



Financial Policy

Policy Reviewed and Adopted by Board of Trustees

Date of Next Review: November 2024

Responsible Officer: Finance Director

Contents

Contents.....	2
1. Legal Framework.....	4
2. Role And Responsibilities.....	4
3. Financial Oversight.....	10
4. Budget Setting.....	11
5. Budget Management And Monitoring.....	12
6. Cash Management.....	13
7. Purchasing, Procurement And Returns.....	13
8. Income And Expenditure.....	14
9. Investments.....	15
10. Borrowing And Debt.....	15
11. Fixed Assets.....	16
12. Leasing.....	16
13. Gifts.....	17
14. Related Party Transactions.....	17
15. Payroll.....	20
16. Charging And Remissions.....	22
17. Vat Procedures.....	22
18. Risk Management.....	23
19. Special Payments.....	23
20. Annual Accounts.....	24
21. Auditing.....	25
22. Record Keeping.....	26
23. Notices To Improve.....	27
24. Whistleblowing And Fraud.....	28
25. Cyber-Crime.....	29
26. Self-Assessment.....	29
27. Monitoring And Review.....	29
28. Appendix 1 Financial Authorisation Levels.....	30
29. Appendix 2 Accounting Policies.....	34

Statement of intent

It is important for Vision Academy Learning Trust to demonstrate that we use public money appropriately. 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, trustees and members, 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. [UPDATED] Legal framework

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

- Employment Relations Act 1999
- Companies Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)
- [UPDATED] ESFA (2023) 'Academy trust handbook 2023'
- [UPDATED] ESFA (2023) 'Declare or seek approval for related party transactions: summary guidance'
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Teachers' Pay Policy
- Charging and Remissions Policy
- Tendering and Procurement Policy
- Gifts, Hospitality and Anti-bribery Policy
- Assets and disposal policy
- Reserves Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Anti-fraud and bribery Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data and Cyber-security Breach Prevention and Management Plan
- Articles of Association

2. [UPDATED] Role and responsibilities

Responsibilities for different groups and individuals within the trust are set out in full throughout this policy. This section highlights key responsibilities.

The members are responsible for:

- Appointing, by special resolution, new members or removing existing members other than, where there is one, the foundation/sponsor body and any members it has appointed.
- Appointing trustees in line with the trust's Articles of Association.
- Where necessary, by special resolution, issuing direction to the trustees to take a specific action.
- Appointing the trust's auditors and receiving (but not signing) 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.

Members will not be employees of the trust or occupy staff establishment roles on an unpaid voluntary basis.

The trust will ensure that members are not currently subject to a section 128 direction and will not appoint anyone as a member if they are currently subject to a section 128 direction.

[UPDATED] The board of trustees is responsible for:

- Applying the highest standards of conduct and governance and taking full ownership of their duties.
- Ensuring the board meets at least three times a year, and conducts business only when quorate.
- Approving a written scheme of delegation of financial powers.
- [New] Identifying the skills and experience it needs, including sufficient financial knowledge to hold the executive to account.
- Managing conflicts of interests and related party transactions.
- Approving a balanced budget for the financial year and minuting the approval.
- Ensuring decisions about executive pay follow a robust evidence-based process reflecting the individual's role and responsibilities, and that the approach to pay is transparent, proportionate and justifiable.
- Appointing an audit and risk committee to advise on the adequacy of the trust's controls and risks.
- Submitting audited accounts to the ESFA by 31 December.
- Ensuring an appropriate, reasonable and timely response is given to findings by auditors.

Any newly appointed senior executive leader can only be a trustee if the members decide to appoint them as such, the senior executive leader agrees, and the Articles of Association permit it.

[Updated] The board of trustees will appoint a senior executive leader who may be appointed as a trustee – this will be the chief executive or equivalent. The board will also appoint a named individual as the trust's accounting officer – this will be the senior executive leader. The roles of senior executive leader and accounting officer will not rotate. The role of the accounting officer will also not be held by the same individual as the CFO.

When the senior executive leader is planning to leave the trust, the board of trustees will approach the trust's Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) in advance to discuss the trust's structure and options, including plans for recruitment.

The accounting officer is responsible for:

- The trust's financial affairs.
- Sharing the ESFA's '[Dear Accounting Officer](#)' letter with the members, trustees, the CFO and other relevant stakeholders, 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 'Academy trust handbook' (ATH), and with the trust's internal procedures.

Finance Policy
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- 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.
- Keeping full and accurate financial records.
- The management of opportunities and risks.
- Assuring the board of trustees that the trust is compliant with the ATH 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 ATH.
- 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 ATH but the board has continued with their actions.

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 and risk 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.
- Liaising with the headteacher and FMs from each academy regarding financial matters.
- Maintaining CPD and undertaking relevant ongoing training.

Governance Professional

The board of trustees will appoint a governance professional to support the board of trustees who is someone other than a trustee, headteacher or chief executive. The governance professional 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.
 - Independent advice on procedural matters relating to the operation of the board.
 - Administrative and organisational support.

