



OAKLANDS
COLLEGE

Candidate Brief

Chief Finance Officer

Oaklands College

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May 2026



DODD PARTNERS

— BOARD & EXECUTIVE SEARCH —

About Oaklands College

Oaklands College is a large further education college in Hertfordshire with more than 8,000 students. Established in 1921, Oaklands College has a proud heritage in providing responsive, transformational education set across three main campuses in Welwyn Garden City, St Albans and Borehamwood, with a growing online presence and arable farm. Throughout its rich history, Oaklands College has developed and supported its students, providing them with the knowledge and skills to achieve their individual ambitions and enabling them to make their own contributions to the wider community. Oaklands College has always expected the best for and from its students whilst at the same time working closely with staff to have an innovative and collaborative educational community.

Oaklands College offers a wide range of learning opportunities, offering courses across a diverse range of subjects at different levels, ranging from vocational courses with strong links to employers through elite sports, to creative industries, engineering, construction and business, as well as A-level provision. Oaklands College is also nationally recognised for its outstanding provision for learners with mild and severe learning difficulties, with 27% of its provision in this area and 40% with an identified learning need. Oaklands College provides a wonderful community that drives aspiration and provides support and opportunities for its students in equal measure, so that every individual can reach their full potential and progress to high-quality destinations.

For over 100 years, Oaklands College has been a cornerstone of further education in Hertfordshire. Since its establishment in 1921, the College has had a proud heritage of providing responsive education. We opened our doors to men and women in 1921 and have since built a rich history of delivering innovative and transformative education. As a leading provider of further education, Oaklands operates campuses in St Albans and Welwyn Garden City, along with training facilities in Borehamwood.

Serving more than 8,000 students, it offers over 300 vocational and academic courses, including apprenticeships, online learning and higher education programmes. Oaklands College is driving the skills of the future. We are ambitious and continually seek to expand our reach and reputation, enabling more adults, young people, and apprentices to access outstanding learning opportunities; whether to enter new employment sectors, reskill, or upskill. This ambition underpins Oaklands College's commitment to maintaining high standards of education and support, ensuring that every student is well-prepared for success in their chosen field. Recently, Oaklands College received two excellent Ofsted judgements for both its study provision and residential provision.



Whilst the operating environment for further education remains challenging, we are confident that our history of seizing opportunities and working closely with our partners puts us in a good position to ensure our continued success. Oaklands College is a rich and vibrant community, with teaching, learning and assessment at our heart and forming our core business.

Oaklands College provides a wonderful community that drives aspiration and provides support and opportunities for its students in equal measure, so that every individual is able to reach their full potential and progress to high-quality destinations and is proud to be ranked the 7th College nationally for the achievement of young people and in the top 10% overall.

The Future

As Oaklands College expands to become Oaklands Educational Group, it is entering a pivotal phase of growth and transformation as it builds on over 100 years of educational excellence in Hertfordshire. With a clear mission to prepare every learner for work, rewarding careers and life's opportunities, Oaklands College is evolving into a Group to meet the needs of a rapidly changing economy and skills landscape.

At the heart of its future strategy is a commitment to becoming a sustainable, innovative and outward-facing educational leader, one that inspires learners, employers and communities to achieve their full potential. This is being realised through a bold strategic plan focused on outstanding teaching and learning, deep employer partnerships, and curriculum design that responds directly to local, regional and national skills priorities.



Oaklands College is investing significantly in its estate and digital infrastructure, creating modern, flexible and technology-enabled learning environments that support high-quality delivery, innovation and growth. Major redevelopment plans will establish world-class facilities and a cohesive, student-centred campus experience aligned to future industry needs.

A defining feature of Oaklands College's future is its integrated model bringing together further education, higher education, apprenticeships, and professional training alongside elite sport and commercial activity. Through strong employer engagement and initiatives such as Local Skills Improvement Plans, Oaklands College will play a central role in aligning education with labour market demand and driving regional economic prosperity.

Looking ahead, Oaklands College will continue to expand its reach locally, nationally, and internationally while maintaining a strong community ethos. Its ambition is to be recognised not only as a leading college, but as a dynamic educational group that shapes future talent, supports industry growth, and delivers meaningful social impact.

Mission, Values & Strategic objectives

Oaklands College has a robust and embedded Strategic Plan. The College's Vision is: "To be a sustainable educational trailblazer, inspiring learners and the wider community to achieve their potential in a changing world." Oaklands College nurtures ambition, providing tailored educational programmes and support to enable students of all ages to reach their full potential. By equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to achieve their personal and career goals, Oaklands College positively impacts communities and the economy.

The Mission

"To prepare every learner for work, a rewarding career, and life's opportunities."

Oaklands College has made significant progress towards being a respected and aspirational brand underpinned by its strong values.

Values

- Excellence and Innovation – Delivering outstanding results, sustainable careers, and future leaders.
- Collaborative Learning – Developing knowledge and skills to prepare students for life and work.
- Inclusion and Happiness – Celebrating the achievements and successes of all communities.
- Integrity and Accountability – Striving for excellence in all endeavours.
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion – Ensuring fairness, accessibility, and an inclusive environment.

