



Chafyn-Godolphin School

# Director of Finance and Operations

Candidate Information



# Welcome

We are looking for an exceptional candidate to lead on all aspects of finance and operations at Chafyn-Godolphin, an all-through, co-educational independent day and boarding school forming in September 2026 through the merger of the historic Godolphin and Chafyn Grove Schools. Building on the track record and popularity of its predecessor schools, we expect Chafyn-Godolphin School to quickly consolidate the position of the first-choice independent school in Salisbury and the surrounding area.

Situated on well-founded campuses just steps apart, Chafyn-Godolphin School will provide an excellent education for children aged 3 to 18 years. Combined, the Schools occupy 25 acres less than half a mile from the historic centre of Salisbury. The extensive facilities include a range of beautiful, well-maintained historic buildings, purpose-built modern facilities for science, art and music, and excellent sports facilities. There is considerable scope to increase commercial activity.

As part of United Learning, the School benefits from central support and expertise. You will

be joining a network of dedicated, highly professional colleagues across both our independent schools and academies who work collaboratively and share a vision of bringing out the best in everyone.

The successful candidate will demonstrate exceptional financial and operational acumen, the ability to think creatively and drive innovation, and the ability to harness the support of the school communities through inspiring, visionary leadership.

At a time of unprecedented change and challenge for the independent schools sector, this role provides the right leader with a fantastic opportunity to thrive and build their reputation alongside that of the School's with the full support and structure of a leading schools group behind them.

If you share our ambition for this role and for the children and young people we serve, we look forward to receiving your application.



**Aaron Smith**

Director of Finance -  
Independent Schools,  
United Learning



## About Chafyn-Godolphin School

Godolphin School is an independent day and boarding school for students aged 11–18 years. Founded in 1726 in the cathedral town of Salisbury in Wiltshire, Godolphin was one of the first girls' schools in the country. It joined United Learning, a group of independent schools and academies, in May 2024 and became a co-educational senior school in September 2025. Founded in 1876, Chafyn Grove School is a co-educational day and boarding school for children aged 3–13 years. Chafyn Grove joined United Learning in May 2025. The Schools, which are located on neighbouring campuses,

have a combined roll of 400 pupils and have strong reputations serving generations of local families whilst providing boarding facilities for pupils from both the UK and overseas.

From September 2026, the Schools will be fully merged as Chafyn-Godolphin School, operating across the current Chafyn Grove and Godolphin sites. The decision to form one all-through, co-educational school is at the heart of the plan to ensure the School is able to offer an outstanding education for many more decades to come. As one school, it will educate children from 3 years old in nursery up to the age of 18. The merger presents considerable opportunities for benefitting from shared staffing and facilities use. Many operational roles have already been amalgamated, and a staffing restructure is on track to be completed by the end of this academic year. Pupils in Year 7 in each school are already taught together for several lessons a day, and sports teams have merged, too.



## Location, Campus and Facilities

Chafyn-Godolphin is located on two sites, 150 metres from each other. The location provides both urban convenience and the beauty of the surrounding countryside, including the Wiltshire Downs, the New Forest and the Jurassic Coast. Transport links are good, with the M3 and A303 within easy reach and a mainline rail connection to London with a travel time of one hour and 20 minutes. Heathrow is a similar travel time by road, enabling easy transfers for international students. The School provides daily bus routes for students across Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset.

The Godolphin site of 13 acres combines historic architecture with contemporary facilities, including modern classrooms, well-equipped science labs, art studios, and computer suites. It features excellent sports facilities, including a sports hall, a 25-metre indoor swimming pool, a fitness suite, a dance studio, tennis courts, and all-weather and lacrosse pitches. The performing arts are supported by a professional theatre, music studios, and practice rooms. Purpose-built boarding facilities provide a comfortable environment for students and the opportunity for commercial lettings during holiday periods. The Godolphin Leisure Centre also operates as a commercial facility offering membership and facility hire.

The Chafyn site has modern classrooms, specialist rooms for art, science, music, and ICT, and extensive sports facilities, including a sports hall, an outdoor swimming pool, an all-weather pitch, a tennis and netball court, and fields for rugby, football, cricket and athletics. It has dedicated music and drama rooms and provides outdoor learning spaces, including a forest school area. The Nursery has its own facilities and an enclosed playground.