The Trust's Audit & Risk committee is responsible for:

- 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.
- Ensuring that risks are being addressed appropriately through internal scrutiny.
- Reviewing the external auditor's plan each year.
- Reviewing the annual report and accounts.
- Reviewing the external auditor's findings and actions taken by the trust's managers in response to those findings.
- Assessing the effectiveness and resources of the external auditor to provide a basis for decisions by the trust's members about the auditor's reappointment or dismissal or retendering.
- Producing an annual report of the committee's conclusions to advise the board of trustees and members, including recommendations on the reappointment, dismissal or retendering of the external auditor, and their remuneration.

The Trust Finance and Resources Committee

The Finance and Resources committee is a committee of the Board. They meet at least once per term but more frequent meetings can be arranged if necessary.

The main responsibilities of the Finance, Resources Committee are detailed in written terms of reference which have been authorised by the Board.

The main responsibilities include:

- Review of the management accounts and financial KPIs
- The initial review and authorisation of the annual budget, to then be presented to the Board;
- The regular monitoring of actual income and expenditure against budget;
- Ensuring the annual accounts are produced in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and the DfE guidance issued to academies;
- Authorising the award of contracts over £50,000
- Authorising changes to the Trust personnel establishment.
- Oversee Capital investment programmes
- Establish, monitor and review employment policies on behalf of the Trustees
- Set and monitor remuneration levels for members of staff except Head teachers, and the Finance Director. Remuneration levels for those members of staff will be set by GB having considered the recommendations of this committee
- Contribute to the appraisal of the CEO and Finance Director

Appraisal Committee

The appraisal committee is a committee of the Board. They meet once a year to review and agree the performance management of the Trust staff (excluding the CEO and Finance Director).

The appraisal committee sets the rate of executive pay, following an evidence-based process reflective of roles and responsibilities, in line with the Handbook.

Finance Policy
PUBLIC

Local governing Councils are responsible for:

- Ensuring that any restricted grants are used for the purposes intended.
- 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.

The Trust's Head Teachers

Within the framework of the Trust's Development Plan, each academy Head Teacher has overall executive responsibility for the academy's activities including financial activities.

Much of the financial responsibility has been delegated to the Finance Director but the Head Teacher still retains responsibility for:

- approving new staff appointments within the authorised establishment, except for any senior staff posts which the Board of Trustees have agreed should be approved by them;
- authorising orders and the award of contracts within the approval limits shown in Appendix 1;
- authorising payments within the approval limits shown in Appendix 1;
- ensuring the delivery of the academy annual budget as approved by the Trust;
- monitoring the regular budget reports with the Finance Director and acting on overspends or risk.

Assistant Finance Director

The Assistant Finance Director works in collaboration with the Finance Director and CEO to provide support to the financial function of the Academy Trust.

The main responsibilities of the Assistant Finance Director are:

- Working in partnership with external professional advisers assist with all aspects of development and effective operation of financial systems and procedures.
- Support the Finance Director in the preparation and implementation of financial forecasts, business plans, reports and returns to ensure the strategic development of the Academy Trust, and long-term sustainability of the budget.
- Conduct reviews and evaluations of cost reduction opportunities and regularly monitor the Academy Trust's contracts and SLAs to ensure value for money is achieved.
- Act as the Finance Director in their absence

Trust Compliance Manager

The Trust Compliance Manager works in collaboration with the Finance Director and CEO to provide Trust wide support to the GDPR and compliance functions.

The main responsibilities of the Trust Compliance Manager are:

- To ensure GDPR compliance and monitor progress, actions and amendments
- Respond and report on any data breaches or subject access requests.

- Ensure all Governance arrangements are recorded accurately including the updating of GIAS and Company house

Office & Finance Managers

Each school will have an Office Manager or Finance Manager who undertakes that role albeit with a different job title

The Office Managers work in close collaboration with the Finance Director, although most of the financial responsibility is retained at trust level.

Responsibilities of the Office Managers are:

- the day to day management of financial issues
- Ensuring that budgetary control methods and purchasing procedures within the Trust are in compliance with financial regulations and contract procedure rules;
- Providing general support to the Finance Director in financial matters
- Ensuring that all funding due to the Trust from the ESFA and other sources is received and properly accounted for.
- Ensuring that financial information held on the Civica financial management system is properly maintained;
- authorising orders and the award of contracts within the approval limits shown in Appendix 1;
- ensuring that financial controls are working effectively at school level

The Finance Managers work in close collaboration with the Finance Director. Responsibilities of the Finance Managers are:

- The day to day management of financial issues
- Assisting the Finance Director and the Finance & Resources Committee in the preparation of the draft budget;
- Ensuring that budgetary control methods and purchasing procedures within the Trust are in compliance with financial regulations and contract procedure rules;
- Providing general support to the Finance Director in financial matters including strategic planning;
- Ensuring that all funding due to the Trust from the ESFA and other sources is received and properly accounted for.
- Ensuring that financial information held on the Civica financial management system is properly maintained;
- authorising orders and the award of contracts within the approval limits shown in Appendix 1;
- authorising payments within the approval limits shown in Appendix 1.
- ensuring that financial controls are working effectively at academy level

Budget holders

The main responsibilities of Budget holders include:

- Responsibility for their individual budget allocations including monitoring their departmental spending;
- Not exceeding their departmental budget allocation;
- Following procedures laid down within the Trust's Finance Policy in respect of purchasing of goods and services; Informing the Finance Director by the end of June each year if they wish to carry forward any under spend into the following financial year;
- Ensuring that all ordering of goods is via the Civica financial management system and should liaise with the Trust Finance Officer, and the Finance Manager who are responsible for the ordering process;
- Regularly reviewing the spending profile.

