ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH COLLABORATION
Multi Academy Trust

Advert for the post of: Chief Financial Officer

This is an important executive appointment for Achievement through Collaboration Trust.

We are seeking a strategic, values led Chief Financial Officer to provide robust financial leadership across our Trust aligned to the DfE Trust Quality Descriptors.

Achievement through Collaboration Trust, are driven by three core values ensuring everyone in our trust can **Achieve**, **Belong**, and **Collaborate**. To learn more about our Charitable School Trust and our values please visit https://www.atctrust.org.uk/

Our next Chief Financial Officer will provide sound financial stewardship that shapes our long term sustainability, guides strategic investment, and instil confidence in our school leaders future planning. The ideal candidate will translate complex financial data into actionable insights, strengthening financial planning and assurance across our trust/schools, and empowering school headteachers and leaders to make wise, evidence informed decisions based on robust, accurate reporting for their school.

The Role

We are looking for a CFO who deeply understands schools and the unique, day to day challenges faced by our school leaders. You will act as a strategic partner to them, harnessing financial efficiencies and insights to deliver tangible benefits for our children, staff, and communities. Crucially, you will champion the effective use of resources to benefit both the Trust and the wider education system.

To achieve this, the successful candidate will:

- Drive a long term financial strategy and use financial data and sector indicators to set a stable, accurate, and sustainable financial roadmap for the Trust.
- Champion a clear, proactive approach to delivering value for money through rigorous budgeting and risk management.
- Operate a well planned reserves policy that secures cash flow, provides robust contingency for urgent expenditure, and perfectly aligns resources with the educational priorities across all our schools.

Working closely with the CEO, DCEO, wider Executive Team, trustees, school leaders, and central colleagues, you set a stable, accurate and sustainable long-term financial strategy for the trust.

The Candidate

This is a demanding full-time role that requires:

- Technical excellence and strong professional judgment.
- A clear, unwavering commitment to the stewardship of public money.
- The ability to ensure all long-term resources and sustainability plans are perfectly aligned with the Trust's strategic plan and priorities.

We have taken care to produce a thorough recruitment guide for this role, which gives much fuller detail about the Trust, our context, our culture, and the breadth of the CFO position. We ask all prospective candidates to read this carefully before applying.

The Trust Executive Team would be happy to meet prospective candidates to provide highly valuable, transparent insight into the role and the Trust.

Job description for the post of: Chief Financial Officer	
Salary Range: L19 £83,478 - L23 £92,065 1 FTE **Permanent**	
Start date:	January 2027 (or earlier)
Contract Type:	Full-Time (37 hours per week, 52 weeks per year)
Location:	Units 11&12, South Preston Office Village, Cuerden Way, Bamber Bridge, PR5 6BL
Pension:	Membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)
Responsible to:	Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Operations)
Accountable to:	Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Trustees
Responsible for:	Finance Management, Annual Auditor and the extended financial services team

Our charitable trust has one single legal and moral purpose: to advance education in the public interest. We believe that when schools work together with shared values and collective purpose, the outcomes for children are transformational.

Role overview:

To provide strategic leadership and oversight of the Trust's financial strategy and long-term planning.

- Take the lead role in formulating, evaluating and promoting the Trust financial strategy, ensuring sustainability, compliance, and growth.
- Evaluate and ensure financial statutory responsibilities and compliance demands are met, specifically ensuring the Trust strictly adheres to the Academy Trust Handbook as a condition of the funding agreement.
- Develop and drive internal financial procedures/systems, exploring initiatives to digitise, simplify, and streamline financial systems (working towards DfE digital and technology standards by 2030), including the exploration of Artificial Intelligence tools where ethically appropriate.
- Take on the leadership of the Trust's financial scrutiny processes, engaging with internal and external audit providers, and leading on the financial risk register, working closely with the Deputy CEO to ensure alignment, robustness, and effective mitigation of financial risks.
- Oversee the Trust's internal control framework, and lead the development and delivery of a three year financial strategic plan to support the Trust's long term sustainability and priorities.
- Ensure Trustees and other relevant stakeholders receive timely reports and the necessary support to fulfil their roles in strategic planning.
- Act as Company Secretary for the Trust, ensuring deadlines are met for all returns and publications.

Main responsibilities:

The CFO leads in setting annual budgets and long-term forward planning aligned with the Trust's strategic priorities. The role holds school leaders accountable for financial decision making related to the General Annual Grant (GAG), establishing key drivers specific to each school setting and using Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning (ICFP) models to ensure efficient resource allocation. The CFO is responsible for statutory returns to the DfE, ESFA, and Companies House, ensuring the trust remains fully compliant with the Academy Trust Handbook, Charity Commission's Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), and other regulatory requirements.

