

Lighthouse Education Trust

Inspiring Bright Futures

Recruitment Pack

Chief Finance & Operations Officer (CFOO)

2025 - 2026 Academic Year





It is my pleasure to welcome you to our wonderful school.

I am proud and privileged to lead such a unique and innovative school. This is a school where students' special interests, social and communication skills, abilities, academic and life skills are mapped and further developed so destinations can be identified and targeted for each individual.

We deliver a broad, ambitious and balanced curriculum that enables all our students to make excellent progress and gain nationally accredited qualifications in Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5.

Developing meaningful friendships and relationships is a life skill that is taught and developed in all aspects of school life, but is a particular focus in the Wellbeing and Speech and Language curriculum/sessions. We also take great joy in celebrating those "Wow" moments for our students when the impossible becomes the possible!

A key part of curriculum delivery is 'building aspirations' and employability awareness. We believe that the future is limitless, and optimism is key to our approach. We do this by exposing our students to a number of different employment sectors and experiences throughout their curriculum.

We also believe every day is a new opportunity and the chance to write a different story and this is fundamental to our compassionate approach to working with our students.

At Lighthouse School the staff body, senior leaders and trustees are devoted to making the difference for our students so they can reach their next steps and thrive in society.

We are a neuro-diverse staff team with a range of disabilities, diversities, strengths and weaknesses. We believe our staff should be role models to support our students to create their own pathway to success.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to be interested in working in our amazing school, and encourage you to take time to find out whether we are the right fit for your skills and experiences.

Emma Sullivan, Principal

OUR TRUST VALUES



RESPECT

Embracing uniqueness, equality, and ensuring all contributions are valued.



'Upon joining this school, I've gained many friends for life and gained myself the motivation to be more ambitious in life and frankly braver in my future endeavours. I simply thank those who worked closest to me at my time there'.

COMPASSION

Showing empathy and understanding of others' needs.

AMBITION

Taking risks, having adventures and aspiring to achieve great things.



HAPPINESS

Taking joy from developing and succeeding together.

OUR SCHOOL VALUES



INNOVATION

Striving for creative solutions, challenging perceptions, and inspiring positive change.

‘Our child has grown in confidence since starting at Lighthouse and loves coming to school. The school not only supports our child but us as a family.’

OPTIMISM

Realising our limitless destinations, now and in the future.

VERSITILITY

Exemplifying individualised and adaptive teaching and learning.

DEVOTION

Being dedicated to our people, our jobs, and our school community.



JOB ROLE PROFILE	
Job title:	Chief Finance & Operations Officer (CFOO)
Salary:	Competitive and commensurate with experience. Indicative salary is circa £70,000
Location:	Central trust office in Yorkshire (Leeds and Harrogate), with frequent travel to Trust schools
Contract type:	Permanent, full time (This role is suitable for a flexible working consideration)
Responsible to: Chief Executive Officer/ Trust Board	
<p><u>Role Summary:</u></p> <p>The CFOO is a pivotal strategic leader in this new and growing Multi Academy Trust. As a member of the Executive Team, the post-holder will build, embed and lead the financial and operational infrastructure required to support both immediate needs and long-term expansion. They will establish robust governance, systems, policies and processes that scale effectively as new schools join the Trust.</p> <p>The CFOO will provide expert financial stewardship, lead and deliver on all operational functions, and ensure Lighthouse Education Trust becomes a resilient, efficient, and compliant organisation with the capacity to grow sustainably, whilst delivering excellent educational outcomes.</p> <p>Initially the MAT is formed by the founder school, Lighthouse Leeds, with a new school being opened in 2026, Lighthouse Harrogate.</p>	
<p>Key Responsibilities:</p> <p><u>Strategic Leadership for a Growing Trust</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the CEO and Board to shape and deliver the Trust's long-term growth strategy. • Lead the development of scalable and future-proof financial, estates and operational frameworks. • Provide strategic modelling for school acquisitions, conversions and due diligence. • Build central capacity and structures that anticipate growth rather than react to it. • Lead change-management initiatives that support Trust expansion. <p><u>Financial Strategy & Planning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and deliver on the Trust's long-term financial strategy and multi-year financial plans. • Produce and monitor sustainable financial models supporting school onboarding and future growth. • Lead and deliver budget setting, financial forecasting, sensitivity analysis and scenario planning • Ensure all available resources are optimised. • Ensure robust cashflow management and financial resilience during periods of expansion. 	

