

# Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust

## Finance Policy



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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy and associated procedures is to ensure that the Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust ("the Trust") maintains and develops systems of financial control which conform to the requirements both of propriety and of good financial management. It is essential that these systems operate properly to meet the requirements of the Trust's Funding Agreement with the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- 1.2 The Trust must comply with the principles of financial control outlined in the academies guidance published by the ESFA. This policy expands on that and provides detailed information on the Trust's accounting procedures. It should be read by all staff involved with financial systems.
- 1.3 This policy relates to all of the Trust's academies. Adherence to the principles and procedures contained in this policy is mandatory for all staff.
- 1.4 This policy is designed to be consistent with:
  - Academy Trust Handbook
  - Trust Articles of Association / Constitution
  - Master and Supplemental Funding Agreements
  - HM Treasury's "Regularity, Propriety and Value for Money".

This Policy also contains the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 Financial Authorisation Limits
- Appendix 2 Accounting Policies

## **2 Organisation**

- 2.1 The Trust has defined the responsibilities of each person involved in the administration of the Trust finances to avoid the duplication or omission of functions and to provide a framework of accountability for Trustees and staff. The financial reporting structure is outlined below:

### **Board of Trustees, Finance Committee & Audit Committee**

- 2.2 The Board of Trustees, Finance Committee & Audit Committee of the Trust has overall responsibility for the administration of its academies' finances and the effectiveness of internal controls.

The main responsibilities of the Board of Trustees are prescribed in the Trust Articles of Association, its Constitution and in the Funding Agreement between the Trust and each of its academies with the ESFA

In addition, financial information needs to be prepared in accordance with company and charity law and in line with accounting standards identified by the ESFA.

These responsibilities in relation to financial matters include:

### **2.2.1 Board of Trustees**

The Board is responsible for ensuring that high standards of corporate governance are maintained, addressing such matters as:

- strategic direction
- finance policy development and strategic planning;
- ensuring sound management and administration of the Trust and its academies and ensuring that managers are equipped with relevant skills and guidance;
- ensuring compliance with general legislative requirements;
- establishing and maintaining a transparent system of prudent and effective internal controls;
- management of the Trust's financial, human and other resources;
- monitoring performance and the achievement of objectives and ensuring that plans for improvement are acted upon;
- setting the Trust's standards of conduct and values;
- assessing and managing risk, (including the preparation of a statement on academies risk management, for its annual report and accounts);
- to hold to account the Chief Executive Officer, the CFO, the Heads and Trust staff.

### **2.2.2 Finance Committee & Audit Committee**

The Committees are responsible for the detailed consideration as to the best means of fulfilling the Trust's responsibility to ensure sound management of the Trust and Academy finances and resources, including proper planning, monitoring and probity; most particularly by:

- assisting to promote the highest standards of propriety in the use of public funds and encourage proper accountability for the use of those funds;
- promoting a climate of financial discipline and control which will help to reduce the opportunity for financial mismanagement;
- contributing to the formulation of each Academy's Development Plan, through the consideration of financial priorities and proposals, in consultation with the CEO, the CFO and Heads, with the stated and agreed aims and objectives of the Trust;
- considering and recommending acceptance/non-acceptance of the Trust's budget at the start of each financial year;
- monitoring and reviewing income and expenditure on a regular basis and ensuring compliance with the overall financial plan for the Trust, and with the Academy Trust Handbook, drawing any matters of concern to the attention of the Board.

The Audit Committee is responsible for audit and scrutinising the Trust and Academy internal control systems and risk management arrangements, most particularly by:

- assisting to promote the highest standards of propriety in the use of public funds and encourage proper accountability for the use of those funds

- improving the quality of financial reporting by reviewing internal and external financial statements on behalf of the Board;
- promoting a climate of financial discipline and control which will help to reduce the opportunity for financial mismanagement; and
- promoting the development of internal controls and risk management systems which will help satisfy the Board that the Trust and its Academies will achieve their objectives and targets and are operating:
  - in accordance with any statutory requirements for the use of public funds;
  - within delegated authorities laid down by Board of Trustees;
  - in a manner which will make most economic and effective use of resources available.

### **The Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

2.3 The CEO is the Accounting Officer with responsibilities as described in HM Treasury's "Regularity, Propriety and Value for Money".

The Accounting Officer has personal responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which he / she is answerable. It must be ensured that, in considering proposals relating to the expenditure or income for which they have responsibilities, all relevant financial considerations are taken into account and full regard is had to any issues of propriety or regularity.

