



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

Welcome pack for new openers

Information for new academies

July 2017

Contents

Introduction	4
Key actions for new academies	5
Working with ESFA	6
Our e-bulletin	6
Our website	6
Our enquiry service	6
Our Information Exchange	7
Getting started with Information Exchange	7
Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs)	9
Funding and payments	10
Your funding allocation	10
Payment schedules	11
Pupil premium payments	11
Claiming for national non-domestic rates (NNDR)	11
Capital funding	12
Governance	13
Funding agreement	13
Academies Financial Handbook	13
Data collections and statistical returns	14
Complaints and whistleblowing	14
Publishing requirements	15
Finance	16
How to submit financial returns	16
Financial management and governance self-assessment (FMGS)	16

Academies accounts direction: submitting your first annual report and financial statements	17
Submitting your accounts return	17
Submitting your budget forecasts	18
Value for money assessment	18
Surpluses/deficits	18
Land and buildings valuation	18
Practical tips for financial management and workforce planning	19
Admissions	21
Publishing your admissions arrangements	21
The admissions code and appeals	21
Other useful information	22
Insurance and risk protection	22
Procurement in schools	22
Managing asbestos in schools	22
Pension schemes	22
Working with stakeholder groups	23

Introduction

Welcome to the large and growing group of academies, free schools, studio schools and university technical colleges that are helping to drive up educational standards for children and young people.

At the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) we recognise that there's a great deal for you to do to ensure your academy is successful. The aim of this publication is to guide you through your first few months on matters relating to funding, funding agreement compliance, finance and financial assurance. We're grateful to a number of established academies, as well as other stakeholders, for the advice and guidance they've kindly offered in developing this welcome pack.

While 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 and the community that it serves. To help you, this publication:

- introduces our areas of work to give you a broad overview of where you can expect to interact with the ESFA
- introduces you to our key 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 about 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](#).

Key actions for new academies

There are key actions for academies to complete within their first few months of opening.

When	Actions
On opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact your local government pension scheme fund to provide details of any relevant staff
Within 14 days of opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate your DfE Secure Access account and add up to 6 users in your school
Within 28 days of opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide contact information using the governance section of EduBase which is accessed via Secure Access including the chair of trustees, accounting officer, chief financial officer and all members and trustees
Within 28 days of opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiarise yourself with the schools efficiency and financial health tools and use them in your financial management and planning (see page 19)
Within 6 weeks of opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and submit your land and buildings valuation information form Apply to the Land Registry for a restriction to be placed on the land as outlined in your funding agreement
Within 6 weeks of receiving your final funding letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit your budget forecast return for 2016/17 academic year using the online form
Within 2 months of opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit a claim form for national non-domestic rates for the current financial year
Within 4 months of opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit a financial management and governance self-assessment (FMGS) or alternative assurance using the online form
Within 4 months of opening or by 31 August whichever is sooner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academies without a sponsor to finalise their closing balance with their local authority (LA)
By May each subsequent year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy trusts to submit a budget forecast return: outturn (using the online form)
By 31 July each subsequent year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy trusts to submit a budget forecast return (using the online form)
By 31 December each year (subject to change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy trusts to submit audited annual report and financial statements, online cover form and auditor's management letter for the period ending 31 August
By 19 January 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy trusts to submit accounts return

Working with ESFA

Our [customer charter](#) is in the academies service statement which summarises our role and services to academies. This section outlines what you can do to make sure you get the best possible service from us.

Our e-bulletin

Our email bulletin for academies is sent weekly during term time. Articles are brief and specifically focused on important developments and updates which you might be interested in, as well as key actions for you. Subscribe by giving your [details online](#).

Our website

Key information for academies is available on [our GOV.UK page](#). This includes documents and guides about funding and finance, and information with links to forms you can use to make a claim for funding such as rates.

Information is organised around the key areas of work such as funding, payments or financial assurance. We'll include a brief item and link in our e-bulletin when anything is added or changed such as when we request a financial return.

You can also set your own alerts on GOV.UK so you'll always know when anything has changed.

Our enquiry service

We aim to provide clear and comprehensive information about all of our areas of work. Our guidance is published on GOV.UK.

You can use Information Exchange to view the online calendar, which sets out key dates and deadlines for the year ahead (see page 7). If there's anything you don't understand or you need clarification on a specific issue relating to your academy trust or academy, our [enquiry service](#) will be able to help or point you in the right direction. This is available to all ESFA funded institutions.