Financial Control, Compliance & Governance

- Establish and maintain strong internal controls and financial systems from inception.
- Ensure compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook, DfE requirements, returns and statutory frameworks.
- Lead and deliver on areas of compliance such as VAT returns, corporation tax, internal/external audit, year-end accounts and financial reporting to trustees.
- Act as Company Secretary, and to include insurance and legal matters.
- Develop policies (finance, procurement, reserves, risk, investment) suitable for a scaling MAT.
- Ensure effective oversight and auditing of payroll and pension arrangements across existing and new schools joining the Trust.

Operational Leadership

- Lead and deliver a Trust-wide estates strategy, including condition surveys, asset management and capital projects.
- Develop and deliver a long-term estates plan that supports Trust growth and efficiency.
- Oversee and deliver ICT strategy to ensure digital infrastructure, asset and information management alongside cyber security are fully embedded within an integrated system, optimised for purpose and growth.
- Champion the effective and safe use of AI in support of T&L plus business operations
- Manage and deliver the procurement strategy, tendering processes and compliant commercial contract negotiation, ensuring value for money.
- Ensure Trust-wide compliance for health & safety, safeguarding-linked premises functions and statutory responsibilities.

People & Culture

- With the Director of HR, recruit, develop and lead finance and operations' teams, ensuring capacity grows ahead of need.
- Lead and deliver the Marketing Strategy, working with key stakeholders for inward and outward facing.
- Foster a high-performance, service-focused culture within central services.
- Support school leaders through coaching and expert guidance, building financial and operational capability at school level.
- Provide training in matters of expertise for e.g. colleagues, Governors etc.
- Represent Lighthouse Education in outward facing opportunities.

Governance, Risk & Due Diligence

- Lead and deliver on the approach to risk management, developing and maintaining a robust risk register tailored for a growing MAT.
- Lead due diligence for incoming schools, identifying operational, financial and estate risks.
- Present clear reports and recommendations to the Board and its Finance & Audit Committees.
- Ensure transparent, evidence-driven decision making.
- Ensure whole Trust compliance with GDPR, including training of staff & Trustees, acting as the SPDC and liaising with the DPO.

Workforce development

- Provide strategic HR solutions on complex and sensitive HR issues including: succession planning, recruitment and retention, data strategies and leadership development.
- Develop and implement strategies in conjunction with leaders for succession planning and CPD to ensure the workforce can meet the needs of its learners now and in the future.
- Develop and embed an effective Performance Management process and pay policy, providing professional guidance and training for line managers/reviewers and for senior leaders.
- Develop, implement, and oversee EDI initiatives, policies, and training programs that promote awareness, reduce bias, and advance representation at all levels across the Trust.
- Work with other leaders to develop robust induction programmes for new starters.
- Ensure that the Trust's staff and trustee training records are accurate, complete and up to date.

Casework

- Be a trusted HR advisor to managers, SLT and Trustees, providing expert guidance on a wide range of HR matters including complex employee relations, recruitment, onboarding, payroll and compliance.
- Provide training, as required, in line with the Trust's policies and procedures and employment law.
- Liaise with other services internally and externally to ensure holistic and comprehensive support is provided.
- Ensure all available mechanisms are utilised to monitor and evaluate the quality of guidance and support provided.
- Support the HR Business Partner and/or HR Assistant in managing case work.
- Support and lead strategic project work as required.
- Act as Investigating Officer as required.

Managing attendance and well-being

- Lead the effective management of attendance, including short term and long term sickness cases. Ensure that absence procedures are followed.
- Develop proactive well-being and attendance solutions that encourage and enable staff to be self-aware of their own health and general well-being.
- Lead and support initiatives to improve the well-being and engagement of employees, working closely with Trust leaders to deliver appropriate support.
- Develop strategies informed by data to manage staff absence and diversity trends and support follow up action as required.
- Lead the Trust's wellbeing strategies, including advising on stress and other risk assessments., salary and pension issues.

