Department for Education

A guide to new 16 to 19 free school revenue funding 2020 to 2021

May 2020

Contents

Introduction

1. This guide sets out how revenue funding for new 16 to 19 free schools will be calculated and paid for the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

2. This guide also sets out the importance of good financial health and the financial governance and accountability requirements for trusts. A pre-opening financial management and governance self-assessment is available at Annex A and is a helpful tool for trusts to assess a free school's financial governance and compliance prior to opening.

3. The following funding will be available in 2020 to 2021 for 16 to 19 free schools upon opening:

- national 16 to 19 formula funding
- business rates grant
- teachers pay grant
- teachers' pension employer contribution grant
- special educational needs (SEN)/alternative provision (AP) commissioner top-up funding (where appropriate)
- post-opening grant

Each is described in more detail later in this guide.

4. This guide does not cover:

- funding for free schools with pupils aged 5 to 15, special or alternative provision free schools (for which separate guides are available)
- free schools open before September 2020 (who will be receiving updates on future funding arrangements from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA))
- any initial funding which may be provided by the department to help free school proposers to develop their projects before the opening of the school (for example, project development grant) - further information on project development grant (PDG) is available on GOV.UK
- capital funding, which will depend on the circumstances of individual free schools (and within this heading is included in any ongoing annual costs of leasing premises)
- value added tax (VAT) open academies and free schools do not receive a separate grant to cover these costs, but will be able to claim back, when open, any VAT paid in respect of their non-commercial activity, directly from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) via the VAT scheme for academies

School resource management and planning overview

Schools resource management

5. Effective schools make the best use of resources, ensuring that every pound is used to have maximum impact for their pupils and the school. Schools that do this well tend to:

- base their financial planning on delivering educational outcomes, rather than as a separate consideration
- have a strategic approach towards financial planning for the longer term (3 to 5 years)
- deploy their staff effectively and efficiently, linked to their long-term plan
- have robust challenge from financially skilled governors and headteachers
- have skilled staff responsible for managing finances, who have experience of seeking best value for money when procuring
- have transparent financial systems and processes that encourage constructive challenge within and between schools

6. The school resource management strategy offers practical support and guidance for schools and academies to help them reduce costs on regular purchases and recruitment costs so that they can invest their resources into areas that make the most difference to pupil outcomes.

7. It includes recommended deals which can help schools save money on regular purchases such as:

- printers, photocopiers and IT equipment,
- Schools Switch, an energy comparison service for schools, to ensure they are getting the best deal
- the Risk Protection Arrangement, to save money on insurance
- the supply teacher and agency worker deal which makes fees and mark-ups transparent and removes the temp-to-perm fee

8. There are also a range of tools to support better resource management including the financial benchmarking service, which allow schools to compare their spending patterns to schools in similar circumstances and the Teaching Vacancies site allows schools to advertise their vacancies for free.

9. There is also support with strategic financial planning and guidance on financial efficiency with curriculum planning available to help school leadership teams, including a curriculum planning tool.

10. The school resource management: top 10 planning checks for governors' guidance contains information to help schools manage their resources efficiently to

deliver good educational outcomes. In particular, trusts will want to use the key metrics contained within the planning checks to consider the affordability and value of their proposed curriculum and staffing plans.

Financial planning

11. Free schools should plan their expenditure using the most up to date financial template to ensure that it is affordable within the funding provided. This should be an on-going process with financial plans updated as plans for the school are more fully developed, staff are appointed, site plans are developed and other costs are more firmly established. Groups should also refresh financial plans as further details of funding arrangements are confirmed and review them regularly to ensure they reflect the likely number of pupils based on the number of applications. In doing this, they will want to make sure they are aware of funding arrangements for each new academic year.

12. The department will need assurance that free schools are on-course to be financially viable on opening. In order to provide a sustainable, broad and balanced curriculum, there is a presumption that primary provision should have a minimum of 2 forms of entry of 30 pupils (total of 60), and secondary provision (years 7 to 11) have a minimum of 4 forms of entry of 30 pupils (total of 120). Financial plans are not expected to be based on fewer pupil numbers unless otherwise agreed with the department.

13. For local authority presumption free schools, the local authority and trust are required to determine the minimum viable number of the school, i.e. the minimum number of pupils required in order to be financially viable. The department expects local authorities to provide sustainable underwriting arrangements for presumption schools in support of the pupil forecasts agreed between the trust and the local authority.

