)   |
| **Contract**  | Permanent  |
| **Responsible to**  | CEO/Executive Principal  |
| **Job Purpose:**  The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the financial development and sustainability of Stephenson (MK) Trust, and for the financial probity of the organisation. They will be responsible for providing the leadership and management of the Trust’s finance and business functions, enabling the Trust to work effectively towards its aims. They will support the CEO/Executive Principal (EP) in his/her role as the Trust’s Accounting Officer.  |
| **Main Responsibilities:**  The duties and responsibilities listed below are indicative of the tasks the CFO will perform and but 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 CFO will be accountable for supporting the Trust’s strategic development and aims through effective financial planning and management, in line with regulations.  The CFO will:  * Advise the CEO, Trustees and other Trust leaders on all matters relating to financial strategy.
* Contribute to the development and implementation of the Trust’s strategy, providing thorough financial analysis.
* Conduct financial due diligence on schools applying to join the Trust, and report to the CEO and Trustees with recommendations.
* Contribute to the Trust’s risk management efforts, including identifying strategic and operational financial risks, taking steps to mitigate these risks, and maintaining the Trust’s asset and risk registers.
* Develop, implement and monitor the Trust’s business plan, using effective financial and budget modelling and benchmarking to support strong decision-making.

**Financial management and control** The CFO will be accountable for maintaining robust financial management of the Trust and its academies.  The CFO will:  * Ensure long-term financial sustainability, manage the budget process (from planning through to approval, working with other Trust leaders).
* Work with the leaders to prepare individual academies’ budgets and monitor in line with school development plans and the Trust’s strategic objectives.
* Provide a monthly report for Trustees and senior leaders detailing the financial position of the Trust, budget monitoring information, cash flow reporting and provide information regarding the internal and external
* Develop, implement, monitor and review the Trust’s financial policies and procedures in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook, enabling robust financial management whilst ensuring that all finance staff across the Trust adhere to these policies and procedures.
* Take appropriate action to address financial risks, problems and irregularities
* Develop and maintain an effective internal audit procedure for the Trust and its academies, including producing audit reports and making recommendations for improvement in line with the internal audit programme.
* Manage the external audit procedures for the Trust and its academies, and follow up on any recommendations, leading on implementing audit improvement points.
* 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.
* Support the income generation strategy for the Trust and its academies
* Ensure that any funding changes are reported to relevant stakeholders in a timely fashion and that all alerts from the DfE and ESFA are actioned immediately ensuring that any additional funding is applied for
* Lead the procurement strategy and ensure policies and procedures for buying and ordering supplies and services are compliant, efficient and generate economies of scale.
* Work with the EP and Business Services Manager to oversee the management of contracts and service level agreements to achieve maximum value for money as the Trust grows.
* Work alongside the EP and Business Services Manager to identify capital grant opportunities and oversee the preparation of capital grant bids.
* In collaboration with the EP and the Business Services Manager prepare a rolling programme of capital purchase plans and detail any financial implications

 **Reporting and compliance** The CFO 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 in line with the Academy Trust Handbook.  The CFO 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 statutory 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 Trustees, Local Governing Bodies and the Trust SLT to support effective leadership.

 **Leadership and management** The CFO will be accountable for supporting the effective management of the Trust and its academies, and for providing motivational leadership at all levels of the Trust’s organisation.  The CFO will:  * Take responsibility for the Trust’s financial management systems and budgeting systems, including managing user access, providing training, considering future system developments and generating report
* Ensure adequate training on the Trust’s financial management system is rolled out across the Trust’s Academies providing support where required
* Develop the Trust’s central finance services, ensuring these are fit for purpose and provide a high- quality service to individual schools, helping the Trust achieve continuous improvement
* Support and manage the effective delivery of payroll and pensions services for the Trust
* Develop effective relationships with the Trust’s stakeholders and partners in order to support its development and operation.
* Work with senior leaders to 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

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***Stephenson (MK) Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment and individually take responsibility for doing so***