Other Staff

- Other members of staff, primarily the Trust Finance Officer, school administration assistants and budget holders, will have some financial responsibilities and these are detailed in the following sections of this policy.
- All staff are responsible for the security of academy property, for avoiding loss or damage, for ensuring economy and efficiency in the use of resources and for conformity with the requirements of the academy's financial procedures.

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.

3. Financial oversight

The trust takes full responsibility for its financial affairs, stewardship of assets and use of resources to maximise pupils' outcomes.

The board of trustees meets at least three times a year. The Finance & Resources committee meets at least three times a year. 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.

The board of trustees does not delegate overall responsibility for the trust's funds. The board of trustees approves a written scheme of delegation of financial powers that maintains robust internal controls. This scheme of delegation is reviewed annually, and immediately when there has been a change in the trust's management or organisational structure.

The board of trustees delegates financial scrutiny and oversight to the finance committee, which can support the board in maintaining the trust as a going concern.

Constituent academies joining the trust will be asked to complete a financial management and governance self-assessment.

4. Budget setting

The budget is a working document which may need revising throughout the year as circumstances change. Any significant revisions will be reported to the Finance & Resources committee and the local governing Committees, as well as the board of trustees.

The budget planning process follows an annual planning cycle and consists of the following four phases:

- Planning
- Budget setting
- Monitoring
- Review

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

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.
- That pupil number estimates are challenged and that these underpin revenue projections, and review these on a termly basis.
- An integrated approach to curriculum and financial planning is taken.

Each academy within the trust will have an independent budget.

A balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year will be approved by the board of trustees, and this approval will be minuted. 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.

Both medium-term and short-term financial plans are prepared for the trust and each of the academies in the trust. The medium-term plan indicates how the educational aims and other objectives of the trust and each academy are going to be achieved within the expected level of resources over the next three years.

The development plan provides the framework for the annual budget.

Draft budgets will be presented to the headteachers and local governing committees via finance and Resources committee, as well as to the CFO and board of trustees, together with

a supporting report for approval of the board of trustees. Once budgets are agreed, this will be communicated to all responsible budget holders to ensure they are aware of the overall budgetary constraints.

The board of trustees will notify the ESFA within 14 calendar days of proposing to set a deficit revenue budget.

5. [UPDATED] Budget management and monitoring

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.

A continuous review of the aims and priorities of the strategy will be undertaken based on the monitoring and analysis of performance.

The finance / Office managers at each academy are responsible for monitoring income and expenditure in their academy throughout the year.

A three-year budget forecast will be prepared when the budget for the current financial year is being set.

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 flow information and balance sheet. The accounts will be shared with the chair of trustees every month and with other trustees six times a year, even if they do not meet in each of those months.

The board of trustees will consider the management accounts when it meets and will ensure appropriate action is being taken to maintain financial viability. The board of trustees will select key financial performance indicators and measure its budgetary performance against these regularly.

Any potential overspend against the budget will be discussed with the CFO before receiving approval.

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. The Finance & Resources 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.

[Updated] The trust will submit a budget forecast return (BFR) to the ESFA each August. The trust's budget forecast return outturn information will be included in the budget forecast return.

The return will be approved by the board of trustees before submission to the ESFA.

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

The trust has robust procedures in place to manage its cash position and will avoid becoming overdrawn on its bank account so that it does not breach restrictions on borrowing.

The CFO will prepare cash flow forecasts to ensure that the trust has sufficient funds available to cover day-to-day operations. The Finance Managers will record all transactions regarding cash flow for their academy and the trust. When producing cash flow forecasts, if significant balances can be foreseen, steps will be taken to invest the surplus funds.

All cheques and other instruments authorising withdrawal from the trust's bank account will bear authorising signatures or electronic signatures in line with the scheme of delegation.

Debit cards linked to a trust bank account are issued to personnel under the scheme of delegation to pay for goods and services when the normal ordering processes are not possible. The procurement of goods and services using debit cards will be kept to a minimum and monitored by the trust's CFO. Payment via debit or credit card requires the same authorisation as that of cheques.

Each school within the trust that requires a petty cash float, maintains a maximum cash balance of £300. The cash is administered by the Office / Finance Managers and all money is kept in the safe. Office/Finance Managers will ensure they:

- Make reimbursements only on the Reimbursements to Individuals Form.
- 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.

In the interests of security, petty cash payments will be limited to £25. Higher value payments will be made via online banking or cheque.

