

QUANTUM MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST



Quantum
M · A · T

Finance Regulations

Version	V1.1
Date Approved	12/02/2026
Next Review	Spring 2027
Source	SBM Services template

CONTENTS

Section Number	Section Title	Page No.
1	Introduction	7
2	Organisation	7
3	Day-to-day Delegation of Authority	11
4	Financial Planning and Review	15
5	Internal Control	17
6	Assets and Inventory	19
7	Banking Arrangements	21
8	Purchasing and Payment Procedures	22
9	Reimbursement	31
10	Payroll and Personnel Procedures	31
11	Income	32
12	Risk Management	33
13	Fraud and Cybercrime	34

Financial Scheme of Delegation/Authorisation & Approval Summary

Expenditure Limits/Ordering Procedures

If approval for a contract that spans more than one year, the limits below apply to the total value over the life of the contract not the per annum cost.

Route to Buy	Value
Route 1: Use a DfE framework agreement	All values
Route 2: Use catalogues to find <u>low</u> value goods and services	Under £10, 000
Route 3: Get at least 3 quotes from suppliers for medium value goods or services	£10,001 - £50,000
Route 4: Run a tendering process for high value goods and services which are below Procurement Act 2023 and associated Regulations.	Above £50, 001 but below Public Contract Regulation (PCR) thresholds
Route 5: Run a Procurement Act 2023 tendering process for goods and services above the Cabinet Office guidance for sub-central authorities.	Cabinet Office guidance for sub-central authorities * Goods: £214,904 Works: £5,372,609 Most services: £214,904 Some services for education are covered by the 'light touch regime'. This threshold is £663,540 (remains unchanged from 01/01/24). See Gov.uk website for more details.

Order/Invoice/Value Reducing Order Authorisation:

Value	Delegated Authority
Up to £5.00	Budget Holders
Up to £2, 500	Headteachers Head of School – Primary Senior Finance Officer
Up to £5, 000	Chief Finance & Operating Officer Head of Finance
Up to £10, 000	Deputy Chief Executive Officer Heads of School - Lower
Up to £15, 000	CEO (Accounting Officer)
Up to £25, 000	Chair/Vice Chair - Finance, Premises, Personnel & Wellbeing Committee
Over £25, 000	Co-Chair Trust Board

Related party transactions over £40,000	<p>DfE approval, using DfE's related party on-line form, required prior to entering into transaction.</p> <p>All related party transactions, regardless of value, must be reported to the DfE where the transaction is considered novel, contentious or repercussive.</p>
---	---

Cheque/Standing Order/Direct Debit/BACS Signatories/Faster Payments

Value	Delegated Authority	Additional Guidance
As per the trust bank mandate	CEO (Accounting Officer) DCEO (Deputy Chief Executive Officer) Heads of School CFOO (Chief Finance & Operations Officer) Head of Finance (Any two)	Ensure bank mandate is complied with

Disposal of Surplus Stock, Stores & Assets

Value	Delegated Authority	Additional Guidance
Up to £250	Headteacher Heads of School	Please liaise with Office Managers & Trust Central Team
Up to £500	DCEO (Deputy Chief Executive Officer)	
Up to £1,000	CEO (Accounting Officer)	
Up to £5, 000	Finance, Premises, Personnel & Wellbeing Committee	
Over £5,001	Trust Board	
Academy trusts must obtain prior approval from DfE for the following transactions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disposing of a freehold of land or buildings • disposing of heritage assets, as defined in financial reporting standards, beyond any limits in the funding agreement for the disposal of assets generally 	DfE Approval/Notification	As per Academy Trust Handbook - 5.22

Write off of Bad Debts

Value	Delegated Authority	Additional Guidance
Up to £20	Senior Finance Officer	
Up to £200	Head of Finance	
Up to £250	CFOO (Chief Finance & Operations Officer)	
Up to £350	CEO (Accounting Officer)	
Up to £5, 000	Finance, Premises, Personnel & Wellbeing Committee	
Over £5, 001 to DfE delegate limits (as below)	Trust Board	
DfE delegated limits as per ATH: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1% of total annual income or £45,000 (whichever is smaller) per single transaction cumulatively, 2.5% of total annual income cumulatively, 5% of total annual income 	DfE Approval	Academy Trust Handbook 5.18-5.21

Approval of Returns & Reconciliations

Return	Delegated Authority	Additional Guidance
VAT 126 Return or VAT return if registered	Head of Finance Senior Finance Officer	One VAT return must be prepared centrally for the whole trust
Bank Reconciliations	Finance Officers	To be prepared at least monthly
Funding Reconciliation	Head of Finance to prepare, Chief Finance & Operating Officer to review	To be prepared at least monthly
Budget Forecast Return	Head of Finance to prepare Chief Financial Officer to approve online submission Trustees to approve	
Risk Register	Trust Central Team to prepare & follow Trust Board to monitor and review	In discussion with relevant staff
Register of Business Interests	Trust Board	
Gifts and Hospitality Register	CFOO Head of Finance	
Business Continuity Plan	CFOO	Consultation with Senior Leadership Team
Schools Resource Management Self-Assessment Checklist	Chief Finance & Operating Officer/Head of Finance/ Senior Finance Officer to prepare in discussion with Finance, Premises, Personnel & Wellbeing Committee/CEO/DCEO	

	Trust Board to approve	
--	------------------------	--

Other Monetary Limits

	Limit	Additional Guidance
Mileage Allowance	HM Revenue and Customs approved rate	
Reimbursements	£100 (not more than one claim per month)	Values must be approved prior to purchase by budget holder
Safe Cash/Cheque Limits	£10, 000 Cash £250,000 cheques and other certificates, bonds, stamps as detailed in RPA rules £5,000 monetary not in a locked safe e.g. in transit or at an authorised employee's home	As per academy insurance policy
Inventory Register	As per Assets, Inventory & Disposables Policy	
Asset Register	As per Capitalisation & Depreciation Policy	

The finance policies listed below should be read in conjunction with the trust's other financial management related policies and the government's Academy Trust Handbook;

related policies and the government's Academy Trust Handbook;

- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Reserves Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Investments Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Lettings Policy
- Fixed Assets, Inventory and Disposal Policy
- School Energy Policy
- Business Continuity Plan
- Capitalisation and Depreciation Policy
- Governors Expenses Policy
- Charging Policy
- School Trips and Visits Policy
- Assets, Inventory & Disposables Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Quantum Multi-Academy Trust Board of Directors (Trust Board) is the legal entity which is responsible for all the trusts academies. It is their duty to ensure that each academy operates efficiently, legally, judiciously and safely.
- 1.2 The purpose of these regulations is to ensure that the academy 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 Department for Education (DfE).
- 1.3 The academy trust must comply with the principles of financial control outlined in the Academy Trust Handbook published by the DfE. These regulations expand on that and provide detailed information on the trust's accounting procedures and systems and should be read by all staff and trustees involved with financial systems.
- 1.4 The general conditions that follow are subject to annual review and consideration by the Trust Board, whom must formally minute both the review and any subsequent amendments and approval each year.
- 1.5 The Trust Board confirms that failure to observe these conditions is considered a serious matter and might involve disciplinary procedures being taken against the individual concerned.