14. If applying to open a free school you may be required to complete a financial plan for the proposed school. All applications, including those with an innovative or new approach, must demonstrate that the school will be financially viable. You can find the full criteria against which we will judge financial viability of free school applications in the how to apply guide.

15. Free schools in pre-opening will be asked to share their current financial plans with the department before entering into a funding agreement. This should include a version modelled around the minimum number of pupils required in order to deliver an educationally and financially viable offer. The minimum viable number should not be lower than the numbers stated in paragraph 13.

16. Financial plans will need to be resubmitted ahead of the school's readiness to opening meeting (ROM) and should be based on the latest available number of accepted offers.

17. Please note that at post 16, an adjustment of at least -30% should be applied to take account of historical drop out between accepted offers and start date, due to students being able to hold multiple offers. It should also be noted that not all 16 to 19 students progress from Year 12 to Year 13, this drop off is typically around 15%. The details included in this plan will be used in order for draft funding statements to be issued.

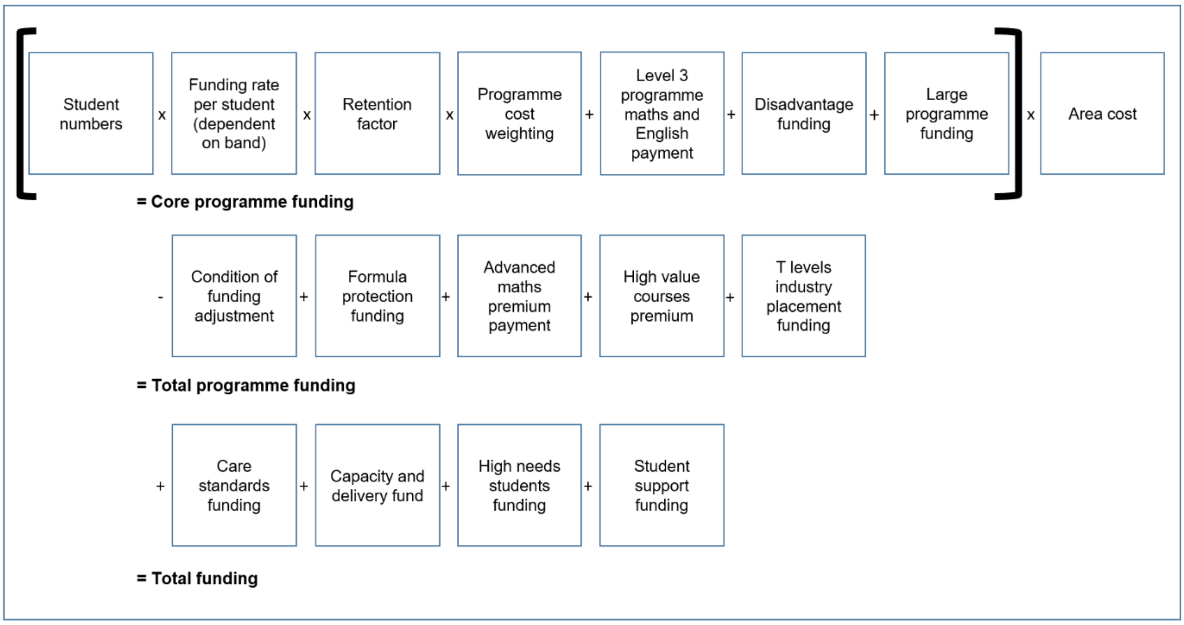
18. Projects should be ready to submit their plans with evidence to underpin their pupil number assumptions which must be realistic and achievable. The department will want to see that as far as possible the plans reflect the school's income based on the best estimates of available grants, the school's outgoings and the likely number of pupils. Plans should show that the school will not go into deficit at any point.

19. Plans should be based on the most up-to-date available estimates of grant funding. The free school financial template containing 2020 to 2021 funding rates is available on GOV.UK and will calculate indicative GAG funding using the up-to-date funding rates.

Annual revenue funding for free schools

20. Except where stated below, the funding for each free school will be calculated and paid by ESFA. 16 to 19 funding will be paid monthly in equal instalments. With the exception of the school's first month of opening, when the school will be paid approximately one week into the month, the ESFA pays schools their 16 to 19 funding on the first working day of the month.

