



HIGHSTED GRAMMAR SCHOOL



Highsted Road, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4PT

Headteacher: Anne Kelly BA MBA

Telephone: 01795 424223

www.highsted.kent.sch.uk

Email: admin@highsted.kent.sch.uk

Chief Financial & Operating Officer (CFOO)

HGS47 (£54,599) – HGS49 (£58,364)

37 hours per week, all year round

We are seeking an outstanding Chief Financial & Operating Officer (CFOO) to provide executive leadership across finance, operations and people at Highsted Grammar School. Reporting to the Headteacher (Accounting Officer) and working closely with Trustees, this pivotal role will ensure the Trust's long-term financial sustainability, operational effectiveness and workforce planning in a challenging funding environment. We are seeking a CFOO who will act as a trusted professional adviser, leading robust financial strategy, risk management, HR and operational infrastructure, while remaining hands-on and pragmatic. This is a highly visible, onsite role requiring discretion, sound judgement and the confidence to challenge constructively, always placing the best interests of pupils at the heart of decision-making.

The post offers an exceptional opportunity in a high performing school where we can offer you:

- A friendly, hardworking and dedicated staff team
- The opportunity to inspire highly able and well-motivated students to fulfil and exceed their potential
- A dynamic and supportive working environment
- Opportunities for professional development
- A private health care package supported by Benenden Health Care
- A competitive salary commensurate with experience

Please contact Angel Topping at the school via email or visit our website to download further information and an application form:

www.highsted.kent.sch.uk

(Closing date noon 24th February 2026)

The school reserves the right to consider the merits of early applications

Highsted Grammar School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff to share this commitment. This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check.

Highsted Grammar School is an Equal Opportunities Employer.





HIGHSTED GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Highsted Road, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4PT

Headteacher: Anne Kelly BA MBA

Telephone: 01795 424223

Email: admin@highsted.kent.sch.uk

Welcome to Highsted

At Highsted, we view education as a creative process. Our vision is to lead a happy and cohesive community which fosters academic, emotional and physical confidence. In doing this we create inspirational learners with the courage to take risks and the wisdom to learn from their mistakes.

Our success is as a consequence of striking a fine balance between tradition and innovation. Our values are traditional ones and we offer an unashamedly academic curriculum. We are keenly aware that we are preparing our students for a working life none of us can yet anticipate. Our focus, therefore, is on developing the skills, attributes and habits of mind that equip our young men and women as life-long learners. Our aim is to launch them into the world as self-starters, focused but flexible, armed with the courage to grasp opportunities and the resilience and humour to negotiate setbacks along the way.

We hope that at Highsted you will find a society, a family – a place of lifelong learning that will support and encourage each and every member of our community.

Please use the contact details above if you would like the opportunity to tour the school or to meet the myself before making an application. I look forward to welcoming you to our school.

Anne Kelly - Headteacher

Ofsted - Good

'Pupils and students flourish and succeed at Highsted Grammar.'

'Pupils are courteous, polite and welcoming – they are happy, safe and well cared for.'

'Teacher's subject knowledge is exceptionally strong'

'Leaders set high expectations of what students can achieve. Pupils and students respond well to these high expectations.'

'An ambitious 'cognitive and compassion' curriculum offers a fitting balance of academic rigour and pastoral support.'

'Incidents of poor behaviour are low, and attendance is high. Pupils arrive punctually to their lessons, so learning time is maximised.'

Ofsted Inspection report 2023

About Us

Highsted Grammar School is a small girls' grammar school (around 900 on roll, including 182 in Sixth Form) situated in the North Kent town of Sittingbourne. The School was one of the first to convert to academy status in the autumn term 2010.

Excellent road and rail connections give easy access to London, Canterbury and Ashford. Sailing and swimming facilities in the area are good and there are plenty of community activities (for example, orchestral, choral, theatrical clubs, etc.) available. Theatres in Canterbury and Maidstone, as well as those in London, provide entertainment. A well-equipped sports complex in the town has excellent facilities both for the serious sportsman and woman and for family recreational use. House prices are relatively low for the South East and opportunities for further professional development are excellent.

The school itself is a high-performing girls' school, where pastoral care and enrichment feature as highly as academic success. Having featured three times in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's list of outstanding schools, we are proud to play a leading role in the education of young people in our area. The pupils are exceptional in every way – they are enthusiastic, personable, caring, and show considerable initiative – and we enjoy the strong support of parents. Likewise, the staff team – teaching, support and administrative – is talented, dedicated, hard-working and committed to the continuing success of the school. The governing body represents a group of capable, multi-skilled individuals, wholly supportive of the work we do.

The main block of the school was opened in 1958 when the school moved from older premises and since then other buildings have been added, including a technology block, new laboratories and additional classrooms. Development of the site continues with an imaginative, multi-purpose teaching area – the Hi-pod; new PE and dance studio, language laboratory and media studies/photography suite.

