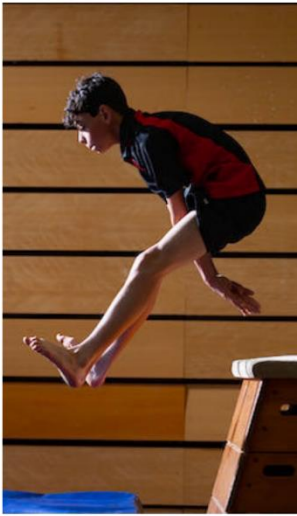


# Acer

TRUST

---



---

## Finance Director

## Recruitment Information Pack

# Welcome

Welcome to the Acer Trust. We are delighted you are considering applying for our Finance Director vacancy. I would like to take the opportunity to introduce you to Acer Trust and to encourage you to take a good look at the information contained in this candidate pack and to get in contact if you would like to find out more.

The Finance Director is a new role within our Trust, emerging as part of our ongoing development, growth and maturing as a Trust. The post-holder will work closely and collaboratively with our trustees, COO, headteachers and myself to develop and implement a strategy for robust and prudent financial management for our Trust and our schools.

Acer Trust is a family of nine schools based in Oxfordshire, which is built on the foundational value of collaboration and an unwavering commitment to excellent learning and exceptional opportunities for all. We aim to achieve this vision by being big-hearted and ambitious for all the learners in the Trust, whether students, pupils, staff, volunteers or members of our communities. Between them, our five primary and four secondary schools serve 5,700 students and pupils from a wide range of backgrounds. It is important to us that each of our schools maintain their own unique identity and have the autonomy to meet the needs of their own communities, whilst benefiting from the efficiencies and opportunities that come from working together.

To that end, we have recently reviewed our Trust operations and implemented a new structure based around three geographical hubs. The new Finance Director will play a key role in embedding this structure and ensuring that our schools benefit from excellent operational finance support, high quality financial information and the stability that comes from well managed Trust finances. The post-holder will have the opportunity to design and implement effective processes in collaboration with our fantastic Finance Managers and their teams, and to lead in selecting and implementing a new finance system for the Trust. All our schools and our Central Team work exceptionally hard to provide excellent outcomes with limited resources and they embrace the challenges that come along the way; three of our schools are facing particular financial challenges. As Finance Director, you would play a key role in bringing stability back to those schools so that they can focus on school improvement, teaching and learning.

This is a big role, with big challenges and also opportunities to make a big difference. It needs someone who will give 100% and lead with ambition and big-heartedness. If you are an experienced finance leader looking for this kind of challenge, we would love to hear from you.

