



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

Welcome pack for new academy trusts

Information for new academy trusts

January 2019

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Introduction

Welcome to the large and growing group of academy trusts. Incorporating as an academy trust to manage schools is a pivotal part of Government policy to improve educational standards for children and young people. It brings a range of freedoms over your curriculum and how you innovate to serve your communities. It also comes with the responsibility of being directly accountable for spending tax-payers' money. We hope this publication provides some useful information that helps you to organise your financial management and governance arrangements to meet this responsibility.

We also recognise that there's a great deal for you to do to ensure your academy trust is successful. This publication is to guide you through your first few operational months on matters relating to governance, funding, funding agreement compliance, finance and financial assurance.

Some of our work is technical and the information we produce is detailed and may require professional practitioner input. There's also a significant amount you need to understand for the well-being of your academy trust and the community that it serves. To help you, this publication:

- introduces our areas of work to give you an overview of where you can expect to interact with the ESFA
- introduces you to our services and systems and what you need to know and do to use these services successfully
- outlines where you can find more information about some of the detailed guidelines that you'll need
- provides outline information other finance related activities for which we're not responsible and signposts to where you can find further information

Help us to make this publication better

We're always looking for ways to improve the information we provide to academies. If you think we've missed something or there's something you don't fully understand, please let us know by contacting our [enquiry service](#).

Actions for newly operational academy trusts

Important actions for academy trusts to complete within their first few months of becoming operational.

| When | Actions |
|--|--|
| Before becoming operational | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiarise yourself with the school resource management tools and use them in your financial management and planning |
| When your first academy or free school opens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact your local government pension scheme fund to provide details of any relevant staff |
| Within 28 days of becoming operational | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate your Department for Education (DfE) Secure Access account and add up to 6 users in your trust |
| Within 28 days of becoming operational | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register to use your ESFA IDAMS account and allocate roles for completing your financial returns (see page 7) |
| Within 28 days of becoming operational | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide direct contact information for your chair of trustees, accounting officer, chief financial officer and list all members and trustees You provide governance contact information using the governance section of get information about schools (GIAS) which is accessed via Secure Access. |
| Within 6 weeks of opening your first academy or free school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and submit your land and buildings valuation information form for your school(s) Apply to the Land Registry for a restriction to be placed on the land as outlined in your funding agreement(s) |
| Within 6 weeks of receiving your final funding letter(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit an in-year budget forecast return (IY BFR), outlining current spending plans, for newly opened academies. |
| Within 4 months of opening | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit a full financial management and governance self-assessment (FMGS) Full return if you are a new multi-academy trust (MAT) or a new single academy trust (SAT) |
| Within 6 weeks of a trust opening a new academy or free school, after the trust has submitted its FMGS Full return | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit a financial management and governance self-assessment (FMGS) Alternative return using the online form. |

Annual actions for academy trusts

The current guidance can be found on GOV.UK

| When | Actions |
|--|---|
| By the third week of May each year | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Submit a budget forecast return: outturn (BFRO) using the online form |
| By the end of July each year | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Submit a budget forecast return using the online form |
| By 5 November each year | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Submit a land and building collection tool return for your trust. |
| By 31 December each year (subject to change) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Submit your audited annual report and financial statements, online accounts submission coversheet and auditor's management letter for the period ending 31 August |
| By 31 January each year | <ul style="list-style-type: none">You must publish your accounts on your academy trust's website as soon as possible after approval by the trustees, but by no later than 31 January each year |
| By 21 January each year | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Submit your accounts return |

Your numbers and details

Below are 2 key numbers that you'll need to access some of our systems.

Company number: this is created by [Companies House](#) and is needed when using the [get information about schools](#) (GIAS) service.

You'll also need to enter this number on the enquiry form when you use our enquiry service.

Your company number is: X

Unique Provider Identifier Number (UPIN) - Identity and Access Management System (IDAMS): You will need to create an account to generate this number. The IDAMS system enables you to submit financial returns online. Information on how to do this is in this pack.

