



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



We are delighted to welcome Jonny Coates as CET's new Chief Financial Operations Officer (CFOO) / Director of Transformation. This role combines strategic financial leadership with comprehensive operational management across the trust. We caught up with Jonny to find out more about why he chose CET and what he hopes to achieve.

Hi Jonny. Tell us a bit about your career journey so far.

I started my career in finance at Northern Rock before moving into the education sector, where I've now worked for over 15 years. My journey has taken me from School Business Manager to Finance & Premises Director, Chief Operating Officer, and most recently, Head of Business & Financial Support Services for a multi-academy trust of 38 schools. Each step has been about developing a deeper understanding of how strong business leadership can create the conditions for great teaching and learning to thrive.

What attracted you to Cumbria Education Trust?

For me, it's about making a real difference. Education is such a powerful force for good, and this role provides the opportunity to ensure children and young people have access to the very best

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resources and learning environments. CET has strong values, a clear moral purpose, and a genuine commitment to improvement - it's exactly the kind of organisation I want to be part of.

What will your initial focus be in the new role?

My first priority is to listen,



understand, and learn more about CET's schools and people.

The Trust already has strong foundations, and I want to build on that by aligning systems, strengthening collaboration, and supporting sustainable growth. It's about making sure our finance and operations functions work seamlessly to enable great outcomes for pupils.

How would you describe your leadership style?

People-focused, collaborative and strategic. I believe in building strong relationships, creating a shared sense of purpose, and empowering



others to deliver. For me, success comes from aligning great people, clear priorities, and efficient systems and ensuring everyone feels part of the journey.

What do you enjoy outside of work?

I love walking in the countryside with our three dogs, spending time with my family (usually involving me cooking for them!) and keeping active through weight training and playing football.

I'm also a lifelong Newcastle United fan and season ticket holder - which definitely teaches you patience and optimism!

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Do you have a favourite quote that inspires you?

Yes, one from Sir Bobby Robson that I've always loved:

"What is a club in any case? It's the noise, the passion, the feeling of belonging, the pride in your city."

For me, that sentiment applies perfectly to education. It's about belonging, community, and pride in what we do for our children and young people.

Thank you for your time and good luck in your new role!

Bio

JONNY COATES
Chief Financial Operations Officer (CFOO) / Director of Transformation.

Jonny has over 15 years' experience in education, leading finance and operations across schools and multi-academy trusts.

He brings passion and energy to his work, is driven to make a difference for children and young people, and is committed to building strong systems that deliver operational excellence.

He also serves nationally as Vice Chair of the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL), supporting professional standards across the sector.

