



2019-20 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

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| Approved by Trustees | |



1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

The Companies Act 1985 (Schedule 4(35) and (36)) and FRS 18 require that accounting policies "judged to be material or critical in stating the financial position" should be included as a note to the accounts. FRS 18 sets out the principles to be followed in selecting accounting policies and the disclosures required. Where accounting standards permit a choice, FRS 18 requires an entity to select those policies judged to be most appropriate to its particular circumstances and also provide a true and fair view. The choice should be made against the objectives of relevance, reliability, comparability and understandability, and these different objectives must be balanced as well as cost/benefit considerations considered.

2.0 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

2.1 Basis of preparation

The financial statements of the trust, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, are prepared under the historical cost convention in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard Applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Academies Accounts Direction 2018 to 2019 issued by ESFA, the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the trust and rounded to the nearest £'000.

2.2 Going concern

The directors assess whether the use of going concern is appropriate, ie whether there are any material uncertainties related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the company to continue as a going concern. The directors make this assessment in respect of a period of at least one year from the date of authorisation for issue of the financial statements and have concluded that the trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future and there are no material uncertainties about the trust's ability to continue as a going concern, thus they continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

2.3 Income

All incoming resources are recognised when the trust has entitlement to the funds, the receipt is probable and the amount can be measured reliably.

2.4 Grants

Grants are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on a receivable basis. The balance of income received for specific purposes but not expended during the period is shown in the relevant funds on the balance sheet.

Where income is received in advance of meeting any performance-related conditions there is not unconditional entitlement to the income and its recognition is deferred and included in creditors



as deferred income until the performance-related conditions are met. Where entitlement occurs before income is received, the income is accrued.

General Annual Grant is recognised in full in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year for which it is receivable and any abatement in respect of the period is deducted from income and recognised as a liability.

Capital grants are recognised in full when there is an unconditional entitlement to the grant. Unspent amounts of capital grants are reflected in the balance in the restricted fixed asset fund. Capital grants are recognised when there is entitlement and are not deferred over the life of the asset on which they are expended.

2.5 Sponsorship income

Sponsorship income provided to the trust which amounts to a donation is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities in the period in which it is receivable (where there are no performance-related conditions), where the receipt is probable and it can be measured reliably.

2.6 Donations

Donations are recognised on a receivable basis (where there are no performance-related conditions) where the receipt is probable and the amount can be reliably measured.

2.7 Other income

Other income, including the hire of facilities, is recognised in the period it is receivable and to the extent the trust has provided the goods or services.

2.8 Donated goods, facilities and services

Goods donated for resale are included at fair value, being the expected proceeds from sale less the expected costs of sale. If it is practical to assess the fair value at receipt, it is recognised in stock and 'Income from other trading activities'. Upon sale, the value of the stock is charged against 'Income from other trading activities' and the proceeds are recognised as 'Income from other trading activities'. Where it is impractical to fair value the items due to the volume of low value items they are not recognised in the financial statements until they are sold. The income is recognised within 'Income from other trading activities'.

2.9 Transfer on conversion

Where assets and liabilities are received by the academy trust on conversion to an academy, the transferred assets are measured at fair value and recognised in the balance sheet at the point when the risks and rewards of ownership pass to the academy trust. An equal amount of income is recognised for the transfer of an existing academy into the academy trust within Donations and capital grant income to the net assets acquired.

2.10 Transfer of existing academies into the academy trust

Where assets and liabilities are received on the transfer of an existing academy into the academy trust, the net assets are measured at fair value and recognised in the balance sheet at the point when the risks and rewards of ownership pass to the academy trust. An equal amount of income is recognised for the transfer of an existing academy into the academy trust within Donations and capital grant income to the net assets acquired.

2.11 Donated fixed assets (excluding Transfers on conversion/into trust)

Where the donated good is a fixed asset, it is measured at fair value, unless it is impractical to measure this reliably, in which case the cost of the item to the donor should be used. The gain is recognised as income from donations and a corresponding amount is included in the appropriate fixed asset category and depreciated over the useful economic life in accordance with the trust's accounting policies.