7. Purchasing, procurement and returns

The trust will ensure:

- Spending has been for the purpose intended and there is probity in the use of public funds.
- Spending decisions represent value for money.
- Internal delegation levels exist and are applied.
- Professional advice is obtained where appropriate.

All academies within the trust will act in accordance with the trust's Tendering and Procurement Policy, and comply with the procurement rules and thresholds in The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Find a Tender service.

The trust uses the DfE's deals for schools service where possible.

Full details of the trust's procurement processes are outlined in the Tendering and Procurement Policy.

8. Income and expenditure

The main source of income for the trust and its academies is through the grants received from the ESFA.

When allocating funding, the board of trustees will consider the funding needs and allocations of each academy within the trust. Headteachers of constituent academies can appeal any funding allocation decisions to the board of trustees. If, after this appeal, the situation is not resolved, the headteacher can make an appeal to the ESFA.

The CFO monitors the receipt of grants, ensuring that all grants due to the academies within the trust are appropriately collected.

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 club lettings

Reimbursements from various parties and activities

The CFO and Assistant FD will keep an up-to-date record of the income and expenditure for the Trust.

Each Finance Manager will bank the entirety of any money collected in return for goods or services, such as a school trip, in the appropriate bank account.

The Trust Finance Officer is responsible for preparing reconciliations between the sums collected, the sums deposited at the bank and the sums posted to the accounting system. Reconciliations will be prepared promptly following the banking of money and will be reviewed and certified by the CFO.

The trust's funds will not be used to purchase alcohol for consumption, except where it is to be used in religious services.

There are two main areas of expenditure:

- **Salaries** – this forms the largest element of expenditure. Salaries of all staff members will be reviewed on an annual basis by the headteacher, with effect from 1 September and no later than 30 November. Pay review recommendations are then given to the local governing board for discussion and authorisation. The appraisal committee confirms pay awards, incremental progression and performance-led pay increases, all of which the CFO will cost, using known figures and estimates, when preparing the draft budget.
- **Premises maintenance** – a combination of maintenance surveys and historical costs will form the basis for planned maintenance. The CFO will incorporate an allowance for unexpected contingencies, as well as for any small new works which may be proposed in-year. Staff members will follow the procedure outlined in the Staff Handbook when requesting maintenance of premises or new work.

9. Investments

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. 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 Reserves and 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.

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

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.

Credit cards will only be used for business expenditure. Payment via credit card requires the same authorisation as that of cheques. Credit card balances will be cleared by direct debit before any interest accrues.

- Credit card orders where purchases are made online in a shopping basket (ie grocery orders) – in these cases the order must be printed and signed by the card holder.
- Ad hoc credit card purchases below the value of £100 - in these cases the receipt must be signed by the card holder.

The trust will prepare and monitor financial plans to ensure ongoing financial health.

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.

The finance managers will contact individuals of any outstanding debts owed after 30 days of the notification of payment, e.g. an invoice being sent. The CFO 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

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.

Any debt write-off exceeding £100 in value will need to be approved by the Finance &

Resources Committee. Debts below £100 in value will be approved for write-off by the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Finance Director and reported to Finance and Resources Committee for information. The trust will also obtain prior approval from the ESFA where it wishes to write off debts and losses and/or enter into guarantees, letters of comfort or indemnities, where the following delegated limits apply:

- 1 percent of total annual income or £45,000 (whichever is smaller) per single transaction
- Cumulatively, 5 percent of total annual income in any financial year per category

11. Fixed assets

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

Other than the transactions outlined above, the trust does not need the ESFA's approval to dispose of any other fixed assets.

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

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

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

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, which are subject to borrowing restrictions
- 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

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

13. Gifts

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

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

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. [UPDATED] Related party transactions

All academies within the trust will act in accordance with the Conflicts of Interest Policy.

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.
- The Charity Commission approves payments to a trustee where there is a significant advantage to the academy.
- Any payment provided to the persons referred to in the '[At-cost requirements](#)' section of this policy satisfies the 'at cost' requirements.

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.

The board of trustees will ensure procedures pertaining to related party transactions are applied across the MAT. 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 Seven Principles of Public Life'.

The chair of trustees and the accounting officer will ensure their capacity to control and influence does not conflict with requirements.

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

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.

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. 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](#).

For the purpose of reporting to, and approval by, the ESFA, related party transactions do not include salaries and other payments made by the MAT to a person under a contract of employment through the trust's payroll.

[Updated] All related party transactions will be reported to the ESFA in advance of transactions taking place on or after 1 September 2023, using the ESFA's online form. The trust will obtain approval from the ESFA for the supply of goods or services to the trust by a related party agreed on or after 1 September 2023, where any of the following limits apply:

- The contract or other agreement exceeds £40,000
- The contract or other agreement of any value would mean the cumulative value of contracts and other agreements with the related party exceeds, or continues to exceed, £40,000 in the same financial year ending 31 August

[New] Approval will not be required where contracts and other agreements for the supply of goods or services to the trust are with colleges, universities and schools which are sponsors of the trust, and other state funded schools and colleges, including academies.

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.

