Job Description: Finance & Operations Manager (Central Team)

Trust: Four Hills Education Trust
Location: Central Office (with travel across schools as required)
Reports to: CFO; operational support to CEO
Contract: Full-time, permanent
Salary/Grade: PO1 (27 – 30) £38,220 – £40,777

Purpose of the Role

The Finance & Operations Manager provides high-quality financial support and administration across the Trust and delivers administrative and operational support to the CEO and CFO. The role ensures robust financial management, value-for-money procurement, efficient operational delivery, and exemplary governance support to Trust leadership and committees, in line with the Academy Trust Handbook and Trust policies (procurement, risk, safer recruitment).

Key Responsibilities

1) Trust-wide Financial Management & Administration

- **Monthly management accounts & forecasting**: Prepare consolidated management accounts, cashflow forecasts, and variance analyses for the CFO and Finance & Resources Committee; support timely oversight of financial performance and forward look.
- **Budget cycle**: Coordinate annual budget setting and in-year reforecasting with school business managers; maintain budget models and scenario planning; monitor income & expenditure against plan; highlight risk and mitigation options.
- **Financial controls**: Maintain reconciliations (bank, payroll control, VAT), maintain ledgers, and ensure audit-ready documentation, working to Trust financial procedures and delegated authorities.
- **System administration**: Oversee day-to-day financial processing within the Trust's accounting software (Access), ensuring POs/invoices carry appropriate documentation and approvals, and that local procurement is accurately recorded.

Four Hill Education Trust
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- **Year-end & audit**: Support the CFO in the preparation of schedules and working papers; liaising with the CFO and external auditors; support statutory reporting requirements.
- **ESFA/DfE compliance (as directed by CFO)**: Support returns, queries, and information requests; ensure adherence to policies and threshold approvals (e.g., ESFA/DfE agreement for specific contracts).

2) Procurement & Value for Money

- **Policy adherence**: Operate and uphold the Trust Procurement Policy, including competitive tendering, supplier due diligence, and auditable processes compliant with relevant legislation and guidance (e.g., Procurement Act 2023; Public Contracts Regulations).
- **Contracting & approvals**: Administer procurement thresholds and approval limits; maintain the Trust's contract register; coordinate framework use; ensure VAT compliance for local purchases and central contracts.

3) Supplier Management

- **Supplier creation and compliance**: Administer the process for setting up new suppliers in the Trust's finance system, ensuring all mandatory checks are completed to comply with HMRC requirements (e.g., VAT registration, tax status verification).
- **Fraud prevention**: Implement robust controls to prevent fraudulent account set-ups, including validation of bank details, identity checks, and adherence to the Trust's financial regulations and procurement policy.
- **Supplier performance monitoring**: Maintain the supplier register, track contract compliance, and review performance against agreed SLAs.
- **Due diligence**: Ensure suppliers meet safeguarding and statutory obligations where applicable and maintain auditable records for all checks.

4) Operations & Trust Infrastructure

- **Operational coordination**: Work with CEOs/CFO and school leaders to keep the operational infrastructure (estates/ICT/SLAs) efficient and compliant; track delivery against plans and escalate issues through agreed risk pathways.
- **Risk management**: Maintain risk information relevant to finance/operations; support updates to the Trust Risk Register; ensure controls are embedded and evidence is captured for committee reporting.
- **Projects & transitions**: Provide administrative coordination on trust-wide projects (e.g., TUPE transitions, new systems), ensuring accurate records, timelines, and stakeholder communications.

5) Governance & Administrative Support to CEO and CFO

- **Committee support**: Produce papers, packs, trackers and action logs for the **Finance & Resources Committee**; coordinate deadlines; ensure consistent, accurate reporting and minute-taking support where needed.
- **Executive assistance**: Manage CEO/CFO diaries, meeting logistics, correspondence and information requests; maintain organised files, registers and decision records; draft letters, briefings and internal communications.
- **Policy & compliance administration**: Keep central copies of finance, procurement and operational policies current; support policy review cycles and publication requirements.

Person Specification

Qualifications & Professional Membership

- AAT Level 4 (or equivalent) **desirable**: part-qualified ACCA/CIMA or School Business Management qualification (e.g., DSBM).
- Evidence of continuing professional development in public-sector procurement and financial controls.

Experience

- Demonstrable experience in school finance operations (management accounts, budgeting, procurement, audit readiness).
- Proven track record of administering financial systems (**Access**) and of maintaining audit-ready documentation.
- Experience supporting senior leaders and governance (committee papers, action tracking, policy administration).
- Exposure to trust-wide risk management processes (risk registers, controls, escalations).

Knowledge, Skills & Behaviours

- Strong grasp of academy trust financial governance, procurement law/practice, and value-for-money principles.
- Advanced Excel; confident with finance systems and document management.
- Excellent organisation, written communication, and stakeholder management; able to handle sensitive information with discretion.
- Proactive, solutions-focused, and committed to continuous improvement.

Safeguarding & Safer Recruitment

Four Hills Education Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff to share this commitment. The post is subject to enhanced DBS, reference checks, and compliance with the Trust's Safer Recruitment policy.

Additional Information

- This role involves travel between schools and occasional evening meetings (e.g., committee cycles).
- All duties must reflect Trust policies, the Academy Trust Handbook, and the Scheme of Delegation for finance and operations.

How Success Will Be Measured (first 12 months)

- Consolidated management accounts delivered to schedule with clear forecasts and actions.
- Procurement conducted in line with policy, with auditable records and demonstrable Value for Money.
- Executive support functions (CEO/CFO) running smoothly (punctual agendas/papers, tracked actions).
- Risk/control improvements evidenced in committee reporting and internal audits.