



Staploe Education Trust

Financial Procedures Manual

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Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that each school within Staploe Education Trust maintains and develops systems of financial control which conform to the requirements both of propriety and of good financial management. It is essential that these systems operate properly to meet the requirements of our funding agreements with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Academies Trust Handbook, ensuring best value is applied to all school financial dealings resulting in the most effective, economic and efficient use of resources.

This policy expands on those financial principles and provides detailed information on the accounting procedures. These financial regulations and procedures must be read by all staff involved with financial systems and copies made available as necessary. It also provides a standardised approach to all finance related tasks within Staploe Education Trust and its schools.

The schools that form Staploe Education Trust are Soham Village College, The Shade Primary School, The Weatheralls Primary School and Kennett Primary School.

Compliance with the policies and procedures outlined in this policy is mandatory and any contravention of procedures must be brought to the attention, in the first instance of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and/or the Accounting Officer (AO). Should the issue relate to the CFO then the report should be made to the AO. Should the issue relate to the Accounting Officer then the report should be submitted to the Chair of the Trust Board.

All staff are aware of Staploe Education Trust's Whistleblowing Policy and to whom they should report any concerns regarding malpractice and wrongdoing. The Whistleblowing Policy is on the Trust website and is referenced at staff induction. Incidents of Whistleblowing are reported to the Board, Any suspected financial irregularity will be reported to the Department for Education.

Organisation

Staploe Education Trust is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. It comprises Members and Trustees of the Trust and has a strategic role in the running of its schools, with control over its land and assets, and is responsible for appointing a Trustee to each of the local Advisory Bodies; which have delegated responsibility for decisions that are made in respect of school improvement.

The main responsibilities of the Trust are prescribed in the Funding Agreement between the Trust and the Department for Education (DfE). Key financial responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that all grants from the ESFA is used only for the purposes intended;
- Approval of the annual budget;
- Balancing its budget from year to year;
- Production of an annual report and audited accounts;
- Appointment of the external auditors;
- Appointment of suitably qualified individuals to undertake internal scrutiny work;
- Ensuring regularity, propriety and value-for-money in relation to the management of public funds;
- Ensure information submitted to the DfE and ESFA that effects funding is accurate and compliant;
- Implement reasonable risk management recommendations that are made by the external auditors;
- Appointment of the Executive Headteacher (as Accounting Officer);
- Appointment of the Trust Operations Director (as Chief Finance Officer); and
- Support the Executive Headteacher as required in the appointment of the Headteachers of each school.

Staploe Education Trust has defined the responsibilities of key committees and staff involved in the administration of school finances to avoid the duplication or omission of functions and to provide a framework of accountability for Trustees and staff.

The committees that have responsibility relating to Trust finances are;

- Finance Committee: responsible for reviewing controls and procedures of financial systems being operated;
- Risk and Audit Committee: responsible for managing opportunities and risks.

The main responsibilities of these committees are set out in written terms of reference available on the Trust website <http://www.staploeeducationtrust.org.uk>

The following sections summarise the responsibilities of those individuals with key roles in the administration and accountability of Staploe Education Trust finances.

Segregation of Duties

The Trust Board and staff must consider the principle of segregation of duties when designing and defining job duties. They must implement processes and control procedures that, to the extent feasible, segregate duties among employees and include effective oversight of activities and transactions.

Maintaining segregation of duties is especially challenging for functions with small numbers of staff.

When these functions cannot be separated, more reliance must be placed on administrative oversight. A detailed supervisory review of activities involving finances, inventory, and other assets is required as a compensating control activity.

General Principles

The Trust and the DfE require that accounting transactions be authorised according to sound management practices. One of the most basic, yet most important principles of sound management is that of segregation of duties.

Segregation of duties is critical because it ensures separation of different functions and defines authority and responsibility over transactions. Segregation of duties is critical to effective internal control; it reduces the risk of both erroneous and inappropriate actions.

The fundamental premise of segregated duties is that an individual should not be in a position to initiate, approve, and review the same action. See Appendix 7.

The performance of reconciliation and the asset (e.g. money, inventory) custody function should be separated among employees. These are called incompatible duties when performed by the same individual.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Headteacher (Accounting Officer)

The Executive Headteacher has overall responsibility for the Trust's activities including financial activities. The Funding Agreement requires the Trust to identify the Executive Headteacher as the Accounting Officer who is responsible to the Trustees for:

- Ensuring regularity and propriety of public finances for which they are answerable. This covers standards of conduct, behaviour and corporate governance;
- Prudent and economical administration;
- Avoidance of waste and extravagance;
- Efficient and effective use of available resources;
- Managing opportunities and risk; and
- The day-to-day organisation, staffing and management of the Trust.

The role of Executive Headteacher and therefore Accounting Officer must not rotate.

The essence of the role is a personal responsibility for:

Regularity - dealing with all items of income and expenditure in accordance with legislation, the terms of Staploe Education Trust's funding agreement and this policy, and compliance with internal Staploe Education Trust procedures. This includes spending public money for the purposes intended by Parliament;

Propriety – the requirement that expenditure and receipts should be dealt with in accordance with Parliament's intentions and the principles of Parliamentary control. This covers standards of conduct, behaviour and corporate governance;

Value for money – achieving the best possible educational and wider societal outcomes through the economic, efficient and effective use of all the resources in Staploe Education Trust's charge, the avoidance of waste and extravagance, and prudent and economical administration. A key objective is to achieve value for money not only for Staploe Education Trust but for taxpayers more generally.

The Accounting Officer is required to complete and sign a short statement each year explaining how Staploe Education Trust has secured value for money. This must be sent to the ESFA and be published on Staploe Education Trust's website. It will also be placed on the DfE's website.

In practice, much of the financial responsibility is delegated to the Chief Finance Officer.

Trust Operations Director (Chief Finance Officer)

The Chief Finance Officer works in close collaboration with the Executive Headteacher through whom they are responsible to the Trustees. The main responsibilities of the Chief Finance Officer are:

- The day-to-day management of financial issues including the establishment, maintenance and operation of a suitable accounting system;
- The management of the Trust financial position at a strategic and operational level within the framework for financial control determined by the Trustees;
- Preparation of budget plans in conjunction with the Executive Headteacher, Headteachers, Finance Manager and Payroll Manager;
- The maintenance of effective systems of internal control;
- The maintenance of adequate fixed asset registers;
- Ensuring that the annual accounts are properly presented and adequately supported by the underlying books and records of the Trust;
- The preparation and presentation of monitoring reports;
- Ensuring forms and returns are sent to the ESFA in line with any timetabled DfE/ESFA guidance.

Appointment of External Auditors

The Trust is required to submit the accounts for an annual audit. This means that external auditors need to be appointed. The appointment will be for a three-year term. Following a three-year appointment, it will be necessary to re-tender the contract ensuring best value principles. It is for the Members of the Trust to appoint external auditors, and re-appointment during the three-year term must be confirmed in writing at the Annual General Meeting.

The auditors are required to give an opinion on whether:

- The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting and Annual Accounts Requirements issued by the DfE;
- Proper accounting records have been kept by the Trust throughout the financial year (Sept-Aug);
- Grants made by the ESFA, Local Authority and other significant third parties have been applied for the purposes intended.

The Trust should arrange for on-going monitoring of the performance of the auditors to be undertaken, decisions to reappoint or not are recoded at the AGM.

Internal Scrutiny (formerly Responsible Officer)

All Trusts are required to have a programme of internal scrutiny that provides independent assurance to the Trust Board that its financial and non-financial controls and risk management procedures are operating effectively. The independent scrutineer(s) are appointed by the Risk and Audit committee and provides the Trustees with an independent oversight of the Trust's financial and non-financial affairs.

Internal scrutiny may be delivered in four different ways;

- Employing an in-house internal auditor;
- A bought-in internal audit service from a firm, other organisation or individual with professional indemnity insurance;
- The appointment of a non-employed Trustee;
- A peer review performed by CFO from another academy Trust.

Those that carry out any part of the programme of internal scrutiny must be suitably qualified in their specialist area.

The programme of work will be informed by the risk register and will have financial control systems at its core and may include other key areas such as financial governance and oversight, safeguarding, IT systems and cyber security.

Any financial or non-financial system that impacts on the effective operation of a Trust may be included in the scope of the programme as required by the Risk and Audit Committee.

Finance Staff

The Trust Finance Department comprises at management level of a Finance Manager and Payroll Manager who report to the Chief Finance Officer. The Chief Finance Officer will establish procedures to ensure that:

- Personnel are competent, suitably qualified and trained to perform at a level commensurate with their responsibilities;
- Clear statements of criteria for personnel selection and job descriptions are maintained;
- The finance staffing levels are adequate;
- There are effective arrangements to deal with the absence of key financial personnel.

All Trust staff are responsible for the security of Trust property, for avoiding loss or damage, for ensuring economy and efficiency in the use of resources, and for conformity with the requirements of Staploe Education Trust's financial procedures.

Register of Interests

It is important for anyone involved in spending public money to demonstrate that they do not benefit personally from the decisions they make. To avoid any misunderstanding that may arise, all Members, Trustees, Advisory Body Members and staff with financial or spending powers are required to declare any financial interests they have in companies or individuals from which the Trust may purchase goods or services. The register is open to public inspection.

The register should include all business interests such as directorships, shareholdings or other appointments of influence within a business or organisation, which may have dealings with the Trust. The disclosure should also include business interests of relatives such as a parent or spouse or business partner where influence could be exerted over a Member, Trustee, Advisory Body Member or a member of staff by that person.

The existence of a register of business interests does not, of course, detract from the duties of Members, Trustees, Advisory Body Members and staff to declare interests whenever they are relevant to matters being discussed by the Trust Board, Trust Committees or Local Advisory Bodies. Where an interest has been declared, Members, Trustees, Advisory Body Members and staff should not contribute to the discussion in that part of any meeting.

The register should be updated at least once a year. All Members, Trustees, Advisory Body Members and relevant staff in posts with financial or spending responsibilities are required to submit a return, including a nil return where relevant. Records should be held by the Trust Governance Professional.

Accounting System

All financial transactions of the Trust should be recorded on the approved finance system. The finance system is operated by the finance department and as a minimum, will consist of a purchase ledger, sales ledger and cash book module. The finance system currently being used is Sage Intacct for Education.

All payroll transactions are currently processed onto the system provided by our payroll provider; Education Personnel Management (EPM) as part of a Service Level Agreement.

System Access

Entry to the finance system is password restricted. The Chief Finance Officer and Finance Manager, in conjunction with the ICT Systems and Strategy Manager are responsible for ensuring that members of staff have appropriate levels of access that are commensurate with their levels of responsibility. Further details of the safe use of ICT equipment can be found in the Trust's ICT e-Safety Policy which can be located on the Trust website <http://www.staploeeducationtrust.org.uk> ICT staff have restricted access to the system depending on their role.

Entry to the payroll system is via an online portal that is password protected with EPM's ICT department being responsible for the security of the data held as part of our Service Level Agreement. This ensures that all data is kept confidential.

