



THE PERSE
SCHOOL
CAMBRIDGE



Candidate brief for the appointment of

**CHIEF FINANCIAL
OFFICER**



▪ ODGERS BERNDTSON

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Background

Founded in 1615, The Perse School is Cambridge's oldest secondary school and one of the country's leading co-educational independent day schools. It comprises three schools, the Upper, Prep and Pelican and operates across five sites in and around Cambridge, including the Porson Road and Abington playing fields. The Perse educates some 1,746 day pupils aged 3 to 18 and employs approximately 400 staff. In the last financial year, 2023-24 The Perse had a turnover of approximately £38 million.

In addition to the day to day operation of the schools the Perse oversees a busy programme of events, community outreach activities and commercial projects including the hire of its facilities to third parties. In August 2024 the Perse completed a new sports centre comprising swimming pool, sports hall and climbing facility which is used

by the School during school hours and by the community during evenings, weekends and school holidays. The Michaelmas term 2024 sees the commencement of a busy programme of community use including lane swimming, learn to swim, learn to climb and hire of the sports hall by local sports clubs.

In addition to The Perse School - the charity which operates the schools in Cambridge - the Perse has two wholly owned subsidiary companies; The Perse School Cambridge International ("TPSCI") and The Perse School Trading Company (currently dormant). TPSCI oversees the operation of The Perse School Sports Centre and also the Perse's two franchised international schools, The Perse School Singapore and The Perse School Muscat, Oman. This role encompasses all group companies.

Key facts and figures

- **Independent School of the Year** for academic performance East Anglia 2024.
- Excellent pastoral care ensuring that children feel safe and secure in their surroundings.
- Ranked as one of the **top ten** schools for A level results by The Times Independent School Exam Results league Tables.
- Ranked in the **top five** independent schools nationally for Oxbridge offers.

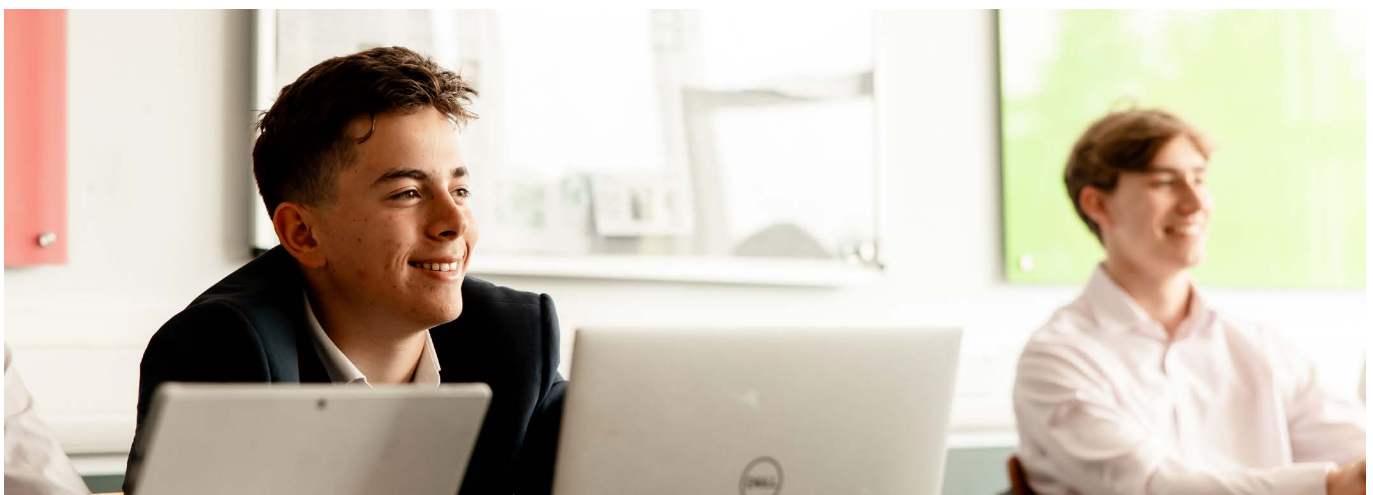
Our Location

The three schools are located across spacious sites in the centre of Cambridge, an economically thriving city which is, and has been for centuries, at the centre of learning. Based in a former Perse boarding house, the Pelican (3-7 years) provides a safe and welcoming atmosphere for the school's youngest children. Set within four acres of spacious parkland, the Prep (7-11 years) benefits from nine acres of playing fields on its doorstep, including a full sized all-weather pitch and two netball courts. The Upper School (11-16 years) and Sixth Form is situated in an attractive 27-acre site with extensive playing fields and recreational space, as well as benefitting from 45 acres of outdoor space at Little Abington, just 15 minutes from the school.

Cambridge offers a unique blend of rich history, vibrant culture, and academic excellence, boasting beautiful architecture, picturesque parks, and the scenic River Cam, which adds to its charm. The city is also well-connected, with easy access to London and other major cities.

