Central Contribution Policy

2025-26

"Rooted in faith, we ignite a love of learning, foster inclusive education and empower every individual to achieve their utmost potential."

At the Newman Catholic Trust, we stand united in our unwavering mission to nurture a transformative educational experience, where every child is seen, valued and cherished as a unique gift from God. Rooted in faith, we ignite a love for learning that awakens curiosity, sparks imagination and fuels a lifelong journey of discovery.

Guided by the teachings of Christ and inspired by the profound wisdom of our namesake, Saint John Henry Newman, we strive to foster a community where inclusion is lived, diversity is embraced and every individual is empowered to fulfil their highest potential. As Newman said, *"To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often."* We believe that education is a sacred journey of continual transformation—intellectually, spiritually and personally. We believe that true education is not just about knowledge, but about shaping hearts and minds, cultivating resilience and nurturing the whole person.

Our vision is simple yet profound: To be a beacon of **Hope** and **Excellence**, where pupils are not only academically accomplished but spiritually enriched and personally inspired to make a difference in the world.

In all that we do, we seek to embody our Trust's **HEART Values**, which define who we are and guide how we serve:

- **Hope** – Believing in the boundless potential of every child and striving to build a future filled with possibility, courage and faith.
- **Excellence** – Pursuing the highest standards in learning, leadership and love, so that every action reflects our calling to greatness.
- **Authenticity** – Living truthfully and faithfully, ensuring our words, actions and decisions are grounded in integrity and the Gospel.
- **Responsibility** – Caring for one another and for creation with compassion, stewardship and a deep sense of duty to the common good.
- **Truth** – Seeking wisdom and understanding through Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Together, **Heart to Heart and Hand in Hand**, we build communities of faith and learning where every child flourishes — intellectually, spiritually and morally — for the greater glory of God.

Contents

Part A: Governance and contribution mechanics

1. Purpose and scope

This document explains the Newman Catholic Trust's central contribution, how it is governed and what it funds. It also sets out the Trust Dividend, the standard service entitlements and service standards that every academy receives as part of being in the Trust family.

The purpose is to provide clarity, confidence and transparency for Principals, Local Governing Committees and stakeholders, including schools exploring joining the Trust.

2. Regulatory and accountability context

The Newman Catholic Trust is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) and therefore a single legal entity. As a charitable company, the Trust Board is responsible for ensuring that public funds are used properly, efficiently and in line with the Trust's charitable purposes.

The Chief Executive Officer is the Accounting Officer and the Chief Financial Officer provides professional oversight and assurance. The Trust's financial operating model aligns with the Academy Trust Handbook 2025, including the permitted use of central funding to meet running costs and improvement priorities across the Trust.

The Trust uses a flat-rate central contribution model and does not operate General Annual Grant (GAG) pooling. Where a trust chooses to pool GAG, the Academy Trust Handbook requires an appeals mechanism. While we do not pool GAG, we still operate a clear concerns and appeals route for transparency and fairness.

3. Principles: Catholic mission and HEART values

Our central contribution model is not simply a financial mechanism. It is an expression of shared Catholic mission, shared responsibility and shared hope.

The Trust's HEART values shape how the Dividend is designed and how services are delivered:

Hope: We build stability and capacity so that schools can plan confidently, lead with optimism and protect provision for the most vulnerable.

Excellence: We provide expert support, high expectations and disciplined improvement so that every school can sustain strong teaching, learning and outcomes.

Authenticity: We operate transparently, avoid hidden costs and communicate clearly so that schools understand what is funded, what is delivered and why.

Responsibility: We practise stewardship of public funds, manage risk, secure compliance and reinvest for the common good across the Trust family.

Truth: We report honestly, evaluate impact rigorously and make decisions based on evidence, professional judgement and the reality of each school's context.

4. Central contribution rate and benchmarking

For 2025/26, the central contribution is set at 6% of each academy's General Annual Grant (GAG). Each academy retains 94% of GAG for direct investment in pupils, staff and the learning environment.

