

Aspirational Futures Multi Academy Trust



Chief Financial Officer Candidate Pack

May 2024

Dear applicant,

Thank you for expressing an interest in the vacancy for Chief Financial Officer in our trust. Here at Aspirational Futures Multi Academy Trust we firmly believe that providing the best possible working environment for our staff leads to the best possible outcomes for our students.

As a newly established trust based in Chorley, Lancashire, our initial phase of growth should hopefully be complete by September 2024, when we will be a family of 5 schools with around 2,700 pupils:

- Parklands High School
- Walton le Dale High School (joining 1st June 2024)
- Balshaw Lane Primary School
- Gillibrand Primary School
- Highfield Community Primary School (joining 1st September 2024)

This is an exciting opportunity for the successful candidate to join our Executive Leadership Team and jointly shape our future and ways of working. We are seeking a well qualified and experienced individual who is able to manage a budget of almost £17 million and support the team and all stakeholders with the delivery of our aims and objectives.

Our Executive leadership team comprises currently of the following:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Financial Officer
- Chief Operations Officer
- Trust HR Manager
- Trust Network Manager

In addition the Executive leadership are supported by a wider central team comprising a trust Primary Lead, Attendance Lead and a Designated and Safeguarding Lead, all of whom are experts in their particular fields.

The current CFO will leave mid August 2024, but we hope the successful candidate will be able to commence employment with us prior to this in order to have a successful and comprehensive handover. In order to support the role of the CFO, the School Business Manager at Parklands High School has an honorarium to provide financial support to the primary schools, but the trustees would like to work with the Executive Leadership Team regarding an additional full-time role within the central team to support the work of the CFO, COO and HR Manager.

Following our current growth phase, we aim to have a period of stability before further growth so that we can refine our processes, procedures and ways of working.

Kind regards,

Steve Mitchell
CEO

Keith Fielding
Chair of Trustees

Our trust vision.

- Advance education by providing a holistic, all-through education to ensure our learners are well-prepared and ready to meet the challenges of the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- Instil the character traits necessary to ensure all our learners can successfully contribute to a global society by focusing on an evidence-based approach to Character Education and Personal Development from Reception through to Year 11.
- Offer rich and varied opportunities to promote spiritual, moral, cultural and social development, from primary through to secondary.
- Aim to ensure no child, regardless of their educational needs or background, is left behind due to our inclusive approach.
- Ensure our learners can contribute economically to the local and surrounding communities through our deep understanding of careers and economic education, and the local, regional and national labour markets.

Our family of schools.

All the schools in the trust family are well established and well known in their communities and we all work together to achieve the common aim of ensuring all our young people are well educated and well prepared for the challenges that life after school will bring.

Parklands High School, Chorley.

[Parklands High School](#) is an 11 - 16 mixed comprehensive school in Chorley, Lancashire. There are 1,107 pupils on roll and has an Ofsted rating of GOOD (June 2023). Parklands is a founder school in the trust, having converted to academy status in 2012. Chief Executive Officer, Steve Mitchell, is the former headteacher of the school. Budget is £7,120,631. The trust offices are located at the school.

Walton le Dale High School, Chorley.

Joining our trust in June 2024, [Walton le Dale High School](#) is an 11 - 16 mixed comprehensive school in Bamber Bridge, Lancashire. It has 772 pupils on roll and has an Ofsted rating of REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT (June 2022). This is our first sponsor school, which we have been supporting since Easter 2023. Budget is £5,275,715. This school is approximately 8 miles from the trust offices.

Balshaw Lane Primary School, Euxton, Chorley.

[Balshaw Lane Primary School](#) converted to an academy in April 2024 and is a founder school in the trust. It is a two-form entry primary school with 385 pupils on roll and has an Ofsted rating of OUTSTANDING (November 2011). Budget is £1,793,290. This school is approximately 1 mile from the trust offices.

Gillibrand Primary School, Chorley.

[Gillibrand Primary School](#) converted to an academy in March 2024 and was the third primary school to apply to join our trust but was the first to actually join us! It has 210 pupils on roll and has an Ofsted rating of OUTSTANDING (July 2022). Budget is £1,021,633. This school is approximately 1 mile from the trust offices.

Highfield Community Primary School, Chorley.

Joining our trust hopefully by September 2024 is [Highfield Community Primary School](#), which is also a founder school in our trust. This conversion has been much delayed due to building and land issues, which we now believe are resolved. The school has 246 pupils on roll and has an Ofsted rating of GOOD (October 2019). Budget is £1,338,366. This school is approximately 1.5 miles from the trust offices.

The benefits of working with us.

In our trust we place emphasis on wellbeing, collaboration and professional development for our staff, underpinned by research. Our aim is to ensure our students finish their education with us as well-rounded, well-grounded individuals who will make a positive contribution to society, which is partly achieved by ensuring our workforce is supported and professionally challenged, underpinned by comprehensive CPD programmes and wellbeing initiatives. We offer the following benefits, designed to promote your wellbeing and make your role enjoyable and rewarding.