Vision and Values

The Perse aims for every pupil to share a love of learning while developing a character of kindness and understanding towards one another. The School values **endeavour, intellectual curiosity and scholarship, breadth and balance** and **one another and the environment**. A Perse education is three dimensional and all pupils and teaching staff are encouraged to contribute to the school's academic, pastoral and extra-curricular programmes. As such, life at The Perse is vibrant, varied and hugely rewarding for pupils and staff alike.





Academic

Outcomes at The Perse are world class with 95% of A-level entries graded A star, A or B in 2024. A quarter (47 pupils) of all students sitting A levels achieved three or more A* grades and a fifth (37 pupils) attained a 'clean sweep' of all A* grades. The School has an outstanding track record in terms of Oxbridge entrants with 37 students gaining places in 2024 and a number of others choosing university options in the North American Ivy League. In the competitive independent school landscape, the School stands out and places are highly sought-after.

Facilities

The School's classrooms are bright and spacious, providing a stunning environment for pupils to learn and flourish. There has been significant investment into the School's facilities in recent years, including the construction of the Peter Hall Performing Arts Centre, extending and refurbishing science labs across the Prep and Upper, and the new state of the art Perse Sports Centre, which includes a swimming pool, sports hall and climbing wall. For further information on the Perse Sports Centre website, visit [here](#).

Safeguarding

The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Further information on The Perse can be found at: <https://www.perse.co.uk/>

The Role

- Job title:** Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
- Job purpose:** Responsible for providing strategic and operational leadership on all financial matters, across the Perse School and its group companies.
- Responsible for:** Overseeing all accounting functions including the purchase, fee, fixed asset and nominal ledgers, payroll, credit control and treasury management.
- Provision of accurate and timely financial information to aid planning and decision making.
- Ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations including correct accounting treatment of any applicable taxes, including VAT.
- Identify and manage key financial risks, protecting the School's assets.
- Reporting to:** The Bursar
- Line management of the following staff:** Finance Manager, School Accountant, Finance Projects Manager, Purchase Ledger Supervisor, Finance Assistant, Payroll Manager.



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Key responsibilities

Leadership and Management

- Provide effective line management and leadership to the six-person Finance Team, developing effective and efficient working practices and promoting high performance.
- Attend meetings of the Board of Governors, Finance & General Purposes committee and Audit & Risk Committee, and of any other committees and working groups as required.
- As a member of the Senior Bursary Team, work alongside other senior support staff and members of the Executive Leadership Team and attend regular meetings of these teams.
- Work collaboratively with key staff including the SBT, Admissions Department, Development Office, Business Development Office, Catering Manager (outsourced function) and budget holders, providing and receiving financial information.

- Uphold the School's money laundering policy, upholding the highest ethical standards and leading by example.
- Uphold the School's data protection policy, safeguarding digital records.

Financial Reporting

- Prepare and maintain financial forecasts and cashflow projections, reflecting the strategic and operational objectives of the School and its subsidiary companies. Prepare detailed annual budgets and monitor performance against those forecasts.
- Preparation of timely and informative monthly management accounts to aid financial management and planning.
- Carry out financial modelling, benchmarking and variance analysis to aid decision making.
- Provision of reports to the Governors on matters pertaining to the School's finances.
- Provision of reports to the Bursar and Head as required.



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Financial Management and Control

- Ensure that all financial transactions relating to the School and its subsidiary companies are promptly and accurately recorded.
- Allocate tasks and responsibilities so as to achieve appropriate segregation of duties within the Finance Department and financial oversight.
- Document and review processes and procedures, and seek ongoing improvements and efficiencies.
- Ongoing review of IT systems in use within the finance function, ensuring systems in use are fit for purpose.
- Set departmental budgets, in discussion with Heads of Department and other budget holders. Monitor spend and issue reports. Ensure budget holders are aware of and act in accordance with the School's purchasing procedures.
- Ensure payroll, associated records and statutory returns operates accurately, securely and in accordance with set timetables.
- Oversee the administration of the School's pension schemes. Ensure pension contributions are correctly deducted and paid over to pension providers in accordance with set timetables.
- Ensure robust procedures are in place for collecting monies owed by debtors, including fee-paying parents.
- Oversee the management and administration of the School's fees in advance scheme.
- Oversee the process by which applications for means tested bursaries are received and assessed. Make recommendations to the Bursar as to what awards should be made, in line with the School's Bursaries Policy
- Maintain an accurate and up to date record of the School's assets and liabilities.



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Treasury Management, Investment Management, Credit Cards and Borrowings

- Oversee operational relationships with the School's bankers and investment managers.
- Ensure regular statements are received, reconciled and that all transactions are properly recorded in the School's books and accounts.
- Monitor compliance with banking covenants.
- Provide an efficient treasury function, ensuring sufficient working capital is available to meet the School's operational requirements, and placing funds so as to achieve the maximum return within the acceptable risk profile set by the Governors and the Bursar.
- Identify short and long term financing requirements, with reference to detailed and up to date cashflow forecasts.
- Assist the Bursar in monitoring the performance of the School's managed funds, ensuring the investment manager is acting in accordance with the parameters set by the Board.
- Maintain signing mandates and ensure payments and movement of funds are authorised in accordance with the School's approved procedures.
- Oversee management of school credit cards, controlling the issuing and use of such cards in line with budget responsibilities and school policies.
- Support the Bursar in negotiating and renegotiating terms for borrowings as required.