2.4 The main responsibilities of the Accounting Officer include:

- the development of the annual budget;
- the development of medium-term financial planning
- the regular monitoring of actual expenditure and income against budget;
- ensuring the annual accounts are produced in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 1985 and the DfE and ESFA guidance issued to academies;
- Ensuring that the regular reports provided to the Board are timely and accurate;
- 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
- authorising changes to the Trust's personnel establishment.

## **The Trust's Headteachers**

2.5 Within the framework of the Trust's Development Plan, each academy Head has overall executive responsibility for the academy's activities including financial activities. Much of the financial responsibility has been delegated to the CFO and the Business Managers but the Heads still retains financial 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 or the CEO;
- 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 preparation of and delivery of the academy annual budget as approved by the Trust;
- monitoring the regular budget reports with the Business Manager and acting on overspends or risk.
- completing and submitting the census returns to the DfE
- with the Business Manager ensuring the academy maintains sufficient financial records in order for the Trust to submit the EFA annual accounts

## **The Chief Finance Officer (CFO)**

2.6 The CFO works in close collaboration with the CEO through whom he or she is responsible to the Board of Trustees. The CFO has direct access to the Board.

The main responsibilities of the CFO are:

- the management of the Trust's financial position at a strategic and operational level within the framework for financial control determined by the Board;
- the maintenance of effective systems of internal control;
- ensuring that the annual accounts are properly presented and adequately supported by the underlying books and records of each academy;
- the preparation of budgets and medium-term financial plans;
- ensuring returns to ESFA and other funding agencies are completed correctly and on time;
- ensuring returns to statutory agencies are completed correctly and on time;
- cash flow and treasury management including managing investments;
- functional management of Academy Business Managers (under a matrix management approach with the Academy Headteacher);
- 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.

### **The Finance Manager**

2.7 The Finance Manager works in close collaboration with the CFO and Business Managers.

The main responsibilities of the Finance Manager are:

- supporting the CFO and Business Managers;
- monitoring the recording of financial transactions at academy level;
- the preparation of monthly management accounts;
- the maintenance of effective systems of internal control;
- ensure all MAT central invoices are paid within 30 days unless otherwise directed by the CFO;
- to ensure that the trust finance policy is being adhered to;
- recording and monitoring grant expenditure;
- to monitor variances between actual and budgeted income and expenditure;

### **The Business Manager**

It is envisaged that each academy will have a Business Manager or a person who undertakes that role albeit with a different job title

2.8 The Business Managers work in close collaboration with the CFO and Finance Manager.

The main responsibilities of the Business Manager are:

- the day to day management of financial issues;
- the preparation of monthly management accounts in conjunction with the CFO;
- development and monitoring of the annual budget in conjunction with the CFO;
- 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;
- ensure all invoices are paid within 30 days unless otherwise directed by the CFO;
- ensuring that financial controls are working effectively at academy level and ensuring the completeness of financial records.

### **Internal Audit**

2.9 The Internal Auditors are appointed by the Board (through the Audit Committee) and provide Trustees with an independent oversight of the financial affairs. The main duties of the Internal Auditors are to provide the Board with independent assurance that:

- the financial responsibilities of the Board are being properly discharged;
- resources are being managed in an efficient, economical and effective manner;
- sound systems of internal financial control are being maintained;

- financial considerations are fully taken into account in reaching decisions;
- risks are identified and appropriate actions put in place.

2.10 The internal auditors undertake a regular programme of reviews to ensure that financial transactions have been properly processed and that controls are operating effectively. A report of the findings from each visit will be provided to the Audit Committee for review.

#### **Other Staff**

2.11 Other members of staff, primarily Business Support Officers and budget holders, will have some financial responsibilities and these are detailed in the following sections of this policy and in job descriptions.

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.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

2.12 It is important for anyone involved in spending public money to demonstrate that they do not benefit personally from the decisions they make. To avoid any misunderstanding that might arise all Trustees and senior staff are required to declare any financial interests they have in companies or individuals from which the Trust may purchase goods or services. The register is open to public inspection.

2.13 The register should include all business interests such as directorships, share holdings or other appointments of influence within a business or organisation which may have dealings with the Trust. The disclosures should also include business interests of relatives such as a parent or spouse or business partner where influence could be exerted over a Trustees or a member of staff by that person.

