

Chief Finance & Operations Officer (CFOO)

Vacancy Information Pack



Mater Ecclesiae
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

'One Family in Christ'



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CEO Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Finance & Operations Officer at Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi Academy Trust.

It gives me great pleasure and excitement to welcome you to our growing, dynamic family of Catholic schools. Mater Ecclesiae is one of three Catholic multi academy trusts created by the Diocese of Lancaster to play an important part in shaping Catholic education across the Diocese.

The Trust currently consists of ten primary schools and one secondary school. In line with the Bishop's vision for schools across the Diocese of Lancaster and following a hugely successful first two years, we are due to grow to seventeen schools on 1st September 2025, when we will be delighted to welcome four more primary schools into the Trust. When fully-formed, the Trust will consist of twenty primary schools and three secondary schools covering the Preston and rural Preston area, making it the largest academy trust in Lancashire.

This is a fabulous opportunity for a talented and experienced professional to join us and work with a fantastic group of committed leaders and staff who believe passionately in education and working to improve the life chances of our children and young people. All primary schools currently in the Trust are rated 'Good' by Ofsted, providing a strong foundation and capacity on which to build a comprehensive business strategy.

The Trust currently serves 3250 pupils and employs almost 600 staff across our schools. The context of our schools means almost half of our secondary pupils and a third of our primary pupils experience challenges based on socio-economic and deprivation-associated factors. Our aim is to expertly deliver an ambitious Catholic curriculum that opens hearts, broadens horizons and accelerates social equality.

The core principles of the Trust are to educate the whole person, striving for excellence and working together as 'One Family in Christ', serving others. Through collective responsibility, united in our Catholic faith, the Trust strives to enable each school to thrive spiritually, academically and financially so all of the children and young people develop a sense of 'compassion, confidence and community' and reach their full potential by realising their God-given talents.

Our Trust works in partnership as one family of schools, whilst maintaining and celebrating the uniqueness of each individual school and the community it serves. Our core values of Compassion, Confidence and Community underpin all of our relationships; between staff, pupils, families, parishes and local communities.



Yours faithfully,



Peter Duffy

Chief Executive Officer

Welcome from the out-going CFOO

Echoing our CEO's introduction, thank you for taking the time to read this information pack. I hope that it communicates the journey our Trust has begun, how we feel about our Trust, and what it is like to be a part of our Team.

Do you passionately believe in the impact of an outstanding education and relish the thought of leading our young and dynamic multi academy trust through the next phase of its growth and development? If so, we'd love to hear from you.

The Role

I have had the privilege of being the first CFOO, seeing the founding schools develop, welcoming a further ten into Mater Ecclesiae's family of schools, and recruiting the first members of the central team that supports them. I hope that you see the special opportunity to innovate, and to truly make a key contribution to the future success of our central offer to our schools.

This is a highly visible role, and the central team and schools alike will look to you for direction and support in all aspects of operations. The central team is small and close knit, where everyone genuinely has a voice and an input. Education continues to face challenges and changes, particularly financial, and the team is dedicated to finding creative ways of ensuring those challenges do not detrimentally affect the quality of education or employment we provide as a trust.

We have established a positive and supportive culture, and fundamentally, how we work for and with our schools. You will be key to this; you will bring experience, care, and commitment that will mean our schools have the best experience possible.

You will work closely with the newly-formed central team and key school staff to ensure we provide a seamless, integrated and high-quality service. You will be willing to roll your sleeves up, and will have experience of working in a multi academy trust, and of change. You will also be resilient and thoughtful in your approach to the relationships you build. We care for and support each other – we work hard, share ideas, and crucially, we listen and we have a sense of humour!

How we work

We have a flexible approach to where you work; you have the option of spending some time working from home, as well as visiting our schools which are all based in and around Preston.

You will spend the rest of your time at our office which is located on Caxton Road in Fulwood (Preston); this has ample parking and excellent transport links, and a number of shops and local amenities within walking distance.

If you would like to find out more about us, the role, and to help you decide whether this position is right for you please do get in touch for an informal chat. It is extremely important to us that this pack gives you a clear insight into our organisation, the qualities we are looking for, and who we are as we aim to make the very best appointment possible.

I look forward to receiving your application.

