



Scheme of Delegation of Financial Powers

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SIGNED BY CHAIR OF TRUST BOARD:
DATE APPROVED: 10th July 2025

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Statement of intent

In accordance with the DFE's 'Academy trust handbook 2025' (ATH), this document outlines the delegation of financial powers within The Pioneer Academy, its schools, and the relevant members of staff.

This document has been implemented to ensure the trust's funds are used sensibly and in accordance with statutory guidance, and to clearly outline the responsibilities delegated by the board of trustees.

The trust is committed to providing a high standard of education and care, whilst ensuring that value for money is achieved. The internal control systems outlined in this document will be implemented at all times with the aim of ensuring that the trust acts in an effective and transparent manner.

This Scheme of Delegation of Financial Powers has been reviewed and approved by the board of trustees and will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- [DFE \(2025\) 'Academy trust handbook 2025'](#)
- [DfE \(2025\) 'Academy trust governance guide'](#)
- [The Companies Act 2006](#)
- [The Procurement Act 2023](#)

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- MAT Financial Policy
- Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy
- Debt Recovery Policy
- Gifts, Hospitality and Anti-Bribery Policy
- Tendering and Procurement Policy
- Lettings Policy
- Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Responsibilities of the members

In regards to the trust's accounts, the members are responsible for appointing external auditors, other than where the Companies Act 2006 permits the trustees to appoint.

In accordance with the letter of engagement, the members will vote on any proposals to remove external auditors – reasons for removing an auditor must be provided.

Members are responsible for overseeing the effective governance of the trust and trust performance, including financially.

Responsibilities of the trust board

A written Scheme of Delegation of Financial Powers will be approved by the board of trustees, ensuring that there are adequate operational and monitoring controls in place for all the financial processes within the trust. The scheme of delegation will be reviewed annually, and immediately when there has been a change in trust management or organisational structure.

The board is responsible for ensuring that the trust is operating in accordance with the law, its articles of association, its charitable objects, its funding agreement and the ATH.

The proper stewardship of trust funds, including regularity and propriety, as well as ensuring that value for money is achieved in order to maximise outcomes for pupils, is the responsibility of the board.

Annual budgets will be formally approved by the board prior to the start of the new financial year.

All capital plans for the trust will be received and discussed by the board on an annual basis.

A Declared Conflicts of Interests Register for all board members and staff with financial responsibilities will be kept and maintained by the board.

External audit

- Appointing an audit and risk committee to advise the board on the adequacy of the trust's internal control framework, including financial and non-financial controls and risk management arrangements, to direct a programme of internal scrutiny and to consider the results and quality of external audit.
- Where the Companies Act 2006 permits to do so, appointing external auditors to give an opinion on whether the annual accounts present a true and fair view of the trust's financial performance and position – and notifying the DfE when an auditor is removed or resigns
- Receiving the reports from the external auditor.
- Cooperating with risk management auditors and managers and implementing reasonable recommendations where necessary.
- Ensuring there is an appropriate, reasonable and timely response to the auditor's findings.
- Ensuring that employees of the trust are not audit and risk committee members, whilst enabling the accounting officer and COO to attend to provide information and participate in discussions.

Liaising with the DFE

- Seeking the DFE's approval and meeting statutory requirements for any element of staff severance payment or compensation payment which is more than £50,000 above any contractual entitlement.
- Informing the DFE if it suspects any irregularity affecting resources.
- Obtaining approval from the Secretary of State via the DFE for the following transactions which are beyond the limits specified in the ATH:
 - Additional funding
 - Writing off debts and losses
 - Entering into guarantees, letters of comfort and indemnities
 - Acquiring freeholds
- Cooperating with the DFE if they require financial information to help inform any audits of the trust they may undertake.
- Seeking approval from the DFE for any novel, contentious or repercussive investments.
- Seeking approval from the DFE for ex-gratia transactions.
- Notifying the DFE if a deficit budget is proposed.
- Complying with any financial notices to improve.

Approval and authorisations

- Approving whistleblowing procedures and ensuring individuals' right to whistleblow.
- Scrutiny, review and oversight
- Reviewing and approving the three-year budget forecast return before the deadline for submission to the DFE, by 30 July each year.
- Maintaining complete, accurate and up-to-date records of all financial arrangements.
- Ensuring that all schools within the trust are following the recommended operational and internal controls provided by the board.
- Keeping records pertaining to related party transactions, to highlight that all transactions have been conducted in accordance with the high standards of accountability and transparency.
- Preparing and monitoring financial plans to ensure the trust remains a going concern and ensure consistency and scrutiny in budget management.
- Maintaining and reviewing the trusts and its academies' Asset Register and Risk Register on an annual basis.
- Reviewing financial reports prior to the submission of the audited financial statements to the Secretary of State by 31 December each year.
- Including contingency and business continuity planning as part of risk management procedures.
- Ensuring sound internal control, risk management and assurance processes are in place.
- Ensuring the protocol and requirements for managing related party transactions are followed and applied across the trust.
- Ensuring adequate insurance cover is obtained in compliance with legal obligations or that the trust is a member of the academies risk protection arrangement.
- Ensuring the governance statement meets the requirements of the ATH.
- Ensuring annual pay awards, including executive leaders' performance management, are reviewed on an annual basis by the committee, and recommendations for approval to the board of trustees are made. The committee will make certain executive leaders will not be involved in setting or reviewing their own remuneration.
- Reviewing and approving all gifts received by executive leaders in line with the trust's Gifts, Hospitality and Anti-Bribery Policy.
- Ensuring the analysis of pay information to identify and explore any gender pay gaps, challenges to achieving pay equality in the trust and any successes.
- Ensuring publication on the trust website information about the gender pay gap within the trust.