- Salary: competitive salary on the national teachers' Leadership scale with automatic percentage increase as negotiated nationally.
- Annual leave: 32 days plus bank holidays.
- Paid leave: maternity/paternity leave, statutory adoption leave, shared parental leave, parental bereavement leave.
- Pension: a generous defined pension with the Local Government Pension Scheme.
- Death in service payment: lump sum payment and an ongoing pension for your partner and children (subject to conditions & membership of the LGPS).
- A culture that actively promotes a positive work-life balance and wellbeing initiatives.
- Professional development: full and part-funded training courses (including higher cost courses such as Masters, PhD) plus a wide range of external and in-house learning opportunities available to all.
- Access to UK Healthcare (<https://www.ukhealthcare.org.uk/>) helping staff with the cost of everyday health expenses such as visiting the opticians, paying for glasses, dental treatment and even paying for prescriptions, up to agreed policy limits. Employees can also claim an allowance for hospital admissions, whether NHS or private, access telephone counselling services and receive a discount on gym membership to keep them fit and motivated for work.
- Flexible working: trust offices are currently based at Parklands High School but the Executive Leaders are also able to work from home.
- Employee assistance programme.
- Free gym: you have free access to the state-of-the-art gym at Parklands High school from 6.30am - 8.30am and from 4pm - 9pm Monday to Friday, and all day Saturday & Sunday.
- Car parking: free and on-site at Parklands High School, which also has 4 electric vehicle charging points (electricity charged at cost).
- Hot drinks: free tea & coffee are provided.
- CycleSolutions: facility to purchase bicycles and equipment at reduced cost through payroll.
- Discounts: enjoy shopping discounts as a member of the Parklands High School community.
- A comprehensive wellbeing social programme with a range of benefits including; Friday treats, staff barbecues, Christmas lunch, a well-stocked staff room.

What skills and qualities do you need?

Aspirational Futures is looking for a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to join the Trust's central executive team, someone who is eager to be a part of our story.

Your impact; alongside having the aptitude and qualifications to oversee the finance functions of our newly established Trust, we know that you are going to need energy, drive, and various skills. You will be part of the team that is at the forefront of constructing the frameworks that support the trust and its schools. This is not just a job; it is a chance to be part of the future of our young people and make a lasting difference.

PERSON SPECIFICATION - CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Attributes	Essential	Desirable	How identified
Education and training			
Educated to degree level or equivalent	X		AF
Possession of or working towards relevant professional accountancy qualification(s) such as ACCA , CIMA , CIPFA (including CIPFA qualifications developed in partnership with ISBL) ICAEW or equivalent	X		AF
Commitment to maintain continuing professional development and/or personal development and undertake relevant ongoing training	X		AF, I
Qualification in Education Leadership, e.g. DSBM, Masters Degree (MA, MSc, MBA)		X	AF
School Resource Management Accreditation		X	AF
Experience			
Senior financial management and strategic leadership role in an academy or academy trust	X		AF, R
Experience of working at Board level		X	AF, R
Experience of successful CIF bids		X	AF, I
Experience of working in a medium to large organisation with a number of budget holders	X		AF, R
Experience of internal and external audit	X		

Knowledge and skills			
Strong understanding of financial regulations and accounting principles	X		AF, I
Statutory requirements for the operation of an educational institution, including company secretarial, legal and tax issues	X		AF, I
Strong understanding of the Academy Trust Handbook	X		AF, I
Strategic thinker with the ability to exercise strong leadership skills	X		AF, I
Highly-developed analytical skills to provide perspective and insight	X		AF, I
Strong technical ability, with experience of Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning, resource optimisation, and people management	X		AF, I
Excellent IT skills with extensive knowledge and application of financial packages (e.g. HCSS, PS Financials etc)	X		AF, I
Knowledge and experience of managing external relationships with professional and regulatory bodies	X		AF, I
Management experience with a proven track record in empowering colleagues and teams	X		AF, I
Understanding of and a passion for education, with a strong moral purpose	X		AF, I
Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to present financial information to diverse stakeholders	X		AF, I
Personal attributes			
Outstanding professional profile with an excellent track record in HR management, strong leadership and interpersonal skills	X		AF, R, I
Analytical problem-solving capability with well-developed emotional intelligence, judgement and political awareness	X		AF, R, I
Resilience and ability to drive change, both through their own practice, team and across	X		AF, R, I

the trust schools			
Highly effective communication skills, with the ability to influence and negotiate effectively	X		AF, R, I
Diplomacy, openness and approachability	X		AF, R, I
Personable, but principled style of strategic leadership and contextual, pragmatic understanding of resource management	X		AF, R, I
Personal integrity, self-awareness and a commitment to personal development and self-reflection	X		AF, R, I

Key

AF = Application Form

R = References

I = Interview

The Role.

As our CFO, your role is pivotal – a blend of strategic oversight and hands-on management, working closely with the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Operations Officer and in collaboration with the rest of the leadership team, wider central team and the schools’ leadership teams to ensure our strategic priorities are met.