Your IDAMS trust UPIN is: X

Working with ESFA

Our [customer commitment](#) shows how you can expect to see us work. This section outlines what you can do to make sure you get the best possible service from us.

Supplying trust contact details

Trusts must provide ESFA with details, including direct contact details, for the positions of chair of trustees, accounting officer and chief financial officer.

Trusts must also notify ESFA of the appointment of all members and trustees. The details must be provided through the governance section of [get information about schools register](#) GIAS using the [Secure Access](#) portal.

Where there is a change in roles, notification must be made within 14 days.

Single academy trusts (SAT's) should use the secure access login for their academy account and record their governance details on the academy record in [get information about schools](#).

Multi-academy trusts (MAT's) should use the Secure Access login for their MAT account and record their governance details on the MAT record in [get information about schools](#). This is a separate account to that of any individual academy within your MAT.

Contact information is also published on the [get information about schools register](#). Education professionals can search for information about trustees and headteachers.

Secure Access

[Secure Access](#) is the Department for Education's (DfE's) secure portal. It gives trusts and academies a single point of entry to DfE's services, including Information Exchange.

We'll automatically set up a Secure Access account for you no later than 28 days after your first academy opens.

Once your account is set up, we'll send an email to your accounting officer who will then be able to activate the account. They must activate the Secure Access account within 48 hours of receiving the email. They can add up to 5 additional people to use Secure Access.

Information Exchange is an application on Secure Access: one of its key functions is the Document Exchange which enables academy trusts to receive and send documents to ESFA.

Document Exchange also allows you to view funding documents for your academies towards the end of the month after your academy, or academies, open.

Secure Access is changing

Over the next few weeks, individual services are [moving from Secure Access to DfE Sign-in](#). During this time some services will use [DfE Sign-in](#) and others will still be using Secure Access. Once all digital services have moved off Secure Access it will be switched off completely and DfE Sign-in will be the only way to access your services. We will keep you informed of the changes.

Identity and Access Management System (IDAMS)

The IDAMS system is a secure information management service. Trusts use this service to complete and submit financial returns online. You'll need to register and set up an account.

The person setting up the account will be an administrator (Super User). They will control access to the system for your trust. They can invite other people within your trust to register to use IDAMS and can assign specific roles to them to complete the online forms.

We recommend your Super User is your business manager or someone who either manages your IT systems, or your finance systems. We've published guidance, including short videos explaining [how to set up and use the IDAMS system](#).

ESFA Update

ESFA Update is our weekly email bulletin for academies and trusts. Articles are brief and focus on important updates and key actions for you.

We send ESFA Update to your chair of trustees, accounting officer and chief financial officer, as well as the person listed on Get Information about Schools (GIAS) as the head of organisation in your academies. We are always keen to receive feedback on how to improve this for the benefit of Board Trustees.

We also publish [ESFA Update](#) on GOV.UK. Anyone can set up a [correspondence alert](#) to receive an email as soon as it's published.

Our website

We've gathered key information for academies into a GOV.UK document collection called [Academies: funding, payments and compliance](#). This includes our publications, detailed

guides about funding and finance, and information with links to forms you can use to make a claim for funding, such as rates.

We'll include a brief item and link in our ESFA Update when anything is added or changed, such as when we request a financial return. You can also set your own [general alerts on GOV.UK](#) so you'll always know when anything ESFA publishes changes.

Our enquiry service

We aim to provide clear and comprehensive information about all of our areas of work. If there's anything you don't understand, or you need clarification on a specific issue relating to your academy trust or any of your academies, our [enquiry service](#) will be able to help, or point you in the right direction.

Planning calendar

We've produced a [planning calendar for academy trusts and their academies](#) showing key dates about ESFA activities and returns required for the 2018 to 2019 academic year. The dates relate to academy funding, finance and trust compliance with your funding agreement.

Social media

For the latest updates relating to academies, follow us on Twitter [@ESFA_academies](#). For updates from across ESFA you can follow [@ESFAGov](#).

You can also subscribe to ESFA's [YouTube channel](#) which hosts our latest video guidance and webinars.

