

## **FINANCIAL PROCEDURES POLICY**

<b>Policy Lead</b>	<b>CFO</b>
<b>Committee</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<b>Adopted by Trustees</b>	<b>May 2020</b>
<b>Last amended</b>	<b>May 2022</b>
<b>Last reviewed</b>	<b>May 2023</b>
<b>For review</b>	<b>Annually</b>

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## **Statement of intent**

It is important for Equa Multi Academy Trust to demonstrate that they do not benefit personally from decisions they make with regards to the spending of public money. To ensure that the financial standing of the Trust cannot be brought into disrepute, this policy will be implemented by all academies within the Trust, guaranteeing consistency in financial procedures across the academies.

This policy applies to all employees in the Trust, as well as services and goods sourced from external agencies, such as contractors and caterers.

The Trust takes its responsibility for handling public funds with the utmost importance and strives to continuously provide a high-quality education and safe learning environment, whilst having a strong financial standing.

## **1. Legal framework**

1.1. This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Employment Relations Act 1999
- Companies Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)
- ESFA (2019) 'Academies financial handbook 2019'
- DfE (2016) 'Academies financial assurance'
- ESFA (2019) 'Declare or seek approval for related party transactions: summary guidance'
- DfE (2019) 'Good estate management for schools'

## **2. Roles and responsibilities**

2.1. The Trust's members are responsible for:

- Appointing the Trust's auditors and receiving the Trust's audited annual accounts.
- Conducting the business of the Trust in accordance with company and charity law and adhering to the Trust's funding agreement with the Secretary of State.
- Appointing the external and internal auditors.

2.2. The Trust's Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Applying the highest standards of conduct and governance and taking full ownership of their duties.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the Trust.
- Ensuring that the Trust's practices reflect the 'seven principles of public life' (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership).
- Ensuring that funds are received according to the academy's funding agreement and are used only for the purposes intended.
- Ensuring the Trust complies with any financial notices to improve (FNtI) issued to it by the ESFA and that these are published on the Trust's website within statutory timeframes.
- Approving the annual budget, consolidated budget, central budget and each academy's budget.
- Ensuring the Trust has sound internal control, risk management and assurance processes.
- Ensuring that their decisions about levels of executive pay, including salary and benefits, follow a robust evidence-based process and are a reasonable and defensible reflection of the individual's role and responsibilities.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.
- Approving the Trust's financial plan.
- Ensuring an appropriate scheme of delegation is in place.
- Ensuring assets are effectively managed.
- Ensuring accurate accounting records are maintained.
- Ensuring regularity and propriety in use of the Trust's funds, and achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- Appointing key positions and roles relating to finance, including the Chief Financial Officer, accountants and auditors.
- Appointing an audit committee to advise on the adequacy of financial and other controls and risk management arrangements, direct a programme of internal scrutiny, and consider the results and quality of external audit.
- Receiving the annual audit report.

- Approving the operation of academy bank accounts and credit cards.
- Approving severance and compensation payments up to £50,000, after which they must seek the ESFA's approval.
- Approving property lettings over one year.
- Appointing, in writing, a senior executive leader who may be appointed as a Trustee.
- Appointing an appropriate accounting officer that is the senior executive leader.
- Ensuring the roles of senior executive leader and accounting officer do not rotate.
- Appointing an appropriately qualified and/or experienced CFO.
- Referring to the competency framework for governance to determine if any skills gaps are apparent and taking steps to mitigate these.
- Appointing the Headteacher for each academy.
- Referring and adhering to the six features of effective governance as set out in the 'Governance Handbook'.
- Keeping the Trust's approach to internal scrutiny under review, considering any changes to the Trust's size, complexity or risk profile.
- Taking advice from the audit committee and ensuring there is an appropriate, reasonable and timely response by the Trust's management team to findings by auditors, taking opportunities to strengthen systems of financial management and control.

2.3. The accounting officer is responsible for:

- Sharing the ESFA's ['Dear Accounting Officer'](#) letter with the members, Trustees, the CFO and other members of the SLT, arranging for it to be discussed by the Board of Trustees and taking action, where appropriate, to strengthen the Trust's financial systems and controls.
- Achieving value for money and the best possible educational outcomes through the economic, efficient and effective use of resources.
- Ensuring regularity when dealing with items of income and expenditure in accordance with legislation, the terms of the Trust's funding agreement and the 'Academies Financial Handbook 2019' (AFH), and with the Trust's internal procedures.
- Ensuring propriety with regards to expenditure and receipts, including standards of conduct, behaviour and corporate governance.
- Completing and signing a statement of regularity, propriety and compliance each year and submitting this to the ESFA with the audited accounts.
- The Trust's financial affairs.
- Keeping full and accurate financial records.
- The management of opportunities and risks.
- Assuring the Board of Trustees that the Trust is compliant with the AFH and the funding agreement.
- Informing the Board of Trustees, in writing, of any action or policy under consideration that is incompatible with the terms of the articles of association, funding agreement or the AFH.
- Informing the ESFA, in writing, where they have advised the Board of Trustees that they are in breach of the articles of association, funding agreement or AFH but the Board has continued with their actions.

2.4. The CFO is responsible for:

- Acting as the principal finance officer for the Trust.
- Ensuring that the Trust's financial position is managed at a strategic level within the framework for financial control determined by the Board of Trustees.
- Ensuring that all financial matters focus on the wider needs of the Trust, rather than on any individual academy.

- Working with internal auditors to provide assurance to the audit committee and Board of Trustees.
- Ensuring the annual accounts are properly presented and adequately supported by the underlying books and records of the Trust.
- Challenging finance staff to ensure that value for money is routinely obtained.
- Ensuring effective financial policies are in place across the Trust.
- Acting as an authorised signatory of the Trust bank account and the bank accounts of the academies within the Trust.
- Ensuring that forms and returns for the Trust are sent in line with statutory timeframes.
- Liaising with the Headteacher and SBM from each academy regarding financial matters.