Appointing staff

- Appointing an audit and risk committee, in line with the following requirements:
 - The trust has a dedicated audit and risk committee that is not combined with another committee
 - The audit and risk committee will meet at least three times a year
 - The audit and risk committee will direct the trust's programme of internal scrutiny and report to the board of trustees on the quality of the trust's financial controls and risk management procedures
 - With clear terms of reference in place, which outlines the role of the audit and risk committee, including advising on the adequacy of financial and other controls and risk management arrangements in the trust. The committee must also direct a programme of internal scrutiny

and consider the results and quality of any external audit

- Appointing a senior executive leader, who will also be the trust's accounting officer
- When a senior executive leader (accounting officer) is planning to leave the trust, the board will approach their Regional Director in advance to discuss their structure and options, including plans for recruitment.

The board will delegate performance management across the trust to the relevant senior leader or relevant committee via the scheme of delegation.

If a Notice to Improve (Ntl) is served by the DFE, this will be published to the trust's website within 14 days of the Ntl being issued, and it will be kept on site until the DFE lift the notice.

All executive appointments will be approved by the board.

The chair of the board of trustees and the accounting officer are responsible for ensuring that their capacity to control and influence does not conflict with the requirements for managing connected party transactions.

The board of trustees will inform the DFE if it suspects any irregularity regarding trust funds and instances of fraud or theft exceeding £5,000 in a financial year.

Delegated powers of the accounting officer

The accounting officer also acts as an executive leader, and is therefore responsible for ensuring that these roles do not rotate so that there is no ambiguity about who is accountable for the financial management and integrity of the trust.

The accounting officer is personally responsible to Parliament, the public and to the DFE for the financial resources under the trust's control. This does not remove the responsibility of the trustees for the proper conduct and financial operation of the trust.

The accounting officer is personally responsible for assuring the board of trustees that the trust is compliant with the ATH and the funding agreement.

The accounting officer is required to advise the board of trustees in writing if, at any time, in his or her opinion, any action or policy under consideration by them is incompatible with the terms of the articles, funding agreement or the ATH.

The accounting officer will advise the board in writing if the board appears to be failing to act where required to do so by the terms and conditions of the ATH or funding agreement.

Where the board of trustees continues to act in ways not in accordance with the specified conditions, the accounting officer will consider the reasons the board gives for its decision. If the accounting officer still considers that the action proposed by the board is in breach of the articles, the funding agreement or the ATH, the accounting officer is responsible for notifying the DFE's accounting officer

immediately and in writing.

Each year, the accounting officer is required to complete and sign a statement on regularity, propriety and compliance, which is submitted to the DFE along with the audited accounts.

Each year, the accounting officer is required to share the annual 'Dear Accounting Officer' letter from the DFE with the trust's members, trustees, chief financial officer and other members of the senior leadership team. They must also arrange for it to be discussed by the board of trustees and take action where appropriate to strengthen the trust's financial system and controls.

It is the responsibility of the accounting officer to demonstrate how value for money has been achieved.

Delegated powers of the audit and risk committee

The audit and risk committee exercises the powers and duties delegated to the board of trustees in relation to the financial administration of the trust.

The audit and risk committee will meet as regularly as necessary, but at least once a term.

The audit and risk committee is responsible for reviewing the reports of the COO regarding the effectiveness of the trust's financial procedures and controls, reporting any findings to the board of trustees.

The audit and risk committee is responsible for ensuring that appropriate insurance arrangements are in place for the trust.

The audit and risk committee will provide advice to the board regarding the maintenance of a risk register.

Delegated powers of the headteacher

The day-to-day financial management of the school and its staff is the responsibility of the headteacher, ensuring that the arrangements for the collection of income, purchasing of goods and services, payments and school assets are in accordance with statutory regulations.

The headteacher will prepare and present a draft budget and present this to the board of trustees for approval.

Management accounts will be reviewed by the headteacher, with potential overspending highlighted to the Accounting Officer, CFO and board of trustees.

The headteacher is responsible for planning, preparing and annually updating a three-year strategic plan in line with the school's SDP.

The headteacher will ensure that all conflicts of interest concerning staff members with financial

responsibility are declared and accurately recorded.

Tenders can be opened by the headteacher when in the presence of another authorised person.

In liaison with the SBM, the headteacher authorises any necessary overtime.

Annual pay awards, including those in relation to non-teaching staff, will be reviewed on an annual basis by the headteacher and recommendations for approval to the board of trustees will be made.