Backup Procedures

The online Finance system takes backups on an automated rolling schedule, keeping backups from the last 7 days, last month and last annual backup. In addition, five manual backup spaces are available, these are used for on demand backups or for moving automated backups. On a half termly schedule a backup is downloaded and kept securely on-site and offline. See Appendix 8.

The Chief Finance Officer and ICT Systems & Strategy Manager shall prepare a disaster recovery and business continuity plan in the event of loss of the finance system and/or financial data. This should link in with the risk assessment of the major risks to which the Trust is exposed and the systems that have been put in place to mitigate those risks. A copy of the disaster recovery and business continuity plan is available on the Trust website; <http://www.staploeeducationtrust.org.uk>

Transaction Processing

All transactions input to the finance system should be authorised in accordance with the procedures specified in this policy. Detailed procedures for the operation of the payroll, the purchase ledger, the sales ledger, the disposal of assets and the maintenance of asset records must be produced by the Finance Manager and/or Payroll Manager and approved by the Chief Finance Officer. All journal entries must be documented when inputted into the finance system. Bank transactions should be input by the Finance Manager and the input should be checked by the Chief Finance Officer, in the absence of the CFO the AO will check and sign off.

The processing of BACS payments are checked weekly and authorised by two authorised signatories as defined in the Bank Mandate.

Bank reconciliations are checked monthly by the CFO as part of the monthly close down process, in the absence of the CFO the AO will check and sign-off. This involves checking the bank balance on the balance sheet with the bank statement, looking through the bank statement for unusual transactions and checking that correct postings have been made on the finance system before signing the electronic copy of the bank statement.

The Trust will seek to adhere to the control principles set out within the Academy Trust Handbook.

Financial Planning

General Principles

The Trust prepares both medium-term and short-term financial plans which are aligned to the needs of the Trust Strategic Priorities. These plans cover a three to five-year period dependant on national circumstances and data available. These are updated annually.

The Strategic Priorities indicate how the Trust's educational and other objectives are going to be achieved in the next academic year and over the medium term. It provides the framework for the annual budget, which is a detailed statement of the expected resources available to the Trust and the planned use of these resources for the following year.

The financial planning and budgetary control processes are described in more detail below.

Annual Budget

The Executive Headteacher, in conjunction with the CFO, is responsible for preparing and obtaining approval for the annual budget. The budget, after consideration by the Finance and Risk and Audit Committees, must be recommended for approval by the Trust Board.

The approved budget must be submitted to the ESFA by the stated deadline each year. The CFO is responsible for establishing a timetable which allows sufficient time for approval and ensures that the submission date is met.

The annual budget will reflect the best estimate of the resources available to the Trust for the forthcoming year and will detail how these resources are to be utilised. There should be a clear link between the Trust Strategic Priorities and the budgeted utilisation of resources.

The Trust has an agreement with each school, whereby there is a provision in their budget to fund central Trust activities. These include the following;

- School improvement support;
- Financial services;
- Facilities management;
- ICT strategy and maintenance services;
- HR and Payroll services; and
- Governance.

In the event that any one of the Headteachers wishes to appeal the value their school will contribute to the central fund they must raise the concern with the Executive Headteacher in the first instance so that a local resolution can be sought and reported to the Trust Board as such.

In the event that a resolution cannot be sought then the Executive Headteacher will proceed to escalate the appeal to the Trust Board for further discussion and final decision.

Any surplus of funds at the year-end will either be apportioned back to the schools or used by agreement of the Trust Board to fund projects from which all schools will benefit. This will include supporting individual schools with funding specific projects or staff to improve outcomes for pupils that have been identified via internal and/or external assessment. The Trust Board will agree the value of any expenditure when the need arises.

The budgetary planning process will incorporate the following elements:

- Forecasts of likely numbers of students to estimate the amount of Government grant receivable, until receipt of the final funding notifications;
- Review of other income sources available to the Trust to assess likely level of receipts;
- Review of past and current performance against budgets, along with expected variations in cost, e.g. pay and price increases, to promote an understanding of the Trust cost base;
- Identification of potential efficiency savings;
- Review of the main expenditure headings considering the Trust Strategic Priorities;
- Review of resource needs of each school within the Trust;
- Consideration of how the Trust is achieving best value in its operation.

Balancing the Budget

Comparison of estimated income and expenditure will identify any potential surplus or shortfall in funding. If shortfalls are identified, opportunities to increase income should be explored and expenditure headings will need to be reviewed for areas where savings can be made. This may entail prioritising tasks, implementation of changes to deliver efficiency savings or deferring projects until more funding is available. Planned use of reserves to balance the budget can be made subject to approval by the Trust Board and maintenance of a minimum prudent level of reserves. Plans and budgets will need to be revised until income and expenditure are in balance. If a potential surplus is identified, this may be held back as a reserve that can be used to support specific projects or future planned changes to staffing structures.

Finalising the Budget

Once the different options and scenarios have been considered, a draft budget should be prepared and proposed by the Executive Headteacher in conjunction with the CFO for consideration by the Finance Committee and Risk and Audit Committee prior to recommendation for approval by the Trust Board. Medium term financial forecasts should be presented alongside the annual budget proposals in order that Trustees can consider and approve budget plans in the context of medium-term estimates. Should a potential “in-year” loss be identified then explanation would need to be presented to ascertain why this position would be necessary, what options have been explored to reduce this position and how will these funds be replaced by the school in future years.

Once the budget has been approved, it should be communicated to all staff with financial responsibility so that everyone is aware of the overall budgetary constraints. Initial approved budgets will be communicated to budget holders in advance of the start of each financial year.

The budget should be seen as a working document which is likely to need revising by way of calculating a budget outturn throughout the year as circumstances change.

Monitoring and Review

Monthly reports will be prepared by the CFO in conjunction with the Finance Manager and Payroll Manager. The reports will include actual income and expenditure, commitments against budget and a forecast for the year and will be presented to the Chair of the Trust Board, Chair of the Finance Committee, Executive Headteacher and Headteachers. Actions to keep the budgets in line and identifying strategies to reduce potential overspends will be discussed and documented.

It is the responsibility of each budget holder to manage the budgets under their control and to ensure that the funds available are not overspent. Budget holders will be provided with monthly statements from the Finance Manager, which will include:

- Overall summary of financial position;
- Detailed financial summary with actual cost incurred and commitments against budget profile;
- Details of transactions processed against those budgets for which they are responsible.

Any potential devolved budget overspends against budget must be reported to the CFO and no additional expenditure committed, unless agreed by the Headteacher in conjunction with the CFO. The Finance System will flag a potential overspend on a budget; the Finance Assistant will raise the issue with the Finance Manager before an order can be placed. In circumstances, whereby there is no expected income to offset against the order then approval will be sought from Headteacher and CFO.

The monitoring process will be effective and timely in highlighting variances in the budget with differences being investigated and action taken where appropriate.

Appeals Process

The Trust Board consider very carefully how reserves funds are to be invested, ensuring that each school is able to fulfil its objectives and priorities.

These considerations are discussed prior and during the academic year so that schools can either plan this expenditure as part of the forthcoming budget preparations, or to react during the year to mitigate risks and maximise opportunities.

In the event that any one of the Headteachers wish to appeal a decision to support a specific project, then this should be raised with the Executive Headteacher in the first instance so that a local resolution can be sought and reported to the Trust Board as such.

In the event that a resolution cannot be sought then the Executive Headteacher will proceed to escalate the appeal to the Trust Board for further discussion and final decision.

External Reporting

Academy Trusts are companies limited by guarantee with charitable status. The Trust is required to produce annual financial statements in accordance with the applicable United Kingdom Standards, the Charity Commission 'Statement of Recommended Practice; Accounting and Reporting by Charities' (SORP 2015), The Academies Accounts Direction issued by the ESFA and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements should give a true and fair view of the Trust's financial position at the balance sheet date and of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the period ended to that date. They require independent audit examination and will need to contain an independent auditor's report.

The Annual Report and Financial Statements must include:

- Reference and Administrative Details;
- The Trustees' Annual Report;
- Governance Report;
- A Statement on Regularity, Propriety and Compliance;
- A Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities;
- An Independent Auditor's Report on the Financial Statements;
- An Independent Auditor's Assurance Report on Regularity;
- A Statement of Financial Activities, incorporating Income and Expenditure Account;
- A Balance Sheet;
- A Statement of Cash Flows;
- Notes to the Financial Statement;

Accounting Policies

Accounting policies are principles, bases, conventions and rules by which transactions and items are recognised, measured and presented within the accounts. They are supplemented by estimation techniques where judgement is required in recording the value of income and expenditure and of assets and liabilities. The accounting policies used should be reviewed and adopted by Trustees with new policies only being implemented if required by FRS 102 or where it is judged to provide reliable and more appropriate and relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events or conditions that affect the financial position, performance or cash flows of the academy Trust. The accounting policies for the Trust are detailed as "Notes to the financial statements" within the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

The Annual Report and Financial Statements must be recommended for approval at a meeting of Staploe Education Trust's Board of Trustees. A meeting of the Members of Staploe Education Trust will be convened where the Annual Report and Financial statements will be approved. They will be signed and dated on behalf of the Trust by the Chair of the Board or another Trust member authorised to do so.

The Trust year-end date is 31st August each year and so the audited Annual Report and Financial Statements must be filed with the ESFA by 31st December each year and with Companies House by 31st May.

Further detailed information can be found in the Academies Trust Handbook and the Academies Accounts Direction issued by the ESFA each year.

Income Sources and Funding Requirements

General Principles

The Trust will ensure that all sources of income available are correctly reported and allocated in accordance with set guidelines. This requires all income to be correctly posted using the Chart of Accounts within the finance system to ensure income is clearly identifiable.

Specific criteria are attached to each source of income, and roles and responsibilities around the allocation of resources are clearly defined.

This policy makes certain assumptions around donations and fundraising income in lieu of a fundraising group for the Trust.

Income Sources

Donations

Donations are defined as amounts paid by private companies or individuals to the Trust for the purpose of furthering the objectives of the Trust without reservation or benefit.

Donations may come with restrictions from the donor and it is the responsibility of the Trust to ensure that the utilisation of funds is compliant with any conditions attached. Should the Trust not be in a position to fulfil the restrictions then the donation would need to be returned to the donor.

For large donations, it will be necessary for the CFO to discuss with the Finance Committee the identity of the donor before expenditure begins to ensure that it would be appropriate for the Trust to accept the donation, therefore preventing any potential risk to the Trust's reputation.

Donations made to the Trust are to be banked in the relevant bank account and coded in the finance system to enable clear identification.

The Finance Manager is responsible for maintaining records of the donations received; including details of any conditions attached, for example, monies to be spent on specific areas, or specific branding requirements and for reporting donations to the Executive Headteacher and CFO. The Finance Manager will maintain a record of the use of funds.

The CFO will report to the Finance Committee on the decisions taken regarding the allocation of donations.

Grant Income

Grant income is defined as restricted funding due from the ESFA, Local Authority or other public funding designated for specific expenditure namely; staffing, premises, occupancy, supplies and services.

Grant income received from either the ESFA or Local Authority for the purpose of capital investment must be “ring fenced” and used solely for the purpose of improving the fabric of the school buildings and reported as such within the statutory accounts.