Trust governance

Developing and supporting good governance in schools is a key government priority. The fundamental principle of the academies programme is to put autonomy in the hands of school leaders, build capacity across the school system and cultivate a self-improving system that empowers trusts to sustain and grow at their own pace.

We recommend that all trusts have a good [Board Clerk or Company Secretary](#) to sift and explain any of the information that needs clarification. A knowledgeable person in this role will dramatically reduce your workload.

Funding agreement

The funding agreement is your contract with the [Secretary of State](#) that sets out the operating framework for your academy trust and, in multi-academy trusts, your academies. Trustee bodies must ensure they're compliant with it.

Academies Financial Handbook

The [Academies Financial Handbook \(AFH\)](#) sets out the responsibilities and requirements relating to academy trusts' financial governance and management. Compliance with the AFH is a condition of your funding agreement.

Financial management and governance self-assessment (FMGS) full and alternative returns.

The [FMGS](#) is a self-assessment that provides a way for you to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Academies Financial Handbook. These requirements apply upon or shortly after opening and include specific obligations for the accounting officer, trustees and delegated committees.

All newly opened SAT's and MAT's must submit the FMGS Full return using the [online form](#) within 4 months of opening. If you are a SAT becoming a MAT then you also need to submit the FMGS Full return.

When a new academy has joined an existing MAT, which has already submitted an FMGS Full return, the MAT must then also submit the FMGS Alternative return, within 6 weeks, using the [online form](#). This form confirms that the academy will comply with the MAT's financial management and governance arrangements and follow its internal control procedures.

Reviewing your governance arrangements

The [governance handbook and competency framework](#) provides information on the governance structure of academy trusts. Everyone involved in the governance of the trust, or of its individual academies, should be familiar with the expectations in the handbook.

You should review your academy trust's governance arrangements to ensure that your board of trustees is structured and constituted to deliver the core functions set out in the governance handbook. The board of trustees is responsible for determining the governance arrangements for individual academies, but you should have a scheme of delegation between the trust's board and any committees of the board, including local governing bodies.

Executive pay

The board of trustees must ensure that their decisions about levels of executive pay follow a robust evidence-based process and are reflective of the individual's role and responsibilities.

Non-financial statutory returns

In addition to financial returns, academy trusts are required by law to make 2 further statutory data returns for:

- the [school census](#) (termly)
- the [school workforce census](#) (annual)

Information is provided at school level and your academies will use [COLLECT](#), which is accessible via DfE's Secure Access system, to supply their data.

Information from these data collections underpins much of our decision making, funding allocations and also many statistical outputs that are made publicly available. They're also published in the school performance tables.

Publishing requirements

The AFH emphasises that trusts must publish details of their governance arrangements on their websites (both at trust and individual academy level).

As a registered company, your websites and all official stationary must display:

- your full legal company name
- your business name, if different)
- place of registration

- registered company number
- registered office address

The funding agreement requires that academy trust websites include details of:

- the content of the curriculum
- its approach to the curriculum
- the GCSE options
- other key stage 4 qualifications offered by the academy
- the names of any phonics and reading schemes in operation for key stage 1
- how parents can obtain more information in relation to the academy's curriculum

You can find further information on the GOV.UK page, [what academies, free schools and colleges should publish online](#).

DfE support for good governance

There is a wealth of information and support provided by DfE to share learning and best practice to ensure that trusts have effective school improvement strategies and robust governance that provides support and challenge to the trust's executive team and senior leaders in academies.

Academy trusts are independent charitable companies. Although they're charities, academy trusts have exempt charity status. This means that DfE, rather than the Charity Commission, is the principal regulator and is responsible for overseeing their compliance with charity law.

You must not register your academy trust with the Charity Commission. However, trustees may find the Commission's [advice and guidance](#) helpful in understanding and carrying out their roles.

The importance of trustees

The role of trustees is vital in setting strategic direction in trusts to provide the very best education for children. Our [professional development programmes](#) began early in 2018 to equip trustees with the skills to provide strategic leadership and data driven accountability for educational standards and financial performance.