Our Information Exchange

Our Information Exchange is our secure website, accessible via DfE's [Secure Access](#) system. It enables academies to use:

- **Document Exchange** to receive and exchange documents with us
- **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

We'll continue to develop Information Exchange as a convenient and efficient way for you to conduct your ESFA business.

Getting started with Information Exchange

New academies

We'll automatically set up a Secure Access account for new academies using information shared from EduBase, the Department for Education's (DfE's) register of educational establishments.

We'll send an email to the Secure Access approver in your organisation who will then be able to activate the account and add up to 5 additional people to use Secure Access and have access to Information Exchange.

Your approver will usually receive the activation email in the first 2 weeks of opening and must activate the Secure Access account within 48 hours.

It may take us a little longer to set up Document Exchange. This is usually completed in the third week after opening.

Multi-academy trusts with new academies

Colleagues in a multi-academy trust (MAT) head office will be able to view Document Exchange folders for their new academies towards the end of the month after the academy has opened (the end of August for July openers).

New multi-academy trusts

We'll automatically set up a Secure Access account for new multi-academy trusts within 28 days of opening.

Once your account is set up, we'll send an email to the MAT's accounting officer who will then be able to activate the account and add up to 5 additional people to use Secure Access and have access to Information Exchange.

Your accounting officer will usually receive the activation email around a month after opening and must activate the Secure Access account within 48 hours.

It takes us a little longer to set up Document Exchange so you can view documents for academies in your MAT. This is usually towards the end of the month after the MAT has opened (the end of August for July openers).

Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs)

Since September 2014, RSCs have been responsible for approving new academies and academy sponsors, and for monitoring and intervening in underperforming academies in their areas.

RSCs also approve an academy trust's proposal to make [a significant change](#) to the characteristics of their school(s) that will affect the clauses of their funding agreement.

These include:

- physical expansion of premises
- changes to age ranges
- faith-related changes

RSCs are accountable to the [Schools Commissioner, Sir David Carter](#).

They're supported by a headteacher board (HTB) made up of 6 to 8 experienced academy head teachers and other sector leaders. They're part of your support network. They'll encourage and work alongside you to ensure staff and children receive the very best opportunities in making your academy get better or, if already good, to become outstanding.

You can read more about your [RSC office](#), their responsibilities and HTBs on GOV.UK.

Funding and payments

You've already received your draft funding allocation for this academic year and we'll write soon to confirm your final funding allocation if we haven't already done so.

Many enquiries we receive from academies are about funding and we've published a range of [funding information](#) dealing with many of the questions we're asked.

A series of [short videos](#) are available to explain how we calculate funding allocations.

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

Your funding allocation

We fund academies on the same basis as maintained schools and they receive annual funding allocations from ESFA. We provide funding from September to August, in line with the academy sector's academic year (and academy trusts' financial years). This is different to maintained schools which are funded from April to March, in line with their local authority's financial year.

We calculate most of an academy's revenue funding using the pupil numbers taken from either the [autumn census return](#) or an agreed estimate of pupil numbers, as outlined in the academy's funding agreement. We'll use pupil numbers recorded in the October 2016 census to calculate your funding for the remainder of the 2016/17 academic year.

If you're funded on estimated pupil numbers, we'll ask you to confirm your pupil numbers through the revenue funding data collection (RFDC) exercise in October each year. Institutions funded on estimates may be subject to a pupil number adjustment if numbers have increased or decreased since you provided the estimate.

If you're a special or alternative provision academy, we use your published 2015/16 academic year place numbers to calculate your allocation.

If you've agreed to change your pre-16 place numbers for the 2016/17 academic year with your local authority, we use the new figure when calculating your allocation. To make sure we fund your academy on the correct basis, you must make your project lead aware of any change to these pre-16 place numbers during the conversion process. Before we grant the academy order, your local authority must also complete a form to notify us of changes to your 2016/17 high needs places. The form will also confirm details of any hospital education place funding.

If your academy is brand new (an academy with no predecessor school), you must agree you places for 2016/17 with us.

We've published more details about [funding allocations](#), including 16 to 19 allocations and high needs place funding arrangements, on GOV.UK.

Payment schedules

If you haven't done so already, you'll need to complete and submit to ESFA the [academy bank details form](#). You 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 will arrive in your nominated bank account on the first working day of every subsequent month. If you don't receive your first payment as expected, the funding should be with you by no later than the 9th working day of your month of opening. This may occur if you set up your bank account later than expected or if you don't submit your bank details to ESFA on time.