Heather Hickman

Chief Finance & Operations Officer



Diocese of Lancaster



Our Vision

We are **'One Family in Christ'** delivering the Catholic mission of the Diocese of Lancaster and serving the family of Catholic schools in the Preston area, under the patronage of Mary the Mother of the Church - Mater Ecclesiae.

Our vision is to work together to meet the needs of all and strive for excellence. Within our family, members of our community are loved and valued as unique individuals, made in the image of God. They are respected and cherished and given every opportunity to grow together.

As **'One Family in Christ'** we embrace, celebrate and inspire our diverse communities to achieve their full potential.



Our Values

One family in **Compassion**
One family in **Confidence**
One family in **Community**



One Family in Christ

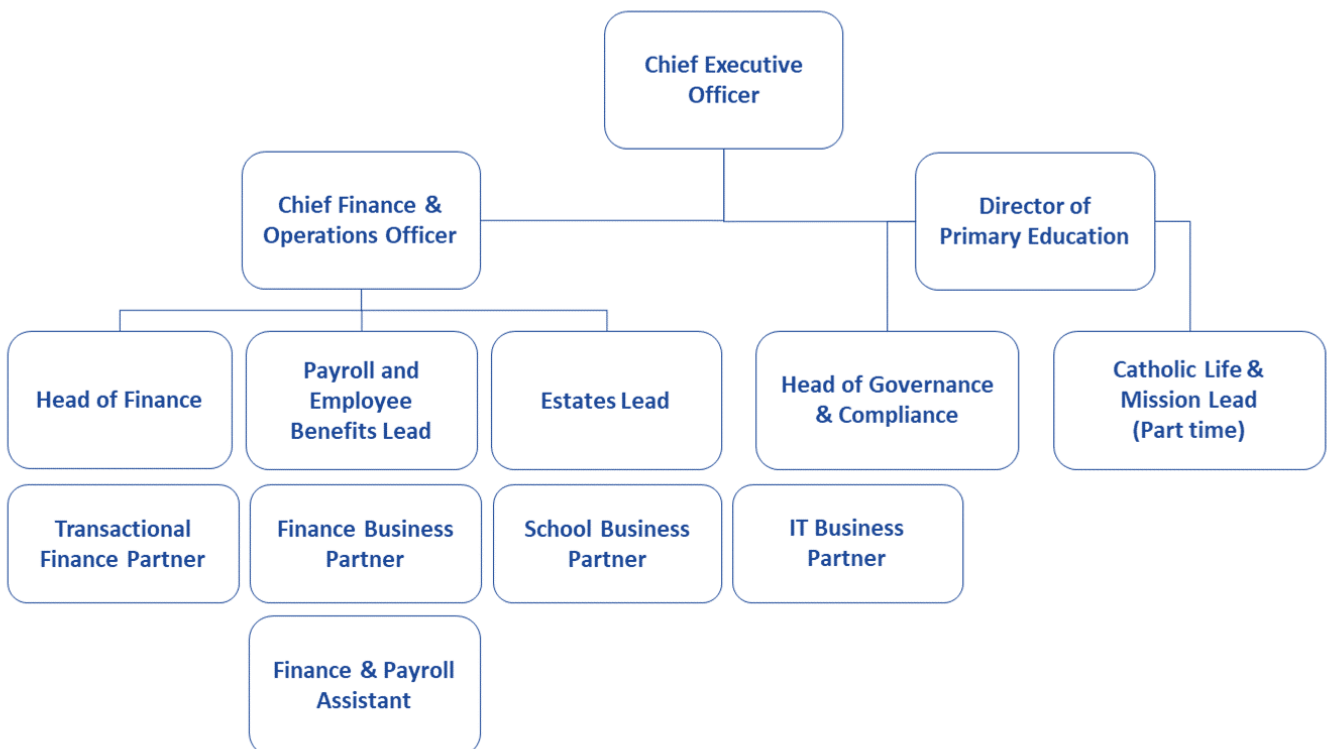


Trust Information

Governance Structure



Trust Central Team



Our Schools



Current Schools (in alphabetical order)



Alston Lane Catholic Primary School
Longridge, Headteacher: Mr Mark Fitzgibbon



St Ignatius's Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mr Chris Hough
(from 1st May)