JOB DESCRIPTION - CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Job title	Chief Financial Officer
Responsible to	Chief Executive Officer
Contract	Full time, full year
Salary	Competitive, depending on experience
Key relationships	Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Chief Operations Officer (COO) Board of Trustees (BoT) Academy Headteachers Academy Finance Teams

Statement of purpose

The CFO will take strategic responsibility for Trust wide operations including but not limited to, financial management and control, reporting and compliance, risk management and audit, governance and contributing to delivering MAT growth.

Key Strategic / Leadership & Management Responsibilities

- To report to the BoT, as required, on areas of responsibility, highlighting any concerns, action taken and making recommendations for solutions, where appropriate and when improvement is not rapid enough.
- Working with the CEO, line manage the central services team, with specific regard to HR and payroll.
- Represent the central team at executive team level to the BoT and external bodies where appropriate.
- Promote the highest standards of financial and operational ethics within the Trust.
- Support the Trust’s growth strategy, providing strategic guidance, leadership and management of the Trust’s finances and operations.
- Represent the central team in planning and development within the Trust and ensure clear and effective two-way communication between academy staff and the central team.
- Ensure that the Trust meets its legal, corporate and statutory responsibilities and provide advice, direction and support to the CEO and BoT.
- Provide challenge, where appropriate, to existing practices at all levels and create more effective alternatives.
- Communicate and consult effectively as required with Senior Leaders of the Trust and other stakeholders to ensure change management leads to positive outcomes.

- To develop and review Trust policies in areas of responsibility, ensuring statutory policies are in place and reviewed and approved by the BoT as required.
- Represent the Trust within any external forums, creating opportunities to enhance the profile of the Trust within the education sector and local communities.
- Work within an infrastructure and culture that promotes excellence and high expectations for pupils/students and staff and complements the Trust's vision.

Financial Management and Control:

- Provide strategic leadership and management of Trust finances, advising Senior Leaders and Trustees on all financial matters pertaining to the Trust.
- Support the BoT by advising, in conjunction with the CEO, on the setting of both trust-wide and individual academy annual budgets.
- Prepare and present the management accounts and related analysis to the BoT and Senior Leaders.
- Have responsibility for and manage the Trust's and individual academies' bank accounts and act as signatory.
- Lead on developing, setting, and monitoring the Trust's three-year financial plan.
- Work with schools to ensure budgets are supported by consistent and realistic budget assumptions.
- Manage the Trust's cash position at all times, including overseeing bank deposits.
- Develop and maintain the Trust's financial policies and procedures in accordance with the Academies Financial Handbook, enabling robust financial management.
- Working with the CEO, develop and implement strategies for the generation of additional revenue and resources for the Trust.
- Provide relevant, clear, accurate and timely information to the BoT and Senior Leaders to inform key decision making and effective budgetary control.
- Lead on the procurement of commercial contracts and procurement processes for the Trust and ensure economies of scale are maximised.
- Ensure that VAT requirements are complied with, validate and certify VAT data and produce VAT returns, including online submissions.
- In line with the agreed Trust Scheme of Delegation, train, develop, empower and motivate financial staff across the Trust.

Reporting and Compliance

- Ensure that all schools are compliant with the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook and Companies House, operating within the appropriate schemes of delegation.
- Complete and submit financial returns as required by the DfE, the ESFA, the Charities Commission and Companies House.
- Prepare and submit the Trust's financial returns and reports, including annual accounts and monthly management accounts.
- Collect, assess, and analyse information required for annual statutory financial reporting.

Risk Management and Audit

- Lead on financial risk management and mitigation, strengthening controls, ensuring that the Trustees and Senior Leaders are aware of financial risks and issues and that these are being mitigated and managed appropriately.
- Working with the CEO and COO, maintain the Trust's risk register and liaise with Trustees on risks on the horizon.
- Lead the preparation of the Trust's statement of accounts, ensuring compliance with current accounting guidance, fully documenting processes.

- Develop and maintain an effective internal audit procedure for the trust and its academies, ensuring recommendations are actioned in a timely manner.
- Manage the external audit procedures for the Trust and its academies, and follow up on any recommendations resulting from the annual audit.
- Manage all insurance claims.
- Administer and account for the Trust's Gift Aid Scheme.
- Liaise with, and report to the Charities' Commission, ensuring that all statutory obligations are discharged.

Governance

- Working with the CEO, maintain and update the Trust's Scheme of Delegation
- Attend and deliver key information and reports at BoT meetings and LGB meetings.
- Act as the key point of contact for trustees and the governance professional.

Growth

- Play a leading role in delivering the Trust's strategic growth plan.
- Lead on completing and submitting Trust Capacity Growth Funding (TCAF) bids in line with the ESFA's assessment criteria.
- Responsible for the provision and strategic analysis of timely, accurate and valid performance information to the BoT and Senior Leaders.
- Work with the Trust's legal advisers on the conversion process ensuring compliance in all areas.