2.0 Organisation

- 2.1 The academy trust has defined the responsibilities of each person involved in the administration of academy finances to avoid the duplication or omission of functions and to provide a framework of accountability for trustees, governors and staff. The financial reporting structure is illustrated below:

The Members

- 2.2 The members have a similar role to shareholders of a company. Their role is to be kept informed about trust business and should be 'eyes on and hands off'.
- 2.3 Members must not be employees or occupy unpaid staff roles. There should be significant separation between individuals that are members and those who are trustees.

The Trust Board of Directors (The Board)

- 2.4 The Board have overall responsibility for the administration of the trust's finances and for maintaining the trust as a going concern. The main responsibilities of The Board are prescribed in the Funding Agreement between the trust and the DfE and in the academy's scheme of delegation.
- 2.5 The responsibilities of The Board are as outlined in the scheme of delegation, terms of reference and also in the Academy Trust Handbook.
- 2.6 The Trust Board meets at least 3 times per year in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook

The Finance, Premises, Personnel and Wellbeing Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee

- 2.7 The Finance, Premises, Personnel and Wellbeing Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee are committees of The Board. These committees meet at least once per term, but more frequent meetings can be arranged if necessary. The main responsibilities of the Finance, Premises, Personnel and Wellbeing Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee are detailed in the written terms of reference which have been authorised by the board.
- 2.8 The chair of trustees must not chair the Finance, Premises, Personnel and Wellbeing Committee or the Audit and Risk Committee.
- 2.9 Employees of the trust must not be members of the Finance, Premises, Personnel and Wellbeing Committee or the Audit and Risk Committee; the Accounting Officer and Chief Finance and Operating Officer attend to provide information.

Accounting Officer

- 2.10 The academy trust has designated the Chief Executive Officer as its Accounting Officer. Whilst the Accounting Officer has responsibility, under the board's guidance, for the trust's overall management and staffing, their appointment as Accounting Officer confers specific responsibilities for financial matters. In particular, the Accounting Officer is personally responsible to Parliament, and to the Accounting Officer of the DfE, for the resources under their control, and must be able to assure Parliament and the public of high standards of probity in the management of public funds.
- 2.11 The essence of the role is a personal responsibility for:
- regularity – dealing with all items of income and expenditure in accordance with legislation, the terms of the trust's funding agreement and these regulations, and compliance with internal trust procedures. This includes spending public money for the purposes intended by Parliament;
 - propriety – the requirement that expenditure and receipts should be dealt with in accordance with Parliament's intentions and the principles of Parliamentary control. This covers standards of conduct, behaviour and corporate governance;
 - value for money – this is about achieving the best possible educational and wider societal outcomes through the economic, efficient and effective use of all the resources in the trust's charge, the avoidance of waste and extravagance, and prudent and economical administration. A key objective is to achieve value for money not only for the academy trust but for taxpayers more generally.
- The Accounting Officer also has responsibilities for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for the management of opportunities and risks.
- 2.12 Whilst the Accounting Officer is accountable for the academy trust's financial affairs, the delivery of the trust's detailed accounting processes will be delegated to the Chief Finance & Operating Officer.
- 2.13 The Accounting Officer must advise The Board in writing if, at any time, in their opinion, any action or policy under consideration by them is incompatible with the terms of the Academy Trust Handbook or Funding Agreement (FA). Similarly, the Accounting Officer must advise the board in writing if the board appears to be failing to act where required to do so by the terms and conditions of the Academy

Trust Handbook or FA. Where The Board is minded to proceed, despite the advice of the Accounting Officer, the Accounting Officer must consider the reasons the board gives for its decision. If, after considering the reasons given by the board, the Accounting Officer still considers that the action proposed by the board is in breach of the Academy Trust Handbook or FA, the accounting officer must advise the DfE's Accounting Officer of the position in writing.

Chief Finance & Operating Officer

2.14 The Chief Finance & Operating Officer works in close collaboration with the Accounting Officer through whom they are responsible. The Chief Finance & Operating Officer also has direct access to the Trustees via the Finance, Premises, Personnel and Wellbeing Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee. The main responsibilities of the Chief Finance & Operating Officer are as outlined in the post-holder job description.

Local Governing Body (LGB)

2.15 All academies will be part of an LGB who will work in close collaboration with The Board and the academy trust's central staff. The LGB's delegated responsibilities are as set out in the scheme of delegation and committee terms of reference.

2.16 The LGB confirms that the day-to-day financial management of the academy is delegated to the Headteacher, subject to exceptions contained in these regulations. Throughout these conditions, delegation to the Headteacher shall imply further delegation to the Heads of School/SLT when the Headteacher is not on the academy site. Where the Headteacher wishes to permanently delegate certain financial matters or activities, then the level of that delegation shall be notified in writing to the individual(s) concerned, reported to the Trust Board in writing and incorporated into these conditions.

Office Manager/Finance Officer

2.17 For the purposes of this document the term Office Manager/Finance Officer refers to the person responsible for the day-to-day management of each individual academy's financial operations. Each academy should employ a suitably experienced Office Manager/Finance Officer to support the Headteacher and LGB to manage and protect resources appropriately or alternatively make use of the support services provided by the academy trust.

2.18 The Office Manager/Finance Officer will work with the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team to ensure the academy's financial processes and finance policies are followed. They will be responsible for the effective use of resources within their organisation and will notify the Headteacher of any issues.

The Governance Professional

2.19 The academy trust will appoint a suitably qualified governance professional to the board who is someone other than a trustee, Headteacher or CEO of the trust.

General Requirement

- 2.20 All employees of the academy are expected to act professionally and with integrity and follow the internal control framework and financial policies of the academy. All staff with financial management responsibilities should have access to the information and training required to perform their financial duties.

Register of Interests

- 2.21 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 academy governors and staff with significant financial or spending powers are required to declare any financial interests they have in companies or individuals from which the academy may purchase goods or services. The register is open to public inspection.

The register should include all business interests such as directorships or shareholdings. 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 governor or a member of staff by that person.

The existence of a register of business interests does not, of course, detract from the duties of Trustees/Governors and staff to declare interests whenever they are relevant to matters being discussed by the governing body or a committee. Where an interest has been declared, governors and staff should withdraw from that part of any committee or other meeting.

All Trustees/Governors and academy staff must be given the opportunity to verbally declare previously undeclared interests, and any previously declared interests that may be relevant to the agenda, at every committee and Governing Body meeting.

In accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook the business interests of the trust's directors will be published on the academy's website and will be kept up to date at all times.

Trading with Connected Parties

- 2.22 In accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook the following will apply to goods or services provided by individuals or organisations connected to the academy trust:

The Academy Trust Handbook confirms the 'at cost' rule applies to members, trustees, local governors, employees and parties connected to them for cumulative contracts over £2,500 in a financial year and sets out the statement-of-assurance and open-book expectations.

Related Party Transactions

- 2.23 Trustees must ensure they avoid conflicts of interest, do not accept benefits from third parties and declare interests in proposed transactions and arrangements. No member, trustee, local governor, employee or related individual or organisation may use their connections for personal gain and no payments can be made to

trustees unless permitted by the articles or by authority from the Charity Commission.

- 2.24 Trustees must report all related party expenditure in advance via the DfE online form; obtain approval where transactions are novel, contentious or repercussive, or where the cumulative value exceeds £40,000 in a financial year.
- 2.25 Trustees must obtain DfE's approval for related party transactions that are;
- novel, contentious and or/repercussive
 - the contract exceeds £40,000
 - a contract of any value that would take the total value of contracts with the related party beyond £40,000 in the same financial year

3.0 Day to Day Delegation of Authority

Expenditure Limits

- 3.1 The Headteacher/Head of School can authorise expenditure up to £2,500 on goods and services. Avoidance of obtaining higher authority by raising a sequence of smaller orders in place of one large order is not permitted.
The CEO may also authorise higher levels of expenditure or contracts provided the value authorised has been clearly documented and approved by The Board in the academy budget.