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 not listed in the trust's Declared Conflicts of Interest Register
- Confirmation that the trust has an open-book agreement with the supplier

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

When seeking approval for a related party transaction, the following evidence will be provided:

- How the trust agreed to the related party transaction
- That the trust followed its Tendering and Procurement Policy
- That the trust tested the market before making a decision
- How the trust has managed any conflicts of interest

Declared Conflicts of Interest Register

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.

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.

The Declared Conflicts of Interest Register will be kept up-to-date at all times and amended when any new interests are declared.

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

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.

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

'At cost' requirements do not apply to the trust's employees unless they are employed by one of the parties outlined in this section. 'At cost' requirements apply to contracts for goods and services from a related party agreed on or after 7 November 2013. '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.

If any of the parties outlined in this section 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.

'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.

The trust will ensure that any agreement with an individual or organisation referred to in this section 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.

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. [UPDATED] Payroll

All payroll transactions relating to trust staff, permanent or casual, will be processed through the payroll system provided by Xentrall Services. Payments for employment will not be made through any other mechanism.

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

The main elements of the payroll system include staff appointments, payroll administration and payments. Payroll is notified of any staff absence using the My HR absence system.

The headteacher and finance staff 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 academy.

Finance Policy
PUBLIC

- Amendments to the payroll are properly processed.

The Finance and HR Managers are 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

During the Spring term each year, the CFO and Headteachers will review staffing requirements for the following academic year and propose any changes. These proposals will be reviewed and approved by the finance and resources committee.

The finance and resources committee is responsible for authorising the following salary changes:

- Pay awards for support staff
- Staffing structure changes
- Performance-related pay progression

Payroll is continuously monitored and reviewed by the CFO to ensure any changes have been implemented correctly and the information is up-to-date.

Payslips will be produced on a monthly basis and administered to employees via the secure MY HR system on the last working day of the month.

Executive pay

The board of trustees will ensure that executive pay (including salary and any other benefits), follow a robust evidence-based process and are a reasonable and defensible reflection of the individual's role and responsibilities. No individual will be involved in deciding their salary.

The board of trustees 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.

The trust publishes on its website, in a separately readily accessible form, the number of employees whose benefits exceeded £100,000, in £10,000 bandings for the previous year ended 31 August. Benefits for this purpose include salary, the trust's pension contributions, other taxable benefits and termination payments, but not the trust's own pension costs. For employees who are trustees, their salary and other benefits will also be disclosed in £5,000 banding in the trust's financial statements.

Where the trust has entered into an off-payroll arrangements with someone who is not an employee, the amount paid by the trust for that person's work will also be included in the website disclosure where payment exceeds £100,000, as if they were an employee.

Information about the gender pay gap in the MAT is published on the trust's website and on the government's reporting [website](#).

[New] Electric Vehicle (EV) salary sacrifice schemes will not require ESFA approval where no liability falls on the trust if an employee does not fulfil their contractual obligations with the scheme provider. For other types of EV salary sacrifice schemes, or where the trust is under a Notice to Improve (NtI), prior ESFA approval will be sought.

16. Charging and remissions

The Trust is responsible for creating a Charging and Remissions Policy. Each academy will act in accordance with this Policy at all times.

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.

The headteacher in conjunction with the CFO, can choose to remit charges wholly or in part.

The trust may charge parents for the cost to replace items broken, damaged or lost if it is due to pupil behaviour. Payments for activities will be processed and recorded by the Finance Manager. The Finance Manager is responsible for ensuring that the correct invoices are sent to parents, and that payment is received.

The audit and risk committee will review the Charging and Remissions Policy annually, seeking advice from the CFO where necessary.

17. VAT procedures

The trust, and the academies within it, are not registered for VAT and are entitled to reclaim VAT on 126 reclaim for qualifying purposes through a monthly VAT return.

Under legislation, VAT claims can be made on expenditure which supports the trust's core business purposes.

The trust is eligible to reclaim most of the VAT it pays on invoices from HMRC. Any invoices for which VAT cannot be reclaimed, as the purchases were for business activity, are identified and deleted.

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.

The trust will not recoup the VAT element of journeys in the UK or abroad which are identified in invoices unless the trust is making substantial and direct cash subsidies for each pupil.

Reclaimed VAT will not be debited to the individual academies, but to the VAT control account of the trust.

On receipt of the reclaimed VAT from HMRC, the FM will review the remittance, confirm whether this equals the claim made and sign the remittance to confirm this agreement.

18. Risk management

The trust will maintain a risk register and manage risks to ensure its effective operation, including contingency and business continuity planning.

The board of trustees will take overall responsibility for risk management, including ultimate oversight of the risk register, while drawing on advice provided to it by the audit and risk committee. The board of trustees will review the risk register at least annually.

Risk management covers the full operations and activities of the trust, not only financial risks.

The trust will have adequate insurance cover in compliance with its legal obligations or will become a member of the academies [risk protection arrangement](#).

The trust will cooperate with risk management auditors and risk managers and will implement any reasonable recommendations made to them.

19. Special payments

For the purpose of this policy, special payments include:

- Staff severance payments.
- Compensation payments.
- Ex gratia payments.