Sector benchmark context (indicative):

Trust size	Typical central contribution
Small MAT (under 3,000 pupils)	7.4% to 8.8%
Medium MAT (3,000 to 7,500 pupils)	6.3% to 6.9%
Large MAT (over 7,500 pupils)	5.4% to 5.5%
Newman Catholic Trust (2025/26)	6.0%

This places the Trust at the lower end of sector benchmarks for central contribution, reflecting our commitment to keep as much funding as possible in schools while maintaining the statutory capacity and improvement infrastructure required to operate as a high-performing Catholic MAT.

Benchmark figures are drawn from the Kreston UK Academies Benchmark Report 2025 as referenced in sector exemplars.

5. Calculation method and budget setting
The Trust applies a flat-rate percentage to each academy's GAG allocation. This method is used because it is transparent, equitable and predictable. It avoids complexity, supports accurate budgeting and ensures the Trust can fund statutory and strategic central functions.

The contribution is built into the annual budget cycle. The rate and the central cost model are reviewed each year to ensure value for money, sufficiency of capacity and alignment with Trust priorities.

Any proposed change to the rate is communicated with clear rationale, financial modelling and impact assessment so that schools can plan confidently.

6. Governance, review and transparency
The annual review and approval process is as follows:
• The CFO completes an annual central services cost and capacity review and sets out the proposed rate for the following year.
• The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (FAR) scrutinises assumptions, benchmarks costs and reviews the proposed service standards and KPIs.
• Schools are consulted where a change is proposed, including rationale, impact and mitigations.
• The Trust Board approves the rate and this policy as part of the budget setting cycle (normally beginning in Term 4 for the following academic year).
• Delivery is monitored termly through committee reporting, internal scrutiny and performance indicators.

7. Concerns and appeals
Any academy may raise a concern about the central contribution, the clarity of the offer or the delivery of central services. The Trust commits to resolving concerns quickly and constructively.

Concerns and appeals process:
• Informal resolution: the Principal raises the issue with the CEO and/or CFO and an action plan is agreed.
• Committee review: if unresolved, the issue is considered by the FAR Committee at its next meeting or via Chair's action if urgent.
• Board determination: if still unresolved, the Trust Board makes a final determination and confirms the outcome in writing.

8. Reserves and financial resilience
The Trust maintains reserves in line with its published Reserves Policy. The target reserve position is 8% of annual GAG income plus one month's Trust salary costs. This provides resilience against financial volatility, protects schools in times of risk and enables strategic investment when required.

Reserves are governed and reported separately from the central contribution. Full detail is set out in the Trust's Reserves Policy and annual accounts.

9. Schools joining and leaving the Trust
The Trust approaches growth through careful due diligence, transparency and stewardship.

The following principles apply:
• Treatment of reserves, deficits and restricted funds is defined through due diligence and the legal conversion or transfer documentation.
• Any specific arrangements are approved by the Trust Board and implemented through documented schedules and reporting.
• Schools are provided with clear information during the joining process, including the central contribution rate, the standard entitlements and the Trust's approach to risk and reserves.

For clarity, this policy does not replace or replicate the Reserves Policy, Financial Regulations or legal transfer documentation. It signposts to them.

Part B: The Trust Dividend service offer
10. What the Trust Dividend is
The Trust Dividend is the collective benefit each academy receives by being part of a purposeful, expertly supported and strategically aligned family of Catholic schools. It is not simply a list of services. It is the strategic capacity, shared expertise and shared accountability that enable schools to flourish.

The central contribution funds statutory compliance, professional services and improvement capacity that no single school could sustain alone without significant cost, duplication and risk.

In Newman Catholic Trust, the Dividend is explicitly mission-led: resources and capacity are deployed so that every child is known, protected, challenged and formed, especially the most vulnerable.

11. Universal entitlements
Every academy receives the following universal entitlements as standard. These are funded through the central contribution and form the baseline Trust offer.