Authorisation for expenditure that is between the values of £2,501 and £5,000 must be referred to the Chief Finance & Operating Officer/Head of Finance. The DCEO, Heads of School have authority to approve expenditure between £5,001 - £10,000 and the CEO can approve all expenditure up to the value of £15,000.

Authorisation for expenditure up to £25,000 must be referred to Chair/Vice Chair of Finance, Premises, Personnel and Wellbeing Committee and over £25,000 must be referred to the Co-Chairs of Trust Board.

Funding

- 3.2 The Finance, Premises, Personnel and Wellbeing Committee will ensure that information submitted to the DfE that affects funding is accurate and complete.
- 3.3 The Trust Board will challenge pupil number projections and review these termly.
- 3.4 The Head of Finance is responsible for reconciling the trust's funding budget entered on the academy's financial accounting system with the monthly funding information provided by the DfE and other government agencies. This reconciliation should be completed on a monthly basis and reviewed by the CFOO.

Bad Debts

- 3.5 The write-off of debts owed to the academy, can be approved as follows;
- Up to £20 – Senior Finance Officer
£21 - £200 – Head of Finance
£201-£250 – Chief Finance & Operating Officer
£251-£350 – CEO

£351 - £5, 000 – Finance, Premises, Personnel & Wellbeing Committee

DfE Approval - DfE delegated limits as per Academy Trust Handbook 5.18-5.21

A sequence of smaller write offs, all within the above limits, to cover a larger write off is not permitted.

Write offs exceeding £5001 must be reported to The Trust Board.

Disposal of Assets or Adjustments to Academy Inventory

3.6 The Headteacher/Heads of School can authorise the disposal / adjustment of recorded academy inventory items up to the value of £250. The DCEO can authorise the disposal / adjustment of recorded academy inventory items up to the value of £500, and the CEO can authorise the disposal / adjustment of recorded academy inventory items up to the value of £1, 000.

Authority for disposals / adjustments above this amount but below £5,000 must be approved by the Finance, Premises, Personnel and Wellbeing Committee.

Disposals/adjustments above £5, 001 must be referred to The Trust Board for approval.

Academy trusts must obtain prior approval from DfE for the following disposals:

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

All disposals / adjustments must be formally recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which they were reported and discussed.

Mileage Allowances and Subsistence Claims

3.7 The academy will reimburse mileage expenses to individuals for business journeys at a rate in accordance with the limitations set out by HM Revenue & Customs. The claimant is entitled to be notified of this rate in advance of commencing their journey. The claimant must have suitable insurance in place to cover both the vehicle and passengers. All expense claims are to be reviewed and authorised by the Chief Finance & Operating Officer/Head of Finance

- The LGB must authorise all claims relating to the Headteachers and the CEO must authorise all claims for the DCEO.
- The Co-Chair of Trust Board must authorise all claims relating to the CEO
- All expense claims, other than milage, are to be supported by VAT receipts (or other appropriate evidence of expenditure) which must be attached to the claim. Claims for subsistence can only be claimed to the maximum stated below
- Rates of subsistence will be paid at the rate and within the conditions that adhere to the Academy Trusts policy on travel and subsistence allowances

Breakfast	£5.00
Lunch	£7.50

Evening Meal £15.00

- Claims for the purchase of alcohol will not be reimbursed
- The academy may not reclaim VAT without a proper VAT receipt

Receiving of Goods / Acknowledgement of Service

3.8 The person accepting the goods will be responsible for signing the delivery/goods received note to confirm the correct goods have been received. This will then be processed by the Office Manager/Finance Manager or Budget Holder who will record on the financial accounting system that goods/service has been received.

Staff Appointments/Terminations

3.9 The Trust Board have approved a personnel establishment for the trust.

3.10 The approval required for the appointment of staff or changes to contract is as follows:

CEO/DCEO/CFOO	The Trust Board
Headteacher/Heads of School	LGB, CEO,DECO
Central Staff	CEO/DCEO/CFOO
All other staff	Headteacher/Heads of School subject to the agreed establishment and budget constraints and in accordance with the Trusts recruitment and appointment policy

3.11 All relevant forms and paperwork with regard to the appointment of, or amendment to contracts of staff should be completed by the trust's Human Resources Department. All personnel pre-employment checks should be completed, and relevant clearances obtained for all staff before they start their employment.

3.12 The Board has authority to approve individual staff severance payments and compensation payments as per section 3.3.5 of the Academy Trust Handbook, providing the non-statutory/ non contractual element is under £50,000. Above £50,000 prior approval must be sought for the non-contractual element from the DfE.

Payment of Additional Hours

3.13 With regard to staff overtime etc., the Headteacher/Line Manager is authorised to incur expenditure up to the level agreed within the annual budget. Beyond this limit, authorisation can only be made by the CFOO/Head of Finance. No overtime should be undertaken without the prior approval.

Monitoring Salary Payments

3.14 It is the responsibility of the Trust HR Managers to ensure that MIS systems are in place to record all staff contract details and that they are regularly updated to take account of new appointments, amendments and terminations of employment. The finance team will use this information as the basis for developing the budgeting tool and ensuring accurate monthly payroll reconciliations.

Any payroll changes relating to the Headteachers, Heads of Schools will be authorised by the CEO and the Trust Board will authorise transactions for the CEO.

Supply Staff

3.15

- a) All supply staff will be appointed by the Headteacher/Heads of School or as otherwise directed by the CEO. At the same time the appropriate commitment for the estimated costs incurred will be entered on to the academy finance system. It is the responsibility of the Office Managers/Finance Officers to ensure this is done.
- b) It is the responsibility of the individual member of staff to agree with the Headteacher/Heads of School the hours worked in the particular payment period. The Headteacher/Heads of School will then authorise the claim and forward it to Trust Central Team. If a dispute arises over hours claimed, the Headteacher/Heads of School will be informed immediately.

Contract Approval

3.16 Any contractual commitment with a term of longer than 12 months, including lease agreements, will require the approval of The Board.

3.17 The Board can only approve a finance lease agreement if it is included on the DfE approved list. [Changes to leasing agreements for academy trusts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/421212/changes_to_leasing_agreements_for_academy_trusts.pdf) Where a proposed finance lease is not on DfE's 'assets granted prior consent' list, the trust must seek specific Secretary of State consent before entering the agreement. Land and building leases may require separate consent.

3.18 Trusts must obtain DfE's prior approval before taking up a finance lease on any asset not on the DfE approved list for any duration from another party.

3.19 Trusts must obtain DfE's prior approval before taking up a leasehold or tenancy agreement.

Insurance

3.20 Insurance cover for the academy will be arranged at Trust Board level. Insurance cover will include:

- Public Liability
- Buildings and Contents
- Business Interruption
- Employer Liability
- Hirers Liability
- Governors Liability
- Academy Journey
- UK and Overseas Travel
- Personal Accident
- Motor

- Engineering
- Cyber Security

If maternity or sick pay insurance is required, this will be arranged at trust level. Business continuity plans should be established in each academy by the Headteacher/Heads of School in consultation with Trust SLT and reviewed annually.