## Academic Success

The Senior School is renowned for its strong academic performance, and GCSE and A-level results are consistently excellent. In 2025, 38% of GCSEs were grades 8–9, and 35% of A-level grades were at A\*–A. Notable university destinations include Oxford, Durham, Exeter, Newcastle, Edinburgh and Bristol, with an even split across the Arts, Humanities, Maths and Sciences.

## Co-Curricular

Chafyn-Godolphin prides itself on the extensive range of co-curricular activities – over 100 are offered in total every week. The dominant areas of the programme are sport, music, drama and outdoor activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Combined Cadet Force.





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## Working With United Learning

United Learning is a group of schools which aims to provide excellent education to children and young people across the country. We seek to improve the life chances of all the children and young people we serve and make it our mission to bring out 'the best in everyone' – pupils, staff, parents and the wider community. We uniquely comprise schools in both the state and the independent sectors. We currently educate over 75,000 children and employ almost 12,000 adults.

Over the past five years, United Learning has seen significant impact: improving educational outcomes faster than the national average, strengthening school leadership, and deepening our work through our community hubs and teacher training partnerships. As we look ahead, we are preparing to launch our next five-year strategy (2026–2031), which will build on this foundation: continuing to drive excellence in teaching and learning, expanding our social

purpose, and ensuring our schools are places where both staff and pupils thrive.

As a national group of schools, we believe that Heads and their Executive Teams, of which the Director of Finance and Operations (DFO) is a key part, should run schools, and we centralise functions only when that will give a significant gain in efficiency and effectiveness. We have been able to generate substantial economies of scale in the 'back-office' functions of finance, HR and management information, central procurement and specialist estate management, as well as building excellent 'create once, use many times' educational and other resources.

The Group provides you with a professional network of other DFOs, and the 'team around the School' can transfer collective knowledge and skills from the wider Group, meaning that as DFO, you have access to a wide range of expertise and resources. This support has become even more important in the current economic environment. We believe that successful organisations prioritise staff development. We make support and professional development for DFOs a particular priority, given their demonstrable and positive impact on staff and pupils' experiences within the School. We work on the basis that each of us, however effective, can always improve.





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## Leadership, Management and Governance

United Learning consists of two charities which are responsible for the operation of the Group's schools. United Church Schools Trust (UCST) governs the independent schools, and United Learning Trust (ULT) governs the Group's academies. United Learning Ltd is the parent charity and owns the independent schools' land and buildings. The Trustees of UCST hold the ultimate responsibility for the governance of Chafyn-Godolphin School, but they delegate certain key roles and responsibilities to the School's Local Governing

Body. The LGB is responsible for ensuring that Chafyn-Godolphin School operates effectively in line with the vision set out by the UCST Trustees.

As a senior leader at Chafyn-Godolphin, the DFO will work with the Head, the LGB and other members of the Executive Team to establish and implement the vision and direction for all pupils from nursery to Sixth Form. The DFO will play a key part in ensuring that United Learning's ethos and values are deeply embedded and visible, securing 'the best in everyone' for both staff and pupils.

The DFO of Chafyn-Godolphin School reports to the Head with a dotted line to the Group's Director of Finance – Independent Schools, both of whom report to the Director of Independent Schools at United Learning, who is responsible to the overarching Group Board through the Chief Executive. The Local Governing Body, and its Chair in particular, act as a 'critical friend' to the School.

# United Learning's Ethos

Our approach to education is underpinned by a sense of moral purpose and commitment to doing what is right for children and young people. We believe in supporting our colleagues to achieve excellence and in acting with integrity in all our dealings within and beyond the Group.

We believe the safety and welfare of all children and young people is paramount. We summarise this ethos as 'the best in everyone'. This ethos underpins our core values:

**Ambition** – to achieve the best for ourselves and others.

**Confidence** – to have the courage of our convictions and to take risks for the right cause.

**Creativity** – to imagine possibilities and make them real.

**Respect** – of ourselves and others in all that we do.

**Enthusiasm** – to seek opportunity, find what is good and pursue talents and interests.

**Determination** – to overcome obstacles and achieve success.

Our values were selected in consultation with United Learning students and staff across the country. As a single organisation, we seek to bring together the best of independent and state sectors, respecting both traditions and learning from each. We believe that each of our schools is and should be distinctive – each is committed to developing its own strengths and identity while sharing our core values as institutions which promote service, compassion and generosity.

