



Appointment of Chief Financial Officer

May 2026 | RBQPD

Welcome Letter from our CEO

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in joining Unity Schools Partnership (Unity).

Having taken up the post of CEO at the start of this year, I've been impressed with the strength of leadership and consistently good provision that children receive across the Trust, testament to the great work that has gone before. As the Trust and times move on, the challenges that we must meet in the coming years will be different and will require different things from those of us working from the centre to support schools. For that reason, I have worked with our Board to reshape the Executive team that is at the heart of our decision making. The post of Chief Financial Officer (CFO) forms an important part of this team, and I am looking for an exceptional individual to fill the post.

The CFO is the fundamental enabler of everything that Headteachers and leaders at the centre want to achieve for children. The post holder will unlock the ability for us to make a difference at scale, as well as ensuring that our efficiencies combine and grow, leaving more and more funding for Heads to point directly at the priorities they face. Success will require a rare combination of qualities – imagination, diligence, precision and empathy, and doubtless many others.

This is an opportunity to contribute at the top of an organisation that has the momentum, appetite and talent to create enduring excellence in education for the East of England – I hope you can see yourself playing a part of this.

Dominic Norrish
Chief Executive Officer



Dominic Norrish
Chief Executive Officer, Unity
Schools Partnership



We Are Unity

Characterised by ethical leadership and ambition for improvement at pace

Unity is a family of 40 schools; 9 secondary, 26 primary and 5 special schools, located predominantly in Suffolk, but also in Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Romford in East London.

Beyond our schools, our work extends through a range of initiatives, including our Unity Teaching School Hub, our Unity Research School, and our Curriculum with Unity (CUSP).

We share the same values and face similar issues, whilst providing a close network of support and challenge. We recognise the unique characteristics of each of the communities we work in and how they are reflected in distinctive school cultures. We are committed to a partnership that respects, sustains, and supports.

We encourage cultural diversity, celebrate the special qualities of each of our schools and understand that communities must develop and grow to become sustainable. Our model is about creating interdependence, schools that are more self-sustaining than stand-alone academies, less dependent than local authority schools and more independent than schools in corporate chains.

We all subscribe to a set of shared values, principles and operational processes that ensure quality education for all our young people. Our central belief is that every young life is special, open to possibility, gifted with the potential to change the world for the better. Our ambition is to unlock the potential of all pupils, remove the barriers that limit aspiration and ensure that all our pupils succeed. This approach is already improving the life chances of pupils in primary, special and secondary schools throughout the Trust.

Unity Vision and Values

– Making Remarkable Change Happen – – Unity Schools Partnership transforms lives –

Unity's Executive Team is formed of its Chief Executive Officer, Chief People Officer, Chief Strategy Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Learning Officer and Chief Education Officers for Mainstream and SEND schools.

Through geographical hubs of like-minded schools and a vision of excellence that is shared by all, Unity works collaboratively to deliver the highest standards of education.

Unity is a family of interdependent schools with a shared ambition to transform lives. The vision of Unity Schools Partnership is to achieve the highest standards of education in its primary, secondary and special schools. It is our intention that all Trust schools, and the Trust as a whole, be recognised locally and nationally for the exceptional quality of its educational provision.

We are committed to the development of a high-quality, evidence-informed model of how excellence is achieved. Our work is fostered by geographical hubs of schools in close proximity that understand their specific communities.

The Trust expects its work to be characterised by its values:

INTEGRITY

INCLUSION

KINDNESS



Strategy & Supporting Schools

The Trust has a strong central team. The Trust's strategy has been for this team to work with Heads on developing common strategies across schools whilst being clear that each Head runs their school. This is an important tension and requires constant attention to get the right balance of commonality across schools and individuality of each school that leads to the most rapid development and improvement.

The Central Team has expert teams in safeguarding, governance HR, finance, IT and procurement that aim to provide excellent service to schools. It also has an extensive school improvement team, of curriculum expertise and former heads who each oversee a group of schools. We have also created a Chief Strategy Officer role who will oversee the growth, data and impact and marketing and comms across the Trust. Each school is allocated a Director of Education who works alongside the school leadership team to quality assure self-evaluation judgements, agree priorities and facilitate support from across the Trust and our external partners.

Closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils is a particular focus. Given its importance Unity invests in and benefits from the Unity Research School (URS), which is instrumental in informing Unity School Partnership's strategy, which is itself rooted in research evidence.

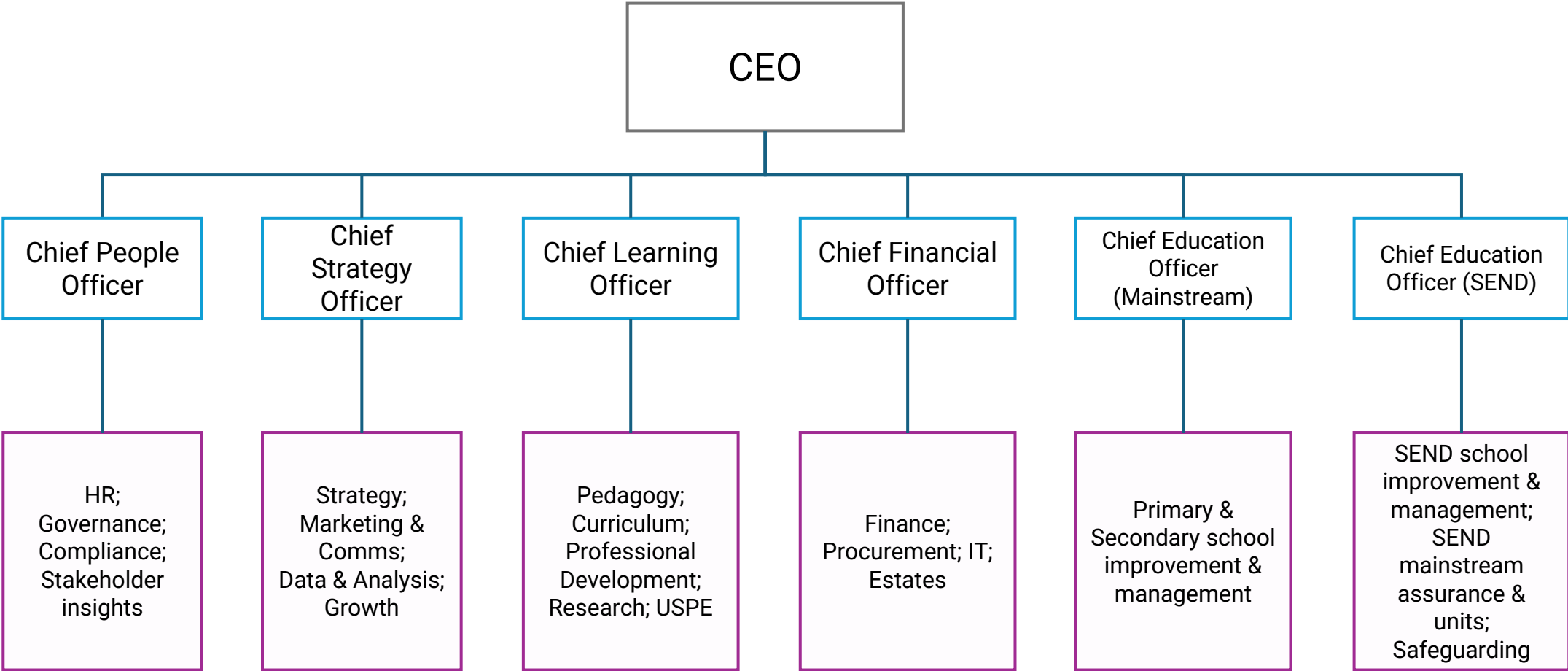
The Trust supports schools to:

- Audit their provision
- Benchmark against key principles
- Collaborate and share good practice in context
- Share collective responsibility for the outcomes of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds

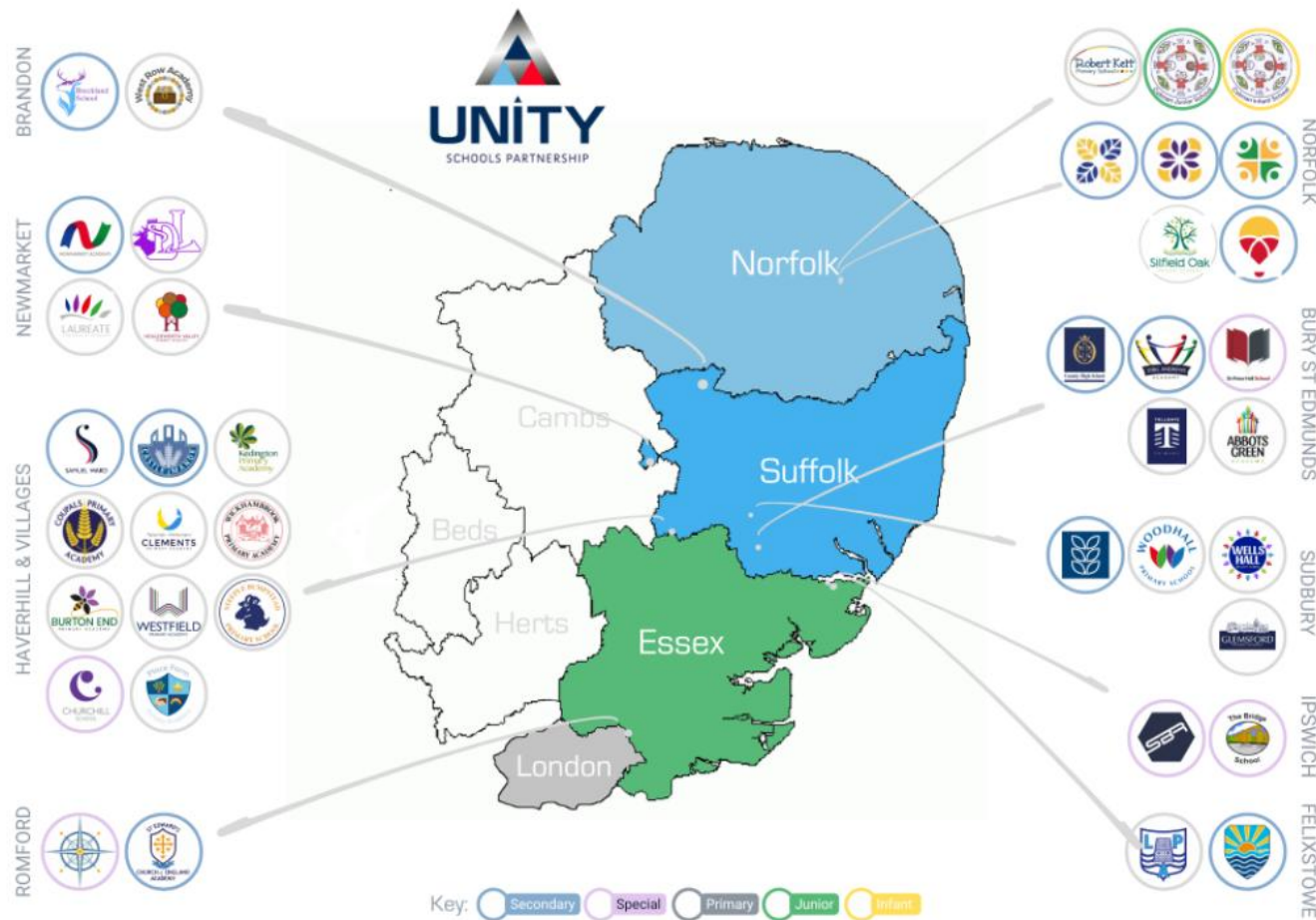
Unity places a high value on local governance and brings together Chairs each term and holds an annual conference for all governors. Education directors work with Chairs of local governing bodies on performance management arrangements for heads.



Our Structure



Our Schools



The vast majority of the Trust's schools are successful and well-performing, judged 'Good' and 'Expected Standard' by Ofsted. The ambition over the next three years is that schools across the Trust become routinely 'Strong' characterised by top quartile performance and with the capacity to support additional schools in the area that would benefit from being part of the Trust.

In order to achieve this ambition, the we will focus on:

Excellent education – Our plans at secondary and primary aim at top quartile outcomes for pupils, with very high parental and external approval ratings of our special schools.

