



**Meridian
Trust**

Financial Administration & Control Handbook

Document Control

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Version Number:	2026.01
Applicable To:	All Academies
Committee:	Finance & Resources
Approved By Trustees On:	12 th October 2026
Review Cycle:	Annually
Date of Next Review:	September 27

Revisions

Version	Page/Para No.	Description of Change	Approved On
2026.01	Pg 8, 2.2	Added DFE must for Trustees to have a skills audit, induction records and training logs	
2026.01	Pg 11, 2.4	Added DFE must for CFO to be qualified	
2026.01	Pg 19, 2.4	Updated special payments rules	
2026.01	Pg 59	Added consideration to use DFE frameworks and contract reviews	
2026.01	Pg 61,62	Updated thresholds for procurement	
2026.01	Pg 104 App 15	Updated for Finance timetable for current year	
2026.01	Pg 110 App 16	Updated for Severance business case	

Contents

Part One	6
Introduction	6
Part Two.....	8
Governance And Financial Oversight.....	8
1. The latest governance structure for the trust.	8
2. Roles and Responsibilities.....	8
2.1 Role of the Members	8
2.2 Role of the Trustees.....	8
2.3 Role of the Chief Executive Officer and Accounting Officer (CEO)	9
2.4 Role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) or equivalent.....	10
2.5 Role of the Trust Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee	11
2.6 Role of the Trust Audit & Risk Policy & Scrutiny Committee	11
2.7 Role of the Principal/Business Unit Lead under the direction of the Executive Principal	12
2.8 Role of the Finance Team	12
2.9 Role of the Staff.....	13
2.10 Role of Budget Holders	13
3. Delegated Authority to the Academy Trust.....	13
4. Register of Interests.....	13
Part Three	14
Financial Planning, Monitoring and Reporting.....	14
1. The Meridian Evolution Plan	14
2. Budgeting	15
2.1 Annual Budgets	15
2.2 Medium Term Budgets (2–5 year projections).....	16
2.3 Budget Monitoring and Reviews	16
3. Ongoing Monitoring and Reviews	16
4. Reporting to Financial & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee and Trustees	18
Part Four	19
Internal Control And Internal Scrutiny.....	19
1. Internal Financial Controls	19
1.1 Centralised Filing Systems.....	19
1.2 Planning and Budgeting Process	19
1.3 Validation of Postings.....	19

1.4 Procurement Process.....	20
1.5 Postings to PSF.....	20
2. Operational Procedures.....	20
2.1 Bank Account.....	20
2.2 Petty Cash.....	21
2.2a Cash Handling.....	21
2.3 Credit Card.....	22
2.4 Payroll.....	22
2.4a. Staff Appointments.....	22
2.4b. Payroll Administration.....	23
2.4c. Payroll Payments.....	23
2.5 Asset Management - Security, Inventories, Stocks and Disposal of Assets.....	24
2.5a. Security.....	24
2.5b. Inventories.....	24
2.5bi. Academy Inventories.....	24
2.5bii. Fixed Asset Registers.....	25
2.5c Acquisitions and Disposal of Assets.....	25
2.5d Loan of Equipment.....	26
2.6 Student Recharges.....	26
2.7 Hiring Premises.....	27
2.8 Unpaid Charges.....	27
2.9 Insurance.....	28
2.10 Receiving Income.....	28
2.11 Expenses Paid to Academy Councillors / Trustees.....	29
3. Robust Financial Systems with Differentiated Restricted Access Levels.....	30
3.1. Accounting System.....	30
3.2 System Access.....	30
3.3 Backup Procedures.....	30
4. Month End Closedown Process.....	30
5. Internal Audit Reviews.....	32
6. Trust Risk Measures.....	32
6.1 Risk Registers.....	32
6.2 Investigation of Fraud or Irregularity.....	32
6.3 Appointment of External Auditors.....	32

Appendix 1	34
Parental Charges.....	34
Appendix 2	37
Academy Trips Refund Policy	37
Appendix 3	38
Hiring Policy	38
Appendix 3a	43
Example School Lettings Policy And Hire Agreement.....	43
Appendix 4	54
Procurement Policy	54
Legal Framework:	54
Legislation and Regulations	54
Key procurement principles:	54
Trust Procurement Strategy and Planning	55
Appendix 5	60
Fraud Policy And Procedures	60
Appendix 6	63
Best Value Statement	63
Appendix 7	65
Reimbursement Scheme	65
Appendix 8	68
Academy Trust Reserves and Investment Policy	68
Appendix 9	71
Fixed Asset Policy	71
Gifts And Hospitality Policy.....	75
Annex 10a	79
Declaration Of Gift Or Hospitality	79
Appendix 11	81
Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee – Terms Of Reference.....	81
Appendix 12	86
Audit & Risk Policy and Scrutiny committee – Terms of Reference	86
Appendix 13	92
Budget Holder Agreement.....	92
Appendix 14	93

Delegated Financial Levels Of Authority	93
Appendix 15	95
Finance annual timetable 25-26	95
Appendix 16	97
Delegated HR Levels of Authority	97
Appendix 17	108
Authorisation For Recruitment & Appoint Template	108
Appendix 18	116
Glossary Of Acronyms	116
Appendix 19	117
The meaning of 'Member', 'Trustee', 'Director' and 'Academy Councillor'	117
Appendix 20	118
Waiver of Procurement Template	118

Part One

Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to ensure that Meridian Trust (Meridian) initiate and maintain systems of financial administration and control that 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 Department for Education (DfE).

Each location within Meridian, be it academy, business unit or core trust, must comply with the principles of financial control published by the DfE in the academy funding agreement and the 'Academy Trust Handbook 2026'. This Meridian handbook expands on those and provides detailed information on the accounting procedures and oversight that is in place. These financial regulations and procedures are aimed at trust Members, Trustees, the Accounting Officer, the Chief Finance Officer, clerks to the Trustees, Academy Councillors and the trust auditors and **must** be read by all staff involved with financial systems, including budget holders. Copies **must** be made available as necessary. It also provides a standardised approach to all finance related tasks within Meridian and its locations.

Compliance with the handbook is mandatory and any contravention of procedures must be brought to the attention, in the first instance of the Chief Financial Officer.

All staff are aware of the trust's whistle-blowing policy and to whom they should report any concerns regarding malpractice and wrongdoing. Suspected financial irregularity where the value exceeds £5,000 will be reported to the Department for Education (DfE).

Part Two

Governance And Financial Oversight

1. The latest governance structure for the trust.

The latest structure can be found on the Meridian Trust website www.meridiantrust.co.uk

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Role of the Members

The main responsibilities of the Members are similar to those of the shareholders of a company. They may:

- Subscribe to the memorandum and articles.
- Amend the articles of association.
- Appoint the auditors and receive the annual accounts.

To enable them to be well placed to perform their duties, they must be informed about trust business, including receiving the trust audited annual report and accounts.

2.2 Role of the Trustees

The Trustees should focus on the following to ensure robust governance:

- Strategic leadership
- Accountability
- People with the right skills
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements
- Evaluation of governance

The Trustees must apply the highest standards of governance and take full ownership of their duties, comply with charity law and the funding agreements.

The Trustees should identify and ensure it has the skills and experience it needs, including sufficient and effective financial knowledge and expertise to hold the executive to account. The Trustees should also address this for committees, sub committees and academy councils. This should include appropriate financial training covering financial management, control, monitoring and reporting, for trustees and in particular, for Finance & Resource and Audit & Risk committee members.

Key financial responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that grants from the DfE are used only for the purposes intended.
- Approval of the annual budget
- Balancing its budget from year to year and providing a clear explanation and remedial planning where this is not the case.
- Production of an annual report and accounts
- Appointment of a Chief Executive Officer (as Accounting Officer)
- Appointment of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

- Ensure regularity, propriety, and value-for-money in relation to the management of public funds to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness and ensure the Trust can continue as a going concern.
- Ensure information submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) that affects funding is accurate and compliant.
- Must arrange for annual letters to trust Accounting Officer from DfE accounting officers about the accountability framework to be discussed by the Trust Board and action taken where appropriate to strengthen trust systems.
- Implement reasonable risk management recommendations that are made by the auditors.
- Manage relationships with related parties and ensure goods and services are provided at no more than cost.
- Ensure management accounts and KPIs are shared with the Chair of the Trust monthly and 6 times a year with the Trustees.
- Must adhere to the seven principles of public life.

Subject to provisions of the Companies Act 2006, the articles and to any directions given by special resolution, the business of the trust will be managed by the Trustees who may exercise all the powers of the trust. The Trust Board must meet at least three times a year and conduct business only when quorate.

The trust has a Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee to which the Trust Board delegates financial scrutiny and oversight. This Committee is responsible for reviewing all controls and procedures of financial systems operating within the Trust. A self-assessment of the financial administration and management within each academy is conducted at all levels by an appointed audit team who compile reports for this committee and the CFO. The main responsibilities of this committee are set out in 2.5 below and the terms of reference are found in Appendix 11.

2.3 Role of the Chief Executive Officer and Accounting Officer (CEO)

The CEO has overall responsibility for the Trust's activities including financial activities. As the Accounting Officer for the Trust, the CEO must:

- Be a fit and suitable person for the role.
- Take personal responsibility for regularity, propriety, feasibility and value-for-money relating to in detail:
 - Regularity - dealing with all items of income and expenditure in accordance with legislation, the terms of the trust's funding agreements and the regulations and procedures in this handbook, and compliance with internal 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 parliamentary intentions and the principles of parliamentary control. This covers standards of conduct, behaviour, and corporate governance.
 - Value for money – this is about achieving the best possible educational and wider societal outcomes through the economic, efficient, and effective use of all the resources in the Trust's charge, through the avoidance of waste and extravagance, and prudent and economical administration. A key objective is to achieve value-for-money not only for the trust but for the taxpayer generally. The trust's Accounting Officer is required to complete and sign a short statement each year explaining how the Trust has secured value-for-money. This must be sent to the DfE with audited accounts and be published on the trust's website. It will also be placed on the DfE's website.
 - Feasibility – can a proposal be implemented accurately, sustainably, and to the intended timetable with the resources available and without incurring wasteful or nugatory spend.

- Assure the Trustees that there is compliance with the handbook, the funding agreements and all relevant aspects of company and charitable law.
- Advise the Trustees, in writing, of any action or policy incompatible with the terms of the academy trust's articles, funding agreement or handbook.
- Notify the DfE Accounting Officer, in writing, if action proposed by the Trustees is in breach of the trust's articles, funding agreement or this handbook.
- Be responsible for the academy trust's governance arrangements, including ensuring the appointment of a clerk to support the Trustees who:
 - will provide details in the governance statement published with its audited accounts.
 - will publish up-to-date details of the Meridian governance arrangements in a readily accessible form on the Meridian and academy websites
- Ensure independence and appropriateness is applied to all transactions undertaken by the Trust, specifically regarding potential conflicts of interest and interactions with connected parties (see section 4).
- Be an employee of the trust. Where they are not, DfE approval must be gained.
- Adhere to the 'seven principles of public life'.

It is essential that there is continuity in the role of the CEO and the Accounting Officer, therefore this role must not rotate.

In practice, much of the financial responsibility is delegated to the CFO but the CEO still retains responsibility for:

- Confirming new staff appointments within the authorised establishment
- Authorising orders, contracts and signing cheques and releasing payments in conjunction with other authorised signatories and in accordance with the agreed scheme of delegated financial authority.
- Having all the trust's property and assets under the control of Trustees and measures in place to prevent losses or misuse.
- Having bank accounts, financial systems and financial records operated by more than one person.
- Keeping and maintaining full and accurate accounting records
- Preparing accruals accounts, giving a true and fair view of the trust's use of resources, in accordance with existing accounting standards
- Preparing budget plans in conjunction with the CFO / Principals and other executive leaders
- Reviewing reports to the trust giving details of income, expenditure, and commitments to date
- Ensuring any actions resulting from the annual audit are implemented.

2.4 Role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) or equivalent

DfE have mandated from September 2027 CFOs recruited should hold a recognised professional accountancy qualification.

The trust's CFO works in close collaboration with the CEO through whom they are responsible to the Trustees. The main responsibilities of the CFO are:

- Day to day management of financial issues including the establishment and operation of a suitable accounting system for the trust's central budget, individual academies, and trust services
- Management of the core trust, business units and academies' financial positions at a strategic and operational level within the framework for financial control determined by the Trustees

- Preparation of budget plans in conjunction with the Trust Financial Accountants, CEO and Principals
- The maintenance of effective systems of internal control
- Preparation and maintenance of fixed asset registers
- Liaising with auditors to ensure that the annual accounts and publication of information about high pay are properly presented and adequately supported by the underlying books and records of the trust
- The timely preparation of management accounts, including income and expenditure reports, cashflow forecasts and a balance sheet
- Ensuring forms and returns are sent to the DfE in line with the timetable in the DfE guidance
- Additional roles, some of which are not directly finance related, as outlined in the Chief Operating Officer or equivalent job description
- Be an employee of the trust. Where they are not, DfE approval must be gained.

2.5 Role of the Trust Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee

The Trust Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee will meet at least once a term to:

- Monitor and scrutinise the core trust annual budget, including staffing for and communicating to the overarching board when deemed necessary
- Consider reports from the Trust Financial Accountants, comparing actual with budget
- Determine the written description of financial systems and procedures
- Operate and ensure compliance with the trust's arrangements for obtaining quotations and inviting tenders
- Agree any proposed write-offs and the disposal of surplus stock and equipment
- Determine insurance arrangements
- Review cashflow management
- Review the Finance Handbook Determine delegated limits of authority to apply within the Trust
- Approve expenditure recommended by the CEO/CFO above those limits agreed
- Ensure best value and highest standards of financial conduct
- Consider and make recommendations from the audit report
- The main responsibilities of this committee are set out in the written terms of reference in Appendix 11

2.6 Role of the Trust Audit & Risk Policy & Scrutiny Committee

The Trust Audit & Risk Policy & Scrutiny Committee should not be made up of Trust employees, however the Accounting Officer and CFO should attend, to provide information and participate in discussions.

Written terms of reference must be in place for the committee covering remit and annual programmes of work should be in place showing the delivery of internal scrutiny across the Trust. The main responsibilities of this committee are set out in the written terms of reference in Appendix 12.

The committee will meet at least once a term to:

- Direct the Trust programme of internal scrutiny.
- Ensure risks are being addressed.
- Review internal control frameworks, including financial and non-financial controls and management of risk. This should cover central Trust and individual academies

2.7 Role of the Principal/Business Unit Lead under the direction of the Executive Principal

The day-to-day operation of a location budget is delegated to the Principal or Business Unit Lead, who will be responsible for:

- Preparing the budget in conjunction with the Trust Financial Accountant or similar role
- Overseeing internal control systems and financial transactions, in accordance with the Meridian Financial Handbook
- Reviewing the budget monitoring report monthly. This should report any variations in expenditure against the approved budget plan.
- Ensuring that returns to the trust are submitted according to published deadlines.
- Providing access to accounting and other relevant records to DfE, external and internal Audit (including academy funds) and support implementing auditor recommendations where necessary
- Ensuring that the location inventory is maintained accurately and kept as up to date as possible and ensuring that an independent check of the inventory is made at least once a year
- Making recommendations for equipment to be written off or disposed of, ensuring that disposal of such equipment is adequately recorded, that the disposal of assets is conducted in an open manner and where income is generated from disposal, it is maximised
- Ensuring that adequate procedures are in place for the prompt security marking of all items of a portable and desirable nature
- Ensure that adequate controls are in place to ensure that all delegated responsibilities are monitored
- Ensure a central file of all submitted applications for grant funding is maintained and counter sign any submissions for audit purposes

2.8 Role of the Finance Team

The finance team's role includes:

- Reviewing the monthly salary reports, signing and dating these to confirm they are accurate and noting any queries
- Providing budget monitoring and producing monthly reports
- Ensuring that invoice checking procedures are followed
- Ensuring that, in conjunction with the Principal, authorisation of orders, invoices and schedules are in accordance with this handbook
- The operation of prompt and intact banking of income and that associated recording of income is in accordance the Meridian Finance Handbook
- To monitor and prepare cashflow statements to ensure the academy has sufficient cash to meet its needs and submit these to the Trustees
- Recording any income received or payments made through controlled funds and assemblage of documents, such as collection records and receipts, to support the transactions processed through these
- Preparation of the year end summary of transactions for external audit, in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook
- Assisting in the maintenance of an accurate inventory and associated security procedures
- Assist in the preparation of the three-year budget plan and the financial returns to the DfE

2.9 Role of the Staff

The role of academy staff in financial administration is to:

- Familiarise themselves with this handbook
- Conduct all financial transactions relating to the academy in accordance with this handbook
- Manage any budget delegated to them responsibly, and after due consultation with relevant staff
- Actively seek 'best value' on all work, goods or services procured on behalf of the academy
- Ensure that all relevant documents (delivery notes, invoices etc.) are promptly passed to the finance team for processing

2.10 Role of Budget Holders

Budget holders bear responsibility for the budget allocated to them; the financial responsibilities are detailed in the budget holder agreement in Appendix 13.

3. Delegated Authority to the Academy Trust

Whilst the board cannot delegate overall responsibility for the trust's funds, it **must** approve and enforce a written scheme of delegation of financial powers that maintains robust internal control arrangements. The delegated financial levels of authority, ratified by the Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee, is attached as Appendix 14. It sets out the authorisation levels required by Meridian for revenue and capital costs:

- Ordering goods and services
- Capital projects
- Virement (re-allocation) of budget provision between budget heads
- Disposal of assets
- Write-offs of bad debts
- Write-offs of overpayments to staff
- Purchase or sale of freehold property
- Granting or taking up of any leasehold or tenancy agreement exceeding 3 years
- Any guarantees, indemnities and letters of comfort entered
- Ex-gratia payments

All colleagues must be aware of their financial responsibility and must ensure they comply with the levels set out in the Meridian delegated financial levels of authority guidelines in all instances.

4. 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 might arise, all Members, Trustees, Academy Councillors and senior staff who can influence financial decisions or spending powers, are required to declare any financial interests they have in companies or individuals from whom Meridian may purchase goods or services. The collection of this register is managed by finance and checked annually.

Meridian publishes the relevant business and pecuniary interests of Members, Trustees, Academy Councillors, and accounting officers. The register is open to public inspection and is available on the Meridian website: www.meridiantrust.co.uk. It

includes all business interests such as directorships, shareholdings, or other appointments of influence within a business or organisation which may have dealings with Meridian. The disclosures should also include business interests of relatives, such as a parent or spouse, or business partner where influence could be exerted over a Trustee, Academy Councillor or a Member of staff by that person.

The existence of a register of business interests does not detract from the duty of disclosure whenever it may be relevant to do so. Where an interest has been declared, Trustees, Academy Councillors and senior staff should withdraw from that part of any committee or other meeting.

Part Three

Financial Planning, Monitoring and Reporting

The Trust must prepare, monitor and report on both medium-term and short-term financial plans. Medium-term financial plans are calculated for the next three years.

1. The Meridian Evolution Plan

The Evolution Plan is concerned with the future aims and objectives of the trust and how they are to be achieved. That includes matching the trust objectives and targets to the resources expected to be available. Plans are kept relatively simple and flexible. They are the “big picture” within which more detailed plans may be integrated.

The plan is structured around 8 themes: Mission and values; growth and capacity; approach to risk; strong governance; effective leadership; academy improvement strategy; operational excellence and how our trust contribution will work.

Operational development plans and tasks that need to be completed in the pursuit of these aims are maintained within business units or individual academies.

Each year, the CEO will operate a planning cycle and timetable which allows for:

- A review of past activities aims and objectives.
 - “Did we get it right?”
- Definition or redefinition of aims and objectives
 - “Are the aims still relevant?”
- Development of the plan and associated budgets
 - “How do we go forward?”
- Implementation, monitoring and review of the plan.
 - “Who needs to do what and by when to make the plan work and keep it on course?”
- Feedback into the next planning cycle
 - “What worked successfully and how can we improve?”

In addition, the Evolution Plan will outline key priorities for the following year. More detailed plans will include the estimated resource costs, both capital and revenue, associated with each objective.

2. Budgeting

2.1 Annual Budgets

Annual budgets will reflect the best estimate of the resources available to each academy, business unit and core trust for the forthcoming year and how those resources are to be utilised by each. There should be a clear link between the Academy Business Plan or Business Unit Business Plan and the budgeted utilisation of resources.

The budgetary planning process will incorporate the following elements:

- Forecasts of the likely number of pupils to estimate the amount of DfE grants receivable
- Review of other income sources available to both the individual academies and other units within the Trust to assess likely level of receipts. Supporting documentation should be provided to support such business plans
- Review of past individual performance against budgets to promote an understanding of the trust cost base
- Curriculum led considerations and efficient timetabling (Meridian Curriculum Led Financial Planning in secondary or similar KPI driven reviews in special/primary)
- Identification of potential efficiency savings
- Review of the main expenditure headings considering the Development Plan objectives and the expected variations in cost, e.g., pay increases, inflation, and other anticipated changes
- Consulting with external agencies, including major suppliers, to ensure that the trust's best financial interests are met

Individual plans and budgets will need to be revised until income and expenditure are in balance. Comparison of estimated income and expenditure will identify any potential surplus or shortfall in funding.

The academies must work towards retaining reserves in line with the guidelines found in the Academy Trust Reserves & Investment policy (Appendix 8). Where the reserves are less than the academy should be holding, a plan should be detailed in the Academies Business Plan showing how the reserves balance will be established. Shortfalls may result in cutbacks and deferring projects to a later date. Surplus may result in funds being held in contingency or carried forward to invest in future development.

The annual responsibilities for the budgeting process are as follows:

1. Draft Budget

Preceding November — Principal and Trust Financial Accountants prepare with relevant information from colleagues e.g. Directors of IT/Estates/Operations/HR etc.

Preceding December — Academy Finance & Resources termly meetings review.

Preceding January — Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee review.

2. Detailed Draft Budget

Preceding March — Principal and Trust Financial Accountants prepare with relevant information from colleagues e.g., Directors of IT/Estates/Operations/HR etc utilising trust provided assumptions regarding such items as pay rises/contract costs etc.

Preceding March — Academy Finance & Resources termly meeting review.