Useful resources for trustees

We have published [Understanding your data: a guide for school governors and academy trustees](#) to support the use of data in reviewing school or academy trust educational performance and financial sustainability.

The guide aims to help trustees to engage and challenge executive teams in their school or academy trust to:

- set the right strategic direction
- improve outcomes for the communities it serves
- discharge its duties responsibly
- take proper account of effective use of the tax payer's money
- ensure probity
- manage risks and mitigating actions
- strengthen decision making, by bringing together information to better understand educational performance and financial stability

The guide was developed with trustees who serve on boards and local authorities and is about collecting the right information, understanding it and using it.

The Charity Commission has produced [charities and charity trustees – an introduction for school governors](#), which you may find helpful.

The [governance handbook](#) provides guidance on the roles and duties of governing boards, and advice on the skills and knowledge they need to be effective.

You'll also find help and advice from:

- [National Governance Association \(NGA\)](#)
- [Inspiring Governance](#)
- [Academy Ambassadors](#)

MAT development programme

The MAT development programme facilitates trusts across the country to create partnerships, collaborate, share good practice and develop capacity in the sector. The programme supports developing trusts, in priority areas, by matching them with high-performing MATs from another region.

We've published [establishing and developing your trust](#), which is a set of development questions on school improvement, governance and finance to help MATs not on the programme reflect on and improve their practices, with some suggestions for using the questions – either as a self-evaluation tool or in partnership with another MAT.

Funding and payments

Your academies will have already received their draft funding allocations for this academic year. We'll write soon to confirm their final funding allocation if we haven't already done so.

We've published a range of [funding information](#) which aims to answer many of the most common questions we're asked. A series of short [videos](#) is available to explain how we calculate funding allocations.

The [funding allocation delivery schedule](#) outlines the ESFA timescales for issuing funding allocation packs (FAP) to new academies in their first year.

Funding allocations

Most of the information about funding allocations relates to individual academies. We provide more detailed information in [the new academy welcome pack](#). We've published more details about [academies funding allocations](#) including 16 to 19 allocations and high needs place funding arrangements, on GOV.UK.

Payment schedules

You need to ensure that your academies have submitted the [academy bank details form](#). They can also use this form to notify us of any subsequent changes to the academy's bank details or remittance address.

The monthly general annual grant (GAG) payment will be sent via BACS and is due to arrive in their nominated bank account on the 6th working day of your month of opening and on the 1st working day of every subsequent month.

There's more information about GAG payments and non-GAG payments in the [welcome pack for new academies](#).

Pupil premium payments

[Pupil premium](#) is additional funding to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers. It's paid on a financial year basis, in arrears and in quarterly instalments. We began to pay the 2018 to 2019 financial year allocation to academies in July 2018.

More detailed information, including allocation and pay arrangements for maintained schools converting to academies, is published on the GOV.UK page, [Pupil premium 2018 to 2019: conditions of grant](#).

Capital funding and estate management

You can read information about [school capital funding allocations](#) on GOV.UK.

Most MATs with 5 or more academies and at least 3,000 pupils as of 1 September 2018 will receive a formulaic capital funding allocation for all of their academies.

The [condition improvement fund](#) (CIF) is a bidding round for trusts not eligible for a formulaic capital funding allocation. The core priority for CIF is to address significant condition need, keeping academy and sixth-form college buildings safe and in good working order. This includes funding projects to address health and safety issues, building compliance and poor building condition.

CIF also supports a small number of expansion projects for academies and sixth-form colleges that Ofsted rates either good or outstanding. This is where there's a need either to increase the number of admissions in the main year of entry or to address overcrowding.

We've published information about applying for the [2019 to 2020 CIF bidding round](#) on GOV.UK. We'll provide further information through ESFA Update.

