

## Job Title: Head of Central Finance

**Reports to:** Director of Finance and Procurement, Ark Schools

**Start date:** ASAP

**Location:** 1EdCity

**Contract:** Permanent

**Pattern:** Full Time (standard hours 9am – 5:30pm)

**Salary:** £70,000 - £80,000, depending on experience

**First round interviews:** Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September

### About the role:

To lead and manage the central finance financial planning and analysis function and to lead on all arrangements in relation to pre-opening finance for new and transition academies into the network, alongside modelling opportunities for change to current academies. The postholder will be responsible for overseeing central financial planning, budgeting, management and donor reporting whilst supporting strategic growth and decision making across the Trust.

Stakeholder management is key to this role. Reporting to the Director of Finance and Procurement and the Director of Projects they will be responsible for reporting finance plans and risks to the Project Boards, preparing financial approvals for the Risk and Audit Committee and Ark Schools Board, and liaising with the DfE, existing trusts and Local Authorities around financial handover in schools, as appropriate. They will be resilient, flexible and able to operate in a busy environment, managing competing demands and priorities whilst remaining calm.

### Key Responsibilities and Duties:

#### Strategic Financial Leadership and Long-term Planning

- Support the Director of Finance and Procurement in delivering Ark's financial strategy and long-term financial planning
- Provide financial insight and analysis to support strategic initiatives, growth opportunities and decision-making, supporting the Director of Finance and Procurement with ad-hoc analysis that supports the network
- Ensure 3-year plans are in place across all central teams, exploring commercial viability, risks and opportunities
- Review the preparation of the consolidated management reporting to Ark School's Management Team and The Board

## **Financial Management and Compliance**

- Oversee the preparation of central management accounts, forecasts and budgets for core and non-core teams within the responsibility of the Financial Planning Manager helping to identify efficiencies where possible. This includes capital planning and reconciling relevant intercompany and balance sheet control accounts alongside managing recharges and dilapidations charges
- Oversee monthly and annual management reporting, ensuring accuracy and compliance with DfE and other statutory and donor requirements
- Own the internal audit programme for school visits, liaising with the Internal Audit team during school audits and data analytics. Taking feedback to improve policies and procedures, identifying training requirements as necessary

## **Finance Business Partnering, Growth and Commercial**

- Lead on financial modelling of growth and or school opportunities with the Projects team
- Own the end-to-end due diligence / audit of new and transition academies joining Ark Schools
- Develop the financial modelling associated with onboarding schools and trusts into the network ensuring that risks and opportunities are understood to support strategic decision making
- Partner with stakeholders effectively communicating finances for specified budget holders, projects and programmes
- Develop the team's finance business partnering improving the commercial focus
- Develop financial models as required to assist with scenario planning

## **Growth, new and transition academies**

- Work with the Director of Projects and the Senior Projects and Engagement Managers to assess the financial feasibility of potential projects and submit project summaries to the Risk and Audit Committee and the Ark Schools Board for approval
- Identify and share clear financial risks associated with schools joining the network working with the Projects team and the broader educational leadership of Ark Schools to ensure that appropriate strategies and plans are in place to mitigate these risks
- Own the preparation, development and implementation of models and processes for managing the finance component of new academy projects from project identification and board approval through to post-opening budgeting, working with the Head of Management Reporting
- Manage all aspects of new and transition schools' finance, prior to schools joining the Ark network, and support, as required, during the initial post-opening period, with support from the senior project and engagement managers

- Work with stakeholders, both centrally and within schools, to manage the due diligence / audit aspects of pre-opening
- Liaise with predecessor schools or trusts to confirm closing balances, and allocation of funds in the pre-opening phase, and support schools in processing this
- Prepare and present all school financial budgets and analysis to the Project Boards
- Prepare all returns and reporting as required by the DfE and LAs
- Provide advice, support and organise training for finance staff in schools joining the network
- Ensure smooth hand over to Regional Finance Directors when necessary, ensuring schools are fully embedded in respective region

### **Team Leadership and Development**

- Lead and motivate the central financial planning team of up to 5, with line management of 2-3, supporting their professional development and ensuring effective performance
- Build financial capacity and capability across the team by supporting the team to provide training and support to budget holders

### **Other**

- Prepare and support relevant reports for Management Team, Risk and Audit Committee and Ark Schools Board
- Support the team to ensure financial procedures are followed and managed correctly across the central departments
- Provide business and financial support, including working on wider finance team tasks or additional duties from time to time as directed by the Director of Finance and Procurement

## **Person Specification: Head of Central Finance**

### **Qualifications**

- Educated to degree level or equivalent
- Professional accountancy qualification, including significant post-qualified experience
- A record of recent and relevant Continued Professional Development

### **Knowledge and Experience**

- Experience as a member of a senior management team
- Knowledge and experience of financial management systems and processes
- Experience of implementing financial policies and procedures
- Experience of leading and managing budgeting and reporting processes in an organisation

- Experience of strategic financial planning and supporting decision-making
- Experience of preparing and presenting financial reports and presentations to and for various stakeholders
- Experience of effective business partnering working with a range of internal and external partners including non-finance personnel
- Extensive experience of building effective teams, managing, developing and motivating staff and monitoring performance against targets
- Understanding of educational, preferably academy, funding mechanisms, and or a quick learner

### Personal Skills and Characteristics

- Ability to ensure confidentiality is always maintained
- High attention to detail, proactive, confident, enthusiastic with a 'can do' attitude, well organised, methodical with the ability to multi-task and prioritise workload to meet tight deadline
- Flexible team player and ability use own initiative to work with minimum supervision is essential
- Excellent written and interpersonal skills, with the ability to communicate effectively with staff at all levels
- Ability to effectively present financial information at the appropriate level
- Strong and supportive manager, capable of getting the best out of a team
- Evidence of well-developed IT skills and ability to make effective use of standard software packages, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook

### Other

- Right to work in the UK
- An understanding of, and empathy for, the ethos and ambitions of Ark
- The successful candidate must demonstrate a genuine resonance with Ark's mission, and a clear willingness to learn about the sector and the specific challenges of supporting schools.
- This post is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check

*Ark is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in our academies. In order to meet this responsibility, we follow a rigorous selection process. This process is outlined [here](#), but can be provided in more detail if requested. All successful candidates will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check.*