



GEORGE
WATSON'S
— COLLEGE —

Head of Finance

Candidate Pack May 2026

LHH



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Welcome from Lisa Kerr, Principal, George Watson's College

Finance as an enabler of educational excellence.

Thank you for your interest in the role of Head of Finance at George Watson's College.

This is a key appointment for our school at an important moment in our development. We are seeking an experienced and capable finance professional who will play a central role in ensuring the strength, integrity and resilience of our financial operations, and in supporting the wider leadership team to make well-informed decisions for the future.

George Watson's College is a school with a proud history, a vibrant present and ambitious plans ahead. We are a complex organisation with significant financial responsibilities, operating within a charitable framework and a highly regulated environment. High-quality financial control, reporting and governance are essential to everything we do.

As Head of Finance, you will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the school's financial affairs, ensuring robust controls, accurate reporting and effective processes across all areas of finance. You will work closely with the Chief Finance and Operations Officer and colleagues across the school, providing clear, reliable financial information and playing a vital role in maintaining strong financial discipline and compliance.

We are looking for someone who brings technical expertise, attention to detail and sound judgement, alongside a collaborative and pragmatic approach. You will be comfortable working in a fast-paced environment, able to balance routine financial rigour with the flexibility required in a large and dynamic school community. While experience in education is welcome, it is not essential; what matters most is your professionalism, integrity and commitment to high standards.

This is an opportunity to join a values-led organisation where finance is seen not simply as a function, but as an enabler of educational excellence. At Watson's, our motto Ex Corde Caritas – Love from the Heart – underpins our culture, and we value colleagues who combine technical skill with a genuine commitment to the people and purpose of the School.

If you are motivated by the chance to contribute your expertise to an organisation with a clear mission and a strong sense of community, I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Warmest regards,

Lisa Kerr
Principal
George Watson's College





Advertisement

Head of Finance, George Watson's College.

Location – Edinburgh

Salary – £70,000 - £80,000 per annum

Are you an experienced finance professional looking for a senior, hands-on role within a values-led organisation?

George Watson's College is seeking a highly capable Head of Finance to take responsibility for the day-to-day leadership of the school's finance function, ensuring robust financial control, high-quality reporting and strong governance across a large and complex organisation.

Watson's operates at significant scale, with substantial income streams, complex cost bases and a charitable governance framework. The Head of Finance will play a critical role in maintaining financial integrity, strengthening systems and processes, and supporting informed decision-making across the school.

Working closely with the Chief Finance and Operations Officer, you will lead on financial control, statutory and management reporting, budgeting, forecasting, audit and compliance. You will also oversee the effective operation of core finance processes, ensuring accuracy, transparency and continuous improvement.

We are looking for someone with strong technical expertise, sound judgement and a meticulous approach, who is equally comfortable working collaboratively with non-finance colleagues. You may come from outside the education sector; what matters most is your ability to bring rigour, professionalism and pace to a demanding but rewarding environment.

This is an excellent opportunity to join one of Scotland's leading independent schools at a key point in its journey, in a role that is both challenging and highly valued. In return, you will be part of a supportive, values-driven community with a clear sense of purpose and ambition.

To apply for the post, please send a tailored CV and covering letter to ScotlandExecutive@LHH.com by **Midnight on Tuesday 02 June**. The covering letter should be no more than two pages of A4 and should summarise your relevant experience, technical strengths and motivation for applying.

If you would like a confidential, informal discussion about the role, please contact LHH on **+44 (0)141 220 6460** or email the above address.



About

Delivering a world-class education within a values-led environment.

George Watson's College is one of the country's leading independent schools. Founded in 1741 and located in the heart of Edinburgh, the school educates around 2,300 pupils aged 3 to 18 across its Nursery, Junior and Senior Schools.

Our motto, Ex Corde Caritas – Love from the Heart – sits at the centre of all that we do. It reflects our commitment to academic excellence, personal integrity and a strong sense of service, ensuring that pupils leave Watson's not only well educated, but well prepared to contribute positively to the world around them.