2.14 The existence of a register of business interests does not detract from the duties of Trustees and staff to declare interests whenever they are relevant to matters being discussed by the Board or a Committee. Those who are considered to have a conflict of interest in the business proposed must absent themselves from any such discussion or vote.

### **3 Accounting system**

3.1 The Academy Trust currently uses Access Finance and Budget software at all its academies. All financial transactions of the Trust must be recorded on this system.

#### **Back-up Procedures**

3.2 The Director of IT is responsible for ensuring that there are effective back up procedures for the system.

#### **Transaction Processing**

3.3 All transactions input to the accounting system must be authorised and paid in accordance with the procedures specified in this policy.

### **Reconciliations of Bank Accounts**

3.4 The Business Managers are responsible for ensuring all bank accounts are reconciled monthly, in line with the timetable produced by the CFO.

## **4 Financial Planning**

4.1 The Trust and each academy will prepare both medium term and short-term financial plans. Medium term is defined as a period of three years

4.2 The medium-term financial plan is prepared as part of the Trust and Academy Development planning process. The Development Plan indicates how the Trust's and each academy's educational and other objectives / priorities are going to be achieved within the expected level of resources over the next three years.

4.3 The Development Plan provides the framework for the annual budget. The budget is a detailed statement of the expected resources available to each academy and the planned use of those resources for the following year.

### **Annual Budget**

4.4 The CFO is responsible for working with the Heads, the Business Managers and others to prepare a draft annual budget for consideration by the CEO. The CEO is responsible for the approval of the budget by the Board of Trustees.

4.5 The approved budget must be submitted to the ESFA by the specified date, and the CFO is responsible for establishing a timetable which allows sufficient time for the approval process and ensures that the submission date is met. A financial calendar will be prepared which details all the submission dates required by the ESFA.

4.6 The annual budget will reflect the best estimate of the resources available to the academy for the forthcoming year and will detail how those resources are to be utilised. There should be a clear link between the Action Plan objectives and the budgeted utilisation of resources.

### **Balancing the Budget**

4.7 Each Academy should set a balanced budget, taking into account the current level of reserves, medium-term projections and the need to invest to meet the longer term business plan.

### **Finalising the Budget**

4.8 Once the different options and scenarios have been considered, a draft budget should be

prepared by the CFO for approval by the CEO, Finance Committee and the Board. The budget should be communicated to all staff with responsibility for budget headings so that everyone is aware of the overall budgetary constraints.

### **Monitoring and Review**

- 4.9 Monthly reports will be prepared by the Business Managers, supported by the CFO. The reports will detail actual income and expenditure against budget for budget-holders and at a summary level for the CEO, Heads, CFO, Local Governing Body, Finance Committee and Board of Trustees.
- 4.10 Monthly management accounts will be circulated to the Chair of the Trust. This will be available within 28 working days.
- 4.11 The monitoring process should be effective and timely in highlighting variances in the budget so that differences can be investigated and action taken where appropriate. Monthly management accounts will always include a latest financial forecast for the year.
- 4.12 If a budget overspend is forecast it may be appropriate to vire money from another budget or from the contingency. All budget virements must be authorised as shown in Appendix 1.

## **5 Payroll**

- 5.1 The main elements of the payroll system are:
  - staff appointments;
  - payroll administration and payments.

### **Staff Appointments**

- 5.2 As part of the annual budget process, the Trust Board will approve a staff establishment for the trust and academies.
- 5.3 Changes (e.g. the addition of new posts) can only be made to this establishment with the approval of the Board of Trustees. This approval will be dependent upon confirmation from the Heads and the CFO that adequate funding exists for the changes.
- 5.4 Any vacancy can only be filled following sign-off by the Heads of the Academy and the CFO. This sign-off includes confirmation that consideration has been given to alternative approaches before a post is advertised.
- 5.5 Any adjustments to pay / benefits outside the Pay Policy must be approved by the CEO.
- 5.6 Subject to clauses 5.2 – 5.5, the CEO and Heads have authority to appoint staff within the authorised establishment except for the roles of Heads where the Board of Trustees will be responsible. The Trustees will approve all appointments to the senior leadership team of the Trust.

### **Payroll Administration and Payments**

- 5.7 Payroll is currently outsourced and the approval of the Trust's Finance Committee is needed to change any such arrangements.
- 5.8 The Trust has an agreed Pay Policy. Any variations from this must be approved by the CEO.
- 5.9 Any payments or settlement agreements in relation to the termination of employment contracts must be approved by the Trust's Finance Committee.

