# JOB DESCRIPTION

SCHOOLS ACHIEVING SUCCESS TOGETHER

**Post: Financial Accounting Manager**

**Main Purpose of the Job:**
To lead and coordinate the Trust's financial accounting and control arrangements, ensuring that accurate records, robust processes and effective controls are maintained across the central finance team and all schools.

The postholder will take responsibility for all financial accounting processes which include balance sheet review, journals, reconciliations, statutory returns including the coordination and preparation of supporting schedules for the auditors to prepare the statutory accounts.

The Financial Controller will work closely with the Head of Finance and Finance Business Partners to provide timely, reliable financial information which supports the accurate and timely delivery of the internal monthly management accounts, as well as coordinating external and internal audit; maintaining consistent financial practice across the Trust.

The postholder will lead and develop a small team of Accounting Technicians and Finance Assistants, overseeing day-to-day delivery and providing clear priorities, guidance and support. Oversight of transactional processing and the effective administration of the Trust's accounting system.

A key aspect of the role is working in partnership with schools to review and improve end-to-end finance processes. The postholder will promote a school-centric, customer-focused service, simplifying ways of working, reducing duplication and improving efficiency and value for money whilst maintaining effective financial controls.

**Main Responsibilities and Duties**
**Financial Accounting and Statutory Reporting**

- Lead the monthly and year-end accounting timetable, coordinating activity across the finance team to ensure records and supporting schedules are complete, accurate and prepared on time.
- Oversee the preparation and posting of journals, ensuring appropriate supporting information and a clear audit trail are maintained.
- Support the preparation of monthly management accounts and financial reports, working with the Head of Finance and Finance Business Partners to validate and reconcile YTD income, key expenditure and the trial balance by fund type.
- Coordinate the preparation of statutory accounts and returns, maintaining supporting schedules and working with the Head of Finance to meet reporting deadlines and Academy Trust Handbook requirements.

**Balance Sheet Control and Fixed Assets**

- Lead the monthly review of balance sheet accounts across the Trust and schools, ensuring reconciliations are completed, reviewed and supported by appropriate evidence.
- Investigate discrepancies and outstanding items, coordinate corrective action and escalate significant or unresolved matters to the Head of Finance.
- Maintain the fixed asset register for each academy, ensuring additions, capitalisation and depreciation are recorded in accordance with Trust policies.
- Maintain month-end and year-end schedules throughout the year to support reliable reporting and audit readiness.

**Audit, Compliance and Internal Control**

- Coordinate preparation for internal and external audit, ensuring schedules, records and supporting evidence are available within agreed timescales.
- Support the Head of Finance in liaising with auditors, responding to queries and coordinating information from the central team and schools.
- Maintain effective financial controls and promote compliance with the Trust's Financial Procedures Manual across all schools.
- Review and maintain their areas of responsibility within the Financial Procedures Manual, ensuring that documented processes reflect current practice and provide clear guidance for colleagues.

**Cash Flow, Banking and VAT**

- Prepare and monitor a rolling 12-month cash flow forecast, identifying emerging pressures and escalating concerns to senior finance colleagues at the earliest opportunity.
- Oversee administration of the Trust's bank accounts and academy funds, maintaining accurate records and appropriate financial controls.
- Prepare monthly VAT returns, ensuring transactions are allocated to the correct periods and VAT categories.
- Respond to VAT queries and support liaison with HMRC, maintaining appropriate records and supporting information.

**Transactional Finance and School Support**

- Oversee accurate and timely transactional processing across the central finance team and schools, ensuring work is prioritised and completed in accordance with Trust procedures.
- Coordinate the management of purchase ledger mailboxes and supplier queries, providing a professional and responsive service to schools and other stakeholders.
- Promote and monitor compliance with the Trust's purchase order policy and addressing issues as they arise.
- Act as an escalation point for transactional finance queries, working with colleagues to resolve issues and provide clear, practical guidance to schools.

**Process Improvement and Value for Money**

- Review end-to-end finance processes across the centre and schools, identifying duplication, unnecessary administration and opportunities for more efficient working.
- Work with school colleagues to understand their needs and improve the accessibility, clarity and responsiveness of the finance service.
- Develop and implement consistent processes and guidance that simplify ways of working whilst maintaining effective controls and accountability.
- Promote a school-centric, customer-focused approach and review the impact of changes on service quality, efficiency and value for money.

**Team Leadership and Development**

- Line manage and develop a small team of Accounting Technicians and Finance Assistants, providing clear direction, day-to-day guidance and support.
- Set priorities, allocate work and review progress against departmental objectives and reporting deadlines, balancing financial accounting and transactional requirements.
- Identify training needs and provide induction, coaching and practical guidance to strengthen accounting knowledge and promote consistent practice.
- Encourage collaborative working within the finance team and with schools, promoting ownership of queries and a commitment to continuous improvement.