Throughout 2024-25, Oaklands College has made significant progress towards the strategic aims and objectives set out in the 2023-27 strategic plan.

Strategic Objectives

- Deliver continuous outstanding teaching, learning and assessment to all learners and employers.
- Create mutually beneficial partnerships to deliver the highest quality educational offer to increase economic prosperity.
- Create our estate so that it is recognised as world-class in terms of quality, sustainability and the promotion and practice of evolving leading-edge technologies.
- Create a caring, accessible, inclusive, and thriving college community, committed to fairness, health, and success.
- Deliver good or outstanding long-term sustainable financial health, through growth, that enables reinvestment in our students, staff, and estate to support our aspirational goals.

Oaklands College integrates its core themes - Sustainability and the Environment, SMART Digital, Happiness and Wellbeing and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion - into all its developments, including new buildings, policies, and strategies.

Oaklands College remains committed to placing students at the heart of everything it does, working closely with stakeholders, employers, and the community to create a collaborative learning environment. Curriculum innovation and design is supported by members of our corporation and regular reviews of the College's curriculum are undertaken by the Corporation and its committees, thus ensuring its currency and readiness for future skills needs.

In response to local needs and resulting from the Local Needs Duty to review key sectors including digital, health, sport, engineering and construction, these have been prioritised within our strategic objectives, annual operating plan, and future strategic investment plans.

As Oaklands College embarks on its next century, it is ideally positioned to respond to current challenges and opportunities, particularly the need for a high quality, career-focused further education system. Oaklands College is recognised at local, regional, and national levels and is strengthening its international links to contribute to an outward-looking and globally connected Britain. It is also well aligned with the government's key missions, to grow the economy, have an NHS fit for the future, safer streets, opportunity for all, and making Britain a clean energy superpower.

Purpose & Key Priorities

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Our focus is to create a caring, accessible, inclusive and thriving college community, committed to fairness, health and success.

At Oaklands College, we take individual's needs into consideration to ensure that you have a successful and happy learning experience.

We therefore uphold an Equal Opportunity policy that states that every individual will be treated fairly and as equals.

For more information, please visit: www.oaklands.ac.uk

Job Specification

Job Title: Chief Finance Officer
Reports: Principal & Chief Executive

Summary of Post

The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) is a Senior Post Holder with Group-wide responsibility for ensuring strong, sustainable and well-controlled finances across all entities. The role provides clear financial stewardship in an environment of increased capital investment, commercial activity and regulatory scrutiny.

The CFO ensures Executive and Corporation decision-making is underpinned by high-quality financial insight, disciplined planning and robust assurance. This includes responsibility for long-term financial sustainability, budgeting and forecasting, cashflow management, capital affordability and rigorous investment appraisal, protecting the financial integrity of core FE provision.

The CFO provides authoritative decision support through financial intelligence, contribution and profitability analysis, and the evaluation of capital, commercial and strategic proposals. Working in close partnership with Executive colleagues, the role strengthens Board assurance, supports effective financial governance across subsidiaries and trading activity, and enables resilience, value-for-money and long-term sustainability

Executive Scope & Accountabilities

The CFO holds executive accountability for:

- Financial strategy, planning and sustainability.
- Budget setting, forecasting and financial performance reporting.
- Funding compliance, statutory returns and financial probity.
- Capital investment affordability, treasury and cash flow.
- Group-wide accountability for internal audit, financial assurance and enterprise risk management.
- Procurement, commercial governance and value for money.
- Financial systems, controls and professional finance standards.



Key Responsibilities

Strategic & Financial Leadership

- Provide visible, values-led executive leadership across all campuses, modelling high standards, accountability and collaboration.
- Lead the development and delivery of a long-term financial strategy aligned to the College's Strategic Plan.
- Provide high-quality financial insight to support growth, resilience, estates development and digital transformation.
- Ensure financial planning actively supports learner outcomes, staff wellbeing and sustainability.

Financial Performance & Control

- Set and oversee robust budgeting, forecasting and financial reporting frameworks.
- Maintain strong financial controls and professional standards, ensuring the proper use of public funds.

- Ensure timely, accurate statutory and funding returns and high-quality Board reporting.

Capital & Investment Strategy

- Provide executive leadership on the financial aspects of major capital and estates investment.
- Ensure investment decisions are underpinned by robust business cases, affordability modelling and sustainability considerations.
- Work closely with the COO and Executive colleagues to align financial planning with estates and infrastructure delivery.

Procurement, Commercial & Value for Money

- Lead financial governance of procurement and commercial activity, ensuring efficiency, transparency and value for money.
- Oversee appraisal of commercial opportunities, contracts and partnerships from a financial perspective.