Christ the King Catholic High School
Preston, Headteacher: Mr Simon Corless



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mrs Catherine Monaghan



Our Lady & St Edward's Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mrs Karen Woods



St Mary & St Andrew's Catholic Primary School
Barton, Headteacher: Mr Simon Waywell



Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mrs Lucy Scanlon



St Mary & Michael's Catholic Primary School
Garstang, Headteacher: Mrs Luena Archibald (from 1st May)



St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mrs Sarah Roach



St Teresa's Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mr James Kay



St Bernard's Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mr Roy Turner



The Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Miss Kelly Hannah



St Clare's Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mrs Ros Wroblewski

Schools joining on 1st September 2025



Holy Family Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mrs Lindsey Morrison



St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mrs Arran Brogden



St Anthony's Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mrs Jane Barnes



St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School
Preston, Headteacher: Mrs Amanda Rich



Job Description

Chief Finance & Operations Officer

Job title:	Chief Finance & Operations Officer
Responsible to:	Chief Executive Officer
Location:	Hybrid – central office (Fulwood, Preston), visits to Trust schools and some working from home
Contract:	Full time, full year
Salary range:	Competitive

1. CFOO RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1.1. Being the Chief Financial Officer for the Trust and company.
- 1.2. Designing and implementing business operations.
- 1.3. Establishing policies that promote company/school culture and vision.
- 1.4. Ensuring compliance with statutory Funding Body requirements including the Academy Trust Handbook.

2. STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ROLE

- 2.1. Provide advice and guidance to the CEO/Trust Board on all aspects of the Trusts' non-academic operations.
 - 2.2. Deputise for the CEO in all aspects of work that do not require an educational background.
 - 2.3. Shape, implement and deliver the strategic plan.
 - 2.4. Strategically oversee the work of School Business Managers and ensure effective communication and collaboration which enhances the value that the Trust brings to its academies.
 - 2.5. Build and develop a culture of high performance, ensuring succession planning is in place at all levels.
 - 2.6. Ensure support structures reflect the best practice from the education sector and from the emerging research into effective and efficient academy trusts.
 - 2.7. Provide clear information, advice and recommendations to the CEO, Headteachers, Trust Board and various committees regarding the strategic development of support services in the use of assets and the development of the Trust's activities to ensure the best possible learning environment for all students.
 - 2.8. Lead the Trust's Finance function such that:
 - Resources are directed effectively to provide the most positive educational outcomes for students
 - The Board, and academies are provided with accurate, timely and actionable financial and management information
 - Ensure financial systems are managed effectively to expedite the budget cycle and to support decision making across the Trust.
 - 2.9. Oversight of the preparation of the annual and medium-term business plans, taking into account performance improvement objectives, funding projections, and other potential events and activities and Trust development and procurement plans.
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- 2.10. Take lead responsibility for relevant policy development and implementation in all support areas
- 2.11. Ensure the Trust is represented in national, regional and local networks so that the Trust influences and is alert to new trends and is familiar with current best practice in the evolving and developing education sector.
- 2.12. Establish a high level of credibility, visibility and professionalism and manage strong working relationships with internal (especially academies and Diocese staff) and external partners
- 2.13. Promote and safeguard the welfare of students.
- 2.14. Work closely with the CEO on developing a strategic plan that develops finance, HR, premises and other support teams to ensure a proactive approach to maximising the best use of resources.

3. MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The CFOO will have responsibility for the following areas:

- 3.1. Financial Management
- 3.2. Human Resources
- 3.3. Payroll
- 3.4. IT and technical services.
- 3.5. Procurement and contract management
- 3.6. Estate Management, including estates compliance and health and safety.
- 3.7. Project management, including funding bids and grants submission.
- 3.8. Risk Management.
- 3.9. Leadership and effective day to day management.
- 3.10. Central team operational staff

4. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 4.1. Be the Chief Financial Officer for the Trust, ensuring that it meets standards set out in relevant legislation and as advised by our Auditors and Financial Advisors and the Department for Education or relevant funding body.
- 4.2. Oversight of the management of finance operations, responsible for delivering the Trust's financial and accounting processes and supporting the CEO in meeting their responsibilities as Accounting Officer
- 4.3. Ensure that funding is utilised in line with funding agreements
- 4.4. Ensure that financial governance is strong and appropriate, and that risk management arrangements are in place.
- 4.5. Develop and ensure implementation of the Trust Financial Regulations Handbook and finance policies.
- 4.6. Ensure that appropriate financial systems are in place that allow financial records to be securely maintained and reported accurately, internally and to external partners in line with legislative requirements
- 4.7. Oversight of the preparation of and monitoring of Trust and school budgets, and reporting to CEO and Directors to ensure that all budgetary targets are met, and efficiencies are maximised.
- 4.8. Ensure delivery of statutory accounts and all other returns as required by company, charity and DfE legislation.