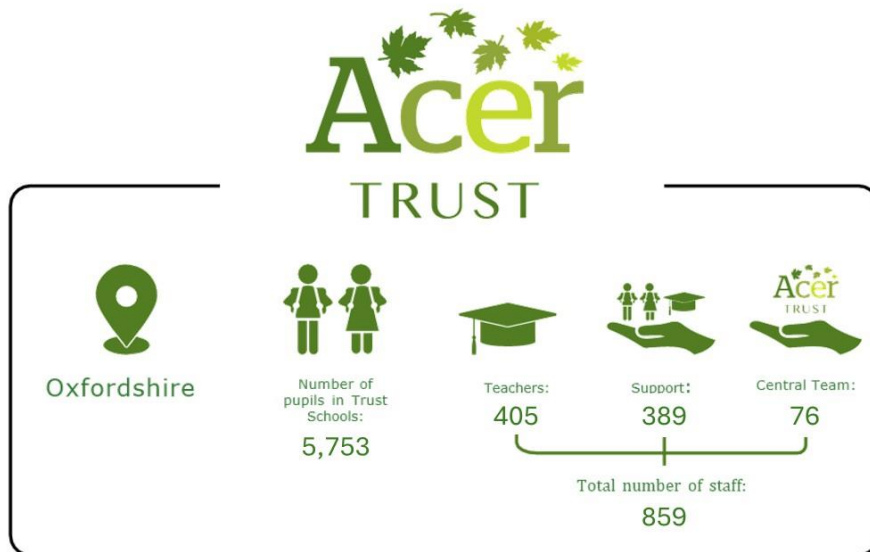
**Nathan Thomas, CEO**

# About Acer Trust

Acer Trust a multi academy trust working together to create great places to learn and work. We are based in Oxfordshire in south central England and currently consist of 5 primary schools and 4 secondary schools, educating approximately 6,000 pupils and students between us. Our overriding purpose is to secure the wellbeing and success of all. We aim to achieve this by focusing on the development of every individual as well as improving the education outcomes for every child.

By holding children at the centre of our thinking, the Trust actively creates a positive learning environment in every school which prepares children and young people for success now and in their future lives.

We are proud of the team of people working in our schools who always put children and young people first. We recognise that all members of the Trust have a contribution to make and are committed to ensuring that everyone plays an active role in enabling the success of all learners in the Trust.



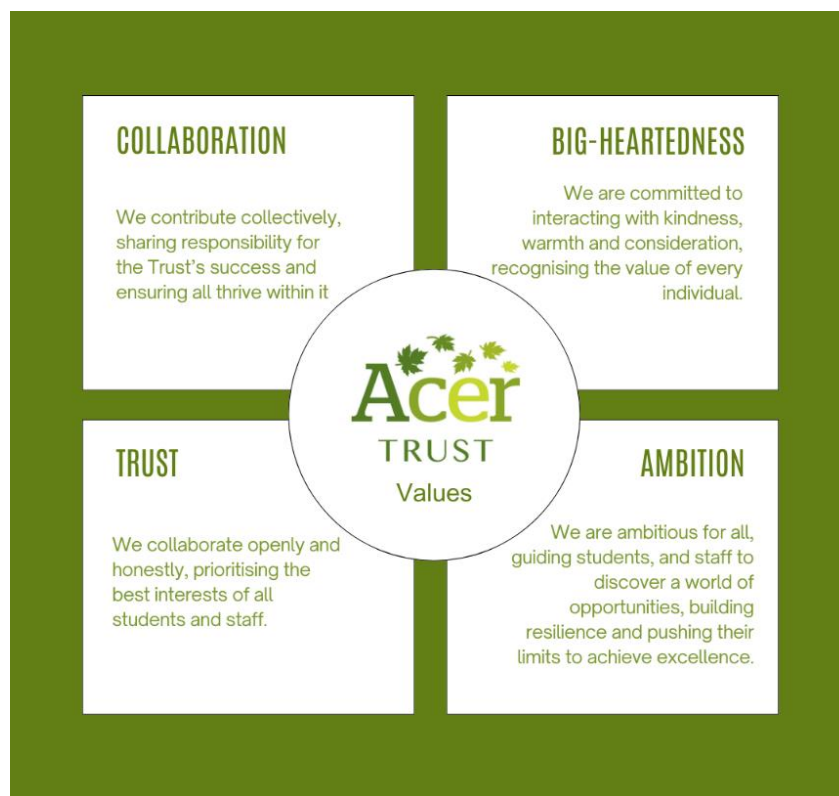
## Our History

Acer Trust was founded in 2017, when four Oxfordshire schools came together to form a multi-academy trust that is truly collaborative and embraces each school's individuality. Since then, the Trust has grown steadily, most recently with our two Bicester schools joining in January 2024, bringing us to nine in total. As the Trust has developed, we have continually reviewed and developed our systems and structures, always aiming to maximise the collective power of the Trust to best support our schools, whilst keeping school level autonomy in the most important areas. This means that our schools increasingly benefit from

consistency of practice in operations and ever-expanding opportunities to collaborate and work together.

