



The Academies for Character and Excellence

Capital and Revenue Reserves Policy

Finance

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Trust has established this reserves policy to protect its activities by providing financial buffers against an unpredictable environment and to make sufficient provision for future cash flow requirements, significant unplanned expenditure, and capital improvements. The policy also provides the framework for future strategic planning and decision- making. An effectively implemented reserves policy will mitigate the impact of risks upon the continuing operations of the Trust caused by funding uncertainty or unforeseen events. This policy and the establishment of reserve targets should be based on a continual assessment of the internal and external operating environment.

2. Key Policy Principles

- 2.1 The following principles underpin the Trust's approach to reserves management:
 - a. The Trust will set a balanced in-year revenue budget every year for each individual school and the central service. In some years an in-year deficit or surplus may be permitted. This may be due to a lag between expected funding and expenditure, planned use of reserves over the minimum stated in the policy or some other exceptional reason such as costs incurred due to building capacity ahead of Trust growth or increased pension deficit recovery payments. Where this occurs and reserve levels are below the policy threshold, this must be justified by a 3-year forecast that the impact on reserves is expected to be mitigated in future years.
 - b. Trust Reserves balances should only decrease below the expected levels without expected replenishment in the following years due to capital investment and/or other organisational need which shall be approved by the Board of Trustees.
 - c. All reserves (restricted, unrestricted and capital funds) are pooled centrally by the Trust and reported on this basis for statutory accounting purposes.
 - d. Unrestricted reserves are managed to remain above the minimum level.
 - e. Designated Reserves may mean that the total of reserves may exceed the target level of reserve.

3. Types of Reserve

- 3.2 Reserves are the representation of the cash balance available at the period end. In charity accounting (used for Multi Academy Trusts), this cash is transferred into fund balances.
- 3.3 Unrestricted funds represent those resources which may be used towards meeting any of the charitable objectives of the Trust at the discretion of the Trustees.
- 3.4 Designated funds are part of unrestricted funds that have been set aside to be used for a particular future project or commitment. Although earmarked, a designated fund remains part of the unrestricted funds of the Trust. This is because the designation does not legally restrict the Trustees' discretion in how to apply the unrestricted funds that they have earmarked.
- 3.5 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.

- 3.6 Restricted general funds comprise all other restricted funds received with restrictions imposed by the funder/donor and include grants from the ESFA.

4. Setting of Reserves

- 4.2 The Trust's level of reserves can be expressed as a target figure or a target range or % of turnover and should be informed by:
- a. its forecasts for levels of income for the current and future years, taking into account the reliability of each source of income.
 - b. its forecasts for expenditure for the current and future years on the basis of planned activity.
 - c. its analysis of any future needs, opportunities, commitments or risks, where future income alone is unlikely to be able to meet anticipated costs I.e., capital investment
 - d. its assessment, on the best evidence reasonably available, of the likelihood of each of those needs that justify having reserves arising and the potential consequences for the Trust of not being able to meet them.
 - e. Its assessment of any activity as a going concern and implications of the cessation of such activities
 - f. Restricted Capital Funding is not included in the General Reserve level.

5. Limit of Reserves

- 5.2 The Trust should not set a level of reserves above the limits permitted by the ESFA that may result in a claw-back of funds by the DFE.
- 5.3 Reserves from unrestricted funds are at the discretion of the Trust.

6. Monitoring of Reserves

- 6.2 The level of reserves should be monitored throughout the year as part of the normal monitoring and budgetary reporting processes to:
- a. identify when reserves are drawn on, the reasons and any corrective action, if any, that needs to be taken.
 - b. identify when reserve levels rise or fall significantly above or below target, the reasons and any corrective action, if any, that needs to be taken.
 - c. ensure that the reserves policy continues to be relevant as the Trust develops or brings on board new activities.
 - d. review the statement on reserves in the Trustees' annual report where there have been significant changes in the reserves policy or level of reserves held.

7. Schools in Deficit

- 7.2 In exceptional circumstances, a school may propose a deficit in-year budget. Where a

school/central team is operating with an in-year deficit it will have to draw upon unrestricted reserves. Where reserves are below the threshold level set, the budget must be accompanied by a recovery plan approved by the Strategic Board, resulting in the deficit being 'repaid' within a timeframe deemed acceptable by the Board to bring reserve levels back to the agreed threshold.

- 7.3 Where a school has no alternative but to set a deficit budget beyond the level of their reserve, the Strategic Board may approve the overall deficit position based on the total level of reserves held by the Trust in order to manage its finances to achieve overall value for money. At the Strategic Board's discretion, this repayment may be postponed or spread over more than one year considering the specific circumstances leading to the deficit position and the ongoing financial health of the school in question.

8. Reserve Levels

8.2 Academy Reserves

- a. To support the stability of reserves, the academy's budgets will meet a 5% of income surplus target each year to replenish any spent reserves.

8.3 Pooled Trust Reserves

- a. The level of reserve that the Trust considers prudent for its current operational environment and strategic objectives is 5% of income.

9. Review

9.1 This policy has been adopted by the Strategic Board and will be reviewed annually.

10. Links with Other Policies

10.1 The links with other policies include:

- a. Financial Regulations Policy.