- 4.9. Ensure the delivery of accurate and useful management accounting reports to schools and the Trust Board
- 4.10. Develop and advise on operational support for the head teachers.
- 4.11. Lead on any significant capital project including managing any application for capital funding and or distribution of any capital grant.
- 4.12. Ensure long-term financial sustainability, by confirming that proper financial systems are established and effectively monitored, that appropriate action is recommended to address problems identified, and to ensure that the Directors are presented with accurate and timely financial reports.
- 4.13. Develop and maintain a strong and effective relationship with the Department for Education and relevant funding bodies, and ensure that funding is maximised. Develop and implement strategies for the generation of additional revenue and resources for the Trust.

5. HUMAN RESOURCES

- 5.1. Ensure that all employment policies and procedures in the Trust are appropriate, follow best practice, and reflect the culture of the Trust as well as all relevant legislation. This includes the Burgundy book for Teaching staff, and the Green Book for Support staff. .
- 5.2. Ensure all HR policies are followed across the Trust.
- 5.3. Have oversight of the staffing structures and costings across the Trust and oversee new appointment processes.
- 5.4. To lead and report to the Board on employment matters such as Employee Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion, Training and Development as they relate to best practice.
- 5.5. Work with Headteachers to monitor and maintain an affordable recruitment strategy.

6. PAYROLL

- 6.1. Lead the payroll team to ensure that the Trust workforce is paid appropriately.
- 6.2. Ensure that systems and processes are in place to ensure Schools receive support on a day-to-day basis.
- 6.3. Ensure that the payroll team adhere to legislative requirements, such as tax, national insurance and benefits such as pensions.
- 6.4. Strategic workforce planning that reflects wider Trust strategies and policies
- 6.5. Oversight of workforce reporting to internal and external stakeholders such as Trustees and the DfE

7. IT & TECHNICAL SERVICES

- 7.1. Develop the Trust's vision for a high-level IT infrastructure across the Trust.
- 7.2. Manage the performance of IT service contracts in relation to agreed KPIs and other performance criteria.
- 7.3. Ensure value for money and efficiencies with IT and technical services across the Trust.
- 7.4. Ensure that IT infrastructure is secure, and meets all DfE and relevant regulatory requirements

8. PROCUREMENT & CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

- 8.1. Undertake strategic planning for procurement and contract management and oversight of the operational implementation of plans .
- 8.2. Ensure procurement legislation is observed and reflected in trust strategies, all policies and regulations, and day to day practical operations

- 8.3.** Lead all tender processes, ensuring appropriate approaches are followed.
- 8.4.** Lead the management of, and develop, the bought in services and contracts across schools on behalf of the Trust.
- 8.5.** Ensure the quality and cost-effectiveness of services to maximise the positive impact on teaching and learning.
- 8.6.** Provide guidance to Trust Leaders on the most effective deployment of resources and services.
- 8.7.** Oversight of a Trust contracts register
- 8.8.** Ensure that purchasing arrangements represent best value and contracts are secured in accordance with financial guidelines and regulations.

9. ESTATE MANAGEMENT

- 9.1.** Lead strategic planning for all estates and facilities related aspects of Trust schools
- 9.2.** Oversight of the maintenance and development of the Trust estate
- 9.3.** Ensure compliance with all legislative requirements relating to health and safety and the management of the estate
- 9.4.** Advise the CEO and Headteachers and Heads of School on the strategic development of the Trust sites.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1.** Identify and mitigate risk and ensure the relevant sections of the Trust's Risk Register is kept updated.
- 10.2.** Ensure there is risk protection cover in place for all risk areas.