2.5. The Trust's Resource committee is responsible for:

- Reviewing the Trust's consolidated budget, central budget and financial plan, as well as making recommendations to the Board of Trustees regarding these key documents.
- Regularly monitoring expenditure and income against the budget and making any recommendations to the Board of Trustees.
- Reviewing the mandates for the operation of academy bank accounts and credit cards.
- Ensuring appropriate insurance arrangements are in place for the Trust.
- Implementing appropriate accounting policies.
- Ensuring an appropriate framework of internal financial controls is established.
- Ensuring the annual accounts are produced in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and related ESFA guidance.
- Authorising changes to the personnel structure of each academy.
- Acting as the audit committee for the Trust and reviewing reports on the effectiveness of the financial procedures and controls of the Trust and its constituent academies.
- Ensuring the Trust's annual summary report of the areas reviewed, key findings, recommendations and conclusions is submitted to the ESFA each year, and providing additional internal scrutiny reports if requested.
- Directing the Trust's programme of internal scrutiny and reporting to the Board on the adequacy of the Trust's financial and other controls and management of risks.

2.6. LGBs are responsible for:

- Reviewing the budget for their academy and making recommendations for approval to the CFO.
- Making recommendations to the Board of Trustees in relation to the appointment, pay and contractual terms of members of the SLT in their academy.
- Approving recommendations from their academy's Headteacher in relation to the appointment, pay and contractual terms of members of staff other than members of the SLT.

2.7. The Clerk to the Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Ensuring the efficient functioning of the Board of Trustees by providing:
  - Administrative and organisational support.
  - Guidance to ensure the Board works in compliance with the appropriate legal and regulatory framework and understands the potential consequences of non-compliance.
  - Advice on procedural matters relating to the operation of the Board.

2.8. The Headteacher of each academy is responsible for:

- Ensuring budgetary control within approved budgets.
- Authorising contracts and orders, up to the amount stated in the scheme of delegation.
- Approving new staff appointments per the Scheme of Delegation.
- Making recommendations to the LGB regarding staff pay and contractual conditions, other than members of the SLT.
- Ensuring that draft budget papers are prepared for the consideration of the CFO.

2.9. The SBM of each academy is responsible for:

- Managing day-to-day financial issues, including the establishment and operation of the accounting system.
- Maintaining effective internal controls.
- Managing their academy's financial position at a strategic and operational level within the framework for financial control determined by the LGB.
- Drafting original and revised finance plans in cooperation with the Headteacher and with the support of the CFO.
- Maintaining the accounting records.
- Ensuring that purchase orders are raised prior to ordering goods/services, wherever possible, to aid effective budget monitoring and management.
- Ensuring that payments are made to suppliers within 30 days after the date of the invoice.
- Monitoring the budget on a monthly basis.
- Ensuring the monthly completion of bank, petty cash and other reconciliations.
- Managing and processing online payments and payroll, subject to appropriate authority.
- Ensuring that proper checks and controls are in place to cover day-to-day activities in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.
- Ensuring VAT is correctly accounted for.

### **3. Financial oversight**

- 3.1. The Trust takes full responsibility for its financial affairs and uses resources to maximise pupils' outcomes.
- 3.2. The Board of Trustees meets at least three times a year.
- 3.3. The resources committee meets at least three times a year.
- 3.4. Where the Board of Trustees meets less than six times a year, it will explain in its governance statement how effective oversight of funds was maintained with fewer meetings.
- 3.5. Constituent academies joining the Trust will be asked to complete a financial management and governance self-assessment.
- 3.6.

### **4. Budget setting**

- 4.1. The budget is a working document which may need revising throughout the year as circumstances change. Any significant revisions will be reported to the Resources committee and the LGBs, as well as the Board of Trustees.
- 4.2. The budget planning process follows an annual planning cycle and consists of the following four phases:
  - Planning
  - Budget setting
  - Monitoring
  - Review

- 4.3. The budget process takes the following elements into account:
- Forecasts of likely pupil numbers to estimate the amount of DfE grant available
  - Review of other income sources
  - Review of past performance against budgets
  - Identification of potential efficiency and budget containment actions
  - An annual review of expenditure headings to reflect known changes and expected variations in costs, such as pay increases, inflation or other anticipated changes
- 4.4. When reviewing and approving budgets for the Trust, the Board of Trustees ensures the following:
- That budget forecasts, for the current year and beyond, are compiled accurately, based on realistic assumptions and are reflective of lessons learned from previous years.
  - Pupil number estimates are challenged and that these underpin revenue projections.
  - An integrated approach to curriculum and financial planning is taken.
- 4.5. A balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year will be approved by the Board of Trustees, and this approval will be minuted.
- 4.6. The annual budget will reflect the best estimate of the resources available to the Trust for the forthcoming year and will detail how those resources will be utilised, establishing clear links to support the objectives identified in school development plans.
- 4.7. Both medium-term and short-term financial plans are prepared for the Trust and each of the academies in the Trust.
- 4.8. The medium-term plan indicates how the Trust's and each academy's educational aims and other objectives are going to be achieved within the expected level of resources over the next three years.
- 4.9. The development plan provides the framework for the annual budget.
- 4.10. Once budgets are agreed, this will be communicated to all responsible budget holders to ensure they are aware of the overall budgetary constraints.
- 4.11. The Board of Trustees will notify the ESFA within 14 calendar days of proposing to set a deficit revenue budget.

## **5. Budget management and monitoring**

- 5.1. To implement a smooth-running planning process, the CFO will create a budget timetable which outlines important dates, such as when information will be collected, including salary information and estimated budget allocation.
- 5.2. A continuous review of the aims and priorities of the strategy will be undertaken based on the monitoring and analysis of performance.
- 5.3. The SBMs are responsible for monitoring income and expenditure in their academy throughout the year.
- 5.4. A three-year budget forecast will be prepared when the budget for the current financial year is being set.
- 5.5. The CFO will prepare monthly management accounts, setting out the Trust's financial performance and position and including an income and expenditure account, variation to budget report, cash



flows and balance sheet. The accounts will be shared with the Chair of Trustees every month and with other Trustees six times a year.

