

Reserves Policy



Education is for improving lives and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.

Approved by the Finance and Resources Committee on: 26th June 2024

Review date: June 2026

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1. Introduction

The Board of Trustees is able to hold reserves to further the trust's charitable aims. Recent ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) guidance indicates that 5% or above of total MAT income in cumulative reserves indicates financial health and sustainability.

The ESFA Academies Handbook notes that trusts should use their allocated GAG funding for the full benefit of their current pupils. If a trust has a substantial surplus and recent guidance suggests 20% or above, they should have a clear plan for how it will be used to benefit pupils.

The trust's funds are nominally allocated to individual schools within the trust, excluding the restricted fixed asset fund and the pension reserve. However, there is no central endowment and all funds held by the trust are contributed by the schools within the trust. Therefore, should a school go into deficit, it is effectively being funded by all other schools within the trust.

2. Relationship between the trust and its schools

Trustees are mindful of the Academies Handbook and requirement that GAG funding should be spent on current pupils.

However, trustees are also aware of significant volatility in the funding of education. As an independent academy trust, the Board of Trustees is responsible for managing the fluctuations in financial fortunes.

Individual schools within the trust are expected to propose a budget each year using the GAG and other grants reasonably foreseen and matching expenditure to that income.

Should an individual school in the trust go into a deficit (negative fund balance) at the end of a year, the headteacher must enter into a recovery plan that repays the deficit over not more than 5 years. In the event that the recovery plan is not in place or is not kept to, trustees will take action to return the school to financial stability.

Reserves at the end of each year are generally held in support of:

- Contribution to capital projects planned or in development
- Financial commitments made but not yet come to fruition
- Investment in future educational initiatives
- Cashflow requirement
- Contingency against unforeseen events
- School Fund balances
- Capital Fund balances

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The headteacher can ask trustees each year for access to their agreed reserves for one of these specific events, but it is up to trustees whether they allow access to the individual school reserves as they have the responsibility of securing the financial stability of the trust as a whole.

Balances held in respect of School Fund can be spent by the headteacher without needing to be referred to Trustees. This is because these balances are built up solely by fundraising or charitable donation and can only be spent locally. Headteachers must ensure that School Fund is not overspent as this deficit is offset by GAG income.

Similarly balances held by the school in respect of devolved funding capital can be spent by the headteacher aligned to their agreed capital plan in subsequent years without needing to be referred to Trustees. Headteachers will develop their capital investment plan in collaboration with Trust Central Services to ensure strategic prioritization and Trust wide value for money procurement and contract management.

3. Policy

Trustees wish to target a level of reserves for each school and in total across the trust that equates to the sum of:

- Planned or anticipated future commitments to capital projects
- Financial commitments made but not yet entered into
- Planned investment in educational initiatives
- Salary and related costs for 1 month to cover cashflow and contingency requirements

Progress against these measures will be reviewed on a termly basis.

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