2.12 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, it is probably that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measure reliably. Expenditure is classed by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity.

Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

2.13 Expenditure on raising funds

This includes all expenditure incurred by the trust to raise funds for its charitable purposes and includes costs of all fundraising activities events and non-charitable trading.

2.14 Charitable activities

These are costs incurred on the trust's educational operations, including support costs and costs relating to the governance of the trust apportioned to charitable activities.

2.15 Tangible fixed assets

Assets costing £1,000 or more are capitalised as tangible fixed assets and are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment.

Where tangible fixed assets have been acquired with the aid of specific grants, either from the government or from the private sector, they are included in the Balance Sheet at cost and depreciated over their expected useful economic life. Where there are specific conditions attached to the funding requiring the continued use of the asset, the related grants are credited to a restricted fixed asset fund in the Statement of Financial Activities and carried forward in the Balance Sheet. Depreciation on the relevant assets is charged directly to the restricted fixed asset fund in the Statement of Financial Activities. Where tangible fixed assets have been acquired with unrestricted funds, depreciation on such assets is charged to the unrestricted fund.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets other than freehold land, at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset on a straight line basis over its expected useful life, as follows:

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| Freehold buildings | 25 years |
| Leasehold buildings | 25 years |

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| Furniture and equipment | 10 years |
| Plant and machinery | 10 years |
| Computer equipment | 3 years |
| Projectors | 5 years |
| Motor vehicles | 7 years |

Assets in the course of construction are included at cost. Depreciation on these assets is not charged until they are brought into use.

A review for impairment of a fixed asset is carried out if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of any fixed asset may not be recoverable. Shortfalls between the carrying value of fixed assets and their recoverable amounts are recognised as impairments. Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Land and Buildings are independently valued every 3 years, with the results shared with Directors and discussed with the Trust's external auditors to determine whether any revaluation is deemed material.

2.16 Leased assets

Rentals under operating leases are charged on a straight line basis over the lease term.

2.17 Financial instruments

The trust only holds basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and financial liabilities of the trust and their measurement basis are as follows:

Financial assets – trade and other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost. Prepayments are not financial instruments. Amounts due to the charity's wholly owned subsidiary are held at face value less any impairment.

Cash at bank – is classified as a basic financial instrument and is measured at face value.

Financial liabilities – trade creditors, accruals and other creditors are financial instruments, and are measured at amortised cost as detailed in the notes. Taxation and social security are not included in the financial instruments disclosure definition. Deferred income is not deemed to be a financial liability, as the cash settlement has already taken place and there is an obligation to deliver services rather than cash or another financial instrument. Amounts due a charity's wholly owned subsidiary are held at face value less any impairment.

2.18 Stock

Stocks of consumables are valued at the lower of cost or net realisable value. The following consumables are included in the valuation in the annual accounts: ICT, Catering, Cleaning, Premises Maintenance, Stationery and Educational Consumables (eg Science, ART and Technology stock).

2.19 Liabilities

Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the trust anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

2.20 Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the trust has an obligation at the reporting date as a result of a past event which it is probable will result in the transfer of economic benefits and the obligation can be estimated reliably.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the provision is based on the present value of those amounts, discounted at the pre-tax discount rate that reflects the risks specific to the liability. The unwinding of the discount is recognised within the interest payable and similar charges.

2.21 Pension benefits

Retirement benefits to employees of the academy trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the academy trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll.

The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. As stated in Note 25, the TPS is a multi-employer scheme and there is insufficient information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of the academy trust in separate trustee administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities.

Actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses.

Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

2.22 Reserves

The trust holds an appropriate level of unrestricted reserves available for general purpose use. The Academies Financial Handbook 2018 (3.10.2) states:

'Trusts should use their allocated GAG funding for the full benefit of their current pupils. If a trust has a substantial surplus they should have a clear plan for how it will be used to benefit their pupils, for example a long-term capital project.'