Financial Compliance

- Overall responsibility for financial regulatory compliance including submission of the appropriate tax and VAT returns and ensuring taxes due are calculated correctly and paid in a timely manner.
- Oversee the annual external audit, liaising with the external auditors and addressing any matters arising in a timely manner to ensure ongoing improvement.
- Oversee the preparation of the statutory accounts including the notes to the accounts and the Trustee report. Ensure accounts are filed at Companies House and with the Charity Commission in line with reporting deadlines.
- Oversee the submission of reports to the Office of National Statistics, Gender Pay Gap reporting and other financial reports as required.
- Ensure relevant reports and returns are provided to the Teachers Pension Scheme and other occupational pension schemes on a timely basis.
- Provide updates and advice on financial matters including but not restricted to business taxes, employee taxes and pensions.

The Perse is a dynamic organisation and opportunities and requirements change over time. The CFO, in line with other employees, is required to exhibit a can do attitude and take on additional duties and responsibilities as reasonably required by the Bursar.



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The Person

Qualifications/Experience

Essential

- Accountancy qualification such as ACA, ACCA or CIMA.
- Successful track record of leading an effective and efficient finance function in a complex organisation.

Desirable

- Experience working within an educational environment and/or a charitable organisation.
- At least three years' experience as a Director of Finance or similar, or as a Deputy Director of Finance in a larger or more complex organisation.

Relevant Skills and Attributes

Essential

- Outstanding interpersonal skills including the ability to communicate with a wide range of people, both verbally and in writing
- Ability to lead and manage a team, including setting and monitoring objectives
- Ability to work under pressure and to organise and prioritise work to achieve deadlines

- Flexibility of approach and the ability to balance multiple competing priorities.
- Excellent analytical and problem-solving skills
- Sympathetic to the educational, as well as the practical, requirements of the School.
- The ability to work strategically and see the big picture, as well as having an eye for detail.



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Job Specific Terms and Conditions

Working hours

This post is full time for 40 hours per week. Normal working hours are Monday to Friday 08:00-17:00, with a daily 1 hour unpaid lunch break.

You may be required to work such additional hours as the needs of the job require. No extra payment will be made for this additional time but, where appropriate, time off in lieu may be given, with the agreement of the Bursar.

Salary

The position offers a competitive salary in line with experience.

Holidays

Paid holiday entitlement is 30 days plus Bank Holidays per annum with 5 days to be taken at Christmas, 4 days at Easter and the balance to be taken as agreed with the Bursar.

Further Benefits

- School tuition fee remission of 50% for children to pre-prep, prep or senior school (subject to passing admission test requirements). Fee remission does not apply to additional activities such as early/late stay, summer schools, trips etc.
- Membership of a Group Personal Pension Scheme with employer contributions of 13.75% of pensionable salary.
- Death in Service benefits of three times salary.
- Free staff lunch provided during term time.
- Free access to on-site sports facilities including the swimming pool (subject to time restrictions).
- On-site parking, subject to availability.
- Cycle to Work Scheme.



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How to Apply

The Perse School has engaged the services of Odgers Berndtson to assist with the recruitment of the Chief Financial Officer.

Key dates

The closing date for applications is **09.00 GMT Monday 13th January**.

Following a long list meeting of the Selection Panel, successful candidates will be invited to attend preliminary interviews with Odgers Berndtson **w/c 20th January**, with shortlist interviews to be held on **Thursday 6th February**. Successful candidates will be invited for a briefing visit on **7th, 10th or 11th February**, with final interviews taking place on **Wednesday 12th February**.

How to apply

In order to apply, please submit a comprehensive CV along with a covering letter which sets out your interest in the role and encapsulates the aspects of your experience relevant to the required criteria. Please include current salary details and the names and addresses of three referees. Referees will not be approached until the final stages and not without prior permission from candidates.

Letters of application, CVs and completed application forms should be submitted online (preferred): www.odgers.com/92734

All applications will receive an automated response.

Personal data

In line with GDPR, we ask that you do NOT send us any information that can identify children or any of your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union

membership, data concerning health or sex life and sexual orientation, genetic and/or biometric data) in your CV and application documentation. Following this notice, any inclusion of your Sensitive Personal Data in your CV/application documentation will be understood by us as your express consent to process this information going forward. Please also remember to not mention anyone's information or details (e.g. referees) who have not previously agreed to their inclusion.

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All candidates are also requested to complete an online Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. This can be found at the end of the application process. Any information collated from the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Forms will not be used as part of the selection process and will be treated as strictly confidential.

Contact details

For a conversation in confidence, please contact:

Freddie Dennis

freddie.dennis@odgersberndtson.com

Constance Moss

constance.moss@odgersberndtson.com

Harry Ford

harry.ford@odgersberndtson.com

The Perse School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or other relevant background checks.



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