The receipt of these funds is to be monitored directly by the Finance Manager and reported to the CFO. Complete records of all grant income and related expenditure must be maintained for auditing purposes. The CFO is responsible for ensuring that all grants receivable by the Trust are collected on a timely basis, and that the reporting required in respect of the grant income receipts is produced.

Additional sources of income received by the Trust include fees for music tuition, lettings of school property, catering, examination fees, educational visits, breakfast and after-school clubs and pre-school/nursery.

Fees for music tuition are published to parents/carers by letter prior to the start of the academic year. Payments are received from parents on a monthly basis and either collected by standing order or handed into the Finance Office, this only occurs at Soham Village College. Cheque and cash payments are stored in the safe before being banked once per week.

Letting of school property across the Trust is monitored in conjunction with the **Lettings Policy** available on the Trust website <http://www.staploeducationtrust.org.uk/>

The letting of school property is administered by the Trust Executive PA at Soham Village College and by the school offices at the primary schools. The Payroll Manager is informed of the fees to be charged to an organisation and will raise and send the invoice. The invoice states that payment must be made within 30 days of the invoice date. Payment can be made by either BACS or cheque. All cheques are banked by the receiving school office. The receipt of all letting income will be reconciled by the Finance Manager.

All the schools operate a cashless catering system whereby parents/carers pay for meals provided in school electronically through the Parent Pay system. These funds are received directly into each school’s specific bank account as and when parents add funds to their child’s account.

On occasions students can request re-sits of external examinations. Parents/carers are advised of the cost of these re-sits and should they wish their child to take the examination then an invoice will be raised by either the Finance Manager or Payroll Manager. Payments can be made by either BACS, cheque or cash. All payments by cheque or cash are handed to the Examinations Officer before being forwarded to the Finance Office for banking. This type of income will only occur at Soham Village College.

Organisers of educational visits at any of the schools must provide a full breakdown of anticipated costs to the Payroll Manager prior to agreement being made for a visit to go ahead, to ensure it is cost effective. Costs will be confirmed to parents/carers via a letter giving details of the timescales in which payment must be made. Payments of either cheque or cash will be made to the Finance Office or school office where the receipt will be banked into the school specific bank account.

Any surplus funds exceeding £20 per pupil will be refunded to parents/carers by cheque. Amounts below this figure will be transferred to the Hardship Fund.

The primary schools that offer a breakfast club and/or after-school club provision have a system whereby parents/carers book sessions each term. The sessions are entered onto the ParentPay system by a school

administrator so that each session can be paid electronically, eliminating the need to accept cash or cheques in school. Income received is monitored each month as part of the month end process.

All of the primary schools offer either a Pre-school or Nursery provision on their premises. Parents/carers will be provided with and asked to sign the terms and conditions for places at either the Pre-school or Nursery settings (**Appendix Six**). The majority of funding is received from the Local Authority for those children who are entitled to funded hours. This funding is received directly into the school bank account on either a monthly or termly basis depending on the type of provision. Very occasionally, some parents/carers opt to book additional sessions outside of the funded hours. These additional hours are entered onto the Parent Pay system by a school administrator so that they can be paid electronically, eliminating the need to accept cash or cheques in school. Income received is monitored each month as part of the month end process.

All cash and cheques received are locked in the safe in the Finance Office or school office at the primary schools with weekly banking taking place.

Cash held on site will not exceed the £5,000 estimate provided for insurance purposes via the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA).

Monies collected must be banked in their entirety in the appropriate bank account.

The Finance Manager is responsible for preparing reconciliations between the sums collected, deposited at the bank and posted to the Finance System, which must be reviewed and certified by the CFO.

Collection of Debts

The Finance Manager must be informed when monies need to be collected so that an invoice can be raised through the finance system. All invoices give 30 days for payment to be received by the Finance Office.

Outstanding debts will be chased by the Finance Office with monthly statements being sent and copy invoices where necessary. The CFO by discussion with the Finance Committee, will agree any occurrences of potential debt write offs for agreement prior to the finance system being updated. As part of this decision-making process the Finance Committee will be presented with the current rules relating to the write off of debts as stated within the Academy Trust Handbook as there may be a requirement to seek ESFA approval.

Fundraising

Fundraising is defined as monies given in respect of a specific event held by the Trust, for the stated purpose of providing funds to support a project or initiative.

Fundraising monies should be ring-fenced from other charitable income for the stated purpose for which the monies were raised.

Complete records of the amount raised and utilised must be kept by the Finance Manager for auditing purposes.

Monies collected through specific fundraising activities are to be banked in the relevant bank account and coded in the Finance System to enable clear identification.

The Finance Manager will be responsible for maintaining records of the monies collected, and monitoring the use of these funds to ensure that they are allocated in accordance with the fundraiser's remit.

The CFO will report to the Finance Committee on amounts raised and allocated.

Banking and Cash Management

Bank Accounts

The opening of all bank accounts is authorised by the Trust Board. **Appendix One** sets out the authorised signatories operating on the Trust bank accounts. This list is reviewed by the Trust Board on an annual basis.

Deposits

The main sources of income for the Trust are the grants from the ESFA and from the Local Authority. The receipt of these sums in the Trust bank accounts is monitored directly by the Finance Manager, who is responsible for ensuring that all grants due to the schools are collected on a timely basis.

All cash receipts for whatever reason should be received by the Finance Manager and paid directly into the relevant school bank account.

Prior to depositing cash receipts, they are kept in the Finance Office or school office safe within the insurance limits, which is £3000. Cash is collected by G4S on a weekly basis.

Particulars of any cash deposit must be entered into the finance system and details should include:

- the amount of the deposit
- a reference, such as the number of the receipt or the name of the debtor

Payments and Withdrawals

All cheques and BACS payments and other instruments including bank purchase cards authorising withdrawal from Trust bank accounts must be approved in accordance with **Appendix One**. This provision applies to all accounts, public or private, operated by or on behalf of the Trust.

Administration

The Finance Manager must ensure bank statements are received regularly and that reconciliations are performed at least monthly. Reconciliation procedures must ensure that:

- Reconciliations are prepared at least monthly;
- Reconciliations are subject to an independent monthly review carried out by the CFO;
- Adjustments are dealt with promptly.

Petty Cash Account

The Trust holds a petty cash account. Funds for this account are transferred from the main Trust bank accounts by the Finance Manager when requests are made from staff. This is used in the following situations:

- Small amounts of cash required for reimbursement;
- Items identified as best value;

Reimbursements made to staff occur when a member of staff brings a valid receipt to the finance office that has been signed by the relevant budget holder. A finance assistant or designated primary school administrator will raise a petty cash request, which must be signed by two of the authorised account signatories in **Appendix One** before payment can be made.

Staff should only use their own funds to purchase goods when there is no alternative and prior agreement has been received from the budget holder. Requests are checked by the Finance Manger before being paid.

Petty cash is stored securely in the safe in the Finance Office at Soham Village College or school office in the primary schools.

The Finance Manager will reconcile petty cash and enter all transactions onto the finance system on a monthly basis.

The Finance Manager will exercise discretion over the use of petty cash.

Cash Flow Forecasts

The CFO in conjunction with the Finance Manager, is responsible for preparing cash flow forecasts to ensure that the Trust has sufficient funds available to pay for day-to-day operations. If significant balances can be foreseen, steps should be taken to invest the extra funds. Similarly, plans should be made to transfer funds from another bank account to cover potential cash shortages if appropriate.

Investments

Investments must only be made in accordance with the **Treasury Management Policy Statement** that has been approved by the Trustees.

All investments must be recorded in sufficient details for external scrutiny. Procedures must be put into place to properly account in the finance system for any income generated as a result of investments made.

Purchasing

Procurement

General Principles

It is the policy of the Trust to seek the best value for money from all purchased commitments, i.e. goods and services of the requisite quality and quantity delivered on a timely basis at the best price possible.

It is always the Trust's policy to ensure the best use of public monies.

The Trust will ensure transparency in the purchase of goods and services and demonstrate that there is no corruption or private gain involved in the contractual relationships of the Trust.

The Trust will deal with all parties on a fair and equitable basis.

The Trust acknowledge the changes to procurement law that is due to be enacted from October 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/transforming-public-procurement>

Routine Purchasing

Routine purchases can be authorised by the budget holder using the chart on page 20 to gather the required number of quotations. The budget holder must consider best value for money when completing order requisitions; any concerns must be discussed with the Finance Manager.

Budget holders are informed of the budget available to them as soon as possible after the start of the term in September. It is the responsibility of the budget holder to manage their budget and to ensure that the funds available are not overspent. A report detailing actual expenditure against budget is supplied to each budget holder after the month end and budget holders are encouraged to keep their own records of orders placed but not paid for.

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. emergency repairs), orders may be placed by telephone or email by the Facilities Manager or nominated deputy, usually the individual school caretaker.

Order requisitions are compiled and approved electronically using the Sage for Education software. Approved order requisitions are received by the Finance Office for processing. The software will not permit order requisitions to be approved if there are insufficient funds available in the budget. In these circumstances, the budget holder must raise the issue with the Finance Manager in the first instance. The Headteacher in conjunction with the CFO will agree any additional spend over budget.

The Finance Assistant will place all orders with suppliers either electronically or by telephone using the purchase order number generated by the software. Copies of all purchase orders are held within the software.

Orders placed via the internet with the Trust debit card will be placed by the Finance Manager who will process an internet purchase remittance to be signed by two of the authorised bank signatories. The finance system will be updated including a bank reconciliation to account for the purchases made. Budget holders are reminded regularly that internet purchases must always abide by the best value principles and not become the default option whereby the same internet supplier is being used continuously without these principles being acted upon as a matter of course.

On delivery of the goods, the Finance Office will check the goods for damage and agree all items with the purchase order. Each type of document relating to the purchase is filed appropriately in the Finance Office.

Once the order has been checked, it can be distributed to the relevant department and the finance system will be updated to reflect the receipt of goods. Any damage or discrepancies will be discussed with the supplier.

When invoices are received, they will be stamped by the Finance Office and passed to the relevant budget holder for confirmation that the goods have been received and the invoice can be paid. The signed invoice will be returned to the Finance Office for entry onto the finance system once it has been checked for accuracy.

Once it has been processed onto the finance system the invoice and all related documentation will be passed to the Finance Manager ready for payment.

Purchasing: Quotation Requirements

Quotations must be received for all purchases prior to a buying decision being made; the agreed quotation requirements and authorising personnel are as follows;

Purchases up to £5000	One oral quotation; which must be confirmed in writing.	Budget Holder
Purchases between £5,000 and £40,000	Three written quotations	Budget Holder and, Executive Headteacher or CFO
Purchases between £40,001 and £75,000	Four suppliers invited to tender; advertising is not necessary	Executive Headteacher and, Chair of Trust Board
Purchases between £75,001 and UK only threshold (From 1 st January 2024 the UK threshold is £214,904 inclusive of VAT)	Invitation to tender via the new e-tendering service called Find a Tender Service (FTS) for four suppliers.	Trust Board or delegated committee; (Acquiring a freehold of land or buildings must have ESFA approval)
Purchases above UK only threshold	Follow UK only procedures and advertise the opportunity on the Find a Tender Service and on Contracts Finder.	Legal Advice

Payments

When invoices become due for payment, it is the responsibility of the Finance Manager to process all payments.