As part of United Learning, Chafyn-Godolphin School shares the objective of bringing out 'the best in everyone', enabling each pupil to become a balanced, happy and articulate person with intellectual freedom, confidence, compassion, integrity and a lifelong love of learning.

Further information on United Learning may be found [here](#).



# The Opportunity

This is a unique and exciting opportunity to work alongside a new Head with the support of United Learning's resources and expertise to help shape the creation of Chafyn-Godolphin School, preserving the best of both schools and delivering a sustainable future. The DFO will provide strong strategic, financial and commercial leadership, building operational capacity within the support teams in both schools and managing people and resources effectively. They will help create a culture of collaboration among staff and ensure the newly combined school benefits from United Learning's vision and values.

The DFO will possess an entrepreneurial spirit to identify and realise commercial opportunities and will provide constructive challenge and support to the Head. The successful applicant will embrace change and be excited by the idea of putting their stamp on the future of the School. They will bring a proven track record of senior operational leadership and financial control, with strong commercial acumen, strategic planning expertise, and the ability to lead and motivate multi-disciplinary teams.

This is a collaborative and multi-faceted role requiring excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to build trusted relationships across the School and local community.

Although prior experience in the education sector is not essential, candidates must be able

to demonstrate empathy with independent education, a commitment to the School's and United Learning's ethos and values, and a willingness to play a full part in the life of the school community.

## Core Purpose

The DFO has overall responsibility for the financial and operational management of the School, including facilities, grounds, catering, HR, IT and data, and commercial enterprise opportunities, including the effective application and management of resources. The aim is to ensure the smooth running of the School to support the Head and LGB in realising their vision for the School's future.

The DFO is responsible for delivering the financial and commercial strategy to meet the School's long-term objectives and, as a member of the Executive Team, shares in the strategic development of the School, working with senior colleagues, the LGB, and colleagues within the Group.

The DFO has overall responsibility for a diverse team of over 40 support staff, plus the outsourced Godolphin catering staff. The DFO has direct line management responsibilities for the Deputy Bursar, Director of Estates, Leisure Centre Manager, Housekeeping Manager, IT Data/Network Managers, HR Manager and Catering Managers.

The responsibilities outlined overleaf are not exhaustive but are indicative of the requirements of this significant and wide-ranging role.



# Key Responsibilities

## Strategy and Planning

- Advise the Head, LGB, and the Group on all matters relating to the School's financial strategy and operations.
- Contribute to the development of the School's Strategic and Operational Plan with specific responsibility for developing financial and commercial strategies in support of it.
- Oversee the implementation of the financial and operational elements of the Strategic and Operational Plan in conjunction with the Head.
- Support coordinated strategic development through working with senior leaders across the School.
- Ensure that the School's support teams are effectively staffed and resourced and have the appropriate skills to ensure the optimal functioning of the School, working with the Head to implement structural changes as necessary.
- Manage the performance of direct reports, ensuring that staff receive appropriate support to achieve the expected standards.
- Ensure Group policies and strategies are implemented in relation to the DFO's remit and more widely as a member of the Executive Team.
- Contribute to and support the development of the Group's independent schools, promoting and sharing best practice, lessons learnt, and the review and development of policies, procedures and working practices, to include working collaboratively with peers across United Learning.
- Advise the Head and LGB on all matters relating to financial strategy to ensure the long-term sustainability of the School and the impact of their decisions on the School's financial position and commercial matters, including preparing feasibility studies and scenario modelling.
- Ensure that financial resources are deployed effectively and efficiently to support the School's educational aims, vision and ethos.
- Continuously review workforce plans to ensure the efficiency of staffing using curriculum-based financial planning to support decision-making.
- Ownership of all finance functions of the School and the Godolphin Foundation, including those functions provided onsite or centrally by the Group through the Chief Financial Officer's team.
- Provide the Head, LGB and the Group's Director of Finance – Independent Schools with appropriate, regular and timely information about the School's finances, including the status of the management accounts, commentary on variance reports, and updates to risks and opportunities, including outside usual reporting timescales as circumstances require.
- Prepare an annual budget and five-year forecast each year for the School, to include pupil forecasts, all income streams, resourcing, non-employment expenditure and capital investment.
- Prepare business cases to support investment proposals, working with the Group to secure approval.
- Ensure that a robust system of financial policies, procedures and internal controls is in place, both specific to Chafyn-Godolphin School and in accordance with the Group's requirements, including fraud prevention.
- Review, check and authorise expenditure and carry out reconciliations in accordance with the internal controls.
- Analyse school fees and costs, including benchmarking, and work with the Head and LGB to recommend fee levels and pricing strategies.
- Advise the Head and LGB on the School's use of fee concessions.
- Oversee the School's bursary application and assessment process and advise the Head and LGB on decisions.

