

Finance Manager



Reports to: Lily Bissett, Director of People, Finance & Operations

Start date: As soon as possible

Location: Hybrid with 50% office presence

Contract: Permanent; 3 days or 22.5 hours per week worked flexibly as needed

Salary: £40,000-50,000 per annum, depending on experience (+6% employer pension contribution)

Closing date for applications: Midnight, Sunday 19th May. Application form [here](#).

The Task Ahead: Finance Manager

As The Difference moves from its early start-up phase into the delivery of our 2025-30 strategy, our programmes and sector-influencing work are expanding to reach more schools and to deepen our impact. Alongside this growth, our team - and the operational function which supports them - is also growing.

As Finance Manager, you will be a key member of the Finance & Operations team. You will hold end-to-end responsibility for the finance function, from reconciliations to budgeting. You will decide where and how our existing processes could be improved, as well as developing new systems that will underpin our work as a larger and more established charity. You will be supported by the Director of People, Finance & Operations, as well as our external auditors.

The Difference is still a small and growing charity. This means that our work is fast-paced, our roles are broad, and there is a culture of being reactive and flexible, as the needs of the organisation evolve. If this sounds exciting rather than daunting, then this could be the role and team for you!

Areas of Responsibility

The Difference is looking for a Finance Manager to lead our finance function in the following ways:

- Oversee our internal bookkeeping, payment, and accounting processes, and improve these systems ongoingly.
- Lead on budgeting and forecasting across the organisation, supporting teams to predict income and expenditure and make sound financial decisions.
- Lead on the production of management accounting information, including internal monthly management accounts, quarterly reports for Trustees, and financial reports for investors.
- Lead on The Difference's audit process, with external auditors.
- Work with the Development & Impact Manager to update fundraising pipelines, and ensure the availability of high quality income projections for Trustees.
- Support accurate budgeting and reporting for grant funding, including tracking spend of restricted funds.
- Support business planning by working with teams to model potential future work - e.g. costs of expansion of an existing programme; modelling potential new programmes.

Person Specification

Essential – We are looking for the following skills, aptitude and experience; though you may be stronger in some areas than others:

- **Values** – Your experience evidences shared values with The Difference (see below) and a personal commitment to our mission to improve life outcomes for vulnerable people.

- **Finance experience, operational and strategic** – Experience across all areas of finance, from accurate invoicing, payments and record-keeping, through to setting and managing budgets, financial modelling and forecasting, and working with external accountants or auditors.
- **Finance process development** – Experience of developing finance systems; the ability to recognise how processes could be continuously improved, and enact this improvement.
- **Leadership of self and others** – Confident in identifying skills or information gaps within your team, and drawing on the expertise of others to address these gaps. Able to show how you've continually grown your own skills and those of your team members so that together you can efficiently cover workload and plan ahead.
- **Proactive problem-solving** – Ability to thrive in a fast-paced start-up environment and to problem-solve: from rolling sleeves up and diving into detail to working collaboratively to build capacity.

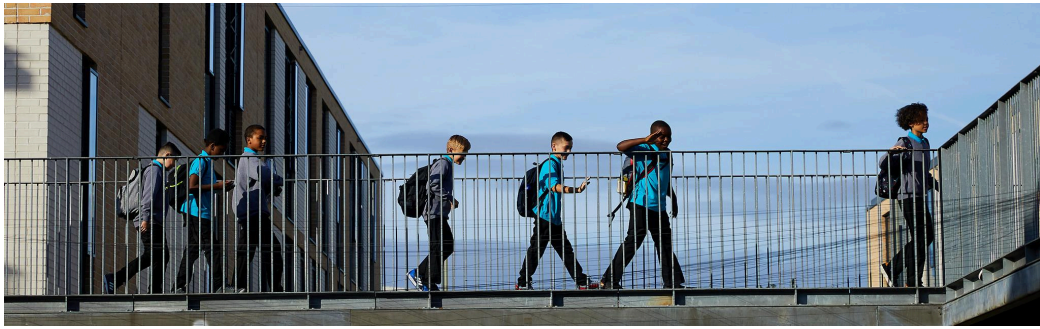
Desired – You are more likely to be successful in your application if you have one or more of the following additional experiences:

- **Accounting qualification and experience** - Some form of accounting qualification and post-qualification experience.
- **Early-stage charity/social enterprise experience** – You may have specific experience growing charities or businesses for social good at the early or start-up phase.
- **Experience of charity finances** – You may have worked for or supported other charities, and have experience of working with philanthropic grants, charity accounting, and governance.
- **Insight into schools** – You may have experience working in the education sector, whether that's through working for a business or charities that partnered with schools, or through working in a school yourself.