Preceding April — Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee review.

Preceding May — Trustees review and approve budget (minutes must be taken)

3. Revised Detailed Draft Budget

Preceding April/May — Principal and Trust Financial Accountants continue to update.

Preceding June - Academy Finance & Resources termly meeting review and approve.

Preceding July — Finance & Policy & Scrutiny Committee review and approve.

Preceding July — Trustees review and approve (minutes must be taken)

Preceding July — Final Trustees approved budget forecast return submitted to DfE.

Please see the Finance Timetable for the year 26/27 (Appendix 15).

2.2 Medium Term Budgets (2–5 year projections)

These should be prepared in line with the guidance and timetable detailed above using all relevant information available to make reasonable and justifiable assumptions established by the CFO. These should be reviewed in the context of the “going concern” consideration at a more local level and the DfE requirement to submit BRF.

2.3 Budget Monitoring and Reviews

At least fortnightly meetings must take place between the Principal and the Trust Financial Accountants and/or the Finance Officers of each academy to review the actual finances and the variances to the annual budget.

Termly review meetings must take place to review the reports prepared by the Principal and Trust Financial Accountants, these also include all other directorate areas and form the Finance & Resources termly meeting. These should be in the standard format, highlighting variances in the budget so that differences can be investigated, and action taken where appropriate. These should include information from other directorate areas which are applicable to each term in the academic year. The meetings should include the Principal, Trust Financial Accountants, Finance Officer, Academy Council Finance Champion, Executive Principal and relevant member of the Strategic Finance team and representatives from other directorate areas where appropriate. Where challenges persist or concerns have been raised, the CEO and CFO may attend. Executive Principals will report the position and issues regarding their academies to the CFO and CEO. Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee members are encouraged to attend one meeting per cycle, wherever possible.

3. Ongoing Monitoring and Reviews — DfE Approval

As part of the monitoring and review process certain transactions, as set out below, require approval in advance by either DfE or HM Treasury. For these transactions, approval must be obtained before the transaction is agreed and before the transaction occurs. The following should be considered:

- **Novel, Contentious and/or Repercussive transactions**
 - If any novel, contentious and/or repercussive transaction is identified, e.g. transactions outside the normal business activity for the Trust, then they **must** be referred to DfE for explicit prior authorisation.
- **Borrowing arrangements**
 - For all forms of borrowing, consider whether the DfE’s prior approval is required (e.g., for all finance leases and overdraft facilities, of any duration)
- **Debt or Loss Write Off**
 - The Trust may write off debts and losses, including any uncollected fines up to the following delegated limits:
 - 1% of total annual income or £45,000 (whichever is smaller) per single transaction.

- cumulatively, 2.5% of total annual income (subject to a maximum of £250,000) in any financial year per category of transaction for trusts that have not submitted timely, unqualified accounts for the previous two financial years.
 - cumulatively, 5% of total annual income (subject to a maximum of £250,000) in any financial year per category of transaction for trusts that have submitted timely, unqualified accounts for the previous two financial years.
- **Special Payments**
 - For all staff severance payments, ensure Meridian HR are contacted and involved; consider the HR DLAs and the following before making a binding commitment:
 - **Staff severance payments** should not be made where they could be seen as a reward for failure, such as gross misconduct or poor performance. The only acceptable rationale in the case of gross misconduct would be where legal advice is that the claimant is likely to succeed (greater than 50%) in an employment tribunal because of employment law procedural errors.
 - **Special staff severance payments** are paid to employees outside statutory or contractual requirements when leaving public employment. They are different to ex gratia payments. Considerations are
 - Is the proposed payment in the best interests of the Trust
 - If considering a staff severance payment including a non-statutory or non-contractual element of £50,000 or more, (gross, before income tax or other deductions), DfE's prior approval must be obtained before making any offer to staff.
 - Can we demonstrate value for money by applying the same scrutiny to a payment under £50,000 as those over this limit and have a justified business case.
 - if the settlement is justified, consider the level of settlement — this must be less than the legal assessment of what the relevant body (for example an employment tribunal) is likely to award
 - Additional areas where the trust must obtain prior DfE approval before making a special staff severance payment are where any of the following apply:
 - an exit package of £100,000 or above includes a special severance payment
 - the employee earns over £174,000
 - a payment is novel, contentious or repercussive, Section 3.4 of HM Treasury's guidance contains examples of such payments including where:
 - the trust has legal advice that the chances of successfully defending the matter in a court or tribunal is more than 50%, and
 - an exit package includes a confidentiality agreement, (see ATH 5.14)
 - **Trusts must clearly record and retain evidence of the management and approval process, including any legal advice of the likelihood of successfully defending the claim, the reasons for the decision, the supporting evidence, and how value for money was ensured.**
 - Refer to section 5.6-5.14 of the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) and follow guidance therein

- **Compensation Payments**
 - For compensation payments, providing redress for loss or injury, which will amount to a non-statutory or non-contractual payment of £50,000 or more, DfE prior approval must be obtained. (ATH 5.16-5.16)
- **Ex-Gratia Payments**
 - For all ex-gratia payments, where a payment has been made where there was no obligation or liability to pay it, DfE prior approval is **always** required. (ATH 5.17-5.18)
- **Acquisition and disposal of fixed assets**
 - Before entering into an acquisition or disposal of land, buildings, or heritage assets, DfE prior approval is required. For ALL asset transactions, the trust must ensure that the best price can reasonably be obtained and that the principles of regularity, propriety and value-for-money are maintained.

4. Reporting to Financial & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee and Trustees

The CFO (or delegate) is responsible for providing the Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee and the Trustees with reports on the budgetary position of the Trust and consolidated cross-trust reports. This report should be produced monthly and presented to Trustees at least once a half-term.

Financial reports must be reliable and relevant to users. Good quality financial information is:

- Produced promptly, including management accounts explaining variances to budget, KPIs, cashflows and balance sheet.
- Accurate: actual expenditure appearing on the report should agree to what has been processed on PS Financials (PSF). There should be a monthly reconciliation of the bank account to PSF. Where amounts have been charged to the academy and are still in dispute, these should still be included in the actual expenditure until queries have been resolved.
- Complete: to provide Trustees with a “true and fair” view of the academy, business unit or consolidated trust financial position. The reports must include committed expenditure. For information to be complete, expenditure that the academy has been committed to, including details of orders and invoices outstanding, must be included.
- Understandable: reports need to be understandable to the intended recipient; in particular, financial reports to Trustees should be jargon free.
- Concise: reports should be summarised and not contain unnecessary detail. Expenditure and budget totals should be summarised to the headings contained in the annual DfE funding statement and in the annual accounts.
- Include a profiled budget: to ascertain whether the level of expenditure to a given date is reasonable, the expected expenditure up to the same date should be provided by the inclusion of a profiled budget. Based on knowledge of the academy or business unit spending patterns, the profile looks at the total budget for the year and indicates what percentage of that budget it would be reasonable to have spent by the specified date
- Include explanatory notes: where there are significant variances on budget headings, an explanation should be provided with the report. Proposed actions to address variances should also be reported and minutes taken for actions agreed. Where large orders are due to be placed, this may also require a note to the report.

Part Four

Internal Control and Internal Scrutiny

Meridian shall maintain sound internal control risk management and assurance processes both at the constituent academy, business unit and trust level, to include:

- Internal financial controls as prescribed by clearly communicated procedures and policies, structures, and training of staff
- Robust financial systems with differentiated restricted access levels
- Month end closedown process
- Internal audit reviews overseen by the Audit & Risk P&S Committee
- Overall risk assessment

1. Internal Financial Controls

For all financial transactions within Meridian the following must be considered:

1.1 Centralised Filing Systems

All control and scrutiny work performed online by the finance team should be saved centrally on the I: drive in line with the standardised structure.

1.2 Planning and Budgeting Process

All members of the school finance team must have full view of the budget and the budget matrix for the location for which they are responsible. All postings made to PSF must be mindful of the budget allocated and unspent and any proposed overspends / unexpected postings must be raised for confirmation with the Trust Financial Accountant and Principal/Director responsible for that budget.

As detailed above (Part 3, Section 2.3 Budget Monitoring and Reviews), at least fortnightly and monthly reviews must take place between the Trust Financial Accountant and the Principal to review variances between budget and actual and to affect a suitable resolution.

1.3 Validation of Postings

It is essential that thorough procedures are in place to ensure that all costs committed, and income received against trust accounts are valid and to verify that they are assigned and allocated to the correct budgets and cost centres within the business units and academies. This must be done on a daily, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. In particular, it is essential that there is evidence of approval for postings:

- For expenditure there must be evidence of the budget holder approval which is compliant with the Meridian Financial Delegated Levels of Authority
- For income there must be agreement that the amount received has been reconciled and agrees to the amount expected
- For all capital it must be in line with the agreed capital spend plan as agreed by the Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee / Principal or relevant Executive Leader depending on the budget it will come from.

The CFO is responsible for ensuring that controls are in place for these checks to be carried out.

The Trust will delegate this role to the academy Trust Financial Accountant. The Trust Financial Accountant is responsible for ensuring the month end reconciliations are performed each month and that any reconciling or balancing amounts are cleared. Please see the month end section below for further details.

1.4 Procurement Process

The Meridian Procurement Policy (Appendix 4) sets out the process to be followed in ALL instances when purchasing on behalf of the Trust. This must be in coordination with the Delegated Financial Levels of Authority (Appendix 14).

1.5 Postings to PSF

There are standardised PSF process notes saved in the I: drive for all finance staff to refer and adhere to. These include:

- Bank reconciliation
- Catering income and expenditure
- Dates and periods
- Downloading bank statements
- Fixed asset procedures
- Journals
- Month end procedures
- PS Purchasing
- Payment run — BACs — Supplier payments end of month
- Payments — one off — with scrutiny for appropriateness
- Purchase ledger
- Purchase ordering
- Sales ledger
- Staff expenses
- Trips
- VAT notes

Please also ensure that for ALL postings made into PSF there is evidence on the backing documentation of the approval confirmation, who made the posting, which nominal and cost centre the entry has been allocated to and when the posting was made.

2. Operational Procedures

2.1 Bank Account

Each finance team must implement the following controls:

- A list of mandate signatories should be drawn up whereby all cheques must have two authorised signatories, these will only include the CEO, CFO, Director of Finance & Deputy Director of Finance.
- A minimum of three signatures should be maintained on the mandate.
- Only the mandated authorities can sign a cheque — cheques should only be used in exceptional circumstances.
- No member of staff is permitted to sign cheques payable to themselves, to someone closely connected to themselves or in whom they have a pecuniary interest.
- No member of staff is permitted to sign financial transactions payable to themselves, to someone closely connected to themselves or in whom they have a pecuniary interest.
- Processing supplier payments monthly (end of month)

- Making one off faster payments if appropriate

Arrangements made with the bank must include:

- A statement to be provided at least once a month
- To disallow any overdraft

Direct debit payments may be entered into for the payment of utility bills and other suppliers with whom the academy has a regular contract. These should be signed by at least one mandated authority. The value of each direct debit should be reviewed and compared with invoices received from the supplier. Suppliers paid by direct debit must be reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to provide best value.

On receipt of the bank statements, the academy Finance Officer will reconcile the bank balance to the balance held in PSF.

2.2 Petty Cash

As Meridian promotes a cashless environment most schools should no longer hold petty cash or are required to hold a minimal amount.

Occasionally, foreign currency is returned from overseas trips and is held until it can be used for future trips.

Dispensation is given to special schools and, where petty cash continues to be used, it is both administered and reimbursed by the finance office upon production of VAT receipts.

In the interests of security, petty cash payments will be limited to £50. Higher value payments should be made by BACS directly from the main bank account as a purchase order.

Personal cheques must not be cashed from petty cash funds.

Expenditure is recorded manually in the first instance. Expenditure is then processed into the PSF accounting system against the appropriate budget centre.

The finance office is responsible for entering all transactions into the petty cash records on a regular basis and regular cash counts should be undertaken by the Finance Officer to ensure that the cash balance reconciles to supporting documentation, and the computer balance.

The Trust Financial Accountant should review and countersign the petty cash reconciliations.

Petty cash must be always held securely, with access strictly limited to authorised officials only.

2.2a Cash Handling

Most schools no longer accept cash, and transactions for dinner money and school activities are completed using an online payment system. Recording and accounting of receipts is processed in the finance office. Exceptions to cash handling are in line with the arrangements for petty cash in special schools but also for charity days, fundraising and other business events that cannot be accomplished online.

Any cash accepted during these events should be taken immediately to the finance office to be counted and secured until it can be banked. Monies should not be held in any other part of the school. Cash should never be accepted from students for any other reason than that stated. Cash is recorded onto PSF and taken to the bank by two members of staff.

The only other exception to Petty Cash & Cash Handling is noted above as 'other business event,' which is an event requiring a cash float that cannot be accomplished in another way. Cash needed for this event can be withdrawn using the Lloyds Credit Card — please see section 2.3 for further details.

2.3 Credit Card

The credit card should only be used to make an emergency purchase or best value purchase that is solely available online.

Lloyds credit card is a 'supplier' and as such a purchase order should always be raised for the purchase and authorised by the relevant budget holder (very important that the budget holder approves this order BEFORE purchase takes place).

Credit cards must be in the control of the finance department and assigned to one responsible officer in each location. The only other individuals that may require a card would be a minibuss driver who should receive a fuel card for fuel top-ups.

No 'contactless' option should be selected when applying for the cards.

Credit cards must always remain in the possession of the registered card holder (or locked in the finance office safe, especially when the cardholder is on annual leave).

Under no circumstances must the PIN number be shared with anyone else.

Cash withdrawal from the credit card is only permitted with prior agreement by the Trust Financial Accountant for specific events where floats are required. The bank will be notified to allow withdrawals from that card up to the value of £100. The cash may not be held in the finance office once the event is complete and must be banked (including any profit). Two members of staff (the card holder and one other) must be present when withdrawing the cash and a receipt obtained.

The responsibility/T&C's all fall on the cardholder — any misuse of the card will result in the withdrawal of this privilege.

Credit card details must not be stored on any online website — particularly Amazon as this site is known to have fraudulent activity.

It is recommended that a PayPal account is opened in each location.

Two signatures must still be in place for checking receipt of goods complete with budget holder signature.

VAT receipts must be requested. VAT receipts are available on most websites, including Amazon.

Administrators must have access to the online statements to ensure regular monitoring of the account and the opportunity to spot any fraud/misuse at the earliest possible opportunity.

2.4 Payroll

The main elements of the payroll system are:

- Staff appointments
- Payroll administration
- Payments

2.4a. Staff Appointments

The Trust HR Delegated Levels of Authority (HR DLA) (see Appendix 16) contains a full explanation of the trust rules regarding appointments and should be read in conjunction with this handbook. There is an approved, fully budgeted, annual

staffing plan which clearly sets out the responsibilities of each business area and academy in the Trust. The relevant officer must ensure that adequate budgetary provision exists for any establishment changes.

The Trust must ensure that for all new roles an Authorisation for Recruitment form (Appendix 17) has been completed BEFORE advertising OR making a binding commitment to staff.

The Trust must ensure that for all hires an Authorisation to Appoint form (Appendix 17) has been completed BEFORE making a binding commitment to staff. Where significant departure from advertised values is requested, appropriate sign off is given BEFORE commitment.

All personnel changes must be notified to the relevant Finance Officer immediately.

The CEO is responsible for ensuring that the Trust's pay policy is implemented.

The CEO is responsible for ensuring that the statutory obligations around the safer recruitment policy and procedures are administered and that nominated staff in each academy are responsible for maintaining accurate records of all staff employed at their academy.

Access to personnel information is strictly limited to authorised officials only. It will also be held separately on the personnel module of the management information system.

2.4b. Payroll Administration

The Trust payroll is administered by a third-party agency. This includes all amendments to payroll data, e.g. appointments, resignations, pay changes, overtime, and all of these are authorised by the Principal at each academy. Such changes are collated by the Meridian HR representative responsible for each payroll, confirmed for authorisation by the Principal or appropriate officer, submitted to the payroll service and details are passed to the finance team to enable them to verify identified payroll variations.

All supply teacher, casual working and overtime claims are checked and confirmed by the appropriate budget holder. These should have been planned and budgeted for in advance, considering a reasonable contingency as best practice. Please note all overtime should be preapproved using the Meridian Overtime Application form. These should be paid in arrears.

This claim form can be found on your school VLE.

2.4c. Payroll Payments

All staff are paid salary monthly by bank credit transfer to their bank accounts. The amounts paid are summarised on the payroll reports. Finance Officers and Trust Financial Accountants undertake monthly reconciliations between actual expense and budgeted costs. Variations are investigated and reported to the Principal and queries raised immediately with the payroll service.

All contracted payments not via payroll are subject to completion of a self-employment questionnaire using the HMRC online self-employment evaluation tool. Where this has not been satisfactory to comply with IR35 the person must be added to the school payroll for the purposes of PAYE and National Insurance.

2.5 Asset Management - Security, Inventories, Stocks and Disposal of Assets

The trust is responsible for maintaining and keeping proper records for all assets (e.g. buildings, stocks, furniture, equipment) under its control.

2.5a. Security

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

Safes must be kept locked and the key removed. Keys to safes and cash boxes must be held on the key holder's person at all times. The loss of such keys should be reported to the Principal / Trust Financial Accountants immediately.

Money left on the premises shall be secured in a locked safe or in a locked secure cabinet. The insurance limit for cash (and cheques) held in a safe is £5,000 unless a higher limit is specifically agreed with Meridian insurance provider.

Losses due to theft of stocks or cash shall be promptly reported to the police, Principal, CFO, relevant Trust Financial Accountant and the CEO.

Steps must be taken by the Director of IT to ensure that there are effective backup procedures for all computer systems. Backups are held securely in our datacentre and replicated to a secure secondary location offsite. Backup procedures should be regularly checked, and these checks documented. The Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee must have oversight of these to ensure that they are appropriate on behalf of the Trust. These critical procedures are also reviewed by the Audit & Risk Policy & Scrutiny Committee as part of an annual IT Audit process by an external provider.

Arrangements should be made to ensure that only authorised staff have access to computer hardware and software used for academy management. Passwords should not be disclosed or shared and should be changed regularly. Access rights of any staff leaving the academy should be promptly revoked.

The Data Protection Office (DPO) or equivalent, on behalf of the Principal and the Academy Council, shall register with the Information Commissioner and comply with all regulations relating to it by the Data Protection Act 2018.

2.5b. Inventories

2.5bi. Academy Inventories

All academies should maintain an inventory of all assets. Inventories of academy property should be kept up to date and reviewed regularly. All the items in each academy inventory are to be permanently and visibly marked as the academy or trust property and there should be at least an annual inspection by someone other than the person maintaining the register.

Discrepancies between the physical count and the amount recorded in the register should be promptly investigated and reported to the principal and relevant financial accountant.

Where items are used by the academy, but do not belong to it, this should be noted for insurance purposes.

The immediate responsibility for the safeguarding of equipment lies with the end user departments. In support of this, the academy provides security measures, including site officer cover, burglar alarm systems, inventories, security marking, insurance cover maintenance and support agreements where appropriate.

2.5bii. Fixed Asset Registers

The Trust Financial Accountants should maintain a fixed asset register in which an adequate description of all property and assets of value over £5,000 shall be recorded. This includes land, buildings, moveable plant and machinery, vehicles, furniture, fittings, and equipment belonging to the academy.

The asset register should include the following information:

- Asset description
- Supplier details
- Manufacturer name and asset model number
- PSF PO reference
- Date of acquisition
- Asset cost
- PSF Invoice reference
- Depreciation
- Current book value
- Location

The asset register helps:

- Ensure that staff take responsibility for the safe custody of assets, as independent checks on the safe custody of assets will be regularly made as a deterrent against theft or misuse.
- To manage the effective utilisation of assets and to plan for their replacement.
- Help the external auditors to draw conclusions on the academy's financial system.
- Support insurance claims in the event of fire, theft, vandalism, or other disasters

Fixed (tangible or intangible) assets are to be depreciated to reflect the recoverable amount in the financial statements, over the useful life of the asset. For details, please see the Fixed Asset Policy (Appendix 9).

2.5c Acquisitions and Disposal of Assets

Assets acquired by the Trust will be duly recorded in the Trust balance sheet in an appropriate fashion and at a valuation which meets accounting standards. Assets below £5,000 do not need to be included on the asset register unless they exceed £750 in value and are of a portable and desirable nature.

The Trust must seek and obtain prior written approval from the Secretary of State, via the DfE, for the following transactions:

- Acquiring and disposing of freeholds on land or buildings
- Disposing of heritage assets. Heritage assets are assets with historical, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical, or environmental qualities that are held and maintained principally for their contribution to knowledge and culture.

Academies may dispose of any other fixed asset (i.e., other than those described above) without the approval of the Secretary of State. Any disposal must maintain the principles of regularity, propriety, and value-for-money. This may involve public sale where the assets have a residual value.

Items which are to be disposed of by sale or destruction must be authorised for disposal by the budget holder or Principal and, where significant, should be sold following due process:

- Taking reasonable steps to advertise the disposal
- Inviting bids for the asset (sealed bids are preferable)
- Negotiating with potential purchasers

The academy must seek the approval of the DfE in writing if it proposes to dispose of an asset for which a capital grant over £20,000 was paid.

The trust may agree to give assets bought for a proper purpose, which are no longer needed for the conduct of its business, to a charity, up to a maximum value of £1,000 per single donation. The residual value of assets is determined by the greater of the written down value or market value.

Disposal of equipment to staff is discouraged, as it may be more difficult to evidence that the academy obtained value-for-money in any sale or scrapping of equipment. In addition, there are complications with the disposal of computer equipment, as the academy would need to ensure that licenses for software programs have been legally transferred to a new owner. However, where it is deemed acceptable to sell this equipment to staff the market will be tested for value-for-money, storage wiped, and equipment restored to factory settings.

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

2.5d Loan of Equipment

Items of academy property must not be removed from academy premises without the authority of the Head of Department or Principal. A record of the loan must be recorded with the IT office and the asset booked back in 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 academy's auditors.