11. DAY-TO-DAY

- 11.1.** Provide day-to-day leadership and management of all teams which report to this post.
- 11.2.** Be aware of and comply with policies and procedures relating to child protection, equal opportunities, confidentiality and data protection (GDPR), reporting all concerns to an appropriate person.
- 11.3.** Maintain high quality working relationships with staff, students and parents/carers that contribute to creating a productive and happy working environment.
- 11.4.** Develop excellent working relationships with suppliers and our contractors.
- 11.5.** Participate in training and other learning activities, as required.
- 11.6.** Attend and participate in meetings, as required.
- 11.7.** Perform all other reasonable requests, as required, within the grading of the post.
- 11.8.** Respect confidentiality at all times.

The post holder will be expected to carry out all duties in the context of, and in compliance with, all policies and procedures and in compliance with our Equal Opportunities Policies and Code of Conduct



Chief Finance & Operations Officer Person Specification

Ref	Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Assessment method
1 Qualifications			
1.1	Fully qualified CCAB or CIMA accountant (including CIPFA qualifications developed in partnership with ISBL)	E	A / R
1.2	Educated to degree level or equivalent.	E	
1.3	Professional qualification in Education Leadership or postgraduate qualification, e.g. DSBM, Masters' degree.	D	
1.4	Recognised qualifications in facilities management, procurement, health & safety, marketing or HR/Personnel	D	
1.5	School Resource Management Accreditation	D	
2 Experience and Knowledge			
2.1	Track record of successful senior leadership and strategy development within a comparable organisation. Experience of doing this within an educational setting would be an advantage.	E	A / I / T / R
2.2	Experience at a senior level in a Multi Academy Trust and of strategy development	E	
2.3	Knowledge and understanding of legislation and key issues in Education in relation to finance, ICT, human resources, estates, procurement and contracting, health and safety, and safeguarding	E	
2.4	Experience of efficient and effective budget, financial, risk and resource management to achieve accountability and a strong performance culture.	E	
2.5	Proven success in building effective partnerships and links with internal and external stakeholders.	E	
2.6	Understanding of working in a school context and, in particular, a Catholic School and how the role and culture contributes to safeguarding and positive outcomes for pupils.	D	
2.7	Experience of working effectively with a Board/Governing body	D	
2.8	Experience of change, and of designing, improving and implementing systems and processes	E	
2.9	Experience of producing statutory accounts and of budget setting	E	
2.10	An understanding of educational legislation and policy in relation to Academy Trusts.	E	
3 Skills			
3.1	Ability to work strategically and seek and implement creative solutions.	E	A / I / T / R
3.2	Well-developed strategic planning capabilities with the ability to work with others to develop a compelling vision for the organisation, underpinned by a strong moral purpose.	E	
3.3	Ability to build a positive organisational culture, encourage reflection, delegate responsibility, build teams, strive for continuous improvement and inspire staff to achieve their full potential.	E	
3.5	Ability to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and be an effective ambassador of the Trust.	E	
3.7	Ability to think creatively, to work strategically, and to anticipate and solve problems.	E	



3.8	Proven track record of developing business plans and managing the introduction of new initiatives.	E	
3.9	Ability to prioritise, plan and organise, and analyse and process complex information quickly and rigorously, when under pressure acting with decisiveness and determination when dealing with difficult situations.	E	
3.10	Strong negotiation skills and the ability to influence others to the benefit of the Trust.	E	
4 Personal qualities			
4.1	Commitment to safeguarding, child protection and the Equality Act 2010	E	A / I / T / R
4.2	Highly organised, resilient and thrives under pressure	E	
4.4	Willing to undertake training and development in order to maintain current knowledge	E	
4.5	Professional, friendly approach to building relationships	E	
4.6	Demonstrate support for the Catholic ethos and Mission of the Diocese and Trust	E	
4.7	Creative as well as logical and methodical approach to problem solving	E	
4.8	Commitment to a work life balance for your, and your colleagues well being	E	

A = Application, I = Interview, T = Task, R = References



Additional Information

Start date:	1 st September or as soon as possible
Salary:	Competitive
Hours of Work:	Full-time, full year - 37 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. Actual hours to be agreed with the CEO.
Contract:	Permanent
Pension:	LGPS
Expenses:	Work-related expenses will be paid per the relevant Trust policies
Annual Leave:	28 days per year, plus bank holidays, to be taken in line with finance deadlines. Rising to 32 days per year, plus bank holidays after 5 years continuous service.
Probation:	6 months
Notice Period:	6 months

Safeguarding Information

Introduction

Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi Academy Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in its academies. The Trust complies with the statutory legislative requirements and guidance that seeks to protect children including 'Keeping Children Safe in Education Guidance'. In order to meet this responsibility, we follow a rigorous selection process to discourage and screen out unsuitable applicants.