Risk, Assurance & Compliance

- Holds Group-wide executive accountability for the financial risk management framework, ensuring risks are identified, assessed, monitored and escalated appropriately.
- Leads internal audit and assurance arrangements, ensuring effective coverage aligned to strategic, financial and regulatory risk.
- Ensures robust frameworks for financial governance, internal control and compliance, proportionate to the scale and complexity of the Group.
- Works in partnership with Executive colleagues to ensure operational risks are effectively managed.

Governance & Executive Contribution

- Ensure compliance with financial regulations, funding rules and corporate governance requirements.
- Provides clear, timely and forward-looking assurance to the Audit Committee and Corporation on risk, control and compliance.
- Provide clear financial advice, challenge and assurance to the Board and its committees.
- Act as a collaborative Executive leader, contributing to corporate strategy and organisational performance.

Leadership & Culture

- Lead and develop high-performing finance teams, embedding accountability, service excellence and continuous improvement.
- Model the responsible and effective use of AI within the role to enhance efficiency, ensuring ongoing awareness of developments, risks and best-practice guidance.
- Model ethical leadership, integrity and inclusion in line with College values.

Data Protection

- Hold executive oversight for financial data protection compliance, ensuring appropriate operational arrangements and assurance are in place.

Working Arrangements & On-Site Requirement

- Primary base at the main campus, with regular presence across all sites.
- Act as duty manager on a rota basis and take part in college meet & greet activities, supporting a visible and proactive executive presence.
- Act as a master key-holder, with responsibility for campus safety, security and operational continuity in line with College policy.

Person Specification

Qualifications

Degree qualified or equivalent with a recognised CCAB qualification: ACA, ACCA, CIMA or CIPFA.

Essential Criteria

- Senior executive financial leadership experience within a complex, large-scale, regulated organisation with a customer-centric focus.
- Proven accountability for financial strategy, long-term sustainability, performance and value for money.
- Executive responsibility for financial control, treasury, capital investment and long-term planning, including regulatory and public funding compliance.
- Strong Board and Audit Committee reporting experience, providing clear assurance, governance and strategic insight.
- Demonstrated leadership of internal and external audit, financial risk management and assurance frameworks in a regulated environment.
- Significant experience delivering major capital programmes, with strong understanding of Estates and IT investment strategies.
- Advanced knowledge of financial systems, management information and governance to support forecasting, planning and strategic decision-making, including consolidation of accounts.
- Proven experience managing multiple income streams and developing commercial opportunities, delivering innovation and continuous improvement.
- Strong commercial, procurement and contract management expertise, ensuring efficiency and value for money.
- Robust project and programme management capability, with a strong grasp of risk management frameworks and controls.
- Experience leading and developing high-performing finance teams and embedding effective business partnering across the organisation.
- Strong awareness of sustainability, environmental responsibility, digital transformation (including SMART campuses/buildings), and placemaking.
- Demonstrable understanding of how to use AI tools appropriately and effectively within the role, with a commitment to keeping knowledge up to date.
- Credible, values-led leader with experience setting clear standards for equality, diversity and inclusion, health and safety, and wellbeing.

Desirable Criteria

- FE, HE or wider public-sector executive experience.
- Group or multi-entity financial leadership experience.
- Track record of leading financial transformation or systems modernisation.
- Experience supporting large estates or digital investment programmes.

The post-holder will carry out all duties in accordance with the College's core values, policies and procedures – especially those relating to Health & Safety, Safeguarding & Prevent, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, and Data Protection, and will undertake any other duties commensurate with this senior post, as required by the reporting manager, Principal & CEO and/or the Governing Body. This job description reflects the broad scope of responsibilities at the time of writing but may be amended in consultation with the post-holder, to meet the evolving needs of the College's Group Operating Model and strategic objectives.

Terms

Remuneration

The remuneration for this role will be circa £120,000, dependent on relevant experience.

Annual Holidays

The annual leave entitlement is 35 days per annum, plus recognised public holidays.

Pension Scheme

The holder of this post will have access to the Local Government Pension Scheme, a defined benefit pension.

Relocation

The College will pay an allowance of up to £8,000 for relocation costs in line with HMRC rules, if required.

Checks

This appointment is subject to satisfactory pre-employment references and DBS clearance.

Timeline

The following timeline is indicative and should only be used as a guide. It may be subject to change.

Process	Date
Close for Applications	9.00am Monday 8th June 2026
Interviews with Dodd Partners	w/c 15 th June 2026
Shortlist Meeting	Thursday 25th June 2026
Interviews with Oaklands College	Monday 29 th June 2026

How to Apply

The recruitment process is being undertaken by Dodd Partners on behalf of Oaklands College. If you wish to apply for this position, please supply the following:

- A covering letter highlighting your suitability and how you meet the essential experience within the Person Specification, along with your current remuneration details.
- A comprehensive CV setting out your career history, with responsibilities and achievements.
- All applications should be emailed to Dodd Partners at your earliest convenience to contactus@doddpartners.com

Should you wish to have an informal discussion about the role, please contact John Dodd on 07545 431 848 or 01244 738 450. Alternatively, email: [johndodd@doddpartners.com](mailto: johndodd@doddpartners.com)