Service area	Universal entitlement	Minimum frequency	Lead accountability	Typical evidence of delivery
Strategic leadership and central team	Executive support from the CEO and CFO that is responsive to context and need. This includes strategic planning and prioritisation with Principals and Chairs, honest professional challenge and coaching and, during periods of difficulty or risk, intensive hands-on involvement in diagnosing issues, shaping recovery plans, advising on staffing structures and appointments and liaising with external partners such as the Diocese, local authority and DfE where appropriate.	Ongoing, with increased intensity during periods of significant risk, change or leadership challenge	CEO	Strategic planning notes, recovery and restructuring plans, records of support meetings, correspondence with external partners
School improvement and leadership	CEO-led annual quality assurance cycle with written reports and feedback. Principal appraisal with LGC Chair input. Planned school improvement visits (including whole-school, Ofsted and CSI inspection preparation, EYFS and RE/CSI) and access to Trust networks,	Annual and termly (minimum)	CEO / School Improvement Leads	QA report, appraisal record, visit notes, network schedule

	moderation, expert CPD and Trust INSET days.			
Catholic life and mission	CSI readiness support, RE and Catholic life review, Trust liturgical and mission calendar and formation opportunities aligned to Catholic Social Teaching and diocesan priorities. Trust Chaplaincy Leadership support, coordination and training/CPD	Annual (minimum) & ongoing	CEO / CSI & RE Lead and Chaplaincy Lead	Catholic life review notes, staff formation record, calendar and resources, participation in chaplaincy training, initiatives and network
Safeguarding and inclusion	Safeguarding audits and compliance reviews, DSL support and supervision, Trust-wide safeguarding updates and training assurance. Inclusion advice and SEND leadership signposting. External safeguarding consultancy and advisory support/emergency response/	Annual/ termly (minimum) & ongoing	CEO & Trust safeguarding consultancy	Audit report, DSL supervision log, training matrix
Finance, audit and procurement	Budget setting oversight, monthly management accounts timetable, statutory returns coordination, audit preparation, procurement support and contract review for value for money.	Monthly and annual	CFO	Management accounts pack, audit tracker, procurement log
People and HR	HR advice and casework support, recruitment process support and policy compliance guidance. Workforce analytics and reporting to committees. HR Admin support for recruitment and personnel.	Ongoing	CEO / HR Admin Manager / CFO and HR Advisory Services	Casework log, recruitment support record, policy schedule
Governance	Professional governance support including meeting support, compliance guidance, induction and development for governors and LGCs. Central policy management and templates. Oversight and management of clerking	Per meeting and termly	Lead governance professional	Agendas, minutes, compliance checks, induction record
Estates, health and safety	Compliance oversight, statutory testing coordination, risk management support and estates prioritisation guidance including capital planning and bid support.	Annual and termly	External H&S consultancy and leads / CEO	Compliance dashboard, audit schedule, capital plan
Data protection and information governance	DPO oversight, GDPR compliance support, FOI and SAR coordination guidance and breach response support.	Ongoing	DPO / CEO	Audit record, FOI/SAR log, training record
ICT and digital	Core IT support model, cyber security assurance expectations and central troubleshooting and escalation routes. Centralised platform and email management, centralised backup services and server management. Centralised cyber security and user management	Ongoing	IT lead provider and CEO	Ticket log, cyber assurance checklist
Data, reporting and analytics	Trust-wide data tools and dashboards to support leadership decision making, including access to agreed reporting platforms (for example Insight and Headteacher Report, CPOMS Spotlight, Every HR workforce statistics and analytics and Arbor MIS Trust-wide analytics), support with statutory pupil data returns and comparative benchmarking across schools.	Termly / ongoing	CEO / Data and reporting lead / CFO	Data dashboards, standard reports, statutory data submission logs
Communications, marketing and external partnerships	Central support for school websites and compliance checks, branding and key Trust messages. Strategic communications support for significant announcements or incidents. Coordination of Trust-wide marketing campaigns, recruitment promotions and external partnerships, including diocesan, CST and other sector networks.	Annual and as required	CEO / Communications and marketing leadership	Website compliance checks, campaign materials, Trust-wide communications, partnership records

Universal entitlements are reviewed annually to ensure they remain affordable, high impact and aligned with the Trust Strategic Plan.