All staff responsibility:

- Promote and safeguard the welfare of children and young people within the Trust, raising any concerns following Trust protocol/procedures.
- Ensure that all activities are undertaken within the framework of the Trust’s risk assessments.
Work collaboratively as part of a team and providing help and support to other team members.
- Participating in any relevant meetings/professional development opportunities at the Trust as appropriate.
- Support the effective running of the Trust by ensuring the policies and procedures are understood

Our aims:

- Centre for excellence for ASC education in our region.
- Sustainably provide/support education for increased numbers of autistic students in our region.
- National leaders for destination led education for autistic students.

Our Trust has a focus on continuous improvement and is always evolving to support our students to make excellent progress in all parts of their academic and personal in-education experience.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCAB-qualified accountant (ACA, ACCA, CIMA, CIPFA or equivalent/significant relevant & related experience if not fully qualified). Evidence of continuous professional development in finance, leadership or operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBA, management or leadership qualification. NEBOSH, PRINCE2 or similar operational/project qualifications.
Experience, Knowledge and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior leadership experience in a multi-site or complex organisation. Experience building or transforming finance/operations systems during organisational growth. Proven ability to design, implement and mature robust financial frameworks. Experience leading large budgets and presenting financial information at Board level. Experience overseeing estates, capital projects, ICT, procurement or compliance functions. Experience of leading teams through periods of change or expansion. Strong financial planning, budgeting, modelling and financial analysis skills. Understanding of the Academy Trust Handbook and DfE compliance requirements (or the ability to learn rapidly). Knowledge of procurement law, value-for-money principles and commercial contracting. Understanding of estates, H&S compliance and capital project management. Excellent ICT, data and MIS capability with an understanding of digital transformation. Exceptional communication skills with the ability to translate complex information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous role in a Multi-Academy Trust or education environment. Experience of school due diligence, conversions or TUPE processes. Experience scaling an organisation (public or private sector).
Personal Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic, innovative and able to anticipate future challenges and opportunities. High integrity, reliability and commitment to transparency. Resilient and solution-focused, with strong judgement and decisiveness. Collaborative, with the ability to build strong relationships and influence at all levels. 	

PERSON SPECIFICATION

	Essential	Desirable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurial mindset with the ability to balance risk, compliance, and opportunity. • Commitment to the Trust's mission, values and focus on delivering excellent education. 	
Other Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced DBS Check • Ability to travel across Yorkshire and occasionally beyond • Willingness to work flexibly in line with Trust needs during periods of growth 	

To apply for this role, please complete a Lighthouse School Application Form available by visiting our website, or contacting HR@Lighthouseschool.co.uk. **If you will struggle to complete an application form and need adjustments, please contact the school and ask for the HR Department on 0113 4570605, who will be able to advise.**

Each application is shortlisted against the Job Description and Person Specification so please ensure you complete the application form in its entirety, providing sufficient information and a supporting statement in relation to these documents. The form is designed in line with safer recruitment practices and allows us to determine your potential suitability for the role and to carry out appropriate pre-employment checks.

If shortlisted you will be invited to interview. This will be with a least one member of the Senior Leadership Team, and a member of the HR team. We will discuss the role in more detail, give you a tour of the school, and carry out an interview to assess your experience and skill set as well as your overall suitability. You may be required to undertake further tasks dependent on the role applied for.

For those candidates shortlisted, we will request references in advance of any interviews and ask that you specify on the application form (where requested) if you do not permit us to apply for these prior to interview. You must also provide original copies of your qualifications and identity documents at interview to enable us to complete safer recruitment checks.

These include:

- **Enhanced DBS check** – we can apply for one of these on your behalf to include a **Children's barred and Adult barred list check.**
- **Prohibited from Teaching check.**
- **A minimum of two references.**
- **Identity checks including right to work in the UK. You must provide 3 documents to cover the following:**
 - ⇒ Photographic Identification, e.g. passport or driving licence.
 - ⇒ Proof of right to work in the UK, e.g. current UK passport, UK Visa or UK Birth Certificate
 - ⇒ Proof of current address, e.g. a current driving licence or bank statement/utility bill dated within three months or council tax statement dated within 12 months.

If you have worked or lived overseas for 12 months or more during the last 10 years you will also be required to provide a letter of good conduct from the police authority of the country you visited. If you cannot provide this, please contact the HR Department (by emailing: HR@lighthouseschool.co.uk) who will be able to advise you on other documents that can be used.

