

CENTRAL FUNDING AND APPEALS POLICY

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Dales Academies Trust is an exempt charity regulated by the Secretary of State for Education. It is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, company number 08372064, whose registered office is at All Saints Academy, Blair Avenue, Ingleby Barwick, Stockton On Tees, TS17 5BL.

Purpose of the Policy

The Academy Trust Handbook 2023 (Education & Skills Funding Agency) states in section 5.30 that a multi-academy trust has freedom to amalgamate general annual grant (GAG) for its academies to form one central fund. This practice can enhance a trust's ability to allocate resources in line with improvement priorities and running costs across the trust's constituent academies. .

The collection of a percentage of individual academies' GAG funding for a MAT's central fund is sometimes referred to as '*top-slicing*'.

For the financial year 2023/24 , Dales Academies Trust will retain 4.5% of its constituent academies funding for all schools to support central services.

Where the MAT has to consider providing additional capacity to support an individual school that wants to join the MAT, the board will consider what payment should be made to provide this additional capacity. Depending on the Due Diligence report findings for the school in question, finance for this additional support could be secured through an additional grant as agreed with the RSC or from the individual school's own budget. Any future school joining the MAT as a sponsored academy will contribute 6% of GAG to the central services fund, 1.5% of this will be ring-fenced for School Improvement. This will be reviewed annually.

Dales Academies Trust will give consideration to the funding needs and allocations of each academy. There is an appeals mechanism which is described within this policy document for academies who may feel that they are being treated unfairly by the Dales Academies Trust.

The individual final approved budgets will be issued to academies within the Trust no later than 31 August for the next academy year detailing the funds to be retained by Dales Academies Trust. The academies will have a period of 10 working days to appeal.

The central services fund will be used to fund the following expenditure on behalf of the academies within Dales Academies Trust:

- External Audit Fees
- Internal Audit Fees
- Accountancy Fees
- Clerking of Trustees meetings
- Insurance (Excluding minibus insurance)
- Annual actuary re-valuation fees (Initial actuary valuation to be funded from academy conversion grant)
- School Improvement Support
- Dales Academies Trust Salaries including CEO, Director of Primary, CFO, and other administrators
- Orovia Budgeting
- PSF Accounting Software
- Payroll and HR
- HR System (SAM)

The central service fund is also used to subsidise the catering service at present.

Academies joining the trust will be expected to fund the following from their conversion grant or from any Revenue or Capital reserves held to allow them to be fully integrated into Dales Academies Trust Management systems:

Bromcom MIS
CPOMS

Academies joining the Trust will also be expected to use Dales Academies Trusts preferred suppliers for ICT Services, Banking Services (Lloyds Bank) and Insurance Services and comply with compliance and premises regulations.

Dales Academies Trust reserves the right to amend this policy on an annual basis at the beginning of each financial year. Where appropriate the central services charge may be adjusted to reflect the costs relating to the previous and current financial year, the increasing of services provided directly by Dales Academies Trust or cost savings generated through streamlining of back-office functions.

GAG pooling

GAG pooling can help to alleviate financial pressures within individual academies during periods of fluctuating income and expenditure. However, Dales Academies Trust will not retain any additional amount in addition to the central services charge.

Dales Academies Trust will give consideration to the funding needs and allocations of each academy. There is an appeals mechanism which is described within this policy document for academies who may feel that they are being treated unfairly by the Dales Academies Trust GAG Pooling.

Appeals

The Academy Trust Handbook 2023 states:

If a trust decides to pool GAG, it must consider the funding needs and allocations of each constituent academy. The trust must have an appeals mechanism and an appeal can be escalated to ESFA, if not resolved. ESFA's decision will be final and can result in the pooling provisions being dis-applied. A trust must not pool PFI funding, in accordance with its funding agreement.

(Section 5.31)

The Dales Academies Trust appeals process is:

The constituent academies have 10 working days from the issuing of the Academies final budget from the Trust to the academy to appeal.

Appeals should be made in writing directly to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO should acknowledge receipt within 5 working days and provide the date of the next Finance and Resources (F&R) committee meeting where the appeal will be considered.

The CEO and the F&R committee will consider the appeal and notify the academy of their decision within 10 working days of the first meeting after receipt of the written appeal.