2.6 Student Recharges

The basic principles to consider are:

- Any charges made by the academy must meet the requirements of the Education Act 1996 (Sections 449 — 462). The Trustees and Academy Councillors endorse the guiding principles contained in the Act, that no child should have their access to the curriculum limited by charges.
- Charges are to recover as a minimum the full cost of providing the goods or service.
- Any surplus from trading will be made available to meet agreed educational priorities or reduce the cost of that service to the academy as a user.
- Priorities will include supporting financial hardship cases and educational activities which would not be self-financing.
- All expenses (including any set up, software or administration systems costs) will be deducted from any surplus generated.
- The academy shall have priority of use where resources are concerned, over and above external customers.

Please see Appendix 1 for full details of the Parental Recharges for:

- Examinations
- Residential trips
- Non-residential trips
- Breakages, damage, and lost items
- Musical instrument tuition
- Academy shop

2.7 Hiring Premises

The full costs of hiring the premises will be charged to all users of the academy.

- The basis for charges is set and reviewed annually by the Director of Operations and approved by the Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee.
- Terms and Conditions of Hire covering the hire of academy premises are available from the academy finance office. Please see the Hiring Policy for details (Appendix 3)
- All hiring will be quoted for on an individual basis to ensure full cost recovery, plus an element of profit.

2.8 Unpaid Charges

In circumstances where legitimate charges have been clearly notified to the relevant debtor but continue to remain unpaid, the academy reserves the right to carry out following actions:

- Issue a gentle reminder letter requesting payment within ten days
- If payment continues to remain outstanding, a second 'Notice of Intended Proceedings' letter will be issued requesting payment within seven days. The letter will clearly state the academy's intention to pursue the matter through the Small Claims Court and the possible effects of such an action (for example the inability to obtain future credit)
- If payment continues to remain outstanding, the Principal will decide whether it is appropriate to instruct the academy's legal representative to issue a County Court summons in order to recover the outstanding debt. No further warnings will be issued to the debtor.
- The academy reserves the right to cancel / disallow the relevant students and their siblings from participating in any non-curricular activities whilst any of the above debt recovery processes are being undertaken.
- Entries in the hiring diary specific to the debtor, will be suspended with immediate effect as soon as the 'Notice of Intended Proceedings' letter has been posted. The decision whether to re-instate any future bookings will remain at the academy's discretion.

Areas covered by this policy:

- Lockers
- Examinations
- Photographs
- UCAS registration (reimbursements)
- Reprographics
- Hiring — including sports and fitness centres

- Trips
- Academy Shop
- Uniform
- Stationary items (e.g.: pencils, pens, rulers, etc.)
- Calculators
- Revision guides
- Workbooks
- Student planners (replacements)
- ICT equipment — including memory sticks.
- Folders (e.g.: art & DT)

VAT is charged in accordance with HMRC guidelines and accountants' recommendations.

2.9 Insurance

The trust will take out insurance as it sees fit or as it is advised. The trust will consider a risk protection arrangement if the commercial insurance no longer provides better value for money. The trust will be insured to comply with statutory requirements. The trust will obtain the following insurance cover as standard:

- Buildings and contents
- Business continuity
- Employer's and public liability
- Legal expenses
- Academy journey
- Libel
- Money
- Personal accident
- Hirer's liability
- Academy Councillor's liability
- Business interruption
- Fidelity guarantee
- Terrorism
- Motor
- Engineering inspections

All risks will be reviewed annually to ensure that the cover is adequate.

All contractors must have public liability insurance before they are allowed to undertake work on academy premises.

People hiring the academy's premises and using facilities should either be covered by the academy's insurance at an additional cost or must produce a valid public liability insurance with indemnity up to £2,000,000.

2.10 Receiving Income

The main sources of income for the academy are the grants from the DfE and Local Authorities (LA). Receipt of these sums is monitored directly by the Trust Financial Accountants who are responsible for ensuring that all grants due to each academy are collected.

Academies also obtain income from other sources including:

- Student teachers from universities and other institutions
- Hiring of premises and facilities
- Academy meal sales
- Uniform sales
- Students (mainly trips)
- Adult education
- External peer review or support
- Support services such as IT, finance, and health & safety support etc

Most monies are now received electronically however, any monies received in cash must be banked, in its entirety, in the appropriate bank account. The Finance Officer is responsible for preparing reconciliations between the sums deposited at the bank and the sums posted to the accounting system. The reconciliations must be prepared promptly after each banking and must be reviewed and certified by the Finance Officers.

All outstanding invoices should be reviewed each month by the Finance Officer and pursued to ensure that the academy receives all monies due.

2.11 Expenses Paid to Academy Councillors / Trustees

Governance plays a key role in the success of the trust and our academies. Individual Trustees/Academy Councillors should not be deterred from playing their full part because of incidental costs. Payments can only be paid in respect of expenditure necessarily incurred for the purposes of enabling the person to perform any duty as a Trustee/Academy Councillor. This would not include payments to cover loss of earnings for attending meetings.

The following expenses can be claimed:

- Care arrangements for a dependant relative (including childcare or babysitting) at a rate of £5 per hour.
- Telephone charges, photocopying and stationery.
- Travel and subsistence at a rate of 45p per mile
- Support for Academy Councillors whose first language is not English (translations)
- Support for Academy Councillors with special needs (e.g. audio equipment)

Any Trustee/Academy Councillor wishing to make a claim for expenses should obtain written approval, in principle, in advance of incurring the expense.

Expenses claimed by a Trustee should be reviewed and signed by the Chair of the Trust prior to submission for payment.

Expenses claimed by an Academy Councillor should be reviewed and signed by the Chair of the Academy Council prior to submission for payment.

The trust should make provision from within the delegated budget if they anticipate expenditure in making adjustments for disabled Trustees/Academy Councillors or in providing support to those Trustee /Academy Councillors whose first language is not English.

Claims should be submitted to the local academy finance office.

For all other expenses queries please see Appendix 7.

For an expense claim form please go to your academy VLE

3. Robust Financial Systems with Differentiated Restricted Access Levels

3.1. Accounting System

The trust is registered annually with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO). The registration will require the Single Data Controller to be the Accounting Officer. The trust has ensured it is GDPR compliant.

All the financial transactions of the trust must be recorded on the PS Financials accounting system (PSF) operated by the finance departments for the trust.

Financial records are required to be kept for at least six years. This is a requirement laid down by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

3.2 System Access

PSF is protected by access permissions to authorised staff. Access permissions should be strictly controlled, and individual logins and passwords should not be compromised. Access to PSF should be restricted and the CFO is responsible for determining the access levels for all members of staff. Super user access is restricted to three members of staff, CFO, PSF Finance Officer and the Systems Administrator.

All leavers with previous access to PSF must have their access permissions formally removed by the IT department.

3.3 Backup Procedures

PSF will be backed up daily. The CFO and the Director of IT should also prepare a disaster recovery plan in the event of loss of accounting facilities or financial data. This should link in with the annual assessment made by Trustees of the major risks to which academies are exposed and the systems that have been put in place to mitigate those risks.

4. Month End Closedown Process

The CFO is responsible for ensuring that controls are in place for these checks to be carried out.

PSF will be closed for transactional postings 6 working days after the end of the month. It will then be closed to senior finance staff for postings and VAT postings 12 working days after the end of the month.

The Trust Financial Accountant is responsible for preparing a month end file for each academy, saving down on the I/drive in the correct folders. They must ensure the following reconciliations are performed each month, and that any reconciling or balancing amounts are cleared:

- Payroll: The Finance Officer will undertake a monthly check of payroll. A reconciliation between the current month's actual expenditure and the budgeted payroll costs is undertaken by the Trust Financial Accountant to verify the accuracy of the payments made. The Costings Comparison report should then be completed and submitted to the Deputy Director of Finance for final checking that the payroll has been signed off and approved

by the trust ready for payment. The payroll journal must be posted into PSF and a copy saved in the month end file. A payroll reconciliation against the budgetary software must be completed monthly.

- Bank balance per the nominal ledger to the bank statement: The Finance Officer must ensure bank statements are received or downloaded on a monthly basis. The reconciliation procedures must ensure that all bank accounts are reconciled to the academy's cash book. Reconciliations are prepared by the Finance Officer; reconciliations are subject to an independent monthly review carried out by the Trust Financial Accountants and all adjustments arising are dealt with promptly.
- All areas where cash is handled must have a clear audit trail of bookings/receipts to show when, how and for what value the cash balance is made up. This should be made available to the finance team at the point the cash is banked / at request for independent verification. Finance teams should make a record of checks performed to provide assurance that balances transferred are correct and complete.
- Credit cards: All receipts must be produced and reconciled monthly to the monthly statement by the Finance Officer and reviewed and signed off by the Trust Financial Accountants.
- Control accounts: All control accounts must be reviewed, and outstanding postings must be detailed and refer to the backing paperwork in such a way that it is easily accessible for verification purposes.
- VAT: Monthly VAT reports from PSF are to be reviewed for the correctness of postings. Corrections must be made immediately. The VAT nominals must then be reconciled to the sums due from HMRC, as per the returns submitted. Any differences must be identified, resolved, or escalated as appropriate.
- Fixed asset and reserves brought forward balances: These must be agreed to the auditors' b/f balances and the fixed asset registers, as updated throughout the year.
- Trips balance sheet accounts: A review of the trip balances on a trip-by-trip basis must be done and a confirmation that this is in line with any management information produced separately for trips. All trips must be confirmed as in line with the budgeted costings agreed before the trip was initiated (see Appendix 1)
- Controlled funds balance sheet accounts: A review of controlled funds on a fund-by-fund basis must be completed and income & expenditure moved onto the P&L regularly.
- Management accounts: A review of the accounts for correctness and completeness must be done.
- Aged debtors and creditors: These must be reviewed for completeness and risk. Annotation must be made to all items showing awareness of the current status and any items needing immediate attention or escalation to the CFO.

Once completed the Month End pack is reviewed by the relevant member of the Strategic Finance team (Director of Finance, Deputy Director of Finance or Assistant Director of Finance) and reported in the Trustee pack for oversight by the CFO ahead of submitting to Governance.

Trustee pack

A trustee pack is formulated each month with the results of each school or business unit including KPI's, budget assumptions, actual & predicted reserves, cashflow and balance sheet.

Termly meetings

Each school or business unit within Meridian Trust shall report per term its current status. This will include reports from each directorate area collated into a single document. An Academy Champion is requested to attend as well as school and core staff. A post termly assessment will take place with CEO, COO, Executive Principal & member of the Strategic Finance team to discuss outcomes, a summary of which is provided to the Trustees.

5. Internal Audit Reviews

The internal audit team will undertake the process for independent checking of operational controls, systems, transactions and risks and report directly to the Audit & Risk Policy & Scrutiny Committee, who in turn shall make available all findings to all Trustees.

Each year, commencing from the financial (academic) year to 31 August, a submission must be made to the DfE by 31 December following the year end, including a short summary of the annual internal audit report.

The focus for internal audit will include:

- Evaluating suitability and compliance with financial and other controls
- Offering advice and insight to the Trust Board on addressing weaknesses in controls
- Ensuring all categories of risk are being adequately identified, reported, and managed.

The internal audit team will consist of the internal audit officer and third party consultant internal audit services where required.

6. Trust Risk Measures

6.1 Risk Registers

Responsibility for risk management within the trust lies with the Trustees. This includes ultimate oversight of the risk register. The Trustees are advised on the risk register by the Audit and Risk Policy & Scrutiny Committee and other committees where appropriate. The Trust Board must review the risk register at least annually.

6.2 Investigation of Fraud or Irregularity

The trust is responsible for ensuring appropriate action is taken where fraud and irregularity is suspected or identified.

Responsibility for identifying fraud and irregularity falls to all members of the trust.

The trust is responsible for ensuring appropriate action is taken where fraud and irregularity is suspected or identified.

All instances of fraud or theft committed against the trust, whether by employees, Academy Councillors or third parties, above £5,000 must be reported to the DfE. Any unusual or systematic fraud, regardless of value, must also be reported.

The DfE reserves the right to conduct or commission its own investigation into actual or potential fraud, theft, or irregularity in any academy, either as the result of a formal notification from the trust itself or as the result of other information received.

6.3 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, by putting out to tender. The appointment is for a one-year period, renewable up to three years, at the confirmation of the trust Members on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Policy & Scrutiny Committee and the Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee. The auditors will confirm:

- 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.
- Grants made by the DfE have been applied for the purposes intended.

The Audit and Risk Policy & Scrutiny committee should arrange for on-going monitoring of the performance of the external auditors, resulting in the production of an annual report for Trustees and Members.

Appendix I

Parental Charges

Examinations

No charges may be made for entering pupils for public examinations that are set out in the DfE charging for school activities regulations. The trust must enter a pupil for each examination in a public examination syllabus for which the academy has prepared the pupil. This does not apply if the academy thinks there are educational reasons for not entering the pupil, or if the pupil's parents request in writing that the pupil should not be entered.

An examination entry fee may be charged to parents if:

Candidates have either failed to attend the exam without an acceptable reason or failed to meet the academy's entry criteria but still wish to be entered, they may be asked to pay entry or resit fees.

- The costs of re-scrutinising an examination entry will be passed on to parents.
- The examination is on the set list, but the pupil was not prepared for it at the academy.
- The exam is not on the set list, but the academy arranges for the pupil to take it.
- A pupil fails, without good reason, to complete the requirements of any public examination where the academy originally paid or agreed to pay the entry fee.

Charges may not be made for any cost associated with preparing a pupil for an examination. However, charging is allowed for tuition and other costs if a pupil is prepared outside academy hours for an examination that is not set out in the regulations.

Residential Trips

- Special rules apply for residential trips. A trip is residential if it takes place in more out of academy hours than academy hours (9:00-15:00) in a day.
- If the residential trip counts as taking place during academy hours, such as year 7 camp, a charge will be made for board and lodging on the trip, except for those pupils whose parents or carers are receiving any of the following benefits at the time of the trip:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
 - Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
 - Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - Universal Credit - (provided an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three most recent assessment periods)

All parents and carers will be advised of the right to claim free board and lodging if they are receiving the benefits set out above.

Trips

- All trips will be charged under a voluntary contribution arrangement unless they are fully funded by the academy (part of prescribed examinations syllabus or national curriculum requirement), although a voluntary contribution can be requested. If the level of voluntary contribution is insufficient to support the trip, then it will be cancelled, and parents will be advised of this, and refunds made where appropriate.
- All trips must have an approved full and detailed financial plan prepared by a Finance Officer.
- All costs associated with the trip are to be included when completing the detailed financial plan.
- All trips must have a completed financial statement following completion of the trip to identify any surplus or loss.
- If there is any surplus exceeding £10 per pupil this will be refunded to parents. If less than £10 this will be retained by the academy.
- Voluntary contributions will be sought for trips which take place mainly within academy hours. No child may be excluded because of inability to pay but the academy is entitled to cancel the trip if the level of contributions does not meet its budgetary requirements.
- All trips are chargeable, subject to any remissions.
- Cancellation of trips must be sanctioned by the CFO to ensure action is in keeping with the terms and conditions of our insurance.
- Trip refund policy can be found in [Appendix 2](#)

Breakages, Damage and Lost Items

- Parents will be expected to pay for all, and any breakages or damages caused by their child's irresponsible or careless behaviour and deliberate vandalism. They will also be expected to pay for replacement text/library books or other academy property entrusted to their child if lost, damaged, or defaced.

Musical Instrument Tuition

- Charges will be made for musical instrument tuition provided to individual pupils or in groups of up to four pupils. This tuition is an optional extra. (No charge would apply for musical instrument tuition which is an essential part of the national curriculum or part of the academy's basic curriculum for religious education.)
- Most musical tuition is provided directly from external tutors under contract with the parents and academy staff will only deliver this on occasion.
- Students in receipt of free school meals will be provided tuition at no cost; the academy will fund this in full.

Academy shop — trading (where applicable)

Elements to be included within costs apportioned to academy shop:

- Costs of items and services
- All delivery costs
- The risk of not selling all items purchased with a view to sale.
- Cash/stock handling costs — including online payments charges, banking, accountancy charges, and audit charges.
- Premises related costs — modifications
- Software costs
- Set up costs relating to academy shop
- Equipment needed to deliver the service (e.g.: lockers)

Appendix 2

Academy Trips Refund Policy

General

No refunds issued 4 weeks prior to departure- but see below for details and any exceptions.

Any refund not covered by the circumstances below will be at the sole discretion of the academy.

Cancellation of a trip by the academy

Refund in full

This includes central government guidance on trips and may mean a postponement where deposits can be deferred

Change of trip date by the academy

Deposits/instalments refunded on request

This includes central government guidance on trips and may mean a postponement where deposits can be deferred

Pupil withdrawn from Trip by Parent/Carer

If a pupil is withdrawn from a trip by the parent/carer for any reason other than those covered by trip insurance, including personal issue, friendship issue or non-attendance.

- If replacement pupil found, then a full refund of sums paid less any additional costs charged to the academy as a result of the change. (i.e., name change on flight)
- If replacement not found - no refund
- If pupil withdrawn before full payment is made parents may be liable for any remaining balance due

Covered by trip insurance circumstances include -death in the family, illness, or injury.

Full refund — less any unrecoverable cost to the academy

Pupil excluded from trip because of behaviour issues / other issues.

No refund — however each circumstance should be dealt with on an individual basis with Principal.

Appendix 3

Hiring Policy

Guidance for Academies

The aim of this guide is, under the direction of the Director of Operational Services, to assist Academies with the creation and implementation of a lettings policy that complies with the latest legislation and conditions of hire that appropriately protect schools, pupils, and hirers.

Introduction

The Academy should regard school buildings and grounds as a community asset and make every reasonable effort to enable them to be used as much as possible.

The trust objects within the Memorandum and Articles of Association set out the use of trust property and state it should be for the benefit of the community.

A letting may be defined as “any use of the school premises (buildings and grounds) by either a community group or a commercial organisation” and it should not interfere with the primary activity of the school — to provide a high standard of education for all its pupils. Activities which fall within the usual life of school such as governors’ meetings, school performances, PTA organized events and extra-curricular activities of pupils supervised by school staff are not considered lettings.

A schools delegated budget may not be used to subsidise lettings and the Academy shall set charges to meet any additional costs incurred by the school. The Academy Council is responsible for adopting a lettings policy for the use of school premises which should be reviewed annually, and standard conditions of hire should also be agreed.

Role of Meridian Trust

Meridian Trust has delegated to Academies the responsibility for lettings and charges for those lettings. Our role is limited to checking that costs incurred by letting school premises to outside users are not subsidised from delegated funds and that all costs are covered by the charges levied. The trust is committed to helping Academies create a comprehensive letting policy and realistic charges.

Lettings Policy

The Academy Council should agree a lettings policy and review it annually. A lettings policy typically sets out all the operational factors which enable the hiring of school’s premises to take place. Sport England have advised that a lettings policy should include as a minimum:

- Policy objectives
- Whether there are any users who get priority usage
- The designated status of anyone who is running the facility
- Conditions of hire
- Administration of lettings
- Pricing e.g., scale of charges, discounts, VAT, minimum charges, and deposits.
- Cancellation protocol

- Payment methods
- Security matters

An example lettings policy is included at Appendix 3a.

Policy objectives

The Academy can set policy objectives for the letting policy. Examples include:

- School premises represent a significant capital investment and should be fully utilised
- They are a valuable community resource supporting a core objective of trust providing facility at heart of our communities.
- A profit margin would be welcome when derived from private or commercial usage but are not the objective when facilitating educational activity by designated users.
- To support the school in providing the best possible education for its pupils, the
- promotion of equality of opportunity and the community cohesion of the local area

Priority usage and Designated Status

The Academy will need to decide whether they are prepared to allow all organisations, whatever their aims and ideas, to use their premises. The implications of the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 will need to be considered if any restrictions are to be applied.

The Academy can identify priority for lettings which should reflect the school improvement plan, local priorities, results of community consultation etc. Such as:

- Lettings to ethnic minority groups, parents, the local community, voluntary
- organisations, youth groups, low-income groups etc.
- Educational or recreational activities open to school pupils and their families.
- Activities organized by local community groups for the benefit of the local community.

The Academy can also identify activities that it does not consider promote the values of the trust or are not appropriate, for example types of use that conflict with the school improvement plan, local priorities, results of community consultation such as:

- Commercial activities with little potential to generate income or support for the school
- Events selling alcohol
- Activities promoting gambling.

Different types of users can also be given a different status in the lettings policy which can lead to variations in charging rates.

Designated users could include, for example, community lettings, school lettings for activities for pupils or their parents and carers that provide educational benefit to pupils, which the school wishes to subsidise.

Private users could include, for example, commercial lettings.

Conditions of Hire

Hirers should be able to refer to clear and reasonable conditions covering a hiring. These should cover the required indemnity to be taken out, the fire regulations for the school, including assembly points, an emergency name and telephone number. A sample Conditions of Hire is included as Appendix 3a.

Administration and management of lettings

The Headteacher is responsible for the management of lettings, in accordance with the Academy's policy. Any delegation of that responsibility should be clearly set out in the Lettings Policy, although the Headteacher will still retain overall responsibility.

A clear process for organisations seeking to hire school's premises will also need to be identified in the Lettings Policy. This should include an initial written request, consideration of the application by the school, confirmation and receipt of the signed Conditions of Hire and payment before start of the hire period. A record of lettings should be kept which should list the lettings per financial year, a total of income earned/expected and if paid.

Pricing

The Academy should set a clear and justifiable charging structure for usage annually and income and expenditure associated with lettings should be regularly monitored to ensure that at least a "break even" situation is achieved. As the primary element may be the caretaking charge, Academies may feel it appropriate to review the charge on a financial year basis to tie in with any caretaking contracts. All lettings' fees received by the school should be paid into the school's budget in order to offset any additional costs.