Safer Recruitment

Job descriptions and person specifications make reference to safeguarding and child protection and all posts are subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate (DBS). All advertisements include our safeguarding statement and commitment.

Application Stage

All applicants are scrutinised to verify identity and academic or vocational qualifications. Professional references are requested using our standard proforma for short-listed candidates; please let us know if we can approach your referees before interview.

As a minimum, references should be from the two most recent employments. References are checked against previous employment history and gaps in employment. Our standard reference proforma makes reference to suitability to work with children and young people. Professional references must be obtained from professional email addresses. The application form requires applicants to complete a disclosure of any criminal convictions.

Shortlisting

Only those candidates meeting the criteria outlined in the person specification will be shortlisted. Please note that only shortlisted candidates will be contacted; if you have not been contacted within 2 weeks of the interview date you have not been successful on this occasion.

Interview

Shortlisted candidates will take part in an in-depth interview and selection process. Candidates will be asked to address any discrepancies, anomalies or gaps in employment in their application form including their employment history. Candidates will be reminded of their responsibility to disclose criminal convictions that are subject to DBS checks if they have not already done so on the application. Proof of right to work in the UK must also be provided at interview.

Appointment

An enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate (DBS) will be required for all appointed posts and other pre-employment compliance checks will also be carried out. A fitness to work declaration will be required following appointment. Inclusion on the Single Central Record (SCR), barred list checks and prohibition from teaching checks will also be carried out. For leadership positions, section 128 checks will be performed. All staff will receive a comprehensive induction programme covering all aspects of safeguarding and health and safety.

Probation

All new staff will be subject to the Mater Ecclesiae probation procedure for a period of six months. The probation period is to enable the assessment of an employee's suitability for the job for which they have been employed which includes the monitor and review of the performance of new staff in relation to duties, skills, qualifications and experience outlined in the job description and person specification. This will also include an employee's suitability to work with children and young people and their commitment to safeguarding and child protection.

Equal Opportunities

Mater Ecclesiae recognises the value of, and seeks to achieve, a diverse workforce. Mater Ecclesiae takes positive steps to create an employment culture in which people feel confident of being treated with fairness, dignity and respect, irrespective of their differences. Mater Ecclesiae is committed to the elimination of unlawful discrimination and to the promotion of good relations between all.

General Data Protection Regulation

Mater Ecclesiae is committed to ensuring that the privacy of an individual is protected. By submitting your application, you will agree for the Trust to process your personal data, including "sensitive personal data" as defined in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), for the purposes of the operation, management, security and/ or administration, as well as, complying with applicable laws, regulations and procedures. The information you provide (except Equality Monitoring Information) may be shared with partner organisations that provide services to the Trust. A full list of these organisations is available upon request from the Trust Business Manager.

How to apply

Prior to applying

If you are unclear about any aspect of the application process or you would like any additional information about Mater Ecclesiae CMAT or the role, then please contact:

Peter Duffy (CEO) or Heather Hickman (CFOO) at recruitment@mecmat.org

Application process:

Please send your completed CES application form (available on the Trust website) to: recruitment@mecmat.org

You will also be required to complete and submit a Recruitment Monitoring Form and a Rehabilitation of Offenders Act Disclosure form.

There are guidance notes supplied to assist in the completion of the forms (see applicant notes on our website).

Closing Date for Applications: 12 noon on Wednesday 30 April 2025

Shortlisting of Candidates: Thursday 1 May 2025

Interview Date for Candidates: Thursday 8 May 2025

Should you decide to apply, please confirm your availability for these dates when submitting your application.

References will only be taken up for shortlisted candidates. Please let us know if we can request references prior to interview.



Mater Ecclesiae
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

'One Family in Christ'