Watson's is a vibrant and diverse community, proud of its traditions and heritage, yet firmly forward-looking. We place a strong emphasis on innovation, inclusivity and ambition, supported by outstanding facilities, extensive enrichment programmes and a broad co-curricular offer.

Our size and scale create both opportunity and complexity, requiring professional, well-led operations to support an exceptional educational experience.

As a charitable organisation, George Watson's College is deeply committed to widening access to the education we provide. Through our Foundation Places programme, philanthropic support enables talented young people from a wide range of backgrounds to benefit from a Watson's education, often transforming life chances for individuals and families.

The school operates as a sophisticated and multifaceted organisation, with responsibility for significant estates, financial resources, digital infrastructure and a large, committed workforce. Strong governance, effective financial stewardship and high-quality operational leadership are essential to sustaining our long-term success and enabling future growth.

At Watson's, it is our people who make the school what it is. We are fortunate to have a dedicated and highly professional staff body, supported by an engaged Governing Council and a loyal alumni and parent community (collectively known as Watsonians).



Together, we share a clear ambition: to be the making of every child, by delivering a world-class education within a values-led environment, while ensuring the school remains financially sustainable, operationally excellent and strategically confident for generations to come.

The Role

A high level of professionalism, rigour and attention to detail

The Head of Finance is a senior operational role within George Watson's College, responsible for the effective day-to-day leadership of the finance function and for ensuring robust financial control, reporting and compliance across the school.

Reporting to the Chief Finance and Operations Officer, the postholder will play a central role in maintaining the financial integrity of the organisation, providing accurate and timely financial information, and supporting sound decision-making at both operational and strategic levels. The role operates within a charitable and regulated environment and requires a high level of professionalism, rigour and attention to detail.

Key Responsibilities

Financial Control and External Reporting

- Maintain and strengthen internal financial controls, policies and procedures in line with best practice and regulatory requirements, ensuring the integrity of the school's financial records.
- Lead the preparation of the school's statutory financial statements, ensuring compliance with relevant accounting standards and charity reporting requirements.
- Act as the primary point of contact for external auditors, managing the audit process efficiently and professionally to ensure a smooth year-end process.
- Ensure compliance with all relevant financial, tax and regulatory requirements and filings applicable to a charitable organisation.
- Support reporting to governance bodies and external stakeholders as required, providing clear and accurate financial information.

Management Reporting

- Lead the preparation of timely, accurate and insightful monthly management accounts, identifying the drivers of financial performance and providing actionable recommendations that enable the delivery of the school's financial plan.
- Provide clear financial reporting and business partnering to senior leaders, enabling effective budget ownership and accountability across the school.
- Continuously review and enhance the reporting packs that support operational and strategic decision-making, enhancing improve clarity, relevance and usefulness for stakeholders.

Financial Planning and Analysis

- Lead the annual budgeting and long-term planning processes, working closely with budget holders across the school to ensure realistic, well-informed outputs that align to the school's strategic and financial objectives.
- Proactively identify risks and opportunities to financial performance, producing analysis and refreshed financial outlooks to support delivery of financial performance.
- Support the Chief Finance and Operations Officer with financial modelling and sensitivity analysis to inform decision-making for business cases, strategic initiatives and operational change.

Operational Finance and Compliance

- Oversee core transactional finance activities, including income, expenditure and payroll liaison, underpinned by appropriate documentation and audit trails.
- Deliver efficient management of working capital, leveraging well-controlled debtors and creditors processes to ensure both financial resilience and deliver an appropriate yield on surplus liquidity.
- Support effective procurement and value-for-money initiatives across the school.

Systems, Processes and Improvement

- Leadership of move to new finance system, iFinance, as part of the school's Digital Infrastructure Transformation Project.
- Ownership of finance systems and reporting tools, ensuring they are used effectively and developed as required.
- Drive continuous improvement in financial processes, controls and reporting to enhance efficiency, transparency and resilience.
- Support wider digital and systems developments where they impact finance and financial data.