4.0 Financial Planning and Review

Budget Planning / Setting

- 4.1 The academy's overall budget plans (both one year annual and multiyear forward financial plans) will be prepared by the Trust Senior Finance Team in consultation with the CEO/DECO and Trust Board. The budget will be prepared having regard to all known needs of the academies including the Schools/Trust Development Plans and the Asset Management Plans. It is the responsibility of the CFOO to ensure that all the required budgeting paperwork is signed by the Finance, Premises, Personnel and Wellbeing Committee and submitted to The Board in accordance with the published timetable.
- 4.2 Detailed records will be kept of all information used in preparing the budget, including estimations of staffing requirements and calculations of all costs, cross referenced to the assumptions made.
- 4.3 The Chief Financial Officer/Head of Finance will be responsible for ensuring that the academy has trading accounts in place for catering & breakfast clubs.
- 4.4 The academy budget will be reviewed by the Finance, Premises, Personnel & Wellbeing Committee and submitted to The Board for final approval.
- 4.5 The approved budget should be promptly loaded onto the academy's financial accounting system.
- 4.6 A copy of the signed budget plan is to be retained by the Trust Central Finance Team.

Budget Monitoring

- 4.7 The Trust Senior Finance Team will be responsible for monitoring actual income and expenditure against budget for each line item and producing and circulating appropriate reports to the LGB and Trust on a monthly basis. Urgent budget issues will be reported to the CEO/DECO immediately.
- 4.8 The Trust Senior Finance Team will circulate monthly management accounts, including income and expenditure reports, cash flow forecasts and balance sheets to the LGB and Trust Board, together with a written explanation of significant variances against budget, and with a projection of income and expenditure to the year-end.

Resource Management

- 4.9 The trust will ensure that it manages its resources effectively. To support with fulfilling this responsibility they will ensure that the following is carried out;
 - Carrying out regular benchmarking with other trusts in a similar context

- Annually completing the Schools Resource Management Self-Assessment Checklist and preparing an action plan. The completed checklist must be submitted to the DfE by their required deadline
- Engaging with the DfE's approved frameworks when procuring goods and services
- Ensuring each academy's curriculum is integrated with the trusts financial planning strategy
- Ensuring each academy's staffing structure is reviewing regularly and is integrated with the trusts financial planning strategy
- Ensuring the trust has an estate vision, strategy and asset management plan with appropriate provision in its budget to support this

Financial Returns

- 4.10 Central Senior Finance staff will be responsible for preparing all the financial returns required by the DfE. All returns will be completed in the required timescales.
- 4.11 In order to give a true and fair view the financial statements for the annual accounts must be prepared according to the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and Regulations made under the Act, and applicable United Kingdom accounting standards. Academy Trusts must also prepare their accounts in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice - Accounting and Reporting by Charities (revised) ('the SORP'). They must also be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies agreed by The Board. A copy of the SORP together with accompanying information sheets, other Charity Commission guidance and legislation are available to view and download from the Charity Commission website at:
- http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Charity_requirements_guidance/Accounting_and_reporting/Preparing_charity_accounts/
- 4.12 The Trust Board is responsible for approving the academy's annual accounts and annual report and ensuring the annual accounts are audited and submitted to the DfE by the required deadlines. Details of the financial information required are as set out in the latest Accounts Direction for the year being reported.
- 4.13 In addition to submitting accounts to the DfE, under section 442 (2a) of the Companies Act 2006, accounts must be filed with Companies House within 9 months of the end of the accounting period.
- 4.14 The DfE require the Academy to publish its Annual Accounts and Annual Report by 31st January. This will be done via the academy trust's website.
- 4.15 The trust's audited accounts must be provided to the members.

5.0 Internal Control

The objectives of Internal Control are to give the academy trust confidence that as far as is reasonably possible:

- a) the academy's accounting records are accurate and complete
- b) the financial procedures in operation minimise the risks of misappropriation of funds and assets
- c) the trust achieves best value

- 5.1 Finance Officers are responsible for carrying out monthly bank statement reconciliations for all bank accounts within two weeks of receipt. All discrepancies are to be investigated immediately and reported to the CFOO/Head of Finance and, if appropriate, the bank.
- 5.2 The Head of Finance/Senior Finance Officer are responsible for ensuring that VAT transactions are recorded accurately, and the VAT control accounts reconciled to support in the preparation of a central trust VAT return.
- 5.3 The Audit and Risk Committee are responsible for ensuring that internal scrutiny audits take place to provide assurance that they are robust. The Audit and Risk Committee will commission an external provider to carry out audit internal scrutiny audits. The Audit and Risk Committee will ensure that an action plan is drawn up to address any weaknesses identified and will review this on a regular basis. All internal audit reports will be reviewed by The Trust Board.
- 5.4 The Trust Board or a delegated committee will approve the scope of the internal scrutiny work to be conducted per financial year. This will include financial and non-financial controls and a regular external review of governance.
- 5.5 The Trust Board must submit to the DfE an annual summary of the internal scrutiny work that has been completed which includes areas reviewed, key findings, recommendations and conclusions by 31st December.
- 5.6 It is a legal requirement for the academy trust to prepare audited, consolidated accounts. The CFOO/Head of Finance will be required to ensure that up to date and accurate accounts are available and that year end processes are followed. The CFOO/Head of Finance will need to be available to support the statutory auditors in conducting their work.
- 5.7 The trustees will prepare an annual report that evaluates the performance of the external auditors, in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook and makes a recommendation for the reappointment, retendering or dismissal of the auditors. Members are responsible for the appointment or removal of external auditors. The re-tender of external auditing services will take place at least every 5 years.

Month-end Aged Reports and Escalation

- 5.8 Aged debtor and creditor reports are produced as part of the month-end close. The Senior Finance Officer completes the first check; the Head of Finance (HoF) or CFOO then reviews and signs off.
- 5.9 Items requiring clarification or potential correction are formally referred by the HoF/CFOO for investigation by the finance team, with outcomes documented and, where material, included in the monthly management pack to Trustees.

- 5.10 These activities provide timely assurance to the Board and its committees, supporting the ATH's expectation that Boards receive regular, fit-for-purpose financial information and maintain effective internal control. [gov.uk], [ddat.org.uk]

Cash Flow Reporting and Trustee Oversight

- 5.11 The CFOO prepares a rolling monthly cash flow forecast for the Trust. This is included in the monthly management accounts distributed to Trustees and reviewed through the Trust's committee structure.
- 5.12 Where short-term pressures or risks are identified (e.g., low cash, covenant risks, or significant timing differences), the CFOO will escalate promptly to the Audit & Risk Committee/Finance Committee and the Board, ensuring appropriate mitigation is agreed and monitored.

Capital Planning: Asset Management Plan (AMP)

- 5.13 The Trust maintains an Asset Management Plan (AMP) covering capital works across all academies, prioritised within available resources.
- 5.14 The AMP is reviewed termly by the Finance, Premises, Personnel and Wellbeing Committee, with recommendations to the Board for approval where required.