Charges may be different depending on the type of user and this should be stated in the Lettings Policy. For example:

- Statutory users will be charged an amount commensurate with cost recovery
- Designated users will be charged at no more than cost or subsidised
- Private users will be charged on a cost plus an income margin for the school

Charges to be levied should include:

- Services - heating and light, these can be calculated from annual energy costs
- and can be set higher for winter months
- Staffing - additional security, caretaking, opening and locking premises
- Cleaning — additional cleaning may be required — particularly for the hire of kitchen facilities
- Kitchen or catering charges — a hire application which includes the use of the
- kitchen for food storage, production, assembly or service should be discussed
- with any school meal contractor before being approved. Additional cleaning
- costs may be incurred.
- Administration — administrative costs incurred by the school in managing
- lettings

- Equipment hire — if applicable
- Cost of use of school equipment — to include wear and tear (if applicable)
- Profit element (if appropriate)

VAT: in general, the letting of rooms for non-sporting activities is exempt of VAT, whereas sports lettings are subject to VAT. Where an extra and separate charge is made for the hire of equipment, VAT is due on that charge at the standard rate. The school must record the VAT element of any income.

N.B. where a funded project such as a 3G football pitch exists the trust may have “opted to tax” which negates the exemption which would normally apply to block bookings for sporting hire. If you need clarification on this, please contact the Director of Operational Services at the trust who will be able to confirm if this applies to your Academy and what VAT rules apply.

Payment methods: The Academy will need to identify in the Lettings Policy how and when the hire charge should be paid.

Cancellation charges: these need to be agreed and set out in the schedule of hire charges.

Security matters

Opening and closing of premises for hirers and attendance during hiring are matters for the Academy to agree on. It is likely that the school’s insurance policy will require a responsible person to supervise and take ultimate responsibility for security. This is often a caretaker, cleaner in charge or paid supervisor.

Insurance: The Academy should be satisfied that the hirers have appropriate and up to date insurance cover for any activities carried out on school premises.

Health and Safety: The Conditions of Hire should contain appropriate health and safety requirements to ensure compliance with the school’s health and safety policies and obligations. Risk assessments for new activities may need to be completed. Advice and guidance can be obtained from the trust’s Health and Safety Manager.

Safeguarding Children and Child Protection: The trust is responsible for ensuring that the school has effective policies and procedures for safeguarding children.

Where school premises are let to other organisations, the Academy should seek assurance that the hirer has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures in place and that there are arrangements for the hirer to liaise with the school on these matters where appropriate. Ideally this will be in the form of a copy of their safeguarding policy where children are in attendance.

Where a hirer is using the facilities outside of school hours and for an activity not involving children, the provision of a letter of assurance that they have carried out all their own safeguarding checks will be sufficient.

Licences and permissions

Under the Licensing Act 2003, a licence for alcohol, music, performance of dance, plays and late-night refreshment is not necessary where a function is not open to the public.

Therefore weddings, private parties or similar events are not licensable. Any events where tickets are sold (i.e., a public event) or where alcohol is sold (not provided inclusive of a ticket price), requires a licence. This will normally be a

Temporary Event Notice which the hirer or the school must submit to the council's licensing service. A hire application which involves gambling activities must not be accepted without the express permission of the trust.

Car-boot sales or car parking: Planning permission may be required if this use occurs regularly. Contact the council's planning department for further information.

Elections

A candidate in a local or national election is entitled to use a suitable room in a school to hold a public meeting where that will not interfere with education at the school. The school can charge for costs in preparation, heating, lighting, cleaning and any damage.

Many schools are also designated polling stations. The school can charge for the cost of heating, lighting, and cleaning only.

Appendix 3a

Example School Lettings Policy And Hire Agreement

All points where the school may wish to insert details are marked with square brackets and bold print.

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME HERE] LETTINGS POLICY

Adoption

The Academy Council at their meeting on **[insert date]** adopted the lettings policy and

the scale of charges set out below.

Introduction

The Academy regards the school's buildings and grounds which are owned by Meridian Trust as a community asset and will make every reasonable effort to enable them to be used as much as possible.

Policy Objectives

The Academy adopts and endorses the following policy objectives:

[add]

Definition of a letting

A letting may be defined as "any use of the school premises (buildings and grounds) by either a community group or a commercial organisation". Activities which fall within the corporate life of the school, such as PTA meetings and events and extra-curricular activities for pupils organized by the school are not considered lettings.

Priority for lettings

The Academy is mindful of the needs in the local area and the following lettings are especially encouraged:

[add]

The following activities are not considered to be appropriate for lettings as they are either well provided for in the local area; are not deemed to be compatible with the ethos of the school or are not able to be accommodated within the school facilities:

[add]

Designated status

Designated User: The Academy has decided that for the purpose of charging there will be the following categories of designated user. These are:

[add]

Private User: The Academy has decided that for the purpose of charging there will be the following categories of private user. These are:

[add]

Charges and Payment

Scale of charges

The Academy is responsible for setting charges for the letting of school premises and will ensure that the school budget does not subsidise non-school activities and that all costs are recoverable. In arriving at their scales of charges the Academy has followed the following principles:

- There will be parity of treatment for similar users
- The overall cost of letting school facilities will be recovered from users
- **[insert charging principles]**

For the purpose of charging, the headteacher **[insert any additional staff with delegated authority]** is/are empowered to determine to which group any particular individual or organization belongs.

The scale of charges is attached at Appendix I to this policy and will be reviewed annually by the Academy for implementation from the beginning of the next financial year.

Discounts

The headteacher **[insert any additional staff with delegated authority]** may offer discounts or agree a subsidy for any lettings, as they deem appropriate.

VAT

The school is constrained by law to apply value added tax to all transactions where this is appropriate. The letting of rooms for non-sporting activities is exempt of VAT, sports letting are subject to VAT. Where an extra and separate charge is made for the hire of equipment, VAT is due on that charge at the standard rate. The school will record the VAT element of any income.

Minimum charges

The minimum hire period will be **[insert minimum period e.g., 1 or 2 hours]**

Deposits

The school reserves the right to require a deposit over and above the hiring charge as a surety against damage to the premises **(including any equipment)** or the premises being left in an unacceptable condition incurring additional cost for cleaning, caretaking or other expenses.

Payment methods

Payment for individual bookings will be required **[insert requirement e.g., in full at the time of booking/ deposit when booking and then payment in full before hire period]. [insert accepted method here – cash, cheque with guarantee card, internet banking, any school internet payment system]**. Payment for recurring booking will be payable **[insert here e.g., termly in advance]**. A receipt will be issued for all payments received.

Cancellations

The school will seek to recover any cost incurred by the school which is unavoidable and result directly from the cancellation of a letting. Details of the cancellation charges are show in the scale of charges in Appendix I.

Letting times, available facilities and equipment

The following times, facilities and equipment available are agreed as follows:

[Insert all areas of the school assessed as suitable for community use and the earliest/latest letting times agreed as appropriate for lettings].

Variations to these facilities and times will be subject to the approval of **[the head teacher]**.

Management and administration of lettings

The trust has delegated day-to-day responsibility for lettings to the Head Teacher. Where appropriate, the head teacher may delegate all or part of this responsibility to other members of staff, whilst still retaining overall responsibility for the lettings process.

An annual report on lettings will be made to the Academy Council and will include information on users, finances, incidents and accidents, enquiries and any lettings refused.

Considering applications for lettings

Organisations seeking to hire the school premises should approach the **[insert head teacher or other designated member of staff]**. Details of charges and conditions of hire should be given.

A request form **(attached as Appendix 2)** should be completed at this stage and a record of all enquiries should be kept. The **[insert head teacher or other designated member of staff]** will decide on the application with consideration to:

- Interference of school activities
- The priority for lettings agreed by the Academy.
- The availability of the facilities and staff
- The schools' equal opportunities, health and safety and child protection policies
- The health and safety considerations such as numbers of users, type of activity, qualifications of instructors etc.

If the **[head teacher]** has any concern about whether a particular request for a letting is appropriate or not, they will consult with the **[insert appropriate person/body such as Chair of Governors]**.

Issuing a lettings contract/Conditions of hire

Once a letting has been approved, a letter of confirmation will be sent to the hirer enclosing a copy of the Conditions of Hire. The school must be in receipt of a copy of the Conditions of Hire signed by the hirer before a letting takes place.

The governors have adopted the Conditions of Hire which are attached at Appendix 3.

All formal hiring of the school's premises, including those for which no charge is made, shall be properly documented. All hirers must complete a hire agreement and will receive a copy. The hire agreement is a contract which the governors may legally enforce. No member of staff is allowed to vary the Conditions of Hire nor to deviate from the published charging policy without the prior consent of the governors.

Security

The head teacher has delegated authority to determine the security risk for each letting and will be responsible for allocating a continuous security presence or other control measure. The school's child protection policy and procedures must be consulted and followed when dealing with external organisations that work with children or young people.

Complaints procedure

A complaint about the school from someone letting the school premises should be dealt with by following the school's complaints procedure. Complaints by a third party about a letting should be forwarded to Hirer. If the Hirer does not have their own complaints procedure, the school will investigate the complaint using its own procedure.

Review of Policy

The governors will review the policy each year in the month of **[insert name of month]**.

Appendix I - Scale of Charges and cancellation charges

[insert charging scale]

Appendix 2– Booking Form for School Lettings

(Please use BLOCK CAPITALS)

Name of Hirer: (person, body, association, limited company)

Address of Hirer:

Contact Number(s):

Email Address:

Purpose of Hire:

Attendees Total No: No. Adults: No. Children:

Single Booking- Data of Booking Start Time: End Time:

Block Bookings- Frequency/Days: Start Date: Start Time:

End Date: End Time:

Booking times must allow sufficient time for preparation and clearing away before and after the event.

Facility Required:

- Dining Hall
- Assembly Hall
- Kitchen
- Sports Hall

Equipment Required:

Other arrangements:

The School does not provide any warranty that the Premises, facilities and equipment provided are suitable for the intended purpose of the hire. The Hirer is required to satisfy themselves that their requirements are met, and the facilities are fit for purpose.

Will refreshments be served? Yes/No

Will alcohol be consumed? Yes/No

If yes, will the alcohol be served or sold? Served/ Sold

If permitted by the School, the relevant licence must be obtained for all events that will involve the sale of alcohol, gambling and public entertainment.

I have read and accept the terms and conditions of Hire and I confirm that I am over the age of 18.

Signed (Hirer): Full name: Date:

You will be sent confirmation of whether this application has been accepted or rejected by post or email. No letting will be regarded as booked until the deposit and booking fee is received in full and the Hire Agreement has been signed by the Hirer and the School.

Please return the form to:

(School use only)

This application for letting is: ACCEPTED/REJECTED

Signed: Position: Date:

Evidence of own insurance cover supplied and approved. Yes/ No

If no, include in Schools insurance cover Yes/ No

Does the letting involve working with children/young people Yes/ No

If yes, has the School followed their safeguarding procedures Yes/ No

Appendix 3– Conditions of Hire

Particulars of Hire

The Academy [School] of [address] (the “School”) permits the hiring of facilities within the School (“the Premises” as set out below) on the Conditions of Hire and Booking Form attached and the following particulars apply:

Name of Hirer:

Address of Hirer:

Premises to be hired:

Hire Period From: [date and time]

To: [date and time]

Hire Fee:

Deposit:

Permitted Use:

Equipment provided:

School Emergency:

Contact:

Any other information or arrangements:

Signed on behalf of the School.....

The Hirer confirms that they have read and understood these Conditions of Hire and agrees to be bound by such terms and conditions from the commencement of this agreement.

Print

Name.....

Signed on behalf of the Hirer..... Date:

Terms and Conditions

Interpretation

- a. Health and Safety Legislation:
- b. School: means the Academy of the School, its employees and agents.

Use and Access

- a. The School permits the Hirer to access and use the Premises on the times specified for the Permitted Use.
- b. The School do not warrant that the Premises are fit or suitable for the purpose of the hire.
- c. The Hirer is responsible for ensuring these terms and conditions of use are observed and for the effective supervision of the arrangements and activities in the Premises during the Hire Period and for the prevention of disorderly behaviour.
- d. The Hirer will be responsible for obtaining and paying for any Public Entertainment Licence required.
- e. The School retains the right to access the Premises at all times during the Hire Period and the Hirer must comply with any reasonable instructions given by School staff.
- f. The Premises remain in the Schools' legal possession notwithstanding the Hirer's occupation during the Hire Period and such occupation shall not be deemed to constitute or create any lease or tenancy.

Restrictions on Use

- a. The Hirer shall not use the Premises for any illegal purpose nor for any purpose or in a manner that would cause loss, damage, injury, nuisance or inconvenience to the School or any other occupiers within the Building or any owner or occupier of neighbouring property.
- b. School kitchens may only be used with the express consent of the School and may incur an additional fee to cover the attendance of a representative of any contractor and/or additional cleaning.
- c. The Hirer shall not make any alterations or addition to the Premises, shall not affix any items to the Premises and no interference is to be made with School property/equipment or other parts of the building which do not form part of this hire agreement.
- d. Alcohol is not to be allowed to be sold on the Premises unless prior permission is given by the School and a licence obtained by the Hirer.
- e. Illegal drugs are not to be brought onto or consumed on the Premises.
- f. No items of a flammable, dangerous or noxious character may be brought onto the Premises, including fireworks, confetti or gas.
- g. Smoking is not allowed on the Premises or the building at any time.

h. No betting, gaming or gambling is allowed on the Premises without the written permission of the School and the relevant licence from the licensing authority.

i. Dogs, other than guide dogs for the blind or other assistance dogs, shall not be allowed on the Premises.

Hire Fee and Deposit

a. The Hire Fee is due and payable [add] days prior to the Hire Period.

b. The School reserves the right to require a deposit over and above the Hire Fee as a surety against damage to the Premises (including any Equipment) or the Premises being left in an unacceptable condition requiring additional cleaning, caretaking or other expenses.

Condition and Damage

a. The Hirer will keep the Premises in a clean and tidy condition when in occupation. The Premises must be left in the same condition as before the Hire Period.

b. Any damage, destruction or theft that occurs during the Hire Period in or to the Premises, to the building, equipment or School property will be the responsibility of the Hirer and the Hirer shall pay to the School the cost of making good any such damage.

Insurance

a. Commercial Hirer's must hold public liability insurance in respect of their occupation of the Premises for a minimum of £2 million and will provide a copy to the School.

b. Non-Commercial Hirers, individuals or small informal group of individuals (not using the Premises for commercial or business purposes) who do not hold public liability insurance do not need to purchase their own PL insurance separately. They are automatically covered under the school's existing insurance policy for public liability up to a limit of £2m.

Indemnity

a. The Hirer shall keep the School indemnified against all expenses, costs, claims, damage and loss (including any diminution in the value or loss of amenity of the Premises) arising out of the use of the Premises by the Hirer or from any breach of any of the Condition of Hire by the Hirer, or any act or omission of the Hirer, or any other person on the Premises with the actual or implied authority of the Hirer.

Loss

a. The School does not accept liability for any loss, theft or damage to property brought onto the Premises by or on behalf of the Hirer or damages to vehicles parked in any car park provided.

b. The School shall not be liable for any loss or damage suffered by the Hirer as a direct or indirect result of the performance of this hire agreement being prevented, hindered or delayed by reason of any act of god, riot, strike or lockout, trade dispute or labour disturbance, accident, breakdown of plant or machinery, fire, flood, difficulty in obtaining workmen's materials or transport, electrical, power failures or other circumstances whatsoever outside its control and which affect the provision by the School of access to or use of the Premises.

Assignment

a. This hire agreement is personal to the Hirer and the Hirer shall not assign or underlet or part with or share possession or occupation of the Premises.

Health and Safety

- a. The Hirer must comply with all laws relating to the Premises and the occupation and use of the Premises by the Hirer, including but not limited to Health and Safety legislation.
- b. The Hirer should, as far as possible, have an accurate list of those present.
- c. Any portable equipment to be used must have a current PAT test certificate.
- d. The Hirer must ensure they are aware of the fire exits and the fire and emergency evacuation procedures. The Hirer is required to take any precautions necessary to ensure the safety of those attending during the Hire Period, including ensuring the means of escape from fire are not blocked or impeded.
- e. The Hirer will immediately inform the School of any emergency, accident or serious incident that occurs during the Hire Period by telephoning the School Emergency Contact. The Hirer will be responsible for reporting any accident to the Health and Safety Executive.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

- a. Hirers providing services to children must have policies and procedures in place to ensure children's safety and any Risk Assessments and DBS certificates required by the Hirer must be supplied to the School upon request.
- b. At an event where the number of children is likely to exceed 100, the Hirer must ensure that a sufficient number of adults are stationed to prevent more children being admitted, to control the movement of the children and to take all reasonable precautions for the safety of the children as required by the Children's and Young Person's Act 1933.

Cancellation

- a. The Hirer may cancel the booking at any time by contacting the School. **[Insert cancellation policy here]**— for example -If a booking is cancelled with more than one weeks' notice, the full Hire Fee and any Deposit will be repaid. If less than one weeks' notice is given, only 50% of the Hire Fee will be repaid.

The Hirer will pay the full cost of the hire for bookings cancelled less than 24 hours before commencement of the Period of Hire.

- b. This agreement will be cancelled immediately should the Hirer breach these Conditions of Hire at any time and no Hire Fee (or part thereof) shall be refundable.
- c. The School reserves the right to cancel the booking at any time without notice and without assigning any reason but will endeavour to give as much notice as possible. In such circumstances, the School will refund the Hire Fee (and any deposit) but will not be responsible for any loss or expenditure whatsoever in relation to the letting which the Hirer may have incurred or be liable to pay.

Advertising

- a. The School must approve all advertising and posters concerning the use of the Premises.

Meridian Trust Head Office
Fen Lane, Sawtry, PE28 5TQ
01223 491600

Appendix 4

Procurement Policy

This policy must be used alongside the Meridian Delegated Finance Levels of Authority, Appendix 14.

This policy sets out Meridian Trust's procurement strategy, setting out our framework for procurement across the trust, ensuring value for money, transparency, and compliance with all relevant legislation, including the Procurement Act 2023.

A key consideration is the Trust must consider DfE procurement opportunities and record their decision-making by

- Using specified DfE routes for supply staffing and energy unless an alternative can demonstrate comparable value.
- Aligning all MIS contracts with the DfE framework by September 2027.
- Reviewing contract expiry dates, extensions and transition arrangements.

The trust must ensure potential suppliers can demonstrate their financial, commercial, and technical capability to fully meet our contractual requirements. We also look for a clear demonstration of commitment to equal opportunities in employment, training of staff, environmental issues health and safety and ethical behaviour. The need to demonstrate value for money is central to our Procurement Strategy and cannot be achieved without the support of suppliers both large and small. We rely on our suppliers to deliver excellence. We constantly seek to improve and expect our suppliers to play a major part in this process. Where practicable and appropriate we seek to undertake cross trust contracts, which provide can best value and strong supplier collaboration

Core Objectives:

- To ensure high quality of services, good and works, whilst ensuring value for money across the Trust's procurement activity.
- To ensure compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 / Procurement Act 2023 and other legal obligations as applicable
- To support social value, sustainability, and local supplier engagement through the Trust's procurement activities.
- To ensure fair, transparent, and competitive procurement processes.
- To streamline procurement to deliver efficiency and consistency across the MAT

Legal Framework:

Legislation and Regulations

- Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (for procurements before 24 February 2025)
- Procurement Act 2023 (for procurements after 24 February 2025)
- Academy Trust Handbook
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018

Key procurement principles:

- **Transparency:** Open communication and clear processes.
- **Fair Competition:** Equal opportunity for suppliers and avoidance of bias.
- **Accountability:** Responsibility for procurement decisions at all levels.
- **Value for Money:** Balancing cost, quality, and sustainability.

- **Proportionality:** Tailoring processes to the procurement size and complexity.

Trust Procurement Strategy and Planning

The Trust will develop and maintain a **Procurement Plan** to:

- Identify high-value, strategic, and recurring contracts.
- Schedule upcoming procurement activities to align with budget cycles and project timelines.
- Manage contracts approaching expiry to avoid gaps in service.

Consolidate purchasing across academies to leverage economies of scale.

Overview of the Procurement Process

Stage 1

The budget holder identifies a need and quantifies the estimated spend required. The Director of Operational Services can be consulted for assistance in this process if required. The Meridian Finance Delegated Levels of Authority (see Appendix 14) is consulted to identify the authorisation levels required.

Thresholds are a key consideration

- If services are to be provided for more than one year the aggregate costs of the services over the tendered period should be calculated to establish whether the relevant thresholds have been exceeded.
- Contracts should not be broken down into smaller parts to bring them down into particular thresholds. If a contract does have several parts, then these should be aggregated.
- Where the trust enters into several contracts with the same supplier in any period the value of those contracts should be aggregated.

Purchases of goods or services over the current Procurement Act 2023 thresholds will require the relevant Notices to be placed on the Government Central Digital Platform. The Trust will do this where procurement is being run internally or where, external procurement consultants are running the procurement will delegate this responsibility to them as part of their process.

Stage 2

Action here depends on the value of the procurement to be made:

- Orders up to £7,500 require a single written quote. The budget holder must raise a requisition on PSF per details below.
- Orders £7,501 to £30,000 require 3 written quotes. The budget holder must raise a requisition on PSF per below and provide copies of the three quotes to the finance team with a justification as to why the quote chosen adheres best to the values detailed above. If 3 quotes cannot be obtained a waiver document (see Appendix 20) can be raised and signed by the Deputy Director of Finance for the following reasons:
 - No reasonable satisfactory alternative available,
 - Supply only available from a single supplier,
 - Requirement covered by existing contract,
 - Where specialised expertise required and only available from one source,
 - Formal tendering procedures would not be practicable, or the estimated expenditure would not warrant formal tendering procedures,
 - Unforeseen emergency
 - Where the cheapest quote has not been selected
- Orders £30,001 to £100,000 require the tender process to undertaken The requirement is advertised on appropriate media with a brief specification written on behalf of the trust (signed off in line with the Meridian

Delegated Finance Levels of Authority) including an anticipated budgeted cost. If a formal tender is not appropriate a waiver document (see Appendix 20) can be raised and signed by Deputy Director of Finance.

- Orders over £100,000 require a tender process to undertaken (see Appendix 4), the requirement is advertised on appropriate media with a brief specification written on behalf of Meridian (signed off in line with the Meridian Delegated Levels of Authority) including an anticipated budgeted cost. If a formal tender is not appropriate a waiver document (see Appendix 20) can be raised and signed by CFO or CEO.
- Orders for Goods and Services exceeding £207,720 (including VAT) are above the threshold requiring compliance with the Procurement Act 2023. Any procurement above this threshold must be referred to the Director of Operational Services who will assist and support with the procurement.
- Orders for Works Contracts exceeding £5,193,000 (including VAT) are above the threshold requiring compliance with the Procurement Act 2023. All procurements for works contracts must be referred to the Estates Director in the first instance.
- Schools are exempt from below threshold Procurement Act 2023 requirements but must follow the above internal procedures for quotations or mini tenders.