- 5.6. The Board of Trustees will consider the management accounts when it meets and will ensure appropriate action is being taken to maintain financial viability.
- 5.7. The Board of Trustees will select key financial performance indicators and measure its budgetary performance against these regularly.
- 5.8. Any potential overspend against the budget will be discussed with the CFO before receiving approval.
- 5.9. The monitoring process will be effective and timely in highlighting variances in the budget so that differences can be investigated, and action taken where appropriate.
- 5.10. The Resource committee will continually monitor the quality of the financial information presented to them to ensure that what is provided remains appropriate, particularly in terms of its timing, level of detail and narrative.
- 5.11. There will now only be a single budget forecast return (BFR). The trust's budget forecast return outturn information will be included in the budget forecast return, which covers:
  - September 21 to March 22 and April 22 to August 22
  - September 22 to March 23 and April 23 to August 23
  - Summary forecasts for September 23 to August 24
  - Summary forecasts for September 24 to August 25.

The returns will be approved by the Board of Trustees before submission to the ESFA.

- 5.12. Where the Board of Trustees has concerns about the Trust's financial performance, it will act quickly to ensure the Trust has adequate financial skills in place and consider whether additional financial reporting is required.

## **6. Cash management**

- 6.1. The Trust has robust procedures in place to manage its cash position and will avoid becoming overdrawn.
- 6.2. The SBM will record all transactions regarding cash flow for their academy and the CFO will record transactions for the Trust.
- 6.3. All cheques and other instruments authorising withdrawal from any of the Trust's bank accounts will bear authorising signatures/electronic signatures in line with the scheme of delegation.
- 6.4. Credit cards linked to an Trust bank account are issued to authorised personnel to pay for goods and services when the normal ordering processes are not possible.
- 6.5. The procurement of goods and services using credit cards will be kept to a minimum and monitored by the Trust's CFO.
- 6.6. The SBM is responsible for the management of petty cash and will:
  - Ensure petty cash is held securely.
  - In exceptional circumstances, make cash available to staff in advance of a receipt being available for items under £25.
  - Reconcile petty cash monthly.
  - Make the petty cash available for checking at any time.

- Record all petty cash transactions.
- 6.7. In the interests of security, petty cash payments will be limited to £25. Higher value payments will be made via online banking.
  - 6.8. A petty cash voucher will be completed and submitted to the SBM for processing before petty cash is received. Valid receipts for all goods purchased will be attached.
  - 6.9. The recipient will sign a petty cash form to acknowledge receipt.
  - 6.10. Details of monies held in the safe will reflect balances shown in the cash book.

## 7. Purchasing, procurement and returns

- 7.1. All academies within the Trust will act in accordance with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation.
- 7.2. For each academy the budget holder's approval must be sought for any purchases or tenders.
- 7.3. An accepted quote or tender will be the one that is economically most advantageous, unless it can be demonstrated that this is not the best option for the Trust and other factors outweigh any monetary savings.
- 7.4. To maintain integrity concerning the use of public funds, the following general principles will be adhered to:
  - **Probity** – it must be demonstrable that there is no corruption or private gain involved in the contractual relationships of the Trust.
  - **Accountability** – the Trust is publicly accountable for its expenditure and the conduct of its affairs.
  - **Fairness** – all tenders dealt with by the Trust are done so fairly and equally.
- 7.5. There are three forms of tender procedure: open, restricted and negotiated.
- 7.6. Open tenders are where potential suppliers are invited to tender. This method involves the SBM discussing and agreeing with the CFO how best to advertise for suppliers.
- 7.7. Restricted tenders refer to where suppliers are specifically invited to tender. This method is appropriate where:
  - There is a need to maintain a balance between the contract value and administrative costs.
  - A large number of suppliers are likely to register an interest.
  - The nature of the goods means that only specific suppliers can be expected to supply the Trust's requirements.
  - The costs of publicity and advertising are likely to outweigh the potential benefits of open tendering.
- 7.8. Negotiated tenders mean that the terms of the contract may be negotiated with one or more chosen suppliers. This method is appropriate where:
  - Other tender methods have resulted in either no or unacceptable tenders.
  - Only one or very few suppliers are available.
  - Extreme urgency exists.
  - Additional deliveries by existing suppliers are justified.
- 7.9. When preparing for tender, full consideration will be given to the objectives of the project, the overall requirements regarding the technical skills necessary and after sales service requirements.

- 7.10. The tender evaluation process will involve at least two people who will disclose any conflicts of interest.
- 7.11. Full records will be kept of all the criteria used for evaluation and for contracts.
- 7.12. The Trust will aim to achieve the best possible value for money for all its purchases, ensuring that services are delivered in the most economical, efficient and effective way.
- 7.13. The Headteacher of each academy is responsible for ensuring procedures are in place for testing the market, placing orders and paying for goods or services.
- 7.14. If a budget holder is pursuing a query with a supplier, the SBM will be informed of the query and periodically kept up to date with progress.
- 7.15. Where the value of an order is over £1,000, the requisition will be accompanied with evidence of thorough discussion and appropriate quotes.
- 7.16. A purchasing flowchart can be found in Annexe 1.

