

TCAT



Chief Finance Officer

The Challenge Academy Trust
Candidate Information Pack

SERVE CHALLENGE EMPOWER

Welcome

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for the interest you have shown in the position of Chief Finance Officer with The Challenge Academy Trust (TCAT).

TCAT was formed in 2017 by like-minded leaders of local primary and secondary schools in Warrington along with Priestley College. Our vision is rooted in our mission – to serve, challenge, and empower the educational community. We embody this mission by offering highly effective services to our academies, fostering strong leadership, investing in our workforce, and inspiring the children and young people in our care.

These guiding principles are anchored in our core values, which encompass:

- Inclusivity and social justice
- Educational excellence
- Collaboration and interdependence
- Challenge and service
- Care and sustainability
- Celebrating difference

These values underpin everything we do as a trust, shaping our services and working practices. We operate around three core principles:

- **Continuous professional development:** An extensive range of training for teacher and support staff at all levels of the organisation. We invest in our staff to ensure they feel valued, develop as practitioners and provide the best outcomes for our young people.
- **Collaboration:** We aim to create strength through interdependence and collective accountability in our working practices via our extensive professional hub network.
- **Challenge & support in equal measure:** A programme of quality assurance provides our academies with a 'mirror on themselves' with the expertise and experience to support improvement where necessary.

Our mission is to serve, challenge and empower the educational community. We enact our mission by adopting an operational excellence framework in what we do, providing highly effective services to our academies, supporting strong leadership, investing in the workforce, and inspiring our children and young people.


There are currently 14 member academies based in Warrington and the surrounding area, including six primary academies, seven secondary academies and a sixth form college, all rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. We also operate a subsidiary outdoor education company operating on Anglesey.

We have around 11,000 children and young people in our care along with over 1,300 staff and revenue of more than £90 million. These may seem like huge numbers; however, we pride ourselves on maintaining an intimacy within this which is built upon positive and professional relationships.

Recognised by the Department for Education as a 'strong' trust, we are proud of the current financial and educational health of the trust. Ours is a trust that is financially secure and fully compliant, with a record of clean audits, positive ESFA reviews and a healthy surplus linked to a strong investment strategy. Our latest annual report, including our financial statements, can be found here: [Annual Report TCAT 2024](#) / [TCAT Annual Impact Report](#) and you can learn more about us here: [About Us – The Challenge Academy Trust](#)

We are not an organisation prone to resting on its laurels; this trust is growing in size, complexity and in influence and this is an exciting time to join our Trust. I would encourage candidates to get in touch for a conversation about the role and look forward to receiving your application.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Moorcroft', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andy Moorcroft
Chief Executive Officer

About the Role

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

Salary:	Competitive
Hours:	37 hours per week, permanent
Reporting to:	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Responsible for:	Central finance staff and indirect line management of finance staff within member academies
Work Location:	TCAT Professional Development Centre, Bridgewater High School (Upper), Broomfields Road, Warrington, WA4 3AE

The Challenge Academy Trust (TCAT) is a multi-academy trust made of up 6 primary schools, 7 secondary schools and a 16-19 sixth form college. With over 11,000 students, 1,300 employees and revenue in excess of £90 million, the Chief Finance Officer, will play a pivotal role in shaping the financial strategy and ensuring the financial health of our Trust.

The CFO works closely with the CEO, Board of Trustees, academy leaders and other members of the Trust senior leadership team to drive financial performance, support strategic decision-making, and ensure compliance with all financial regulations.

You will be expected to attend regular meetings with senior colleagues and trustees deliver the trust's key charitable aim of educational advancement. To this end, you will need to be a team player with the skills and qualities to support system leadership.

Ideally with a background in education, charities or the public sector, you will lead a central team consisting of a management accountant, financial controller the four cluster finance managers. Together, the team is responsible for all aspects of financial management across the trust working closely with academy level finance colleagues. The CFO will also be a Director of our subsidiary outdoor education company, playing a leading role in the development of our offer to children and young people across the region.

To arrange a discussion about this opportunity with TCAT please contact Melissa Alexander, TCAT Development Lead by telephone (01925 971827) or email (m.alexander@tcat.uk.com).