Procurement Routes and Thresholds summary:

Threshold	Procurement Route	Documentation Required	Approvals/Delegated responsibility (see Appendix 14)
Up to £7,500	Direct award	Single written quote	Budget Holder
£7,501 up to £30,000	Direct award	Three written quotes	Budget Holder & Principal/Executive Principal/DDoF
£30,001 up to £100,000	Competitive tender (informal)	Written proposal from bidders/evaluation/recommendation	Budget Holder, Principal/Executive Principal/DDoF
£100,001 up to £214,904	Formal tender / Framework Agreement	Written proposal from bidders/evaluation/recommendation	Budget Holder, COO & CEO
Above Threshold limit £207,720	Procurement Act 2023 compliant tendering, including use of Framework Agreements	As per Procurement Act — full documentation and notices as required	2x Trustees & CEO

Stage 3

Invitation to tender documents are produced, supported by the Director of Operational Services. Each procurement process is treated individually. Dependent on circumstances, a specialist procurement approach is adopted which takes the appropriate environmental, sustainable, social and ethical issues into account.

The invitation to tender should include:

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

Stage 4

Prospective bidders submit proposal in sealed envelopes or by electronic mail depending on the instructions within the invitation to tender (ITT). Formal tenders under the Procurement Act 2023 may require bids to be submitted via separate procurement portals where used. This will be specified in the ITT and procurement notices issued for above threshold contracts.

Informal tender submissions are not to be opened immediately. These tenders should then be stored in a secure place until an acceptable number of tenders have been received.

Opening tenders:

- Where possible all tenders should be opened at the same time with the details of tender recorded. For submissions to electronic portals, bids will be downloaded when the tender deadline closes.

A record of tenders/bids received should be kept for review if required by the selection panel.

Stage 5

Evaluating tender process:

- The evaluation process must involve at least two people.
- Those involved should disclose all interests that may conflict with their decision to contract.
- If a conflict of interest should arise, then the persons are expected to withdraw from the tender evaluation procedure.
- Those involved in the tender evaluation process must take care not to accept gifts or hospitality from potential suppliers as to not compromise or seem to compromise independence in decision making.
- Full records should be kept of all criteria used for evaluation.
- For contracts over £100,000 a report should be prepared for the Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee, highlighting the reason for deciding who to contract with.

The accepted tender should normally be the one that is the most advantageous. However other criteria may be used to form a decision to tender, such criteria will be included in the invitation to tender (ITT).

Full consideration should be given to:

- Objective of project
- Overall requirements
- Technical skills required
- After Sales service requirements
- Form of contract
- Financial aspects
 - Does the quotation price come with any ramification costs?
 - Is there scope for negotiation?
 - When receiving multiple quotes, does the cheapest quote equate to a satisfactory level of service?
- Technical aspects
 - Qualifications of the contractor
 - Relevant experience of the contractor
 - References from past customers
 - Descriptions of technical and service facilities
 - Certificates of quality/conformity with standards
 - Quality control procedures
- Other considerations
 - Previous dealings with the contractor
 - Pre-sales demonstrations
 - Post-sales service
 - Financial status of the supplier

Stage 6

The contract or contracts are awarded based on the results of the evaluation process.

It is important that the trust adheres to the DfE value for money framework and where over threshold, the Procurement Act 2023.

The successful bidder and the unsuccessful bidders are notified with reasoning as to the outcome. For above threshold contract, relevant notices will be placed on the Central Digital platform as required.

A minimum response period of 10 (8 days for above threshold contracts) days is required before retracting an offer to a different party if no response is given.

A requisition is raised through PSF in confirmation of this. This requisition will be representative of the agreed payment tranches the contract has agreed in advance.

Stage 7

The contract is implemented and communicated. Above threshold contracts notices will be placed on the .Gov Central Digital Platform as required.

Stage 8

The contract is managed throughout its term. Above threshold contracts notices will be placed on the .Gov Central Digital Platform for monitoring and performance reporting as required. Costs and performance are reviewed on a regular basis or at milestones throughout the lifetime of the contract. Invoices are only signed off and paid at the successful completion of the stages of works agreed.

PSF Procurement Process

Trust internal purchase order requisition form

- Budget holders must submit a purchase order on PSF or via email. They must confirm that there are adequate funds in their budget to facilitate the purchase.
- Once this is submitted it will be sent to the finance department for authorisation. Where the value of spend is greater than £7,499 up to £30,000 it will be sent to a Deputy Director of Finance to approve subject to 3 quotes being attached or a signed waiver form. Between £30,001 up to £100,000 it will be sent to the Deputy Director of Finance to approve, subject to the correct tender documentation being attached or a signed waiver form. Over £100,000 it will be sent to the CFO or CEO to approve. It is then sent by the finance department to the supplier for ordering.
- At Primary Schools where the Headteacher is the main budget holder for all expenditure, orders can be entered on PSF by finance staff initially to then be authorised via PS Online by the Headteacher
- Orders must not be placed verbally.
 - The exception to this rule is in exceptional scenarios e.g., emergency repairs where a purchase order should be approved and raised as soon as possible and filed with the approved waiver form.
 - All waivers should have a detailed, reasonable reason for the procurement process not applying.

Goods and services

- Goods received into the school should be received at reception and passed over to the budget holder.
- Goods should then be checked as to quantity and quality.

- If there are any problems, then the finance office should be notified, and the goods will be returned or replaced, and the invoice will be put on hold.
- Services should be physically examined and documented as completed with a signature and date on the invoice for payment as correct and authorised.
 - If the services have not been adequately rendered, notify the finance department to put the invoice on hold/dispute.
 - The department for whom the order was made are encouraged to contact the supplier to rectify the situation.
 - Where a goods received note is not received a signature agreeing to payment (on an invoice or email) can be accepted as proof of receipt.

Purchase invoices

- All purchase invoices should be sent directly to the finance office upon signed authorisation from a department's budget holder.
- Payment will be made within the trust's standard terms and conditions.

Quotes for works or services

- The procurement of works/goods/services will normally require a form of quote.
- Copies of quotes must be saved down and provided to the finance department.

Tendering for works or services

- Copies of tender bids must be saved down and provided to the finance department.

Appendix 5

Fraud Policy and Procedures

Introduction

The trust aims to be an honest and ethical institution. As such, it is opposed to fraud and seeks to eliminate fraud by the way it conducts business. This document sets out the trust's policy and procedures for dealing with the risk of significant fraud or corruption. In order to minimise the risk and impact of fraud, the trust's objectives are, firstly, to create a culture which deters fraudulent activity, encourages its prevention and promotes its detection and reporting and, secondly, to identify and document its response to cases of fraud and corrupt practices.

In order to achieve these objectives, the academy trust has taken the following steps:

1. The development and publication of a formal statement of its expectations on standards of personal conduct, propriety, and accountability
2. The establishment of adequate and effective systems of internal financial and management control (and a clear requirement to comply with them), and an independent audit function with an ongoing responsibility to review and report on these systems.
3. The development and publication of a formal statement of the procedures to be followed by employees who have a suspicion of, or concern about, possible or actual malpractice within the academy and a fraud response plan which sets out the academy's policies and procedures to be invoked following the reporting of possible fraud or the discovery of actual fraud.

These three steps are described in greater detail in the following sections:

Personal Conduct

The trust aims to promote an organisational culture which encourages the prevention of fraud by raising awareness of the need for high standards of personal conduct. To help ensure that all employees are fully aware of the trust's expectations regarding standards of personal conduct, appropriate guidance is provided by the following key statements:

- These regulations are binding on all Trustees, Academy Councillors, members of staff, students, and constituent parts of the trust. Refusal to observe them will be grounds for disciplinary action.
- In disbursing and accounting for all funds, the academy trust must demonstrate that it is adopting high standards of financial probity. Implicit within this regime is the requirement that Trustees, Academy Councillors and employees of the trust must at all times conduct financial affairs in an ethical manner.
- All members of staff, Trustees and Academy Councillors of the trust are responsible for disclosing any personal, financial, or beneficial interest in any transaction with respect to the academy or its related companies, minority interest companies and trading areas.
- Any person who is responsible for placing an order with a supplier (whether a contractor or not) with whom he has a personal interest must disclose this to the Principal, Trust Financial Accountant or the CFO/CEO.
- Trustees, Academy Councillors or employees of the academy trust shall never use their office or employment for personal gain and must at all times act in good faith with regard to the trust's interests.
- Heads of department/budget holders are expected to adhere to the financial regulations at all times and to use their best efforts to prevent misuse or misappropriation of funds and other trust property.

Systems of Internal Control

The next line of defence against fraud is the establishment of operational systems which incorporate adequate and effective internal controls designed to minimise the incidence of fraud, limit its impact, and ensure its prompt detection. These controls include high level management controls such as budgetary control (designed to identify fraud which results in shortfalls in income or overspendings against expenditure) and organisational controls such as separation of duties, internal check, and staff supervision. Personnel policies are also a key part of setting the culture and deterring fraud. This includes seeking to reduce the risk of employing dishonest staff by checking information supplied by employees and references obtained during the course of the recruitment process, including DBS and section 128 checks.

The general framework of responsibilities for financial management and the policies relating to the broad control and management of the trust are documented in the financial procedures policy. The financial procedures are issued and updated periodically by the CFO. They are binding on all Trustees, Academy Councillors, members of staff, students and constituent parts of the trust and are distributed to the Principal, the senior leadership team, Heads of Department and staff in the trust finance offices.

The Audit & Risk P&S Committee conducts a review of cyclical programme of works examining the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems which have been put in place (including those intended to minimise the potential exposure to fraud and corruption).

Fraud Response

This document sets out the trust policies and procedures for ensuring that all allegations and reports of fraud or dishonesty are properly followed-up are considered in a consistent and fair manner and that prompt and effective action is taken to:

- Minimise the risk of any subsequent losses
- Reduce any adverse operational effects
- Improve the likelihood and scale of recoveries
- Demonstrate that the trust retains control of its affairs in a crisis
- Makes a clear statement to employees and others that it is not a soft target for attempted fraud

The plan includes both statements of general policy and specific steps to be taken when circumstances dictate and is necessary in order to reduce the following risks:

- Inadequate communication so that action is late or inappropriate
- Lack of leadership and control so that investigators are not properly directed and waste time and effort
- Failure to react fast enough so that further losses are incurred, or the evidence required for successful recovery or prosecution is lost
- Adverse publicity which could affect confidence in the trust
- Creation of an environment which, because it is perceived as being ill-prepared, increases the risk of fraud

The main elements of the academy trust's policy are in line with the whistleblowing policy and are outlined below:

- I. All Trustees, Academy Councillors, members of staff, students and constituent parts of the trust are required to notify immediately the Principal and/or the CFO of any financial irregularity, or any circumstance suggesting the possibility of irregularity, affecting the financial procedures, cash, stores or other property of the trust. The Principal and/or CFO should bring this to the attention of the CEO immediately.

2. The Principal/CFO will ascertain whether or not the suspicions aroused have substance. They will if appropriate, conduct a preliminary investigation to gather factual information and reach an initial view as to whether further action is required. The findings, conclusions and any recommendations arising from the preliminary investigation will be reported to the Chair of Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee and the Chair of the Trust.
3. The Principal will have the initial responsibility for coordinating the individual academy's response. In doing this they will consult with the academy's HR Manager/Advisors regarding potential employment issues. The Principal will also seek expert legal advice from the academy's legal advisor on both employment and litigation issues before taking any further action.
4. The Principal is required to notify the CEO and Trust Board of any serious financial irregularity. This action will be taken at the first opportunity following the completion of the initial investigations and will involve, inter alia, keeping the trust and its committees, the Executive Board, and the Chair of Academy Councillors fully informed between committee meetings of any developments relating to serious control weaknesses, fraud, or major accounting breakdowns.
5. If evidence of a fraud is forthcoming, then the trust will inform the DfE as required by the funding agreement and will consider whether or not to refer the matter to the Police.

Appendix 6

Best Value Statement

Introduction

The trust is accountable for the way in which our resources are allocated to meet the objectives set out in the trust, academy or business unit's development plans. Trustees need to secure the best possible outcome for pupils, in the most efficient and effective way, at a reasonable cost. This will lead to continuous improvement in the trust's achievements and services.

What is Best Value?

Trustees will apply the four principals of best value:

- Challenge: Why, how and by whom a service is provided
- Compare: academy performance against available data
- Consult: With service users, the local community etc
- Competition: Wherever practicable, to secure efficient and effective services

The Trustees' Approach

The Trustees, executive leaders and Principals will apply the principles of best value when making decisions about:

- the allocation of resources to best promote the aims and values of individual academies
- the targeting of resources to best improve standards and the quality of provision
- the use of resources to best support the various educational needs of all pupils

The Trustees, trust leaders and the Principals will:

- make comparisons with other/similar academies using available data, e.g., DfE Performance Tables, quality of teaching and learning, levels of expenditure benchmarking, Ofsted Inspections etc.
- challenge proposals, examining them for effectiveness, efficiency, and cost
- require suppliers to compete on grounds of cost and quality/suitability of services/products
- consult individuals and organisations on quality/suitability of service we provide to parents, pupils, and services we receive from providers

This will apply in particular to:

- staffing — Trustees, Academy Councillors, trust leaders and Principals will deploy staff to provide best value in terms of quality of teaching, quality of learning, adult-pupil ratio, and curriculum management.
- use of premises — Trustees, Academy Councillors, trust leaders and Principals will consider the allocation and use of teaching areas, support areas and communal areas, to provide the best environment for teaching and learning, for support services, and for communal access to central resources.
- use of resources — Trustees, Academy Councillors, trust leaders and Budget holders will deploy equipment, materials, and services to provide pupils and staff with resources which support quality of teaching and quality learning.
- quality of teaching — Trustees, Academy Councillors, trust leaders and Principals will review the quality of curriculum provision and quality of teaching, to provide parents and pupils with a curriculum which meets the

requirements of the National Curriculum and the needs of the pupils and teaching which builds on previous learning and has expectations of children's achievement.

- quality of learning — Trustees, Academy Councillors, trust leaders and Principals will review the quality of children's learning by setting of pupil achievement targets.
- purchasing — Trustees, Academy Councillors, trust leaders and Principals will develop procedures for assessing need, and obtaining goods and services which provide best value in terms of suitability, efficiency, time, and cost.
- pupil's welfare — Trustees, Academy Councillors, trust leaders and Principals will review the quality of the academy environment and the academy ethos, in order to provide a supportive environment conducive to learning and recreation.
- health and safety — Trustees, Academy Councillors, trust leaders and Principals will review the quality of the academy environment and equipment, carrying out risk assessments where appropriate, in order to provide a safe working environment for pupils, staff and visitors.

These areas will be monitored for best value by:

1. Departmental reviews by the Principal & Senior Leadership Team
2. Termly meetings between Principal, Senior Leadership Team, and Head of Departments
3. Annual performance management
4. Annual budget planning
5. Principal's reports including financial review
6. Feedback from Internal Audit reports
7. Analysis of individual academy pupil performance data
8. Key issues for action identified by OFSTED
9. Termly Finance & Resource meetings
10. Trustee / Academy Councillor annual staff salary review

The pursuit of minor improvements or savings is not cost effective if the administration involves substantial time or costs. Time wasted on minor improvements or savings can also distract management from more important or valuable issues.

Appendix 7

Reimbursement Scheme

All potential reimbursements should receive authorisation from the Department Budget holder BEFORE the expense is incurred.

Claims are to be submitted on a monthly basis and employees should expect delayed reimbursement if they do not hand in their claim form as soon as practicable.

Meridian retains the rights not to reimburse any claims older than 3 months.

The claim form must be sent to the appropriate Finance Officer with all relevant backing papers attached and all signatures legible.

All claims will be verified for correctness.

No one should make or approve a claim if the conditions have not been met. The trust will take a very serious view of fraudulent or negligent claims.

Overtime

A form for overtime can be found on Meridian VLE

All overtime MUST be pre-approved.

The Budget holder signs the completed form to confirm that the costs are a valid charge against the academy's budget.

All overtime is paid in arrears.

Travel

Employees must fill out an expense claim form and attach the relevant receipts and documentation. Claims should be submitted as soon as possible to the claimant's line manager.

If a claimant is unsure as to whether they will be able to claim travel expenses, they should ask their Budget holder prior to incurring the expense as it may not be reimbursed if it fails to adhere to the terms of trust policy. Exception to policy may be granted but it must be authorised by a Budget holder and the Finance Officer.

The simple rule is **no receipt, no reimbursement**. The only exception to this rule is when it is not possible to obtain a receipt. If this is the case, you must seek authorisation from the CFO or other senior finance leader.

- Travel should only be made when it is absolutely necessary to do so. Other means of communication should be considered first.
- The shortest and most effective route should be taken when travelling for business purposes.
- If multiple persons are travelling to and from the same location, then carpooling is advocated.

Vehicle travel

- All travel up is calculated as 45p per mile

- If car park costs are incurred as a result of business travel, the employee must attach the car park ticket/receipt to their claim form.
- Everyday home to work mileage is not included in the mileage expense scheme. If, for any reason, an exception to this arrangement is granted by the Accounting Officer, this reimbursement will be classed as taxable mileage.
- Mileage is calculated as total mileage completed less normal mileage to designated place of work via the shortest route as per Google. Normal everyday home to work mileage is the employee's responsibility.
- Staff who travel regularly may be allocated a nominated designated place of work, their journey from home to their nominated place of work must be deducted before mileage can be claimed. Alternatively, staff may be allocated a nominal work to home distance of 15 miles, they must deduct 15 miles to and from work before mileage can be claimed.
- All travel claims must be in excess of an employee's average home to work mileage. This rule applies to training courses, overtime and travel outside normal hours.
- Travel between an employee's home and any other workplace is business travel.
- It is the employee's responsibility to ensure they have appropriate insurance to cover business travel. A copy of the valid insurance certificate must be available when making a mileage claim.
- It is the employee's responsibility to ensure they comply with their legal obligations as a driver.
- The trust will not reimburse driving related fines.
- All payments are month in arrears.

Rail/Bus travel

Train and bus tickets should be pre-booked via the finance department and the fare should be significantly less than buying a ticket at the station on the day of departure.

If the employee purchases the bus/train ticket themselves then they must attach the receipt for this transport to their claim form. This will be paid post travel.

Employees are expected to always travel standard class and take advantage of off-peak timings.

First class travel should only be an option if:

- Standard class accommodation is full
- The additional cost of travelling first class is no more than the cost of travelling standard class.

Accommodation

All overnight stays must be approved in advance by the Principal or Trust Financial Accountant.

Overnight accommodation should be pre-booked via the finance department.

If the employee incurs the cost of overnight accommodation, the cost can be reimbursed subject to the limits set out below and on production of a VAT receipt.

- London- up to £100 per night
- Outside of London- up to £80 per night

Out-of-pocket expenses

This primarily covers breakfast, lunch and evening meals.

- Maximum allowances:
 - Breakfast - £7.50

- Lunch - £10
- Evening meal - £15

Cost of alcohol will **NOT** be reimbursed.

If employees need to travel abroad, a separate allowance must be authorised by either the CFO or the CEO before the expense is incurred.

For accommodation and all other out-of-pocket expenses please use the form available on Meridian Trust VLE.

Appendix 8

Academy Trust Reserves and Investment Policy

1. Meridian maintains reserves to:
 - be in a position to absorb setbacks
 - protect against any unforeseeable expenses or changes in expecting funding/income
 - plan to fund future projects that will either improve education or our financial position in the longer term
 - provide security when risk is considered in projects
 - ensure we do not suffer reputational damage as the result of cashflow issues
2. The trust ensures that our management of public funds provides best value. Whilst it is necessary to hold reserves, we must seek to maximise opportunities to make these continue to work for the trust.
3. This policy and associated operational directives are reviewed annually, by the trust Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee, taking account of the following:
 - Forecasts for levels of income in future years, taking into account the reliability of each source of income and the prospects for opening up new sources.
 - Forecasts for expenditure in future years on the basis of planned activity.
 - Analysis of any future development needs, risks and opportunities that could not be met out of annual income
4. In establishing this policy, Trustees aim to balance:
 - The needs of today's pupils, overly prudent holding back of excessive funds may unnecessarily limit the quality of education
 - The future of the individual academies, leaving no money for investment in the future of the academies can damage the education of tomorrow's pupils
 - The collective responsibilities of the trust, in terms of reputation but also being able to support schools facing turbulent financial times
5. The basic principles of the trust are:
 - Academies and business units should expect to contribute to reserves every year from revenue funding
 - The trust does not transfer monies between academies. Where loans are necessary for liquidity or other reasons, the trust will borrow from the funds of one academy and then loan them to the receiving academy or core trust as an interest free loan repayable on demand. This is approved centrally by the Director of Finance, Deputy Director of Finance or Chief Financial & Operating Officer and a clear ledger of all such borrowing will be kept
6. Reserves are held in two ways:
 - Centrally (multi academy trust) to enable work to be undertaken in promoting new academies, to provide support for newly sponsored academies initially unable to gain access to finance and to allow for the building of capacity for the growth of the trust in general. This amount will be reviewed periodically, currently it is approximately 3% of all trust income.
 - At individual academies or business units

7. Academy and business units (Cambridge and Peterborough Teaching School Hub, Meridian ITT, Meridian Education Services Ltd) reserves are split between
 - “Fixed” reserves, an expectation that academies hold value 7% of mainstream pupil funding (in special schools this also includes LA SEN top up funding)(this number will be recalculated every two years) in reserve, and core trust hold 3% of trust wide mainstream pupil funding.
 - “Development” reserves, targeted towards delivering specific approved future projects.
8. Academies and business units must provide an annual “business plan” following the trust template. This should record:
 - Where the required reserves are not held, a clear plan to reach this target
 - For all development reserves ensure there is a plan of spending, including the need for spend on items such as sinking funds required for asset maintenance
 - A detailed explanation of any request to access reserves either to “balance” a financial year or to deliver a planned project
9. The trust’s annual report must state the level of reserves on the last day of the financial year and the future needs, opportunities, contingencies and risks relevant to the level of reserves.
The charities SORP requires Trustees to include in their annual report:
 - A statement of their policy on reserves
 - The level of reserves held and an explanation of why they are held
 - Where material funds have been designated, the amount and the purpose of the designation should be explained.
 - Where designated funds are set aside for future expenditure, the likely timing of that expenditure.
10. The trust regularly monitors cash flow and current balances to ensure immediate financial commitments can be met (payroll and payment runs) and that the current accounts have adequate balances to meet forthcoming requirements. The trust will avoid any of its accounts going overdrawn. The CEO with the CFO/Director of Finance will identify funds surplus to immediate cash requirements and transfer them in line with the section 16.
11. The trust can invest funds surplus to day-to-day operational requirements and to ensure that investment risk is properly and prudently managed, aiming to achieve the best financial return available for the trust’s funds whilst ensuring security of deposits. In doing so, Trustees must:
 - Act within the trust’s power to invest as set out in the articles of association
 - Set investment objectives
 - Ensure that all investment decisions are in the trust’s best interests
 - Consider the level of liquid cash required to be held either overnight or within current accounts. Any investment decisions must be supported by a cashflow forecast that reduces the risk of the trust not having the liquidity required to carry out its planned activities for the term of the investments.
 - Exercise care and skill in investment decisions, including taking advice as appropriate from a professional adviser
 - Define processes to manage and make investment decisions
 - Monitor and review investments on a regular basis
 - The trust will only place funds with banking institutions that are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and with ‘AAA’ credit ratings and continue to hold ‘AAA’ credit ratings. Should the rating of the institution be downgraded, best value action should be taken as soon as is reasonable.

