

Central Services Policy and Appeals Process

Every child matters and no child is ever left behind..."

"Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them;
for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."
Luke 18:15-17

Policy Reviewed: 7 May 2025

Version: 8

Date of Next Review: Annual

Responsible Officer: COO

Vision Statement:

At the heart of our vision is our commitment to ensure all of our schools are places where children and young people develop and thrive academically, socially, culturally and spiritually. The drive for excellence and effectiveness in our schools is paramount, but not merely because the Government says so. The enabling of every child to flourish in their potential as a child of God is a sign and expression of the Kingdom and is at the heart of the Trust's distinctive mission. This vision statement will be taken into account in all of our policies and their implementation.

1. Aim and objectives

This policy aims to provide transparency in the charging methodology for central trust services and outlines an appeals process to be followed in the case of a member academy's dissatisfaction with these charges, in line with the Academy Trust Handbook.

2. Central Services

The Trust provides a number of central support services to its member academies to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the Trust. These services include the salary costs of staff working across the Trust on

- leadership and operational management
- finance support
- school improvement

The central trust also bears the costs of operational, financial and statutory Trust-wide services such as internal and external audit, software licences for finance, school management information and asset and contract management, accounts preparation, HR support, governance support, payroll, health and safety, safeguarding support and advice, CPOMS and StaffSafe software, HR recruitment software and DPO services. Other services may also be included as notified by the Trust board to the schools.

The costs of all these central services are covered by a recharge of funds based on a percentage of the school budget share element of GAG funding to the academy (and for the avoidance of doubt the percentage is not applied to any pupil premium funding).

3. Communication of charges

The Head Teacher will receive details of proposed recharge of funds to be paid to the Trust for the forthcoming year as part of the budget preparation cycle in the summer term. Final charges will be confirmed to member academies no later than 31 July for the next academy year.

The recharge of funds will also (if any surplus) contribute to a central reserve to be used as a contingency in the event of any unexpected central costs to the MAT and increased running costs and scope for wider central services as the MAT

grows going forwards. To mitigate risks including short term cash flow management, unexpected buildings issues and unforeseen long term staff absence it has been agreed that an appropriate reserves balance to ultimately aim for across the whole MAT (including both central and collective reserves) should equate to one month's worth of budgeted expenditure both in terms of salaries and invoices. The Trust will review this policy, along with its reserves policy, on an annual basis to ensure there is a clear plan for any excess central funds to be used for the benefit of the pupils in the DNDLT.

4. Appeal Process

Upon receipt of the annual percentage retention a member academy will have a period of 20 working days to submit an appeal.

Stage 1:

The Head Teacher of the academy should in the first instance appeal, in writing, directly to the Accounting Officer. The Accounting Officer in conjunction with the Chief Financial Officer will review and consider the appeal and respond within 15 working days.

Written records will be kept of any meetings and interviews held in relation to the appeal and details of all appeals together with the outcomes will be reported to the Board of Directors.

Stage 2:

Where the Head Teacher is not satisfied with the Accounting Officer's response to their appeal, they may have their grievance considered by an Appeals Panel of the Trust. The request for a further appeal must be made in writing to the Clerk of the Board of Directors. An Appeals Panel will be convened within 10 working days of receipt of the request.

5. Appeal Panel membership

The Panel will consist of three members of the Board of Directors who have not previously being involved in the appeal.

6. Appeal Panel remit

The Panel may

- dismiss the grievance in whole or in part
- uphold the grievance in whole or in part
- recommend, if relevant, the revised charges to be paid.
- recommend if relevant changes to the methodology of calculating charges

7. Panel Attendance

The following are entitled to attend the panel hearing, submit written evidence and address the Panel;

- up to two representatives of the Academy.
- up to two representatives of the Accounting Officer and Chief Financial Officer.
- any other person who the Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision making.

8. Panel Evidence

All parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position.

All written evidence must be received by the Clerk no later than 5 working days in advance of the Appeal Panel hearing. The Clerk will distribute the evidence to all parties no later than 3 working days in advance of the Panel Hearing.

9. Panel Decision

The Panel will reach a decision, and make any recommendations within 5 working days of the hearing. The decision reached is final.

10. Notification of the Panel's Decision

The Panel's findings will be sent in writing to the Head of School/Principal and copies to the Accounting Officer and Chief Financial Officer. The letter will state the reasons for the decision reached and any recommendations made by the Panel. Details of all Panel hearings and decisions will be reported to the Board of Directors.

11. Department for Education (DfE)

If the Head of School/Principal is not satisfied with the decision of the Appeals Panel an appeal may be taken to the Secretary of State (via the DfE).