## Our Vision and Values

**Our Vision:** Working together to achieve excellent learning and exceptional opportunities for all.



We will achieve our vision and values by:

- Placing each child as an individual at the centre of our thinking
- Supporting the well-being and success of all students and staff
- Providing students and staff with excellent opportunities, encounters and experiences to prepare them for exciting futures
- Actively seeking to work with external organisations to share and further improve our practice and the opportunities we offer

## Our Structure

In designing and developing our Trust governance and operating structures (depicted below), we constantly strive to strike a balance between being local enough to be personal and being central enough to leverage the benefits of specialism, resilience and financial efficiency that being a Trust can afford us. To this end we have made three key decisions that shape and support how we operate:

1. Our School Governing Bodies retain significant delegated powers and remain a crucial part of the Trust's governance structure

2. Our Executive Group is comprised of all our School Headteachers, alongside the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operations and Finance Officer
3. Our Central Team is organised into three Hub Teams which operate under the leadership of both specialist function leaders and local Hub Business Managers.

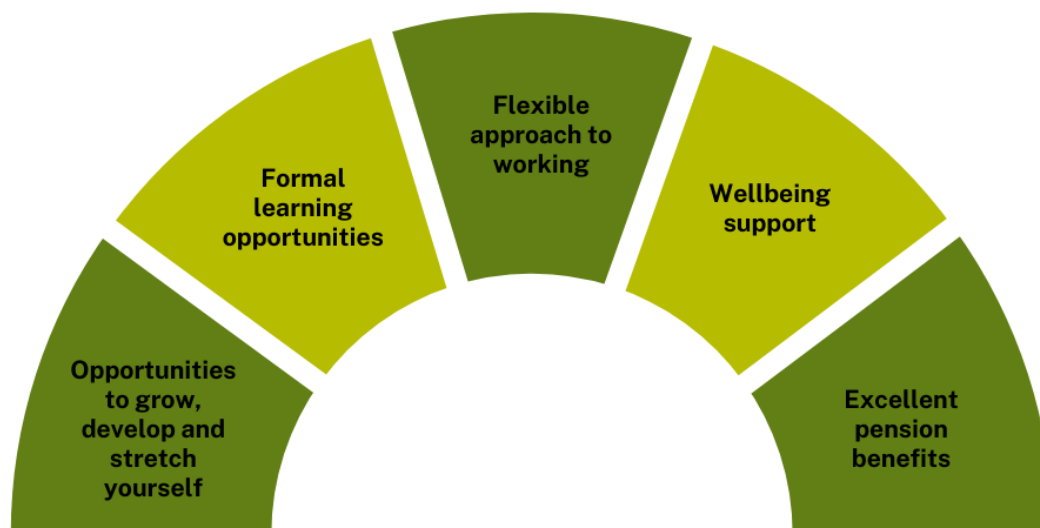
The Finance Director will be a key member of the Central Leadership Team, working alongside leaders of our HR, Governance and IT teams to ensure that the Finance Team delivers consistent support that is also nuanced enough to meet the needs of individual schools.





## Our Offer

At Acer Trust, it is important to recognise that we are all learners, from our pupils and students to our staff, governors and trustees, to members of our wider school communities. Because of this belief we are committed to creating working environments for our staff that provide opportunities for continual growth and development. We set ambitious goals and work towards high standards, but we offer a very supportive environment intended to allow everyone to flourish. As a member of the Acer Trust team, you can expect to benefit from:



### Opportunities to grow, develop and stretch yourself

In our Trust there are so many opportunities to grow and develop, whether it is stretching yourself to take on something responsibilities, adapting to the ever-changing education landscape, getting involved in sector-wide events or getting involved in supporting our students! You will benefit from a supportive, coaching approach to leadership and management that encourages taking measured risks and learning from your mistakes. We strive for an open and transparent culture that recognises failures as learning opportunities and successes as shared.

### Formal learning opportunities, funded through the Apprenticeship Levy

We are committed to providing our staff with the formal learning opportunities needed to support their roles, both current and future. Although resources can

be tight, we are always keen to utilise our Apprenticeship Levy to support learning and development for our staff.