## **8. Income and expenditure**

- 8.1. The main source of income for the Trust and its academies is through the grants received from the ESFA.
- 8.2. When allocating funding, the Board of Trustees will consider the funding needs and allocations of each academy within the Trust.
- 8.3. Headteachers of constituent academies can appeal any funding allocation decisions to the Board of Trustees.
- 8.4. The CFO monitors the receipt of grants, ensuring that all grants due to the academies within the Trust are appropriately collected.
- 8.5. The Trust collects income from parents via a number of methods including, but not limited to, the following:
  - School meals
  - Trips and residential visits
  - Book bags and uniform
  - Additional nursery places
  - Breakfast and after school clubs
  - Reimbursements from various parties and activities
- 8.6. There are two main areas of expenditure:
  - **Salaries** – this forms the largest element of expenditure. Salaries of teaching staff will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Headteacher, with effect from 1 September and no later than 31 October. Salaries of Support staff will be reviewed on an annual basis by the SBM between March and April. Pay review recommendations made within normal incremental increases are then given to the LGB for discussion and authorisation. The Resource committee authorises any cost of living pay increases or pay recommendations outside of the normal incremental increases. Pay reviews of the Trust Executive Team and Headteachers are agreed by the Trust Remuneration committee.
  - **Premises maintenance** – a combination of maintenance surveys and historical costs will form the basis for planned maintenance. The SBM will incorporate an allowance for unexpected contingencies, as well as for any small new works which may be proposed in-year.

- 8.7. The SBM will keep an up-to-date record of the income and expenditure for their academy.
- 8.8. The SBM will bank the entirety of any money collected in return for goods or services, such as a school trip, in the appropriate bank account.
- 8.9. The SBM is responsible for preparing reconciliations between the sums collected, the sums deposited at the bank and the sums posted to the accounting system.

## **9. Investments**

- 9.1. Where the Board of Trustees wishes to make investments to further the Trust's charitable aims, it will ensure that investment risks are properly managed.
- 9.2. When considering an investment, the Board will:
  - Act within its powers to invest as set out in the articles of association
  - Act in line with the Trust's Investment Policy and review this policy on a regular basis.
  - Ensure value for money.
  - Take advice from professional advisers where appropriate.
  - Ensure that exposure to investment products is tightly controlled so that security of funds takes precedence over revenue maximisation.
  - Ensure investment decisions are in the best interests of the Trust.
- 9.3. Prior approval will be sought from the ESFA before all investment transactions that are novel, contentious and/or repercussive, regardless of value.

## **10. Borrowing and debt**

- 10.1. Prior approval will be obtained from the ESFA before borrowing from any source, where such borrowing will be repaid from grant monies or secured on assets funded by grant monies.
- 10.2. Credit cards will only be used for business expenditure.
- 10.3. Payment via credit card requires the same authorisation as that of cheques.
- 10.4. Credit card balances will be cleared before any interest accrues.
- 10.5. The Trust will prepare and monitor financial plans to ensure ongoing financial health.
- 10.6. The Trust will disclose aggregate figures for transactions of any amount and separate disclosure for individual transactions above £5,000 in its audited accounts for writing off debts and losses, as well as guarantees, letters of comfort and indemnities.
- 10.7. The SBM will contact individuals of any outstanding debts owed after 30 days of the notification of payment, e.g. an invoice being sent.
- 10.8. The SBM will issue payment reminders to any non-payments at the following intervals:
  - 4 weeks from the invoice being sent – first reminder
  - 6 weeks from the invoice being sent – second reminder
  - 10 weeks from the invoice being sent – final reminder
- 10.9. If, after the final reminder is sent, payment is not received in full, the CFO will send a letter informing the individuals that if the Trust does not receive payment within 14 days, they will refer the matter to a small claims court.
- 10.10. Debts will not be written off without the express approval from the Board of Trustees and the ESFA.

10.11. The CFO will keep accurate records of the debt process, including:

- Logging invoices and receipts on the Trust's accounting system.
- Keeping any emails pertaining to debt collection for three months after the payment has been made.

## **11. Fixed assets**

11.1. The Trust will obtain prior approval from the ESFA for the following transactions:

- Acquiring a freehold of land or buildings
- Disposing of a freehold of land or buildings
- Disposing of heritage assets, as defined in financial reporting standards, beyond any limits in the Trust's funding agreement for the disposal of assets generally

11.2. Other than the transactions outlined in 11.1, the Trust does not need the ESFA's approval to dispose of any other fixed assets.

11.3. Any disposal will maintain the principles of value for money, regularity and propriety.

11.4. The Board of Trustees will refer to the DfE's '[Good estate management for schools](#)' guidance to help them to manage capital assets and budgets.

## **12. Leasing**

12.1. For the purpose of this policy, there are two types of lease:

- Finance lease – a form of borrowing
- Operating leases – not a form of borrowing

12.2. The Trust will obtain prior approval from the ESFA for the following lease transactions:

- Taking up a finance lease on any class of asset for any duration from another party.
- Taking up a leasehold or tenancy agreement on land or buildings from another party for a term of seven or more years.
- Granting a leasehold interest, including a tenancy agreement, of any duration, on land and buildings to another party.

12.3. Any lease will maintain the principles of value for money, regularity and propriety.

## **13. Gifts**

13.1. The value of any gifts will be reasonable and within the limits set out in the Gifts, Hospitality and Anti-bribery Policy.

13.2. The decision to make gifts will be documented and have regard to propriety and regularity.

13.3. The Gifts, Hospitality and Anti-bribery Policy sets out the Trust's procedures relating to the acceptance of gifts, hospitality, awards, prizes and any other benefit that might be seen to compromise the judgement or integrity of the Trust.

## **14. Related party transactions**

14.1. The Trust will be even-handed in their relationships with related parties by ensuring:

- Compliance with their statutory duties to avoid conflicts of interest, benefits are not accepted from third parties, and interests in proposed transactions or arrangements are declared.
- A Declared Conflicts of Interest Register has been completed.
- No member of the Trust uses their connection to the Trust for personal gain.