Working in conjunction with the wider executive team and school leaders, the CFO:

- Through their leadership, will ensure the Trust's resources enable its pupils, staff, and schools to achieve excellent educational outcomes.
- Develops a culture of belonging where all stakeholders are united through a common purpose and shared values of excellence, equity, and integrity.
- Through respectful relationships identifies and shares good practice, building strong relationships with the Executive Board, auditors, banks, and external partners.
- Ensures monthly accounting and internal controls are accurate, producing monthly management accounts (including income and expenditure, balance sheet, and 12-month rolling cash flow forecasts).
- Is responsible for budget monitoring providing the overarching framework for the implementation of effective financial management and controls consistent with obligations as publicly funded bodies.
- Has strategic responsibility for procurement driving efficiency and value for money across the MAT through effective financial planning, procurement, and contract management

The specific purpose of this job is to:

- Provide professional management and leadership of financial services, moving the Trust from basic compliance and assurance to operational optimisation.
- Ensure the provision of accurate and timely consolidated financial reporting to enable the Trust to achieve its objectives, preparing annual accounts to prescribed standards.
- Promote best practice and ensure compliance with the financial processes and procedures set out in the policies of the Trust and the Academy Trust Handbook, which provides the overarching framework for effective financial management.
- Have effective responsibility for Financial statements, Management accounts, Financial compliance, Budget preparation, Financial reporting, Audit services, and Financial systems and processes.
- Oversee the financial management in each school; working proactively with Headteachers to implement deficit recovery strategies so that all schools contribute towards the maintenance of healthy reserves.
- Prepare and present school and Trust level reports on the financial position to schools, the CEO, DCEO and the Board of Trustees.
- Oversee externally contracted services, ensuring all procurement procedures achieve value for money and comply with the Public Contracts Regulations.

- Analyse and evaluate staff structures on a regular basis to maximise efficiency and effectiveness, anticipating and planning for growth and change.
- Conduct financial due diligence on schools proposing to join the Trust and reporting to the Board with recommendations.
- Represent the Trust to regulatory authorities, the media, stakeholders, and the public as required

Core duties

Financial Management:

- Ensure the Trust has appropriate financial systems in place to manage and maintain accurate financial records, reporting to the DfE, ESFA, Companies House, and the Charities Commission.
- Ensure that the Trust adheres to the Academy Trust Handbook and its Funding Agreement at all times, including compliance with DfE senior pay controls and approval requirements for new appointments where remuneration.
- Oversee the preparation of the year-end statutory accounts and the audit file; liaise with the auditors to reach signoff according to DfE and HMRC guidelines.
- Develop a 3 to 5 year strategic financial plan and agree annual budgets with the CEO, DCEO and Headteachers, ensuring individual school budgets are aligned with school improvement plans.
- Devise appropriate accounting procedures to control, monitor and disburse budgets, maintaining oversight of payroll processes, reconciliation, and accurate payment of salaries.
- Work with finance personnel to ensure the production of monthly/quarterly management accounts and produce timely, accurate reports for the Trustees/Local Governing Bodies.
- Support and challenge the CEO and Trustees in the review of systems and structures to ensure value for money and efficiency in all operations, ensuring the Trust operates as a going concern.
- Research and bid for additional funding or grants to the DfE and other sources, liaising with bid preparation advisers where appropriate.

Audit, Risk, and Scrutiny Services:

- Advise the Executive Team and the Board on external and internal audit arrangements, as required by financial regulations.
- Oversee the audit programme, reporting to trustees on the adequacy of the Trust's internal control framework and ensuring timely response to audit findings and implementation of recommendations.
- Maintain and frequently review in respect of the Trust Financial Risk Register, including contingency and business continuity planning.

Contract Management:

- Manage the effective purchasing and procurement of services for the MAT, ensuring all procurement procedures achieve value for money, comply with Procurement Act 2023 regulations, and ensure Agency Spend and Management Information System (MIS) contracts align with DfE's MIS framework.
- Delivery and ensure leaders at all levels have access to a robust trustwide contracts register to guide contract management work.

- Ensure best-value within Trust-wide budgets for buildings, power, water, rates, furniture, furnishings, contracts, insurance, and grounds maintenance.
- Ensure appropriate levels of insurance or RPA cover are in place to fully capture the needs of all the establishments within the Trust.