Following the interview process, the successful candidate will be offered the role conditional upon the outcome of the above vetting checks.

We look forward to receiving your application.

Lighthouse School Leeds was the fulfilment of a long-held dream. In September 2012, five families with children on the autistic spectrum set up the free school to create a learning environment where autistic young people could thrive, and where their needs were fully understood and met.

Today, that vision is a reality. Specialist teachers, teaching assistants and tutors now deliver a curriculum to one hundred-plus students, within Arthington House, Cookridge, Leeds. Originally a Victorian hospital, it was extensively renovated after sitting derelict for many years and is now a state-of-the-art facility designed specifically for our students.



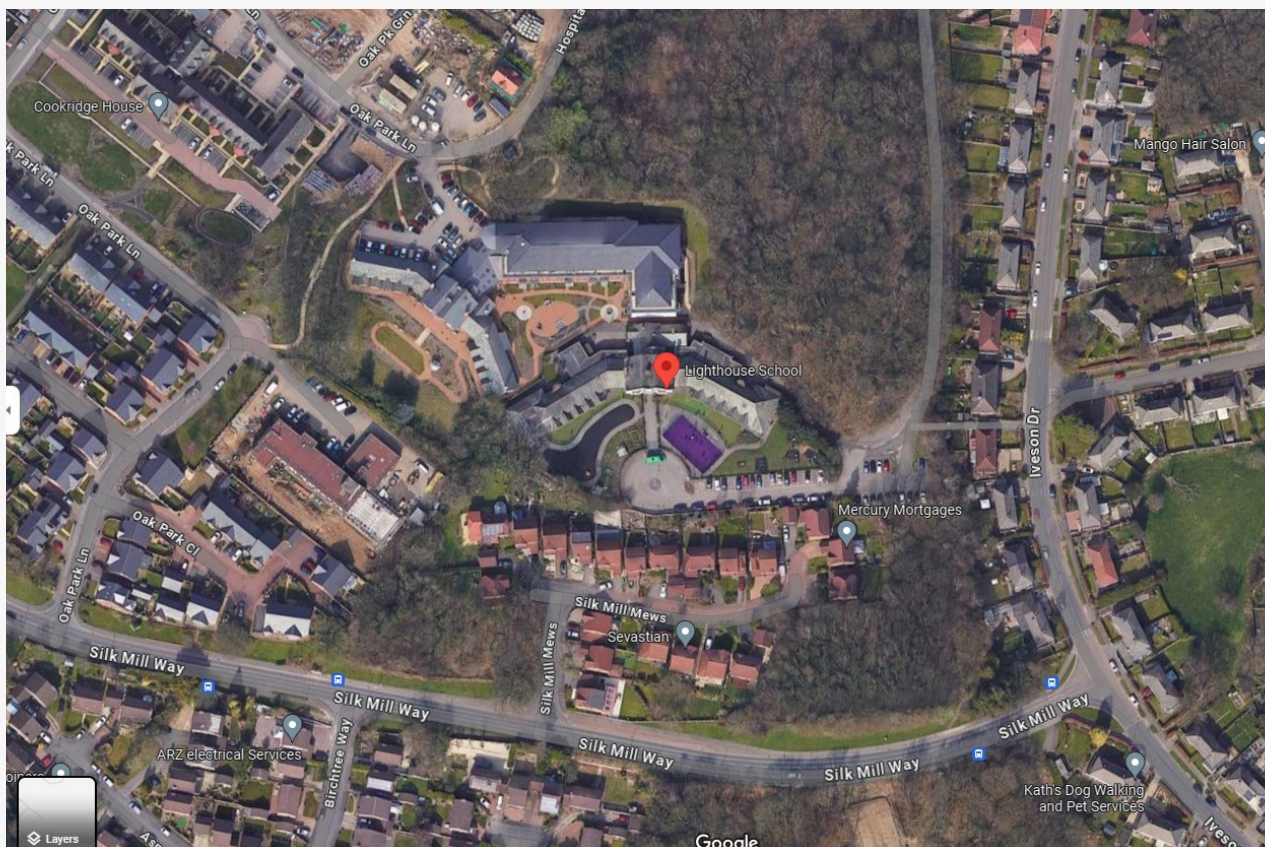
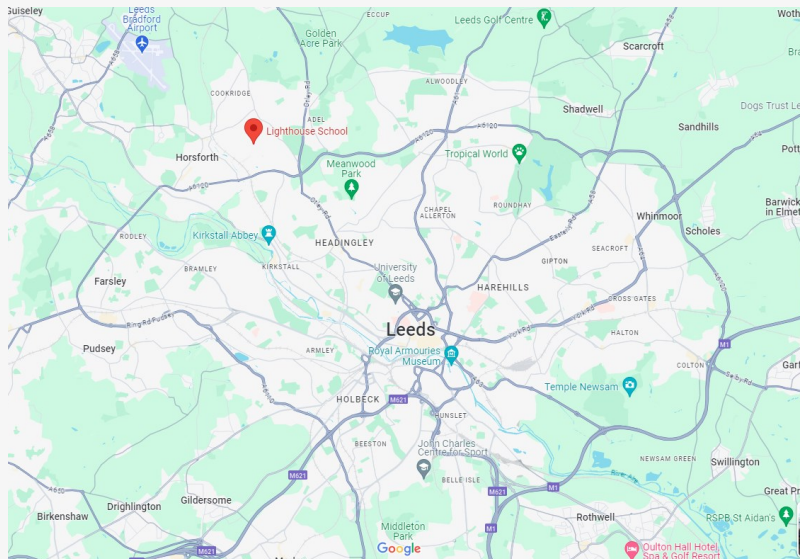
Our journey so far has been amazing and we are immensely proud of what our students have achieved. We are a 'Good' school with aspirations to be 'Outstanding' in the near future.