The Learning Resource Centre was created out of the old school library and boasts a light, comfortable and airy environment with good book stock, excellent ICT facilities and a pleasant reading area. It is very popular with students and well used by all age groups. Books, newspapers and specialist magazines are catalogued alongside other media and loans are monitored through an electronic library management system. Much of the day-to-day running of the Centre is undertaken by a group of library prefects, trained and overseen by the Centre Manager.

Highsted is a school of opportunity for staff as well as pupils, winning the School Achievement Award in two out of the three years that the scheme ran. We contribute extensively to initial teacher training, with many PGCE and SCITT trainees successfully completing their programme in the school each year and in recent years, no less than six members of the leadership team have been promoted to headship posts.

Selective Education

Pupils are granted places at the school on the basis of success in the Kent selection tests or the Highsted Test, broadly speaking they represent the top 25% of the ability range. The economic and social characteristics of the locality are not the most affluent in Kent, so opportunities for value-added are high and the school is able to make a real impact within the community. At Sixth Form level we work in partnership with two other local schools, Borden Grammar (boys) and Fulston Manor (mixed). Through this arrangement, we focus mainly on A-level provision and are able to offer more than 34 different courses, including several applied A-level options. Highsted continues to be placed in the top 100 secondary schools (The Telegraph) based on our A-level results.

Partnership Working

The school, formerly sponsored by Microsoft, received specialist school status through science and consequently we have implemented major changes to the ICT infrastructure to make full use of these connections. Across the school we regard this not only as a strategy to develop science further and promote the role of women in this area, but also as the opportunity to enhance provision across the whole curriculum.

The school has enjoyed a long-standing partnership with Gymnasium Fridericianum, Erlangen in Bavaria and this has led to regular exchange visits for more than 25 years. From our advantageous geographical position, we are also able to undertake day trips to Europe and each year there are study visits to France, Belgium and Italy, organised by different subject areas. For the first time in 2005, a group of Year 12 students spent three weeks in quality work experience placements in Brussels and this has become a regular part of the summer term enrichment programme, supported by substantial grants from the EU.

Extra Curricular

Music and drama within the school are exceptional, with high quality productions taking place regularly. Sporting activity also features highly in the work that we do, and the pupils enjoy both local and national recognition in areas as diverse as cricket, judo and other sports. Other extra-curricular activities are wide-ranging and responsive to student need. A very strong School Council has been an established part of Highsted for more than 50 years.

The Team

We are looking for a dynamic, innovative and hard-working individual to join a committed, friendly and high-performing support team that genuinely operates as a team – supporting and motivating one another in what is often demanding but always enjoyable work. The school is well resourced, operates in a collegiate spirit of shared excellence and there is a tradition of inspiring and encouraging one another to impact on learning in exciting ways.

We are looking forward to appointing an outstanding colleague who can contribute to the progress of all of our students with energy, passion and skill.

About You

From this brief description, potential candidates will realise that this grammar school offers far more than a purely academic focus. This does not come about by accident. It is entirely dependent on the determination and commitment of the whole school community, alongside effective delegation of

tasks. If you have the potential to contribute to an exceptional school and would like to be part of a friendly, winning team, we would love to hear from you!

This post would suit a creative and ambitious professional who can work well as part of a team, is keen to contribute ideas and take on new initiatives and has high expectations of the students. It provides an opportunity to work with able and well-motivated students within a supportive team and with friendly colleagues. Flexibility and a personal desire to broaden professional experience would be an advantage.

Application & Interview Process

Applications will only be accepted from candidates completing the school's application form, which is available to download from the website. All sections of the application form must be completed as accurately and as full as possible. Alternatively, applicants may submit their application via the Kent Teach website. Please note that CV's will not be considered in isolation and must be attached to an application form as a supplementary form.

Closing date for applications: Tuesday 24th February 2026

Interview date: TBC

The school may interview early in the case of an exceptional candidate. Candidates will be shortlisted based solely on the information provided within the application form, so ensuring your application form is accurate and fully completed is imperative.

After the shortlisting process has taken place, candidates will then be invited to interview and references then contacted.

All candidates who have been invited for interview will be required to bring the following documentation:

- Right to Work in the UK evidence (typically a birth certificate, passport or driving license)
- Criminal Record Self Declaration (will be sent ahead of the interview)

Highsted Grammar School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our pupils and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. An enhanced criminal record check via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) will be undertaken for the successful candidate, including a check of the DBS Children's Barred List. All applicants must be willing to undergo safeguarding screening appropriate to the post, including checks with the DBS and at least two satisfactory references. It is an offence to apply for the role if you are barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children

Highsted Grammar School: Job Profile
Full Time Chief Financial & Operating Officer (CFOO)

Job Title: Chief Financial & Operating Officer (CFOO)

Report To: Headteacher

Hours: 37 hours per week

Grade: Highsted Academy Trust Band HGS47 (£54,599) – HGS49 (£58,364)

Strategic Purpose of the Role

Highsted Grammar School seeks an exceptional Chief Financial & Operating Officer (CFOO) to provide strategic leadership across finance, operations, and people. This is a pivotal executive role, central to the Trust's financial sustainability, organisational effectiveness, and long-term strategic development in a challenging and evolving funding environment.