### Flexible approach to working

Whilst our roles are, by their very nature, primarily based in our schools, we look to support flexible working wherever possible, so that every member of staff can give 100% whilst working with us. With TRUST as one of our key values, we trust you to work with your manager to determine the approach to working that will best enable you to thrive in your role.

### Wellbeing support

Staff wellbeing is hugely important to Acer Trust, and we are working on developing our wellbeing support offer for employees. So far, we offer a cycle to work scheme, free flu jabs, an employee support hotline and generous annual leave allowances, and we are always looking to add to these offers.

### Excellent pension benefits

Our support staff benefit from access to the defined benefit Local Government Pension Scheme, one of the most advantageous pension schemes available, with employer's contributions of over 20% and death in service benefits included.

## About The Role

This exciting new role has emerged out of a re-evaluation of our structures following our recent period of growth. The post holder will play a key role in leading our finance function, helping us to attain and maintain our ambition for operational excellence in all aspects of finance. Working closely with the Chief Operations and Finance Officer, Finance, Risk and Audit Committee, Headteachers, Business Managers and Finance personnel, the Finance Director will ensure that we meet our regulatory requirements, manage our risk and, most crucially, provide school leaders, governors and trustees with timely, reliable and contextualised information to support good decision making.

Within an increasingly challenging educational landscape, making the best possible use of our funds and managing emerging risks are crucial for the success of our schools and all of our learners. Therefore, this role is critical to the success of our Trust. It is our hope that the Finance Director develop our Finance personnel into a highly resilient, effective and efficient team that is able change and adapt to meet the ever-evolving needs of our schools. They will create a culture of excellence and continual improvement within the finance function that allows team members to flourish and ensures the Trust is protected from undue risk.

The Finance Director will demonstrate collaborative leadership in the development and implementation of clear, consistent systems and processes, starting with the identification and implementation new finance software

solutions that will support operational efficiencies and data-informed practices. They will also act as a trusted advisor to trustees and the Trust Executive Group, drawing on their excellent knowledge of school finance and accountancy to support the effective and resilient running of our schools. Over the coming years, as we resolve the financial challenges facing our schools and look to build an increasingly sustainable and innovative Trust family, this role is pivotal to our success.

## **The Ideal Candidate**

We are looking for someone truly exceptional for this critical role. The ideal candidate will be a qualified accountant with a grounding in finance and accountancy that is both deep and broad, enabling you to design effective solutions to the challenge that the Trust faces. You will have a good knowledge of school finance, with all the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of funding formulae, spending patterns and regulatory requirements, and you will be willing to proactively fill any knowledge gaps so that you soon become a subject matter expert.

Strong applicants will be able to demonstrate solid experience of finance at both an operational and a management level, with a proven track record of improving systems, processes and outcomes. You will be able to share your experiences of managing complex change and increasing the financial sustainability of your organisation, and the things that you learned along the way.

