

The Chief Financial Officer

Role Details

- Reporting to CEO
- Accountable to: Chief Executive, Board of Governors (West Suffolk College) and Board of Trustees (Eastern Education Group Trust)
- Direct Reports: Heads of Finance; Group Director of Estates; leads for procurement, risk and assurance
- Salary: 110-130K

Role Summary

Eastern Education Group is seeking a commercially minded, transformational Chief Financial Officer to work alongside the CEO and Senior Executive Team in shaping the next phase of the Group's development.

This is a broader role than traditional financial stewardship. The CFO will bring financial insight, commercial acumen, constructive challenge and an external perspective to the biggest decisions about the Group's future. As the CEO's strategic finance and commercial partner, the CFO will translate organisational ambitions into affordable plans, provide clear visibility of performance and risk, and help the Senior Executive Team make timely, well-informed decisions.

The CFO will strengthen how EEG plans, measures performance and makes decisions, building a modern finance and corporate services model with sharper forecasting, scenario modelling, business partnering and decision support, powered by better use of systems, data and automation. The portfolio extends well beyond finance, covering strategic procurement, risk and assurance, estates, capital investment and funding opportunities, so that decisions about EEG's resources, infrastructure and investment are joined up, sustainable and aligned with its long-term ambitions.

Key Purpose of the Role

- To act as a trusted adviser and constructive challenger to the CEO, Board and Senior Executive Team, bringing financial and commercial insight to the development and delivery of the Group's strategy.
- To safeguard the Group's financial sustainability while building the planning, analysis, business partnering and decision-support capabilities needed for its future development.
- To lead and develop the Group's finance, strategic procurement, risk and assurance functions, creating efficient processes, clear accountability and confidence in the information used to make decisions.
- To provide strategic oversight of property strategy, capital projects and bids, estates and facilities management across the Group, including leadership of the Group Director of Estates, ensuring estate planning and investment support the Group's educational, operational and growth ambitions.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic leadership and CEO partnership

- Act as the CEO's strategic finance and commercial partner, offering sound advice, constructive challenge and an independent perspective on opportunities, risks and investment decisions.
- Provide strategic financial advice to the Senior Executive Team and to members and committees across the Group's governance structure.
- Translate the Group's strategic priorities into financial and operational plans, with clear measures of performance and accountability.
- Improve the quality and pace of decision-making through timely analysis, forward-looking forecasts and clear communication of financial information.
- Work across the organisation to build confidence in financial information and a shared understanding of performance, affordability and value for money.
- Represent the Group externally, within and beyond the education sector, building a strong financial reputation and network that positions EEG to make the most of future opportunities.

Finance transformation and performance

- Develop a modern finance function with significantly stronger financial planning and analysis, business partnering and decision support, underpinned by better use of systems, data and automation.
- Shape a clear operating model for the functions within the CFO's remit, with the right skills, capacity and ways of working for the Group's future needs.
- Strengthen budgeting, forecasting and scenario modelling so leaders can anticipate change and assess their options.
- Ensure principals, executive leaders and budget holders receive accessible financial insight and effective support in managing their areas.
- Lead the Group's finance functions, ensuring sound systems and processes are delivered by highly competent teams.
- Maintain a strategic financial plan with short-, medium- and long-term goals and objectives.
- Oversee the preparation of annual budgets, management accounts, statutory accounts and financial reports, ensuring they are accurate, timely and useful to decision-makers.
- Ensure effective oversight of income, expenditure, cash flow, treasury, tax, payroll and transactional finance, supported by proportionate controls and efficient processes.
- Direct and support the Heads of Finance in financial management, performance reporting and continuous improvement.

Risk, governance and assurance

- Uphold sound governance and ethical behaviour, including effective accounting, reporting and financial control practices.
- Provide strategic oversight of internal controls, internal audit, enterprise risk, insurance and regulatory compliance across the CFO's portfolio.
- Support the Audit and Risk Management Committee and maintain effective working relationships with internal and external auditors.
- Ensure the CEO, Board and relevant committees receive clear reporting and appropriate assurance on financial performance and material risks.
- Lead the continuing review and development of financial policies, procedures and safeguards as the Group evolves.