Invoices should be paid by BACS wherever possible with cheques being used as a secondary alternative where necessary. In cases where a supplier informs the Trust that their bank account has changed, the Finance Manager will call the company from an old invoice and confirm the bank details with the accounts payable team at the company, before updating the finance system. The CFO will check these details and sign the correspondence received to confirm they have been entered correctly, is to prevent fraud.

The payment and associated paperwork must be authorised by two of the nominated bank signatories **(Appendix One)**.

For BACS payments, a report will be downloaded from the finance system detailing the invoices that are due for payment. The invoices will be checked for authorising signatures by the Finance Manager before being entered for payment on the relevant bank account.

The invoices together with the BACS report will be passed to the first authorised signatory, who will check every invoice for an authorising signature and that the gross amount matches the BACS report. The total amount being paid will be checked on the bank account to ensure it matches the BACS report. The bank payment will be authorised, and the BACS report signed and dated.

The second authorised signatory will follow the exact steps detailed above before handing all paperwork back to the Finance Manager.

For cheque payments, a remittance advice will be produced from the finance system for each cheque payment being made. The authorised invoice will be attached to the remittance advice.

The first and second signatory will check that the invoice has been authorised and that the amount of the cheque agrees to the invoice value. The payee and cheque value must also agree with the remittance advice. Both signatories will sign the cheques before returning all paperwork to the Finance Manager.

The Finance Manager will post cheque payments with remittance advice to suppliers and email BACS remittances to suppliers. All documentation will be filed in sequential order with all supporting documents attached.

Invoices: Authorised Signatories

All invoices must be signed by the following agreed personnel before the invoice can be processed onto the finance system.

Invoices up to £5,000	Budget Holder and; One other member of the department.
Invoices between £4,000 and £40,000	Budget Holder and either; Executive Headteacher or CFO.
Invoices over £40,000	Executive Headteacher and; Chair of the Trust Board.

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Tendering Process

There are three forms of tender procedure: open, restricted and negotiated, and the circumstances in which each procedure should be used are described below.

Open Tender

This is where all potential suppliers are invited to tender. The budget holder must discuss and agree with the CFO how best to advertise for suppliers e.g. general press, trade journals or to identify all potential suppliers and contact directly if practical. This is the preferred method of tendering, as it is most conducive to competition and the propriety of public funds.

Restricted Tender

This is where suppliers are specifically invited to tender. Restricted tenders are appropriate where:

- There is a need to maintain a balance between the contract value and administrative costs;
- A large number of suppliers come forward or because the nature of the goods is such that only specific suppliers can be expected to supply the Trust's requirements;
- The costs of publicity and advertising are likely to outweigh the potential benefits of open tendering.

Negotiated Tender

The terms of the contract may be negotiated with one or more chosen suppliers. This is appropriate in specific circumstances:

- The open tender methods have resulted in either no or unacceptable tenders;
- Only one or very few suppliers are available;
- Extreme urgency exists;
- Additional deliveries by the existing supplier are justified.

Preparation for Tender.

In the evaluation of tenders, full consideration should be given to:

- The objective of the project;
- Overall requirements;
- Technical skills required;
- After sales service requirements;
- Form of contract.

It may be useful, after all requirements have been established, to rank requirements (e.g. mandatory, desirable and additional) and award marks to suppliers on fulfilment of these requirements to help reach an overall decision.

Invitation to Tender

If a restricted tender is to be used, then an invitation to tender must be issued. If an open tender is used an invitation to tender may be issued in response to an initial enquiry.

An invitation to tender should include all the following:

- Introduction and background to the project;
- Scope and objectives of the project;
- Technical requirements;
- Implementation of the project;
- Terms and conditions of tender;
- Form of response.

The following aspects will be considered in the tendering process:

Financial

- The quality of goods and services in the proposition should be considered along with the price, i.e. if a lower price means a reduced service or lower quality this should be factored into the decision-making process;
- Care should be taken to ensure that the tender price is the total price and that there are no hidden or extra costs;
- Scope for negotiation on price.

Technical/Suitability

- Qualifications of the contractor;
- Relevant experience of the contractor;
- Descriptions of technical and service facilities;
- Certificates of quality/conformity with standards;
- Quality control procedures;
- Details of previous sales and references from past customers.

Other Considerations

- After sales service;
- Financial status of supplier.

Tender Acceptance Procedures

The invitation to tender should clearly state the date and time by which the completed tender document should be received by the Trust.

Tenders should be submitted in plain envelopes clearly marked to indicate they contain tender documents. The envelopes should be time and date stamped on receipt and stored in a secure place prior to tender opening.

Tenders received after the submission deadline should not normally be accepted.

Tender Opening Procedures

All tenders submitted should be opened at the same time and the tender details should be recorded. Persons should be present for the opening of tenders as follows:

- For contracts up to £50,000
Budget Holder, Executive Headteacher and CFO
- For contracts over £50,000
Budget Holder, Headteacher, Executive Headteacher and CFO

A separate record should be established to record the names of the firms' submitting tenders and the amount tendered. This record must be signed by all people present at the tender opening.

Tendering Procedures

The evaluation process should involve at least two people. Those involved should disclose all interests, business and otherwise, that might impact upon their objectivity. If there is a potential conflict of interest, then that person must withdraw from the tendering process.

Those involved in deciding must take care not to accept gifts or hospitality from potential suppliers that could compromise or be seen to compromise their independence.

The decision and criteria should be recorded and be available for future reference.

Where required by the conditions attached to a specific grant from the ESFA, the agency's approval must be obtained before the acceptance of a tender.

In some cases, it may be necessary or preferred to appoint a suitably qualified consultant to support the Trust through a tender process.

Related Party Transactions

The Trust must ensure that it observes the ESFA's regulations when dealing with goods or services provided by or to individuals or organisations related to Staploe Education Trust.

The principles that apply to related party relationships as set out in the Academy Trust Handbook are;

The Trust must be even-handed in its relationships with related parties by ensuring that:

- Trustees comply with their statutory duties as company directors to avoid conflicts of interest, not to accept benefits from third parties, and to declare interest in proposed transactions or arrangements;
- All Members, Trustees, Members of Local Advisory Bodies and senior employees have completed the register of interests;
- No Member, Trustee, Member of a Local Advisory Body, employee or related individual or organisation uses their connection to the Trust for personal gain, including payment under terms that are preferential to those that would be offered to an individual or organisation with no connection to the Trust;
- There are no payments to any Trustee by the Trust unless permitted by the Articles of Association or by authority from the Charity Commission and must comply with any relevant agreement with the Secretary of State. The Trust will need to consider these obligations where payments are made to other business entities who employ the Trustee, are owned by the Trustee, or in which the Trustee holds a controlling interest;
- The Charity Commission's approval is obtained where the Trust believes a significant advantage exists in paying a Trustee for acting as a Trustee;
- Any payment provided to any of the following must be "at cost":
 - A Member;
 - A Trustee;
 - Any individual related to a Member or Trustee;
 - Any individual or organisation given the right under the Trust's Articles of Association to appoint a Member or Trustee or anybody connected to such individual or organisation;
 - Any individual or organisation recognised by the Secretary of State as a sponsor of the Trust or anybody connected to such individual or organisation.

The Trust Board must ensure requirements for managing related party transactions are applied across the Trust. The Chair of the Trust Board and the Accounting Officer must ensure their capacity to control and influence does not conflict with these requirements.

They must manage personal relationships with related parties to avoid both real and perceived conflicts of interest, promoting integrity and openness in accordance with the seven principles of public life.

The Trust Board must recognise that some relationships with related parties may attract greater public scrutiny, such as:

- Transactions with individuals in a position of control and influence, including the Chair of the Trust Board and the Accounting Officer;
- Payments to organisations with a profit motive, as opposed to those in the public or voluntary sectors;
- Relationships with external auditors beyond their duty to deliver a statutory audit.

The Trust must keep sufficient records, and make sufficient disclosures in their annual accounts, to show that transactions with these parties, and all other related parties, have been conducted in accordance with the high standards of accountability and transparency required within the public sector.

The Trust must report all transactions with related parties to the ESFA in advance of the transaction taking place. This requirement applies to transactions made on or after 1 April 2019.

The Trust must obtain the ESFA's approval for transactions with related parties that are novel, contentious and/or repercussive. The Trust should carefully consider the impact of this requirement and its relevance to transactions involving the Chair of the Trust Board and the Accounting Officer.

The Trust must obtain ESFA's prior approval, for contracts for the supply of goods or services to the Trust by a related party, agreed on or after 1 April 2019 where any of the following limits arise:

- A contract exceeding £20,000;
- A contract of any value that would take the total value of contracts with the related party beyond £20,000 in the same financial year ending 31 August;
- A contract of any value if there have been contracts exceeding £20,000 individually or cumulatively with the related party in the same financial year ending 31 August.

For the purposes of reporting to, and approval by, the ESFA, transactions with related parties do not include salaries and other payments made by the Trust to a person under a contract of employment through the Trust's payroll.

Novel, Contentious and Repercussive Transactions

The Trust must always refer novel, contentious and repercussive transactions to the ESFA for approval. In such circumstances the ESFA may need to seek further approval from HM Treasury and so sufficient time should be allowed for any proposal by the Trust to be considered.

- Novel transactions are those in which the Trust has no experience, or are outside the usual range of business;
- Contentious transactions are those that might cause criticism of the Trust by Parliament, the public or the media;
- Repercussive transactions are those likely to cause pressure on other Trusts to take a similar approach and will therefore have wider financial implications.

Month End Procedures

The following procedures will be conducted each month by the Finance Manager and Payroll Manager;

- Bank reconciliation;
- Agree income to funding statements producing a reconciliation;
- Petty cash reconciliation;
- Creditors report check identifying any issues;
- Debtors report check identifying any issues;
- Fixed Asset reconciliation;
- Produce VAT 126 calculations;
- Post payroll journal;
- Payroll reconciliation;
- Reserves reconciliation;
- Capital reconciliation;
- Document journals;
- Trial Balance reconciliation of all balances;
- Produce budget holders` reports and email;
- Produce management accounts with variances and narrative;

An electronic reconciliation of all balance sheet items will be completed by the 14th of each month, unless a school holiday has taken place requiring the date to move, by the Finance Manager and approved by the CFO, on a monthly basis prior to the completed accounts being distributed to the Executive Headteacher, Chair of the Trust Board and Chair of the Finance Committee.

Fixed Assets

Purchase of assets

All assets purchased with a value over £1,000 must be entered in the capital asset register. Assets of a lower value but which are perceived as a high-risk item should be entered onto a separate inventory register for insurance purposes / asset management purposes e.g. laptops, digital cameras etc.

Asset Register

The asset register should include the following information:

- Date of acquisition;
- Description of the asset including a unique identification mark such as a serial number where appropriate;
- Cost on acquisition;
- Source of funding i.e. grant or donations;
- Location of asset;
- Expected useful life of asset;
- Depreciation charge for the current year;
- Accumulated depreciation charge.