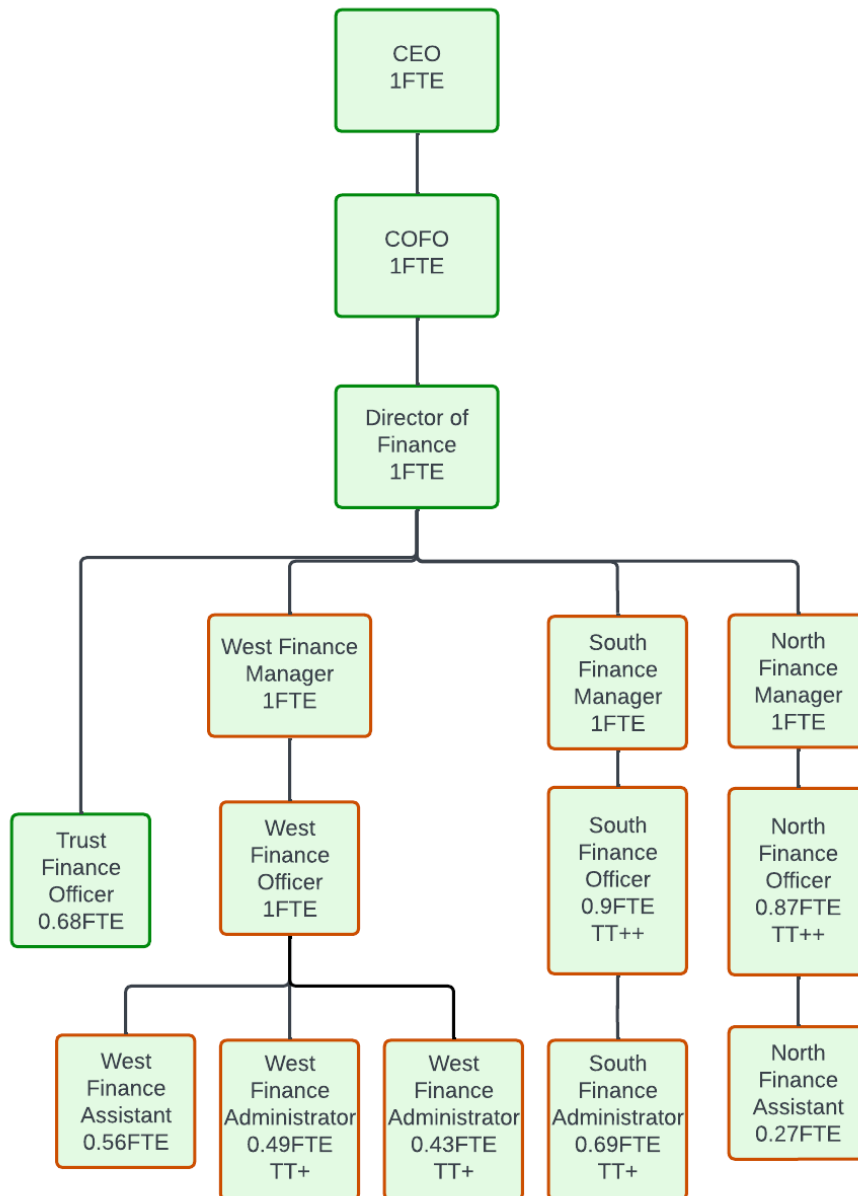
Alongside this key knowledge and experience, you will be a strong leader, with the ability to develop people, teams and systems to be consistent and highly effective. You will be ambitious, for your own growth and development, for the success and development of your team, and for the success of Acer Trust as an example of excellent financial practice within the sector. You will demonstrate a commitment to accuracy and data-integrity, understanding the importance of high-quality data within robust strategic and operational decision making.

This role would suit someone with a strong background in management of finance teams, within the education or a comparable sector, who is looking to take the next step to develop into strategic leadership. In this role you will have the opportunity to interact with executive leaders and trustees, as well as wider sector colleagues, and would provide the ideal next step for an aspiring Chief Financial Officer.



## Team Structure

Our Finance Team is organised into three Hub teams, with different levels of resourcing depending upon the size and make-up of the Hub. Each Hub team is led by a Hub Finance Manager, who works closely with the Hub Business Manager(s) and Hub HR team to ensure the needs of the schools in their Hub are well met. The central Finance function is supported by a Finance Officer, who also supports the management of the Central Budget. The structure (due to come into effect in December 2024) is outlined below:



# Job Description

**Job title:** Finance Director

**Team:** Central Leadership Team

**Reporting to:** Chief Operations and Finance Officer

**Accountable to:** Chief Executive Officer

**Contract:** Year round (52.143 weeks)

**Grade:** TBC

**Hours/week:** 37

**Location:** Based at one of the schools in the Trust, with regular travel to other school sites

## Main purpose of the role

Working closely with the COFO and Central Leadership Team, to play a crucial role in the strategic and operational management of the Trust's finances. To ensure robust financial planning, management, and reporting in line with the Department for Education's Academy Trust Handbook. To develop the capacity, efficiency and effectiveness of the Trust's finance teams.

