



CENTRAL FINANCIAL SERVICES

Central Financial Services

Excellence in Education

**Compassion,
respect and
ambition**

**Valuing
whole person
as much as
academic
achievement**

**Placing
every academy
at the heart
of their
community**

MEET THE TEAM

The central financial services team ensure the effective management, reporting and recording of the schools' and Trust's finances, including budget planning, monitoring, control and communication of financial information and decision making.

CFO
Finance Managers Sue Brobyn
Janet Williams
Nikki Laney
Elizabeth Birnie
Khadijia Tahari

Commercial Manager
(TWA and Enterprise Ltd) Matt Money

Assistant Finance Managers Claire Lees
Lisa Johnson
Natalie Jones

Finance Officers Leah Sherwin
Donna Riddell
Mel Ashley
Toni Fraser
Emma Kemp

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Our core strategic aim is to achieve financial strength through Trust wide strategic planning, ensuring that resources are available for Teaching & Learning priorities, whilst maintaining strict compliance with statutory and regulatory guidance. Providing expertise that enables and compliments Trust growth plans and mitigates any financial risks.

We do this by providing a Trust wide finance system that will assist you in the following areas:



Online Purchase Requisitions and Orders

- Easy to use request for goods and services
- Enables budget holders to manage their departmental allocations.
- Transparent for audit purposes following the Financial Scheme of Delegation



Paperless Invoices and Authorisation

- Environmentally friendly and speeds up our processes.
- Helps to reduce delays which means the finance teams have more capacity to support your school.



Online Budget Summary

- Real time budget holder reports via the Access workspace so you can see what has been processed against your areas of responsibility
- Enables you to decide how your budget is spent.



Managed and Supported

- Each school will have access to Finance Officer and Assistant Finance Manager assistance that will provide first line support.
- Finance Managers will provide regular scheduled meetings with school leaders to build relationships and understanding and will provide second line support.
- The Trust executive team of CFO, HR Director and Deputy CEO are available for third line support, professional guidance, and strategic vision.

SERVICE PROVISION

Effective Monitoring and Management

Finance Managers and the CFO will support school leaders through regular meetings to discuss the following areas. They will also work with schools to gain information on how best to support questions and decisions on staffing changes, capital planning, compliance requirements etc whilst providing high quality reports and analysis.



**Monthly
Management
Accounts**



**Financial
Benchmarking**



**Key Performance
Indicators**



**Strategic Medium
Term Financial
Planning**

STATUTORY COMPLIANCE

The Trust is bound by the Academy Trust Handbook which states that 'Academy Trusts must comply with this handbook as a condition of their funding agreement. It provides an overarching framework for implementation of effective financial management and other controls, consistent with your obligations as publicly funded bodies.'

The Accounting Officer, the CEO, has a specific responsibility for financial matters and this is a personal responsibility to Parliament for the Trust's financial resources. The CFO has delegated responsibility for the Trust's detailed financial procedures and has a technical and leadership role.

To ensure that we are fully compliant, the finance team provide the following guidance and services:



POLICIES

There are a number of finance policies maintained centrally to support the statutory guidance and to provide clear information for key areas. [Trust Policies](#)



ADVICE

The central finance service will provide advice on how to comply with the ESFA Academy Trust Handbooks and other statutory obligations. As well as general 'how to' questions. Contact us by email: finance@ascendlearningtrust.org.uk



REPORTING TO TRUSTEES AND ACCOUNTING OFFICER

The CEO and Chair of the Board must receive management accounts monthly, taking action to maintain financial viability. The Board must approve a balanced budget.



INTERNAL AUDIT

There are 2 Internal Audit visits per annum, of 5 days each. These are based on an agreed assessment of need, approved by Trustees. Compliance reports are presented to the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee and also form part of the annual statutory account's compliance.



EXTERNAL AUDIT

The Trust have an annual external audit in the autumn. The auditors will check and test a wide range of information across all schools as part of producing the statutory accounts. These are presented and approved by the Board and published on the Trust website. They are also reported to the ESFA by 31st December together with a management report on areas of development or compliance concern.



RISK MANAGEMENT

The Trust have an external DPO (data protection officer) to manage the GDPR risk for the Trust.

There is a high-level Trust risk register that is reviewed by Trustees on a regular basis through the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.



FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Executive Management, Trustees and Members have a legal duty to manage the Trust's finances responsibly to ensure the organisation's ability to deliver on its aims and charitable objectives.

In addition, there is a moral responsibility to use the financial resources given to ensure the best outcomes for all pupils.

As a Trust we are open and transparent and will take hard decisions to ensure that value for money, regularity and probity are self-evident at all times.

The Finance Strategy highlights high level actions across 3-years from September 2023 to August 2026.

STATUTORY REPORTING

The finance team have a responsibility to maintain accurate records and send regular statutory reports to bodies such as ESFA, Government Bodies, DFE, HMRC etc.



COMPLETION OF MONTHLY
VAT RETURN TO HMRC



CARBON REPORTING



FIXED ASSET REGISTER



LAND AND BUILDINGS RETURN



ANNUAL ACCOUNT RETURN (AAR)



PENSION RETURNS TO BOTH
LGPS AND TEACHERS PENSION



BUDGET FORECAST RETURN (BFR)

FINANCIAL PLANNING IN SCHOOLS AND ACROSS THE TRUST

Ensuring short - medium term financial sustainability and resilience underpins any organisation's ability to deliver on its collective aims. The finance team will guide school leaders through a budget planning cycle and 3-year plan to ensure we take account of changes to funding, known assumptions, potential risks, to create a meaningful and detailed budget.

The CFO and Finance Managers are also available to provide guidance and support on capital plans, business cases, Trust wide contracts, tender processes and general procurement as detailed in the Scheme of Delegation (SODA).



SETTING OF ANNUAL BUDGETS



INTERACTIVE CURRICULUM FINANCIAL
PLANNING (ICFP)



CAPITAL PLANNING (SCA AND DFC)



CONTRACTS MANAGEMENT,
(TENDERING AND PROCUREMENT)

HELPFUL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The finance team is committed to providing support and sharing excellence with all Trust schools via a business partnering approach and working with and in schools on a regular basis. In addition, the team will provide guidance material and updates where appropriate.



PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

- Funding advice
- Signposting



TEMPLATE DOCUMENTS

- Policies
- Tenders



HOW TO GUIDES

- Financial system
- Every



FINANCIAL TRAINING

- Budget holders
- Admin support



FINANCE TEAM

- Professional, knowledgeable team
- Qualified and time served staff who bring a wide range of skills