

Three Counties Academy Trust



Financial Scheme of Delegation

Current until next review date of December 31st, 2023

Delegation

A Multi-Academy Trust's (MAT) Board of Trustees is accountable in law for all major decisions about their academies. However, this does not mean that the Board is required to carry out all the Trust's governance functions, and many can and should be delegated as per Three Counties Academy Trust Scheme of Delegation which includes areas of responsibility including the Executive Officer, Trust Committees and Local Governing Bodies. Any decision to delegate a function must be made by the full Trust Board and recorded in the minutes. Any such delegated authorities must be reviewed on an annual basis by the Board of Trustees. Without any such delegation in place then individuals, Committees or Local Governing bodies have no power to act.

This Financial Scheme of Delegation is the main document setting out the principles which determine and define the financial responsibilities, including those delegated, within the Three Counties Academy Trust. It is intended to be clear so that at all levels, those with responsibility are clear in respect of their roles and responsibilities in the key aspects of decision making leading to the financial effectiveness and probity of the Trust. It should be used and reviewed with direct reference to the overall Scheme of Delegation but sits as a separate detailed document in its own right.

Finance and Audit Committee

Three Counties Academy Trust has established a Committee known as the Finance and Audit Committee to scrutinise financial matters pertinent to the Trust. As part of the remit of the Committee, it will encompass the responsibilities of a separate Audit Committee and is hereby authorised by the full Trust Board to do so.

The structure of the Committee will work to the following principles:

- The Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee cannot be the Chair of the Full Trust Board
- The Executive Officer who will act as the Accounting Officer, and the Trust Finance officer will be appointed to the Committee automatically due to their positions
- No other member of the Finance and Audit Committee can be an executive member or employee of the Trust
- Except for the Executive Officer and Trust Finance Officer, all appointments to the Finance and Audit Committee will be made and ratified by the full Trust Board
- There is an explicit right of attendance to Finance and Audit Committee meetings for any Trustee of the Board not appointed to the Committee
- Finance and Audit Committee minutes, where possible, must be circulated to all Trust Board members via Governor Hub, within 10 working days of any meeting concluding
- Finance and Audit Committee meetings shall be held monthly where at all possible
- Extraordinary meetings of the Finance and Audit Committee can be called ad-hoc if required

Authority

The Finance and Audit Committee does not have any executive powers delegated to it and therefore acts in an advisory capacity. It is authorised by the Full Trust Board to investigate activity which falls within the scope of the Terms of Reference for the Finance and Audit Committee, which may include seeking information from Trust employees who as a condition of employment are required to cooperate fully in any such enquiries made on behalf of the Trust Board.

Furthermore, where the Finance and Audit Committee deems it necessary to enlist external professional advice it is authorised to do so, including the additional use of the Trust Accountants or Auditors.

Duties

The specific remit and duties of the Finance and Audit Committee for Three Counties Academy Trust are:

- On behalf of the Trust board, review the Annual Budget for the Trust and for the academies within the Trust, making appropriate recommendations to the full Trust Board
- Review the internal and external financial statements of the Trust and academies within the Trust to ensure they reflect best practice
- Discuss with the external auditor the nature and scope of each forthcoming audit and ensure that the external auditor receives full cooperation from Trust employees in discharging their duties
- Consider all relevant reports from the Trust Finance Officer or the appointed external auditor, including reports on the trust's accounts, achievement of value for money and response to and progress against any improvement targets reported in management letters
- Review the effectiveness of the Trust's internal control system established to ensure that the aims and objectives and the key performance targets of the academies in the Trust are achieved economically, effectively and with due regard for the wider environment and community
- Review any report offered by the Trust Finance Officer relating to the operation of Trust buildings and grounds
- Review new and existing policies relating to the employment and conditions of staff employed by the Trust, making appropriate recommendations to the Trust Board
- Review the recommendations made by any committee of the Trust Board or Local Governing Body in respect of salaries and discretionary awards
- Establish procedures and mechanisms to monitor Trust employees are remunerated in line with contracts of employment and agreed Trust Pay and Conditions Policy
- Audit and report on the adequacy of insurance cover which supports the activities of the Trust as an employer, public liability, and other such insurance requirements as necessary