People and Stakeholder Engagement

- Lead, manage and develop the finance team, setting clear objectives and supporting professional development.
- Work constructively with colleagues across the school, providing partnering and support to non-finance leaders.
- Build effective working relationships with external advisers, auditors and professional partners.

The Person

A high level of professionalism, rigour and attention to detail

We are seeking a highly capable and professional finance leader who brings strong technical expertise, sound judgement and a commitment to high standards. You will be someone who takes pride in robust financial control, enjoys working in a complex organisation and is motivated by contributing to a values-led institution with a clear sense of purpose.

Essential Experience and Skills

- Professional accountancy qualification (e.g. CA, ACCA, CIMA or similar).
- A strong background in financial operations and control, with proven experience in a senior finance role such as Head of Finance or equivalent.
- Demonstrable experience of producing high-quality management accounts with the ability to translate financial data into clear, actionable insight for senior colleagues.
- Credibility in statutory and external reporting, including experience as the primary contact with stakeholders such as HMRC and external auditors, ensuring compliance within a regulated or charitable environment.
- Experience of leading or significantly contributing to budgeting, forecasting and financial planning processes, confident in developing and using financial models, with a strong grasp of assumptions, risk and financial drivers.
- The ability to apply financial analysis pragmatically to support decision-making, rather than producing analysis for its own sake.
- Confident user of finance systems and reporting tools, with an interest in improving processes and ways of working.

Leadership and Personal Attributes

- A collaborative and approachable leadership style, with experience of managing and developing team members.
- Able to communicate financial information clearly and constructively to non-finance colleagues.
- Pragmatic, solutions-focused and comfortable operating in a fast-paced environment.
- Strong organisational skills, with the ability to plan ahead and deliver to deadlines.
- Unwavering personal integrity, discretion and professionalism.
- High levels of accuracy and attention to detail, with the ability to manage multiple priorities effectively.
- Comfortable working within a regulated and charitable context, with a strong sense of accountability.

Desirable Experience

- Experience of working within a complex, multi-income organisation, in the private, public or third sector.
- Exposure to capital projects, estates-related finance or long-term financial planning.
- Experience of working with governing bodies, boards or committees.

Above all, you will be someone who combines technical excellence with a genuine commitment to the people and purpose of George Watson's College, and who takes pride in enabling the organisation to deliver outstanding education through strong and reliable financial stewardship.





Conditions & Remuneration

Salary

£70,000 - £80,000 per annum

Place of Work

Edinburgh

Other Benefits

- Automatic enrolment in the contributory professional services staff defined contribution pension scheme, with enhanced employer contributions
- 35 days' annual leave entitlement
- Membership of the Galleon Club (the school's fitness club)
- Access to a range of other benefits and discounts is available through our Employee Benefits Platform.

Timescales

Closing date for applications:

Midnight on Tuesday 02 June

Interviews with George Watson's College:

Week commencing 15 June



How to Apply

If you would like a confidential, informal discussion about the role then please contact LHH on +44 (0)141 220 6460.

To apply for the post, please send a tailored CV and covering letter to ScotlandExecutive@LHH.com

Please note that the covering letter should be no more than two pages of A4 and should summarise your relevant skills and experience and motivations for applying for this role.

If you would like a confidential, informal discussion about the role then please contact Fizza Islam, LHH on **+44 (0)141 220 6460** or email the above address.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is one of George Watson's College's Strategic Priorities. Our commitment to entrenching, through policy and practice, EDI as a constant in the life of the school underpins everything that we do and is enshrined in our four values: Aim High, Join In, Be Kind, Respect All. We are constantly reviewing our approach to ensuring equality and diversity in our applications and would be pleased if you could complete an Equalities Monitoring Form.

Should you require any modifications or wish to speak with a member of our team to discuss any particular circumstances, please email the above address.



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