## **6 Procurement**

- 6.1 The Trust wants to achieve the best value for money from all its purchases. This means getting goods at the correct quality, quantity and time at the best price possible. A large proportion of purchases will be paid for with public funds and there is a need to maintain the integrity of these funds by following the general principles of:

- Probity - it must be demonstrable that there is no corruption or private gain involved in the contractual relationships of the Trust;
- Accountability - the Trust is publicly accountable for its expenditure and the conduct of its affairs;
- Fairness - that all those dealt with by the Trust are dealt with on a fair and equitable basis.

It is particularly important in the case of the Trust that any tenders where a Trustee may have a conflict of interest are managed with utmost probity.

- 6.2 Transactions with connected parties, including with Trustees or governors, should be at cost and not include a profit element.

### **Routine Purchasing**

- 6.3 It is the responsibility of the budget holder to manage the budget, working with the Business Manager, and to ensure that any expenditure is consistent with the objectives of the academy.
- 6.4 Appropriate authorisation limits are reviewed annually and approved by the Trust's Board (see Appendix 1).
- 6.5 It is necessary to take the principles of best value into account at all times although this is not necessarily the lowest cost. An explanation will need to be provided when the lowest cost quotation or tender is not accepted. Three quotations must be sought for expenditure in excess of £5,000.
- 6.6 If it is not possible to obtain three quotations, or if there is a strategic reason as to why a particular supplier is preferred, a procurement waiver form must be completed and signed by the CFO.

6.7 Any expenditure which appears to be of a contentious or novel nature should be referred to the CFO for approval (if below £10,000) or the CEO (if above £10,000). A definition of such expenditure is that which might attract public attention.

Some examples, although this list is not exhaustive, include:

- o Any payments in relation to the termination of employment contracts
- o Any settlement agreements
- o Any related party transactions or connected party transactions – including with Trustees or governors
- o Any transactions with consultants.

### **Credit Cards**

6.8 Credit cards can be issued to senior management and/or business managers of academies. Each card has up to a £2,000 credit limit, and must only be used for school and not personal expenditure. These cards should only be used when a supplier demands immediate payment and does not accept other payment methods e.g. internet purchases. VAT receipts should be obtained for such purchases. Receipts will be matched to the monthly statement and the monthly statement signed by the card holder. In addition, the Heads must authorise each statement and the Business Manager must authorise the Head's statement. The balance on the purchasing card statement will be paid in full each month by direct debit.

## **7. Income**

7.1 The main sources of income for the Trust are the grants from the DfE / ESFA. The receipt of these sums is monitored directly by the CFO who is responsible for ensuring that all grants due to the Trust are collected.

7.2 Grant funding is received from sources such as the local authorities for a variety of purposes including SEN funding.

7.3 The Trust also obtains income from:

- school dinners, uniform, trips, school clubs
- the public, mainly for lettings

### **Trips**

7.4 Each academy has a specific procedure on trips. A designated staff member must be appointed for each trip to take responsibility for the collection of sums due. The appointment must be approved by the Business Manager.

The designated staff member will be responsible for estimating the costs, ensuring the cash is collected, producing a reconciliation etc.

The headteacher must first approve the details of each trip before the academy makes any

financial commitment. The headteacher should acknowledge the reconciliation of the trip and put a plan in place for recovering any pupil debt relating to the trip.

### **Lettings**

7.5 Letting and hire of the Trust facilities will be conducted in line with the Lettings Policy for each academy which includes a scale of charges, which will be reviewed annually.

### **Custody**

7.6 Monies collected should be held securely in the Office Safe and should be banked and reconciled promptly.

## **8 Cash Management**

### **Bank Accounts**

8.1 The opening of all accounts must be authorised by the CFO who will set out, in a formal memorandum, the arrangements covering the operation of accounts, including any transfers between accounts and cheque signing arrangements. The operation of systems such as Bankers Automatic Clearing System (BACS) and other means of electronic transfer of funds must also be subject to the same level of control.

### **Payments and withdrawals**

8.2 All cheques and other instruments authorising withdrawal from the Trust bank accounts must bear the signatures of authorised signatories as listed in Appendix 1.

This provision applies to all accounts operated by or on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

### **Administration**

8.3 All bank accounts must be reconciled monthly and checked by the Business Manager, within five working days of month end.  
The CFO will periodically review the bank reconciliations.