Audit Duties

The specific remit and duties of the Finance and Audit Committee with respect to audit are:

- Monitoring the adequacy and effectiveness of the Trust's systems of internal control (including review of the Statement of Internal Control) and arrangements for risk management, control and governance processes and securing value for money through economies and efficiencies
- Advise the Trust Board and Members on the appointment, re-appointment, dismissal and fee payment of the Trust Auditor and internal audit service
- Advise the Trust Board on the scope and objectives of the work of the internal audit service and the work of the financial statement's auditor
- Enable and monitor effective communication between the internal audit service and the financial statements auditor
- Advise the Trust Board on audit strategy and annual internal audit plans for the internal audit service
- Advise the Trust Board on internal audit assignment reports and annual reports and on any control issues indicated in management letters of the financial statement's auditor, including responses to these issues
- Monitor to agreed timescales the implementation of agreed recommendations in respect of internal audit assignment reports, internal audit annual reports and/or the financial statements auditor management letters
- Advise the Trust Board on relevant reports from the National Audit Office, the Education and Skills Funding Agency and other relevant funding bodies, including available internal responses to such reports
- In collaboration with the Trust Board and Executive, establish and set appropriate annual financial performance measures and indicators and monitor the effectiveness of the internal audit service and financial statements auditor through these measures and indicators, and, where appropriate so to do and in conjunction with the Trust Members, examine competition for price and quality in respect of the audit service
- Monitor the Trust Risk Management Plan and advise the Trust Board on adequacy and effectiveness
- Produce an annual report for the Trust Board and Accounting Officer, including advice of the Finance and Audit Committee on the effectiveness of the Trust's risk management, control and governance processes and any significant matters arising from the work of the internal audit service and the financial statements auditor
- Monitor and advise the Trust Board on any alleged fraud and irregularity in the Trusts financial and control systems, ensuring that all allegations of fraud and irregularity are appropriately and if required independently investigated
- Receive notification of, and if necessary, give approval for all additional services undertaken by the internal audit service and the financial statements auditor required to perform their remits
- After consideration, recommend the annual financial statements to the Trust Board for approval
- Monitor the effectiveness of the Trust's whistleblowing procedures and in so doing, meet annually with internal and external auditors and the Trust Finance Officer independent of each other

Accounting Officer

The Funding Agreement requires the Trust to identify a nominated Accounting Officer. For Three Counties Academy Trust the Accounting Officer is the Executive Officer where the Trust has multiple academies or the Headteacher where the Trust operates as a single academy trust.

The Trust Accounting Officer is Martin Farmer.

Areas of financial responsibility and administration are delegated by the Trust Board to the Accounting Officer. Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Ensuring regularity and propriety
- Ensuring prudence and economical administration
- Avoiding waste and extravagance
- Ensuring the efficient and effective use of all resources of the Trust
- The effective day to day organisation of staffing and management academies within the Trust

The Accounting Officer may, without the express permission of the Finance and Audit Committee or the Trust Board, appoint others to assist in discharging such duties for example the Trust Finance Officer.

Executive Officer/Executive Headteacher

Within the framework of the Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) having been approved by the Trust Board, the Executive Officer has overall responsibility delegated to them for individual academy activities including financial activities. Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Recommending to the Finance and Audit Committee appointments to any Senior Leadership role in any academy within the Trust for ratification by the Trust Board
- Authorising contracts and Service Level Agreements to a maximum of £25,000 in conjunction with the Trust Finance Officer and taking contracts more than set parameters for approval by the Trust Board
- Following set procedures, sign cheques/BACS in conjunction with any other authorised signatory and in so doing, ensuring systems of control are adhered to. For cheques/BACS in excess of £25,000 approval must be obtained in advance from a non-executive member of the Finance and Audit Committee

Trust Finance Officer

The responsibilities of the Trust Finance Officer include, but are not limited to:

- The day-to-day management of financial issues including the establishment and operation of appropriate accounting systems and procedures
- Management of the financial position of each academy within the Trust at a strategic and operational level in line with pre-determined levels of control as set out in this document or the Trust Scheme of Delegation
- Maintenance of effective and robust systems of internal control
- Ensuring annual accounts are presented and supported appropriately by the underlying books and records of each academy within the Trust
- The preparation and distribution of monthly management accounts as directed by the Finance and Audit Committee
- The authorisation of contracts not exceeding £10,000 in the absence of the Executive Officer
- Ensuring required forms and returns are sent to the DfE, ESFA and/or other regulatory bodies in line with set timetables and signing off such returns as necessary

Delivering Assurance

The Trust Board will monitor and check the operation of the financial controls that have been established and are operated by officers of the Trust. Trustees must always ensure financial probity.

Ongoing independent oversight of the Trust's financial affairs will include:

- That the Trust is appropriately and correctly discharging its financial responsibilities in line with all accepted protocols and those conditions set out in the Funding Agreement and the Academy Trust Handbook
- Trust resources are managed efficiently, economically, and effectively
- Sound systems of internal financial controls are maintained and followed
- There is full financial consideration in consideration of recommendations or decisions made by or on behalf of the Trust

Delegation to other Trust Committees, Local Governing Bodies or Committees of Local Governing Bodies

The Trust Board recognises that at times, the delegation of duties to committees other than the Finance and Audit Committee may be required. The Trust Scheme of Delegation and Financial Scheme of Delegation will be reviewed at least annually to consider any changes to such delegation.

Financial Levels of Authority

All procurement activities must be conducted under the principles of EU procurement law until such time that requirements to do so are no longer binding.

Financial levels of authority may vary dependent on an academy position within the wider Trust. Some financial transactions can only be fully approved by the Trust Board.

Trust Level

Delegated Duty	Value	Delegated Authority	Comments
Approval of Statutory Accounts	-	Trust Board	Statutory Accounts must be signed by the Chair of the Trust Board and the Executive Officer in accordance with DfE and Companies House requirements.
Approval of annual budget	-	Trust Board	Trust Board must approve the annual budget. Budget prepared by the Executive Officer and Trust Finance Officer.
Submission of DfE/ESFA financial returns	-	Executive Officer and Trust Finance Officer	Returns to include Annual Return, Budget Forecast return out turn and any grant monitoring forms e.g., CIF funds.
Approval of financial policies	-	Trust Board	Trust Board to approve financial policies implemented across all academies within the Trust.
Submission of VAT reclaims	Unlimited	Executive Officer and Trust Finance Officer	Timely VAT returns to be made for the Trust under the direction of the Trust Finance Officer.
Ordering of goods and services	Over £25,000	Trust Board	Trust Board approval required for orders more than £25,000 for any academy within the Trust. EU procurement processes for orders more than £140,000 must be followed until no longer required under law.
Disposal of assets	Over £5,000	Trust Board	Trust Board required to approve the disposal of any Trust assets more than £5,000.

Academy Level

Delegated Duty	Value	Delegated Authority	Comments
Ordering goods and services	Up to £500.00	Budget/Capitation Holder/HoS	Under £500.00 proof of best value to be noted and retained.
	Between £501.00 - £1,000.00	ABM	Again best value to be noted & retained
	Between £1,001 – £5,000.00	TFO	Between £1,000 and £3,000.00 a minimum of 2 quotes to be obtained. Between £3,000.00 - £5,000.00 Lowest quote to be accepted unless authorized by Executive Officer or Trust Finance Officer & best value noted
	Between £5,001 and £25,000	Executive Officer	3 documented quotes to be received. Authority to use any appropriate quote not necessarily the lowest granted but best value must be demonstrated.
	Over £25,000	Trust Board	Orders must be put out to tender.
	Over £140,000	Trust Board	May need to comply with EU compliant tendering process until transition period has lapsed.
Authorising salary outruns	Unlimited	Trust Finance Officer	
Signatures/authorisation for cheques and/or BACS payments	Up to £2,000	Any 2 signatories	Both signatories to do so in the presence of the Trust Finance Officer as a witness.
	Unlimited (subject to authorisation and approval limits)	Executive Office plus any 1 signatory	For payments more than £5,000 the Executive Officer must be 1 of the 2 required signatories and both signatories to do so in the presence of the Trust Finance Officer as a witness.
Budget cost center virements	Up to £25,000	Executive Officer or Trust Finance Officer	Finance and Audit Committee to be informed where over £1,000.
	Over £25,000	Finance and Audit Committee	Trust Board to be informed of any such virements.
Disposal of assets	Up to £5,000	Executive Officer or Trust Finance Officer	Inform Finance and Audit Committee for disposal of assets above £500