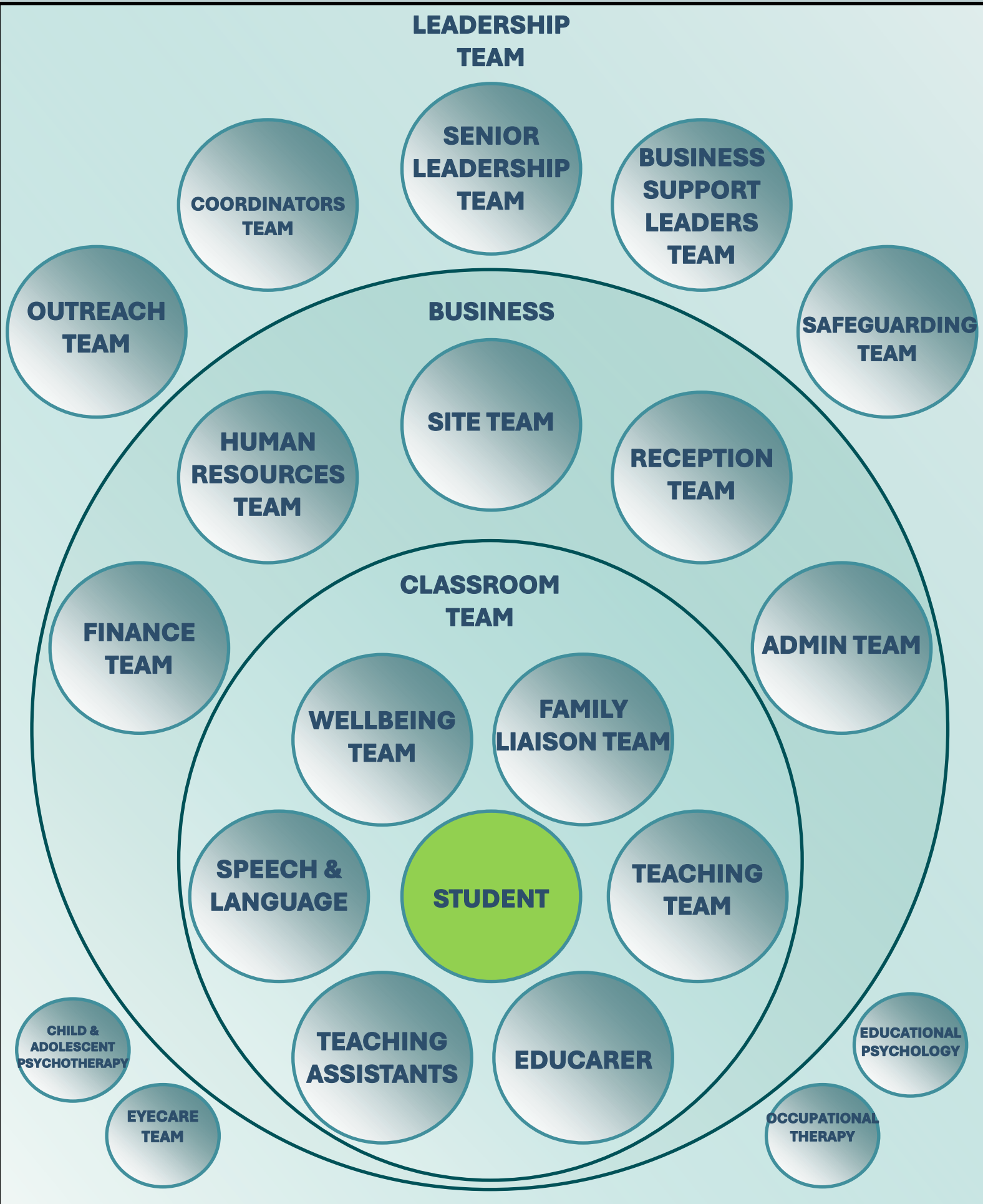
We provide a flexible learning environment, which reflects the bespoke needs of each and every one of our students. Ofsted (2023) recognised that the school has a calm but purposeful atmosphere, provides a highly ambitious curriculum, is well resourced, and leaders are tenacious when pursuing support for students. The harmonious school community is founded on respect and tolerance.