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

Where the trust is considering a severance payment which includes a non-statutory/non-contractual element of £50,000 or more, 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. Value for money will be shown for all severance payments.

The trust will also obtain prior approval from the ESFA before making a staff severance payment where:

- An exit package which includes a special severance payment is at, or above, £100,000; and/or
- The employee earns over £150,000.

Compensation payments will take account of the facts of the matter ensuring value for money is achieved. For compensation equal to or greater than £50,000, prior approval from the ESFA will be sought.

The trust will consider whether cases reveal concerns pertaining to the effectiveness of internal control.

Ex gratia payments will always be referred to the ESFA for approval.

20. Annual accounts

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](#)'.

When preparing financial statements for the period ending 31 August, the trust will also have regard to the supplementary bulletin, which provides guidance on matters arising from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

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.

All copies of the accounting audit will be stored and filed securely, in line with the trust's Data Protection Policy.

21. Auditing

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 and risk committee.
- External audit and assurance.

Internal scrutiny

Internal scrutiny will be conducted within the trust and directed by the audit and risk 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.

Internal scrutiny will focus on:

- Evaluating the suitability of, and level of compliance with, financial and non-financial 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 non-financial controls.
- Ensuring all categories of risk are being adequately identified, reported and managed.

The programme of internal scrutiny will be covered by a scheme of work, driven and agreed by the committee, and informed by risk. The programme of work will be spread appropriately over the year to ensure higher risk areas are reviewed in good time.

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.

Internal scrutiny will take account of output from other assurance providers to inform the programme of work. 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.

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.

The trust will confirm, in its governance statement, the method(s) it uses for internal scrutiny and why these are used.

The trust may also use other individuals or organisations where specialist non-financial knowledge is required. Where this is done, the trust will reflect the individual's or organisation's findings, recommendations and conclusions as part of the summary document submitted to the ESFA.

Findings arising from internal scrutiny will be used to inform the accounting officer's statement of regularity in the annual accounts.

Regular reports of the programme of work will be provided at each audit and risk committee meeting, including recommendations to enhance financial and other controls and risk management.

The trust will submit its annual summary report of the areas reviewed, key findings, recommendations and conclusions to the ESFA by 31 December each year when it submits its audited annual accounts. If requested, the trust will also provide any other internal scrutiny reports.

External auditing

The trust will appoint an external auditor to give an opinion on whether its annual accounts present a true and fair view of the trust's financial performance and position.

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. 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. There will be a separate letter of engagement for additional services beyond the prescribed audit.

The trust will retender its external audit contract at least every five years.

The board of trustees will notify the ESFA immediately of the removal or resignation of the auditors.

The accounting officer will produce a statement on regularity, propriety and compliance and this will be included in the trust's annual accounts. 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.

The trust will respond promptly, reasonably and appropriately to any findings by the auditors.

22.Record keeping

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

The CFO is responsible for keeping up-to-date records of the trust's financial state. The FMs / OMs are responsible for keeping up-to-date records in relation to the finances of their academy.

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

Each academy has its own set of financial records for day-to-day operational purposes and budget management.

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. All financial records will be kept securely in each academy's admin/finance offices

Third party access rights

The ESFA or its agents may carry out audits and investigations at the trust. The trust will provide the ESFA with access to all books, records, information, explanations assets, premises and staff, and the ESFA may take copies of relevant documents.

Where the ESFA has concerns about financial management and/or governance at the trust, it may wish to obtain from third parties information or documentation about the trust which the ESFA considers relevant for the purposes of its investigation. The trust will provide the ESFA with written authority giving permission for any third party to provide such information to the ESFA or its agents.

23. Notices to improve

Where the ESFA has concerns about the trust's financial management and/or governance, and has issued a Notice to Improve (Ntl), the trust will comply with this notice.

The ESFA will notify the trust of the date of which it published the Ntl.

The trust will publish any Ntl 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. If a Ntl 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

Where required, the trust will seek prior approval from the ESFA before entering into transactions with related parties. The trust will submit additional information, such as monthly income and expenditure accounts, if required by the ESFA.

24. Whistleblowing and fraud

The trust puts proportionate controls in place to mitigate the risks of fraud, theft and irregularity, e.g. regular inspections addressing risks, and implements an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy.

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.

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

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 a member of their SLT. Reports of fraud will be treated in a fair and unbiased manner.

If the report of fraud is against a member of the SLT, the member of staff can go directly to the chair of trustees.

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 board of trustees for further inspection.

Upon receiving the SLT's initial findings, the board of trustees will:

- 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.

Finance Policy
PUBLIC

- 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.

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.

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.

All concerns raised by whistleblowers are responded to properly and fairly in line with the Whistleblowing Policy.

The trust's Whistleblowing Policy is published on the trust's website.

25. Cyber-crime

The trust is aware of the risk of cyber-crime and will implement its Data and Cyber-security Breach Prevention and Management Plan across the trust.

Proportionate controls will be put in place to manage risks and appropriate action will be taken where a cyber-security incident has occurred.