How to apply

Click here to apply: [Chief Finance Officer – The Challenge Academy Trust](#)

Please download our application form and return by email to recruitment@tcat.uk.com

Closing Date – 12 noon, 29 January 2025

Applications received after the closing time will not be considered.

Interviews

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an assessment centre, to be held on w/c 10 February 2025.

Working for The Challenge Academy Trust

At The Challenge Academy Trust, we want to embed a culture that champions better work and working lives across the Trust; a framework to support and develop our workforce from 'hire to retire'. Our staff workload, wellbeing and benefits package demonstrates our commitment to ensure we can:

- Provide a workload that is fair and reasonable,
- Foster an environment where employee health and wellbeing are actively supported and promoted,
- Develop employee's personal and professional skills & knowledge continuously throughout their careers,
- Provide structured routes for career progression,
- Reward people fairly with transparent and appropriate pay and conditions of service alongside additional benefits through TCAT+:
 - Retailer discounts and savings,
 - Car Lease scheme,
 - Cycle to Work scheme,
 - Discounted Healthcare Cash Plan with Westfield Health,

TCAT+ also hosts a range of online wellbeing resources, supporting physical, emotional, financial, professional and social wellbeing.



Continuing Professional Development
Join us at Education Connect to access high-quality CPD that is rooted in the latest research, promotes innovation, and fosters a culture of collaboration.



Cycle to Work Scheme
Save 23-39% on a new bike for work. TCAT have teamed up with BHN Extras to offer a Cycle to work salary sacrifice scheme.



TCAT Plus (Health and Wellbeing and Staff Discounts)
TCAT Plus is an online hub for all staff that offers wellbeing support and financial discounts at hundreds of big brand online and high street retailers.



Smart Tech
A chance to get the latest tech at the best price and spread the payments over your salary, interest-free.



Car Benefit Scheme
A salary sacrifice car lease scheme in partnership with Tusker. Access an electric or hybrid vehicle that will be fully serviced, insured, vehicle tax paid and recovery assistance.



Hub Support Model
Strength through interdependence and collective accountability in our working practices. Much of this is achieved via our extensive professional hub network.



Pension
A career within TCAT will provide you with access to the Teachers Pension or Local Government Pension scheme.



Enhanced annual leave for support staff
8 bank holidays plus up to 31 days annual leave.



Entitlement to occupational sick pay
Up to six months full pay and six months half pay in the event of being unable to work.



Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Shared Parental leave
Enhanced maternity and adoption pay for eligible employees.



Workload Strategy
We have carefully examined and implemented the recommendations outlined in the DfE Workload Reduction Toolkit across the Trust. We are committed to aligning and integrating our approach to workload management for all our staff.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title:	Chief Finance Officer (CFO)
Reporting to:	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Responsible for:	Central finance staff and indirect line management of finance staff within member academies

Main Purpose

The CFO is responsible for the financial development and sustainability of The Challenge Academy Trust, ensuring the financial integrity of the organisation and achieving value for money in all areas of the organisation. They will lead and manage the trust's finance functions, supporting the CEO in their role as the trust's Accounting Officer.

Duties and Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership and Trust Development

- Advise the CEO, Trust Board, academy Heads/Principals and local governing bodies on financial strategy and operations.
- Contribute to the development and implementation of the trust's strategic action plan, providing financial analysis and guidance.
- Manage the trust's investment strategy.
- Conduct financial due diligence on schools applying to join the trust.
- Contribute to risk management efforts, identifying and mitigating financial risks.
- Develop, implement, and monitor the trust's business plan using effective financial and budget modelling.

Financial Management and Control

- Manage the budget process from planning to approval, working with trust leaders.
- Oversee the preparation and monitoring of individual academies' budgets.
- Provide accurate and timely financial information to the Board and trust leaders.
- Develop and maintain financial policies and procedures in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook.
- Ensure robust financial management and address financial risks and irregularities.
- Oversee internal and external audit procedures and follow up on recommendations.
- Establish effective procurement procedures and oversee commercial contracts
- Manage the trust's tax, National Insurance arrangements, and cash position.
- Support the income generation strategy for the trust and its academies.

Reporting and Compliance

- Complete and submit financial returns as required by relevant authorities.
- Prepare and submit the trust's financial reports, including annual accounts and monthly management accounts.
- Ensure compliance with all relevant financial regulations and legislation (including the Academy Trust Handbook and charitable law).
- Provide timely reports to the trust board and other leaders to support effective governance.

