

Finance Staff Training 2013-14

The Finance Staff Training programme has been developed around the skills and knowledge required to be effective in operating and managing school finances. It consists of a large suite of courses that have been designed around specific skill sets:

- Core Skills – Essential day-to-day operational finance skills, such as making payments, recording and banking income, and processing Month End.
- Further Skills – Based on additional tasks that may or may not be undertaken by a member of staff, such as operating a Petty Cash account, completing Sickness Insurance Returns, recording Dinner Monies etc.
- Budget Skills – Specific skills required by Finance Staff that are involved in setting or monitoring the budget.
- Refreshers – Based on key elements of school finance that are either complex in nature or are often subject to frequent development or change.

All courses are provided as part of the School Finance Support Package and can therefore be attended at no additional charge.

To help Governors and Headteachers identify training and development needs for Finance Staff, the skill sets and corresponding courses will form part of the Finance Training & Development section of the RAG Matrix.

New Finance Staff

It is important that new finance staff are able to quickly gain the skills and knowledge needed to operate the school finances. A new un-trained finance officer can pose a significant risk to the integrity of the school financial information used for budget monitoring and decision-making.

The Training & Development section of the RAG therefore includes a progressive training plan to ensure that finance staff gain the required skills and knowledge in a timely manner and the Governors are alerted if this has not happened.

A school with a new member of finance staff would be rated as Red in the Finance Training and Development section of the RAG if the Introduction to Finance & Star Accounts course has not been completed in the financial year.

Introduction to Finance & Star Accounts Course

The Introduction to Finance course covers a basic overview of school finance and basic use of Star Accounts. On this course, delegates will be given a Finance Induction Training Plan which will help them to identify courses that should be attended, track completion and transfer skills gained from courses back to the workplace.

If this is the only course completed in the financial year, the RAG will be updated to Amber (Red).

Core Skills

Core Skills are essential for anyone operating school finances. They include:

- Purchasing and Expenditure
- Income and Banking
- Month End

It is expected that the applicable courses would be completed within a new member of staff's first term. Courses are supported with Skills Checklists that will enable Headteachers to measure application of learning back to the workplace.

Once all applicable Core Skills courses have been completed, the RAG would be updated to Amber (Green) at the end of the financial year.

Further Skills

Further Skills are based on the tasks that a finance member of staff may or may not have responsibility for completing. They include:

- Year End
- Dinner Monies Database
- School Fund
- Administering Lettings
- Sickness Insurance Returns
- Petty Cash
- Trading Accounts
- Activity Accounts
- Purchasing Cards

Further Skills will be identified within the Induction Training Plan and should be completed within a new member of staff's first year.

Budget Skills

If a member of Finance staff has any responsibility for the school budget, they would be expected to gain skills and knowledge in the following areas:

- Financing Your School
- Setting the Budget

- Monitoring the Budget
- Revising the Budget
- Capital Funding
- Procurement

Budget Skills will be identified within the Induction Training Plan and should be completed within a new member of staff's first year.

Once all applicable Further and Budget Skills courses have been completed, the RAG would be updated to Green at the end of the financial year. For the purpose of the Finance Training RAG, the member of staff would then be classed as 'Existing' rather than 'New'.

Existing Finance Staff

All existing finance staff (in the job for more than 1 year) will be expected to keep up-to-date with skills and knowledge by completing Finance Refreshers.

Refresher courses are available for key aspects of schools finance. These include:

- Procurement
- Schools Financial Value Standard
- Budget Planner Software
- Key Financial Controls
- VAT For Schools
- Star Refresher

Although these are specifically designed as refreshers, any of the tutor-led and E-Learning courses from the Governors, Headteacher or Finance Staff programmes can be attended as part of the Finance Support Package.

A refresher doesn't have to be a course, it can also be attendance at a Budget Workshop, Fair Funding Consultation, Budget Visit, Finance Support Clinic or any other Ad-Hoc Finance Briefing / Event held by the Schools Finance Team.

Finance Training Plans and Skills Checklists will be available for existing staff to download and use as self-assessment tools if required. Training needs can be highlighted from this as part of the school appraisal and staff development processes.

For the RAG Matrix, Finance Staff will be expected to keep updated on finance knowledge and skills by completing a defined number of refreshers. A school not completing any refresher in a financial year would be Red rated. One refresher completed will be Amber 1, two refreshers will be Amber 2, and three refreshers completed will be rated Green.

The assessment would be school based and not recorded at staff member level. Bigger schools have the flexibility to spread the refreshers amongst staff involved.

Only a limited number of spaces are available for Tutor-Led courses so will be bookable on a first-come-first-served basis. An E-Learning alternative will be developed if demand is too much for a specific course.