- All payments are permitted by the Articles of Association or by authority from the Charity Commission.
  - Any payment provided to the persons referred to in [14.22](#) satisfies the 'at cost' requirements outlined in this policy.
- 14.2. All transactions with related parties will be reported to the ESFA in advance of the transaction taking place. This applies to transactions made on or after 1 April 2019.
- 14.3. The Board of Trustees will ensure procedures pertaining to related party transactions are applied across the Trust.
- 14.4. The Board of Trustees and accounting officer will manage personal relationships with related parties to avoid both real and perceived conflicts of interest, promoting integrity and openness in accordance with '[The 7 principles of public life](#)'.
- 14.5. The Chair of Trustees and the accounting officer will ensure their capacity to control and influence does not conflict with requirements.
- 14.6. The Trust recognises that some relationships with related parties may attract greater public scrutiny, such as the following:
- Transactions with individuals in a position of control and influence, including the Chair of Trustees and the accounting officer
  - Payments to organisations with a profit motive, as opposed to those in the public or voluntary sectors
  - Relationships with external auditors beyond their duty to deliver a statutory audit
- 14.7. The Trust will keep up-to-date records and make sufficient disclosures in their annual accounts to show accordance with the high standards of accountability and transparency required within the public sector.
- 14.8. The Trust will report all related party transactions made on or after 1 April 2019 to the ESFA in advance of the transaction taking place.
- 14.9. The Trust will obtain prior approval from the ESFA for related party transactions that are novel, contentious and/or repercussive, regardless of value, using the ESFA's [enquiry form](#).
- 14.10. For the purpose of reporting to, and approval by, the ESFA, related party transactions do not include salaries and other payments made by the Trust to a person under a contract of employment through the Trust's payroll.
- 14.11. The Trust will declare, but not seek approval for, eligible transactions to the ESFA where they are for services that can only be delivered by the diocese. A single upload of evidence relating to the payment or levy for these services will be completed.
- 14.12. The Trust will obtain approval from the ESFA using the [online form](#) for contracts and other agreements for the supply of goods or services to the Trust by a related party agreed on or after 1 April 2019, where any of the following limits apply:
- The contract exceeds £20,000
  - The contract, regardless of the value, would exceed £20,000 in the same financial year ending 31 August
  - The contract, regardless of the value, would exceed £20,000 individually or cumulatively with the related party in the same financial year ending 31 August

- 14.13. Before completing the ESFA's online form, all the information outlined below will be collected, as it is not possible to partially complete the form and return to it later.
- 14.14. To create a record for the supplier, the following information is required:
- The name of the supplier
  - The supplier's address
  - The supplier's company number which can be found using the [Companies House](#) website (for limited companies)
  - The statement which best describes the relationship between the supplier and the Trust
  - Confirmation that the supplier is listed in the Trust's Declared Conflicts of Interest Register
  - Confirmation that the Trust has a statement of assurance from the supplier
  - Confirmation that the Trust has an open-book agreement with the supplier
- 14.15. The following information will be provided about the related party transaction:
- A short description of the goods or service
  - Details of the proposed cost
  - The start and end date of any contract or agreement
- 14.16. When seeking approval for a related party transaction, the following evidence will be provided:
- How the Trust agreed to the related party transaction
  - That your academy Trust tested the market before making a decision
  - How the Trust has managed any conflicts of interest

#### **Declared Conflicts of Interest Register**

- 14.17. All business and pecuniary interests will be recorded on the Declared Conflicts of Interest Register, including:
- Directorships, partnerships and employments with businesses.
  - Trusteeships and governorships at other educational institutions and charities.
  - For each interest: the name of the business, the nature of the business, the nature of the interest and the date the interest began.
- 14.18. The Declared Conflicts of Interest Register will identify any relevant material interests from close family relationships between the Trust's members, Trustees or local governors. Relevant material interests arising from close family relationships between these individuals and employees will also be identified.
- 14.19. The Declared Conflicts of Interest Register will be reviewed ensuring all information is up-to-date and amended when any new interests are declared.
- 14.20. The relevant business and pecuniary interests of members, Trustees, local governors and the accounting officer will be published on the Trust's website.

#### **'At cost' requirements**

- 14.21. The Trust will not pay more than 'cost' for goods or services provided by the following:
- Any member or Trustee of the Trust
  - Any individual or organisation related to a member or Trustee of the Trust, namely:
    - A relative of a member or Trustee: defined as a close member of the family, or member of the same household, who may be expected to influence, or be

influenced by, the person. This includes, but is not limited to, a child, parent, spouse or civil partner.

- An individual or organisation conducting business in partnership with the member, Trustee or a relative of the member or Trustee.
  - A company in which a member or the relative of a member (taken separately or together), and/or a Trustee or the relative of a Trustee (taken separately or together), holds more than 20 percent of the share capital or is entitled to exercise more than 20 percent of the voting power at any general meeting of that company.
  - An organisation which is controlled by a member or the relative of a member (acting separately or together), and/or a Trustee or the relative of a Trustee (acting separately or together) – an organisation is controlled by an individual or organisation if that individual or organisation is able to secure that the affairs of the body are conducted in accordance with the individual's or organisation's wishes.
- Any individual or organisation given the right under the Trust's articles of association to appoint a member or Trustee of the Trust, or any body connected to the individual or organisation.
  - Any individual or organisation recognised by the Secretary of State as a sponsor of the Trust, or any body connected to the individual or organisation.

14.22. A body is connected to an individual or organisation if it is controlled by the individual or organisation, controls the organisation, or is under common control with the individual or organisation, namely any of the following:

- Holding a greater than 20 percent capital share or equivalent interest
- Having the equivalent right to control management decisions of the body
- Having the right to appoint or remove a majority of the Board or governing body

14.23. 'At cost' requirements do not apply to the Trust's employees unless they are employed by one of the parties outlined in [14.22](#).

14.24. 'At cost' requirements apply to contracts for goods and services from a related party agreed on or after 7 November 2013.

14.25. 'At cost' requirements apply to contracts for goods and services from a related party exceeding £2,500, cumulatively, in any one financial year. Where a contract takes the Trust's cumulative annual total with the related party beyond £2,500, the element above £2,500 must be at no more than cost.