The trust will obtain permission from the ESFA to pay any cyber-ransom demands and understands that the ESFA supports the National Crime Agency's recommendation not to encourage, endorse or condone the payment of ransom demands.

26. Self-assessment

The trust will utilise independent external reviews of the trust's governance. External reviews of governance will be conducted routinely as part of the trust's wider programme of self-assessment and improvement. External reviews will also be conducted before the board of trustees undertakes any significant change, e.g. before the trust grows significantly.

The trust will complete the '[School resource management and self-assessment tool](#)' and submit its completed checklist to the ESFA by the specified annual deadline.

27. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or when new legislation/guidance regarding the subject is published, by the Finance & Resources committee and the accounting officer.

The CFO will review and monitor all financial records continuously throughout the year. The Auditors will review and monitor each academy's financial records, raising any concerns with the CFO.

28. Appendix 1 Financial Authorisation Levels

Summary of Financial Authorisation Levels (September 2023)

Delegated Duty	Value	Delegated Authority
1. Ordering Goods and Services (raising requisitions) All ICT related purchases must also be reviewed by an IT specialist. Tendering procedures	Up to £1,000	Budget Holder, reviewed by Office Manager (Primary)
	£1,001 - £10,000	As above plus Finance Director/ Trust Finance Manager /Director of IT/Director of Facilities (Primary)
	Up to - £5,000	Budget Holder, reviewed by Finance Manager, (Secondary)
	£5001 - £10,000	As above plus Finance Director/ Trust Finance Manager/Director of IT/Director of Facilities (Secondary)
	£10,001 - £50,000	As above plus Head Teacher and Finance Director
	£50,001 - £100,000	As above plus Chief Executive Finance and Resources Committee as per policy
	Over £100,000	Finance & Resources Committee
2. Signatories for cheques and payment authorisations for individual academies (including BACS payments other than payroll)	Any	Two signatories from: - - Head Teacher - Chief Executive - Finance Director - Trust Finance Manager

3. Signatories for cheques and payment authorisations for MAT	Any	Two signatories from: - Chief Executive - Finance Director - Head Teachers
4. Payroll BACS	Any	Trust Finance Manager reviewed by Finance Director or Chief Executive
5. Signatories for DfE grant claims and DfE returns for individual academies	Any	Two signatories from: - Chief Executive - Finance Director - Head Teachers - Chief Executive
6. Signatories for DfE grant claims and DfE returns for MAT	Any	Two signatories from: - Chief Executive - Finance Director - a Board Trustee
7. Virement of budget provision between budget headings	Up to £10,000	Finance Director
	£10,001 - £50,000	As above plus Chief Executive and reported to the Finance and resources Committee

	£50000 - £100000	As above plus Head Teacher, reporting to the Finance and Resources Committee
	Over £100,000	Finance and Resources Committee
8. Virement of funding between academies	Any	Board of Trustees
9. Disposal of assets	£Nil Value	Finance Director and Chief Executive
	Greater than £Nil	As above plus Finance and Resources Committee . DfE approval required as appropriate for disposal of assets funded with DfE grant, or transferred from an LA at nominal consideration
10. Write-off bad debts	Up to £100	Finance Director
11. Purchase or sale of any Freehold property	Any	Board of Trustees and DfE approval required
12. Take up of any leasehold or tenancy agreement exceeding seven years	Any	Board of Trustees and DfE approval required
Grant any tenancy – DfE approval needed		
13. Raising invoices to collect income	Any	Office / Finance Staff

14. Petty Cash & Expense Claims	Against Budget Holders delegated budgets	Budget Holder
	As above but Budget Holder is claiming	Office Manager and Finance Staff
	SMT Finance /Office Manager Trustee of Finance Head Teacher Trust appointments Chief Executive Governor or Trustee	Head Teacher or Finance Director Head Teacher Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chair of Board of Trustees Finance Director
15. Credit Cards	Finance Director	Head Teacher Chief Executive

29. Appendix 2 Accounting Policies

Basis of Preparation of Financial Statements

The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention in accordance with applicable United Kingdom Accounting Standards, the Charity Commission Statement of Recommended Practice: 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities' ('SORP 2015'), the Academies: Accounts Direction issued by the Education & Skills Funding Agency and Companies Act 2006. A summary of the accounting policies, which have been applied consistently, except where noted, is set out below.

Going Concern

The Trustees assess whether the use of going concern is appropriate i.e. whether there are any material uncertainties related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the company to continue as a going concern. The Trustees make this assessment in respect of a period of one year from the date of approval of the financial statements.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are recognised when the Academy Trust has entitlement to the funds, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Grants receivable

Grant income is included in the Statement of Financial Activities on a receivable basis. The balance of income received for specific purposes but not expended during the period is shown in the relevant funds on the balance sheet.

The general annual grant ('the GAG') from the DfE, which is intended to meet recurrent costs, is credited directly to the Statement of Financial Activities to the extent of the entitlement to the funds, any abatement in respect of the period is deducted from income and is recognised as a liability.

Other grants from government agencies and other bodies are recognised in the period in which they are receivable to the extent the conditions of funding have been met. Where income is received in advance of entitlement of receipt its recognition is deferred and included in creditors as deferred income. Where entitlement occurs before income is received the income is accrued.

