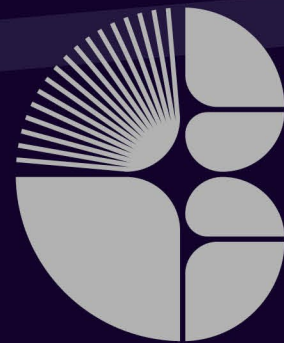


# Creative Education Trust

## Candidate Recruitment Information Pack

Chief Financial Officer



*Creative  
Education  
Trust*



## Dear Colleague

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Financial Officer.

Creative Education Trust is a 17-school organisation built on equity, ambition and life-changing education. We combine academic strength with powerful personal development, supported by collaboration and purposeful improvement - and we welcome your interest in joining us.

As Chief Financial Officer, you will be a core member of the Executive Team, shaping the Trust's long-term financial strategy and ensuring our resources drive the best outcomes for pupils. You will hold executive accountability for financial governance, risk, multiyear planning, reserves, capital investment and compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook.

You will provide sharp, forward-looking insight to the CEO, Trustees and senior leaders, enabling confident strategic decisions. Your leadership will modernise systems, strengthen financial resilience and drive transformation across digital finance, procurement and capital planning.

This role has Trust wide influence. You will be integral across Education, Operations, HR, Estates and IT teams, ensuring financial strategy fully supports organisational priorities and sustainable growth. You will also represent the Trust externally with regulators, auditors and sector partners.

We are delighted you are considering this opportunity. As Chief Financial Officer, you will shape the next phase of our development - securing long-term sustainability, driving financial efficiency and effectiveness, and enabling ambitious investment in our people, infrastructure and educational mission.

Our Senior Recruitment Team would be delighted to discuss this role with you and are contactable via [recruitment@creativeeducationtrust.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@creativeeducationtrust.org.uk).

Visit our Work With Us pages to find out more about why we do what we do - [Work With Us](#)

I look forward to receiving your application.

Yours sincerely,  
Nicole McCartney

You can find out more at:  
[www.creativeeducationtrust.org.uk](http://www.creativeeducationtrust.org.uk)

# ABOUT CREATIVE EDUCATION TRUST

Creative Education Trust is a successful and ambitious multi-academy trust educating over 13,500 children across England. Since our founding in 2010, we've grown from two schools to a collaborative network of seventeen, united by shared values and a belief in high expectations for every student. Our schools serve diverse communities, and we are driven by a commitment to equity, opportunity, and ambition in education.

Over the years, our Trust has evolved with purpose and clarity. We've grown in scale and confidence, strengthened our identity, and refined our strategy to ensure it is lived across every school. We've invested in leadership at all levels, integrated our services for greater impact, and shifted our culture from one of resilience to one of ambition. Today, we are focused on thriving, creating environments where staff and students are empowered, supported, and inspired to achieve their best.

We offer a strong, knowledge-rich academic curriculum alongside a vibrant extra-curricular programme, because we believe that academic rigour and personal development go hand in hand. From the outset, we've championed the idea that opportunity beyond the classroom is essential, not optional.

Our model is built on creative collaboration. We support schools to retain their unique identity while benefiting from aligned practice and the expertise, challenge, and support of a wider Trust. Leadership is shared and distributed; every school leader, teacher and specialist play a critical role in shaping our direction through wide and varied development opportunities.

We are proud to be:

- Empowering **Ambition**: Our people drive our progress. We invest in them, fuel their ambition for themselves and our students, and empower them to lead and innovate with confidence to achieve success.
- Championing **Equity**: Every student deserves success. We deliver this through ambitious academics and rich personal development that cultivates individual talent and agency.
- Unlocking **Opportunity**: We unlock opportunity by ensuring every student has access to the knowledge, experiences and networks that broaden horizons and open doors. Through collaboration across our Trust, we enrich learning, raise expectations, and ensure no student's potential is limited by circumstance.

We don't just support our communities from the outside; we work alongside them. Our schools are active partners in their local areas, creating places where opportunity, equity, and excellence can thrive together.

At Creative Education Trust, we are proud of how far we've come, and even more excited about where we're going.