21. A national funding formula is used to calculate funding for 16 to 19 provision for each institution, each academic year:



22. New free schools planning to offer 16 to 19 provision in their first 2 years of opening will have an opportunity to submit a business case in the spring before they open to provide evidence to support assumptions about the characteristics of provision to be reflected in the formula. This will inform the final funding allocation.

23. Normally the funding formula factors are based on historic data from the latest full year of data. For example, to calculate 2020 to 2021 allocations, data from each institution from the end of the 2018 to 2019 academic year is used.
For new institutions, factors for the first 2 years will be based on national or local authority level averages for school and academy sixth forms. Where a business case has been submitted and is approved, the approved factor will be used instead of the average for the first 2 years. In all cases, the allocation will revert to using actual historic data from year 3.

24. Students are placed into funding bands based on the number of planned hours in their study programme. Each funding band is assigned a national funding rate. The bands and funding rates per student for 2020 to 2021 are:

Band	**Annual planned hours**		**National funding rate per student**
5	540+ hours	16 and 17 year olds, students aged 18 and over with high needs	£4,188
4a	450+ hours	Students aged 18 and over who are not high needs	£3,455
4b	450 to 539 hours	16 and 17 year olds, students aged 18 and over with high needs	£3,455
3	360 to 449 hours		£2,827
2	280 to 359 hours		£2,234
1	Up to 279 hours		£4,188 per full time equivalent (FTE)

25. For new free schools it will be assumed that all students are full-time and under 18, unless we are informed otherwise. Students will therefore attract the national funding rate of £4,188 per student. It is important to note that all funding can be subject to change.

26. The retention factor recognises the number of students who are continuing on their programme or are ‘retained’ to their anticipated end date. Each student who remains in learning to the planned end date of their study programme, or who is recorded as

completed or continuing, gets full funding. Each student who is not retained attracts 50% of the full funding rate. For new free schools, the national average will be used (0.982 in 2020 to 2021).

27. The programme cost weighting recognises that some programmes are more costly to deliver than others. Most academic and some vocational programmes are weighted at the base rate of 1. Other programmes are weighted higher than 1, dependent on the sector subject area assigned to the core aim of the programme or where an academic programme includes 2 or more eligible Science A Levels. For new free schools the national average will be used (1.037 in 2020 to 2021) unless a different factor can be justified and a business case is approved due to the specific programmes of study being offered.

28. The Level 3 programme maths and English payment, introduced for 2020 to 2021, is provided to support the delivery of maths and English to those students on substantial level 3 study programmes who have not yet attained a grade 9 to 4 (legacy grade C) in either or both of these subjects. Qualifying students on eligible 1-year programmes will attract a single payment per subject (maths and/or English) of £375. Qualifying students on eligible 2-year programmes will attract a single payment of £750. For new free schools, the national average instances per student will be used (0.035 for 1-year programmes and 0.032 for 2-year programmes in 2020 to 2021) unless a different factor can be justified and a business case is approved.

29. Disadvantage funding is made up of 2 blocks:

- Disadvantage Block 1 provides funds to support students from areas of economic deprivation based on the index of multiple depravation (IMD). We currently use IMD 2015 but are reviewing the use of IMD 2019 for allocations from 2021 to 2022 onwards. For new free schools the local authority average will be used, unless a different uplift can be justified and a business case is approved.
- Block 2 provides additional funding to support young people who have not yet achieved a GCSE Grade 4 (legacy grade C) in maths and\or English by the end of year 11. Each student without GCSE English or maths at grade 4 (or above) attracts one instance of block 2. Where a student does not have a grade 4 (or above) in both subjects, this attracts 2 instances. The institution receives £480 per full-time instance of block 2. For new free schools the national average will be used (0.161 instances per student in 2020 to 2021) unless a different value can be justified and a business case is approved.

30. An area cost uplift will be applied to reflect the higher costs of learning in some areas of the country. This uplift applies to all elements of the formula.

31. The High Value Course Premium was introduced from 2020 to 2021 and is to support the sector to grow the number of students studying substantial level 3 study programmes in selected A level subjects or Sector Subject Areas (SSAs) that lead to

higher wage returns. Programmes which include at least 2 A levels or a level 3 qualification of 360 guided learning hours or more and are included on our published list of qualifying qualifications will attract an additional £400 for each year of the programme. For new free schools, the national average (0.310 instances (31% of students)) will be used unless a different value can be justified and a business case is approved.