We ensure that our staff are well trained and are developed to be effective in their roles. They say their workload is manageable, and early career teachers are well supported.



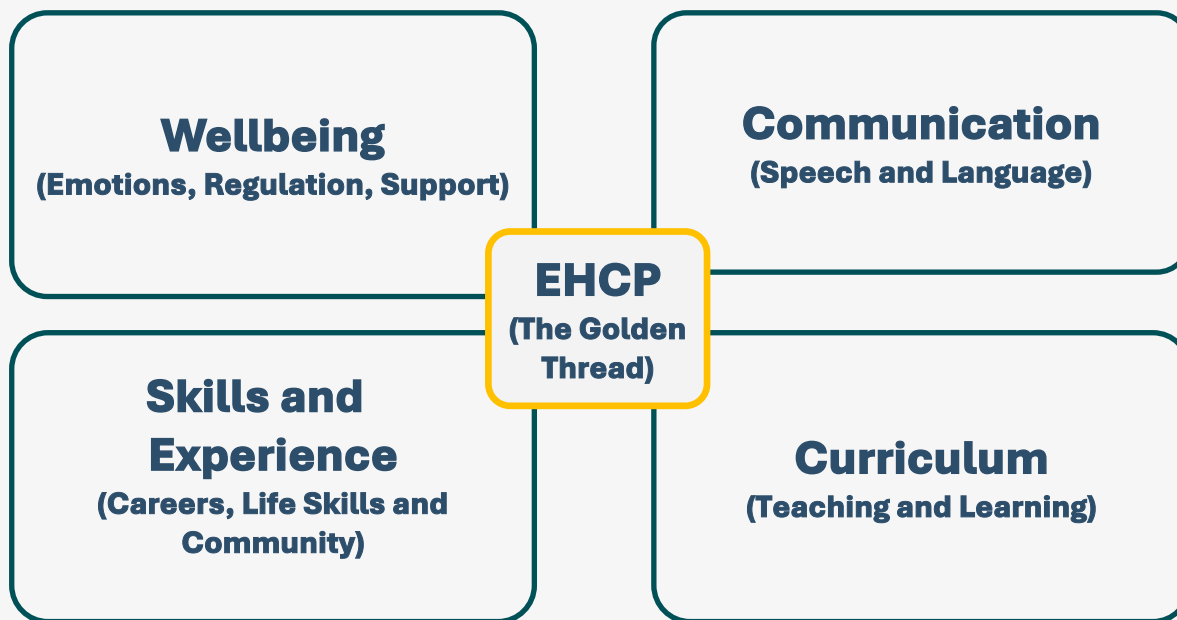
We are situated on the edge of woodland in the heart of Cookridge in North Leeds, just a 20-minute drive from Leeds City Centre on one side (with access to the M1 and M62) and on the edge of countryside on the other with the market town of Otley also just a 20-minute drive away. The spa town of Harrogate is also approximately 40-minutes drive, as is Ilkley. The school is close to local bus routes (19, 19A, 6) and the train (Horsforth Station).