Good estate management for schools

[The good estate management for schools](#) page on GOV.UK includes:

- the policies and procedures needed to manage the school estate effectively
- guidance on strategic estate management, organisational oversight, understanding your land and buildings, energy and water management and managing projects
- updated guidance on health and safety, compliance and maintenance (replacing guidance in Essential Schools Maintenance)
- links and signposting to organisations and resources that can help

The site also offers a number of useful tools, including:

- an organisational self-assessment
- top ten checks for governing boards
- a skills framework

An effective estates strategy means you are:

- confident that land and buildings are supporting your educational objectives
- more likely to meet your health and safety responsibilities, including statutory compliance
- making the best decisions on how to spend your money, prioritising effectively for the short and long-term

Managing asbestos in schools

Responsible bodies have a duty to manage asbestos in their schools and provide assurance that their schools are compliant with the asbestos management regulations ([Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012](#)). The responsible body is the main employer of staff in a school, which may be the academy trust.

The [Asbestos Management Assurance Process](#) (AMAP) provides guidance to help trusts and academies to submit their assurance declaration.

The [online AMAP form](#) captures information of how asbestos is managed in schools and provides further guidance on the process. The AMAP must be completed every time there is a change in the information you have provided and reviewed at least every two years.

If you or your schools have not yet provided any information, you should complete your assurance declaration before 15 February 2019. Responsible bodies must ensure this form is submitted for all of their schools, though they can delegate the responsibility of completing the form to each individual school.

Finance

Due to the degree of control exercised by the DfE through funding agreements, academy trusts are judged to be public sector organisations. As such, their accounts are consolidated into a set of standalone government style accounts for the whole academy sector; which requires additional accounting work and financial returns.

We aim to keep a reasonable balance between academy trusts' independence and the need to account for public money. The main components of the financial accountability framework and assurance arrangements are set out below, with guidance about the returns you'll need to submit to ESFA.

We'll contact you if any of the deadlines change using [ESFA Update](#), or by direct email from our Notify email service.

How to submit financial returns

As an academy trust, you're required to submit to ESFA the financial returns described below. Each return includes guidance on how to submit your information.

Eileen Milner, Chief Executive of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), wrote [to all academy trusts](#) to announce the ESFA's intention to publish an annual list of trusts who are late with, or do not submit, two or more of the annual financial returns during an academic year.

Academies accounts direction: submitting your first annual report and financial statements

The annual report and financial statements must be prepared in accordance with the [academies accounts direction](#).

Academy trusts with a funding agreement and an open academy at any point in the academic year to 31 August must submit to ESFA an audited [annual return and financial statements](#), an [online cover form](#) and associated auditor's management letter for the period ending 31 August each year, by 31 December. Trusts cannot extend their first accounting period.

You'll need to change your [accounting reference date](#) to 31 August as soon as possible after incorporation.

You must also file your annual return and financial statements with Companies House, and publish them on your academy trust and academy's website(s), in accordance with the timescales set out in our [guide to academies financial returns](#).

Where a new trust is formed by merging existing trusts, the academy trust which is closing must submit audited accounts to the period end date, to ESFA no later than 4 months after the date to which the accounts are prepared.

Value for money assessment

A value for money assessment must be included within the trust's governance statement, which forms part of its annual report and financial statements. Further information is provided within the [academies accounts direction](#).

Your annual accounts return information

The [accounts return](#) provides financial data for the academy [sector annual report and accounts \(SARA\)](#). It asks trusts for additional, and in some cases different, disclosures from trusts' annual report and financial statements. This is because HM Treasury's disclosure requirements for central government bodies (into which SARA falls) are different from those for academy trusts.

Academy trusts have to prepare annual reports and financial statements in accordance with the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) as amended by the academies accounts return, whereas the government has to prepare annual reports and accounts based on International Financial Reporting Standards as interpreted by HM Treasury's financial reporting manual (FReM).

Specific information provided in the accounts return is published by DfE on the [financial benchmarking service](#) site on GOV.UK. The accounts return also gives ESFA financial information in an electronic format that we can analyse.

We'll communicate any updates about the accounts return using [ESFA Update](#).

Submitting your budget forecasts

Academy trusts must monitor and manage their own budgets to ensure effective financial oversight of public funds. We review academy trusts' budget projections and actual results to assess financial health and to produce supplementary estimates.