	Over £5,000	Trust Board	Ensure compliance with the Academies Financial Handbook when reporting asset disposal to the DfE.
Approval of annual budget academy level	Over £25,000	Trust Board	Trust Board to approve annual budget, produced by the Executive Officer and Trust Finance Officer and scrutinized by the Finance and Audit Committee prior to recommendation to the Trust Board.

Appointment of Trust Employees

Role	Appointment Panel
Executive Officer Trust Finance Officer	Trust Board.
Trust Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead Professional	Executive Officer with a minimum of 2 full Trustees. Appointment to be ratified by Trust Board.
Head of School	Executive Officer and Local Governing Body with a minimum of 2 full Trustees. Appointment to be ratified by Trust Board.
Deputy or Assistant Head	Executive Officer, Head of School and Local Governing Body with a minimum of 1 full Trustee. Appointment to be ratified by Trust Board.
Faculty Leaders or Departmental Heads, SENDCO, Phase Leaders or any post at TLR 1 or 2	Executive Officer, Head of School and at least 1 member of the Local Governing Body.
Primary Subject Leaders	Head of School and at least 2 members of the Local Governing Body.
All other teaching roles	Executive Officer, Head of School and at least 1 member of the Local Governing Body.
All Associate Staff other than the Trust Finance Officer	Executive Officer, Trust Finance Officer and at least 1 member of the Local Governing Body who is a full Trustee (Executive Officer can delegate in full for some positions).

If unavailable, the Executive Officer may delegate responsibility for the appointment of teaching roles to the relevant Head of School. For Associate Staff this can be delegated to the Trust Finance Officer.

No interviews should be conducted, and no appointment can be made unless the panel meets the minimum requirement specified for Trustees and/or Local Governors.

All appointments must follow employment law with recorded shortlisting activities and retention of records. All equality laws and conventions must be observed. A minimum of 1 panel member must have current Safer Recruiting credentials from an accepted body. The Executive Officer and all Heads of

School must maintain current Safer Recruitment training.

Disciplinary Cases

Role	Delegated Authority
Executive Officer	Trust Board.
Trust Finance Officer, Trust Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead Professional or Head of School	Executive Officer and Trust Board.
Deputy or Assistant Head	Executive Officer, Head of School and Staff Discipline and Wellbeing Committee with a minimum of 3 full Trustees. Outcome to be reported to the Trust Board.
Faculty Leaders or Departmental Heads, SENDCO, Phase Leaders or any post at TLR 1 or 2	Executive Officer or Head of School and Staff Discipline and Wellbeing Committee with a minimum of 2 full Trustees. Outcome to be reported to the Trust Board.
Primary Subject Leaders	Executive Officer or Head of School and Staff Discipline and Wellbeing Committee with a minimum of 1 full Trustee. Outcome to be reported to the Trust Board.
All other teaching roles	Executive Officer or Head of School and Staff Discipline and Wellbeing Committee with a minimum of 1 full Trustee. Outcome to be reported to the Trust Board.
All Associate Staff other than the Trust Finance Officer	Executive Officer or Head of School and Staff Discipline and Wellbeing Committee with a minimum of 1 full Trustee. Outcome to be reported to the Trust Board. (Executive Officer can delegate in full for some positions).

