

Finance Officer - Cognus

Full time: 37 Hours per Week – Fixed-Term Contract until 31st August 2026

Salary: £32,184.09 per annum, Cognus Band 2, SCP 29

Location: Cognus Office, First Floor, Cantium House, Wallington, SM6 0DZ

About Cognus

Cognus Limited is a Local Authority Traded Company commissioned by the London Borough of Sutton to provide education services to early years providers, mainstream schools, and specialist education settings in Sutton. Wholly owned by the local authority, Cognus delivers a wide range of high-quality services to improve the lives of children, young people, and families in Sutton and beyond.

Cognus is seeking to appoint a Finance Officer to join the Finance Team. The Finance Officer is crucial in ensuring the accurate and efficient financial management of the Cognus group, including Sutton Music Trust.

You will give us great commitment and in return we offer an excellent package including:

- i) Starting salary of £32,184.09 per annum (Cognus Band 2)
- ii) Workplace pension scheme 4% to 8% matched contributions
- iii) 28 days annual leave pro-rata (plus Bank Holidays)
- iv) Regular manager support and supervision
- v) Hybrid and flexible working
- vi) Staff benefits package, currently including Employee Assistance Programme, Perkbox and (upon completion of probation) Sovereign Healthcare Cashback plans
- vii) Staff EDI group and Mental Health First Aiders to support wellbeing and inclusion
- viii) Cognus Coaching Programmes
- ix) An ambitious culture with friendly and supportive colleagues

If you are interested and would like to be considered for this role, please apply to recruitment@cognus.org.uk with the completed [application form](https://www.cognus.org.uk/work-with-us/current-vacancies/cognus-application-form/), downloaded from <https://www.cognus.org.uk/work-with-us/current-vacancies/cognus-application-form/>, outlining your suitability. The deadline for receipt is **Friday, 4th April 2025**. Candidates are requested to be available for interview on **Tuesday, 8th April 2025**.

For an informal conversation about the role, please contact Jon Mills, Head of Finance at jon.mills@cognus.org.uk.

All offers of employment are subject to successful completion of recruitment formalities which includes an enhanced DBS check. These checks must have been completed before the commencement of employment. We expect our staff to have due regard for safeguarding and





promoting the welfare of children and young people and to follow the child protection procedures adopted by the Company and Sutton's Local Safeguarding Partnership.



JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION:	Finance Officer (Fixed-term contract until 31st August 2026)
DIVISION:	Finance
REPORTS TO:	Head of Finance
GRADE/PAY:	Cognus Band 2 - £32,184.09 per annum
LOCATION:	Cognus Office, First Floor, Cantium House, Wallington, SM6 0DZ

JOB SUMMARY

The Finance Officer will support the Head of Finance in the day-to-day financial operations of Cognus and Sutton Music Trust, ensuring accurate and timely recording of all financial transactions, and contributing to the overall financial health of the Group. The role requires a detail-oriented individual with strong numerical, analytical, and problem-solving skills, and a comprehensive understanding of financial procedures and best practices.

PRINCIPLE ACCOUNTABILITIES

- **Accounts Payable and Receivable:**
 - Process invoices and manage purchase orders within the Xero accounting system and ApprovalMax.
 - Generate sales invoices and monitor accounts receivable to ensure timely collection of income.
 - Liaise with suppliers and customers to resolve queries and ensure accurate billing and payment processes.

- **Banking and Treasury:**
 - Perform bank reconciliations for Cognus and Sutton Music Trust.
 - Manage weekly payment runs, including payments for suppliers, payroll, and other third parties.
 - Process payments for monthly payroll, including third-party payments, VAT, and ad hoc payments.
 - Reconcile commercial cards, PayPal, and suspense accounts.
 - Administer banking mandates and online banking accounts.

- **Month-End and Year-End Support**
 - Assist in the preparation of the month-end and year-end close processes for the balance sheet and profit and loss.
 - Prepare and enter current asset and current liabilities schedule journals and payroll journals into Xero.



- Oversee accrued and deferred income for various income streams including grants, commissioning contract and trading income.
- Support the annual external year-end audit, including liaising with auditors and providing necessary documentation and evidence.
- **Financial Reporting and Analysis**
 - Provide regular and ad hoc financial reports to the Executive Team, Area Leads, team managers, and administrative staff.
 - Assist budget holders with financial invoicing advice and reports.
 - Maintain and update the Contract Income and Contract Expenditure spreadsheet.
 - Compile statistical and financial data to support financial systems and budget control.
- **Financial Governance and Process Improvement**
 - Promote and guide financial governance within the Business Support Team across all service areas.
 - Adhere to Cognus and Council-wide financial procedures.
 - Contribute to departmental efficiency and effectiveness by reviewing processes, implementing improvements, and creating/updating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- **Stakeholder and Relationship Management**
 - Liaise with internal departments to ensure accurate and timely payments and invoicing.
 - Communicate effectively with external vendors to ensure compliance with payment processes.
 - Liaise with stakeholders to ensure timely receipt of grant income and maintain cash flow.
 - Provide excellent customer service to internal and external stakeholders.
- **Training and Mentoring**
 - Mentor and train internal staff in the use of Xero accounting software and ApprovalMax.
- **Other Duties**
 - Manage correspondence, emails, and phone calls as required.
 - Support the Head of Finance with ad hoc tasks, projects and other duties of a similar nature as required.