Strategic Prioritisation (Strategy Morning)

- 5.15 Each spring term, the Trust holds a Strategy Morning to consider AMP priorities using three factors:
1. Urgency – including health & safety implications
 2. Impact – on staff, pupils and infrastructure if not addressed
 3. Funding – availability of funds, use of reserves, or inclusion in the forthcoming budget cycle
- 5.16 Outcomes feed the budget setting process and are documented for Board review and approval, ensuring transparent, evidence-based decision-making in line with ATH expectations for effective financial planning and oversight. [gov.uk], [ddat.org.uk]

Separation of duties

- 5.17 It is the responsibility of the CEO/DCEO/CFOO/Head of Finance to ensure that key financial duties are properly separated between individuals. Functions to be separated between staff will include:
- a) Execution – the placing of an order and receipt of goods and services, and the charging and receipt of a fee
 - b) Authorisation – the authorisation of a transaction such as a purchase order and the payment
 - c) Payment – the raising of cheques / BACS and cheque / BACS signatories
 - d) Custody – the holding of goods and services
 - e) Recording – the completion of the accounting records
 - f) Post transaction management checking– reviewing previous transactions to identify errors or intentional manipulation

Accounting Arrangements

- 5.18 The financial transactions of the academy must be recorded in accordance with the academy trust's approved accounting policies and recorded on the accounting system. All transactions input into the accounting system must be authorised in accordance with the procedures specified in this manual.
- 5.19 Entry to the accounting system is password restricted and requires a Multi-factor authentication (MFA)
- 5.20 Access to the component parts of the accounting system can be restricted and the CFOO is responsible for determining access levels for all members of staff using the system.
- 5.21 The academy trust will use the DfE chart of accounts which will be used by the individual academies. Requests to set up new ledger codes need to be made to the Head of Finance
- 5.22 The CFOO/Head of Finance is responsible for ensuring there is effective back up procedures for the accounting system.
- 5.23 The Trust Central Finance Team are responsible for ensuring the following reconciliations are carried out on a monthly basis and account balances reviewed.
- Debtor control accounts
 - Creditor control accounts
 - VAT control accounts
 - Payroll control accounts
 - Bank
 - Sundry creditors/accruals
 - Sundry debtors/prepayment
 - Suspense accounts
 - Intra-company accounts
 - Fixed asset accounts
 - Any other balance sheet accounts as appropriate

Any unusual or long standing reconciling items should be brought to the attention of the Head of Finance.

6.0 Assets and Inventory

- 6.1 The Trust Central Senior Finance Staff/IT Services should ensure that all items which have a useful life and value lasting more than one year and which is above the de minimis level set in the trust's accounting policies are recorded on a fixed asset register and capitalised in the accounting system. The asset register should include the following information.
- asset description
 - asset number
 - serial number
 - date of acquisition
 - asset cost
 - source of funding

- expected useful economic life
- depreciation
- current book value
- location
- supplier
- warranty information

Condition of the items should be reviewed annually, and adjustments made to the register if required.

Inventory

6.2 Each academy in the trust will keep an inventory to:-

- Ensure proper physical control of academy equipment
- Provide a basis for insurance cover and claims if equipment is damaged or destroyed
- Provide an up-to-date record of the equipment available for teaching purposes
- Help the academy plan its equipment replacement programme

All portable items of equipment will be security marked with the name and postcode of the academy. If the academy chooses to use an invisible form of marking, then the item of equipment must carry a visible reference to the fact that the equipment has been security marked. Items not security marked are potentially not covered by insurance.

The following categories of inventory will be entered in the inventory register at the time of acquisition by the academy:-

- Desirable and portable items
- All non-standard classroom furniture/non-IT equipment (e.g. library storage, fans)
- All IT equipment that is not classified as consumable
- All rented or leased equipment (including IT)
- Multiples of small value items (such as set of 30 musical instruments)
- Donated equipment and furniture

The inventory register will record the following information;

- Item description
- Serial number or asset reference number
- Date acquired
- Acquisition cost
- Asset location
- If item has been security marked
- Date of last physical check

The Office Manager/IT Services/Heads of Departments are responsible for maintaining the inventory register.

All inventory items recorded in the register will be checked annually and certified as correct. Any adjustments arising from the physical check must be authorised as laid down in 3.5 above. Evidence of the annual check taking place will be by date and signature of the person responsible for the check on the inventory sheets used for the check. These sheets will be retained on file for at least 24 months to provide an audit trail for changes made to the register as a result of the check.

All authorised disposal of academy inventory must be recorded, showing the method of disposal and the authority for such action (see Section 3.5).

A separate 'Off Site Register' shall be kept for all items loaned to members of staff and pupils. In the event of any items not being on site when the inventory is checked, reference shall be made to this on the documentation used for the inventory check.

7.0 Banking Arrangements

7.1 All decisions with regard to choice of banking service provider and subsequent banking arrangements will be made by The Board.

7.2 The Trust Board must ensure that the academy bank accounts never become overdrawn. Any concerns regarding cash flow should be reported to the CFOO.

7.3 Trust Central Finance Officers are responsible for carrying out monthly bank statement reconciliations for all bank accounts within two weeks of receipt. Any un-reconciled payments older than six months, and unreconciled receipts older than one month, must be investigated and appropriate action taken.

7.4 Trustees will wish to maximise income as far as possible and, where appropriate, a high interest or deposit account will be maintained, in addition to the normal current account. The Trust Board need to ensure compliance with the Trusts Investment Management Policy.

7.5 Direct Debit or Standing Order payment arrangements must be authorised by two of the following authorised signatories and retained on file for reference.

Chief Executive Officer

Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Heads of School

Chief Finance & Operating Officer

Head of Finance

A current bank mandate must be retained on file and the mandated signatories should be consistent with those detailed above.

7.6 An academy may use BACS facilities to replace cheques. The principles and authorisation remain the same as for cheque payments.

7.7 BACS procedures and control are as follows:

- On initial set up the Financial Accounting System runs an initial check on bank details entered and verifies these match

- Finance Officers contact suppliers if there are any changes on bank details
- On receipt of their bank details (or subsequent changes thereto) the Finance Officer will telephone the company to verify their bank details and will write/sign on the letter that this has been completed
- The bank details are then input into the Financial Accounting System and are double checked and signed off by a different member of staff in the Central Team. This signed evidence of independent checking is to be retained for audit purposes
- BACS payments over £5, 000, and a spot check of 5 payments per BACS run generated on the Financial Accounting System, together with supporting invoices, will be signed individually by 2 approved signatures, in accordance with the bank mandate and the financial regulations, to confirm authorisation for payment.
- The BACS bureau procedures will be completed, ensuring the separation of duties are maintained. Payment advices are to be sent to each supplier.
- The trust will pay undisputed invoices within 30 days of receipt and will require suppliers to apply the same 30-day term throughout their supply chains.

7.8 When banking money received (either cash or cheques) the bank paying in slips will be completed in full, clearly showing the split between cash and cheques, and each cheque will be listed separately.

8.0 Contract Management, Purchasing and Payment Procedures

- 8.1 A contract register will be maintained that details the contracts, service level agreements, software licenses and any indemnities that each academy has in place. Trustees will have oversight of the register(s) and be given the opportunity to challenge each academy's plans for replacing goods and services that are due to expire shortly.
- 8.2 The trust is able to enter into indemnities which are within the normal course of business. Any indemnities which are not within the normal course of business will require DfE approval. The trust will risk assess any indemnity clauses within contracts prior to entering into the contracts and will record details of these in the contract register(s).
- 8.3 Quantum Multi-Academy Trust reviews it's contracts regularly to ensure value for money, compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook, and effective, up-to-date service provision. While specific, high-value contracts may have their own review cycles, best practice generally suggests an **annual review** of key contracts and policies.
- 8.4 Budget holders will be responsible for requesting the purchase of items or services from their own budgets and in accordance with their delegated limits. This will be done by the completion of an Internal Order Form which will be sent to the Office Manager /Finance Officer, or by entering a request directly onto the Financial Accounting System

This route should not be used for any non-sterling payments.