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12. Responsive support
In addition to universal entitlements, the Trust deploys responsive support where risk, need or concern is identified, or where targeted development will accelerate improvement. This ensures proportionate support without unnecessary bureaucracy.

Responsive support is agreed through the CEO-led improvement cycle and is typically triggered by:
• Safeguarding or compliance risk, including audit findings or emerging concerns
• Standards and outcomes concerns, including decline in performance or capacity risk
• Leadership transition, including acting leadership or significant restructuring
• Financial risk, including in-year pressures, deficit recovery or forecast volatility
• Inclusion pressures, including high levels of need, attendance concerns or SEMH complexity

Where additional support is deployed, the Trust will be clear about the purpose, the expected impact, the time period and the responsibilities of both the academy and the Trust. Full detail of the differentiated school improvement model is set out in the Trust's School Improvement Offer.

13. Service standards
The Trust commits to the following minimum service standards for central services:

Service	Minimum standard	Reporting and assurance
Catholic life and mission	A Catholic life and RE or CSI review cycle agreed with each school and completed in line with diocesan expectations. CSI preparation support provided in good time ahead of inspection. Chaplaincy network and formation offer refreshed annually.	Termly Catholic life and mission update within CEO reports and to the appropriate Trust committee.
School improvement and leadership	Annual visit schedule agreed by the start of Term 1 and completed within the academic year. Written feedback shared within ten working days of each visit with clear actions and follow up.	QA schedule and reports monitored through the Standards and Outcomes Committee and CEO termly reports.
Finance	Management accounts issued monthly in line with the published timetable. Budget setting timetable and guidance issued.	Monitored through the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (FAR) and internal scrutiny.
HR advisory	Initial response to HR queries within 1 working day with clear next steps. Urgent safeguarding-linked casework escalated immediately to the appropriate adviser.	Termly HR service indicators reported to FAR and included in CEO reports.
Safeguarding	Annual safeguarding audits completed. DSL supervision offered termly as a minimum. Access to external safeguarding advice available for urgent or complex cases.	Annual safeguarding assurance report to the Trust Board with termly updates as required.
Governance	Agendas issued at least 7 calendar days before meetings. Draft minutes issued within 10 working days. Ongoing support for Chairs and Clerks through Trust forums and individual guidance where required.	Quality assurance through the Lead Governance Professional and regular reporting to the Trust Board.
IT support	Critical incidents acknowledged on the same working day with agreed next steps. Routine issues acknowledged within 2 working days and managed in line with agreed service level expectations.	Provider reporting and escalation log, with exceptions reported through FAR where necessary.
Estates and health and safety	Annual statutory compliance plan agreed for each site and reviewed termly. Emerging high-risk issues are escalated promptly with a clear action plan.	Compliance dashboard and estates reports to FAR.
Data protection and information governance	All potential data breaches triaged on the day of notification. SAR and FOI responses supported to meet statutory deadlines. Annual training and policy review programme in place for all schools.	Annual DPO report to the Trust Board and compliance reporting through FAR.

14. Measuring impact and value for money
The Trust is committed to demonstrating that the central contribution delivers measurable value, not simply activity. Impact is evaluated through a combination of service KPIs, audit assurance, school feedback and outcomes indicators.

The Trust reports and assures impact through:
• Termly committee dashboards including central service delivery KPIs and compliance metrics
• Internal scrutiny and external audit, including follow up of recommendations
• Procurement review and contract rationalisation, including evidence of savings and improved service quality
• School improvement assurance, including reporting and delivery of agreed actions
• Governor and Principal feedback, including periodic review of service effectiveness

15. Worked example and indicative value comparison
The following worked example is intended to help academies understand scale. Actual costs vary by provider, locality and school context.