Each year, trusts submit two different annual budget forecasts – a budget forecast return (BFR) in July and a budget forecast return outturn (BFRO) the following May.

In addition new trusts are required to submit their first [in year budget forecast return \(IY BFR\)](#) 6 weeks after receiving their final funding allocation letter. The existing trust must also submit an IY BFR for their newly opened academy/ies within 6 weeks of receipt of the final funding letter.

Land and buildings valuation

Each year, ESFA undertakes an exercise to have the [land and buildings valued](#) for all new academies that opened between 1 September of the previous year and 31 August of the current year.

We commission professionally qualified valuers to carry out desktop valuations of all new academy trusts' sites in order to consolidate valuations into the academies [sector annual report and accounts](#) (SARA). The valuations are not intended to support land and building valuations recognised in local academy trust annual reports and financial statements.

Newly opened academies should complete the [information request form](#) to provide basic background data to support the valuation within 6 weeks of opening.

Land and buildings collection tool (LBCT)

DfE is required to collect information about how academy trusts occupy their sites (such as freehold, leasehold, etc.) as well as additional information as to how academies in the trust use their land and buildings.

[The land and buildings collection tool \(LBCT\)](#) is an annual return that intends to address accounting issues arising from a lack of evidence to support how the assets are recognised in the SARA. This return is currently separate to the valuation form for new academy schools, which still needs to be completed within 6 weeks of opening.

The DfE requires a LBCT return from your academy trust if you have at least one open academy at 31 August. If an academy school joins your academy trust on or after the 1 September, the predecessor trust will need to complete a return covering that school.

Surpluses and deficits

Schools becoming academies without a sponsor must finalise their closing balance with their local authority within 4 months of conversion.

We've published guidance about what happens if a school has a [budget surplus or deficit](#) when it converts to academy status.

Practical tips for managing resources

The [supporting excellent school resource management](#) guide provides a summary of the support the department provides to help schools reduce costs and get value for money.

It would also benefit you to bookmark the collection of practical guidance and tools on the [school resource management](#) GOV.UK page, as it will be regularly updated.

The school resource management strategy describes the help and support in more detail, including:

Financial benchmarking

The [financial benchmarking service](#) can help you compare your academy spending in various categories with other similar academies and create reports that:

- give a clear picture of an academy's financial performance
- help trusts identify areas where their academies are spending more than similar academies, which may be a focus for further efficiency

The [school resource management self-assessment tool](#) helps to provide academies and trusts with assurance that they are meeting the basic standards necessary to achieve a good level of financial health and resource management. The tool can be used to identify potential areas for change to ensure that resources are being used most effectively. The tool is in two parts:

- A checklist, which is a set of questions about how resources are being managed
- A dashboard, which shows how a school's data compares to thresholds on a range of measures for good resource management and outcomes

National commercial deals for schools

The [buying for schools](#) guide outlines initiatives to help academies improve how they purchase goods and services, and save money on the things they buy regularly. The list of [recommended deals for schools](#) is updated as new deals are launched. The list will continue to expand throughout 2019.

The [risk protection arrangement](#) (RPA) is an alternative to commercial insurance for academies, underwritten by the government. Academies can opt in to RPA by completing the [registration form](#). Once an academy has opted in, the EFSA will automatically renew membership every year. Details of the losses RPA will cover are published in the [RPA membership rules](#) information on GOV.UK.

Regional Schools Buying Hubs

The Regional Schools Buying Hubs pilot offers free procurement advice and support when buying goods and services. The support includes:

- expert advice and guidance on buying
- sharing market intelligence
- help with complex contracts, particularly services such as catering, cleaning and premises
- local collaboration and aggregation, providing an opportunity to reduce costs in areas such as business services, ICT, stationery and utilities.
- Access to templates and exemplar documents including sample contracts and specifications which schools can tailor to their specific needs.

If your school is in either the [North West](#) or [South West](#) region, you can join now.