Business Planning & Strategic Growth:

- Conduct financial due diligence on schools applying to join the Trust, and manage the successful onboarding of new schools and trust financial platforms and operating models.
- Ensure there are appropriate risk management systems in place for all financial and business risks, actively managing relationships with banks and financial institutions for robust treasury management.
- Lead initiatives to align financial and capital planning with sustainability goals, including carbon reduction and net-zero commitments.

General Duties:

- Attend Trust Board meetings, participating and presenting key financial information.
- Prepare policy and review papers as required.
- Maintain a presence in professional networks, ensuring a current overview of sector policies, government legislation, and educational trends.
- Manage and lead the Trust Finance Team, taking responsibility for their professional development, conducting staff development reviews, and fostering a high-performance culture.
- Comply with policies and procedures relating to child protection, health and safety, confidentiality, and data protection, reporting all concerns to an appropriate person.
- Uphold the Trust's code of practice on equality, diversity, and inclusion, creating an environment free of discrimination.

Performance Measures:

- Performance of the finance team's staff in line with Trust improvement and strategic development plans.
- Accuracy and timeliness of financial returns to statutory agencies.
- Accuracy, timeliness, and quality of internal management information, including cash flow and budgetary control.
- Achievement of streamlined, digitised, and cost-effective processes for financial administration.
- Successful integration and financial due diligence of new schools joining the Trust

General:

- Attending meetings within the academy trust and external events as required.
- Preparing policy and review papers as required and requested.
- Maintaining a presence in national professional networks and through these and other means ensuring a current overview of sector policies and developments.
- Managing teams / people as required, including conducting staff development reviews and participating, as required, in training, induction and staff development events.

• Complying with and upholding, in all respects, the trust's code of practice on equality and diversity. • Undertaking such other duties as the Executive Team may require from time to time. • Undertaking any duties, consistent with this position, which might, from time to time, be assigned by the Board or the Chief Executive.			
Prepared by:	Craig Holden	**Date:**	23rd September 2026

Equal opportunities

We are committed to achieving equal opportunities in the way we deliver services to the community and in our employment arrangements. We expect all employees to understand and promote this policy in their work, fostering an inclusive culture.

Health and safety

All employees have a responsibility for their own health and safety and that of others when carrying out their duties and must help us to apply our general statement of health and safety policy.

Safeguarding Commitment

The Trust is committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The successful candidate will be required to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and Children's Barred List check. As the role includes working with children, it is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Furthermore, an online search will be carried out on shortlisted candidates prior to interview

Person Specification – Chief Financial Officer (January 2027)	
Qualifications & Experience	**Essential / Desirable**
Full professional accountancy qualification (ICAEW, ACCA, CIMA, or CIPFA Level 7) and/or active membership of a relevant professional body, **or** a willingness to work towards and achieve this, in alignment with the Academy Trust Handbook 2026 requirements.	Essential
Significant senior financial leadership experience within a complex, multi-site organisation, ideally within education or academy trusts.	Essential
Proven track record of leading financial strategy, multi-year forecasting, and capital projects.	Essential
In-depth knowledge of statutory requirements relating to academies, specifically the Academy Trust Handbook and Charities SORP.	Essential
Experience in driving digital transformation, innovation, alignment with DfE digital and technology standards (2030 vision), and using financial software packages.	Desirable
Experience in onboarding schools, academy conversions, due diligence, and MAT growth.	Desirable
Skills & Personal Attributes	
Strategic thinker able to translate Trust vision into actionable financial strategy using tools like Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning (ICFP).	Essential
Strong persuasive, influencing, and stakeholder-management skills to communicate complex data clearly to non-finance specialists.	Essential
High level of professional integrity, resilience, and collaborative values led leadership style, aligned with the 7 principles of public life.	Essential
Demonstration of AtC values of Achieve, Belong Collaborate	
Achieve: ability to review existing systems, identify new opportunities and ways of working, implement and continuously evaluate.	Essential
Belong: ability to foster good working relationships with stakeholders at all levels. Ability to motivate pupils, students and colleagues through common purpose and shared values	Essential
Collaborate: ability to lead by example, setting high standards for self and others. Commitment to the pursuit of Continuous Professional Development of oneself and others	Essential
Safeguarding: Demonstrates a clear commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults, and is willing to undergo appropriate checks and training as required.	Essential

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion: Committed to actively promoting and embedding principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion.	Essential
Health & Safety: Understands and upholds responsibilities relating to health and safety, ensuring a safe working and learning environment for all.	Essential