14.26. If any of the parties outlined in [14.22](#) are based in, or work from, the Trust's premises, the Trust will agree an appropriate sum to be paid to the Trust for use of the premises, unless the party is conducting work on behalf of the Trust.

14.27. 'At cost' requirements apply to legal advice or audit services when the organisation's partner directly managing the service is a member or Trustee of the Trust, but not in other cases.

14.28. Contributions made by the Trust to the diocese for services received associated with securing the Trust's religious character and ethos, which only the diocese can provide, are regarded as meeting the 'at cost' requirement.



14.29. The Trust will ensure that any agreement with an individual or organisation referred to in [14.23](#) is procured through an open and fair process and is:

- Supported by a statement of assurance from the individual or organisation to the Trust confirming their charges do not exceed the cost of the goods or services.
- On the basis of an open book agreement including a requirement for the supplier to demonstrate clearly, if requested, that their charges do not exceed the cost of supply.

14.30. The cost will be the full cost of all the resources used in supplying the goods or services and will not include any profit. Full cost includes:

- All direct costs – the costs of any materials and labour used directly in producing the goods or services
- Indirect costs – a proportionate and reasonable share of fixed and variable overheads

## **15. Payroll**

15.1. Payroll forms the largest element of the school budget and it is, therefore, essential that financial procedures and internal controls in relation to payroll are properly implemented.

15.2. All payroll transactions relating to Trust staff, permanent or casual, will be processed through the payroll system. Payments for employment will not be made through any other mechanism.

15.3. Each academy within the Trust will act in accordance with the Teachers' Pay Policy and Support Staff Pay Policy.

15.4. The main elements of the payroll system include staff appointments, payroll administration and payments.

15.5. Payroll is notified of any staff absence.

15.6. The Headteacher and SBM are responsible for ensuring that:

- Payments are made only to bona fide employees.
- Payments are in accordance with individuals' conditions of employment.
- Deductions, including income tax, national insurance and pensions, are properly administered.
- Payments are made only in respect of services provided to the school.
- Amendments to the payroll are properly processed.

15.7. The SBM is responsible for keeping the staff personnel database up-to-date via the designated recording system. This will include the following information about staff members:

- Salary
- Bank account details
- Taxation status
- Personal details
- Any deductions or allowances payable

15.8. During the Spring term each year, the Headteacher will review staffing requirements for the following academic year and propose any changes. These proposals will be reviewed and approved by the Resources committee in the budget setting process.

15.9. The Resources committee is responsible for authorising the following salary changes:

- Pay awards for staff

- Staffing structure changes
  - Performance-related pay progression, other than Head's and Executives
- 15.10. Payroll is continuously monitored and reviewed by the CFO to ensure any changes have been implemented correctly and the information is up-to-date.
- 15.11. Payslips will be produced on a monthly basis and administered to employees via secure email, or in person where requested, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month.

#### **Executive pay**

- 15.12. The Board of Trustees will ensure that executive pay and benefits, follow a robust evidence-based process and are a reasonable and defensible reflection of the individual's role and responsibilities.
- 15.13. No individual will be involved in deciding their salary.
- 15.14. The Board of Trustees, through the Remuneration Committee, will discharge its responsibilities effectively, ensuring its approach to pay and benefits is transparent, proportionate and justifiable, including:
- **Process** – that the procedure for determining executive pay and benefits is agreed by the Board in advance and documented. The Board ensures that both pay and benefits are kept proportionate.
  - **Independence** – decisions about executive pay and benefits reflect independent and objective scrutiny by the Board and conflicts of interest are avoided.
  - **Robust decision-making** – factors in determining pay and benefits are clear, including whether educational and financial performance considerations, and the degree of challenge in the role, have been considered.
  - **Proportionality** – pay and benefits represent good value for money and are defensible relative to the public-sector market.
  - **Commercial interests** – the Board is sighted on broader business interests held by senior executives, and is satisfied that any payments made by the Trust to executives in relation to such interests do not undermine the transparency requirements for disclosing pay in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction.
  - **Documentation** – the rationale behind the decision-making process, including whether the level of pay and benefits reflects value for money, is recorded and retained.
  - A basic presumption that executive pay and benefits should not increase at a faster rate than that of teachers, in individual years and over the longer term.
  - Understanding that inappropriate pay and benefits can be challenged by the ESFA, particularly in any instance of poor financial management of the Trust.
- 15.15. When the Trust increases to more than 250 employees, information about the gender pay gap in the Trust will be published on the Trust's website and on the government's reporting [website](https://www.gov.uk/report-gender-pay-gap-data) (<https://www.gov.uk/report-gender-pay-gap-data>).

## **16. Charging and remissions**

- 16.1. The Trust is responsible for creating a Charging and Remissions Policy.
- 16.2. Each academy will act in accordance with the Trust's Charging and Remissions Policy at all times.
- 16.3. Charging is permitted for education provided out of school hours, unless it is within the requirements of the national curriculum or to fulfil statutory duties relating to RE.
- 16.4. The LGB, in conjunction with the CFO, can choose to remit charges wholly or in part.

- 16.5. The Trust may charge parents for the cost to replace items broken, damaged or lost if it is due to pupil behaviour.
- 16.6. Payments for activities will be processed and recorded by the SBM.
- 16.7. The SBM is responsible for ensuring that the correct invoices are sent to parents, and that payment is received.
- 16.8. The Resources committee will review the Charging and Remissions Policy annually, seeking advice from the CFO where necessary.

