

Finance Lead

*Forward Academy Trust Central Offices,
Leycroft Academy, Leycroft Avenue, Birmingham, B33 9UH*

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Finance Lead
Salary	Grade G, Points 43 to 55
Contract Type	Permanent – 36.5 hours per week – Full Time, full year (opportunity for hybrid working)

JOB DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE:

The Finance Lead is the Trust's senior finance specialist, supporting the Director of Finance & Operations in the strategic and operational leadership of the Trust's finances. The postholder will lead financial planning, management reporting, budgeting, forecasting and financial compliance across the Trust, providing expert advice, support and challenge to senior leaders, Headteachers and Trustees.

The postholder will lead the preparation of monthly management accounts, support annual budgets, financial forecasts and year-end reporting, ensuring robust financial control, compliance and high-quality financial information to support operational and strategic decision-making.

Working closely with the Director of Finance & Operations, the Finance Lead will oversee the performance of the Trust's outsourced finance service, maintain & develop effective financial systems and processes.

REPORT TO: Director of Finance and Operations

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Key responsibilities

Financial Reporting and Month-End

- Lead and coordinate the monthly management accounts process across the Trust, ensuring timely delivery to support upwards reporting to CEO and Trustees.
- Ensure completion of month end journals, accruals, prepayments and balance sheet reconciliations.

- Perform monthly payroll reconciliations, liaising with the HR team to verify payroll data, investigate variances, and ensure accurate reporting
- Produce management accounts, KPI reporting and financial commentary for senior leaders and trustees. Analyse financial performance and identify emerging risks, opportunities and trends.
- Ensure the accuracy and integrity of all financial records and reporting.

Budgeting, Forecasting and Financial Planning

- Lead the annual budget-setting process across the Trust and its academies.
- Work closely with Headteachers and budget holders to develop robust and sustainable budgets.
- Prepare and maintain multi-year forecasts.
- Deliver scenario modelling and financial analysis to support strategic decisions.
- Coordinate in-year reforecasts and monitoring processes.
- Support staffing affordability and workforce planning decisions

Year-End and Statutory Reporting

- Lead preparation for year-end accounts, and external audit.
- Coordinate the production of audit working papers and supporting schedules.
- Support the preparation of statutory accounts and financial returns including BFR, aAR, EOYC SRMSA and SCA return.
- Ensure implementation of audit recommendations.
- Maintain oversight of the fixed asset register and capital accounting.
- Ensure clear responsibilities and effective communication between schools, Trust leaders and the outsourced provider.

Business Partnering

- Act as lead finance business partner to Headteachers and budget holders.
- Working closely with the Trust Business Manager supporting procurement and contract oversight
- Provide professional advice, support and constructive challenge.
- Present financial information in a clear and accessible way.
- Support school leaders in understanding financial performance and budget accountability.
- Attend leadership meetings as required.

Financial Control and Compliance

- Ensure compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook and Trust financial regulations, Finance Policy and Scheme of Delegation.
- Monitor the effectiveness of internal controls.
- Support internal scrutiny and risk management activities.
- Review financial policies and procedures.

- Ensure compliance with delegated authorities, procurement requirements and financial controls.
- Oversee VAT and banking activities.

Systems, Process Improvement and Development

- Lead improvements to financial reporting and management information.
- Develop streamlined and efficient financial processes.
- Work with the payment processing team to maximise the effectiveness of finance systems.
- Support implementation of system enhancements and digital transformation projects.

Strategic Support

- Support the Director of Finance & Operations with strategic financial planning.
 - Prepare reports and analysis for Trustees and executive leaders as required.
 - Contribute to Trust growth, expansion and due diligence activities where required.
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- **Safeguarding** - Demonstrate commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

Additional Responsibilities

- Carry out duties with full regard to the Trust's policies and processes
- Comply with health and safety policies, organisational statements, and procedures, undertake to report any incidents/accidents/hazards and to take a proactive approach to health and safety matters in order to protect both yourself and others.
- Operate within the General Data Protection Regulations at all times.
- Contribute to the overall aims and ethos of the Trust and establish constructive relationships with the Trust's schools.
- Always promote the Trust's co-operative ethical values
- Any other duties as commensurate with the post.

ANNUAL LEAVE

There is an expectation that up to 5 days annual leave may be needed to cover the Christmas closure period.

REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

This job description is normally subject to annual review. It may be amended at the request of the CEO or the post holder but only after full consultation with the post holder.

This job description is current at the date shown. It will be reviewed at least annually and, in consultation with you, it may be changed to reflect or anticipate changes in the job commensurate with the grade and job title.

The role has recently been independently evaluated in respect of responsibilities and pay range.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

JOB TITLE - Finance Lead

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Education, qualification and professional development	- Fully qualified accountant holding a recognised professional qualification (ACA, ACCA, CIMA, CIPFA or equivalent). - Evidence of continuing professional development and commitment to maintaining professional standards. - Level 4 Maths & English GCSE (or equivalent)	SBM qualification
Experience, professional skills and knowledge	- Significant experience preparing management accounts and financial reporting. - Experience of charity accounting - Experience leading budget-setting and forecasting processes. - Experience of year-end accounts preparation and external audit. - Experience managing relationships with external providers or stakeholders. - Experience of financial business partnering with senior leaders. - Experience of developing financial controls and improving processes. - Experience producing financial analysis, business cases and strategic financial plans to support decision-making.	- Academy Trust or education sector experience. - Experience working with outsourced services or shared service models. - Experience supporting Trust growth, mergers or school transfers. - Experience preparing papers for Trustees, Audit and Risk Committees or Finance Committees. - Experience managing finance staff and supporting professional development. - Experience of capital projects, capital funding or grant management. - Experience of preparing statutory accounts within the Academy Trust sector. - Experience developing management information through financial systems,

	• Experience ensuring compliance with relevant financial regulations, policies and procedures. • Experience using integrated finance systems and financial reporting tools. • Use of a range of financial management and budgeting software systems • Excellent analytical and problem-solving skills with strong attention to detail. • Ability to interpret complex financial information and present it clearly to non-finance colleagues. • Strong organisational skills with the ability to manage competing priorities and meet deadlines. • Excellent written and verbal communication skills. • Ability to build effective working relationships with senior leaders, budget holders and external stakeholders. • Proactive and solution-focused approach to improving financial processes and controls. • High level of integrity, discretion and professionalism. • Advanced Microsoft Excel skills, including data analysis, financial modelling, complex formulas, pivot tables and reporting tools. • Ability to work independently while contributing positively to a collaborative team	reporting tools and data analytics platforms. • Knowledge of Academy Trust Handbook requirements and ESFA funding regulations. • Understanding of charity accounting and the Academies Accounts Direction. • Knowledge of education sector financial management systems and reporting requirements.
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	• Strong technical accounting knowledge and understanding of financial reporting requirements. • Sound knowledge of budgeting, forecasting, cash flow management and financial planning. • Understanding of internal controls, risk management and governance principles. • Knowledge of audit requirements and the preparation of supporting working papers. • Understanding of financial compliance and regulatory requirements. • Advanced knowledge of Microsoft Excel and financial modelling techniques.	
Personal qualities and attributes	• Commitment to the Trust's values and educational mission. • Ability to manage confidential and sensitive information with discretion, integrity, and professionalism. • High levels of personal accountability and professional judgement. • Resilient and adaptable in a changing environment. • Committed to continuous improvement and delivering high-quality outcomes. • Ability to challenge constructively and influence decisions where appropriate.	