**Finance Systems and Information**

- Act as system administrator for the Trust's accounting software, maintaining accurate and up-to-date financial information to support reporting and decision-making.
- Provide guidance and support to colleagues using the accounting system, including training for new Accounting Technicians and Finance Assistants.
- Review how the accounting system supports finance processes and work with colleagues to identify practical improvements in its use.
- Maintain the confidentiality and integrity of financial information and promote appropriate handling of sensitive records.

**Wider Finance Support and Professional Development**

- Work with the Head of Finance and senior finance colleagues to support financial planning and the development and implementation of the Trust's financial strategy.
- Deputise for the Head of Finance as required, working within agreed responsibilities and referring significant risks or complex issues appropriately.
- Undertake continuing professional development and maintain the knowledge and skills required to support effective financial management across the Trust.

**Knowledge & Skills**

**<u>Essential</u> Knowledge and Experience**

- Full or part Part-qualified ACA, ACCA, CIMA or CIPFA, or equivalent or Qualified by Experience
- Substantial financial accounting and management experience, including month-end processes, journals, balance sheet reconciliations
- Experience of preparing supporting schedules and financial records for year-end reporting and audit.
- Experience of leading and developing a small finance team, including allocating work, providing guidance and supporting training and induction.
- Experience of explaining financial information and processes to non-finance colleagues.
- Strong ICT skills, including excellent working knowledge of Microsoft Excel and experience of using financial systems.
- Understanding of confidentiality and data protection responsibilities when handling financial and personal information.

**<u>Desirable</u> Experience**

- Working knowledge of academy finances.
- Experience and working knowledge of Sage Intacct.
- Experience of budgeting.
- Experience of the preparation of management accounts.

**Other Skills and Competencies**

- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills, with a methodical approach and close attention to detail.
- Ability to work independently, organise competing priorities and meet reporting deadlines.
- Clear written and verbal communication, with the ability to provide practical guidance and support consistent practice.
- A collaborative, customer-focused approach and the ability to build effective relationships with school and central team colleagues.
- Ability to review processes, identify practical improvements and support changes that improve efficiency, service quality and value for money.

- A flexible approach and commitment to continuing professional development and the development of others.

**Supervision and Management**

- **Reporting to:** Head of Finance.
- Line management responsibility for a small team of Accounting Technicians and Finance Assistants, providing day-to-day guidance, support and development.
- Work independently within agreed priorities and Trust procedures, exercising judgement to resolve routine financial and process issues and manage competing deadlines.
- Act as the first escalation point for the team, referring significant risks and unusual or complex matters to the Head of Finance.

**Key Contacts and Relationships**

- Head of Finance
- Finance Business Partners.
- School leaders and school staff.
- Accounting Technicians and Finance Assistants.
- Internal and external auditors.
- Suppliers and other external stakeholders.

**Resources**

- Workstation and related IT and office equipment.
- Responsible for the accuracy, integrity and appropriate handling of financial information through the proper use and safekeeping of accounting records and systems.

**Working Environment**

- Working in a busy office environment with frequent use of financial systems and IT equipment.
- Work requires sustained concentration, accuracy and a methodical approach, particularly during monthly reporting, year-end and audit periods.
- The postholder will manage competing deadlines and interruptions to respond to queries from schools, finance colleagues, suppliers and auditors.

**Safeguarding Responsibilities for this post**

Safeguarding responsibilities associated with this role will not include engagement in regulatory activity. It will have minimal contact with young people on a day-to day basis. SAST is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The successful candidate will have to meet the person specification, and the post is subject to safeguarding checks, including an enhanced DBS check and Children's Barred List check. The post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020.

This is not a comprehensive list of all tasks which may be required of the post holder. It is illustrative of the general nature and level of responsibility of the work to be undertaken, commensurate with the grade. The duties of this post could also vary from time to time as a result of new legislation, changes in technology or policy changes.

**Other duties**

- Have due regard for safeguarding and follow the child protection policies and procedures adopted by the Trust.
- Promote inclusion, equality and diversity, and uphold the values and ethos of the Trust.

- Take a proactive approach to health and safety and contribute to the security of the school and Trust.
- Participate in workplace learning and development and continually improve own practice and support team development.

**Equality and Diversity**

SAST recognises the benefit of having a diverse workforce and is committed to building a workforce which reflects diversity from the communities it serves. SAST values the contributions from all staff from a wide range of different backgrounds and actively seeks to promote an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment and at the same time supports fair promotion and cultural acceptance. Under the provision of the Equality Act 2010 SAST welcomes applications from everyone and operates a recruitment process which is fair and does not discriminate against or disadvantage anyone because of their age, disability, gender reassignment status, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race or nationality, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.