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| **PERSON SPECIFICATION**  |
| Personal Attributes required (on the basis of the job description)  | Essential (E) Or Desirable (D)  | Identified by: Application Form (AF), Interview (I), Test (T) or other  |
| **QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING**  |
| Educated to degree level or equivalent  in a finance related discipline  | E  | AF  |
| Professional Accountancy Qualification (ACA, CIMA, ACCA or CIPFA)  | E  | AF  |
| **EXPERIENCE**  |
| Senior financial management and strategic leadership either in the public or private sector with accountability for a complex resource base  | E  | AF/I  |
| Proven track record of successful financial leadership and building effective teams  | E  | AF/I  |
| Significant experience of leading and managing budgets, and working with stakeholders to develop strong financial understanding  | E  | AF/I  |
| Experience of developing and managing external relationships with professional and regulatory bodies  | E  | AF/I/T  |
| Experience of working within an academy Trust  | E  | AF/I  |
| Experience of rapid high change environments/ settings  | D  | AF/I  |
| Experience of working with Governors, Trustees, or similar  | E  | AF/I  |
| Experience of managing multi-site and multi-disciplinary teams  | D  | AF/I  |
| Change management experience  | D  | AF/I  |
| Experience of establishing  and developing financial systems and processes  | D  | AF/I  |
| Experience of working with external and internal audit teams  | E  | AF/I  |
| Experience in the evaluation, documentation and management of risk (financial and non-financial)  | E  | AF/I  |
| **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING**  |
| Detailed and up to date knowledge of accounting and professional codes of practice  | E  | AF/I  |
| Knowledge of academy financial reporting; including statutory accounting, the academies handbook and other ESFA returns  | E  | AF/I  |
| Understanding of month-end and year-end processes and procedures including the production of management accounts  | E  | AF/I  |
| Detailed understanding and application of complex control processes and reconciliations.  | E  | AF/I  |
| Detailed understanding of contract management, Best Value and practical experience of procurement processes and procedures.  | E  | AF/I  |
| An understanding of school funding streams  | E  | AF/I  |
| **SKILLS & ABILITIES**  |
| Strong analytical skills and meticulous attention to detail  | E  | AF/I  |
| Ability to build strong working relationships with a range of stakeholders  | E  | AF/I  |
| Self-starter able to prioritise and meet tight deadlines  | E  | AF/I  |

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| **PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES**  |
| Leadership and team working  | E  | AF/I  |
| Enthusiasm and personal drive  | E  | AF/I  |
| Initiative  | E  | AF/I  |
| Senior management and organisational skill  | E  | AF/I  |
| Logical methodology to work and tasks  | E  | AF/I  |



**The Recruitment Process**

**Indicative Timeline**

* Advert Closing Date: 12.00pm on Monday 25th March 2024
* Shortlisting: Wednesday 27th March 2024
* Invitation to Interview: Thursday 28th March 2024
* Interview Dates: Tuesday 16th April 2024

**Further Information**

If you would like to discuss the role in more detail or require any further information or to request an Application Form please contact Eeleen Hoo-Gouvea via email at recruitment@Stephensonmktrust.org.uk on 01908 889400 ext. 1412 and she will arrange for the CEO to contact you for this discussion.

**Safer Recruitment**

**References**

If you are shortlisted for this position we will normally take up references before the
interview date. One of your referees must be your current or most recent employer. Two
or three satisfactory references must be received before we confirm any offer of an
appointment. The information we request will relate to salary, length of service, skills and abilities, suitability for the job, disciplinary record and suitability
to work with children. Copies of references or references that are addressed “to whom it
may concern” will not be accepted. On receipt of references, your referees may be
contacted to verify any discrepancies, anomalies or relevant issues as part of the
recruitment verification process.

**Disclosure & Barring Service Check (DBS Disclosure)**

Employment is subject to an enhanced check with the Criminal Records Bureau. Checks
will also be made against List 99 and under Section 128. All such checks must be satisfactory before we confirm any offer of an appointment. Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exemption Amendment) Order 1986, there are several jobs where we must take account of convictions, even though they are ‘spent’. All posts in the Trust are regarded as such. However, spent and/or unspent convictions may not necessarily make you unsuitable for appointment.

**Validation of Qualifications**

All shortlisted candidates will be asked to bring original certificates of relevant qualifications to interview. These may be confirmed as genuine with the relevant awarding bodies.

**Right to Work in the United Kingdom**

Under the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, it is a criminal offence to employ anyone
who is not entitled to live or work in the United Kingdom. Applicants can expect us to ask
for proof of this at interview stage, where you will be asked to provide some original
documentation e.g. your passport, to confirm that you are eligible to work within the UK. Photographic proof of identity will also be required.

**Medical Assessment**

A confidential pre-employment health declaration will need to be completed if you receive an offer of employment. A satisfactory medical assessment may be required
before we confirm any offer of an appointment.

**Child Protection**

The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and
young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We have a
designated senior leaders who are responsible for referring and monitoring any suspected case of abuse. All members of staff receive training in line with our child protection policy.

**Code of Conduct and Personal Behaviour**

The Trust believes that it is essential for standards of conduct at work to be maintained
to ensure delivery of quality services and also to protect the wellbeing of all people in the
community. The Trust regards everyone working in our academies as role models to our students. As such employees should conduct themselves with integrity, impartiality and honesty. Furthermore, everyone in the school has an absolute duty to promote and safeguard the welfare of children. Registered teachers are in addition bound by the codes and professional values set out in Part 2 of the Teacher Standards. While registered teachers are bound by the Standards, the Trust considers the principles to apply to all staff employed by it.

**Equal Opportunities**

The Trust is committed to promoting best practice in our efforts to eliminate discrimination and to create a working and learning environment where all are treated fairly and with respect. We take action to ensure that nobody is treated less favourably than anyone else
because of their colour, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation,
disability or age.