Why Work for The Difference?

Schooling isn't working for the children who need it most. Every week in England 109 children – equivalent to three full classrooms – are permanently excluded. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Since the pandemic, school suspensions have risen significantly, as has persistent absenteeism. 1 in 5 children are missing more than 10% of their time in school. Children who are excluded or persistently absent are much more likely to already be experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage. They are more likely to live in poverty, have additional learning needs, suffer mental health challenges, or experience a lack of safety outside school. Certain ethnicities are also disproportionately affected, notably Gypsy Roma Traveller and black Caribbean children.

Exclusion and high rates of absence can have a dramatic effect on life chances. These young people are more likely to drop out of education or employment, become vulnerable to long-term mental ill health, or be at risk of criminal exploitation. The Difference believes that children and young people deserve better and that the education system has to change.



Our Organisation

The Difference is a young education charity, founded to change the story on lost learning. By 2030, we want rates of exclusion and absence to be falling nationally and for schools to be better equipped to support all children, including those who may be vulnerable.

The Difference was born out of [a year of research into school exclusions with think-tank IPPR](#). This research identified a lack of inclusion expertise in schools and proposed a new leadership development programme to fill this gap. In 2018, Difference founder [Kiran](#) hired the team who took this idea from concept to reality, beginning work with our first schools.

The Difference is now a 22-strong team delivering multiple school leadership programmes, alongside a growing research and policy arm. The team is supported by our Youth Advisory Board, made up of young people who have experienced exclusion and who provide their expertise and insights on how school inclusion work should be done. This work is needed more than ever. Effects of COVID-19, coupled with the spiralling cost of living, have substantially increased levels of vulnerability. Schools serving excluded pupils face under-funding. The Difference has had excellent early impact but there is work ahead to capture this, share learning with schools and policy-makers, and grow our capacity to lower exclusions across England.

Our Values

- **High Expectations** - We are ambitious for excellence from young people, colleagues and ourselves. We don't believe in writing off someone's potential because of their identity or experience of crisis.
- **Strong Relationships** - We prioritise genuine relationships over transactional interactions, and know that this requires deliberate relational practice. We see colleagues and partners as people first and their roles second; and know this greater trust allows us to take more risks, gain more feedback and have greater impact.
- **Internalised Locus of Control** - We work hard to reframe difficult situations to discover what *we* have within our power in terms of solutions. We take it upon ourselves to walk towards challenges and can take a high level of ownership and agency in our work/
- **Pragmatism** - We believe leadership means recognising current limitations and striving for improvements within and beyond them. We develop consensus and chart new ways forward, challenging false and extreme positions like “zero exclusions” or “no excuses”.
- **Scientific approach** - We take a diagnostic approach to unpicking causes of problems. We are loud and proud of our failures, recognising failing fast and often is key to finding the best solutions. We test solutions and are willing to use data and feedback to make adjustments and choose new directions.
- **Not Squeamish about Structural Inequality** - We believe patterns of inequality can and should be disrupted. We strive to be clear-eyed about these inequalities, and both the individual

practice and system-changes required to address them. We push ourselves to overcome awkwardness in talking about this; and begin by acknowledging our own biases and blind spots.

- **Asset-based** - We work hard to avoid deficit thinking and aim to start with what's strong, not what's wrong. We are careful not to frame our colleagues and stakeholders - particularly young people and families – as victims but instead to recognise their agency.
- **Wise selves** - To both enjoy work and do their best, we want to make decisions and work with others in our “wise” - or regulated - selves. We also want to bring our compassionate self to those we work with, externally and internally, to support one another through challenging times.

How To Apply

To apply, please complete all sections of the application form by midnight on Sunday 19th May. [Link to our application form on Applied](#)

First round interviews will be held during **the week beginning 27th May**, over video call. Please indicate if you would not be available to attend an interview during this week.

If successful in this stage, second round interviews (including a task to be completed the same day) will take place on **the week beginning 3rd June**, at our office in Bethnal Green.

For an informal and confidential discussion about the role prior to application, please reach out to lily@the-difference.com.

We are committed to building a diverse team and strongly encourage applications from under-represented groups in the charity sector such as people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, people with experience in the care system, non-graduates and first-in-family graduates.

As part of our commitment to fairer recruitment, all applications will be assessed with names and any protected characteristics redacted.

Recommended Reading

If you'd like to understand more about The Difference and what we are trying to achieve, we would recommend the following:

- The [research](#) which underpins our organisation.
- Our latest [Impact Report](#), sharing our work in 2023