### **Petty Cash Accounts**

8.4 Each academy is responsible for the safe management of petty cash and petty cash limits must be agreed by the CFO.

### **Payments and Withdrawals**

8.5 In the interests of security, petty cash payments will be limited as shown in Appendix 1. Higher value payments should be made by BACS directly from the main bank account as a cash book payment.

## **Administration**

8.6 Petty Cash accounts will be reconciled monthly and all transactions recorded on the accounting systems monthly.

## **9 Fixed assets**

9.1 All fixed asset additions, as identified in paragraph 9.2, must be approved by the Chief Executive and CFO.

9.2 All expenditure on IT equipment, IT infrastructure and related IT developments must be approved by the Director of IT and the CFO, who will liaise with the Chief Executive to ensure that investment is consistent with the Trust's overall IT strategy.

### **Asset register**

9.3 All items purchased with a value over the academy's capitalisation limit of £5,000 must be capitalised.

9.4 All assets

- with a value of over £5,000
- with a value below £5,000 but considered 'attractive' will be entered in the Asset Register.

Business Managers will review the Asset Register on a yearly basis to ensure completeness and identify any discrepancies. Any discrepancies over £1,000 must be reported to the Trust's CFO. It is expected that the Business Managers will investigate any discrepancies and make recommendations to the CFO for treatment.

9.5 The Asset Register helps:

- to ensure that staff take responsibility for the safe custody of assets;
- to enable independent checks on the safe custody of assets, as a deterrent against theft or misuse;
- to manage the effective utilisation of assets and to plan for their replacement;
- the external auditors to draw conclusions on the annual accounts and the Trust's financial system and
- to support insurance claims in the event of fire, theft, vandalism or other disasters;
- security & disposal of assets.

### **Security of Assets**

9.6 Stores and equipment must be secured by means of physical and other security devices. Only authorised staff may access the stores.

9.7 All the items in the asset register should be permanently marked as the Trust's property and there should be a regular (at least annual) count by someone other than the person maintaining the register. Discrepancies between the physical count and the amount recorded in the register should be investigated promptly and, if it exceeds £1,000, reported

to the Trust CFO. Inventories of Trust property should be kept up to date and reviewed regularly.

### **Loan of Assets**

- 9.8 Items of Trust property, except staff laptops or tablets, must not be removed from academy premises without the authority of the Heads.
- 9.9 If assets are on loan for extended periods or to a single member of staff on a regular basis the situation may give rise to a 'benefit-in-kind' for taxation purposes. Loans of assets should therefore be kept under review and any potential benefits discussed with the Trust's auditors.

### **Disposals**

- 9.10 Items which are to be disposed of by sale or destruction must be authorised for disposal in accordance with the Finance Regulations in Appendix 1 and, where significant, should be sold following competitive tender. The Trust must seek the approval of the ESFA in writing if it proposes to dispose of an asset for which capital grant in excess of £20,000 was paid.
- 9.11 Disposal of equipment to staff is not encouraged, as it may be more difficult to evidence the Trust obtained value for money in any sale or scrapping of equipment. In addition, there are complications with the disposal of computer equipment, as the Trust would need to ensure licenses for software programmes have been legally transferred to a new owner.
- 9.12 The Trust is expected to reinvest the proceeds from all asset sales for which capital grant was paid in other academy assets. If the sale proceeds are not reinvested then the Trust must repay to the ESFA a proportion of the sale proceeds.
- 9.13 All disposals of land must be agreed in advance with the Secretary of State.

### **Leases**

- 9.14 The Trust is able to enter into operational leases as outlined in the Academy Trust Handbook
- 9.15 Finance leases are classed as borrowings and can only be entered into with the specific authority of the ESFA.
- 9.16 All leases must be approved by the CFO.

## **10 Depreciation Policy**

- 10.1 The Trust will depreciate fixed assets in line with recognised accounting standards, best practice and DfE guidelines.
- 10.2 Depreciation rules will be approved by the board in advance of preparing the annual statements. The current policy is shown in Appendix 2.

## **11 Companies Policy**

11.1 The Trust will not form any companies, subsidiaries or joint ventures without the approval of the Board.

## **12 Reserves & Investments Policy**

12.1 The Trust will build and maintain a revenue reserve fund to provide flexibility and certainty in forward planning.

12.2 All revenue reserves are controlled by the Trust Board including those transferred in upon conversion and cannot be spent without the approval of the Board. The intention is that transferred reserves and surpluses will be retained for the benefit of the individual academy unless the board directs otherwise.