The ESFA do not impose any restriction on the level of reserves held, but can challenge the level if deemed to be excessive. To avoid such challenge, full disclosure is made in the trustees' report to explain the reason(s).

The trust holds reserves to inform the budget and risk management process by identifying uncertainty in future income streams, for funding new projects (eg premises and infrastructure) and achieving a balanced budget. The amount of reserves held at the end of the 5-year medium term plan, is based on a percentage of the in-year GAG income, and is determined through the budget planning cycle.

As part of the budget setting process, governors and directors must approve both the current year plan and the cumulative reserves held.

Reserves falling outside the above bands will require governors to provide directors with a rationale for the decision, with a plan of how reserves will be maintained at the published levels over the 5-year medium term plan. This should be in writing and approved by Directors.

Reserves are set within the following parameters:

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| Secondary Schools | - | minimum of 5% and maximum of 12% (of GAG) |
| Primary Schools | - | minimum of 8% and maximum of 12% (of GAG) |

The above reserves parameters are unlikely to be achievable due to costs increasing faster than grant income. Therefore, reserves levels will be reviewed annually, and will be represented both as a percentage of GAG, and in liquidity/cash flow terms.

2.23 Taxation

The trust is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2019 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes.

Accordingly, the trust is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by part 11, chapter 3 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

2.24 Fund accounting

Unrestricted income funds represent those resources which may be used towards meeting any of the charitable objects of the trust at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted fixed asset funds are resources which are to be applied to specific capital purposes imposed by funders where the asset acquired or created is held for a specific purpose.

Restricted general funds comprise all other restricted funds received with restrictions imposed by the funder/donor and include grants from the Education Funding Agency and Department for Education.

2.25 Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgment

Estimates and judgments are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

2.26 Critical accounting estimates and assumptions

The trust makes estimates and assumptions concerning the future. The resulting accounting estimates and assumptions, will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results. The estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year are reported in the annual accounts. In the 2017-18 published accounts, the following statement was included:

The present value of the Local Government Pension Scheme defined benefit liability depends on a number of factors that are determined on an actuarial basis using a variety of assumptions. The assumptions used in determining the net cost (income) for pensions include the discount rate. Any changes in these assumptions, will impact the carrying amount of the pension liability.

Furthermore, a roll forward approach which projects results from the latest full actuarial valuation performed at 31 March 2016 has been used by the actuary in valuing the pensions liability at 31 August 2018. Any differences between the figures derived from the roll forward approach and a full actuarial valuation would impact on the carrying amount of the pension liability.

2.27 Conversion to Multi Academy Trust

The conversion from a state maintained school to a Multi Academy Trust, involves the transfer of identifiable assets and liabilities and the operation of the schools within the trust for £nil consideration. The substance of transfers is deemed a gift and is accounted for on that basis. Assets and liabilities transferred on conversion to the trust are valued at their fair value, with the long leasehold of land & buildings and the pension scheme (deficit) balance independently valued at the date of transfer. The amounts are recognised under the appropriated balance sheet categories, with a corresponding amount recognised in voluntary income – transfer from local authority on conversion in the Statement of Financial Activities and analysed under unrestricted funds, restricted general funds and restricted fixed asset funds.

2.28 Central Services

The key price for partner schools is the percentage of the General Annual Grant (GAG), plus Early Years Funding, that will be retained centrally, and, nationally, academy chains are known to charge between 5% and 10%.

The Trust will review the charge for 2019-20 in the light of trust expansion in the context of a central services model. (The charge was 5.5% for primary and 4.3% for secondary in 2018-19). This will cover a range of essential services, such as finance systems, HR advice and support, premises and liability insurances, together with a contribution to the central management costs and funds for educational improvement.

In order to ensure the percentage retained centrally ensures new schools considering joining the trust, view us on an equal footing with other trusts, there will be a fixed percentage to cover a range of essential services, plus a service charge for other services.

3.0 CONCLUSION



Accounting Policies are reviewed annually. Where a material change in policy occurs - a prior period adjustment is required. The policies listed above are not intended to be exhaustive and may need to be varied as circumstances dictate.