- 8.5 Funds must not under any circumstances be used to purchase alcohol except for religious services
- 8.6 On receipt of an order a check will be carried out to determine that the appropriate budget has sufficient funds to meet the order. Where sufficient budgeted funds are identified the Office Manager/Finance Officer/Budget Holder will raise an official sequentially numbered Purchase Order to send to the supplier/contractor, once fully approved. Reference will be made as appropriate to the procurement standards laid down by the academy trust.
- 8.7 Orders are to be authorised in accordance with the 'Authorisation Limits' set out in the front of these Regulations and section 3.1 of these Regulations.
- 8.8 If an order is placed verbally due to urgency or during holiday periods, a retrospective purchase order should be raised as soon as possible to ensure that a commitment is promptly raised on the Financial Accounting System.

It is not acceptable to wait until the invoice/ delivery note is received before entering a commitment onto the Financial Accounting System.

Value Reducing Orders

Orders based on expected annual spend rather than units, which remain internal, as they have no contractual liability.

Orders that do have a contractual liability e.g. building/improvement projects that have been tendered.

Activities where Value Orders are often utilised.

- Exam Fees
- Diner Food and Drink Supplies
- PE Fixture Transport
- Copier Charges
- Contracts with valuation certificates and percentage fees (e.g. Condition Improvement Fund Projects)
- Others as required by Trust Senior Finance Team

The following purchases may be processed without a purchase order being raised as it is accepted that approval is evidenced in an alternative system or process;

- Extra Curricula Trips and Visits (Evolve Approval) - note this does not include School Proms and associated costs as these take place without Evolve Approval.
- Courses and Conference Bookings (CPD)
- Emergency Repairs to the values set in the Scheme of Delegation
- Third Party Relationships e.g. BAP, CSSP
- Copier Charges for Rental Photocopier Machines (Rental charges must have a PO)
- Trip Ledger Expenditure (unless requested by third party when PO will be raised and cancelled)
- Curriculum Subject Tournament/Competition entry fees (most usually PE and Maths)
- P.E. referee's attendance fee

- 8.9 All invoices should be received by the Trust Central Team and will be checked against the original order for accuracy (and delivery notes where appropriate) and

entered promptly on the Financial Accounting System. Goods Received Notes (GRN) are recorded on the Financial Accounting System by Office Manager/Finance Officer/Budget Holder.

- 8.10 The cheque/BACS signatories are any two from the following:-
Chief Executive Officer
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Heads of School
Chief Finance & Operating Officer
Head of Finance
- 8.11 Head of Finance is designated to control cheques / BACS and must ensure that:
- a) A current bank mandate is kept on file and that the mandated signatories are consistent with those noted in 7.5 above
 - b) Spoiled cheques are cancelled on the financial system, defaced and retained on file to confirm that all cheques have been accounted for
 - c) All blank cheques are securely stored and properly accounted for
 - d) Blank cheques are not pre-signed
 - e) Where continuous cheque stationery is used, the approved format is complied with, in accordance with trust guidance
 - f) All raised cheques / BACS are entered correctly on the financial accounting system
 - g) Minimum remaining cheque levels are established with the bank
- 8.12 The Headteachers/Heads of School/CFOO must ensure that all prime financial records are retained for six financial years plus the current year and are stored in a secure and logical manner.
- 8.13 The trust will pay undisputed invoices within 30 days of receipt and will require suppliers to apply the same 30-day term throughout their supply chains.
- 8.14 If discounts are available for prompt payment, then payments can be made immediately, having taken into account any loss of interest that might arise.
- 8.15 A copy of the computer-generated remittance advice relating to the cheque payments only will be affixed to the original invoice.
- 8.16 Copy invoices are not to be paid unless verified that payment has not previously been made. References back to the original order are to be made in every case.
- 8.17 Under no circumstances are payments to be paid against statements.
- 8.18 Where appropriate, adequate checks are to be made that the contractors employed for buildings work have Public Liability Insurance Cover, minimum value £5,000,000. It is the responsibility of the CFOO to ensure that this is complied with.
- 8.19 **Route 1:** For all procurement activities, the trust will first check the DfE's approved frameworks and see if an appropriate framework is already in place. If there is not an appropriate framework in place, the following processes will be followed.

Route 2: For any order or purchase which is estimated to be **low value** for the supply of goods, materials or services, the budget holder must ensure value for money is obtained.

Route 3: Orders and purchases which are estimated to be **low to medium value** will be subject to the receipt of at least 3 competitive quotations. Documentary evidence of the various quotations must be obtained and attached to the purchase order and appropriately authorised. Where a quotation other than the lowest is accepted authorisation from the Local Governing Body is required.

Route 4: Orders and purchases which are estimated to be **high value** and are below the Procurement Act 2023 thresholds should involve the running of compliant tender process.

Route 5: Orders and purchases which are estimated to be **high value** and are above the Procurement Act 2023 and associated Regulations thresholds should be advertised and a compliant tender process run using the government's Find a Tender (FTS). Issue an assessment summary to each bidder before publishing the Contract Award Notice on Find a Tender. The Contract Award Notice then triggers a minimum 8 working day standstill before contract signature.

Some services for education are covered by the 'light touch regime' which has a different threshold and process. Review the government's guidance ahead of procurement to see if this approach applies.

In accordance with agreed procurement standards, approval of contracts over £50,000 will only be made after following the appropriate tendering procedure. The Trust Board will oversee all tendering processes on behalf of the trust.

Internet Purchases

- 8.20 At all times, the same rigour of control must be placed on internet purchases as is normally applied to standard procurement with regard to separation of duties, authorisation controls and independent management checking.
- 8.21 Finance Officers/Office Managers/Purchase Charge Card Holders will be authorised to place online purchases. The internet order must be raised in the name of the academy with the academy's address, not to an individual.
- 8.22 Requests should be made to the Finance Officers/Office Managers from the budget holder in the normal manner, an official order should be raised on the Financial Accounting System and authorised as specified (section 8.4). Where possible the official order number should be quoted on the internet order as a cross reference.
- 8.23 It is the responsibility of the Finance Officers/Office Managers/Charge Card Holder to ensure the internet is the most appropriate means for procurement.
- 8.24 The preferred method of payment for internet purchases will be the request of an invoice from the supplier, which can be paid via the academy's normal payment route.
- 8.25 Payment by an individual's personal credit card should only be considered when the above options have been exhaustively attempted and failed. The correct authorisation procedure for purchases should still be adhered to, and the academy retains the right to refuse to reimburse the individual if the academy's procedures are not followed.

- 8.26 Reimbursement to individuals should be made in the normal manner upon production of an original invoice / receipt.
- 8.27 Supplier invoices, delivery notes and all relevant documentation should be obtained for all internet purchases and retained within the normal filing system (section 8.4). This is especially important if the academy is to recover any VAT element.
- 8.28 All purchases should only be made from secure websites that the AFL has gained reassurance are safe and free from fraudulent activity. The use of online auction websites is not recommended.

Purchase Charge Cards

- 8.29 Purchase Charge cards may be issued by the academy to key staff members to purchase items for the academy instead of using petty cash. They are the only payment method that may be used for international payments other than Faster Payments.