We want the students at Lighthouse to be well cared for and well educated, and we have a large team of staff working together to support all areas of the students' lives whilst at school.

The four Cornerstones form the basis of our educational philosophy, and staff teams are based around these areas:



Staff work closely with external professionals, such as the Eyecare Team, Educational Psychologists, Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists, and Occupational Therapy on school site. We also liaise closely with other healthcare and welfare professionals, including the Schools Nursing Team, CAMHS, Social Care and Cluster Support.



We have high expectations for everyone at Lighthouse, staff and students alike. In order to ensure that our students receive the very best education, we have a full training programme for all staff.

Upon appointment at Lighthouse School, staff begin a comprehensive Induction Programme, which includes:

Principal's Welcome
Safeguarding Training
Health & Safety Guidance
HR Support

Understanding Autism
SEN & EHCP Process
Online Training through Smartlog
GDPR induction through Veritau

Across the year, all staff undertake yearly updates in a number of key areas. There are 5 full training days across the year, and meetings and seminars each week which keep staff up to date with new research, school policies and procedures, and student centred information. These include:

Cornerstones training:

- Speech and Language (Cornerstones)
- Wellbeing (Cornerstones)
- Curriculum (Cornerstones)
- Skills & Experience (Cornerstones)

Role specific training:

- TeamTeach (positive handling)
- First Aid
- Mental Health Awareness
- Personal Care
- Medical and Additional Special Educational Needs (including deaf awareness, dyslexia, ADHD, epilepsy, asthma, diabetes etc.)
- Reception systems and processes
- Invigilator training for examinations



Early Careers Teachers are fully supported through a comprehensive mentoring and training package with Red Kite Alliance.

More information on training can be sought from training@lighthouseschool.co.uk.

Our [staff testimonials](#) on the recruitment section of our website will give your more insight into working at Lighthouse School.

100% of staff said they enjoyed working at Lighthouse in a recent survey (March 2024). The Leadership Team recognises that working in special education can be emotionally challenging, and a wide range of support and wellbeing services are available to our staff.

These include:

- School sick pay and leave of absence entitlements.
- Access to a range of free health care services through our Employee Assistance Programme, including, mental health services and physiotherapy, menopause support, access to a GP, free flu vaccinations and free eye tests for VDU users.
- Mental health and wellbeing support. Our staff say they feel supported by the leadership and Mental Health First Aider teams.
- Active staff Wellbeing Working Party, who arrange a number of [staff perks](#) such as weekly parking raffle, staff 'Shout Outs' and awards, secret buddy scheme and more!
- Staff Neurodiversity Working Party who work with the Senior Leadership Team and HR to ensure Lighthouse is an inclusive environment for all staff.

We are committed to the equal treatment of all current and prospective employees and do not condone discrimination on the basis of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, gender identity, or marriage and civil partnership.

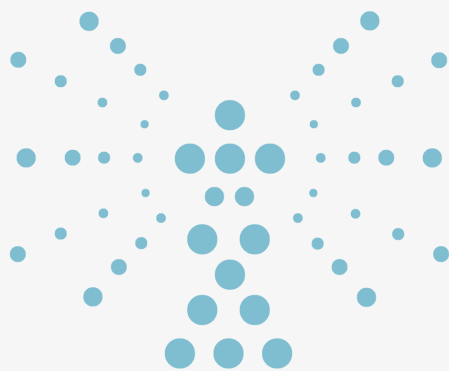
We aspire to have a diverse and inclusive workplace and strongly encourage suitably qualified applicants from a wide range of backgrounds to apply to join us and positively encourage you to choose a career at our inclusive school.

We are also a DfE appointed Flexible Working Participant School and are open to offering a range of flexible working options. Please share your preferences with our HR colleagues at your earliest opportunity in order for these to be fully considered.

Should you have a disability or health condition that requires workplace adaptations in order for you to work comfortably and remain in work please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply> as you may be eligible to funded interventions through Access to Work.





Lighthouse
School **Leeds**
Inspiring Bright Futures ...

Information correct as of May 2024