32. From 2020 to 2021, discretionary bursary funding will consist of 2 elements. Element 1 (financial disadvantage) is based upon the student's home postcode. Those in the top 27% most deprived areas of the country (based on IMD 2015) attract an instance value for element 1. Element 2 (Travel costs) takes account of rurality and the distance travelled by each student to the delivery location. Instances are then averaged to calculate the average instances per student for each element. For new free Schools we will use the local authority average to take account of local variances.

33. High Needs funding may be allocated at £6,000 per student for each place as identified by local authority commissioning plans and decisions.

34. Other elements of the funding formula, such as Large Programme Uplift, Advanced Maths Premium, T Levels, and Capacity and Delivery Funding are not applicable for new free schools.

35. For further information, please refer to the 16 to 19 funding advice.

Pupil number adjustment (PNA)

36. It is vital to produce robust and realistic estimates of pupil numbers to ensure that the school is funded accurately (without the need for subsequent funding adjustments) and that they remain financially viable. In the first year of opening, an early PNA exercise shall be undertaken and if the October schools census shows that the school has not admitted the predicted number of pupils, any excess funding will be clawed back in the following academic year.

37. Where more pupils are recruited than have been funded for, ESFA will carry out an in-year reconciliation and pay any additional funding in February of the current academic year. ESFA will initially base allocations on an estimated number of pupils and local authority average pupil characteristic data. Any positive or negative adjustment calculated will also take account of the actual pupil characteristics returned in the October census and replace the averages initially used if it produces a more favourable outcome for the school.

38. From the second year of opening and for as long as the free school is funded on a basis of estimated pupil numbers, ESFA carries out the in-year reconciliation for the number of pupils, in accordance with the published process, with any additional funding paid in July of the current academic year and recoveries commencing in the following academic year.

39. In cases where academies have a positive PNA identified and also a historical PNA liability is outstanding:

- where there is a net positive payment ESFA shall, in all cases, reduce the PNA by the amount of the outstanding debt
- where there is a net negative adjustment, ESFA will use the positive amount to offset the debt and ask for any agreed deferrals or repayment plans to be re-confirmed against the lower amount to ascertain if the changed circumstances make earlier repayment possible

40. Where local authorities have already funded for growth in pre-16 pupil numbers to meet basic need, ESFA will deduct the amount they have paid from any positive PNA to ensure that academies are only funded for the growth once.

Teachers pay grant

41. In 2019, the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) recommended a 2.75% uplift to the minima and maxima of all pay ranges and allowances, and we accepted the recommendations in full. The recommended award is 0.75% over the 2% we assessed that schools can afford on average at a national level. In recognition of the difference, we invested a further £105 million into the teachers' pay grant in 2019-20, on top of the £321 million that schools received in 2019-20 to implement the residual 2018/19 pay award. We are providing the equivalent pro rated amount for the second instalment during the academic year 2019/20, which will cover the period from April to August 2020.

42. We will continue to provide the grant to maintained schools until March 2021, and academies until August 2021. We intend to include funding for pay increases within the core funding schools receive as part of their national funding formulae (NFF) allocations by April 2021 for maintained schools, and September 2021 for academies.

Teachers' pension employer contribution grant

43. The teachers' pension employer contribution grant provides additional funding to schools, to cover the cost of the increase in the employer contribution rate of the Teachers' Pension Scheme from 16.4% to 23.6% from September 2019.

44. We will continue to provide the grant to maintained schools until March 2021, and academies until August 2021. We intend to include funding for pensions within the core funding schools receive as part of their national funding formulae (NFF) allocations by April 2021 for maintained schools, and September 2021 for academies.

45. Detailed information on the grant is available here, and further information on the 2020/21 allocations will be published in the autumn.

46. Guidance due to be published will cover arrangements for the period April to August 2020 and there will be further guidance after that covering September 2020 onwards. Funding beyond this point will be decided as part of the upcoming Spending Review.