12. Responsibility for the day-to-day responsibility of managing and implementing the investment policy is delegated by the Trustees to the COO Director of Finance to ensure investments are managed in accordance with this policy and monitor regularly how the trust's investments are performing.
13. The trust can invest surplus funds in a mixture of investment products including interest-bearing accounts and money market facilities (where the capital is not placed at risk) including:
 - Overnight (instant access)
 - Notice accounts (typically from 30-days to 100+ days)
 - Fixed term deposits (typically from 1-month to 12-months)
 - Investments should not exceed 12-months in term.
14. The trust maintains that the reserve balance of each Academy will remain with the relevant Academy and does not engage in reserve pooling. However, Trustees recognise that cash balances may need to be pooled in order to maximise investment returns.
15. The CFO will report investments held and the performance of investments against objectives to the Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee for review each time it meets or when requested to do so. The reporting should include:
 - Funds invested
 - Maturity dates
 - Interest rates
 - Current market rates
 - Latest cash flows showing 12-month liquidity requirements
 - Recommendations for the next 3 months.
16. The decision for allocation of returns on these investments will be agreed by the Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee as part of the investment approval process.

Appendix 9

Fixed Asset Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is:

- to provide guidance when dealing with capital expenditure and the purchase and disposal of fixed assets (as defined below); and
- to provide guidance on other aspects of fixed asset accounting such as depreciation and revaluation

Definitions

Accumulated Depreciation

The total accumulated amount charged to the income and expenditure account to reflect the use of the asset by the business, over its useful economic life. The value of the fixed asset on the balance sheet will be reduced over the useful life of the asset.

Capitalisation

The addition to the balance sheet of an amount in respect of an asset which has come into the possession of the academy, whether through purchase or donation or gift in kind.

Carrying amount/net book value

The purchase cost (or valuation) of a fixed asset less the accumulated depreciation on that fixed asset.

Depreciation

The charge made to the income and expenditure account each month to reflect the use of the asset by the business during the period.

Fixed Assets

A fixed asset is an asset that has a useful life greater than one year. This includes land, buildings, office furniture and equipment (e.g., air conditioning, heating systems), vehicles, IT equipment and other classroom equipment. These are included in the academy balance sheet. Consumables which are used on a daily basis are not fixed assets.

Fixed Asset Register

An inventory of all fixed assets which must include date purchased, the depreciation rate, net book values and the depreciation.

Grant

Funds given to the academy by a third party, subject to complying with any terms and conditions attached to the grant, to purchase unspecified fixed assets.

Recoverable Amount

The cash proceeds when an asset is disposed.

Categories of Fixed Assets

This list describes the categories of fixed assets most commonly used by trusts. It is not exhaustive, and other categories may be added but only with the approval of the CFO.

Freehold and Long Leasehold Buildings

The cost of acquiring freehold and long leasehold land and buildings. It includes all external costs incurred as part of the acquisition such as legal and professional fees as well as other costs such as building costs which are necessary in order to bring the asset into use.

The trust must seek and obtain prior written approval from the Secretary of State, via the DfE when acquiring a freehold on land or buildings.

Fixtures and Fittings

Items such as shelving, fixed or free standing, soft furnishings, and general furniture such as chairs, desks which will last a number of years but not as long as the building in which they reside.

Plant and Equipment

Items such as air conditioning, lifts, heating system, diesel generators and classroom equipment which will be used for several years.

Computer Equipment

Cost of the computer hardware used throughout the academy

Criteria for Capitalisation of Assets

Expenditure Eligible for Capitalisation

Authorised and approved expenditure for an item which meets the definition of a fixed asset, and exceeds £5,000, should be identified, and flagged as a fixed asset, as should spend of over £750 where the asset purchased is portable and desirable. The asset should be recognised on the trust balance sheet.

The cost of the fixed asset should include the cost of the asset and any other costs directly attributable in bringing the asset into a condition where academy employees can use it. Such costs include, but should not be limited to:

- costs of enhancements (not repairs and renewals), which significantly extend the life of the asset and would not be carried out on a regular basis (e.g., building improvements)
- costs of external consultants whose work is directly attributable to the implementation of the asset

Expenditure Not Eligible for Capitalisation

- individual items costing less than £5,000, unless purchased in bulk as part of a capital project
- costs of staff training as part of normal business activities
- administration and general overheads for running day to day activities
- planning costs relating to initial activities such as option appraisals, feasibility studies, identifying appropriate hardware and applications and selecting suppliers and consultants
- cost of abortive work

Accounting Treatment (valuation in balance sheet)

Only costs eligible for capitalisation should be entered into the Balance Sheet.

Costs must be allocated against individual fixed assets.

The cost of the asset includes the purchase price (including import duties and non-refundable taxes) and any other direct attributable costs of bringing the asset to working condition. Discounts received should be deducted from the total cost.

Expenditure on enhancing a fixed asset already recognised on the balance sheet should be added to the carrying amount where the expenditure meets the definition above.

Fixed assets purchased with grant money must be clearly identified in the fixed asset register.

Revaluation of Fixed Assets

Freehold and long leasehold land and buildings will be revalued by DfE independent valuers every five years.

Gains on revaluation of fixed assets must be credited to the relevant reserve as follows:

- land and building revaluations should be transferred to a designated revaluation reserve
- losses on revaluation must be debited to the relevant reserve (revaluation, fixed assets revaluation reserve) to the extent that gains have previously been recognised and recorded

Depreciation

Depreciation is charged against fixed assets over the expected useful life of the asset to reflect the usage of the asset over time.

The trust uses the straight-line method of depreciation where the asset cost is written down in equal annual amounts over its expected useful life.

The period over which the asset is depreciated varies according to the category of the asset.

All tangible fixed assets, other than freehold land and assets in progress must be depreciated as follows:

Leasehold land	125 yrs
Leasehold buildings	50 yrs
Plant & machinery	10%
Furniture and equipment	10%
Computer equipment	20%
Motor vehicles	20%

Depreciation will be charged from the month in which a newly purchased asset comes into use. Depreciation ceases to be charged in the month the asset is disposed.

Disposal of Fixed Assets

When a fixed asset is sold or otherwise disposed, a profit or loss may arise. This is the difference between the total sale proceeds, less the cost of disposing of the asset, and the net carrying amount of the asset.

The profit or loss arising on disposal should be recognised as follows:

- profits on disposal of fixed assets must be included in the income and expenditure account under 'profit or loss on sale of assets'
- losses on disposal of fixed assets must be treated as additional depreciation and included in the relevant account within the income and expenditure account

Any asset that is lost or destroyed, and subsequently replaced through insurance proceeds should be removed from the balance sheet. The profit or loss arising (the difference between carrying amount and insurance proceeds) must be recognised in the income and expenditure account under profit and loss on sale of fixed assets. The replacement asset is capitalised at cost in the normal way.

The trust must seek and obtain prior written approval from the Secretary of State, via the DfE, for the following transactions:

- disposing of a freehold on land or buildings; and
- disposing of heritage assets beyond any limits set out in the trust's funding agreement in respect of the disposal of assets generally. Heritage assets are assets with historical, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical, or environmental qualities that are held and maintained principally for their contribution to knowledge and culture, as defined in applicable financial reporting standards.

The trust may dispose of any other fixed asset (i.e., other than land, buildings and heritage assets as described above) without the approval of the Secretary of State.

The trust must ensure that any disposal maintains the principles of regularity, propriety, and value for money. This may involve public sale where the assets have a residual value.

Custodial Review

The fixed asset register must be formally checked to the assets held at least once a year by the Trust Financial Accountant and verified by the CFO.

Appendix 10

Gifts And Hospitality Policy

Introduction

Meridian Trust is committed to the highest level of integrity, honesty, and accountability in all its business dealings. All staff, Trustees, and Academy Councillors are expected to maintain high standards of propriety and professionalism in all their dealings, ensuring they are free from any conflict of interest through their business in the name of each academy and in the name of Meridian Trust.

Scope

The intention of the policy is to ensure that the trust can demonstrate that no undue or improper influence has been applied, or could be perceived to have been applied, by any supplier or anyone else dealing with the trust. The trust must be able to show that all decisions, whether educational, financial, or otherwise are reached on the basis of the proper application of laid-down procedures and for no other reason. Any breach of this policy could lead to disciplinary action and may constitute gross misconduct.

Purpose

In order to protect all individuals associated with the trust, and the reputation of the trust and its academies from accusations of bribery or corruption, staff, Trustees, and Councillors must take extreme care to ensure that none of their dealings, directly or indirectly, could be deemed as a reward or benefit, in line with the Prevention of Fraud and Bribery Act 2010. This Act makes it a criminal offence to:

- offer, promise, or give a bribe
- request, agree to or accept a bribe
- (by an organisation) fail to prevent bribery by those acting on its behalf ('associated persons') to obtain or retain business or a business advantage for the organisation.

Under this Act, a bribe is 'a financial or other advantage' offered, promised, or given to induce a person to perform a relevant function or activity improperly or reward them for doing so.

Definition

A gift is any item or service, award, prize, or any other benefit which is received free of charge; or personally offered at a discounted rate or on terms not available to the general public or which might be seen to compromise the personal judgment or integrity of the recipient.

Hospitality is the offer of food, drink, accommodation or entertainment or the opportunity to attend any cultural or sporting event not available to the public.

Dealing with Gifts and Hospitality

Meridian Trust expects all staff, Trustees, and Councillors to exercise the utmost discretion in giving and accepting gifts and hospitality when on trust or academy business. Particular care should be taken about a gift from a person or organisation that has, or is hoping to have, a contract with our organisation. In any instance of doubt, advice must be sought from a Trust Financial Accountant or the CFO of the trust.

Staff, Trustees, and others involved in governance must not make use of their official position to further their private interests or those of others.

Staff, Trustees, and others involved in governance must not accept gifts, hospitality, or benefits of any kind from a third party where it might be perceived that their personal integrity is being compromised, or that the trust/academy might be placed under an obligation.

Gifts of low intrinsic value such as promotional calendars or diaries, or small tokens of gratitude, may be accepted. If there is any doubt as to whether the acceptance of such an item is appropriate, individuals should decline the gift or refer the matter to the trust's CFO or CEO.

It is common for appreciative parents and pupils to register their thanks for the work of staff in the form of a small personal gift. If these are valued at less than £20 per donor these are perfectly acceptable without reference to senior members of staff. These will not need to be recorded in the register. Where gifts valued over £20 are accepted, they must be recorded in the register (Annex 10a). Please note this register is kept by CFO. Where a gift of over £250 is accepted this needs to be approved by the CFO and could be subject to tax regulations.

Where a more valuable gift, benefit or service is offered which is to the good of the academy, rather than an individual, it must be referred to the Principal and Trust Financial Accountant and/or the CFO/CEO for approval within their discretion; if acceptable, these items must be recorded in the register.

Hospitality such as working lunches, refreshments etc are perfectly acceptable where it is appropriate to offer or receive these in support of good relationships with visiting staff or business colleagues. Modest hospitality, provided it is reasonable in the circumstances, should be similar to the scale of hospitality which the trust as an employer would be likely to offer. These would not be added to the register. Hospitality received above this level should be recorded in the register.

If a member of staff, Trustee or others involved in governance is offered a gift or hospitality whilst involved in the procurement of goods and services, tenders for work or when liaising with anyone conducting business with the school(s)/academy (other than light refreshments) it is their responsibility to discuss this with the CEO immediately.

If not accepting a gift would be regarded as causing offence (such as a sudden and unexpected gift or one where refusal could cause cultural offence) the item should be accepted. The matter should then be brought to the attention of the CEO as soon as possible who may decide to return the gift or may donate it to a school raffle/fair or a charitable cause.

If any of the above applies to the CEO or CFO, the Chair of the Trust will assume their roles.

Examples of gifts or hospitality that must not be accepted include:

- cash or monetary gifts
- gifts or hospitality offers to a member of your family
- gifts or hospitality from a potential supplier or tenderer in the immediate period before tenders are invited or during the tender process, staff, Trustee or other involved in governance attendance at sporting and cultural events at the invitation of suppliers, potential suppliers, or consultants. (Where it is considered that there is a benefit to the trust, or one of its Academies, in a member of staff, Trustee or governor attending a sponsored event, the attendance must be formally approved and registered by the CEO).

Where a gift is received on behalf of the school, the gift remains the property of the school. The gift may be required for departmental display, or it may, with the headteacher's approval, remain in the care of the recipient. Unless otherwise agreed, the gift must be returned to the academy or Meridian's central office on or before the recipient's last working day.

Gifts are sometimes offered by suppliers with the purchase of items. All such special offer gifts are the property of the academy and must be used accordingly.

Giving Gifts

Meridian and its academies will not normally give gifts to other individuals or organisations. In the exceptional circumstance that gifts are given, staff must ensure that the decision is fully documented in the Gift and Hospitality Register and has regard to the propriety and regularity of the use of public funds. This does not apply to the award of gifts, prizes etc related to the achievement of pupils or students e.g., attainment or merit awards.

Giving Hospitality

Where hospitality is provided by the trust or its academies this should be approved in advance by the trust's CEO or by the Principal.

In approving hospitality, the CEO/Principal must ensure it is not in breach of the UK Bribery Act 2010 and also that the costs are appropriate for a publicly funded organisation.

Expenditure on hospitality and related areas must be directly related to, or associated with, the active conduct of official school/academy business. When the school/academy spends public money on hospitality or related areas, the occasion must, in the best judgement of the Principal, produce a clear benefit for the academy with no personal benefit for staff, academy council or trust.

Hospitality in this context includes meals, snacks, refreshments, and beverages such as tea or coffee. Staff should not be provided with hospitality except when work sessions extend over meals times or beyond normal working hours. The Principal's/CEO's discretion and due regard for economy will be the guide on such occasions and in ensuring that hospitality is not offered to close colleagues working together on a regular basis.

Free Tea and coffee making facilities are available in all academies and staff should use these facilities for internal meetings / cross school meetings.

Public funds may not be used to provide hospitality, floral tributes, small gifts, or other tokens of appreciation for events such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, retirement, or farewell gatherings.

In exceptional circumstances a school may wish to acknowledge long service or exemplary performance. Hospitality may be provided to the main guest, the official host (Principal or Chair of the Academy Council), to Governors and visiting dignitaries. Hospitality at such events shall not be extravagant and should normally be provided on school premises, using the in-house services whenever possible. If in-house facilities are not appropriate, then as a general rule expenditure per head should not exceed the current rates of Meridian approved subsistence. Except in the case of the principal guest, parents, spouses, or partners should not be provided with hospitality. Public funds may not be used to provide floral tributes, gifts, or other tokens of appreciation at such events.

Non-Compliance

In the case where it is believed a member of staff, a Trustee or an Academy Councillor has not declared a gift or hospitality then a formal investigation will be instigated by Meridian's CEO, CFO or Chair of the Trust. If misconduct is indicated, this may take the form of disciplinary procedures.

Annex 10a

Declaration Of Gift Or Hospitality

Please indicate by ticking box A or B whether you have been offered and declined or have accepted a gift or hospitality.

Name:	
Position:	

☐ A I have been offered a gift / hospitality which I have declined

☐ B I have been offered a gift / hospitality which I have accepted.

Declaration details

Name of external organisation and their relationship with the School	Nature of interest / gift / hospitality	Estimated Value If applicable

I believe my objectivity and independence in relation to the above external organisation has not been impaired in any way by the offer of gifts or hospitality.

SIGNED
(Recipient)

Date

NAME (capitals)

SIGNED

Date

(Principal /
Executive Leader/ Trustee)

NAME (capitals)

Completed forms should be sent to the Chief Finance Officer to enter in the Register.

Entered in Register:	Date:	Reference:
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Appendix 11

Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee — Terms Of Reference

Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee - Terms of Reference

The Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee will exercise responsibility for and have oversight of the finances, the personnel, ICT, and premises of Meridian Trust.

1 Constitution

1.1 The Trustees (the Directors) of Meridian Trust (the Trust Board) hereby resolves to establish a committee of the Trust Board to be known as the Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee (the Committee).

1.2 The Directors recognise and will adhere to the overriding principles of the Academy Trust Handbook (the ATH). The Committee must be established in such a way as to deliver objective, independent and robust assurance for the trust that all aspects of operations are delivered efficiently, effectively and meet all legal requirements whilst maintaining best value for public money.

2 Membership

2.1 The Committee shall have SEVEN members. A majority of Committee members must be Directors of the Trust Board (FOUR). Directors will ensure Committee members have the necessary skills, background, and experience to properly fulfil the Committee functions. Up to three additional members may be appointed from either Academy Councils or to provide other skills/ independence.

2.2 The Trustees shall appoint a Trustee to act as Chair of the Committee (the Chair). The Committee will elect a temporary replacement from among those Trustees present at the meeting in the absence of the Chair.

2.3 The Chair of the Trust shall ensure minutes are taken at meetings of the Committee.

2.4 The Accounting Officer (AO) and Chief Finance & Operating Officer (CFOO) will ensure reports are provided for each meeting and attend. The AO and CFOO are not entitled to vote.

2.5 The AO/CFOO and/or the Committee may invite attendance at meetings from persons who are not Directors or Committee members to assist or advise on a particular matter or range of issues. Such persons may speak with the permission of the Chair but shall not be entitled to vote.

3 Remit and responsibilities of the Committee

3.1 The Committee shall be responsible for the matters set out in Schedule 1.

4 Proceedings of Committee meetings

4.1 The Committee will meet five times annually.

4.2 Any two Committee members can request that the Chair convene an additional meeting by giving no less than 14 days prior notice.

4.3 The quorum for the transaction of the business of the Committee shall be three or more of the Committee members. No vote on any matter shall be taken at a meeting of the Committee unless the majority of members of the Committee present are Directors of the trust.

4.4 Every matter to be decided at a meeting of the Committee must be determined by a majority of the votes of the members present and voting on the matter.

4.5 Each member present in person shall be entitled to one vote.

4.6 Where there is an equal division of votes the Chair shall have a casting vote.

4.7 A register of attendance shall be kept for each Committee meeting and published annually.

5 Authority

5.1 The Committee is authorised by the Trust Board to:

5.1.1 carry on any activity authorised by these terms of reference; and

5.1.2 seek any appropriate information that it requires from any officer of the trust (and all officers shall be directed to co-operate with any request made).

6 Reporting Procedures

6.1 Within 28 days of each meeting the Chair will:

6.1.1 produce and agree draft minutes of its meetings.

6.1.2 provide a summary update identifying (i) decisions made, (ii) recommendations to the Trust Board, (iii) any items for the information of the Trust Board and (iv) items for further discussion by the Trust Board and present this at the next appropriate opportunity to the full board.

6.2 The papers, reports, draft minutes, and agenda for meetings will be available for Trust Board within 28 days following each Committee meeting.

6.3 The Committee shall arrange for the production and delivery of such other reports or updates as requested by the Trust Board from time to time.

6.4 The Committee shall conduct a biennial review of its work and these terms of reference and shall report the outcome and make recommendations to the Trust Board.

Schedule I

Responsibilities of the Finance & Resources Policy & Scrutiny Committee

General:

1. To determine the process for the trust's governance of resources (Structure of: termly meetings, engagement of the academy leaders and governance, KPIs, asset registers and information to be provided)
2. Ensure expertise and capacity are sufficient within operational structures to enable trust to function effectively through monitoring customer survey reports
3. To approve and monitor staffing plans for directorate.
4. To review and maintain an effective and robust committee risk register.
5. Ensure standards of procurement and best value are maintained at all times.
6. To review the trust's policy and procedures for handling allegations from whistleblowers.

Finance:

1. To receive the half-termly finance report to the committee from the AO/CFOO — including the Director of Operational Services' report on major contracts (e.g., cleaning, catering, energy etc) and tendering processes
2. To recommend the annual budget plan and cash flow forecasts to the trust board for the forthcoming financial year
3. To review and provide comment on the funding provided and to recommend the trust contribution and uses to the main board.
4. Establish, maintain, and ensure adherence to the Delegated levels of authority with regard to Finance and HR.
5. To use monthly management reports at business unit level as well as in consolidated form, to monitor financial performance compared with budget . To review and monitor budget projections / medium term financial plans to ensure the trust's budget is realistic and any financial decisions are sustainable, and to take remedial action as necessary.
6. To advise the Trust Board on the appropriateness, or otherwise, of budget changes to be made in response to significant external changes (additional funding, pay rises, escalating costs)
7. To establish and oversee the implementation of the trust reserves policy, including any investments made
8. Approve the Financial Handbook and make any comments required to improve — in particular, to keep under review the financial management and reporting arrangements, providing constructive challenge (where necessary) to the actions and judgements of management in relation to the interim management and financial accounts, statements and reports and the annual accounts and financial statements, prior to submission to the Trust Board, paying particular attention to:

- critical accounting policies and practices, and any changes in them
- decisions requiring a major element of judgement
- the extent to which the financial statements are affected by any unusual or complex transactions in the year and how they are disclosed
- the clarity and transparency of disclosures
- significant adjustments resulting from the audit
- the going concern assumption
- policies and procedures for handling allegations of fraud, bribery, and corruption, including receiving reports on investigations of suspected or alleged impropriety.
- compliance with accounting standards
- compliance with DfE and legal requirements.