**Mission Statement:** Creative Education Trust transforms lives by delivering an education that unlocks opportunity, inspires ambition, and equips every student for lasting success. Through a rich curriculum and a culture of purposeful leadership, we empower our people to embody equity and excellence so that every student thrives, now and into the future.

**Vision:** We aspire to build a Trust where equity is lived, ambition is ignited, and opportunity is limitless. Through sector-leading collaboration and a shared commitment to excellence, our schools will be places where every learner thrives, every adult leads with purpose, and success is both expected and achieved- together.

# SUPPORT FOR OUR STAFF

## Learning & Development

At Creative Education Trust, we recognise that our people are the key to our success. Our ethos, **Recruit, Train, Retain**, reflects our commitment to nurturing talent at every stage of the professional journey. We encourage curiosity, initiative, and a proactive approach to development, supported by our dedicated Centre for Professional Learning and Development platform, **ElevatEd**.

For teaching practitioners, ElevatEd offers access to a wide range of programmes including our Summer Internship, the CET Teacher Training Programme in partnership with the University of Warwick, and our Early Career Framework delivered with the Ambition Institute. Our leadership development pathway includes a new Leadership Curriculum and ongoing coaching opportunities through trained mentors and qualified coaches across the Trust. For associate staff, ElevatEd signposts apprenticeship qualifications, statutory guidance, and specialist courses such as the Aspirant Designated Safeguarding Lead programme, alongside a rich portfolio of learning via the TES Develop platform. Staff also benefit from a comprehensive calendar of collaborative events - from national conferences to Trust-wide development days - and active Professional Communities of Practice that foster connection, discussion, and the sharing of best practice across all roles and teams.

## Health and Wellbeing at Creative Education Trust

Your wellbeing matters to us - because when you feel supported, you can thrive. At Creative Education Trust, we are committed to creating a workplace where everyone feels valued, included, and empowered to bring their whole self to work.

We offer a range of health and wellbeing benefits designed to support your physical, emotional, and financial wellbeing, including:

- **Health Assured Employee Assistance Programme** – Free, confidential support 24/7 for life's challenges, big or small.
- **Discounted Gym Membership via GymFlex** – Stay active and energised with flexible access to gyms nationwide.
- **Health Cash Plan** – Claim back every day healthcare costs like dental, optical, and physiotherapy treatments.



We champion **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** across everything we do, because a diverse team is a stronger team. You'll find a culture that celebrates difference, promotes fairness, and ensures every voice is heard.

### Our statement:

Creative Education Trust is committed to developing, maintaining, and supporting an inclusive culture and environment for the benefit of its employees and the communities it serves. The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of school life, and Creative Education Trust expects all employees, pupils, parents/carers and members of the wider school community to be treated equitably and with respect.

# JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

<b>Job Title</b>	Chief Financial Officer	<b>Location &amp; Travel</b>	Home based with significant travel across the trust's schools, with occasional overnight stays required.
<b>Salary</b>	Competitive Salary, commensurate with experience	<b>Contract &amp; Hours</b>	Permanent Full-Time
<b>Department</b>	Central Team – Finance	<b>Reports To</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Reporting Lines</b>	Head of Finance Partnering and Financial Controller		

## JOB PURPOSE:

The Chief Financial Officer is a key member of the Executive Leadership Team, providing strategic financial leadership, stewardship and assurance to secure the long-term sustainability and viability of Creative Education Trust. The post holder holds statutory responsibility as the Trust's named Chief Financial Officer under the Academy Trust Handbook and ensures the organisation operates to the highest standards of financial governance and risk management, in full accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction, Companies Act requirements and Charity Commission expectations.

The Chief Financial Officer also leads and develops a high-performing finance function, overseeing a team of 20+ finance professionals. The post holder is responsible for building capability, ensuring effective delegation, and embedding a culture of excellence, collaboration and continuous improvement across the finance team to deliver strong operational performance and high-quality financial services across the Trust.