## Specific Responsibilities

### Strategic financial leadership

- Work with the COFO, CEO and Trust Executive Group to develop and implement a robust financial strategy in alignment with the Trust's vision and goals-%
- Provide strategic financial advice and support to the COFO, CEO, and Trustees, as required, taking into account the wider aims of the organisation and providing solutions that support those aims whilst adhering to good financial practice;
- Strategically lead the development and implementation of consistent and rigorous financial planning, budgeting, forecasting, and reporting processes;
- Maintain an up-to-date view of the finance and sector landscape, identifying future developments that may affect the Trust and suggesting preparatory steps that may be taken;
- Continually evaluate the Trust's financial practices in light of sector developments, implementing improvements and updates to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

### Financial management

- Ensure the preparation of accurate and timely audited annual financial statements;
- Prepare timely annual budgets, including shaping and recommending robust budget assumptions based on sector knowledge and ensuring a continual focus on value for money;

- Ensure compliance with the Department for Education's Academy Handbook and other the requirements of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Charity Commission, HMRC and other relevant regulators;
- Manage cash flow and investments, and oversee the Trust's financial risk, providing advice and guidance to the Board of Trustees on risk management;
- Ensure the delivery of accurate and timely management accounts and budget monitoring, in light with ESFA requirements, and identifying emerging risks and identifying corrective actions as needed;
- Implement clear and consistent financial processes with appropriate oversight and monitoring to ensure that the work of the Trust's finance teams is efficient, effective and compliant at all times;
- Have a good understanding and knowledge of relevant educational finance systems
- Support the COFO in the management of key financial contracts, including insurance, payroll and audit;
- Ensure the procurement, implementation and ongoing maximisation of fit-for-purpose financial systems and software.

### Team leadership

- Lead, mentor, and develop the Trust's finance team, including the Hub Finance Managers and the Central Finance Officer, to ensure that team members are well supported and given opportunities to develop their skills and expertise;
- Foster a collaborative, customer focused and high-performance culture within the finance team.

### Compliance and governance

- Work with the COFO to develop and implement clear and robust financial policies and procedures that ensure compliance and appropriate risk management;
- Under the guidance of the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee, manage the Trust's internal audit programme, and act as the primary contact for the Trust's external and internal auditors;
- Liaise with the Trust's external auditors and regulatory bodies as required;
- Maintain accurate and transparent financial records;
- Attend the Trust's Finance, Risk and Audit Committee and Trust Board meetings providing high quality reporting to support the work of that Committee and the Trust Board, as required.

### Stakeholder engagement

- Develop strong working relationships with key internal stakeholders, including the Headteachers, Trustees and Finance Governors, providing clear and comprehensive financial information and advice;
- Communicate the Trust's Finance Strategy and initiatives to all stakeholders, ensuring transparency and engagement;

- Develop strong collaborative relationships with key external stakeholders, such as the Trust's regulators, auditors, and sector colleagues;
- Provide excellent support to colleagues across the Trust in any matters relating to financial management and decision-making.

### General Duties:

This job description is illustrative and may vary without changing the character of the job or level of responsibility. Whilst every effort has been made to explain the main duties and responsibilities of the post, the list of responsibilities is not exhaustive.

The post holder must be flexible to ensure the operational needs of the Trust are met. This includes the undertaking of duties of a similar nature and responsibility as and when required, throughout the various workplaces in the Trust.

The above duties may involve having access to information of a confidential nature, which may be covered by the Data Protection Act or other regulation/legislation. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times.