Strategic procurement and commercial value

- Lead the development of procurement as a strategic Group capability, moving beyond transactional purchasing towards category management and coordinated supplier strategy.
- Oversee supplier and contract management, commercial negotiation and opportunities to improve value for money across the Group.
- Ensure significant procurement decisions balance cost, quality, risk and long-term organisational benefit.

Funding, investment and major bids

- Research, lead and advise the CEO and Senior Executive Team on funding, income and new business opportunities.
- Provide financial strategy, modelling and commercial evaluation for significant funding opportunities, capital bids, investments and major projects.
- Assess affordability, strategic alignment, risk and long-term financial sustainability before major commitments are made.

Estates, capital investment and development

- Provide strategic oversight of the Group's long-term estate strategy, capacity planning and capital investment priorities.
- Lead the Group Director of Estates and ensure effective oversight of major capital developments and facilities services, including maintenance, compliance, cleaning and catering.
- Ensure estate and capital plans are integrated with financial planning and support high-quality learning environments across the Group.

People and culture

- Promote the Group's values through personal leadership style and behaviours.
- Support transformational change and continuous improvement in pursuit of the Group's strategic priorities.
- Build, lead and develop capable teams, creating a culture of collaboration, accountability and continuous improvement.
- Motivate and coach colleagues to achieve and develop their full potential.
- Ensure effective performance management, recruitment, induction, development and communication across the functions within the CFO's remit.

Equality and diversity

- Actively promote equality and diversity throughout the Group.
- Ensure decisions within the CFO's remit are informed by relevant data and consistent with the Group's equality and diversity policies.
- Ensure staff complete mandatory training and carry out their duties in accordance with the Group's policies and procedures.

Health and safety

- Promote health, safety and welfare throughout the Group.
- Ensure staff complete mandatory training and carry out their duties in accordance with the Group's Health and Safety Policy and Procedures.

Safeguarding

- Take responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults within the Group.
- Carry out duties in accordance with the Group's safeguarding policies and procedures, including referring concerns to specialist staff as appropriate.

General

This job description is not exhaustive. The post holder may be required to undertake other reasonable duties consistent with the level of responsibility of the role. As Eastern Education Group operates as a collective organisation, the post holder may from time to time be required to undertake duties for any of its Group organisations.

Person specification

EEG welcomes applications from outstanding CFOs and senior finance leaders in multi-site education, and from other complex multi-discipline organisations. Direct education experience is preferable but not necessarily essential. What matters most is commercial judgement, adaptability and the ability to quickly understand the Group's funding, regulatory and educational landscape.

	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	Educated to degree level or equivalent. Qualified accountant (ACA, ACCA, CIMA, CIPFA or equivalent).	
Knowledge and skills	Strong financial skills with a proven background in a corporate environment at executive level. Strong FP&A, forecasting, scenario planning and business partnering capability. Excellent understanding of internal and external audit processes. Strong understanding of governance, risk and internal control. Ability to drive successful delivery of major projects. Strong commercial acumen and evidence of influencing organisational strategy. Knowledge and understanding of policy developments and funding in the education sector. Ability and appetite to rapidly understand a new sector, its funding model and regulatory environment.	Knowledge of FE or MAT funding and regulatory structures. Exposure to estates or capital programmes.
Experience	Significant senior financial leadership in a complex, multi-site or multi-entity organisation. Experience operating within a regulated, complex or stakeholder-rich environment. Experience operating as a strategic partner to a CEO or MD and Board. Experience of engaging with and managing a diverse range of stakeholders. Integrated business planning experience supported by financial modelling and scenario planning. Experience of improving systems, data, reporting and automation. Proven experience of managing teams, including performance management and appraisals.	Public-sector funding or grant experience. Previous experience in education. Experience of working with the DfE or equivalent bodies.
Personal qualities	Commercially astute, with a proven ability to identify and respond to strategic opportunities. A proven, proactive approach to performance improvement and achieving excellence. Track record of leading finance transformation and developing high-performing teams. A passion for personal and professional development. An influential disposition, with the ability to build strong internal and external relationships. Ability to network effectively across the FE sector, the DfE and other funding bodies, and to establish high levels of credibility and integrity.	

Safeguarding and pre-employment checks

This post is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and satisfactory clearance. Eastern Education Group is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.