As an executive strategic leader, the Chief Financial Officer shapes trust wide financial strategy encompassing long-term planning, growth, reserves, risk, investment and capital planning. The role combines forward-looking, insight driven financial strategy with executive oversight of robust systems, strong controls and transparent reporting, enabling informed, evidence-based decisions by the CEO, Executive Leadership Team and Trust Board.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES:

### Strategic Leadership & Organisational Direction

- As an Executive Team member, shape the Trust's long-term strategic direction, ensuring financial sustainability underpins educational and organisational priorities.
- Lead the Trust's multi-year financial strategy, including long-range planning, funding strategy, reserves planning, growth modelling, scenario testing and organisational viability assessments.
- Act as the CEO's and Trustees' principal adviser on investment, affordability, capital planning and organisational resilience.
- Direct financial strategy across revenue, capital and grant funding to maximise long-term value and impact for pupils.
- Ensure all financial strategies align with the Trust's vision and values of *opportunity, equity and ambition*, integrated into trust wide KPIs and educational strategy.
- An integral part of cross functional sustainability working across the Education, HR, Estates, IT, Operations and Audit functions.
- Evaluate long-term impact of trust wide initiatives, using financial and organisational insight to inform improvement and decision-making.

# JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

## **Financial Governance, Compliance & Statutory Accountability**

- Serve as the Trust's named Chief Financial Officer under the Academy Trust Handbook, holding statutory responsibility for financial oversight and DfE expectations.
- Ensure a robust financial governance and compliance framework covering the Academies Accounts Direction, Charity SORP (FRS 102), Companies Act and tax obligations.
- Provide strategic oversight of monthly management accounts, cashflow, KPIs and narrative reporting for the Executive and Trust Board.
- Ensure exemplary financial stewardship, high-quality statutory returns and unqualified audit opinions.
- Lead engagement with Chairs of the Finance and Audit & Risk Committees, shaping agendas and strategic reporting.

## **Trust wide Budgeting, Forecasting & Performance**

- Hold executive accountability for the annual budget cycle and in year forecasting across the Trust.
- Ensure Integrated Curriculum and Financial Planning (ICFP) is embedded, equitable, and aligned with educational and financial goals.
- Set and monitor strategic financial KPIs, using them to drive long-term sustainability and informed board level decisions.
- Oversee trust wide financial modelling, benchmarking and multiyear forecasting.

## **Systems, Processes & Digital Transformation (Executive Oversight)**

- Provide strategic direction for finance systems, automation, data architecture and digital transformation across the Trust.
- Ensure strong financial controls, policies and frameworks, with consistent adoption and continuous improvement.

## **Audit, Risk & Strategic Assurance**

- Lead relationships with internal and external auditors, ensuring risked audits and timely resolution of findings.
- Own the financial risk areas of the Trust's risk register, ensuring appropriate mitigations and contingency arrangements.
- Provide strategic leadership on insurance, business continuity and counter fraud across the Trust.

## **Procurement, Commercial Strategy & Cost Effectiveness**

- Lead the Trust's procurement strategy to deliver cost-effective outcomes and ethical supply chains, ensuring compliance where Public Contracts Regulations apply.
- Provide executive oversight of commercial negotiations, contract strategy and procurement priorities.

## **Growth, Due Diligence & Trust Expansion**

- Lead financial due diligence for schools joining the Trust, advising the CEO and Trustees on viability, risk and integration planning.
- Ensure robust financial arrangements for onboarding new schools, including systems, controls and contractual set-up.
- Provide executive financial leadership for capital projects and major programmes, ensuring strong appraisal, governance and benefits realisation.

## **Payroll, Tax & Treasury (Strategic Oversight)**

- Provide oversight of payroll assurance, pensions and HMRC compliance.

# JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

- Lead the Trust’s treasury strategy, ensuring liquidity, prudent risk management and optimal reserves use.
- Oversee banking and investment arrangements to support long-term resilience.

## Executive Leadership & People Development

- Build and lead a high performing central finance team with a clear operating model, development pathways and succession plans.
- Coach and develop senior leaders and budget holders to strengthen financial insight across the Trust.
- Model inclusive, values driven leadership and foster cross trust collaboration.
- Lead performance management, talent development and succession planning for finance leadership roles.