The Trust Staff Discipline and Grievance Policy must be followed at all points during any disciplinary procedure without exception. This may include the commissioning of external agencies to conduct such investigations as appropriate. The Staff Discipline and Wellbeing Committee is a committee of the Trust Board. Advice from Trust HR professionals should be sought at each juncture as appropriate to need. Where the disciplinary action is as a result of a complaint, the Trust Complaints Policy and Procedure must have been fully complied with. Potential conflicts of interest must be resolved prior to any Trustee or employee sitting on a disciplinary panel or playing an investigative role in any investigation on behalf of the Trust.

Decisions to dismiss Trust employees can only be taken in line with parameters as set out in the current trust Scheme of Delegation.

No disciplinary meetings should be held and unless the panel meets the minimum requirement specified for Trustees and/or Committee members as above.

A separate Trust Board Appeals Panel may be required, and an appropriate number of suitable Trustees should not take part in any process leading up to the

lodging of an appeal to ensure correct procedure is observed.

Appraisal, Performance Management and Performance Related Pay Decisions

Role	Delegated Authority
Executive Officer/Executive Headteacher or Trust Finance Officer	Executive Officer/Executive Headteacher Appraisal and Review Committee, which must include the current Chair of Trustees. Recommendations to be made to the Trust Board.
Trust Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead Professional or Head of School	Executive Officer and the current Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee. Recommendations to be made to the Trust Board.
Deputy or Assistant Head	Executive Officer. Recommendations to be made to the Trust Board.
Faculty Leaders or Departmental Heads, SENDCO, Phase Leaders or any post at TLR 1 or 2	Executive Officer or Head of School. Recommendations to be reviewed by the Finance and Audit Committee and authorized by the Trust Board.
Primary Subject Leaders	Executive Officer or Head of School. Recommendations to be reviewed by the Finance and Audit Committee and authorized by the Trust Board.
All other teaching roles	Executive Officer or Head of School. Recommendations to be reviewed by the Finance and Audit Committee and authorized by the Trust Board.
All Associate Staff other than the Trust Finance Officer	Trust Finance Officer. Recommendations to be made to the Executive Officer and the Finance and Audit Committee.

The Executive Officer will produce an annual report (redacted) for appraisal and any recommended pay awards of teaching staff in line with the Trust Pay Policy. Teaching staff will receive reviews and the issuing of new targets prior to October half-term at the latest each year. The Trust Board will be required to scrutinise, accept, and approve these recommendations which may include remote acceptance if no Trust Board meeting is able to be called at the time. Any decisions accepted and ratified should formally be recorded in the next set of Trust Board minutes.

The Trust Finance Officer will produce an annual report (redacted) for appraisal and any recommended pay awards of teaching staff in line with the Trust Pay Policy to both the Executive Officer and the Trust Board at a point in the annual cycle where all reviews have been conducted by.

In the case of the Executive Officer/Executive Headteacher, the Executive Officer/Executive Headteacher Appraisal and Review Committee will meet no later than the end of Autumn Term to consider Performance Management. With regards specifically to the Executive Officer/Executive Headteacher, the committee will consider evidence and recommendations made by the appointed School Improvement Partner.

The Executive Officer may delegate appraisal and pay recommendation decisions to the Head of School for any employee below a senior leadership role.

Other Personnel Functions impacting Trust Finances

Delegated Duty	Delegated Authority
Creation of Leadership posts	Executive Officer, Trust Finance Officer and at least 1 full trustee as governed by this Financial Scheme of Delegation.
Creation of all other posts	As per this Financial Scheme of Delegation. Must be authorized by the Finance and Audit Committee.
Re-deployment of employees across academies within the Trust	Executive Officer or the Trust Finance Officer in line with employment contracts.
Changes to pay and conditions of employment	Trust Board with advice from the Finance and Audit Committee, Executive Officer and Trust Finance Officer.
Redundancy decisions	Trust Board with advice from the Finance and Audit Committee, Executive Officer and Trust Finance Officer.
Authorisation of redundancy payments	Trust Board with advice from the Finance and Audit Committee, Executive Officer and Trust Finance Officer.