47. New free schools (opening in September 2020) will not appear on the census data which is being used. The grant allocation which these schools will receive between September 2019 and March 2020 will be based on a minimum funding allocation based on a minimum level of:

- 100 pupils for mainstream schools
- 40 places for high needs institutions

48. The new schools will receive an updated allocation in spring 2020 based on their October 2019 pupil numbers. This will cover the September 2019 to March 2020 period. Schools that were not fully open in October 2019 and are still growing by adding year groups, will also receive an updated allocation in spring 2020 to reflect that growth. Further details of these updates will be included alongside the spring 2020 allocations.

49. Additional information on the published teachers' pension grant methodology can be found here.

Risk protection arrangement (RPA)

50. Risk protection arrangement (RPA) is an alternative to commercial insurance, whereby government funds cover any losses that arise. The RPA will cover losses that are in scope of the RPA membership rules.

51. The RPA membership year runs from 1 September to the following 31 August, however members can join at any time. Please note, free schools can join the RPA scheme and receive cover prior to opening; there is no cost or premium to join the RPA in pre-opening. Free schools in the pre-opening stage, should have discussions with their lead contact regarding RPA and inform them if they require opting into the RPA scheme at an early stage.

52. Once a school is open, ESFA will deduct the per pupil cost at source from the free school's general annual grant (GAG). The cost of RPA will be £18 per pupil.

53. Free schools do not have to enter the scheme and are free to make their own alternative insurance arrangements; however, there will be no additional funding provided should extra costs be incurred. More information on RPA can be found on GOV.UK.

Business rates grant

54. 16 to 19 free schools pay business rates at the 80% discounted charitable rate. They will receive a grant to cover the actual costs paid. This needs to be claimed via the online form.

Special educational needs (SEN)/alternative provision (AP) commissioner top-up funding (high-needs)

55. Mainstream free schools will receive additional funding from the local authority for pupils aged 5 to 19 with high needs where the local authority has commissioned the place. Schools will be expected to fund the first £6,000 of additional educational costs (over and above standard teaching and learning) for each high-needs pupil from their own budget. More information on high needs funding arrangements can be found on GOV.UK.

Post-opening grant (POG)

56. 16 to 19 free schools are provided with a post-opening grant to reflect the additional costs in establishing a new publicly funded school which cannot be met through the GAG. The post-opening grant provides funding in 2 elements as the school grows: non-staffing resources, paid on a per-pupil basis; and a leadership grant. These titles reflect the basis on which the funding is calculated, but the grant can be spent on any legitimate purpose of the school.

57. The first element (resources) is paid each year that the school builds up to capacity for each new pupil *expected* to be on roll and is not revisited to reflect actual pupil numbers and is taken from the final finance plan submitted before opening. It is paid at the following rates:

- £250 for each new mainstream pupil in the primary phase (years R to 6)
- £500 for each new mainstream pupil in the secondary and 16 to 19 phases (years 7 to 13)

58. The second element (leadership) is paid annually based on the number of year groups that the school will ultimately have that do not yet have pupils. The amount paid to mainstream schools with pupils aged 5 to 15 each year depends on how many year groups (cohorts) are empty and is set out in the table below:

Empty cohorts	6+	5	4	3	2	1	Maximum
Primary	£80,500	£67,500	£54,000	£40,500	£27,000	£13,500	£283,000
Secondary (regardless of whether the school plans to have a sixth form)			£125,000	£93,500	£62,500	£31,000	£312,000
All-through (regardless of whether the school plans to have a sixth form)	£125,000	£93,500	£62,500	£54,000	£40,500	£27,000	£402,500

59. The resource element of POG is paid over the first 3 months of the academic year, with 50% paid in month 1, 25% in month 2 and 25% in month 3.

60. The leadership element of POG is paid monthly.

61. Free schools set up through the local authority presumption route are not eligible for POG. They should liaise with the local authority to agree what, if any, post opening/diseconomies funding the local authority will provide when the school opens.

Finance governance and accountability

62. Trusts will need to ensure that spending decisions are transparent and in the school's best interests and should not give rise to criticism of the trust by Parliament, and/or the public, and/or the media. Free schools will need sound financial procedures, the capacity to handle public money and good governance arrangements. On opening, a 16 to 19 free school will need to have a robust framework to manage its funding and ensure proper accountability and procedures are maintained.

The Academies' Financial Handbook

63. The Academies' Financial Handbook, together with the funding agreement, sets out the financial management and governance requirements for academy trusts.