10. To ensure the timely preparation of the financial statement element of the annual report of the trust to stakeholders for filing in accordance with requirements of the Companies Act, Charity Commission and Funding Agreement (including AH)

11. To ensure significant losses are investigated and reported to the DfE where required.

12. To review any recommendations made by the Secretary of State for Education or the DfE for improving the financial management of the Academies.

HR

1. To receive the half-termly personnel report to the committee from Director of HR
2. To approve the trust pay policy (with consideration of any collective agreements)
3. To ensure effective performance development and appraisal strategies which have a positive impact on the impact and morale of staff
4. Review and support the communications strategy — including reviewing use of stakeholder insights (staff, parents, students, community, and recruitment)
5. To monitor, evaluate and review the delivery of the People Strategy to ensure compliance and effectiveness. With specific focus on:
 - Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion
 - Wellbeing
 - Gender Pay Report
6. To approve all HR policies and in particular monitor the implementation of the trust:
 - Allegations of abuse against staff
 - Annual Leave and TOIL Policy
 - Capability Procedure Support Staff
 - Capability Procedure Teachers
 - Dignity at Work Policy
 - Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
 - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
 - Early Careers Teacher Induction Policy
 - Flexible Retirement Policy
 - Flexible Working Policy
 - Grievance Policy and Procedure
 - Parental Bereavement Policy
 - Pay Policy for Support Staff
 - Pay Policy for Teaching Staff
 - Performance Management — Teachers Appraisal Policy
 - Probation Policy
 - Recruitment Policy (Includes Single central record which is statutory)
 - Redundancy & Restructure Policy
 - Sickness Management Policy
 - Special Leave of Absence Policy
 - Staff Code of Conduct
 - Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure
 - Volunteers & Visitors Policy

Estates (H&S) and IT

1. To receive the half-termly reports to the committee from the Directors of IT and Estates
2. To review and maintain comprehensive estates condition information and plans, including decarbonisation
3. Approve and ensure effectiveness of SCA spending, and the estates strategy to budgeting within academies
4. To review and monitor the trust Health, Safety and Environmental Policy
5. To review and ensure the provision of high-quality IT services to the trust both in terms of infrastructure and staffing

6. To ensure an effective and robust disaster recovery plan is in place.

7. Establish and review the following policies:

- CCTV Policy
- First Aid in Schools Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Premises Management Strategy

Agreed F&R P&S meeting 27/4/26

Appendix 12

Audit & Risk Policy and Scrutiny committee — Terms of Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Audit and Risk Committee

MERIDIAN TRUST

1. Purpose

As a charity and company limited by guarantee, Meridian Trust (the Trust) is governed by the Trustees (the Trust Board). The Trust Board is the trust's accountable body and has overall responsibility, with ultimate decision-making authority for all the work of the trust.

The purpose of this document is to set out how the Trust Board, with its overall responsibility for governance of the trust, will allocate its responsibilities to the Audit & Risk Committee (the Committee) within the trust.

These Terms of Reference together with the membership of the Committee will be reviewed at least once every twelve months.

None of what is set out below can override the requirement on the trust to observe the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders relating to Contracts as set out in the Academy Trust Handbook.

2. Related documents:

- Articles of Association of Meridian Trust
- Register of Pecuniary Interests
- Risk Registers of the Trust Board and each of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees
- Academy on a Page Evaluations (APE)
- Meridian Trust Finance Handbook
- Meridian Trust Scheme of Delegation
- Academy Trust Handbook (latest DfE edition)

3. The remit

Through its Scheme of Delegation, the Trust Board delegates the following powers to the Audit & Risk Committee:

- a. to oversee the Trust's audit function, internal and external, to ensure that it works as efficiently, effectively and transparently as possible
- b. to ensure effectiveness of the Trust's framework for managing risk,
- c. to recommend any changes to processes, or areas for specific attention to the Trust Board
- d. to respond to Trust requests for reassurance and advice on other quality assurance topics as and when they arise, that are wider than solely financial issues
- e. to ensure the Trust manages risks emerging from all aspects of cybersecurity effectively
- f. to oversee and ensure the Trust's GDPR work is compliant and reflects best practice
- g. to ensure the accuracy and compliance to statutory obligations of the Trust's websites (including all academies) and other communications
- h. to oversee the Trust's Complaints Policy and tracker to monitor risk
- i. to have oversight of Trust and Academy Critical Incident Plans and continuous improvement cycle
- j. to oversee the Trust's approach to due diligence regarding new projects

Members will be regularly briefed about how the audit function works. The Committee has the authority to call for any relevant information.

With respect to 3a, Internal Audit, the Committee will.

- Review the standing, resources, authority and effectiveness of the internal audit function and the relationship of the internal and external auditors
- Agree and direct the annual work plan of the internal audit function
- Review and approve the annual audit plan and any updates thereon and also examine the conclusions and recommendations of, and responses to, audit reports
- Further oversee the management arrangements so that the Trust's regulations, governance, internal controls and practices are working as well as possible
- Ensure that the internal audit is regularly reported on to the Audit & Risk Committee at its scheduled meetings, usually by the internal auditor. The internal auditor will be given the right of direct access to the Chair of the Trust if necessary
- Review the effectiveness of the Trust's internal control system established to ensure that the aims, objectives and key performance targets of the Trust are achieved in the most economic, effective and environmentally preferable manner
- Ensure that the internal audit function meets, or exceeds, the standards specified in the Government Internal Audit Standards, complies in all other respects with these guidelines and meets agreed levels of service
- Consider and advise the Trust Board on the Trust's annual and long-term audit programme

With respect to 3a, External Audit, the Committee will

- Oversee the process for selecting the external auditor on behalf of Trust Members and make appropriate recommendations to the Trust Board for consideration and approval by the Trust Members at the AGM, in relation to the appointment, re- appointment and removal of the external auditor
- Approve the remuneration and terms of engagement of the external auditor
- Review, with the external auditors, the findings of their work, including any major issues that arose during the course of the audit and have subsequently been resolved and those issues (if any) that are unresolved with regard to key accounting and audit judgements; levels of errors identified during the audit; obtaining explanations from management and, where necessary, the external auditors if any errors remain unqualified
- Discuss any other issue which the external auditors raise as a matter of concern
- Meet the external auditors at least once a year, without management being present, to discuss any issues arising from their work

With respect to 3b, Risk Management, the Committee will:

- Recommend an approach to risk management to the Trust Board across a range of key performance indicators
- Establish, refine and propose the format of the risk register to the Trust Board

- Review the effectiveness of the use of the risk registers and APE
- Agree internal scrutiny programmes linked to the risk registers and mitigating controls
- Recommend the “Our approach to managing and mitigating risk” section of the Evolution Plan to Trustees

With respect to 3c, quality assurance, and other responsibilities, the Committee will:

- Provide guidance and assistance to the Executive Board, Trust Board and its Committees on any matters relating to Audit and Risk responsibilities
- Consider outputs from other assurance activities by third parties including ESFA financial management and governance reviews, funding audits and investigations
- Review the Committee’s terms of reference, and make any recommendations for changes to the Trust Board at the first meeting in each academic year
- Ensure, as far as is within its competence, that the financial procedures and arrangements required by law, by the DfE, by the auditors and by other authorities are in place and are being properly implemented
- Review the operation of the Trust’s Code of Conduct for Trustees, Committee Members and Academy Council members
- Report to the Board on the discharge of the above duties, including the adequacy of the Trust’s internal control framework, financial and non-financial controls and the management of risk in July in each financial year

With respect to 3d, cybersecurity, the Committee will:

- Provide guidance and assistance to the Executive Board, Trust Board and its Committees on any matters relating to ensuring the Trust is resilient to all aspects of cyber-attack
- Determine the method by which reassurance will be provided on all risks associated with cybersecurity
- Appoint an appropriate external audit provider to provide reassurance, advice and actions
- Receive reports from external auditors and ensure action is taken to minimise risk

With respect to 3e, GDPR, the Committee will:

- Recommend an approach to GDPR to the Trust Board to ensure compliance with legislation
- Receive and monitor reports from the Trust DPO

With respect to 3f, compliance with statutory aspects of website and communications, the Committee will:

- Ensure the clarity of expectations
- Approve and review the annual cycle of compliance testing
- Report to the Trust board any concerns that emerge or challenges faced

With respect to 3g, complaints, the Committee will:

- Review and approve the Trust Policy
- Monitor the effectiveness of the Trust policy

- Review and receive tracking data related to complaints
- Identify any patterns that emerge; investigate and suggest actions for the Trust Board to consider

With respect to 3h, critical incident planning and improvement, the Committee will:

- Ensure the Trust and academies have Critical Incident Policies
- Undertake a rigorous and robust testing cycle is at all sites
- Identify learning outcomes and take any necessary remedial actions

With respect to 3i, due diligence, the Committee will:

- Review and approve the due diligence methodology principles and any specific foci with regard to individual projects
- Review and report to the Trust Board on the accuracy of due diligence projects

4. Membership

The Audit and Risk Committee shall consist of not fewer than three Trustees and the majority of Committee's voting members shall be Trustees. Membership of the Committee requires Trust Board approval. The Trust Board will satisfy itself that at least one member has recent and relevant financial experience.

The Chair of the Committee will be a Trustee and will be appointed by the Trust Board.

The following are not allowed to serve on the Committee, but at the invitation of the Committee may attend meetings in a non-voting capacity:

- The Chair of the Trust Board
- The Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Financial Officer (Chief Operating Officer)
- Other Meridian staff members
- The Chair of the Finance & Resources Policy and Scrutiny Committee

The Internal Auditor (or others undertaking such work) will be invited to attend meetings of the Committee in a non-voting capacity.

The Trust Board may appoint co-opted non-voting members. These members will serve in an advisory capacity.

Only full members of the committee, as approved by the Trust Board, shall have the right to vote on any resolution placed before the Committee.

Members of the Committee must resign from this Committee if they take up employment within the trust.

5. Quorum

The quorum shall be three including at least two Trustees.

The quorum must remain in place for each vote taken at the meeting.

6. Meetings

The Committee shall meet five times a year, or more frequently as may from time to time be required. The Committee A&R Evidence of Risk Management document will provide the annual workflow for the Committee.

Each summer term the Committee shall agree the dates of meetings for the next academic year.

7. Delegated Authority

The Committee has delegated authority, on behalf of the Trust Board and in connection with the fulfilment of its responsibilities to:

- Seek any information it requires from any employee, contractor, or agent of the trust
- Require any employee to provide information or attend meetings
- Seek information from internal and external auditors.

8. Standing orders

The agenda for the meeting shall be distributed to all members at least seven days before the meeting.

All meetings will be minuted. Draft minutes shall be circulated to the Chair as soon as possible after the meeting and to all committee members within 14 days of the meeting.

Where there is an equality of votes for and against a particular resolution, the Chair will have the casting vote or may refer the matter back to the next full meeting of the trust Board.

Once minutes have been finalised, they will be posted to the Audit & Risk Committee secure area of Teams.

Policies and other delegated responsibilities of the Committee can be identified in the Trust Scheme of Delegation.

9. Declaration of interests

The trust will maintain and publish a register of business and pecuniary interests and attendance of the members of the Audit & Risk Committee. This will be recorded on the trust website and updated after each meeting by the clerk.

Before discussing or voting on a subject, any member of the Audit & Risk Committee must declare an interest, if relevant.

If a financial interest is declared it must be recorded in the Register of Pecuniary Interests.

If an interest is declared the member must physically leave the meeting whilst that item is under discussion. They must not vote on any matter if:

- There may be a conflict between their interests and the interests of any of the schools or the trust.
- There is any reasonable doubt about their ability to act impartially in relation to a matter.
- They have a personal interest in a matter (this is where they and/or close relative will be directly affected by the decision of the Committee in relation to that matter).

The Committee does not have the discretion to allow the member to listen to the discussion.

The requirement that the member must withdraw from meetings on grounds of financial interest does not prevent them from discussing insurance cover for them against liability arising from their role as a Trustee / Committee member.

10. Disqualification & Removal of Committee Members

A person shall be ineligible for appointment to the Audit & Risk Committee and, if already appointed, shall immediately cease to be a member if the relevant individual:

- is or becomes disqualified from holding office under the trust's Articles of Association
- is or becomes disqualified from holding office as an Academy Council Member (local governor) of a school or academy;
- is included in the list of teachers or workers considered by the Secretary of State as unsuitable to work with children or young people.
- is barred from any regulated activity relating to children.
- is or becomes bankrupt or makes any arrangement or composition with their creditors generally; or their estate has been sequestrated and the sequestration has not been discharged, annulled or reduced;
- is convicted of any criminal offence (other than minor offences under the Road Traffic Acts or the Road Safety Acts for which a fine or non-custodial penalty is imposed or any conviction which a spent conviction for the purposes of is the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974).
- has been fined for causing a nuisance or disturbance on any academy/trust premises during the 5 years prior to or since appointment or election as a Committee member.
- refuses to an application being made to the Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) for a criminal record check
- commits a serious breach of the trust's Code of Conduct or any standing order or protocol implemented by the Trust Board.
- resigns their office by notice in writing to the Chair of the Committee.

Agreed A&R P&S Committee 2/7/26

Appendix 13

Budget Holder Agreement

MERIDIAN 2026-27 BUDGET HOLDER'S AGREEMENT

BUDGET HOLDER NAME/BUDGET CODE (eg ENGL01)	AGREEMENT	EITHER	NIL DECLARATION	TICK	OR	DECLARATION OF INTEREST	TICK	SIGNATURE and DATE
	I agree to: • Not to exceed my designated budget allocation(s) • Comply with the Trust's Financial Policies and Procedures (details of which are available on the VLE) • Maintain my own financial records to enable me to determine the current and future position of my budget(s) • Provide considered and accurate monthly out-turn information immediately upon request	Either	I confirm that I do not have any interests to declare		or	I have an interest to declare and have supplied details on the attached Meridian Trust Pecuniary Interests Form		

Appendix 14

Delegated Financial Levels of Authority

This table clarifies exactly what authorisation levels are required by Meridian for revenue and capital costs:

- Ordering goods and services
- Capital projects
- Virement (re-allocation) of budget provision between budget heads
- Disposal of assets
- Write-off bad debts
- Write-off overpayments to staff
- Purchase or sale of freehold property
- Granting or taking up of any leasehold or tenancy agreement exceeding 3 years
- Any guarantees, indemnities and letters of comfort entered into
- Ex-gratia payments

For goods and services where contracts will have a value over their lifetime in excess of the Procurement Act 2023 threshold, contracting authorities in the public and utilities sector will need to follow the requirements of the act to ensure compliance. This will require such procurements to be notified on the Central Digital Platform within the .GOV Central Digital Platform. Any such procurements should be referred to the Director of Operational Services who will oversee any contracts above the Procurement Act thresholds. All colleagues must be aware of their financial responsibility and endeavour to achieve best value at all times.

As with all aspects of our work,

- we encourage all staff to work collaboratively.
- we operate the assumption that if you feel like you might need to ask, then you should ask.
- we ensure the highest levels of probity and best value dominate all we do.

The authority to accept other than lowest quotation or tender requires approval in accordance with the delegated authority set out below. A clear business case to be provided for next appropriate governance meeting.

Please see the grid on the subsequent pages for the specific levels:

Purchase Level	Procedure	Delegate Authorisation
Less Than £7,500	A best value price must always be obtained prior to any order being placed. This price should be attached to the purchase order and filed. Wherever possible, a “value” sense check should be undertaken with a colleague familiar with similar procurement.	Budget Holder
Between £7,500 and less than £30,000	At least three written quotations should be obtained prior to any order being placed. These should be attached to the purchase order and filed alongside the rationale for selecting the chosen supplier.	Budget Holder & Principal/Executive Principal/DoF/DDoF
Between £30,000 and less than £100,000	Subject to a mini tendering process. Please see below and contact the Directorate for support.	Budget Holder, Principal/Executive Principal/DoF/DDoF
Between £100,000 and less than Procurement Act 2023 threshold £207,720 (inc VAT)	Subject to a formal tendering process. Please see below and contact the Directorate for support.	Budget Holder, COO & CEO
Above £207,720 (inc VAT)	Procurement Act 2023 compliance regulations apply and will require a formal compliant tendering process. (Currently £214,904 services / £5.372m Capital projects). Please contact the Directorate for support. If Meridian or academies wish to enter into multiple contracts to fulfil the same requirement, then the value of those contracts will be aggregated together to decide whether it crosses the threshold. The rules are very specific about this: when offering public sector tenders contractors must not enter into separate contracts below the thresholds in order to avoid having to apply the regulations.	2x Trustees & CEO

Appendix 15

Finance annual timetable 25-26

	Jun-26	Jul-26	Aug-26	Sep-26	Oct-26	Nov-26	Dec-26
Close down audit 25-26			- Prepare to closedown 25-26 to roll for new year in PSF and loading of DFE submitted 26-27 budget - Interim audit work - Prepare schedules in advance	Finalise and send information for year end per Audit Timetable	Audit work commences	Mgt meeting to review accounts 2nd week	Statutory accounts filed
26-27 Budget	Final proposed budgets established		Submit Budget to DFE	- New budgets loaded and ready for use - Commence use of revised Finance Handbook			
26-27 Land & Buildings Report						Prepare details	
Monthly actions 26-27 forecast **					10th close down 15th reporting deadline	10th close down 15th reporting deadline	10th close down 15th reporting deadline
27-28 Budget						First draft budget 27-28 created using Oct census, current staffing and other costs and known income changes	
Termly Meeting							Review progress to Oct initial indications, risk review and mitigation for 26-27
Finance & Resource P&S Comm		Sign off 26-27 Budget		Review Year end close position and budget for coming year Approve changes to Fin Handbook		Sign off audited accounts review, review progress to October initial indications and risk review for 26-27	
Trust		Trust Sign Off					Sign off audited accounts

	Jan-27	Feb-27	Mar-27	Apr-27	May-27	Jun-27	Jul-27	Aug-27
Close down audit 25-26								- Prepare to closedown 26-27 to roll for new year in PSF and loading of 27-28 budget - Interim audit work - Prepare schedules in advance
26-27 Budget								Submit Budget to DFE
26-27 Land & Buildings Report	26/1 submission deadline							Prepare details
Monthly actions 26-27 forecast **	10th close down 15th reporting deadline	10th close down 15th reporting deadline	10th close down 15th reporting deadline	10th close down 15th reporting deadline	10th close down 15th reporting deadline	10th close down 15th reporting deadline	10th close down 15th reporting deadline	
27-28 Budget		Initial detailed budget build - following GAG	2nd draft of budget for formal review	3rd draft of budget for formal review	Penultimate draft of budget		Submit Budget to DFE	
Termly Meeting			Review Progress to Feb and initial budget build			Review Progress to May, review final 26-27 budget		
Finance & Resource P&S Comm	Remaining meeting to review projected budgets and mitigation plans, including core trust budget			Review projected budgets and mitigation plans, including core trust budget			Sign off 27-28 Budget	
Trust							Sign off 27-28 Budget	

Appendix 16

Delegated HR Levels of Authority

This document sets out the HR delegated authority that must be adhered to when carrying out certain HR functions.

This applies to Senior Leaders, Line managers and those responsible for HR in the Core Trust and Schools.

APPOINTMENTS	
All appointment panels must contain at least one member who has undertaken Safer Recruitment Training The chair of the Interview panel will be the most senior member of the panel. <i>Interview panels should, wherever possible, have an odd number of members with one vote each.</i> <i>In circumstances where an even number of votes are cast (absences, abstentions etc) – the Chair of the final interview panel will have the casting vote (to level of Academy Head)</i>	
Position to be appointed:	Voting members of final appointment panels: with non-voting co-optees as required
Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Deputy CEO (DCEO)	Consultation with Executive Board, Directorate, Finance & Resources Committee (F&R), Audit & Risk Committee (A&R) and Chairs of Academy Councils (COAC). Final Interview panel comprises a minimum of 4 Trustees plus Chair of Trustees (final decision ratified by Trust Board). For DCEO, 3 Trustees plus Chair of Trustees and CEO.
Chief Finance & Operating Officer (CFOO)	Consultation with Executive Board (EB), F&R & A&R. Final interview panel comprises 4 Trustees (Trust Chair, Chair of F&R, Chair of A&R plus one other), plus CEO.
Executive Board Member eg: Executive Director (SEND/Primary/ Secondary) or other role as determined	Consultation with EB, Curriculum & Standards Committee (C&S). Final interview panel comprises a minimum of 4 Trustees (including Trust Chair and Chair of C&S) plus CEO.
Executive Principal / Deputy Director (Phase)	Consultation with EB and C&S. Final interview panel comprises a minimum of 2 Trustees, plus CEO and Executive Director of Phase plus one other (C&S member, Trustee, COAC, Executive Phase Director).