GENERIC OBJECTIVES

Contribute to Cognus Limited's business objectives at the appropriate level by ensuring every child matters and has access to education and learning opportunities, including:

- a) Health and safety
- b) Safeguarding and protection of children
- c) Equal opportunities and management of diversity
- d) Data protection
- e) Outstanding Customer care

GENERAL:

SAFER RECRUITMENT:

Cognus is committed to safeguarding and protecting the children and young people that it works with. An offer of employment is subject to safer recruitment practices which include an enhanced DBS check, two professional references acceptable to Cognus Limited, proof of qualifications, proof of right to work in the UK, proof of personal address and employment history covering 5 years and, fitness to work with children (occupational health assessment). These checks must have been completed prior to commencement of employment. We have a range of policies and procedures in place which promote safeguarding and safer working practices across the organisation.

PROCESSING OF DATA:

- a) You ("the employee") consent to the holding and processing of personal data provided by you to the Company ("the Company") for all purposes relating to your employment, but not limited to administering and maintaining personnel records, paying and reviewing salary and other remuneration and benefits, undertaking performance appraisals and reviews, the compulsory Disclosure and Baring Services check (DBS) details in line with its statutory responsibility to safeguard and protect children and vulnerable service users; maintaining sickness and other absence records and taking decisions as to your fitness for work.
- b) You hereby acknowledge and agree that the Company may, in the course of its general and statutory duties as an employer be required to disclose personal data relating to you for legislative purposes during or after the end of your employment. This does not affect your statutory rights under the General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

- a) During the course of your employment, you will have access to and knowledge of Company confidential information and trade secrets.



- b) Disclosure of any of this confidential information and/or trade secrets could have serious financial consequences and/or create serious competitive disadvantages for the Company. There may be material damage, financial or otherwise, deliberate or otherwise, to the Company's legitimate business interest.
- c) Under the terms of this confidentiality agreement, you agree to keep secret and shall not at any time, either during employment or post-employment, use, communicate or reveal to any person any trade secret or confidential information relating to the Company or any Associated Company.
- d) You are aware of the Company's policies in relation to compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation and undertake to act in accordance with these at all times. Any breach of these policies will be dealt with under the Company's disciplinary procedure and action taken can include dismissal without notice.

This job description and person specification outlines the summary of key accountabilities and is not an exhaustive list of duties and, is subject to periodical review and changes in line with the business needs.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

The main duties and responsibilities of the post holder are indicated below although other duties of an appropriate level and nature will also be required as necessary.

No	Description	Criteria
a.	Part/fully qualified AAT or equivalent (qualified through experience)	E, S, I
b.	Intermediate level in Excel (IFERROR/VLOOKUP formulas, organising data using filters, creating tables/charts)	E, S, I
c.	Experience of compiling financial data to support financial systems and control of budgets	D, S
d.	A commitment to ongoing training and development to ensure knowledge and skills evolve and are maintained	E
e.	Experience of working in a financial environment, preferably in a Local Government setting	D, S
f.	Knowledge of corporate, industry and professional standards, policies, regulations, compliance and codes of conduct associated with the role	E, S
g.	Thorough understanding of associated policies and regulations with a commitment to ongoing knowledge development, including UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018	D
h.	Ability to work proactively and to organise a personal workload to meet competing demands and tight deadlines	D, S
i.	Demonstrable understanding of the statutory local government framework and knowledge of the key issues facing local government and local authorities	E, S, I
j.	Experience in maintaining and developing systems to manage financial and administrative processes Ability to develop effective relationships within an organisation and across its partners	E, S
k.	Experience working with large volumes and differing categories of data.	E, S, I
l.	Ability to make full use of information technology systems including word processing, spreadsheets and database software	D, S
m.	Experience of developing and implementing appropriate qualitative and quantitative indicators, and knowledge of how they can be used to improve performance	E, S, I
n.	Experience working collaboratively alongside multi-disciplinary teams to develop greater understanding of service impact	D, S
o.	Experience working within the education sector with a good understanding of educational services and obligations	D, S



p.	Ability to work under pressure, manage own workload and forward plan to meet statutory deadlines	E, S, I
q.	Previous use and understanding of Xero Accounting Software and ApprovalMax is desirable but not essential	D
r.	Ability to work as a member of a team and the ability to maintain confidentiality	E, S
s.	Excellent numerical and analytical skills	E, S, I
t.	Knowledge/experience of data analysis software	D
u.	The ability to carry out data quality control and validation	E, S
v.	Willingness to work flexibly in undertaking additional duties and further training as necessary	E
w.	Ability to understand, implement and comply with the Cognus behavioural values	E

KEY:	D	Desirable	I	Evaluated at interview
E	S	Shortlisting criteria	T	Subject to test