The asset register helps:

- To ensure that staff take responsibility for the safe custody of assets;
- With the security of assets e.g. to enable independent checks on the safe custody of assets, as a deterrent against theft or misuse;
- To manage the effective utilisation of assets and to plan for their replacement;
- To calculate capital asset depreciation costs;
- To help the external auditors to draw conclusions on the annual accounts and the Trust's financial system;
- To support insurance claims in the event of fire, theft, vandalism or other disasters.

The items on the fixed asset register should be categorised into:

- Land and buildings analysed between freehold and leasehold;
- Furniture and equipment;
- Computer equipment and software;
- Motor vehicles;
- Assets under construction (if applicable).

Stores and equipment must be secured by means of physical and other security devices. Only authorised staff may access the stores.

All items in the register should be permanently and visibly marked as the Trust's property and there should be a regular (at least annual) count by someone other than the person maintaining the register. Discrepancies between the physical count and the amount recorded in the register should be investigated promptly and where significant, reported to the CFO. Inventories of Trust property should be kept up to date and reviewed annually. Where items are used by the Trust but do not belong to it, this should be noted.

Disposals

Items which are to be disposed of by sale or destruction must be authorised for disposal by the CFO and where significant, should be sold following competitive tender. The Trust must seek the approval of the ESFA in writing if it proposes to dispose of an asset for which capital grant in excess of £20,000 was paid or if it intends to dispose of assets inherited from Cambridgeshire County Council.

Disposal of equipment to staff is not encouraged, as it may be more difficult to evidence the Trust obtained value for money in any sale or scrapping of equipment, however if on the rare occasion that assets are disposed of internally, appropriate guidance on price must be sought. In addition, there are complications with the disposal of computer equipment, as the Trust would need to ensure licences for software programmes have been legally transferred to a new owner.

The Trust is expected to re-invest the proceeds from all asset sales for which capital grant was paid in other Trust assets. If the sale proceeds are not reinvested, then the Trust must repay to the ESFA a proportion of the sale proceeds.

Academy land and buildings cannot be disposed of by the Trust.

Loan of Assets

Except for ICT assets specifically intended for the purposes, e.g. laptops, property must not be removed from Trust premises without the authorisation of the Executive Headteacher/CFO. A record of the loan must be recorded in a loan register and booked back into the Trust when it is returned.

If assets are on loan for extended periods or to a single member of staff on a regular basis, the situation may give rise to a 'benefit-in-kind' for taxation purposes. Loans should therefore be kept under review and any potential benefits discussed with the Trust's auditors.

When staff members leave the organisation, computer equipment must be returned to the ICT Systems and Strategy Manager and keys returned to the Facilities Manager.

Depreciation

Land and Buildings

Assets under construction – no depreciation is provided on land and assets in construction;

Freehold land and buildings are not depreciated;

Leasehold buildings will be depreciated on a straight-line basis over the term of the lease, which will be 50 years.

Equipment

Equipment costing less than £1,000 per item or group of items is written off to the income and expenditure account in the period of acquisition. All other equipment with an expected life of more than one year is capitalised at cost.

(Equipment is depreciated on a straight-line basis over its useful economic life as follows) *

Motor vehicles	10 years – 25% reducing balance
Fixtures and Fittings	10 years – 10% straight line
ICT Hardware and Software	3 years – 33.3% straight line

*(Certain individual assets may have a 'useful economic life' that varies from the above. Where this is the case, the policy can be varied to reflect this and shall be reflected in the Trust financial statements)

Assets will continue to be depreciated annually at the year-end.

Leased Assets

There are two types of lease:

- Finance leases: these are a form of borrowing; and
- Operating leases: these are not borrowing.

The Trust must gain approval from the ESFA for the following leasing transactions;

- Taking up a finance lease on any class of asset for any duration from another party;
- Taking up a leasehold or tenancy agreement on land or buildings from another party for a term of seven or more years;
- Granting a leasehold interest, including a tenancy agreement, of any duration, on land and buildings to another party

The Trust does not require approval for any other operating lease and therefore permitted leases will be approved by the Executive Head teacher and/or the CFO.

Depreciation is charged to income and expenditure on the same basis as above. Leasing payments are treated as consisting of capital and interest elements and interest is charged to the income and expenditure account over the period of the lease.

Payroll

Both payroll administration and salary payments are currently handled by our payroll provider; Education Personnel Management (EPM) on behalf of the Trust. The detailed terms are outlined in the annual Service Level Agreement.

The main elements of the payroll system are:

- Staff appointments;
- Payroll administration;
- Payments.

Staff Appointments

The Trust Board has approved a Pay Policy for the Trust and it is the responsibility of the Executive Headteacher to ensure that it is implemented. Changes can only be made with the express approval in the first instance of the Finance Committee, who must ensure that adequate budgetary provision exists for any payroll changes.

The Trust Board will appoint the Executive Headteacher and Trust Operations Director.

The Executive Headteacher will appoint the Headteacher to each of the schools.

The Headteacher for each school has designated responsibility for appointing both teaching and support staff within their schools with support from Trust personnel as required.

All staff appointments and changes to contracts for existing staff must be made within the parameters of the budget and communicated clearly to the HR Manager(s) and Payroll Manager before an appointment or change is made and confirmed with the individual.

The offering of posts to successful applicants will be subject to the following employment and safeguarding checks and requirement for information;

- Scrutiny of application form;
- Photographic identification;
- Right to work in the United Kingdom;
- Minimum of two references;
- DBS clearance;
- Bank details; and
- Emergency contacts;

A letter of appointment will be sent to the new member of staff, and once the above information has been verified the contract is issued by EPM.

The contract is signed by the Executive Headteacher. This is delegated to the CFO in the absence of the Executive Headteacher.

Every member of staff will have a personnel file that is stored securely with limited access.

The Payroll Manager organises child protection training for all new employees within three months of their start date.

The HR Department will provide all new employees with an induction pack to include electronic and hard copy information.

The Executive Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the statutory obligations around the safer recruitment policy and procedures are administered, and nominated staff in each school are responsible for maintaining accurate records of all staff employed in a single central record.

When staff leave the organisation, the appropriate correspondence must be shared with the HR Manager(s) and Payroll Manager to ensure that contracts are ended on the correct date to prevent under or overpayments being made to staff leavers. The Payroll Manager will inform EPM via the portal and provide a copy of the correspondence. EPM will produce the P45.

Payroll Administration

It is the responsibility of the Payroll Manager to ensure that each member of staff is paid in line with their contract and receives reimbursement for additional hours and any expenses incurred during the undertaking of their role.

Hours worked in addition to those contracted must be agreed by the Headteacher or CFO prior to being worked to ensure they fall within the parameters of the budget. Members of staff claiming additional hours must complete the correct form available from the Payroll Manager; which should be signed, dated and authorised by their line manager before being presented to the Payroll Manager in line with the payroll schedule which is published by the Payroll Manager.

Cleaning staff have a clocking card system to record additional hours, which are authorised by the Facilities Manager before being processed and entered onto the EPM portal.

Staff that have incurred expenses must complete the correct form from the Payroll Manager; which should be signed, dated and authorised by their line manager before being presented to the Payroll Manager in line with the published payroll schedule. Receipts to evidence the expenses should be attached to the claim form. The Trust has a duty of care to its employees and so when claiming motor expenses for journeys undertaken on Trust business, employees must provide valid copies of their driving licence, MOT certificate and business insurance, which will be kept on file.

All additional payments will be entered onto the EPM portal by the Payroll Manager.

Once the payroll has been processed by EPM, the Payroll Manager will check the payments being proposed by downloading the reports from the portal and check the following information;

- All employees listed have contracts;
- FTE and pay scales are correct;
- Gross payments match individual contracts and the budget;
- Additional payments agree to claim forms;
- Monetary deductions are correct;
- Unpaid absence deductions are correct;

All anomalies will be raised with EPM. Once correct the CFO will undertake final checks and electronically sign off the payroll via the EPM portal, in the absence of the CFO the AO will check and sign off..

The Executive Headteacher will undertake additional detailed checks of payroll matters relating to all Trust personnel that have contact and responsibility for Trust financial matters. These include the following posts;

- CFO;
- Finance Manager;

- Payroll Manager;
- Finance Assistants;

The Payroll Manager is responsible for filing all monthly payroll documentation and conducting a reconciliation between the actual and budgeted costs, reporting any variances to the CFO. The Finance Manager will process the payroll journal that is entered onto the finance system.

For members of staff who currently participate in the Computer Share salary sacrifice scheme and have already registered, the Payroll Manager will ensure that the appropriate deductions are made through the payroll and that the invoices received from Computer Share are correct and paid in a timely manner.

The invoices will be entered onto the finance system by the Finance Assistant and processed for BACS payment by the Finance Manager.

Payments

All salary payments are made by the Payroll Provider; Education Personnel Management (EPM) in line with the arrangements outlined in the annual Service Level Agreement.

All staff are paid on the last working day of every month by bank credit transfer directly into their bank accounts.

The EPM payroll system automatically calculates the deductions due from payroll to comply with legislation. The major deductions are for tax, national insurance contributions and pension contributions. The amounts paid are detailed on each staff member's electronic payslip.

Expenses

General Principles

It is the Trust's policy to ensure that Members, Trustees, Advisory Body Members and members of staff are reimbursed promptly and appropriately for expenses incurred on Trust business. However, it should be stressed that it is the responsibility of the claimant to ensure that costs are appropriate and reasonable. Any attempt to claim expenses knowingly or falsely will result in disciplinary action.

It is always the Trust's policy to ensure the best use of public monies, considering the nature of its business.

Members, Trustees, Advisory Body Members and members of staff are always expected to display prudence with respect to business related expenses, and to base their business spending decisions on the best interests of the Trust. Only actual expenses incurred in accordance with the travel guidelines and in the course and interest of the Trust's business will be reimbursed.

Full details of the Trust **Travel and Subsistence Policy** are set out in **Appendix Two**.

Entertaining Visitors

Members, Trustees, Advisory Body Members and members of staff may entertain visitors and guests only where it is within budgetary limits and is likely to help the Trust to further its business objectives. Advance approval from the Headteacher or CFO is required.

The names of each person attending must be noted on the claim, identifying which attendees are from the Trust and which are external guests. When in-house catering is used, the names should be given to the Catering Manager.

Subject to these constraints and those in relation to the **Gifts and Hospitality Policy**; Members, Trustees, Advisory Body Members and members of staff may claim reasonable and appropriate entertaining expenses.

Entertaining Staff

The cost of entertaining other school staff is not normally reimbursable. Reimbursement may only be claimed where exceptional business purposes justify the expense. Advance approval from the Headteacher or CFO is required.

The names of each person entertained must be noted on the claim or given to the Catering Manager.

When approval is given and such entertaining results in a taxable benefit on the staff entertained, the Trust will meet this tax liability.

Other Circumstances

In circumstances where a member of staff should incur other expenses that are not explicitly covered by this policy, reimbursement may be available providing agreement has been reached with the Headteacher and the CFO.