The total aggregate spend limit across all Purchase Charge cards within the Trust is £30,000 per month. Individual card limits may be temporarily increased to facilitate one-off, high-value, or urgent business expenditure. Any request to increase a temporary limit must be submitted via email to the Finance Department, detailing the business justification and expected date range for the higher limit. Requests for temporary limit increases can only be approved by the CEO, DCEO, CFOO, or Head of Finance.

- Cards are issued in the academy's name for the following members of staff/departments below:

Headteachers/Head of School (Primary) - £1,000

Chief Finance & Operating Officer - £5, 000

Head of Finance - £5, 000

Head of IT - £1,000

Site Manager (Primary) - £1,000

Site Manager (Secondary) - £1,000

Catering (Secondary) - £1,000

Food Technology - £1,000

Library (Secondary) - £1,000

Caxton Currency Card 1

Caxton Currency Card 1

- Finance Officers/Office Managers/Charge Card Holders are authorised to use cards for online payments as detailed above
- Cards are kept securely when not in use
- Card purchases are subject to the academy's purchase/expenditure limits/procedures as detailed above
- Personal use is not permitted
- Prime documents will be retained for 6 years + current
- Internet purchase limits are detailed above
- Monthly statements are authorised by the CFOO/Head of Finance
- Any purchase card in the name of CFOO will be signed by the CEO

- Misuse of purchase card by individuals must be reported to the CEO/Trust Board

Tendering Procedures

Introduction to Tendering - Route 4

- 8.30 Approval of contracts over £50,000 and under the PCR limit will only be made following the trust's tendering procedure.
- 8.31 For more specialist or complex works and purchases, the academy may choose to appoint a professional third party to carry out the tender process on their behalf i.e. consultant, architect etc.). If a third party is used, it is expected to apply these regulations with the same rigour and ensure that the principles of Cabinet Office Procurement Policy Notes and Procurement Act 2023 guidance are adhered to where applicable.
- 8.32 Where a government framework exists for the service or goods required, this option should be used.

The Tender Process

8.33 Step 1: Research and assess the market (soft market testing, often preferred for software purchases)

Undertake some initial research into the market and consider the following points:

- Is there a DfE approved framework that could be used?
- How many possible suppliers are there?
- How can the trust identify potential suppliers to invite to bid?
- Speak to potential suppliers (ensure that any information provided to them at this stage is given to everyone else who bids later and that your specification does not unnecessarily favour the suppliers you have spoken to)
- Ask other schools what they have done
- Consider asking suppliers to submit an expression of interest
- Consider publishing a Planned Procurement Notice (PPN) on Find a Tender (FTS)

8.34 Step 2: Prepare the Tender Documentation

The tender documentation that will be sent to suppliers should include:

- A covering letter
- A timeline
- How to ask questions
- How to submit a bid
- The tender specification
- A list of items that require pricing
- The award criteria

- The contract terms – including the level of service required and any contract management arrangements, such as regular meetings
- Any mandatory requirements for suppliers and, if needed, an invitation for suppliers to provide a demonstration
- The proposed contract drafted as far as possible
- A disclaimer that the trust has the right to abandon the process at any time without liability to the bidders

Timelines:

The following deadlines should be outlined within the tender documentation:

- The clarification period – when suppliers can ask you questions
- The deadline for suppliers to submit their bid
- The date the contract will be awarded

Award Criteria:

Award criteria are used to determine which bidder is best placed to deliver the contract.

The award criteria should be specific to the requirements of the tender specification and to aid assessment to determine which bid is the most economically advantageous (the one that combines price and quality).

Each criteria should be given a:

- Range of scores (e.g. 1-5 with 5 highest)
- Weighting (a figure you multiply the score by depending on how important the criteria is, e.g. if price is important then you might give it a higher weighting)

For example:

Supplier 1

Award Criteria	Score (1 low to 5 high)	Weighting (1 low to 5 high)	Overall Score
Price	4	5	20
Delivery time	5	2	10

Supplier 2

Award Criteria	Score (1 low to 5 high)	Weighting (1 low to 5 high)	Overall Score
Price	2	5	10
Delivery time	1	2	2

8.35 Step 3: The Clarification Stage

The tender process includes a clarification stage which is a time when suppliers can ask questions.

No matter who asks the question, in most cases the trust will then send the question and answer to all the bidders in an anonymised fashion to protect the identity of the supplier who asked the question.

Copyrighted or sensitive information should not be revealed.

Suppliers should be asked if they are happy to have their question and answer published. If they decline, consideration should be given to their request and allow them the opportunity to withdraw their question if you do not agree with their request.

Suppliers should be asked to email their questions into the trust and a log of these and the answers provided should be maintained.

8.36 Step 4: Deciding the Winning Bid

The bids received should be assessed using the awards criteria previously agreed and advertised.

No bids should be opened before the deadline

No bid received after the deadline may be considered

All bids must be treated fairly and equally

Record how decisions were made so they can be defended if required (see criteria matrix above)

Keep confidential, secure, auditable records

Award the contract to the highest scoring bidder (see criteria matrix above)

Who should assess the bid?

At least two trustees should attend every tender opening to provide assurance of the process and independent review. It may be appropriate to include a specialist in this process if expert knowledge is required to assess criteria.

A moderation process should then take place where they compare scores and discuss any differences to then reach an agreed score.

Records of all scores, comments and moderation decisions should be maintained.

8.37 Step 5: Communicating the Tender Outcome

Telling successful bidders

A letter should be sent to the successful bidder to advise them:

- That they have been successful
- The award criteria that was used
- Their scores
- Why their bid was the most economically advantageous

The letter is an invitation to finalise the contract. It should make it clear that there are no commitments and that no work should begin until both parties have signed the contract

If for any reason the successful bidder decides not to go ahead with the contract, it can be awarded to the second highest scoring bidder or the process can be re-run.

Telling unsuccessful bidders

A letter should be sent to each unsuccessful bidder at the same time to advise them of:

- The name of the winning bidder
- The award criteria that was used
- The scores for the winning bid
- The reasons for the decision including characteristics and relative advantages of the successful tender
- Their scores and feedback

If an unsuccessful bidder asks for the actual cost of the winning bid, this should be provided to them, provided that it will not give away any commercially sensitive information. There is no obligation to provide a detailed breakdown.

If an unsuccessful bidder asks for feedback on their proposal, there is no obligation to provide a detailed breakdown and only comment on their unsuccessful bid, do not share details of anyone else's bid (other than the successful bid, if this has been requested). Feedback meetings are to be avoided.

If an unsuccessful bidder challenges the fairness of the contract award decision or process, legal advice should be sought.

8.38 Step 6: Awarding the Contract

If there have been no legal challenges, the contract with the successful bidder should be finalised and signed.

Terms and conditions should be signed. The last copy of the terms and conditions sent by either side is the one that is legally binding so the trust should be the last party to sign them. A purchase order should also be raised and approved.

There should be no changes made from the original content of the invitation to tender.

8.39 Abandoning the Process

On rare occasions, the tender process may need to be stopped.

If the process is stopped whilst suppliers are preparing or submitting their bids, they should be provided with an explanation including why this decision has been taken.

The later in the process a decision to abandon takes place, the greater the risk of receiving a legal challenge where bidders may seek reimbursement of their bid costs.

The process cannot be abandoned because the highest scoring bidder is not the supplier the trust wants.