## Leadership and Management

- Lead by example; be an inspiring leader of staff, coach and support them, and facilitate and encourage strong working relationships between the teaching and operational staff.

## Finance

- Manage the financial performance of the School to achieve agreed financial targets, KPIs and operational surpluses.



## Facilities

- Manage the submission of business cases and capital expenditure requests to the Group's Director of Finance – Independent Schools.
- Manage all capital building projects across the site, ensuring that such projects are delivered on time, on budget and to the agreed quality, including the tendering process and management of contractors on site, working collaboratively with the Group's Estates Manager – Independent Schools.
- Develop and maintain an effective, forward-looking master plan that supports the strategic vision in conjunction with the Executive Team, the LGB and the Group's Estates team.
- Ensure that the rolling programme for building maintenance and school facilities is costed and implemented on time, on budget and to the agreed quality, including the tendering process and management of contractors on site.
- Ensure that the facilities are well presented, serviceable, safe and compliant with regulations, including health and safety, fire and the Independent School Standards, liaising with expert external consultants as appropriate.
- Ensure positive relationships are fostered with local residents.
- Manage the catering contract at the Godolphin site and the Catering Manager at the Chafyn site, liaise closely with the Catering Managers to ensure that appropriate standards of catering are provided for students, staff, and hospitality for agreed school events.
- Ensure effective management of school transport and arrangements for vehicular traffic to, from and within the site, including tendering for transport contracts.

## HR

- Ensure United Learning policy and procedures are followed, liaising with the Group's HR function as appropriate.
- Ensure compliance with employment law and the relevant sections of Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Independent School Standards Regulations.
- Oversee the Single Central Register and ensure all required compliance with the regulations is fully implemented.
- Facilitate and encourage positive employee relations across all staff.

## IT

- Oversee the development, procurement, delivery and management of the IT infrastructure, data and services to support high-quality teaching and learning and administration.
- Work closely with the central IT teams to manage the safety, security and integrity of the School's IT network, ensuring that it remains secure from attacks and viruses.

## Health and Safety

- Ensure there are appropriate arrangements in place, including policies, procedures, equipment, training and funding, to ensure compliance with all health and safety regulations, including those determined by the Group.
- Promote a positive health and safety culture throughout the School.

## Commercial

- Develop and grow commercial activities and business opportunities across the sites to maximise income generation and optimise returns for the benefit of the School, the Group and the community.

## Governance, Compliance and Risk Management

- Implement key Group-wide policies and strategies in relation to GDPR, compliance, finance, HR and IT security.

- Ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, ensuring policies and procedures are in place and championing their application throughout the School.
- Identify, assess and manage risk, including management of the risk assessment process and Risk Register.
- Ensure that the School has appropriate insurance cover for all key insurable risks.
- Lead on critical incident planning and lead on business continuity and financial planning to ensure that the School is well prepared for any crisis.
- Liaise with the Clerk to the Governors to ensure the LGB has the information it requires to fulfil its role and responsibilities.

## Safeguarding and Welfare of Children

- Chafyn-Godolphin is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. You will undertake your role and responsibilities in accordance with the School's Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policies and Procedures. The School's Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy can be found [here](#).



# Person Specification

The successful candidate will bring the following qualifications, experience, skills and knowledge, leadership style and personal attributes.

## Qualifications and Experience

- Educated to degree level or equivalent.
- A professional qualification in a business-related discipline (desirable but not essential).
- Demonstrable success in a leadership role in a comparable organisation and through significant periods of development.
- Direct experience at a senior level of both finance strategy and operations.
- Experience of working within a complex budgetary structure, leading efficiency savings and business improvement initiatives.
- Experience of shaping and delivering change.
- An awareness and understanding of estate planning and health and safety.
- Experience in leading and developing colleagues and effective teams.