DSE Users

All DSE workstation users are entitled to a free eye test should they feel they need one. This is carried out at the expense of the Trust. Should the ophthalmic optician prescribe the use of spectacles to correct vision defects at viewing distances used specifically for DSE work (usually 50-60 cm), then an allowance of £55 including VAT should be paid to the employee to cover the cost of the basic standard spectacles adequate for the task. Again, this cost is met by the Trust through devolved funding upon production of a receipt confirming the optician's prescription. Users who currently use normal spectacles or contact lenses

prescribed for any other reason are to be afforded the same expense and allowances as other users, only if they are prescribed special corrective appliances specifically for DSE work. Users are entitled to further eyesight examinations at regular intervals – two years is considered good practice.

Reimbursement of Expenses

Staff expenses will only be reimbursed if they are:

- Supported by detailed (VAT) receipts and credit card slips if necessary;
- Submitted on the relevant claim form that can be obtained from the Payroll Manager;
- Submitted within one (1) month of being incurred;
- Fully completed;
- Appropriately authorised;
- Claimed in line with this Finance Policy.

In exceptional circumstances, the Trust may consider reimbursing minor claims for travel without the back-up receipt, for example the use of a prepaid Oyster card to travel on Trust business where no receipt is currently issued or tube tickets that are retained as you pass through the ticket barrier. Staff should give a full explanation as to why no receipt is available and must include this on the expense claim form before submission.

In claiming reimbursement, staff must confirm both that the expenses have been incurred and that the Trust business to which they relate has been carried out in the manner most cost effective to the Trust in the circumstances.

Authorised expenses submitted in line with this policy on the required forms will be paid directly into the member of staff's bank account or building society account monthly along with their salary. The Finance Department must receive claims on or before the last day of each month to receive payment on the following pay date.

Members, Trustees and Advisory Body Members expenses need to be submitted on a claim form from the Trust Governance Professional and this will be reimbursed by cheque or BACS payment.

Interview Expenses

Claimants should have due regard for economy in incurring travel expenses. Only expenses necessarily incurred will be reimbursed. It is expected that claimants will make use of public transport to attend any one of the Staploe Education Trust schools. Those who travel by public transport will be paid the bus or rail fare actually incurred. On some occasions due to geographical difficulties, it may be impractical to use public transport, consequently mileage may be paid (the suitability for payment of mileage is decided by Staploe Education Trust).

Payment of expenses for candidates will be paid by BACS or cheque. Cheques will be forwarded by post after the interview.

Gifts and Hospitality Policy Statement

The Gifts and Hospitality Policy of the Trust is intended to assist all staff members in following the various Trust guidance and relevant legislation on the giving and receipt of hospitality or gifts.

The policy covers both the receipt and delivery of hospitality and gifts to / by members of staff, in their capacity as employees of the Trust.

The term 'gifts' is deemed to include:

- Goods provided for personal or private use;
- Personal services;
- Loans of equipment, vehicles etc. for personal use;
- The provision of goods and / or services at preferential cost (including loans of money) for personal or other private use;

The term 'hospitality' is deemed to include the offer or receipt of:

- Food and drink;
- Travel;
- Accommodation;
- Entertainment.

Legal Framework & National Guidance

Prevention of Corruption in the Public Sector

Under the Prevention of Corruption Acts, 1906 and 1916, it is an offence for employees corruptly to accept any gifts or consideration as an inducement of reward for:

- Doing or refraining from doing, anything in their official capacity;
- Showing favour or disfavour to any person in their official capacity.

Under the 1961 Act, any money, gift or consideration received by an employee in public service from a person or organisation holding or seeking to obtain a contract will be deemed to have been received corruptly unless the employee proves to the contrary.

General Principles

The Trust is responsible for ensuring the guidelines are brought to the attention of all employees, and that a framework is put in place to ensure they are effectively implemented.

It is the responsibility of staff to ensure that they are not placed in a position which risks, or appears to risk, conflict between their private interests and their duties at the Trust. This applies to both staff who commit resources directly (e.g. the ordering of goods or services) or indirectly (e.g. by policy development).

The provision of the policy shall be held to apply to all staff members. There is no seniority threshold. In cases of doubt, individuals should clear the acceptance of gifts or hospitality with the Executive Headteacher.

Each employee has a personal responsibility to declare hospitality and gifts in accordance with the policy. Non-compliance with the policy may lead to disciplinary action. Staff also need to be aware that a breach of the provisions under legislation may make them liable to prosecution and may lead to loss of employment.

Any hospitality or trivial gifts accepted should be entered on a **Gifts and Hospitality Register** maintained within the Finance Office. It should be noted that this register is not a confidential document and should be made available to interested parties on request.

It is the responsibility of the CFO to periodically review the **Gifts and Hospitality Register**.

Receipt of Hospitality

Acceptable Hospitality

Modest hospitality is an accepted courtesy of a business relationship. However, the recipient should not allow themselves to reach a position whereby they might be deemed by others to have been influenced in making a business decision as a consequence of accepting such hospitality.

The frequency and scale of hospitality accepted should not be significantly greater than the recipient's employer would be likely to provide in return.

Any hospitality accepted of a value exceeding £20 should be recorded on the register.

Unacceptable Hospitality

Any hospitality which does not fulfil the criteria in the above paragraph will be unacceptable. Where this is not easy to decide, the offer should be declined, or advice sought from the Executive Headteacher. Any significant hospitality offered to Trust employees whether accepted or declined should be recorded in the register.

Commercial Sponsorship

As a general principle, all offers of hospitality received from commercial third parties should be refused. Attendance at relevant commercially sponsored conferences and courses is acceptable but only where acceptance will not and cannot be seen as compromising purchasing or other decisions in any way. Receipt or provision of such sponsorship should be recorded in the register.

Employees should pay attention to the circumstances in which hospitality is offered; the provision of hospitality by an individual or organisation during a tendering process or where a contract is shortly to end, or where performance of the contract is in question, or in any other circumstances where acceptance might compromise the position of the employee or of the Trust, is not acceptable.

Provision of Hospitality

The provision of hospitality by employees of the Trust to representatives of other organisations should be modest and appropriate to the circumstances.

Provision of hospitality by the Trust to employees or others would not normally be appropriate except in the case of working lunches during meetings or workshops.

The use of the Trust monies for hospitality and entertainment at conferences and seminars should be carefully considered. The Trust needs to be able to demonstrate good value in incurring public expenditure.

Note that where individuals have accepted hospitality from another organisation, for example to fulfil a speaking engagement this should be of a value equivalent to that normally provided by the Trust and there is no further entitlement to claim expenses from the Trust.

Hospitality must be secondary to the purpose of any meeting and the level must be appropriate and in proportion to the event. The costs involved must not exceed the level which the recipients would normally adopt when paying for themselves at such an event or that which could be reciprocated by the Trust.

Business – Gifts

Acceptance of gifts

Employees should not accept gifts which may be capable of being construed as being able to influence a purchasing decision or cast doubt on the integrity of such decisions.

Personal gifts offered by parents and students to members of staff, for example, at holiday or end of term times, should be recorded on the **Gifts and Hospitality Register** if the estimated value is more than £20.

In certain instances, for example, where a class contribute collectively, gifts greater than a value of £20 up to a maximum value of £250 may be accepted but must be recorded on the **Gifts and Hospitality Register**.

Where it is difficult to decide whether a gift should be accepted or not, advice should be sought from the Executive Headteacher.

Commercial or corporate business gifts and donations made to the Trust, other than items of very small intrinsic value, should be reported separately to the Executive Headteacher and added to the register.

Presents and donations to the Trust or a department should be reported and added to the register. It is at the discretion of individual members of the Senior Leadership Team as to whether or not the gift may be kept by an individual.

All gifts or hospitality received which are valued at over £20 shall be acknowledged in writing and a copy of that acknowledgement shall be forwarded to and held on file by the CFO.

Giving of gifts

Charitable donations will not be given by any member of staff on behalf of the Trust.

Monetary gifts

The acceptance or giving of cash is not acceptable in any circumstances.

Alcoholic gifts

The giving of alcoholic gifts on behalf of the Trust is not acceptable.

The Trust will not permit the purchase of gifts for staff members using public funds available to the Trust. However, it is acceptable for staff members to organise a “collection” from those staff members who volunteer to donate personally to purchase a gift privately. In exceptional circumstances, gifts may be purchased using funds that the schools have earned, such as from the letting of school premises.

A gift of reasonable value may be given by the Trust to someone external to the Trust in exceptional circumstances.

Records of Hospitality and Gifts

All gifts and hospitality must be recorded on the **Gifts and Hospitality Register**. When in doubt, employees are advised to record any matters concerning gifts and hospitality which may be covered by this policy, to ensure that an individual does not expose themselves to risk.

The information required for the hospitality and gifts register is set out below:

- Date of entry;
- Name of recipient / provider;
- Job title;
- Nature and purpose of hospitality or gift received or provided;
- The name of any other organisation involved;
- Estimated value.

Submissions should be made as soon as is practically possible.

If employees have any doubt about whether an item should or should not be recorded, they are advised to record it.

The **Gifts and Hospitality Register** will be reviewed annually by the Responsible Officer (as arranged by the Risk and Audit Committee) and from time to time by the CFO. It will be available to the External Auditors.

Reserves Policy Statement

Under Fund Accounting rules the Trust is able to hold two types of funds, unrestricted and restricted:

- Unrestricted Funds – which represent those resources which may be used towards meeting any charitable objects of the Trust, at the discretion of the Trust Board. Funds received during an accounting year range between 5-10% of total income received.
- Restricted Funds – which comprise funds received from the ESFA, DfE and Cambridgeshire County Council among other organisations, which are applied for specific purposes including the normal running costs of the Trust.
- Capital Restricted Funds – which include funds received from the ESFA and Local Authority, which are provided specifically for the purpose of improving the fabric of the school buildings or for the new build of extensions to existing buildings.

The Trust needs to hold reserves for a number of reasons, examples of which are listed below:

- Contingency / minimum prudent level of reserves to deal with unforeseen events that cannot be contained within the annual approved budget;
- A planned build-up of funds to pay for some major work, project or replacement programme;
- Funds held from one year to the next to manage variations in funding levels or specifically allocated grants for which carry forward is allowed;
- Change management costs e.g. redundancy payments to staff;
- Fixed asset funds which are applied to specific capital purposes in which the asset acquired or created is held for a specific purpose.

It is the policy of the Trust to hold reserves to support future education purposes in line with the Trust Strategic Priorities and to help bridge any anticipated budget gaps over the medium term, whilst being mindful of not holding an excessive level of funds in reserve to the detriment of any of the Trust schools.

The Trust Board have agreed to hold cash reserves that are valued as follows;

A minimum value of 1 month`s budgeted salary costs calculated each academic year.

A maximum value that will not exceed 2 months budgeted salary costs calculated each academic year without being referred to the Trust Board for further discussion and decision.

Treasury Management Policy Statement

Treasury Management is defined as:

- The management of the Trust's cash flows, banking and investment transactions,
- The management of the risks associated with these activities;
- The pursuit of optimal returns consistent with those risks.

