

Finance Service FAQs

Question	Answer
<p>1. How do I contact the finance consultancy team?</p>	<p>The SE4S Schools Finance helpdesk is available in the usual way by calling 0800 073 4444 Option 5 or emailing schoolsfinance@strictlyeducation4s.co.uk Our team are also contactable through their usual personal email or phone numbers. If you require additional information, please contact Jackie Redknap, Head of Service on 01306 032154 or email jackie.redknap@strictlyeducation4s.co.uk</p>
<p>2. What happens if the assistant finance consultant supporting my school is unable to work?</p>	<p>Our priority is to notify you immediately. We will agree an action plan and have a dedicated team who will be more than happy to provide additional cover. We are committed to supporting you through these challenging times and ask all our clients to be understanding of the additional pressures this could create.</p>
<p>3. What are the current finance deadlines I should be aware of and need support for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year End (31st March 2020) • Budget Plan 2020-21 • BFRO • Teachers' Pension Return • Rates reclaim 	<p>Year End – able to complete if we have a remote connection and key information. Those schools without the facility for remote access should see the revised guidance issued by email from the Schools Finance and Monitoring Team, SCC on 24 March, with a further emailed update on 26 March. All these communications were also included in March SOS issued w/c 27 March.</p> <p>Budget Plan 2020-21 – Please see updated emailed guidance from SFMT, SCC dated 24 March to be read in conjunction with Section A, Finance Manual. This was included in the March SOS.</p> <p>BFRO – able to support to complete remotely if we have log in information, 3-year budget information/audit reports etc.</p>
<p>4. Have the DfE given any guidance on relaxing deadlines?</p>	<p>We have not received any information currently, but we are actively seeking guidance and will keep you informed as soon as we have any news.</p>
<p>5. Given the ESFA's requirement for a certain number of Internal Scrutiny visits a year to our Academy Trust, how will you ensure this still happens?</p>	<p>We will work with the school to compress visits as required to ensure compliance and deliver a report for submission with your accounts by 31st Dec 2020.</p>

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<p>6. Will my Finance Consultant still be available to help me with year-end closedown and meet the LA's tight submission deadline?</p>	<p>We will be working with you to ensure you meet any obligations and deadlines. Maintained schools are our priority due to the approaching year end and academies/MATs to follow thereafter. Strictly Education has a robust business continuity plan which we have implemented and have access to a variety of technological solutions to ensure continuity of support.</p>
<p>7. My SBM is off sick/self-isolating and school needs payments to suppliers, staff etc. Can SE4S help?</p>	<p>If your school is able to arrange remote access to your finance system, then payments can be processed by SE4S</p> <p>Payment methods include either BACS or Cheques: -</p> <p>By BACS - the school would process as normal after the payment run completed using internal process and security sign off to the bank. By Cheque - if in the school's possession it will have to be printed or handwritten.</p>
<p>8. Can SE4S help schools with a contingency plan to cover finance staff not being able to either be on site, or to work from home?</p>	<p>If SE4S is to help, we need remote access to finance system and agree the method on how to make payments - each school will be different dependant on BACS set up or cheques. We can assist with more strategic guidance and wider support if required. Please ensure where possible we have contact numbers/emails for the finance team so that we can assist.</p>
<p>9. If SE4S can't remote into your finance system, how do we deal with this?</p>	<p>We will work with you requesting information and system reports to enable us to support you and prepare any submissions.</p>
<p>10. Can schools request the SE4S team to visit them in school?</p>	<p>Strictly Education takes staff and client safety very seriously and are following both Public Health England and the Government's health and safety advice in order minimise putting anyone at risk. It would not therefore be appropriate for most SE4S staff to visit the school. Working remotely, we will continue to support all our clients and ensure all requirements are being met. We have access to a number of different technologies to support you during this very challenging time.</p>
<p>11. Will there be any impact on our funding?</p>	<p>We do not anticipate there being any detrimental impact on funding at this stage, although we are keeping a close eye on this and will update as soon as we hear anything. It is important to consider the implications of COVID-19 in your budget setting which may have an impact on additional funding streams such as lettings etc.</p>



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<p>12. As we haven't been in this situation before, what should our priorities be?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear and regular guidance to all staff • Ensure all contingency arrangements are documented and tested – including 'user guides' which inform staff of how to operate important systems. Share this knowledge so that if a member of staff is absent then important processes can still be carried on • Update financial forecasts and cashflow projections (in the case of academy clients) based on these new operational arrangements • Refresh your risk profile – new risks will arise whilst others may reduce. Put in place plans to manage those major risks
<p>13. How will we be informed of future developments and changes?</p>	<p>Strictly Education is keeping a close eye on the ever-changing situation and we will update this document regularly with any information as it occurs.</p>