## **17. VAT procedures**

- 17.1. The Trust, and the academies within it, are registered for VAT and are entitled to reclaim VAT on qualifying purposes through a monthly VAT return.
- 17.2. Under legislation, VAT claims can be made on expenditure which supports the Trust's core business purposes.
- 17.3. A report is run for each of the academies within the Trust by the CFO, to provide the data necessary for the completion of the VAT reclaim form.
- 17.4. Only one return for the Trust is required by HMRC.
- 17.5. The Trust is eligible to reclaim most of the VAT it pays on invoices from HMRC.
- 17.6. Any invoices for which VAT cannot be reclaimed, as the purchases were for business activity, are identified and deleted.
- 17.7. Where invoices relate partly to business activity and partly to non-business activity, only the proportion of the VAT relating to the non-business activity will be reclaimed.
- 17.8. Reclaimed VAT will not be debited to the individual academies, but to the VAT control account of the Trust.
- 17.9. On receipt of the reclaimed VAT from HMRC, the CFO will review the remittance, confirm whether this equals the claim made and sign the remittance to confirm this agreement.

## **18. Risk management**

- 18.1. The Trust will maintain a risk register and manage risks to ensure its effective operation, including contingency and business continuity planning.
- 18.2. The Trust will have adequate insurance cover in compliance with its legal obligations or will become a member of the academies [risk protection arrangement](#).
- 18.3. The Trust will co-operate with risk management auditors and risk managers and will implement any reasonable recommendations made to them.

## **19. Special payments**

- 19.1. For the purpose of this policy, special payments include:
  - Staff severance payments.
  - Compensation payments.
  - Ex gratia payments.
- 19.2. Where the Trust considers making a staff severance payment above statutory or contractual entitlements, the following factors will be considered prior to making the commitment:
  - The proposed payment is in the interest of the Trust

- The payment is justified, based on legal assessment of the chances the Trust will successfully defend the case at employment tribunal
  - The level of settlement is less than the legal assessment of what the relevant body will award
- 19.3. Under no circumstances will the Trust make severance payments where the money could be interpreted as a reward for insubordination or failure.
- 19.4. For severance payments equal to or greater than £50,000, the Trust will seek prior approval from the ESFA. The ESFA will refer the transaction to HM Treasury so the Trust will allow sufficient time for this to be considered.
- 19.5. Value for money will be shown for all severance payments.
- 19.6. Compensation payments will take account of the facts of the matter ensuring value for money is achieved.
- 19.7. For compensation equal to or greater than £50,000, prior approval from the ESFA will be sought.
- 19.8. The Trust will consider whether cases reveal concerns pertaining to the effectiveness of internal control.
- 19.9. Ex gratia payments will always be referred to the ESFA for approval.

## **20. Annual accounts**

- 20.1. The Trust will maintain accounting records and prepare an annual report and audited accounts in line with the Charity Commission's [Statement of Recommended Practice](#) and the ESFA's '[Academies Accounts Direction](#)'.
- 20.2. The audited accounts will be:
- Submitted to the ESFA by 31 December each year
  - Published on the Trust's website by 31 January
  - Filed with Companies House in accordance with company law requirements, usually by 31 May
  - Provided to every member (under the Companies Act)
  - Provided to anyone who requests a copy
- 20.3. All copies of the accounting audit will be stored and filed securely, in line with the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

## **21. Auditing**

- 21.1. The Trust will follow a tiered approach to internal control, risk management and assurance processes comprising:
- Clearly communicated procedures, structures and training of staff.
  - Appropriate day-to-day supervision and checks by management.
  - Internal scrutiny overseen by an audit committee.
  - External audit and assurance.

### **Internal scrutiny**

- 21.2. Internal scrutiny will be conducted within the Trust and directed by the audit committee, alongside the work of an external auditor, to provide independent assurance to the Board that its financial and other controls, and risk management procedures, are operating effectively.
- 21.3. Internal scrutiny will focus on:

- Evaluating the suitability of, and level of compliance with, financial and other controls, including assessing whether procedures are designed effectively and efficiently, and checking transactions to confirm whether agreed procedures have been followed.
  - Offering advice and insight to the Board on how to address weaknesses in financial and other controls.
  - Ensuring all categories of risk are being adequately identified, reported and managed.
- 21.4. The programme of internal scrutiny will be covered by a scheme of work, driven and agreed by the audit committee and informed by risk.
- 21.5. The programme of work will be spread appropriately over the year to ensure higher risk areas are reviewed in good time.
- 21.6. With reference to its risk register, the Trust will identify on a risk-basis the areas it will review each year and modify its checks accordingly.
- 21.7. Internal scrutiny will take account of output from other assurance providers to inform the programme of work.
- 21.8. Independence in internal scrutiny will be achieved by establishing appropriate reporting lines whereby those carrying out checks report directly to a committee of the Board.
- 21.9. Internal scrutiny will be kept under review and if any changes in size, complexity or risk profile become apparent, the Trust will consider whether its approach remains suitable.
- 21.10. The Trust will confirm, in its governance statement, the method(s) it uses for internal scrutiny and why these are used.
- 21.11. Findings arising from internal scrutiny will be used to inform the accounting officer's statement of regularity in the annual accounts.
- 21.12. Regular reports of the programme of work will be provided at each audit committee meeting, including recommendations to enhance financial and other controls and risk management.
- 21.13. The Trust will submit its annual summary report of the areas reviewed, key findings, recommendations and conclusions to the ESFA each year when it submits its audited annual accounts. If requested, the Trust will also provide any other internal scrutiny reports.

#### **External auditing**

- 21.14. The Trust will appoint an external auditor to certify whether its annual accounts present a true and fair view of the Trust's financial performance and position.
- 21.15. The contract with the external auditor will be in writing and be accompanied by a letter of engagement that only covers the details of the external audit including the requirements of the DfE.
- 21.16. The letter of engagement will also include details of the removal of external auditors, before the expiry of the term of office, in exceptional circumstances.
- 21.17. The Board of Trustees will notify the ESFA immediately of the removal or resignation of the auditors.
- 21.18. The accounting officer will produce a statement on regularity, propriety and compliance and this will be included in the Trust's annual accounts.
- 21.19. The statement on regularity, propriety and compliance will include a responsibility to ensure that:

- There is efficient and effective use of resources in their charge.
  - Public money is spent for the purposes intended by parliament.
  - Appropriate standards of conduct, behaviour and corporate governance are maintained when applying the funds under their control.
- 21.20. The Trust will respond promptly, reasonably and appropriately to any findings by the auditors.
- 21.21. The ESFA will be informed within 14 calendar days if the Trust appoints or terminates the contract of:
- An accounting officer or CFO, including their contact information.
  - A Chair of Trustees, including their contact information.
  - A member, Trustee or governor, including their contact information.
  - A Headteacher, including their contact information.
  - A Chair of a local governing Board, including their contact information.
  - A local governor.