The objectives of this policy statement are to ensure that the Trust:

- Maintains sufficient cash balances in its current account to meet its day-to-day commitments;
- Invests surplus cash to earn an acceptable rate of return without undue risk;
- Considers spreading risk between differing types of investment and institutions to reduce credit risk.

Responsibility

The Members, Trustees, Executive Headteacher, CFO, Headteachers and local Advisory Body have overall responsibility for the security and management of funds. The day-to-day management of the treasury function is controlled by the CFO. The CFO will liaise with the Members, Trustees, Executive Headteacher, Headteachers and Local Advisory Bodies in relation to investment decisions. Advice and guidance will be taken at every stage from the Trust's accountants.

Cash Flow Forecasts

The Finance Manager will prepare and present regular 12 month rolling cash flows to the CFO, identifying expected cash balances throughout the year for investment opportunities and to provide early warning of low cash balances. Opportunities and risks will be reported to both the Finance Committee and the Risk and Audit Committee.

Borrowing

The Trust is not permitted to borrow without the prior permission of the Secretary of State.

Investments

The Trust will operate an interest-bearing current account with a bank approved by the Trustees (Barclays) and maintain sufficient balances to ensure there are adequate liquid funds to cover all immediate and forthcoming financial commitments, including maintaining a sufficient contingency for unexpected payments.

Monies surplus to the working requirements shall be invested in term deposits with Barclays. The Trust will not take out any long-term investments until reliable cash flow patterns have been established. Any investments undertaken thereafter will be reviewed regularly with appropriate advice and guidance being taken.

Limits and Authority

The Trustees reserve their powers to:

- Give prior approval to the opening of new bank current accounts;
- Amend the list of approved institutions with whom the Trust will invest;
- Give prior approval to any bank deposit with a maturity date exceeding six months.

The Trust Board delegates authority to the CFO to place deposits in the Trust's name, at approved institutions, subject to the agreed limits within this policy. No deposits will be placed without prior agreement of the Executive Headteacher.

Register of Deposits

The CFO will maintain a register of all deposits / investments held which will record.

- Institution with which deposit placed;
- Date deposit placed;
- Amount deposited;
- Date of maturity;
- Amount returned;
- Interest earned;
- Rate of Interest.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The CFO will present the Register of Deposits to the Trustees on an annual basis.

Periodically (at least annually) the CFO will review interest rates and compare these with investment opportunities through other institutions, taking advice as appropriate from the Trust's accountants.

Anti-Fraud Policy Statement

To be read in conjunction with the Trust's Whistleblowing policy, Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Rules for All Employees policy.

1. For the purpose of this policy statement, fraud includes all irregularities, which could normally be described as theft, deception, fraud, corruption, bribery or impropriety. Fraud is always wrong. In any organisation, it countermands the management at every level and positive action is needed to prevent and discourage it. The prevention of fraud and the protection of the Trust is the responsibility of every member of staff.
2. Each discovered loss arising from suspected theft or fraud shall be reported to the Executive Headteacher at the earliest opportunity. The Code of Conduct policy will provide guidance for gross misconduct.
3. In every case, reported suspicions will be passed to the Trust Board. The Chair of the Trust Board will decide on the subsequent course of action after consulting those that are informed.

When fraud is identified, action will be taken to:

- Clarify the situation;
- Limit the damage;
- Inform the police if a criminal offence has been committed;
- Seek reparation for losses incurred (Ex Gratia payment);
- Revise procedures to prevent any recurrence.

4. Reporting of suspected fraud

Any suspicion of fraud should be reported to the Executive Headteacher. If it is considered more appropriate, suspicions may be reported directly to the Chair of the Trust Board.

5. After a suspicion is reported

The Executive Headteacher will make initial enquiries considered necessary to clarify the situation. In every case and as soon as possible after these initial investigations, they will pass the matter to the Chair of the Trust Board. Even if there is no evidence to support the allegation, the Executive Headteacher must report the matter to the Chair of the Trust Board.

6. The Risk and Audit committee

The management of any investigation will be undertaken by the Risk and Audit committee.

They will:

- clarify the situation;
- determine who should carry out the investigation;
- determine which outside agencies (police, auditors) should be involved;
- assess the risk to the Trust;
- determine to whom day to day management of the response should be given;
- allocate responsibility for damage limitation action;
- determine the course of action to recover losses;
- determine the course of action to be taken against wrongdoers, seeking HR advice;
- evaluate the events which enabled the fraud to occur;
- ensure preventative action is taken.

- the Trust must notify the ESFA of any instances of fraud, theft and/or irregularity exceeding £5,000 individually, or £5,000 cumulatively in any academy financial year. Any unusual or systematic fraud, regardless of value, must also be reported.

Charging and Remissions Policy

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that there is clarity over those items which the Trust will provide free of charge and for those items for which there may be a charge. The policy is available on the Trust website <http://www.staploeducationtrust.org.uk>

Insurance

The Trust will ensure that all its schools are appropriately insured or enter into pooling arrangements in line with DfE regulations.

It is the CFO's responsibility that appropriate insurance is in place.

All schools within the Trust are part of the DfE's Risk Protection Arrangement. Additional motor insurance and equipment and machinery insurance is organised by the Local Authority through Zurich.

Risk Management: Finance Staff

It is essential, that to ensure financial business continuity that there is a system in place to support Trust financial affairs in the event of an absent member of finance staff.

Therefore, in the short-term duties will be covered as follows;

Duties undertaken by a finance assistant will be covered by the finance manager with support from the CFO;

Duties undertaken by the finance manager will be covered by the CFO;

Duties undertaken by the payroll manager will be covered by the CFO with support from EPM as required;

In the event that either the Accounting Officer or CFO should be absent then a meeting of the Trust Board should be convened, to establish which tasks could be delegated to other members of the team and where external support would be required.

Review of the Finance Procedures Manual

The Finance Policy will be reviewed annually following the availability of the latest Academy Trust Handbook and completion of the annual audited accounts. This allows recommendations to be included in the policy where appropriate.

Appendix One: Delegated Financial Authority

Authorities are being reviewed and updated in Summer Term 2024

Trust Bank Account Signatories

Dr Carin Taylor	Executive Headteacher (Principal Finance Officer)
Mr Simon Wright	Chair of Trust Board
Mrs Lisa Levings	Trust Operations Director (CFO)
Mr Jon Hampson	Headteacher: Soham Village College

Trust Bank Accounts Approved Users

Dr Carin Taylor	Executive Headteacher (Principal Finance Officer)
Mrs Lisa Levings	Trust Operations Director (CFO)
Miss Fiona-Louise Tilden	Finance Manager
Mr Jon Hampson	Headteacher: Soham Village College
Miss Mary Wilcox	Assistant Headteacher: Soham Village College
Miss Julie MacIntyre	Deputy Headteacher Soham Village College

Finance System Approved Users

Mrs Lisa Levings	Trust Operations Director (CFO)
Miss Fiona-Louise Tilden	Finance Manager
Mrs Angie Doughty	Payroll Manager
Mrs Rosie Wills	Finance Assistant

Mrs Rachel Kent	Finance Assistant
Joanne Ayrton	Premises Compliance and Financial Administrator
Wendy Vigrass	Temp Finance Manager
Dave Riddick	Temp Operations Consultant
David Eden	ICT Systems and Strategy Manager
Alison Layton	Interim Finance Manager

HR and Payroll System Approved Users

Dr Carin Taylor	Executive Headteacher (Principal Finance Officer)
Mrs Lisa Levings	Trust Operations Director (CFO)
Mrs Angie Doughty	Payroll Manager
Miss Gemma Satchell	HR Manager
Mrs Karen Fordham-Palmby	Administration Assistant: The Weatheralls Primary School

HR Files Approved Access

Miss Gemma Satchell	HR Manager
Mrs Kate Tye	Executive PA
Mrs Jenny Judd	HR Officer
Mrs Angie Doughty	Payroll Manager

Finance Office Safe Key Holders

Miss Fiona-Louise Tilden	Finance Manager
Mrs Angie Doughty	Payroll Manager
Mrs Rosie Wills	Finance Assistant

Appendix Two: Travel and Subsistence Policy

This policy has been produced to explain when an employee may be able to claim various allowances, what they are able to claim, and how they could make a claim. It should also be referred to by management in making sure that claims are valid.

Equal Opportunities

Staploe Education Trust expects employees to adhere to this policy in line with the Trust's obligations under equality legislation. Managers must ensure that all reasonable adjustment or supportive measures are considered to allow equality of access and opportunity regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, faith or religion, gender identity, pregnancy or marital status.

Introduction

If an employee is not sure whether they will be able to make a claim in a particular situation, they should ask before they incur any expenses, as this may not be reimbursed. Clarity should be sought before a claim is submitted. It is very important that claims are not made outside the terms of this policy and guidance unless permission has been given specifically to deal with a particular situation.

Out-of-pocket Expenses

Employees must seek prior authorisation to claim any out-of-pocket expenses.

Travel General Principles

- Employees should only make business journeys when they are absolutely necessary. Other options should always be considered before travel is undertaken which are more efficient and cost effective for example, email, telephone, video or telephone conferencing.
- Where a business journey is necessary, employees are expected to organise it in the shortest and most effective way.
- Employees whose post requires them to undertake business travel are responsible for their own travel arrangements and these must be carried out in the most effective and efficient way to perform the job. The Trust will support necessary business travel, including reimbursement of costs arising from the use of employees' own vehicles and the provision of other support.
- Mileage payments will be made within Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs guidelines.

Mileage Payments

Employees who use their own car, van, motorcycle or cycle for official Trust work purposes are entitled to be reimbursed in accordance with Her Majesty's Customs and Revenue (HMRC) approved mileage rates.

Where several employees undertake the same or a similar journey, they should always travel together where possible.

The basic criterion for claiming official mileage is that this should be calculated from the employee's workplace and back again. Normal everyday home to school mileage is the employee's responsibility.

Where it is more beneficial for employees to travel direct from home to an outside appointment or vice versa, rather than call in the workplace first, they are only entitled to claim the number of miles over and above their normal home to work mileage. On this basis, all travel claims in any one day should always exclude the employee's normal home to office miles regardless of the reason e.g. training course etc.

The only circumstance in which normal home to office mileage is payable is where a second journey from home to a place of work is made on the same day in order to carry out official duties. Where an employee agrees to work on a day they would not normally work, it is still their responsibility to get to and from work (including training courses). Therefore, no home to office mileage is payable.

Other Conditions

Where an employee is required to travel from their normal workplace to carry out their day-to-day role, travelling time is included within their normal working day. However, employees who are expected to travel to training courses can claim no more hours than their normal working day including travelling time. Where there are excessive demands placed on an employee, for example, very long distances travelled which extends significantly over the working day and where such occurrences happen repeatedly over a short period of time, then management will have discretion, as a gesture of goodwill, to allow some time in lieu or overtime claimed as recompense.

Rail Travel

When employees need to travel by rail to attend authorised Continued Professional Development (CPD) they will be entitled to reimbursement for the cost of the rail ticket that they have purchased.

Employees are expected to travel standard class and take advantage of off peak or other reduced rates if the circumstances allow. First class travel may be used provided prior approval is obtained, if:

- accompanying someone else travelling first class;
- the timing of a journey would make it impossible to work effectively e.g. peak holiday periods;
- standard class accommodation is full.