12.3 In accordance with ESFA and charity accounting standards, the Trust will maintain financial records which identify revenue reserves by academy.

12.4 Reserve funds will be held on deposit in an interest bearing account in a UK regulated bank or in other instruments and investments as agreed from time to time by the Board.

12.5 The Trust will take a very prudent approach to any deposits or investments that it makes.

## **13 Charging & Remission Policy**

13.1 The Trust will ensure that educational opportunities provided at the Trust during school hours are available to all students regardless of ability to pay and that other activities are charged for in a fair and transparent way. No student will be excluded from essential curriculum activities because of their parents' inability to pay.

Each Academy will have its own charging and remissions policy.

Academies may charge for some optional activities which take place wholly or mainly outside academy hours. The Trust may invite voluntary contributions for these from parents. Parents who wish to discuss financial matters are able to discuss them in confidence with the Heads.

In all cases, where a charge is made it will not exceed the costs of the provision.

## **14 Staff Expenses**

14.1 The Trust Staff may claim for reasonable expenses incurred to perform their duties or to repay them for items bought on behalf of the Trust. Reasonable expenses include:

- Travel by public transport;
- Use of own car and parking (excluding home to work travel);
- Unavoidable overnight accommodation;

- Reimbursement for approved items bought on behalf of the Trust.

Rates and allowances are laid out in a schedule of allowed expenses which will be reviewed annually.

- 14.2 Staff must submit an expenses claim form and seek approval as laid out in the Finance Regulations in Appendix 1 before being sent to the Business Manager to be paid. All claims must be accompanied by receipts.
- 14.3 The CFO will monitor claims to ensure compliance with this policy.

## **15 Trustees' Expenses**

- 15.1 Trustees and members of the Trust may claim for reasonable expenses incurred by him or her when acting on behalf of the Trust, in line with the Trust schedule of allowed expenses.

Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses will include:

- Attendance at meetings of the Trust board or Local Governing Body or their sub-committees;
- Meetings with authorities, regulators, auditors etc.;
- Meetings with members of staff or prospective staff connected with their official duties;
- Other official meetings.

It is expected that Trustees and members will wish to minimise the level of expenses claimed so that maximum resources can be applied to the core purposes of the Trust.

Trustees and members may not claim for:

- Time spent working as a Trustees or Member
- Loss of earnings
- Expenses in connection with foreign travel other than as allowed below.

The level of expenses that can be claimed will be no higher than that used for staff in Trust and the Academies.

## **16 Tax**

- 16.1 The Trust will account for VAT strictly in compliance with the rules and regulations applicable at that time. It is the responsibility of the CFO to ensure compliance with VAT regulations.
- 16.2 The CFO will ensure that Corporation Tax returns are completed on time and in accordance with legislation.

16.3 Any payments to contractors and subcontractors are made in accordance with the Construction Industry Scheme.

## **17 Insurance**

17.1 The Trust is a member of the DfE Risk Protection Arrangement and expects all academies to be a member of this arrangement.

17.2 For items such as vehicles and international trips not covered by the RPA, Academies are expected to source reasonable insurance.

## **18 Bad Debts**

18.1 The procedures for debt recovery and for the write-off of any debt which is deemed to be irrecoverable will follow this guidance.

18.2 Wherever possible, income due will be collected before or at the time the relevant sale or service is provided. If this is not possible, an invoice will be issued.

18.3 Income from lettings will be collected in accordance with the Trust Lettings Policy.

18.4 All debts will be recorded and non-payment will be followed up by issuing reminders at the following intervals:

- 2 weeks from date of account - 1st reminder
- 4 weeks from date of account – final reminder.

The final reminder is sent by recorded delivery and threatens legal action if the account is not settled within 14 days. After 10 weeks from the date of the account, where the debt is still outstanding, legal action may be considered, and the debtor will be informed of this in writing.

18.5 If, after every effort has been made to collect the debt and legal action is considered impractical or has been unsuccessful, individual bad (irrecoverable) debts may be written off in accordance with Financial Authorisations in Appendix 1 and in accordance with the guidance provided in the Academy Trust Handbook.

18.6 To ensure sound internal control, staff who raise invoices, will not have the authority to write off debts. The VAT element of any debt must not be written off, as this contravenes HM Revenue & Customs statutory requirements.