Introduction to Tendering – Route 5

Route 5 is for all contracts that are above the Public Contracts Regulation (PCR) thresholds set out in the table on page 3 of this policy.

In order to be compliant with the Procurement Act 2023, the tendering process for goods and services above this threshold must be run in accordance with advice provided on the Government website. Legal advice may also be sought.

9.0 Reimbursements

- 9.1 Minor Items of expenditure can be reimbursed to staff through the Financial Accounting System via BACS payment only
- 9.2 Expenditure paid via a reimbursement BACS should not exceed £100 on any one item, and not exceed £100 in any one month to one individual. Requests for amounts above this limit can only be authorised by the CFOO/Head of Finance
- 9.3 All purchases made through the reimbursement process, regardless of size, should be pre-authorised by the Headteacher/Heads of School/Budget Holders. Purchases made by the Headteacher must be pre-authorised by the Executive Team or Head of Finance.

Purchases made by the DCEO must be pre-authorised by the CEO. Purchases made by the CEO must be pre-authorised by the Co Chairs of Trust Board

- 9.4 All payments made must be supported by a VAT receipt for the goods purchased. In order for the VAT to be recovered the VAT receipt needs to be scanned and attached to the journal entry to support in the completion of the central VAT return. In the absence of a scanned VAT receipt the expenditure needs to be coded as out of scope for VAT purposes.
- 9.5 Finance Officers will be responsible for the entry of transactions onto the Financial Accounting System.

10.0 Payroll and Personnel Procedures

- 10.1 All staff appointments, amendments to an employee's terms of employment and terminations of employment are to be made in accordance with the arrangements laid down in 3.9 and 3.10.
- 10.2 Neither the CEO/DCEO/Headteachers nor the Heads of School can authorise amendments concerning their own pay and contract conditions. Changes to the CEO/DECO/CFOO pay and contract conditions must be authorised The Trust Board.
- 10.3 The board of trustees must ensure its decisions around executive pay follow a robust evidence-based process and are reflective of an individual's role and responsibilities. As per the Academy Trust Handbook the following process should be followed;

- The procedure for determining executive pay is agreed by The Board in advance and documented
- Decisions around executive pay reflect independence and objective scrutiny and conflicts of interest are avoided
- Factors in determining the level of pay are clear
- Benchmarking has been carried out to ensure the level of pay reflects value for money and is relative to the public sector market
- The process and rationale are all clearly documented.

10.4 The trust will publish on its website, in a separate readily accessible form, the number of employees whose benefits exceeded £100k, in £10k bandings, as an extract from the disclosure in its financial statements for the previous year ended 31 August.

10.5 The CFOO has responsibility for checking and reconciling actual monthly payroll payments and deductions to those expected and committed.

10.6 Payments made each month to the Payroll Service Provider and payments made to outside staff agencies are to be debited against the relevant budgets and credited to the payroll control accounts. After the appropriate BACS transfers and the corresponding entries in the payroll control accounts and the academy bank accounts have been made, any balance remaining in the payroll control accounts must be reconciled, and appropriate explanations documented. It is the responsibility of the CFOO to ensure that this is done.

10.7 Each month Finance Officers will reconcile back to the bank statement all payments for salaries, BACS, and other salary related payments.

10.8 Each month the Head of Finance will check a sample of the personnel records maintained by the academy to the payments actually made by the Payroll Service Provider. It is expected that over the course of a year, every member of staff would have had his/her salary payment checked against personnel records at least once. It is the responsibility of the CFOO to ensure this is done.

10.9 Copies of all notifications to the Payroll Service Providers will be filed by the Trust HR Managers in each individual schools payroll folders and kept secure.

11.0 Income

General

11.1 It is the responsibility of the Head of Finance to ensure that all income due to the academy has been received, banked and that all income due to the academy is collected and reconciled to its financial accounting system.

11.2 All income received should be recorded immediately on the academy's daily income form and entered onto the academy's Financial Accounting System. The collection record should contain the amount received, the name of the person / organisation making the payment, the date the payment is received, and the method, i.e. cash or cheque.

11.3 All income received by the academy should be banked at least monthly and in full. The insurance policy cover for cash and cheques held on site must not be exceeded. However, if a high level of income is expected e.g. proceeds from a fete,

the insurer must be informed to obtain additional short term cover, and the income must then be banked as soon as is practicable.

- 11.4 Personal cheques should not be cashed.
- 11.5 When income is banked the collection record must be totalled in value in order to provide a clear cross reference to the value entered on the bank paying in slip. The bank paying in slip number should then be entered onto the income collection record to assist in providing a clear and simple audit trail.
- 11.6 When banking money received (either cash or cheques) the bank paying in slips will be completed in full, clearly showing the split between cash and cheques, and each cheque will be listed separately, either on the bank paying in slip, or the Cash Analysis Sheet.
- 11.7 Income received by the academies will be acknowledged by the issue of a receipt upon request only.

Custody

- 11.8 Where required, official, pre-numbered academy receipts should be issued for all cash and cheques received where no other formal documentation exists. All cash and cheques must be kept in the safe prior to banking.
- 11.9 Monies collected must be banked in their entirety (intact) in the appropriate bank account. Office Managers/Finance Officers are responsible for preparing reconciliations between the sums collected, the sums deposited at the bank and the sums posted to the accounting system and related system generated reports. The reconciliations must be prepared promptly after each banking and must be reviewed by the Head of Finance.

Automated On- Line Payments - Arbor

- 11.10 When setting up a contract with a new supplier for provision of an on-line payment system, consideration should be given to the following areas:
 - i) Basis of fees payable to the company
 - ii) Complete audit trail and facility of income reconciliation of totals received
 - iii) Reminder facilities to chase up overdue amounts

Any contract for the services of an online parental payment system Service Provider will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the academy is getting value for money and that the provider is giving an adequate service. A copy of the contract should be held in the Trust Central Trust Team.

12.0 Risk Management

- 12.1 The Trust Board has overall responsibility for risk management and must not delegate overall responsibility to a committee. The Trust Board must maintain a risk register. The Local Governing Body will support the trust's risk management strategy by ensuring that they prepare a local risk register which is regularly maintained and submitted for monitoring to The Trust Board. It should identify significant risks and the member of staff responsible for managing it. A copy of the

register should be presented to the LGB at least annually. Termly a copy should be forwarded to The Trust Board.

- 12.2 Where risks arise that threaten the reputation of the academy trust or the financial viability of the academy, they should be notified to The Board immediately.

13.0 Fraud and Cybercrime

- 13.1 The Trust is committed to safeguarding public funds and maintaining the highest standards of financial integrity. In line with the Academy Trust Handbook 2025, we operate a zero-tolerance approach to fraud, theft, and financial irregularity.
- 13.2 Robust internal controls, segregation of duties, and whistle-blowing procedures are in place to prevent and detect fraud. Any suspected or confirmed fraud must be reported immediately to the Chief Finance and Operations Officer and the Audit Committee.
- 13.3 The Trust will investigate all cases promptly and take appropriate disciplinary and legal action. The Department for Education will be notified without delay of any fraud or irregularity exceeding £5,000, or any unusual or systematic fraud regardless of value.
- 13.4 Regarding cybercrime, the Trust will not pay any ransom demands under any circumstances. This position reflects government and Handbook guidance that ransom payments do not guarantee restoration of systems and may encourage further attacks. Instead, the Trust will follow its Disaster Recovery plan, engage appropriate authorities, and implement recovery measures to protect data and systems.