Illustrative example	Value
Typical two-form entry primary with GAG	£1.4M
Annual central contribution (6%)	£84,000
GAG retained by the academy (94%)	£1,316,000
Indicative standalone purchase cost for comparable services (range)	£63,000 to £94,000+
Indicative conclusion	The central contribution delivers comparable services with added strategic capacity, assurance and rapid support

This comparison excludes the uncosted but significant value of rapid crisis response, strategic capacity, peer support, collective purchasing power and mission-aligned leadership development.

16. How schools access support
Schools access central support through clear points of contact and agreed cycles, including the annual quality assurance programme, termly improvement visits, network meetings and operational support routes.

To access support:
• Operational support (finance, HR, IT, estates): contact the central team via the published support channels and escalation routes.
• School improvement and leadership support: through the CEO-led cycle and the team of School Improvement partners.
• Safeguarding: through the Trust safeguarding consultancy and lead, DSL network and supervision, with escalation support for urgent matters.
• Governance support: through the lead governance professional and clerking support routes.

One Family, Many Strengths
The Trust Dividend is not just a promise, it is a lived reality. It is seen in schools that are stronger, safer and more sustainable than they were before joining, in leaders who feel supported and held to high standards and in pupils who receive richer opportunities through shared expertise and shared mission.
We believe schools should not have to choose between autonomy and support, nor between mission and sustainability. The Trust Dividend exists so they do not have to.
Together, heart to heart and hand in hand, we build more than schools. We build a community that serves the common good and forms young people for lives of faith, purpose and service.

Appendix:
Detailed breakdown of services covered and support:

Department	Service Type	Item
Catholic Life & Mission	Central service	Catholic life and RE review cycle including CSI readiness support
Catholic Life & Mission	Central service	Trust liturgical and mission calendar and shared Catholic life resources
Catholic Life & Mission	Central service	Staff formation and mission aligned CPD programme
Catholic Life & Mission	Central service	Trust chaplaincy leadership, training and network coordination
Estates & Operations	Traded service	Property Care
Estates & Operations	Software	iAmCompliant software licence
Estates & Operations	Software	iAmCompliant software support
Estates & Operations	Traded service	Health & Safety support
Estates & Operations	Central service	Co-ordination of CIF Bids
Estates & Operations	Statutory return	Preparation and submission of the Land and Buildings Collection Tool (LBCT)
Estates & Operations	Central service	Central procurement support
Finance	Insurance	RPA insurance
Finance	Traded service	Diocese Service Level Agreement
Finance	Traded service	Payroll
Finance	Traded service	Pensions administration
Finance	Software	Accounting software - Iris Financials
Finance	Software	Budgeting software - IFP
Finance	Software	Financial Reporting software - Iris Advanced
Finance	Central service	Financial processing
Finance	Central service	Preparation of monthly control accounts reconciliations
Finance	Central service	Preparation and distribution of monthly Budget Monitoring Reports
Finance	Central service	Preparation of monthly Management Accounts
Finance	Central service	Preparation and distribution of benchmarking reports
Finance	Membership	Annual ISBL benchmarking threshold data purchase
Finance	Auditors	Preparation and submission of annual statutory accounts
Finance	Auditors	External audit - interim and year end
Finance	Traded service	LGPS Deficit year end valuation
Finance	Auditors	Internal Scrutiny annual programme
Finance	Auditors	Preparation and submission of Annual Accounts Return (AAR)
Finance	Statutory return	Preparation and submission of Budget Forecast Return (BFR)
Finance	Statutory return	Co-ordination of TP End of Year Certificates (EOYC)
Finance	Auditors	Co-ordination of Teachers Pension Audit (TPA)
Finance	Auditors	Preparation and submission of Corporation Tax Return (CT600)
Finance	Central service	Budget support and guidance
Finance	Network/Forum	Finance shared leadership and network
Finance	Central service	Finance standard operating procedures and policies
Finance	Central service	Finance training
Finance	Central service	Liaison with HMRC