Excellent staff – We are committed to recruiting, developing and retaining great people, creating clear pathways for internal progression and ensuring Unity is an excellent place to build a career in education.

Excellent support for schools – at the core of our success is the support provided across the Trust for Heads and staff working in Unity schools, from a range of experts at the centre and in our schools.

Our Curriculum & Pedagogy

We strive for best practices across the Trust, with Trust Leadership, Headteachers, and the Central Team collaborating to enhance each school's curriculum. Our primary objective is to ensure that all students, irrespective of their backgrounds, needs, or abilities, have equal access to opportunities. The school improvement team, including subject advisers, works across phases to promote consistency and drive forward improvements, particularly in our special schools, where we aim for pupils to achieve their full potential through a well-rounded and tailored curriculum.

CUSP:

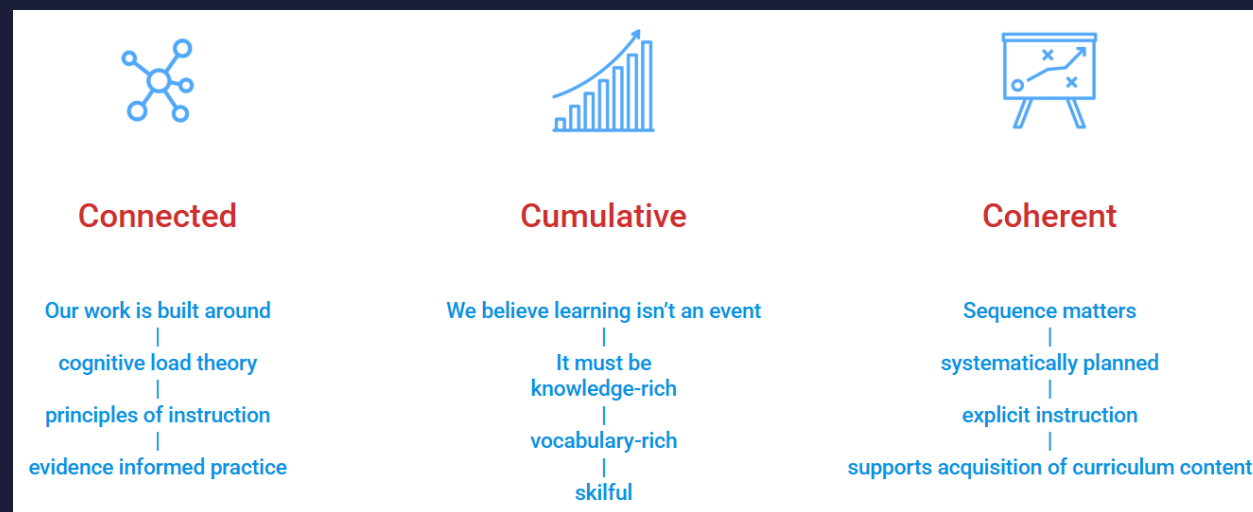
In line with our vision of making remarkable change happen, Unity is proud to have its own curriculum, Curriculum with Unity Schools Partnership (CUSP).

CUSP is underpinned by evidence, research and cognitive science. The curriculum is deliberately sequenced to activate prior learning, build on skills and deepen knowledge and understanding, enabling robust progression for every pupil. There is an emphasis on vocabulary acquisition, retention and use to break down learning barriers and accelerate progress. Specific skills are discreetly taught and practised so that they become transferrable. Learning, vocabulary and content is cumulative; content is learned, retrieved and built upon.

Although the curriculum was developed for schools in the Unity Schools Partnership, we have been pleased to share it with 850 schools nationally and internationally – and this number is growing every day.

Unity Research School:

Unity Research School is proud to be part of the Research Schools Network, aiming to support schools to bridge the gap between research and practice. We work with classroom practitioners, school leaders and system leaders to engage, unite and reflect around the use of research evidence to address educational disadvantage. We disseminate evidence-informed practice through communications, articles, video, exemplification, training and publications. We work with experts within our research school network and beyond, as part of a mission to help all pupils, irrespective of background and starting points, to thrive.



[Read more about CUSP
Early Foundations](#)

[Read more about CUSP
Primary](#)

[Read more about CUSP
Secondary](#)

The Role



The CFO provides strategic and professional leadership across Finance, Procurement, Estates and IT.