64. Trusts must comply with the handbook throughout the pre-opening period and once open. This is outlined within the grant agreements underlying any funding you receive from the department and/or ESFA. Non-compliance with the handbook is considered a breach of contract and may trigger various sanctions.

65. The handbook includes requirements in relation to financial oversight, financial planning, internal control, financial monitoring and management and proper and regular use of public funds as well as a number of other specific matters. The handbook also sets out the audit requirements for academy trusts.

66. The handbook is aimed at trustees, accounting officers (principals and chief executives), principal finance officers (finance directors and business managers), clerks to the board of trustees, local governing bodies of multi-academy trusts and auditors.

67. The handbook clearly articulates that the accounting officer is personally responsible to Parliament, and to the accounting officer of ESFA, for the resources under their control. This personal responsibility extends to ensuring regularity, propriety and value for money. The accounting officer also has responsibilities for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for the management of opportunities and risks.

Financial statements

68. Free schools, including those in the pre-opening phase, with a signed funding agreement must submit audited financial statements to ESFA, for each year ending 31 August, by 31 December. The Academies Accounts Direction prescribes the form and content of the financial statements. Prior to signing the funding agreement financial statements should be prepared in accordance with company law.

69. Trusts should set their accounting reference date to 31 August at Companies House. This is the date to which their financial statements will be produced.

70. Additionally, trusts must publish accounts on their website as soon as possible after approval by trustees, but by no later than 31 January each year.

71. The accounts must also be filed by 31 May (i.e. within 9 months of the end of the accounting period) with Companies House. Further information can be found on the Companies House website.

Other financial returns

72. Trusts must also submit the following financial returns to ESFA once open:

- Budget forecast return submitted to ESFA by 31 July or 6 weeks after receiving the final funding letter, whichever is later.
- Academies accounts return due where the free school did not prepare audited accounts at 31 August but had opened by 31 March, or where the free school did prepare accounts at 31 August but has opened between 1 September and 31 March. The return must be submitted to ESFA by 31 May in the first year only. Subsequent returns will be for the year ending 31 August and must be submitted to ESFA by 31 January.
- Land and buildings valuation return, new free schools should complete the land and buildings valuation online form within 6 weeks of opening. This allows the department to produce desktop valuations of the land and buildings of all new academies. ESFA will send academies that opened in the year between 1 September and 31 August a copy of the desktop valuation in the following January. The copy is for information only.
- Financial management and governance self-assessment submitted to ESFA within 4 months of opening. The self-assessment highlights the main requirements academies must have in place soon after opening. A pre-opening self-assessment is available at Annex A and is a helpful tool for trusts to assess a free school's financial governance and compliance prior to opening.

73. Trusts are responsible for keeping up to date with the latest deadlines and requirements. More information is available on GOV.UK.

74. Trusts can also keep up to date through the ESFA Update.

ESFA Information Exchange

75. ESFA Information Exchange is a secure website, accessible via the department's secure access system. It enables academies to use:

- Document Exchange to receive and exchange documents with ESFA
- Help Centre to provide support and advice on using the Information Exchange
- calendar to check key business cycle dates and deadlines

- digital forms for accurate financial returns and other transactions

76. A secure access account for new free schools will be automatically set up using information shared from Get Information About Schools (GIAS), the department's register of educational establishments. This usually happens within 2 weeks of opening. Prior to a free school opening, ESFA will send an email to the secure access approver of the free school who will then be able activate the account and add up to 7 end users to use secure access and have access to Information Exchange.

Further information

77. Further information on academies revenue funding is available on the ESFA pages on GOV.UK.

Annex A – Pre-opening financial management and governance self-assessment

This self-assessment is comprised of questions from the [financial management and governance self-assessment (FMGS)](). The requirements in the FMGS checklist apply from the date on which the funding agreement is signed, so it is a helpful tool for trusts to assess a free school's financial governance and compliance prior to opening. The self-assessment must be completed in full and sent to ESFA within 4 months of opening.