Capital grants are recognised as voluntary income on a receivable basis to the extent that there is an entitlement.

Donations

Donations are included recognised on a receivable basis where there is certainty of receipt and the amount can be reliably measured.

Other income

Other income including hire of facilities is recognised in the period it is receivable and to the extent the goods have been provided or the completion of the service.

Donated services and gifts in kind

The value of donated services and gifts in kind provided to the Academy Trust are recognised at their open market value in the period in which they are receivable in incoming resources, where the benefit to the Academy Trust can be reliably measured. An equivalent amount is included as expenditure under the relevant heading in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Interest receivable

Interest receivable is included in the Statement of Financial Activities on a receivable basis, and is stated inclusive of related tax credits.

Resources expended

All expenditure is recognised in the period in which a liability is incurred and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to that category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to each activity cost category on a basis consistent with the use of resources, with central staff costs allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges on the portion of the asset's use. Other support costs are allocated based on the spread of staff costs.

Costs of generating funds are costs incurred in attracting voluntary income, and those incurred in trading activities that raise funds.

Charitable activities are costs incurred on the Academy Trust's educational operations.

Governance costs include the costs attributable to the Academy Trust's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and Trustees' meetings and reimbursed expenses.

All resources expended are inclusive of irrecoverable VAT.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted income funds represent those resources which may be used towards meeting any of the charitable objects of the Academy Trust at the discretion of the Trustees.

Restricted General funds are resources subject to specific restrictions imposed by funders or donors, and include grants from the Education Funding Agency and Department for Education. Restricted Fixed Assets Funds are resources which are to be applied to specific capital purposes imposed by the Education Funding Agency and the Department for Education and the Local Authority where the asset acquired or created is held for a specific purpose.

Tangible fixed assets - Capitalisation policy

Tangible Fixed Assets costing:

- £3,000 or more for machinery/equipment/vehicles/ICT
- £10,000 or more for land, buildings and improvements

Finance Policy
PUBLIC

are capitalised at cost and are carried at cost net of depreciation and any provision for impairment.

Where tangible fixed assets have been acquired with the aid of specific grants, either from the government or from the private sector, they are included in the balance sheet at cost and depreciated over their expected useful economic life. Where the related grants require the asset to be held for a specific purpose they are credited to a restricted fixed asset fund in the Statement of Financial Activities and carried forward in the Balance Sheet, with this amount being reduced over the useful economic life of the related asset on a basis consistent with the depreciation policy.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets other than Finance & Resources Committee held land, at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset on a straight-line basis over its expected useful lives, as follows:

Long leasehold buildings	2% pa (50 years)
Fixtures, fittings and equipment	25% pa (4 Years)
ICT equipment	25% pa (4 Years)
Motor Vehicles	25% pa (4 Years)
Building additions	10% pa (10 years)

A review for impairment of a fixed asset is carried out if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of any fixed asset may not be recoverable. Shortfalls between the carrying value of fixed assets and their recoverable amounts are recognised as impairments. Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Taxation

The Academy Trust is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the Academy Trust is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Leased assets

Rentals under operating leases are charged on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

Pension benefits

Retirement benefits to employees of the Academy Trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes, are contracted out of the State Second Pension (S2P) and the assets are held separately from those of the Academy Trust.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the Academy Trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quinquennial valuations using a prospective benefit method. As stated in Note 24, the

TPS is a multi-employer scheme and the Academy Trust is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities of the scheme on a consistent and reasonable basis. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme and the contributions recognised as they are paid each year.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of the Academy Trust in separate trustee administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and gains and losses on settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs. Past service costs are recognised immediately in the Statement of Financial Activities if the benefits have vested. If the benefits have not vested immediately, the costs are recognised over the period until vesting occurs. The expected return on assets and the interest cost are shown as a net finance amount of other finance costs or credits adjacent to interest. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other gains and losses.

Agency arrangements

The Academy Trust acts as an agent in the administering of 16-19 Bursary Funds from the ESFA. Related payments received from the ESFA and subsequent disbursements to students are excluded from the statement of financial activities to the extent that the Academy Trust does not have a beneficial interest in the individual transactions. The allowance of 5% as a contribution to administration costs is however recognised in statement of financial activities. Where funds have not been fully applied in the year then an amount will be included as amounts due to the ESFA.

Conversion to an Academy Trust

The conversion from a state maintained school to an Academy Trust, involves the transfer of identifiable assets and liabilities and the operation of the school for £nil consideration and has been accounted for under the acquisition accounting method.

The assets and liabilities transferred on conversion from a maintained school to the Academy Trust is valued at their fair value being a reasonable estimate of the current market value that the trustees would expect to pay in an open market for an equivalent item. Their fair value is in accordance with the accounting policies set out for Vision Academy Learning Trust. The amounts have been recognised under the appropriate balance sheet categories, with a corresponding amount recognised in voluntary income in the Statement of Financial Activities and analysed under unrestricted, restricted general and restricted fixed asset funds.