The CFO ensures the Trust's long term financial sustainability, robust stewardship of public funds, and the effective delivery of operational infrastructure that enables high quality education across the Trust.

The CFO contributes to Trust wide strategy, supports organisational growth and change, and ensures that people, resources, estates and systems are aligned to educational priorities and outcomes.

Reporting to: Chief Executive Officer

Responsible for: Finance; Procurement; IT; Estates

Hours: Full time, 52 weeks per year

Location: Hybrid; regular attendance at Trust offices in Haverhill, with travel to schools as required

Salary: Salary based on experience and expertise

Pension: Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The Role

As Chief Financial Officer, you will play a central role in enabling Unity's educational ambition by ensuring the Trust is financially strong, resilient and well positioned for the future.

You will set the long-term financial strategy for the organisation, balancing sustainability with the confidence to invest where it will make the greatest difference for children and young people. Working closely with the CEO, Executive Team and Board, you will shape budgets, investment decisions and priorities, providing clear insight and constructive challenge to support confident decision making.

You will lead and oversee the Trust's Finance, Procurement, Estates and IT functions, ensuring that schools are supported by strong systems, safe and compliant environments, and efficient, reliable infrastructure. This includes responsibility for finance, audit, risk and compliance, and for ensuring transparency and trust in how public money is stewarded.

A key part of the role is leadership. You will build and develop high performing central teams and work in partnership with Headteachers and leaders across the Trust, supporting difficult conversations with clarity, fairness and purpose. Above all, this is a senior role for someone motivated by impact: freeing up resources, strengthening capacity across the organisation, and ensuring that financial decisions actively support excellent education at scale.



Role interfaces

- **Chief Strategy Officer** – responsible for Trust strategy and growth, including agreeing the resources required to achieve sustainable change. The CFO will support the CSO with budgeting and due diligence.
- **Chief Learning Officer** - accountable for leading the Trust's learning strategy (curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and professional development). The CFO partners with the Chief Learning Officer to align education priorities to sustainable financial plans, including affordability, investment cases and value-for-money evaluation.
- **Chief People Officer** - accountable for the Trust's people strategy, including organisational design, recruitment and retention, pay and reward, wellbeing. The CFO partners with the Chief People Officer to ensure workforce plans and people initiatives are affordable and sustainable.
- **Chief Education Officers** - responsible for translating Trust strategy into school level improvement, performance outcomes and intervention. The CFO works with the Executive Directors to ensure school improvement plans are properly resourced, budgets are aligned to agreed priorities, and financial performance is monitored with timely support and challenge to secure sustainability.
- At Board level relationships with the **Chair of the Board and the Chair of the Finance Committee**.



Key Responsibilities

1. Financial Strategy & Sustainability

- Develop and deliver an ambitious long term financial strategy aligned to the Trust's educational priorities and growth ambitions.
- Ensure long term sustainability through robust planning, balanced budgets and the removal of structural deficits over multiple cycles.
- Lead effective treasury management, optimising investment income while safeguarding liquidity, reserves and charitable objectives.

2. Resource Allocation & Investment Decision Making

- Work with the CEO, Executive Team and Board to shape annual budgets, investment cases and affordability decisions.
- Provide high quality financial analysis, scenario modelling and insight to support clear, evidence based decision making.
- Enable curriculum led financial planning, ensuring resources are deployed where they deliver the greatest educational impact.

3. Governance, Risk & Stewardship

- Ensure strong financial governance, internal controls and compliance with all statutory, regulatory and funding requirements.
- Lead audit, reporting and assurance processes, providing the Board with a clear and transparent understanding of performance and risk.

- Lead Trust wide risk management, ensuring risks are identified, mitigated and actively managed.

4. Operational Leadership

- Provide strategic oversight of Finance, Procurement, Estates and IT, ensuring operational infrastructure effectively supports schools.
- Oversee procurement, estates and capital planning, ensuring safe, compliant and sustainable learning environments.
- Ensure digital systems, IT resilience and cyber security arrangements are fit for purpose and future focused.