18.7 The Trust will retain a Bad Debt Write-Off Summary.

Delegated Duty	Value	Delegated Authority
<b>1. Ordering Goods and Services</b>	Up to £1,000	Business Manager
	Up to £10,000	Business Manager and Headteacher
	£10,001 - £50,000	As above plus CFO (if capital item then Finance Committee)
	Over £50,001	Finance Committee
<b>2. Signatories for cheques and payment authorisations for individual academies (including BACS payments other than payroll)</b>	Any	Any two signatories from: - Head - Deputy/Assistant Heads - Business Manager - CFO - Finance Manager - Chief Executive
<b>3. Signatories for DfE grant claims and DfE returns for individual academies</b>	Any	Two signatories from: - Heads - Chief Executive - CFO
<b>4. Virement of budget provision between budget headings</b>	Up to £50,000	CFO
	Over £50,000	Finance Committee

<b>5. Disposal of assets</b>	Up to £1,000	Headteacher
	£1,001 - £5,000	CFO
	Over £5,000	Finance Committee
<b>6. Write-off bad debts</b>	Up to £1,000	CFO
	Over £1,000	Chief Executive, with referral to the Finance Committee annually
<b>7. Purchase or sale of any freehold property</b>	Any	Board of Trustees and DfE approval required
<b>8. Granting or take up of any leasehold or tenancy agreement</b>	Any	Board of Trustees and DfE approval required
<b>9. Raising invoices to collect income</b>	Any	Business Manager
<b>10. Petty Cash &amp; Expense Claims</b>	Against Budget Holders delegated budgets	Business Manager
	As above but Budget Holder is claiming	Business Manager
	SLT	Business Manager
	Business Manager	Headteacher
	Governor	Chair of Board of Governors
<b>12. Credit Cards</b>	Headteacher	Business Manager
	Business Manager	Headteacher

### Summary of Financial Authorisation Levels - MAT

Delegated Duty	Value	Delegated Authority
<b>1. Ordering Goods and Services</b>	Up to £250,000	CFO or CEO (If capital item over £10,000 then Finance Committee)
	Over £250,000	Finance Committee
<b>2. Signatories for cheques and payment authorisations for individual academies (including BACS payments other than payroll)</b>	Any	Any two signatories from: - CFO - Chief Executive - Finance Manager
<b>3. Payroll BACS</b>	Any	- CFO - Finance Manager
<b>4. Signatories for DfE grant claims and DfE returns for MAT</b>	Any	- Chief Executive - CFO
<b>5. Virement of budget provision between budget headings</b>	Up to £50,000	CFO
	Over £50,000	Finance Committee
<b>6. Virement of funding between academies</b>	Any	Board of Trustees

<b>7. Disposal of assets</b>	Up to £5,000	CFO
	Over £5,000	Finance Committee
<b>8. Write-off bad debts</b>	Up to £1,000	CFO
	Over £1,000	Chief Executive, with referral to the Finance Committee annually
<b>9. Purchase or sale of any freehold property</b>	Any	Board of Trustees and DfE approval required
<b>10. Granting or take up of any leasehold or tenancy agreement</b>	Any	Board of Trustees and DfE approval required
<b>11. Raising invoices to collect income</b>	Any	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CFO</li> <li>- Finance Manager</li> </ul>
<b>12. Petty Cash &amp; Expense Claims</b>	CFO	Chief Executive
	Finance Manager	CFO
	Central Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CFO</li> <li>- Finance Manager</li> </ul>
	Trustees	Chair of Board of Trustees
<b>13. Credit Cards</b>	CFO	Chief Executive
	Chief Executive	CFO

## **Accounting Policies**

### **Basis of Preparation of Financial Statements**

The financial statements have been 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 2005'), the Academies: Accounts Direction issued by the Education Funding Agency and Companies Act 2006. A summary of the Heads 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.

### **Accruals Accounting**

Accruals and prepayments over a *de minimus* of £500 are posted at year end to ensure that the income and expenditure statement is accurate for the financial period.

### **Tangible fixed assets - Capitalisation policy**

Tangible Fixed Assets costing £5,000 or more 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 freehold land, at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset on a straight-line basis over its expected useful lives, as follows:

Property	2% pa
Fixtures, fittings and equipment	10% pa
ICT equipment	33.33% pa
Motor Vehicles	20% pa

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 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. 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.

### **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 Learning Accord Multi Academy 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.