Your GAG allocation will be paid in 12 equal payments across the academic year (potentially less in the first year, depending on your opening date). The only exception is for some elements of start-up grants for full sponsored academies which are paid within the first 3 months of opening and bursary funding for those with post-16 provision which is paid twice a year. A monthly remittance advice will be emailed to you and we've published a [short guide](#) to help you understand this.

Non-GAG payments for early years funding and high needs top-up funding are paid directly to academies by local authorities. We're responsible for non-GAG payments for [Universal infant free school meals](#) (UIFSM), [Year 7 catch-up premium](#), [pupil premium grant](#) and [PE and sport](#) grant allocations.

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 to academies on a financial year basis, in arrears and in quarterly instalments. You can view the census data and per-pupil amounts used to calculate your allocation using [Key to Success](#) within your Secure Access account.

ESFA will begin to pay the [2017 to 2018 financial year allocation](#) to academies in July 2017.

As a July opener you will receive 5/12ths of the allocation from your local authority, the remaining 7/12ths will be paid by the ESFA, split into 3 payments. The first payment from ESFA to the academy will be made in October.

Claiming for national non-domestic rates (NNDR)

Academies need to submit an [electronic claim form](#) to claim funding for [national non-domestic rates](#) (NNDR).

We'll make one payment within 2 months of receiving a claim, depending on our monthly payment deadlines. You need to claim for NNDR each subsequent year.

Capital funding

Information about [academies capital funding and support](#) and [school capital funding allocations: 2015 to 2018](#) is published on GOV.UK.

Most MATs with 5 or more academies and at least 3,000 pupils as of 1 September 2016 will receive a [formulaic capital funding allocation](#) for all of their academies.

The [Condition Improvement Fund](#) (CIF) is a fund for sixth-form colleges and open academies not eligible for a formulaic capital funding allocation to address building condition and, in a very small number of cases, expansion issues.

Applications for CIF funding in 2017/18 financial year are now closed. We'll provide information about applying in 2018/19 financial year via our e-bulletin.

Governance

The [Governors' handbook](#) provides information about the role and legal duties of the board of governors in maintained schools.

In academies there's a separation of trustees and governors. Statutory governance sits at an academy trust's company director level (called trustees due to their charitable status). Governors are those individuals who sit at a MAT's local level for individual MAT academies.

You should review your academy trust's governance arrangements to ensure that your board of trustees is structured and constituted to deliver high standards of governance. For MATs the exact nature of the governance arrangements for individual academies is fluid, and is at the discretion of its academy trust's board of trustees.

You might also find our [top tips for governors](#) useful as this is based on academies' experiences and lessons learnt.

The Charity Commission has also produced [guidance](#) for trustees of academy trusts about being charity trustees.

Funding agreement

The [funding agreement](#) is the contract every academy trust signs with the [Secretary of State](#) to describe the operation of their new academy. It provides the operating framework for the academy trust and academy, and trustee bodies must ensure they're compliant with it.

Academies Financial Handbook

The [Academies Financial Handbook](#) sets out responsibilities and requirements relating to academy trusts' financial governance and management. It's taken from the requirements in trusts' funding agreements with the [Secretary of State](#), and compliance with the Handbook is a condition of the funding agreement.

Trustee boards are expected to adopt the spirit of the principles set out in the Handbook, not just the letter, and to incorporate the 7 principles of public life in all their decision-making.

The Handbook emphasises that trusts must publish details of their governance arrangements on their websites, ensuring the information is readily accessible on a webpage without the need to download or open a separate document.

It also emphasises the requirement that trusts must notify ESFA of the vacating or filling of the positions of chair of trustees, accounting officer and chief financial officer, including direct contact details, along with the appointment of all members and trustees.

Notification must be made within 14 days through the governance section of EduBase which is accessed via [Secure Access](#).

Data collections and statistical returns

Academy trusts are required by law to make the same statutory data returns that are required of maintained schools. During each term all academies are required to make data returns for the [school census](#) and the [school workforce census](#).

Data collections are made using COLLECT, which is accessible via DfE's Secure Access system.

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 [school performance tables](#).

Complaints and whistleblowing

Academies and free schools 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.

You might find our [factsheet](#) helpful when drawing up and administering a complaints procedure. Similarly [information about complaints](#) and the ESFA's role in investigating them will be helpful.

Academies and free schools must have an appropriate [procedure for whistleblowing](#) 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.

The Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Group has launched a counter extremism helpline and email address. The purpose of the helpline is primarily to enable school staff and governors to raise concerns relating to extremism directly and in confidence. Concerns should be reported [via email](#).

Publishing requirements

As a registered company, your website (and all official stationary) must display your full legal company name, your business name (if different, ie all MATs), place of registration, registered company number and registered office address.

The [current legislation](#) details the information all schools are required to publish online, including contact details, admission arrangements, academic performance and how pupil premium funding has been spent.

All funding agreements since July 2011 have required academies to publish curriculum information, and new funding agreements issued this year require that the information is published on the academy's website.

Curriculum information is important for parents so that they know precisely what is taught and when, enabling them to support their children in their studies. It's also important information for parents when choosing new schools.

The funding agreement requires that the academy trust should include details of the content of the curriculum, its approach to the curriculum, the GCSE options and other key stage 4 qualifications offered by the academy, the names of any phonics and reading schemes in operation for key stage 1 and how parents can obtain more information in relation to the academy's curriculum.

You must also publish details of your governance arrangements on your website (see page 14).

Finance

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

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

As self-governing organisations, academy trusts (and their academies) have the freedom to improve the lives of children and young people they educate. Academy trusts are responsible for their own compliance with laws and regulations. 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.

Please note that the deadline for your accounts return is currently subject to change. We'll contact you if any of the deadlines change through our e-bulletin.

How to submit financial returns

As an academy trust, you're required to submit financial returns to ESFA. Each return includes guidance on how to submit it. Some returns, such as the budget forecast return, can be submitted using an online form.

Financial management and governance self-assessment (FMGS)

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

All trusts with newly opened academies and free schools must submit the FMGS return using the [online form](#) within 4 months of opening.

Where a new academy has joined an existing MAT, the MAT must submit alternative assurance using the [online form](#) stating that the academy will comply with the MAT's financial management and governance arrangements and follow its internal control procedures.

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

Academy trusts must submit to ESFA audited [annual report and financial statements](#), an online cover form and associated auditor's management letter for the period ending 31 August each year by 31 December. The annual report and financial statements must be prepared in accordance with the [academies accounts direction](#).

We've published a set of [model annual report and financial statements in Excel](#) which you may wish to use as a template.

You'll need to change your trust's accounting reference date to 31 August as soon as possible after incorporation. Companies House sets out how to do this in [Life of a company – GP2](#).

You must also file your annual report 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](#).

Submitting your accounts return

Academy trusts will be required to submit an [accounts return](#) by 19 January 2018 to ESFA, covering the previous trust financial year (ending 31 August). All trusts, including those in their first year of reporting, that had academies open as at 31 August should prepare annual reports and financial statements for the period to 31 August and should complete the accounts return. We'll communicate any changes to arrangements for submitting your accounts return using our e-bulletin.

Information provided in the accounts return is published by DfE on the academies benchmarking site. The accounts return provides financial data for the academy [sector annual report and accounts \(SARA\)](#). It also gives ESFA financial information in an electronic format that we can analyse.

The accounts return asks trusts for additional, and in some cases different, disclosures from their 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) 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).

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.

In any year, newly operational academy trusts that became active on or after 1 April and new academies joining an existing MAT on or after 1 April are required to submit a [budget forecast return](#), using an online form. The budget forecast return for academic year 2016/17 must be returned to ESFA within 6 weeks of receiving the final funding letter.

Trusts are required to submit two budget forecasts during the academic year. The first in July, and then an updated version of this return is required in the following May.

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](#).

Surpluses/deficits

Academies without a sponsor must finalise their [closing balance](#) with their LA within 4 months of your conversion date. If the agreed closing balance is a surplus, your LA must pay the cash balance to your academy trust within 1 month of finalising the amount.

If the agreed closing balance is a deficit (akin to a bank overdraft), ESFA will settle that amount with your LA and you'll be able to set up a repayment plan with us after you've converted.

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

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' lands and buildings in order to consolidate valuations into SARA.

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

If your academy or free school is currently in temporary accommodation, please confirm this on the form together with the date you expect to move to your permanent site. You'll then need to complete a new land and buildings form for your new accommodation when you move in.

Practical tips for financial management and workforce planning

To help the school's senior leadership team and trust's directors to achieve effective financial management, ESFA and DfE have developed a range of practical guidance and tools that are intended to be used at all stages in the financial planning process. It would greatly benefit you to bookmark the full selection of guidance and tools on the [schools efficiency and financial health webpage](#) to be used as a reference tool in the future as it will be regularly updated.