## Skills and Knowledge

- Strong strategic abilities and organisational skills with the capacity to guide whole-organisational development.

- Financial literacy (budgeting, cost management, financial planning, and reporting) with strong analytical skills and the ability to present financial information clearly and concisely.
- Strategic financial management and commercial acumen.
- First-class communication skills – able to balance robustness with constructive, positive discussion and diplomacy with the confidence and personal authority to represent the School with a broad range of stakeholders.
- Strong interpersonal skills and high levels of emotional intelligence, with a proven ability to operate effectively and efficiently in a complex environment while maintaining a sense of humour.
- An understanding of the economic, financial, legal and commercial challenges in the leadership and management of independent charitable schools.
- A clear and analytical thinker – willing to be flexible, solution-focused, and listen to others, as well as take and implement difficult decisions.
- Versatility and ability to manage conflicting deadlines and priorities.
- High levels of accuracy and attention to detail.
- Excellent IT skills and proficiency in MS Office Suite with advanced working knowledge of MS Excel, finance MIS and software packages.

## Leadership Style and Personal Attributes

- A highly visible leader who can work both independently and as a key team member, with the ability to delegate and build rapport, empower colleagues and gain the confidence of wider stakeholders.
- A clear understanding of and commitment to the development of the United Learning values and ethos.
- Clarity of vision with the ability to communicate it in a compelling and engaging way.
- An adaptable leadership style which encourages leadership from others and celebrates success.
- A team player and a commitment to collaborative working, both within the School and across the Group.
- An entrepreneurial spirit balanced by a strong appreciation, evaluation and judgment of risk.
- Openness, humility, energy and enthusiasm.
- Sensitivity and wisdom in managing relationships within a school.
- Highly ethical.
- A commitment to the safeguarding of children.
- Determined and resilient, able to remain calm in a crisis.
- Values and promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion.





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## Appointment Terms

A highly attractive remuneration package is offered, reflecting the seniority and significance of the position. The salary offered will depend on skills and experience.

This is a full-time, 52-week post, and some flexibility of working hours will be required in light of the role and responsibilities it entails.

The main benefits are likely to include:

- Annual holiday entitlement of 30 days plus statutory bank holidays.
- A generous staff discount on fees for children at the School.
- Contributory employer's pension scheme.
- Group life assurance.
- Health cash plan after six months.
- Complimentary school lunches in term time.

*United Learning values diversity and inclusion and is committed to creating and sustaining a more diverse workforce. We welcome applications from professionals of minority ethnic origin and from majority ethnic professionals who share our commitment to inclusion and diversity. Whether you are an aspiring or experienced Bursar/DFO looking to develop your career within the support and framework of a wider group, we would welcome an application from you.*

*United Learning 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, the Disclosure and Barring Service and online searches.*

*This post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020.*

# Application Process

Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics in the first instance to arrange a confidential discussion with Susannah Thompson: [susannahthompson@rsacademics.com](mailto:susannahthompson@rsacademics.com)

**Closing date: 10.00am on Friday 27 February 2026.**

You should submit:

- A completed application form (available to download from [www.rsacademics.com](http://www.rsacademics.com)).
- A covering letter addressed to Mr Aaron Smith, Director of Finance – Independent Schools. The letter should be a maximum of two pages and should explain your reasons for applying and outline your suitability for the role.

Applications should be made electronically to RSAcademics. To submit your application, please upload your documents according to the instructions on the RSAcademics website.

If you have any questions about uploading your application documents, please contact:

- Laura Cave:  
[applications@rsacademics.com](mailto:applications@rsacademics.com) / +44 (0) 204 6269 791

The process is as follows:

- All applications will be acknowledged by email. If you have not received acknowledgement that your application has been received within two working days of sending it, please contact our Head Office by telephone.
- Preliminary interviews will take place with RSAcademics via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday 4 and Thursday 5 March 2026.**
- Longlist interviews will take place at the School w/c 16 March 2026.
- Shortlist interviews will take place at the School w/c 23 March 2026.

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