### General responsibilities:

- Comply with, and assist with the development of, Acer Trust policies and procedures relating to child protection, health, safety and security, confidentiality and data protection, reporting all concerns to an appropriate person.
- Be aware of and support difference and ensure equal opportunities for all.
- Contribute to the overall ethos/work/aims of the Trust.
- Establish constructive relationships and communicate with other professionals and agents of organisations beyond the Trust.
- Lead, attend and participate in regular meetings as required.
- Participate in training and other learning activities and performance development as required.
- Undertake appropriate and regular training and development to maintain knowledge and improve practice

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation places responsibilities for health and safety on the Trust, as your employer and on you as an employee. In addition to the employer's overall duties, the post holder has personal responsibility for their own health and safety and that of other employees; additional and more specific responsibilities are identified in the Trust's Health and Safety policy.

### Safeguarding Children and Young People

Acer Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We expect all staff to share this commitment and to undergo appropriate checks, including an enhanced DBS check.

# Person Specification

Job title: Finance Director

Team: Central Leadership Team

Reporting to: COFO

Education and experience	Requirement
Professional accounting qualification (e.g., ACA, ACCA, CIMA) or equivalent on the job training and willingness to undertake formal training as appropriate	Essential
Significant experience in a senior financial leadership role, preferably within the education sector	Desirable
Experience of managing and developing high performing teams	Essential
Experience of managing and maximising accounting software, banking and cashless payment systems	Essential
Experience of budget management and reporting at a senior level	Essential
Experience of academy finance and working with schools	Essential
Experience of change management and process improvement	Essential
Proven track record of implementing strong financial processes within a complex and/or geographically dispersed organisation	Desirable
Knowledge and skills	Requirement
Strong numeracy skills	Essential
Comprehensive knowledge of accounting, bookkeeping and budgeting principles and procedures	Essential
Good understanding of the strategic role of finance	Essential
Excellent attention to detail, analytical and problem-solving skills	Essential
Strong leadership skills, with the ability to inspire and develop others	Essential
Strong IT skills, including advanced Excel skills	Essential
Ability to implement consistent practices and processes	Essential
Good literacy and communication skills	Essential

Good interpersonal skills, including the ability to influence senior stakeholders	Essential
Ability to work independently and meet deadlines	Essential
In depth knowledge of the education sector	Essential
<b>Personal characteristics</b>	<b>Requirement</b>
Pro-active, diligent and accurate	Essential
Committed to leading by example	Essential
Positive, 'can-do' attitude	Essential
Committed to the vision and values of Acer Trust	Essential
Committed to own and team learning and professional development	Essential
Flexible and adaptable	Essential



# How to Apply

## Safeguarding and equality statement

The Acer Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and expects all staff to share this commitment. Any offer of employment with The Acer Trust is subject to verification of ID and qualifications, satisfactory evidence of the right to work in the UK, health clearance, DFE and Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Check. The Acer Trust is an equal opportunities employer, and we welcome applications from candidates from all ethnic and community backgrounds. Please note that, for safeguarding reasons, this role is subject to an enhanced DBS check and other safeguarding procedures.

## Find out more

If this sounds like the role for you, then we highly recommend that you set up an informal discussion with Jamie Wade, Chief Operating Officer to find out more. Please email [office@acertrust.org.uk](mailto:office@acertrust.org.uk) and we will be very happy to set up a call.

## Submit an application

You can submit your application for this role through MyNewTerm here: [Finance Director at Acer Trust | MyNewTerm](#)

If you are shortlisted, we will take up written references before your interview so please provide permission for this and provide accurate phone and email contact details for your referees. One of your referees must be your current or last employer.

The closing date for applications is **12 midday on Monday 21st October 2024**.

## Interviews

Interviews will be held in person on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at one of the Trust's schools in Oxfordshire. During the interview process, shortlisted applicants will have the opportunity to meet the CEO and COO as well as some of our Trustees and Headteachers, and members of the Finance and Business Management teams. You will be asked to prepare a short presentation on a topic which will be confirmed in the invitation to interview.