Finance	Central service	Liaison with pension bodies
Finance	Central service	Pensions regulator re-declaration and re-enrolment
Finance	Central service	Statutory returns
Finance	Statutory return	Preparation and submission of VAT126 returns
Finance	Central service	Management of the Investment Strategy
Finance	Central service	Completion of Office for National Statistics Questionnaires
Finance	Central service	Preparation and monitoring of cashflow
Governance	Network/Forum	Chairs Forum
Governance	Network/Forum	Clerks Forum
Governance	Central service	Governance Oversight
Governance	Central service	Policy Writing
Governance	Central service	Governor recruitment and induction support
Governance	Central service	Governor training and development programme
Governance	Central service	Governance reviews and Board and LGC self evaluation support
Governance	Central service	Risk management and maintenance of the Trust corporate risk register, including coordination of Board and committee risk reviews
HR	Software	Management Information System (MIS) - Arbor
HR	Software	HR and absence management software - Every HR
HR	Traded service	HR support - including HR admin (contract writing, etc.)
HR	Software	Recruitment platform licence - MyNewTerm
HR	Traded service	Principal Performance Management
HR	Traded service	HR Project - (TURA, job descriptions standardisation and benchmarking or roles)
HR	Traded service	Legal services - escalation
IT	Software	Microsoft Licences
IT	Traded service	IT Project (SharePoint & nct.com emails)
IT	Traded service	Website management and centralised websites
IT	Traded service	Data Protection
IT	Traded service	Information Commission Officers (ICO) licence and management
IT	Traded service	Core IT support contract for schools (remote and or onsite)
IT	Central service	Centralised backup and disaster recovery management
IT	Central service	Cyber security monitoring and user access management
IT	Central service	Microsoft 365 tenancy administration and user lifecycle management (account creation, changes and leavers)
IT	Central service	Email domain and security management (including SPF, DKIM and DMARC configuration)
IT	Central service	Endpoint and device management for Trust owned devices (antivirus, patching and mobile device management)
IT	Central service	Management of web filtering, firewall configuration and secure remote access for schools
IT	Central service	Monitoring and triage of cyber security alerts with coordination of incident response where required
IT	Central service	Trust wide virtual learning platform configuration and support (for example online classroom and collaboration tools)
IT	Central service	Single sign on and access management for key Trust systems and platforms
IT	Central service	Staff cyber security awareness training materials and annual update campaigns
Marketing	Central service	Marketing support and activities

Marketing	Central service	Website content and compliance checks against Trust and DfE requirements
Marketing	Central service	Trust wide communications and media support including crisis communications
Marketing	Central service	Design and coordination of Trust wide recruitment and marketing campaigns
Operational	Membership	CST membership
Operational	Membership	FD Forum membership
Operational	Central service	Admin & resource support
Reporting	Software	Insights software
Reporting	Software	Headteachers Report licence
Reporting	Software	CPOMS Spotlight analytics licence
Reporting	Central service	Trust wide data analysis, benchmarking and dashboard production support
Safeguarding	Traded service	Safeguarding external consultant
Safeguarding	Traded service	Safeguarding reviews
Safeguarding	Central service	SCR reviews
Safeguarding & Inclusion	Network/Forum	DSL and safeguarding network meetings and briefings
Safeguarding & Inclusion	Central service	Safeguarding and child protection policy development and updates
Safeguarding & Inclusion	Central service	Inclusion and SEND leadership network and advice
School Improvement	Traded service	School Improvement support
School Improvement	Traded service	EYFS support
School Improvement	Central service	Trust Inset days
School Improvement	Central service	Presence and support before and in external inspections
School Improvement	Network/Forum	Subject, phase and curriculum leadership networks
School Improvement	Central service	Trust teaching, curriculum and assessment CPD and moderation programme
School Improvement	Central service	Support for school improvement planning including recovery and restructuring plans where required
Staffing	Central service	Shared Services salaries
Staffing	Central service	MAT wide staff deployment
Staffing	Central service	Lead Governance Professional cost
Staffing	Central service	Trust network leads remuneration and release