1. Has the board appointed a principal or chief executive?
2. Has the trust permanently designated only one senior executive leader (principal or chief executive) as the accounting officer?
3. Have the directors/trustees been provided with the information for them to fully discharge their duties as company directors and charity trustees to undertake their roles effectively?
4. Does the accounting officer, under the guidance of the board, ensure appropriate oversight of financial transactions:
   - by having all the trust's property under the control of the trustees
   - having measures in place to prevent losses or misuse
   - having bank accounts, financial systems and financial records operated by more than one person
   - keeping and maintaining full and accurate accounting records
   - preparing accruals accounts, giving a true and fair view of the trust's use of resources, in accordance with existing accounting standards?
5. Does the board have arrangements in place to meet at least 3 times per year and conduct business only when meetings are quorate?
6. Does the trust prepare management accounts every month, including budget variance reports, cash flow forecasts and information on cash, debtors and creditors?
7. Are management accounts shared with the chair of trustees every month and other trustees 6 times a year?
8. Has the board made arrangements to consider information about the financial performance of the trust when it meets? This must be at least 3 times a year.
9. Does the trust have an individual in place discharging the role of chief financial officer, with appropriate qualifications and/or experience?
10. Has the board approved a written scheme of delegation of financial powers that maintains robust internal control arrangements?
11. Has the board of trustees approved a balanced budget and minuted its approval?
12. If a deficit revenue budget was set, was ESFA informed within 14 days?

13. Has the trust submitted all relevant budget returns as detailed in the Academies Financial Handbook by the relevant deadline?

14. Has the board been made aware of the Academies Financial Handbook requirements when making investments?

15. Has the trust implemented a risk management strategy which includes the regular review of its risk register by an appropriate committee of the board?

16. Has the board approved a whistleblowing policy?

17. Has the trust prepared a contingency and business continuity plan?

18. Has the trust established an appropriate internal control framework?

19. Is the trust a member of the department's risk protection arrangement (RPA) or does it have alternative, adequate insurance cover?

20. Has the board been informed of the requirement to obtain ESFA approval for the following transactions beyond the delegated limits as per the Academies Financial Handbook?

    - severance, compensation and ex-gratia payments
    - write-offs
    - indemnities
    - acquisition and disposal of assets
    - leasing

21. Has the board been informed of the requirement to obtain ESFA approval for the following transactions?

    - novel, contentious and repercussive transactions
    - borrowing

22. Has the board been informed that goods or services provided by individuals or organisations related to the trust must be provided at 'no more than cost', on the basis of an open book agreement and supported by statements of assurance, in accordance with the conditions set out in the Academies Financial Handbook?

23. Does the trust have procurement controls ensuring that:

    - spending has been for the purpose intended and there is probity in the use of public funds
    - spending decisions represent value for money
    - internal delegation levels exist and are applied within the trust
    - a competitive tendering policy is in place and applied, and Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) procurement thresholds are observed
    - relevant professional advice is obtained where appropriate?

24. Have all decision makers including the trustees, members, local governors of academies, if a multi-academy trust and senior employees, completed the trust's register of business and pecuniary interests?

25. Has the academy trust published on its website, its governing structure and remit and the relevant business and pecuniary interests of the accounting officer and members and trustees, including local governors where the trust is a MAT?

26. Does the trust have in place measures to manage any conflicts of interest?

27. Is the trust aware that they must report all transactions with related parties to ESFA in advance of the transaction taking place, using ESFA's online form? This requirement applies to transactions made on or after 1 April 2019.

28. Is the trust aware that they must seek approval for transactions with related parties agreed on or after 1 April 2019 on or above the Academies Financial Handbook limits?

29. Do senior officers' payroll arrangements meet tax obligations fully?

30. Do decisions about executive pay follow a robust evidence-based process reflective of the individual's role and responsibilities, and that the board's approach to pay is transparent, proportionate and justifiable and in line with the Academies Financial Handbook?

31. Has the board been made aware of the requirement to prepare an annual report and accounts, which incorporates accounting policies which need to be approved by the board of trustees?

32. Has the board agreed the appointment of an external auditor for the trust?

33. Has the trust established a committee to provide assurance to the board about the suitability of, and compliance with financial systems and operational controls, and to ensure that risks are being adequately identified and managed? Trusts with annual income over £50m must have a dedicated audit committee for this. Other trusts can include this within another committee.

34. Has the audit committee or equivalent agreed and implemented a programme for the independent checking of financial controls and risks?

35. Does the trust have plans for this FMGS full return to be included in the programme for the independent checking of financial controls and risks?

36. Has the board been informed of the requirement to report to ESFA any instances of fraud or theft above £5,000 against the trust, whether by employees, trustees or third parties, or where fraud is unusual or systematic in nature?

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