## External Representation & Sector Influence

- Represent the Trust at national and regional levels with DfE/ESFA, auditors, insurers, banks, local authorities and sector bodies.
- Build and maintain strong relationships with the Executive team, Principals, Headteachers, Trustees, external agencies, regulators, auditors and local authorities to support the Trust’s agenda.
- Engage with Multi Academy Trust networks, including The Queen Street Group, contributing to sector discussions and sharing best practice.
- Communicate complex financial information clearly to nonfinancial audiences, supporting confident, strategic decision making.
- Promote the Trust’s key values of opportunity, equity and ambition and our commitment to inclusion and excellence in all areas of student life.
- Maintain awareness of national and international education developments to inform long-term strategic planning.

*This job description is not exhaustive and will be reviewed annually as part of the performance management process. The post holder may be required to undertake any other reasonable duties as directed by The Chief Executive Officer, in line with the evolving needs of the trust.*

JOB REQUIREMENTS:		
	Essential	Desirable
<b>QUALIFICATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionally qualified accountant (ACCA, CIMA, CIPFA, ICAEW) with significant post-qualification experience.</li> <li>• Bachelor’s in Accounting or other Finance related degree.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master’s of Business Administration (MBA) or Master’s of Science in Finance (MSF).</li> <li>• Leadership/management CPD</li> </ul>
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proven leadership of a high performing finance function.</li> <li>• Extensive experience in financial roles including senior level management positions.</li> <li>• Experience managing large, complex, multi-site budgets within strict governance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proven involvement in MAT growth activity, including leading or contributing to due diligence.</li> <li>• Oversight of capital programmes or significant capital projects.</li> </ul>

# JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong record of shaping financial strategy and improving systems at organisational level.</li> <li>• Extensive experience leading year-end reporting, audits and regulatory compliance.</li> <li>• Skilled in producing complex management accounts and presenting to senior leaders and trustees.</li> <li>• Confident advisor to Boards, providing clear strategic insight.</li> <li>• Experience leading remote, multi-location teams.</li> <li>• Background in Local Authority, MAT or independent education settings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership or key contribution to digital finance transformation initiatives.</li> <li>• Understanding of pension scheme governance within an education or public sector context.</li> </ul>
<p><b>KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert knowledge of the Academy Trust Handbook, AAD, Charity SORP (FRS 102), Companies Act and all key tax requirements.</li> <li>• Strong strategic understanding of public procurement and the Public Contracts Regulations.</li> <li>• Advanced grasp of ICFP and its role in aligning finance with curriculum, staffing and pupil outcomes.</li> <li>• Strong knowledge of DfE reporting systems and sector wide benchmarking tools.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>SKILLS AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding financial management and strategic planning skills.</li> <li>• Proven ability to implement and sustain robust financial systems.</li> <li>• Skilled in analysing school performance and financial data to drive improvement.</li> <li>• Strong ability to interpret complex financial information and provide authoritative professional advice. Commercially astute, with a strong focus on delivering cost-effective outcomes.</li> <li>• Calm and effective under pressure, able to manage competing priorities and tight deadlines.</li> <li>• Exceptional leadership and people management skills, with the ability to inspire and influence widely.</li> <li>• Highly analytical, using evidence and insight to improve outcomes.</li> <li>• Excellent written and verbal communication and presentation skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of using educational finance packages.</li> </ul>

# JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to build strong, credible relationships with trustees, senior leaders and external partners.</li> </ul>	
<b>CREATIVE EDUCATION TRUST VALUES</b>	<p>All colleagues are expected to demonstrate the Creative Education Trust values in their work by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Empowering Ambition:</b> Supporting personal growth, innovation and high performance.</li> <li>• <b>Championing Equity:</b> Promoting fairness, inclusion and high expectations for every student.</li> <li>• <b>Unlocking Opportunity:</b> Helping create access to knowledge, experiences and networks that broaden horizons.</li> </ul> <p>These values should be evident in how the post-holder works, collaborates and contributes to the wider Trust community.</p>	
<b>EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES</b>	A demonstrable commitment to supporting and promoting safeguarding, inclusion, student welfare, equality and diversity	
<b>SAFEGUARDING</b>	A thorough understanding of up-to-date safeguarding requirements and best practice	
<b>OTHER REQUIREMENTS</b>	Ability to work out of working hours on occasion in accordance with the needs of the Trust team.	

**Creative Education Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The successful applicant will be required to undertake relevant safeguarding checks in line with Government safer recruitment guidelines.**