If the pilot proves successful, the intention is to rollout the service nationally in 2019. The latest information will be shared through the ESFA Update and published on GOV.UK

Workforce planning

The [workforce planning guidance](#) is for anyone who has a strategic leadership position within a school or academy trust, for example trustees, finance directors and academy CEO's. This non-statutory guidance aims to support schools and academy trusts that are reviewing staff structures as part of financial planning.

School business professionals can also sign up to the [DfE School business professional contact list](#) to receive occasional updates on topics and products related to school resource management.

Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs)

ESFA works with regional schools commissioners (RSCs) who act on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education and are accountable to the [National Schools Commissioner](#).

DfE appoints RSCs for their extensive knowledge of the education sector within their regions. They typically have backgrounds as highly experienced academy headteachers, chief executives of multi-academy trusts (MATs) or leaders in education.

Each RSC is supported by a [headteacher board \(HTB\)](#). HTBs are made up of experienced academy headteachers and other sector leaders who advise and challenge RSCs on the decisions they make.

RSCs main responsibilities include:

- taking action where academies and free schools are underperforming
- intervening in academies where governance is inadequate
- deciding on applications from local-authority-maintained schools to convert to academy status
- improving underperforming maintained schools by providing them with support from a strong sponsor
- encouraging and deciding on applications from sponsors to operate in a region
- taking action to improve poorly performing sponsors
- advising on proposals for new free schools
- advising on whether to cancel, defer or enter into funding agreements with free school projects
- deciding on applications to make [significant changes to academies and free schools](#)

There are 8 RSCs that operate across 8 regions in England:

- [Sue Baldwin: East of England and North-East London](#)
- [John Edwards: East Midlands and the Humber](#)
- [Vicky Beer: Lancashire and West Yorkshire](#)
- [Janet Renou: North of England](#)
- [Martin Post: North-West London and South-Central England](#)
- [Dominic Herrington: South-East England and South London](#)
- [Lisa Mannall: South-West England](#)
- [Christine Quinn: West Midlands](#)

Each RSC has a [vision statement](#), which describes their aims and commitments in fulfilling their responsibilities within their region.

Admissions

Admissions law is set out in both primary and secondary legislation and the statutory [School Admissions Code](#) (the Code) and [School Admission Appeals Code](#) (Appeals Code), which both carry the force of secondary legislation.

The Code exists to ensure that places in all state funded schools are allocated in a fair and transparent manner. The Appeals Code is statutory guidance designed to ensure the independence of admission appeal panels and ensure that all admission appeals are conducted in a fair and transparent way.

Publishing your admissions arrangements

With the exception of further education and sixth form colleges, academy trusts are their own admissions authority and must meet all the mandatory provisions of the [School Admissions Code](#). Once admission authorities have determined their [admission arrangements](#), they must notify the appropriate bodies and publish a copy of the determined arrangements on their website, displaying them for the whole offer year (the academic year in which offers for places are made).

Academies and free schools that cater for 16 to 19-year-olds have admission policies which they're required to keep under review and which must be 'fair, objective and transparent'. They don't need to seek DfE's agreement for changes post-opening.

There's additional guidance on [admissions for free schools](#) with advice on adopting fair admissions and a template to use as a basis for drawing up an admissions policy.

Admission authorities for faith schools must also send a copy of their arrangements to the body or person representing their religion or religious denomination.

The admissions code and appeals

Any applicant refused a place at a maintained school or an academy has a [right of appeal](#) to an independent appeal panel.

The academy has to ensure that the independent admission appeal panel is trained to act in accordance with all relevant provisions of the [School Admissions Appeals Code](#) published by the DfE.

ESFA is responsible for handling [independent admission appeal panel complaints](#) from parents and legal guardians.

Safeguarding

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (KCSIE) sets out the legal duties with which academies must comply. It provides statutory guidance on safeguarding children and information about safer recruitment.