## **22. Record keeping**

- 22.1. All financial transactions of the Trust are recorded including, but not limited to, the following:
- Purchases and tenders
  - Returns
  - Payroll
  - Cash flow
  - Income and expenditures
  - VAT returns
- 22.2. The CFO is responsible for keeping up-to-date records of the Trust's financial state.
- 22.3. The SBM is responsible for keeping up-to-date records in relation to the finances of their academy.
- 22.4. Records will include the following information:
- Income and expenditure; identifying which transactions were cheques and which were cash payments
  - The income and expenditure for each activity, with the activity recorded as a budget heading
  - A balance sheet which identifies total income, expenditure and the balance for each budget heading
  - The total income and expenditure for the year
  - The balance and carry forward from the previous year
  - Identified profit and loss – any causing concern is investigated
- 22.5. Each academy has its own set of financial records for day-to-day operational purposes and budget management.
- 22.6. A record will be kept of all the monies kept on the premises prior to banking, as well as the amount which is kept as petty cash.
- 22.7. All financial records will be kept securely in each academy's admin office.

## **23. Financial notices to improve (FNtI)**

- 23.1. Where the ESFA has concerns about the Trust's financial management and/or governance, and has issued a FNtI, the Trust will comply with this notice.

- 23.2. The Trust will publish any FNTI issued by the ESFA on its website within 14 days of it being issued, and retain this on the website until it is lifted by the ESFA.
- 23.3. If a FNTI is issued, the Trust will seek prior approval from the ESFA for all transactions outlined in [section 19](#), specifically:
- Special staff severance payments
  - Compensation payments
  - Writing off debts and losses
  - Entering into guarantees, indemnities or letters of comfort
  - Disposals of fixed assets beyond any limit in the funding agreement
  - Taking up a leasehold or tenancy agreement on land or buildings of a duration beyond any limit in the funding agreement
  - Carrying forward of unspent GAG from one year to the next beyond any limit in the funding agreement
  - Pooling of GAG
- 23.4. Where required, the Trust will seek prior approval from the ESFA before entering into transactions with related parties.
- 23.5. The Trust will submit additional information, such as monthly income and expenditure accounts, if required by the ESFA,

## **24. Whistleblowing and fraud**

- 24.1. The Trust puts proportionate controls in place to mitigate the risks of fraud, theft and irregularity, e.g. regular inspections addressing risks.
- 24.2. Where instances of fraud, theft or irregularity are suspected or identified the Board of Trustees will investigate it promptly and should any evidence of fraud be found, they will take appropriate action.
- 24.3. In any instance of fraud, theft or irregularity whereby the amount defrauded comes to a total exceeding £5,000 in a financial year, the Board of Trustees will report it to the ESFA as soon as they become aware of it.
- When reporting to the ESFA on instances of fraud, theft or irregularity, the academy will include the following information:
    - Full details of the event(s) with all key dates
    - The financial value of the loss
    - The measures taken by the Trust to prevent recurrence
    - Whether the matter was referred to the police and if not, the reasons why
    - Whether the insurance or the risk protection agreement have offset any loss
- 24.4. If a member of staff suspects their colleagues are involving them in matters of fraud, they have a duty, as an employee of the Trust, to raise suspicions to the CFO.
- 24.5. Reports of fraud will be treated in a fair and unbiased manner.
- 24.6. If the report of fraud is against a member of the SLT, the member of staff can go directly to the Chair of Trustees.
- 24.7. The SLT of the relevant academy within the Trust will be responsible for the initial enquiries of fraud, theft or irregularity – they will then pass on their findings to the CFO for further inspection.

- 24.8. Upon receiving the SLT's initial findings, the CFO will provide recommendations to the Board of Trustees to make a decision, to include:
- Determine whether further investigation is warranted.
  - Determine the initial response to the alleged perpetrator when this is a member of school staff.
  - Determine who will carry out the investigation.
  - Determine which outside agencies will be involved.
  - Assess the risk of the fraud and the perpetrator to the academy.
  - Determine to whom day-to-day management of the response will be given.
  - Allocate responsibility for damage limitation action.
  - Determine the course of action to recover losses.
  - Determine the course of action to be taken against the perpetrator.
  - Evaluate the events which enabled the fraud to occur.
  - Ensure preventative action is taken to prevent recurrence.
  - Report any excessive fraud (over £5,000) to the ESFA.
- 24.9. The Trust's Whistleblowing Policy outlines the procedures to follow in the event of a report being made by a member of staff, as well as the appeals process and what can be done in the event of a whistleblower being treated unfairly.
- 24.10. The Headteacher will ensure all their staff are aware of the Whistleblowing Policy, ensuring that they understand the process of reporting a concern and what they can expect once they have brought a concern to the attention of the academy.
- 24.11. All concerns raised by whistleblowers are responded to properly and fairly in line with the Whistleblowing Policy.

## **25. Monitoring and review**

- 25.1. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or when new legislation/guidance regarding the subject is published, by the audit committee and the accounting officer.
- 25.2. The CFO will review and monitor all financial records continuously throughout the year.
- 25.3. The SBM will review and monitor each academy's financial records, raising any concerns with the CFO.
- 25.4. The next scheduled review date for this policy is date.



Purchasing within the agreed budget