Leadership and Management

- Develop and manage the trust's financial management system.
- Lead and develop the central finance team, ensuring best practices are observed.
- Build effective relationships with stakeholders and partners.
- Represent the trust in external networks and forums.

Core Leadership Accountabilities

- Develop and implement the trust's financial strategy.
- Ensure compliance with relevant laws and sector requirements.
- Lead the promotion and delivery of excellent financial management.
- Manage cash reserves and procurement strategy.
- Monitor financial performance and report outcomes to the CEO and Trust Board.

Professional Development

- Engage in own continuous professional development and that of finance team members.
- Attend briefings and participate in professional development opportunities.
- Keep up-to-date with educational developments and legislation affecting trust finances.

Other Duties

- Attend and participate in trust board meetings.
- Support the CEO and Strategic Business Lead in ensuring effective meetings.
- Promote and safeguard the welfare of children and young people.
- Ensure compliance with health and safety, data protection, and equality policies

REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS: The details contained in this Job Description reflect the content of the job at the date it was prepared. However, it is inevitable that over time the nature of the job may change. Existing duties may no longer be required, and other duties may be gained without changing the general nature of the post or the level of responsibility entailed. Consequently, the Trust will expect to revise this Job Description from time to time and will consult with the post-holder at the appropriate time.

REVIEW DATE: January 2025

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Criteria		Essential	Desirable	Assessment Method
Qualifications				
1	Fully qualified accountant (e.g., ACCA, ACA, CIMA, CIPFA).	X		A/I
2	Degree or equivalent qualification in a finance-related discipline.	X		A/I
3	Commitment to, and evidence of, ongoing professional development.	X		A/I
Experience				
4	Significant, post qualification experience in senior financial management and strategic leadership.	X		A/I
5	Experience in accounting, management, and auditing.	X		A/I/T
6	Proven ability to manage service delivery and financial systems.	X		A/I
7	Experience with project budgeting and control.	X		A/I/T
8	Experience in developing and implementing financial policies and procedures.	X		A/I
9	Experience in managing budgets and producing management accounts.	X		A/I/T
10	Experience in managing and leading people, with a record of developing staff to realise their full potential.	X		A/I
11	Experience in a senior financial leadership role within the education or public sector.		X	A/I
12	Experience in a multi-academy trust environment.		X	A/I
Skills & Competencies				
13	Strong strategic thinking and analytical skills, with the ability to translate complex financial information into actionable insights.	X		A/I/T
14	Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to build effective relationships with a wide range of stakeholders.	X		A/I
15	Highly developed planning, prioritisation, and organisational skills in order to meet tight deadlines.	X		A/I/T

16	Ability to explain complex financial concepts to non-specialists.	X		A/I/T
17	Readiness to accept and implement change.	X		A/I
18	Experience as a strategic leader, demonstrating excellent judgement and decision-making skills.	X		A/I
19	Knowledge of companies and charities law.	X		A/I/T
20	Experience with financial software packages.	X		A/I
Behaviours & Attributes				
21	Flexible and enthusiastic approach to work.	X		A/I
22	Resilient and able to thrive under pressure.	X		A/I/T
23	Ability to motivate team members to ensure high performance, taking responsibility for own and other professional development.	X		A/I
24	Excellent attention to detail.	X		A/I/T
25	Ability to develop excellent internal and external relationships.	X		A/I
26	Commitment to the trust's values and the promotion of diversity, equality, and inclusion.	X		A/I
Other requirements				
27	Enhanced DBS clearance.	X		A/I
28	Compliance with all academy and trust policies.	X		A/I
29	Commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.	X		A/I
30	Ability to travel between academies and attend evening meetings as required.	X		A/I
31	Understanding of and commitment to the principles and practice of equality, diversity and inclusion.	X		A/I

Key: A = Application; I = Interview; T = Task

NOTE TO APPLICANTS:

Whilst all points on the specification are important, those marked as 'essential' are the key requirements for the role. You should pay particular attention to these points and provide evidence of meeting them. Failure to do so may mean that you will not be invited for interview.

REVIEW DATE: January 2025