Reporting to the Headteacher (Accounting Officer) and working closely with Trustees, the CFOO will ensure that financial strategy, operational delivery, and workforce planning are fully aligned to support outstanding educational outcomes and a thriving school community.

The CFOO will:

- Act as the executive lead for finance, HR, and operational infrastructure across the Trust.
- Provide strategic financial and organisational leadership, ensuring long-term sustainability, resilience, and effective cashflow management.
- Serve as a trusted adviser to the Headteacher and Trustees, enabling informed, risk-aware decision-making.
- Ensure the Trust operates with robust financial controls, strong people practices, and efficient operational systems.
- Champion a culture of accountability, professionalism, discretion, and continuous improvement, always placing the best interests of children at the centre of decision-making.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership & Governance

- Lead the development and delivery of the Trust's medium- and long-term financial and operational strategy, including planning for efficiency savings where required.
- Advise Trustees and senior leaders on financial risk, workforce sustainability, capital planning, CIF Bids and major initiatives.
- Ensure full compliance with DfE, Companies Act, Charity Commission, employment law, and audit requirements.
- Monitor external developments (funding, policy, employment law, inflation) and assess organisational impact.

Financial Strategy, Planning & Reporting

- Lead the annual budget-setting process, ensuring alignment with curriculum, staffing, and school improvement priorities.
- Produce monthly management accounts, forecasts, and dashboards for Trustees and committees.
- Oversee cash flow, reserves strategy, capital expenditure, insurance arrangements, and income streams.
- Lead statutory financial returns, year-end accounts, and audit processes.
- Drive improvements in financial systems, digital processes, and internal controls to improve efficiency and accuracy.

Operational & Business Management

- Oversee the effective management of Trust resources, assets, estates, IT systems, and contracts.
- Identify and evaluate income-generating and efficiency opportunities, including grants, traded services, and asset utilisation.
- Ensure value for money across all operational and support services.
- Maintain strong relationships with auditors, banks, legal advisers, local authority partners (including KCC), and external providers.

Human Resources & People Strategy

- Act as strategic lead for HR, ensuring workforce planning supports educational priorities and financial sustainability.
- Oversee recruitment, induction, probation, and retention strategies, ensuring safer recruitment practices are embedded and maintained.

- Lead and manage employee relations processes, including absence management, discipline, grievance, capability, and restructures, ensuring fairness, consistency, and legal compliance.
- Oversee HR systems, personnel records, and management information reporting.
- Work closely with external HR advisers to ensure best practice and legislative compliance.

Leadership & Management

- Line-manage finance and HR staff, promoting high standards of accuracy, service, and professional development.
- Contribute fully as a member of the Senior Leadership Team, working collaboratively and constructively with the Headteacher and senior colleagues.
- Attend and contribute to Trustee and committee meetings as required.
- Promote a positive, inclusive culture aligned with the Trust's values and safeguarding responsibilities.

Essential Skills, Knowledge & Experience

- Significant senior-level experience in finance, operations, or business leadership within a school or academy trust (essential).
- Strong understanding of academy trust finance, governance, and compliance frameworks (essential).
- Demonstrable experience of budgeting, forecasting, cashflow management, and financial reporting in a complex organisation.
- Sound working knowledge of employment law, HR best practice, and safer recruitment.
- Experience leading and developing teams, balancing strategic oversight with hands-on delivery.
- High level of professional integrity, discretion, and credibility with senior stakeholders.
- Ability to provide clear, pragmatic advice and to challenge constructively without over-promising.
- Strong digital capability (e.g. Microsoft 365, finance and HR systems).
- AAT qualification or equivalent as a minimum requirement.

Desirable

- CCAB professional finance qualification and/or CIPD Level 5+.
- Experience of education finance systems (e.g. PSF, SIMS, ParentPay).
- Experience of capital projects, condition funding applications, or major estates programmes.
- Experience of organisational change, efficiency programmes, or digital transformation.
- Experience operating at executive or SLT level within a school or academy trust.

Why this role matters

The Chief Financial & Operating Officer plays a critical role in ensuring Highsted Grammar School remains financially sustainable, operationally strong, and well positioned to deliver outstanding education in an increasingly complex and constrained funding environment. As a key member of the Senior Leadership Team, the CFOO provides the strategic oversight, professional challenge, and organisational leadership that enable the Headteacher and Trustees to focus confidently on educational excellence. By aligning financial strategy, workforce planning, and operational delivery, the CFOO helps safeguard resources, strengthen resilience, and create the conditions in which pupils, staff, and the wider school community can thrive—both now and in the future.

Safeguarding & Ethos

Highsted Grammar School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. The CFOO is expected to uphold the highest standards of safeguarding, confidentiality, equality, and professional conduct, and to actively contribute to the ethos and values of the school community.