Academy trusts must appoint a senior board level lead to take responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements. Trusts must meet their duties under legislation by having appropriate policies in place. They must ensure that their academies have:

- an effective child protection policy in place at each individual school
- a staff behaviour policy (also known as a code of conduct)
- safeguarding responses in place for children who go missing from education to help identify those at risk of abuse and neglect
- a senior member of staff from the academy leadership team appointed to the role of safeguarding lead.
- clear whistleblowing procedures and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed
- a process for sharing information with other professionals and safeguarding partners as set out in Working together to safeguard children
- robust recruitment practices, including meeting legal obligations on when to obtain a criminal record check
- procedures for all staff members to receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training and to make sure they are aware of the systems within their school

It is a matter for the academy trust and their schools if they wish to put additional arrangements in place.

ESFA's role in safeguarding

ESFA will consider safeguarding and child protection policies in line with the funding agreement. We'll refer to other organisation such as Ofsted or the local authority where specific child protection action or inspection is required.

Further information about safeguarding

[What to do if you are worried a child is being abused – Advice for practitioners](#) – this guidance is non-statutory, and is aimed to help practitioners identify child abuse and neglect and take appropriate action in response.

[Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges](#) – the guidance sets out what sexual violence and sexual harassment is, how to minimise the risk of it occurring, and what to do when it does occur, or is alleged to have occurred.

Complaints and whistleblowing

Academies are required to have complaints procedures meeting certain requirements, set out in Part 7 of [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) \(England\) Regulations 2014](#). Procedures must be available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils.

We've published information about [setting up an academies complaints procedure](#) to help you when drawing up and administering a complaints procedure. Similarly, we've published information about [how ESFA handles complaints about academies](#) to explain ESFA's role in investigating complaints that come to us.

Trusts must have an appropriate [procedure for whistleblowing](#), at both the trust and academy operational levels, in place that protects staff members who report colleagues they believe are doing something wrong or illegal, or who are neglecting their duties. The whistleblowing charity Public Concern at Work offers [support packages](#) on developing policies.

Counter extremism

Concerns relating to extremism affecting young people or their education can be reported by [email](#) or by calling the helpline: 020 7340 7264.

The purpose of the helpline is to enable school staff and governors to raise concerns relating to extremism directly and in confidence.

Other useful information

Apprenticeships

We have published a [guide to apprenticeships for the school workforce](#) to explain how the apprenticeship levy applies to academy trusts and how academies can use apprenticeships.

Pension schemes

Information can be found on the [teachers' pensions website](#).

If your academy has staff in the local government pension scheme, you should contact your local government pension scheme fund as soon as possible after opening. You'll need to provide the fund with the details they request for your staff so they can accurately record contributions and promptly provide the valuations you and ESFA will require for accounting purposes.

Further information can be found on the [local government pension scheme website](#).

Working with stakeholder groups

Representatives from across the range of stakeholder groups and membership organisations work with ESFA to check our plans for service development, support our communications, deliver substantial amounts of training and development, and most importantly, provide feedback to us on things that could be improved or issues that you might have.

We believe that autonomous academies are best served by the organisations whose purpose is to represent the sector. We treat all representative bodies equally and make no recommendations. The following list is not definitive but is a sample of peer-to-peer networks of organisations with whom you're encouraged to consider engaging:

- Inspiring Governance
- Academy Ambassadors
- [Freedom and Autonomy for Schools – National Association \(FASNA\)](#)
- [The Schools Network \(SSAT\)](#)
- [Institute of School Business Leadership \(ISBL\)](#)
- [Association of School and College Leaders \(ASCL\)](#)
- [National Association of Head Teachers \(NAHT\)](#)
- [National Governors' Association \(NGA\)](#)
- [Association of Colleges \(AoC\)](#)
- [Finance Directors Forum \(the FD forum\)](#)

Stakeholder groups may publish advice from time to time to support academies. In particular there's a best practice library on the [ISBL](#) website that provides guidance on a number of financial and governance issues and includes model policies, procedures and templates.

You might also find the [Charity Commission](#) useful for best practice in financial management for charities, as well as the [Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting](#) (CIPFA), which offers financial guidance for academies.



Education & Skills Funding Agency

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