We've provided details below of some of the most significant tools for you to use within your financial management and workforce planning from now on:

	What is it?	Who is it for?	What are the benefits?
Financial Benchmarking	Guidance on how benchmarking can help your academy compare its spending in various categories with similar academies, and includes a link to websites especially for academies to create reports.	School leadership team (SLT) Accounting officer (AO) School business managers (SBMs) Governors and trustees	Displays key financial data and performance data in one place Gives a clear picture of an academy's financial performance Helps academies identify areas where they're spending more than similar academies, which may be a focus for further efficiency
National Commercial Deals	Outlines initiatives designed to help academies improve how they buy goods	Executive headteachers	There are five national commercial deals that will help academies save up to 10% on their energy spend

	What is it?	Who is it for?	What are the benefits?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Supply • Multi-functional Devices (MFDs) • Microsoft MoU • ICT for Education • Risk Protection Arrangement 	and services (for example, photocopiers and scanners).	<p>Academy principals/SLT</p> <p>SBMs</p> <p>Finance directors</p> <p>Governors and trustees</p>	<p>and over 40% on the cost of printers, photocopiers and scanners</p> <p>The initiatives will improve the buying process in academies and give all academies access to a wide range of great National Deals so they can make even larger savings</p>
Workforce Planning	Guidance to help academies and trusts plan and review their workforce structure.	<p>Executive heads</p> <p>Academy principals/SLT</p> <p>SBMs</p> <p>Finance directors</p> <p>Governors and trustees</p>	<p>Provides planning options and links to further help with workforce planning</p> <p>Helps assess whether academies could use their staff resources more creatively/efficiently</p> <p>Example timelines, case studies and curriculum planning tools</p>
Top 10 Planning Checks	Ten essential planning checks to help ensure that schools are managing their resources efficiently.	<p>Governors and trustees</p> <p>Finance directors</p> <p>SBMs</p>	<p>Provides direction for improving financial management</p> <p>Provides links to external advice (e.g. Education Endowment Fund)</p>

Admissions

Publishing your admissions arrangements

With the exception of schools that cater for 16 to 19-year-olds, all 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).

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

Other useful information

There will be many other issues and concerns which academies encounter which aren't covered here, for which you may contact our [enquiry service](#).

Insurance and risk protection

Academy trusts are responsible for making their own insurance arrangements or opting into the [risk protection arrangement \(RPA\)](#). The trust should consider opting into the RPA unless commercial insurance provides better value for money. If the trust does not opt in to the RPA it should determine its own level of cover to include buildings and contents, business continuity, employer's and public liability insurance and any cover required for motor vehicles. This list is not exhaustive but cover should secure best value for money.

Procurement in schools

An academy trust must apply the basic rules of procurement whenever it spends public money. These rules look to make sure that public funds are spent openly and fairly, and make the most of every budget, while protecting against legal challenges, financial penalties and damage to an academy's reputation.

[Effective buying for your school](#) has been created to help facilitate collaborative purchasing without barriers or boundaries. It will signpost you to deals for goods and services to help with your procurement responsibilities.

Managing asbestos in schools

Any part of a school constructed before 2000 may contain asbestos. If not managed properly, asbestos fibres can be released into the air and breathed in by staff and children. This puts them at risk of contracting a number of serious diseases, including mesothelioma and lung cancer.

The academy trust and members of school staff have a duty to manage asbestos under the [Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012](#). We've published [Managing asbestos in your school](#) offering step-by-step advice on what you need to do to manage asbestos in schools in order to keep staff and pupils safe.

Pension schemes

A number of changes to the teachers' pension scheme came into effect in April 2015 and are detailed in the [Teachers' pension scheme: proposed final agreement](#).

Further information can be found on the [Teachers' pensions website](#).

If your academy has staff in the local government pension scheme, you should contact your LA's local government pension scheme fund as soon as possible after opening if you haven't done so already. 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 the 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 the 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:

- [Freedom and Autonomy for Schools – National Association \(FASNA\)](#)
- [The Schools Network \(SSAT\)](#)
- [National Association of School Business Management \(NASBM\)](#)
- [Association of School and College Leaders \(ASCL\)](#)
- [National Association of Head Teachers \(NAHT\)](#)
- [National Governors' Association \(NGA\)](#)
- [Association of Colleges \(AoC\)](#)
- [Finance Directors Forum \(theFDforum\)](#)

Stakeholder groups may publish advice from time to time to support academies. In particular there's a best practice library on the [NASBM](#) 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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