5. Leadership, People & Capability

- Lead and develop high performing central teams across finance and operations, fostering professionalism and continuous improvement.
- Build financial understanding and accountability among budget holders, Headteachers and senior leaders across the Trust.
- Model ethical, open and collaborative leadership, supporting colleagues through challenge while maintaining trust and clarity.



The Person

We are seeking a CFO with a strong corporate mindset, able to take proportionate risks and focus on freeing up resources in service of education and young people.

You will be strategic, resilient and driven bringing clarity and challenge where tough choices are required. This role calls for someone transparent and credible, able to simplify complex financial decisions, communicating well to different audiences.

You will bring strong treasury and investment judgement, with the confidence to spot and steward significant opportunities across our estates, IT and procurement functions. Above all, we are looking for a collaborative leader who builds strong teams, shares expertise openly, and is a team player keen to work with us in delivering an excellent education to the pupils in our schools.



The Person (Continued)

KNOWLEDGE

Essential

- Public or charity sector finance experience.
- Strong understanding of financial governance, risk management and public accountability.
- Knowledge of regulatory and statutory financial frameworks.
- Understanding of estates, capital planning or operational infrastructure at a strategic level.
- Awareness of cyber security and information governance requirements.
- An understanding of the potential for digital tools and AI to enhance and redefine existing processes and practices.
- Knowledge of child-safeguarding issues and successful use of measures that promote and ensure the safeguarding of children.

Desirable

- Legal and regulatory context for a Multi-Academy Trust.
- Sound knowledge in any of the major reporting areas of Estates, IT or Procurement.
- Strong knowledge of the Academy Trust Handbook.

EXPERIENCE

Essential

- Significant experience in a senior finance role and leader of finance and operational teams.
- Strong commercial and financial acumen, with experience of developing business opportunities to make a substantive contribution to the financial success of the organisation.
- Strong track record of performance managing professional staff; driving morale, raising standards and promoting a team ethos with regard to a multi-site organisation.
- Proven success in building effective partnerships and links including with schools, commercial organisations and Local Authorities, to maximise networks and opportunities.
- Successful experience of promoting inclusion, equality and diversity.

Desirable

- Have led finance in a complex, distributed organisation of similar scale.
- Have successfully helped leaders to achieve balanced budgets without compromise to quality.
- Good experience of risk management.
- Experience of leading on functions outside their personal specialism, effectively managing experts.



The Person (Continued)

QUALIFICATIONS

Essential

- Educated to degree level, with evidence of continuing professional development
- Fully qualified Chartered Accountant (e.g. ACA, ACCA, CIMA, CIPFA or equivalent)

Desirable

- Further professional qualifications or CPD in strategic leadership, Finance, Estates or IT.

SKILLS & APTITUDES

Essential

- Highly organised, efficient and productive.
- Able to cope in highly pressurised situations, where delivery in short timescales without compromise to quality is required.
- A reflective mindset, willing to have their thinking challenged and their mind changed.
- Socially adept and likeable, able to work with people from any background or at any level.
- An inspirational leader that others want to learn from and to work with/ for.
- A corporate mindset, capable of making decisions that are right for the wider organisation.
- A strategic thinker who can work with schools, Trust leaders and the Board.
- Committed to ethical leadership, willing to do the right thing for children in any circumstance.
- Well-developed presentation and writing skills, and comfortable with public speaking.
- Ability to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences, acting as an effective ambassador for the Trust.
- An effective leader who can build a positive organisational culture, encourage reflection, delegate responsibility, build teams, strive for continuous improvement and inspire staff to achieve their full potential.

Desirable

- Political awareness and acumen.
- Willing to capitalise on appropriate sources of external support and expertise.
- Ability to negotiate and manage conflict, providing appropriate support.
- A commitment to excellence, intolerant of mediocrity and constantly asking 'What would make this better?'
- A logical, critical thinker with routinely sound judgement.





Why be part of the Unity Team?

At Unity Schools Partnership, we break barriers to create remarkable change, putting pupils first and supporting the vulnerable and disadvantaged. We are dedicated to fostering a positive work environment where employees can grow, valuing collaboration, wellbeing, diversity, equality, and work-life balance. Across our schools and central hub, we nurture talent at all career stages, offering a wide range of roles.

PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

We recognise the importance of providing professional development opportunities and support all our staff with a CPD programme to equip them for their current role and next steps. Our aim is to retain talent and so we actively encourage and facilitate movement within the Trust. In fact, several members of our executive team originate from internal promotions, and we have enabled a number of staff to follow their passions and embark on new careers within the Trust. From apprenticeships to leadership training, we offer open doors, not glass ceilings.

MEANINGFUL WORK THAT MAKES A REAL CONTRIBUTION

All roles within the Trust contribute towards ensuring our pupils receive the education they deserve so that they can achieve their potential. We rely on our teams to take the initiative to make things better, to work smarter, to collaborate within and across teams to be the best we can be, so that our pupils can be the best they can be. We facilitate collaborative working across schools and multi-disciplinary projects to share best practice and maximise our skills, talent and knowledge sharing.

WELLBEING & SAFEGUARDING

Of course, as an educational organisation, safeguarding is front and centre of what we do. But our care extends to our employees too. We value every member of staff as a person in their own right, everyone needs support in different ways and at different points in their lives. We have invested in wellbeing systems to ensure that staff get the right support at the right time and whenever needed.

FAIRNESS & FLEXIBILITY MATTERS

We pride ourselves on being fully committed to equality and diversity best practice. We follow Teachers' Pay and Local Government pay scales for fair compensation and transparency. Our benefits package includes final/average salary pensions, wellbeing service, an employee assistance programme, cycle to work scheme, flu vouchers and EV leasing. In addition, we recognise the need for, and benefits of flexible working and hybrid working and are pleased to offer these where appropriate for the job role.

Staff Benefits & Wellbeing

We aim to recruit and retain top talent, recognising that every team member contributes to improving pupil outcomes. Our primary focus is on breaking down barriers to facilitate remarkable change, empowering teachers to teach and leaders to lead. Supporting staff wellbeing and professional growth is crucial; we want everyone to feel valued and have opportunities to progress within the Trust. Our team fosters a culture of belonging, enhancing staff happiness and service delivery.

We prioritise inclusive working practices and welcome diverse teams, offering flexible arrangements for a healthy work-life balance. Our commitment to equal opportunities is evident in our initiatives celebrating diversity.

Professional development is a cornerstone of our approach, supported by our Teaching School and access to national experts. We offer talent management programmes, executive coaching, and an extensive CPD framework, including:

- Instructional coaching
- Funded professional courses (up to Level 7)
- Internal CPD opportunities
- Strong ties with the Unity Teaching School Hub for NPQs

Join us to work, learn, and grow together.

Staff Wellbeing

We prioritise wellbeing through the DfE Wellbeing Charter, offering benefits such as workload reduction commitments, discounted gym memberships, and mental health support via TELUS.

Our Pluxee package includes discounts on shopping, holidays, and leisure activities, enhancing overall wellbeing.

Eligible staff can also join the Blue Light Card discount scheme for exclusive savings.

Unity Schools Partnership Education (UE)

We have established UE as a subsidiary trading company to independently trade with commercial organisations, generating additional income for the Trust. This initiative has already returned over £1 million to Unity Schools Partnership schools through tutoring and consultancy, providing staff opportunities to develop their ideas and work on a commission basis.





How to Apply

Application Process:

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to Unity Schools Partnership on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role via www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **RBQPD**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter, addressed to Dominic Norrish, and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form. An application form will be requested for final round candidates.

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application

The closing date for applications is 5pm on **Monday 15 June 2026**.

Key dates:

- Shortlisting: **Thursday 25 June** (*For information only, candidates not required*)
- Informal one to ones with Dominic Norrish (CEO): **Wednesday 1 July**
- Panel Interviews date: **Thursday 9 July in Bury-St-Edmunds, Suffolk**

Due diligence:

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.

Safeguarding:

Unity Schools Partnership is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at all times. You will be responsible for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of all children with whom you come into contact, in accordance with the Trust's and the schools' Safeguarding policies.

The post holder is required to hold a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

References:

We will seek one written reference for each shortlisted candidate and a second and final written reference for the preferred candidate

GDPR personal data notice:

According to GDPR guidelines, Saxton Bampfylde Ltd are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