The CEO or Trust Chair may nominate an alternative representative if they are unavailable to form part of the final decision-making panel	
Academy Head (Principal or Headteacher)	Minimum of 3 panel members maximum of 5 – CEO or other EB member & Executive Principal plus a minimum of one the following: Trustee (preferably Link or member of F&R), COAC, AC member or Executive Principal
Directorate Member (Finance, HR, IT, Operations or Estates)	Minimum of 3 panel members maximum of 5; CEO and CFOO plus a minimum of one of the following: Trustee, Chair of F&R (or another nominated trustee), EB Member or Director.
Senior Directors of Curriculum Subjects	Minimum 3 panel members made up from: EB Members, Academy leaders appointed by CEO and Trustee from C&S.
Vice Principals	Minimum 3 panel members made up from: Executive Principal, Academy Head, another Trust Leader (EP, Academy Head or equivalent) and COAC (or appointed representative)
Assistant Principals and SLT Support Staff in schools	Minimum 3 Panel members made up from: Academy Head, Executive Principal, Vice Principal and COAC (or appointed representative)
Deputy Director / Assistant Director (core trust)	Minimum 3 Panel members made up from: CFOO and Relevant Core Trust Director plus one other Director, or F&R/A&R member
Head of Department / Lead Teachers / Lead Practitioner (TLR 1 or Leadership)	Minimum 3 Panel members made up from: Academy Head & appropriate Curriculum Director of Subject (if applicable). Plus one other from either Vice Principal, Assistant Principal or AC member
Other TLR Posts (TLR 2)	Minimum 2 Panel members made up from: Academy Head or Vice Principal plus Head of Department, Vice Principal or Assistant Principal
Core Trust middle manager - Includes: Trust Accountants, HR Manager, IT Managers and Estates Area Managers	Minimum 2 Panel members made up from: Relevant Director plus one other from CFOO, Academy Head, Director, Deputy Director or 1 other with relevant specialist knowledge
All other Teaching posts	Minimum 2 Panel members made up from: Academy Head (or nominated SLT representative) & Head of Department or Vice Principal or Assistant Principal. May also include AC member or another SLT representative for a maximum of 3. Final approval by Academy Head

School Support Staff - (other than SLT posts)	Minimum 2 Panel members made up from: Line manager and Academy Head or their nominated relevant professional lead. For professional services roles on the school payroll (HR, Finance, Estates) panel must include the professional dotted line manager who will make a recommendation to the Head for approval. Final approval for all posts by Academy Head.
Core Support Staff (other than middle manager posts)	Minimum 2 Panel members made up from: Line manager and 1 other determined by the relevant Director. Final approval by Director

<u>Signature on Letters of Appointment</u>	Delegated Authority
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Chair of Trustees
Chief Finance and Operating Officer (CFOO)	CEO
EB Members/Executive Principal/Executive Leaders / Directors	CEO
Academy Head	CEO or Executive Director of Phase
All other school posts	Academy Head in charge of school
Other Senior or middle manager posts Core Trust	CEO / CFOO or Director of HR
All other Core Trust posts	Director of HR or relevant director

DISCIPLINARY CASES AND DISMISSALS

- Disciplinary (including suspension decisions)
- Capability (professional competence)
- Ill Health Capability

- Redundancy (The Board will have determined that there is a Redundancy situation)
- Some other substantial reason

post	suspension	hearing panel	appeal panel
Chief Executive	approved by Trust Board	Chair of Trustees, Chair of F&R and 1 other Trustee.	3 Trustees not involved in the original dismissing panel
CFOO / Executive Principal / Executive Directors	recommended by CEO and approved by F&R	Chair of Trustees, CEO and 1 Trustee	3 Trustees not involved in the original dismissing panel
Directors	recommended by CEO and approved by F&R	Dismissal: Chair of Trustees, CFOO and 1 Trustee Formal stages prior to dismissal: CFOO or another EB Member	Dismissal: CEO & 2 Trustee members not involved in the original dismissing panel formal outcomes short of dismissal: CEO, CFOO or EB Member
Academy Head	recommended by Executive Principal having consulted with COAC & Director of HR, Approved by CEO and Academy Council informed	Dismissal: COAC, EB Member and 1 Trustee Formal stages prior to dismissal: EP or EB Member	Dismissal: CEO & 2 Trustee members not involved in the original dismissing panel formal outcomes short of dismissal: CEO, EP or EB Member
All other Academy posts	recommended by Principal having consulted with the Director of HR or their nominated representative, and approved by an Executive Principal or EB member	Dismissal: Principal Formal stages prior to dismissal: line manager	Dismissal: Panel of 3 from: CEO or CFOO, EB member, COAC and Trustee. Formal outcomes short of dismissal: Principal
All other Core Trust posts	recommended by the relevant Director having consulted with the Director of HR or their nominated representative, and approved by CFOO	Dismissal : CFOO Formal stages prior to dismissal: line manager	Dismissal: Panel of 3 from: CEO or CFOO, EB member and Trustee Formal outcomes short of dismissal: Director

OTHER HR FUNCTIONS	
Function	Delegated Authority

Settlement Agreements	Settlement agreements will always contain an element of Statutory payments. Statutory payments must be detailed as such and include: • Pay in lieu of notice. This will depend on terms and conditions and employment contract. • Redundancy payments- this will depend on the negotiations. However, if the term redundancy is used, it must be included as a statutory payment. • Payment of Annual leave — outstanding AL is a statutory payment but can be paid through the employee's normal pay. Confidentiality clauses have traditionally been regarded as standard provisions within settlement agreements. Prior to recent changes, the key limitation was that such clauses could not prevent whistleblowing or disclosures in the public interest. Any confidentiality clauses linked to staff severance payments which could be categorised as “novel, contentious or repercussive”, MUST now receive prior DfE approval or risk falling foul of the new rules and being subject to fines
Settlement agreements (where member of staff earns under £174,000 excl pension) • up to and including £10,000 statutory/contractual payment • Up to £5,000 compensation payment	Initial authority CEO Executive Principal/Academy Head/Director, Director of HR to agree terms with input from CFOO or Director of Finance. Demonstrate value for money by applying the same scrutiny to a payment under £50,000 as those over this limit and have a justified business case. Executive Principal or Academy Head to sign
Settlement agreements (where member of staff earns under £174,000 excl pension) • Total severance payment less than £100,000 AND • Over £5,000 and less than £50,000 compensation payment	Initial authority from CEO

	Executive Principal/Academy Head/Director and Director of HR to agree terms with input from CFOO or Director of Finance. Demonstrate value for money by applying the same scrutiny to a payment under £50,000 as those over this limit and have a justified business case. CEO to sign
Settlement agreements (where member of staff earns under £174,000 excl pension) - In excess of £50,000 compensation payment (total of non-statutory/non-contractual elements gross) OR - In excess of £100,000 total severance payment (total of statutory/contractual and non-statutory/non-contractual elements)	Initial authority from Trust Board CEO, CFOO and Director of HR Approval to be sought from DFE and HM Treasury Demonstrate value for money by having a justified business case. Chair of Trustees to sign
ANY settlement agreements where individual earns over £174k gross excl employer pension	Initial authority from Trust Board CEO, CFOO and Director of HR Approval to be sought from DFE and HM Treasury Chair of Trustees to sign
TUPE Transfers	
TUPE transfers (not at whole-school level and with a maximum of 10 FTE employees affected)	Director of HR proposes and CEO approves
Adoption of transferring policies and collective agreements	Director of HR proposes and CEO approves, F&R formally approves
<u>Trade Union Activity</u>	
Revisions to Collective Agreements	Recommended by Director of HR, approved by CEO and formally approved by F&R

<u>PM appraisal and target setting</u>	Delegated Authority
CEO	Chair of Trustees, one Chair of other Trust Committees
Chief Finance and Operating Officer	CEO and Chair of F&R
Executive Board Member other than CFOO	CEO and Chair of C&S (or nominated other trustee committee member)
Executive Principal	Executive Phase Leader, and trustee
Academy Head	Executive Principal/Director, COAC and Link Trustee will be invited (but not required)
Teachers	Line manager / Head of Department recommends. Academy Head approves
Directorate Members	CFOO and Trustee of relevant committee (Chair or nominated Trustee with relevant specialist experience).
Other Academy or Core trust staff	Line manager recommends, Relevant Director or senior manager approves
Movement to higher pay bands	
Movement of SLT Bands (Academy Heads / VP/AP)	Executive Director of Phase recommends to CEO. CEO approves
Movement of pay grade or pay scale: support staff schools	Academy Head recommends with approval from any relevant Director (eg Estates) and HR and Finance (job evaluation)
Movement of pay grade or pay scale: core trust	CFOO recommends to CEO with advice from Directors of HR and Finance (Job Evaluation)

Remuneration	
Executive Leadership and application of STPCD Leadership Scales	Proposed by CEO/CFOO and Director of HR — recommended by Remuneration Committee and approved by Trust Board (F&R/A&R consulted)
CEO pay framework & subsequent pay awards	Remuneration Committee propose and Trust Board give final approval
CFOO, EB, Executive Principals and Directorate pay framework	CEO recommends, Remuneration Committee approve and Trust Board give final approval
Determination of pay range for an individual support staff member with a salary not on leadership pay scales	CEO/CFOO/Relevant Director, after utilising job evaluation scheme
Teachers Cost of Living Annual Pay Award	CFOO proposes, CEO recommends, F&R approve with final approval from Trust Board
Support Staff Cost of Living Annual Pay Award	CFOO proposes, CEO recommends, F&R approve with final approval from Trust Board

<u>Acting up Payments/Additional Payments (e.g. TLR/R&R)</u>	
CEO	Remuneration Committee
CFOO/ Executive Principal/ Directors	CEO, Chair of Trustees or relevant Chair of Trust Committee
Academy Head	CEO, Chair of Trustees on recommendation of Executive Phase Director
Creation or amendment of TLR	Recommended by Principal and Chair of Academy Council in consultation with Director of HR or their nominated representative. Approved by Executive Board member or CFOO
Other school Staff	Director of HR approves on recommendation of Academy Head
Other Core Trust Staff	CEO or CFOO approves on recommendation of Director

<u>Authorisation of Staffing structures</u>	
Executive Board, Executive Principals and Directorate	CEO proposes, Trust board approves on recommendation from F&R
Academy leads	CEO proposes, Trust board approves on recommendation from F&R/C&S
Core Trust –Directorate members	CEO proposes, Trust board approves on recommendation from F&R
Academies	Academy Head proposes, Executive Principal and COAC recommends, AC approve. CFOO formally approves
Core Trust	Directorate (Finance, HR, IT, Operational Services or Estates) consulted, CFOO proposes, CEO recommends and F&R approve
<u>Restructures (proposed redundancies)</u>	
CEO, CFOO, Executive Principal, and senior post Core Trust	Chair of Trustees, Chair of F&R
Academy Heads or Senior Leadership teams	CEO, Chair of F&R and COAC
MITT and CPTSH	Executive Principal, CEO, Chair of F&R and Director of HR
All other core or school posts	Director or Executive Principal recommends in consultation with COAC where appropriate and the Director of HR or their nominated representative. The CEO approves and the Chair of F&R and COAC where relevant approve
Authorisation of redundancy/early retirement payments	CEO with recommendations from CFOO and Director of HR
<u>Reorganisation - Creation of new posts</u>	

The CEO is responsible for determining a trust leadership structure. Directorate members are responsible for determining staffing within their areas.	
CEO	Chair of Trustees, and Trust board
CFOO	CEO and Trust Board
Executive Principals	Trust Board with salary recommendation from Remuneration Committee / CEO
Academy Heads / Headteachers and Curriculum specialist Directors	CEO - proposes to Trust Board with salary recommendation from Remuneration Committee
Senior leadership - schools	Executive Principal / Academy Head proposes to CEO. Staffing plan approved by F&R / Academy Council
Teachers	Academy Head proposes to Executive Principal and Finance. Staffing plan approved by F&R / Academy Council
Other support roles in schools	Academy Head proposes to Executive Principal in consultation with the relevant Director
Directorate posts at Senior Level (CFOO, Directors, Assistant Director of HR, Governance and Deputies)	CEO - proposes to Trust Board with salary recommendation from Remuneration Committee
Core Trust support roles	Directorate Member proposes. CEO and CFOO approve
Creation of temporary new posts of up to 1 year	CEO on recommendation from Academy Head, or CFOO for core posts
<u>Revisions to Pay and Conditions</u>	Trust board on recommendation from F&R
Administration of employment contracts, pay and conditions of services (excepting previous delegated authorities)	Director of HR in consultation with CEO, or CFOO as appropriate

Maintenance of the Core Single Central Record	Director of HR implements, CEO is accountable
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N.B — Any other delegated Authority not described above would need to be referred to the Trust Board for a decision. All post holders will include 'Acting' post holders

Appendix 17

Authorisation For Recruitment & Appoint Template

AUTHORISATION FOR RECRUITMENT

(Teaching and Non-Teaching posts including Apprentices)

Academy:

Date:

Process:

1. Requester raises authorisation form
2. Principal / Executive Principal / Director approves recruitment to post
3. CEO/Scrutiny Committee approves recruitment if this role is a SLT role
3. Finance Manager for school / core trust authorises monies available
4. HR Officer in school / Core Trust manages recruitment process
5. Appointment form to be completed for successful candidate.

Teacher Vacancies

Schools must contact TCP for possible appointment of trainees before proceeding to external recruitment. Please confirm this has been done: (shade the appropriate box)

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐

Recruitment Request

Name and position of person requesting recruitment	Name: Position: Date of Request:	
Position to be recruited (Please ensure that appsupport@meridiantrust.co.uk is informed of any <u>new</u> positions that need to be created)	Job title: Salary / Grade: Vacant or New post: Site: Start date (if known):	

Support Staff: any change to a current grade for a post or if a new post can only be applied if a job evaluation has taken place Teaching Staff: if this is a SLT post approval must be sought from the CEO	JD sent to central HR for Job evaluation (If applicable) If Yes confirmation of evaluations must be attached. Authorisation required If yes date authorisation received from CEO (attach copy of email to document):	
Hours / type of contract required: If part time, please state hours or % of teaching contract hours to be worked each week Support staff only: 52 weeks or TTO or variation	Teaching staff: % of hours to be worked: If casual or fixed term, please state proposed contract end date: Support Staff: Weekly hours: Number of weeks: If casual or fixed term, please state proposed contract end date: Reason for fixed term:	
Teaching staff – please include any TLR allowance TLR 1 is not used by Primaries in the Trust	TLR: If yes, state level:	
Agency / supply cover (long term supply)	Length of cover required: Reason:	

Advertisement: Please confirm where this post is to be advertised	Internal post only:	Yes/No
	My New Term	Yes/No
	Ad Warrior	Yes/No
	Free job sites: e.g. Indeed	Yes/No
	Parent Mail – local schools	Yes/No
	Social media e.g. Facebook/LinkedIn/Other	Yes/No
		Yes/No
Date scheduling:	Opening date:	
	Closing date:	
	Shortlisting panel:	
	Interview date:	
	Interview panel:	
Interview preparation:	Have questions been prepared?	
	Will there be interview tasks?	
	Length of interview:	
Hiring Manager confirmation and date	Signature:	Date:

Recruitment Authorisation *Please now forward this to the Principal for authorisation.*

CEO/Principal/Core Trust Director Authorisation	Approved / Not Approved
	Comments:
	Signature:
	Date:

	Please advise the requester if this has not been approved, otherwise please forward to the Finance Manager for your school or core trust team.
Confirmation / Authorisation from HR:	Signature: Date:
Confirmation / Authorisation from Finance:	Signature: Date: Please return to the HR Officer in the school and copy to the Principal and requester.

Recruitment Campaign Administration (to be completed by HR only)

Date Received:	
Name:	
All details completed, and correct authorisation received:	Yes/No
Date recruitment campaign commenced:	
On completion of the process, a copy of this form must be filed on the personnel file of the successful applicant. (Ensure this information is added to the Recruitment tracker for Core)	

AUTHORISATION FOR APPOINTMENT

(Teaching and Non-Teaching posts)

<i>All sections of this form must be completed and signed to enable HR to produce an offer letter.</i> <i>Final sign off is needed by appointing Manager, appropriate Director, Finance Director and Head of HR.</i>	
Recruitment Information	
Name of Candidate:	
Internal/External Candidate:	
Date of Interview:	
Role appointed from: (if applicable)	
Role appointed to:	
Contract Start Date: (if known at time of form)	
Contract End Date: (if applicable)	
Role Information	
Appointment type:	
If temporary or fixed term please provide reasons: (Please seek advice from Core HR about suitable reasons for temporary contracts)	
Support post: Weeks/days worked per year:	
Hours per week:	

Working pattern: (please state days worked in a weeks and hours worked over these days e.g. M-F 8-4)	*Please ensure any changes to the working pattern for vacant roles are sent to appsupport@meridiantrust.co.uk			
	Days	Tick if applicable	Hours (E.G 8 Hours)	Time worked (E.G 09:00-16:00)
	Monday			
	Tuesday			
	Wednesday			
	Thursday			
	Friday			
Teacher post: Working % and pattern: (please state days worked in a week and hours worked over these days e.g. M-F 8-4)	*Please ensure any changes to the working pattern for vacant roles are sent to appsupport@meridiantrust.co.uk			
	Days	Tick if applicable	Hours (E.G 8 Hours)	Time worked (E.G 09:00-16:00)
	Monday			
	Tuesday			
	Wednesday			
	Thursday			
	Friday			
Continuous service date:				
Local Government Continuous service date:				

Line Manager (iTrent purposes)	
Salary Information	
Support Staff Salary scale:	
Grade/Scale:	
Pay point:	
Teacher range:	
Pay point:	
Reason for pay spine appointment: (examples: good/outstanding lesson, good/outstanding reference, match salary, track record of results)	
If the above grade is different from that advertised and signed off previously, please give reasons:	
If the agreed point is not the bottom for the grade given, please provide reasons why:	
Recruitment and/or retention to be offered? Please provide reasons why: (examples: shortage area, high specialist knowledge)	
If recruited via an agency please provide details of agency used and costs attached.	
Allowances to be paid:	No

Contract Information	
Individual Address:	
Place of work address:	
Authorisation – all boxes must be signed by the appropriate Manager/Director/CEO	
Hiring Manager	Signed _____ Date _____
Budget holder for hiring department (Principal, Director or CEO) (must be CEO for SLT positions)	Signed _____ Date _____
HR Manager signature	Signed _____ Date _____
Finance (financial sign off)	Signed _____ Date _____
<i>Once all signatories have been obtained, please pass to the HR Representative (school or core) for offer letter to be produced and sent off to the candidate.</i> <i>Please ensure interview paperwork is passed over to the HR Representative (school/core) for file including:</i> • criminal disclosure form • signed interview notes • DBS documents • and any other relevant personal documents you are holding from the interview process.	

Appendix 18

Glossary Of Acronyms

MERIDIAN — Meridian Trust

ESG — Education Services Grant

GAG Funding — General Annual Grant

DfE — Department for Education

LA — Local Authority

RFQ — Request for Quote

TFEU — Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

TOR — Terms of Reference

DoF — Director of Finance

DDoF — Deputy Director of Finance

Appendix 19

The meaning of 'Member', 'Trustee', 'Director' and 'Academy Councillor'

'Member'

The Members of an academy trust have a different status from the Trustees. The Members are the subscribers to the trust's memorandum of association, and any other individuals permitted to become Members under its articles of association. Members have an overview of the governance arrangements of the trust and have the power to appoint trustees and remove these Trustees.

Members can amend the articles and may do so to support stronger governance arrangements. For details on making changes to the articles, including circumstances in which Charity Commission approval is required, please see the Charity Commission guidance CC36: Changing your charity's governing documents.

While Members can also be Trustees, retaining some distinction between the two layers ensures that Members, independent of Trustees, provide oversight and challenge. This is especially important in multi-academy trusts in which Trustees are responsible for a number of academies.

Academy trusts should be established with at least three Members, although the Department for Education (DfE) encourages trusts to have at least five Members in total, as this:

- ensures enough Members can take decisions via special resolution (which requires 75% of Members to agree) without requiring unanimity, and
- facilitates majority decisions being taken by ordinary resolution (which requires a majority of Members to agree)

Governance structures in which Members are also employees are not considered by DfE to be best practice. Members **must not** be employees of the trust, nor occupy staff roles on an unpaid voluntary basis. The latest model articles do not allow Members to be employees.

'Trustee', 'Director' and 'Academy Councillor'

In this handbook there are frequent references to Trustees. This is the same body of people as both the Directors of the company and the 'governors' of a single academy trust; these words are used interchangeably.

They are the people responsible under the academy trust's articles of association for controlling its management and administration. They have responsibility for directing its affairs, and for ensuring that it is solvent, well-run, and delivering the trust's charitable outcomes for the benefit of the public.

Single academy trusts have Members and Trustees. Multi-academy trusts have different governance arrangements because they are established to oversee and manage more than one academy. They typically have Members, Trustees, and local governing bodies. MERIDIAN has academy councils in lieu of local governing bodies. Individuals who sit on a local governing body at a constituent academy in a multi-academy trust may not necessarily be Trustees of that overall trust but can have duties delegated to them by the Trustees.

Individuals **must** ensure that they fully understand their duties as Company Directors and charity Trustees. The duties of Company Directors are described in sections 170 to 181 of the Companies Act 2006. The role and duties of charity Trustees are described by the Charity Commission in their guidance CC3: the essential Trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do.

De facto Trustees

Academy trusts **must not** have de facto Trustees (as defined in appendix I of the Charities SORP 2015) or Shadow Directors (as defined in section 251(1) of the Companies Act 2006).

Principals

Where the Financial Handbook refers to Principals this refers to both the Headteachers of the academies as well as the Directors of the Business Units.

Academies

Where the Financial Handbook refers to Academies this refers to both the Academies and the Business Units within the trust.

Appendix 20

Waiver of Procurement Template

Use this waiver for purchases above £7,500 if:

- 3 quotes have not been obtained.
- The cheapest quote has not been selected.
- The total value of spend is not known but is likely to be over £7,500
- The value is over £30,000, but a tender process has not been completed.

School name:

Supplier name	Total cost EXCL VAT or estimated cost (if subject to variation)

Description of services being procured

Please explain the rationale to substantiate the waiver and attached documents if relevant

	Tick appropriate reason for requesting waiver	
1.	Supply only available from a single supplier	
2.	Specialised expertise required, only available from one source	
3.	No reasonable satisfactory alternative available	
4.	Requirement is covered by existing contract	
5.	Formal tendering procedures would not be practicable, or the estimated expenditure or income would not warrant formal tendering procedures	
6.	Unforeseen emergency	

Requested by Budget Holder:		Signature		Date:	
Authorised by Deputy/Director of Finance to £99,999	Jo Hall / Jane Handy (delete as applicable)	Signature		Date:	
Authorised by COO or CEO if over £100,000	Helen Anderson / Mark Woods (delete as applicable)	Signature		Date:	
Date Reported to Governance & Audit committee					