Parking Expenses

Bus fares and car-parking charges incurred on Trust business may be reclaimed in full on production of a valid receipt.

No payments will be made for parking charges at the employee's normal place of work. The only exception relates to employees with a declared disability affecting mobility. In this situation, reasonable charges for car parking at, or as near as possible to, their usual place of work will be reimbursed where there are no free parking facilities available.

Staploe Education Trust will not reimburse in respect of parking and similar fines.

Authorisation

Employees are advised to seek approval in advance for any unusual journeys where there is likely to be any doubt about the legitimacy of the journey or of the amount of mileage that can be claimed.

If employees choose to undertake journeys by car when it would be practical and / or cheaper to travel by train, then the employee's claim should be limited to the equivalent of the train fare.

Methods of Claiming

Employees should complete the relevant claim form that can be obtained from the Payroll Manager, attaching the relevant VAT receipts. Claims should be submitted to the Finance Office as soon as possible after the journey takes place in order for the claim to be processed in time for the following month's payroll. If an employee delays and then submits forms covering a substantial period, they must expect a delay in processing and payment.

Insurance

Employees who use their own vehicle for work should ensure they have the appropriate insurance in place, and employees using their own vehicle for travelling to meetings and training events etc. should also have business insurance. A signed declaration should be given to the Payroll Manager (**Appendix Five**).

Staff driving the Trust minibus should ensure that it is used in accordance with the employer's regulations and protocols.

Appendix Three: Employee Business Travel Rates

EFFECTIVE APRIL 2022

The following rates apply to employees who are required to travel on Staploe Education Trust business from April 2022.

Pence per mile

Car or Van Users:

First 10,000 miles 45p

After 10,000 miles 25p

Motorcycle Users: 24p

<https://www.gov.uk/expenses-and-benefits-business-travel-mileage/rules-for-tax>

Appendix Four: Authority to Sign Payroll Related Forms

Authorities are being reviewed and updated in Summer Term 2024

Travel Claims	Executive Headteacher/CFO/Headteacher (Primaries)/ Line Manager (SVC)/ CPD Lead (SVC)/Finance Manager Executive Headteacher`s claims to be signed by a Trustee.
Additional Hours Claims	Executive Headteacher/CFO/ Headteacher (Primaries)/Line Manager (SVC).
Supply Claims	Headteacher (Primaries)/ Cover Co-ordinator (SVC).
Invigilator Claims	Exams Officer.
New Starter	Executive Headteacher.
Leavers	Executive Headteacher/Headteachers.
Contract Amendments	Executive Headteacher/Headteachers.
Interview Expenses	Executive Headteacher/Headteachers.
Member/Trustee/Advisory Body Member Expenses	Executive Headteacher.
Online Absence Reporting	Payroll Manager (SVC, SHA, KEN)/Senior Administrator (WPS)
Pensions Changes	Executive Headteacher in exceptional circumstances.

Appendix Five: Employee Driver's Documentation Self Declaration

Requirements for all Academy staff driving on school business in vehicles not provided by the Academy Insurance

Employees are required to have cover for using their vehicles on school business. This must be noted on the Insurance Policy and include cover for work or business, for example 'in connection with work or business including carrying passengers.

The Vehicle

The vehicle used must hold current tax, have a valid MOT certificate (where applicable) and be in a roadworthy condition. The vehicle must be suitable for its intended purpose.

Drivers must:

- Hold a full (not provisional) license that is valid for the type of vehicle being driven.
- Be fit to drive.
- Inform their line manager of any change to a medical condition which may affect their ability to drive.
- Immediately inform their line manager of any change to their licence (including penalty points and disqualification).

To be completed by Employee

I have read and understood the above requirements and agree to comply with them; I undertake to inform my line manager of any change in my licence conditions or any medical condition, which may affect my ability to drive safely and in compliance with the law.

I also undertake to inform my line manager of any change in circumstances which may affect my ability to drive safely and in compliance with the law.

Signed: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Name (print full name): _____

Please state the number of penalty points on your driving licence: _____

Appendix Six: Pre-School/Nursery Terms and Conditions

Aims and Commitments

We are committed to providing a happy, safe and secure environment in which each child can develop at his/her own pace and to provide a nurturing environment where we will inspire creative and independent thinking through open-ended activities—where children’s ideas are celebrated and valued.

We aim to have a good working partnership with parents/carers who will be informed about the learning activities the children have been taking part in on a regular basis.

Admission Policy

The admission criteria for each of our early years’ provisions will be detailed in the prospectus for the individual setting.

Registration

Parents are welcome to register their child at any time by completing and returning an application form (available from the school office or the school’s website) to the school office.

Children can be registered from the term after they turn 3 years of age at all of our pre-school/nursery settings.

Additionally, at the Shade Primary School, children can be registered from the age of 2 years 6 months providing they have been granted funding via the Early Years Team or wish to purchase sessions.

Offer of a place

Children will be offered placement using the Local Authority/Early Years guidelines as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Autumn Term (current school year) | Letter of placement in July |
| • Spring Term (current school year) | Letter of placement in November |
| • Summer Term (current school year) | Letter of placement in February |
| • Autumn Term (future school year) | Letter of placement June |

Acceptance

Once sessions have been offered, parents/carers are asked to accept or decline by emailing the school office.

Requests to change sessions will be considered and authorised subject to availability.

Payment of Fees

Parents/carers must sign up to Parent Pay as we operate a cashless system in the school office. You will also receive email correspondence through Parent Pay.

Attendance is prepopulated on Parent Pay; outstanding balances are live and linked to daily attendance.

- Payments can be made via Parent Pay at any-time and we encourage payments to be paid in advance as far as possible.
- Please ensure that your account is no further than one week in arrears at any given time.
- Childcare vouchers are accepted on a monthly basis.
- If fees remain outstanding and no attempts have been made to settle the account the pre-school/nursery reserves the right to refuse entry for your child until the debt is settled or terminates the contract.
- Fees are the joint responsibility of each person who has signed the Admission Form.

- If the school has to close for any reason such as weather or heating issues or any other circumstances that cause us to have concern for the welfare of the children or staff, we will call and ask for parents to collect their child from the pre-school/nursery. No refund will be made in this event, for those with chargeable sessions.
- The school reserves the right to charge parents/carers who are continually late in collecting their children.

Cancellation of Contract

Funded Children

- Ideally parents/carers will provide a minimum of 2 weeks written notice for the cancellation of sessions to allow the funding to be transferred.

Non-Funded Children

- The school requires four weeks' written notice for the cancellation of sessions.

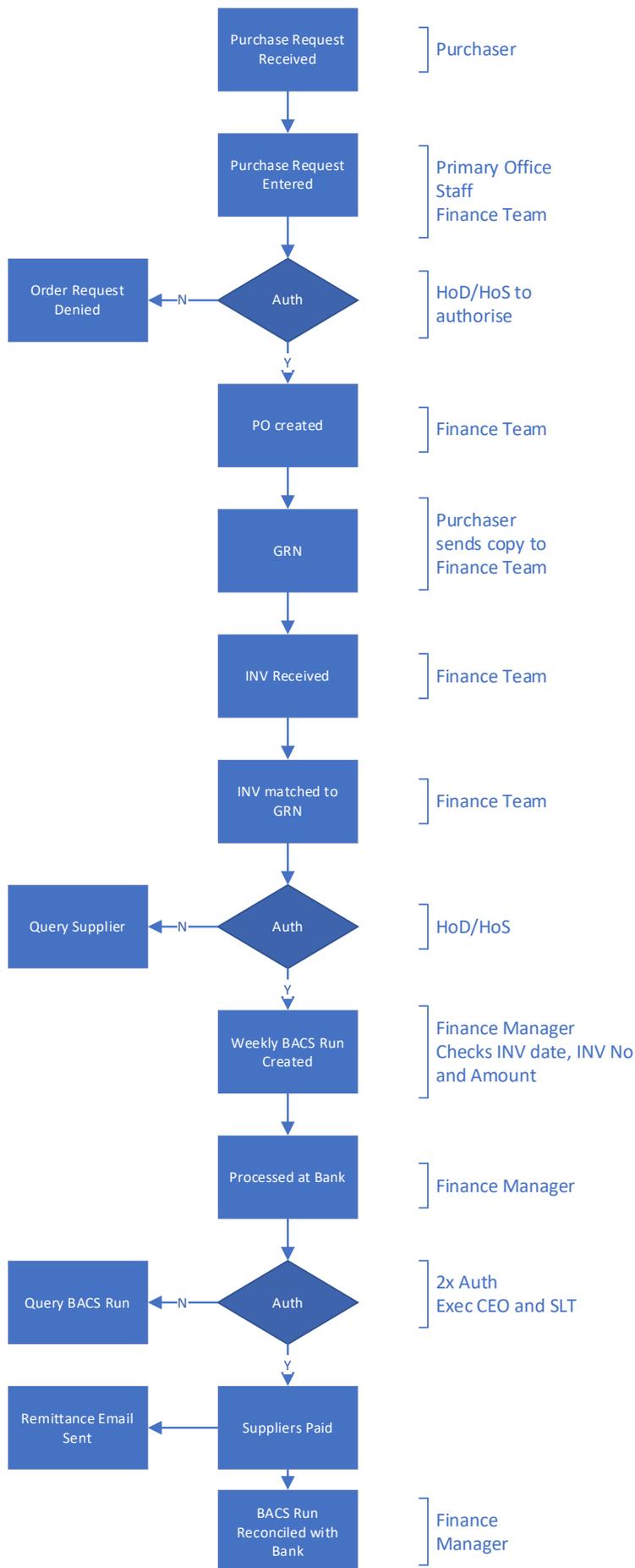
Liability

- We accept no responsibility for any loss suffered by parents/carers, arising directly or indirectly, as a result of the pre-school/nursery being temporarily closed or for the non-admittance of their child to the pre-school/nursery for any reason. This applies to absences due to sickness, holidays and Bank Holidays.
- Parents/carers are responsible for their children on school premises before and after sessions. Children are the responsibility of parents/carers until they have been handed over to a member of staff in the setting.
- Liability for damage to property is excluded except where caused by our negligence.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix Seven: Scheme of Division of Duties



Appendix 8 – Backup Procedures

Sage Intacct is hosted on AWS (Amazon Web Services) data centres with the primary data centre in Ireland with a failover to Germany.

For UK customers Sage Intacct's database is backed up and stored in AWS S3 storage. Besides S3, Sage and AWS also take daily AWS Snapshots of all DB servers (which also get stored in their respective AWS region).

The combination of all these backups allow Sage and AWS to restore DB servers for various kind of failures (Single Server, Regional Outrage, Point in time recovery etc) and provide a Restore Point Objective (RPO) of no more than 4 hours and Restore Time Objective (RTO) of no more than 24 hours.

Besides databases, all other type of servers processing customer data are backed up via AWS snapshots.

There are no tape backups (nor they are necessary). Transmission of data is via secured protocols. Sage will make commercially reasonable efforts to maintain uptime of 99.8%/calendar month.