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that full, accurate and up-to-date records are maintained in relation to the school's finances, and that these are available for audit by the external auditor.

Delegated powers of the CFO

The CFO is responsible for the management of the trust's financial position at a strategic and operational level within the framework of financial control, as determined by the board of trustees, maintaining effective systems of internal control within the trust.

School SBMs work closely with the CFO to ensure efficient and effective day-to-day management of the trust's finances, liaising with the audit and risk committee and board of trustees as appropriate.

The CFO is responsible for ensuring there are appropriate division of duties between staff responsible for processing orders, receiving deliveries and processing payments.

The CFO is responsible for ensuring that required information and documentation is submitted to the DfE and DFE in line with the specified deadlines.

The CFO is responsible for ensuring that the trust bank account does not become overdrawn.

The CFO is responsible for ensuring that all income is accurately accounted for and is promptly collected and banked.

The CFO will ensure that all staff members with access to the trust's online banking have the appropriate level of authority and that the correct procedures are followed.

Working alongside the headteacher and the CFO, the SBM will assist in preparing an annual draft budget for consideration by the board of trustees prior to the start of the academic year.

Management accounts are shared with the chair of trustees on a monthly basis and with other trustees on a bimonthly basis.

The CFO is responsible for maintaining a record of all contracts entered into by the trust, including details of payments, quotes obtained and invoices received.

Alongside the COO, the CFO is responsible for the authorisation of all BACs and faster payments.

Delegated powers of the COO

The COO is responsible for ensuring the certification of the payment of salaries each month and authorise any necessary overtime or expenses. Authorising the payment of salaries may be delegated to the Director of HR on a monthly basis.

The COO is responsible for notifying the payroll provider of any matters affecting payments to employees.

The COO is responsible for maintaining the trust's asset and risk registers.

Alongside the CFO, the COO is responsible for the authorisation of all BACs and faster payments.

Delegated powers of other school staff

Designated staff members will be delegated financial responsibility in order to support the headteacher with the maintenance of the financial controls and procedures in operation at the school.

Staff members with financial responsibility are aware of the financial regulations which they must act in accordance with.

The following members of staff are authorised to receive and check goods on behalf of the school:

- Budget holders
- Administrators nominated by the budget holder

SBMs are responsible for checking and certifying monthly statements of expenditure against delegated budgets.

Staff members will notify the SBM of any eventuality that could affect the school's insurance arrangements, such as a school trip.

All staff members with financial accountability are responsible for maintaining accurate and up-to-date records regarding their actions in relation to the school's finances.

General financial management

Where the trust's transactions go beyond the specified delegated authority limits, prior approval from the DFE will be sought, regardless of the source of funds.

The trust will seek the DFE's prior approval for borrowing from any source where such borrowing is to be repaid from grant monies or secured on assets funded by grant monies.

Before the transaction takes place, the trust will use the DFE's contact form to request DFE approval for any transactions beyond the delegation limits.

All trust funds, including those involving credit cards and online banking, will only be used for business expenditure and all balances will be cleared before interest accrues.

All members of the board of trustees who hold delegated powers are responsible for ensuring that:

- There is probity in the use of public funds.
- Spending decisions represent value for money.
- Internal delegation levels are applied within the trust at all times.
- A competitive tendering policy is implemented.
- The Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) procurement thresholds are observed.
- Relevant professional advice is obtained, where appropriate.

The trust will disclose aggregate figures for all transactions of any amount, and separate disclosure for individual transactions above £5,000, in their audited accounts for the transactions outlined in the ATH.

Relevant financial procedures implemented within the trust are outlined in the following trust policies and procedures:

- Pay Policy
- Gifts, Hospitality and Anti-Bribery Policy
- Tendering and Procurement Policy
- Lettings Policy
- Month end check-list
- Budget planning timetable
- Year-end procedures

All special payments that exceed statutory and contractual obligations will be disclosed in total and individually.

The trust recognises that special payments include the following:

- Staff severance payments
- Compensation payments
- Ex gratia payments

All ex-gratia payments will be referred to the DFE for prior authorisation.

The trust has delegated authority to approve individual compensation payments, provided that any non-contractual element is under £50,000. Where the payment is above this amount, the DFE's prior approval will be obtained.

All members, trustees, local governors, employees and accounting officers with financial responsibility are required to record the details of any relevant business and pecuniary interests – relevant material interests arising from family relationships must also be details. This register will be published on the trust's website.

All members, trustees, local governors, employees and their relations, and organisations are responsible for ensuring that their connections to the trust are not used for personal financial gain.

Prior approval of the DFE will be sought for all transactions with connected parties that are perceived as novel, contentious or repercussive.

Prior approval of the DFE will be sought for the following transactions beyond the delegated limits:

- Writing-off debts and losses
- Entering into guarantees or letters of comfort
- Entering into indemnities which are not in the normal course of business.

The trust will always pursue recovery of amounts owed to it, overpayments and payments made in error, irrespective of how they came to be made.

No payments will be made to trustees unless such payments are permitted by the trust's articles of association or by express authority from the Charity Commission and the payments comply with the terms of any agreements entered into with the Secretary of State.

In accordance with the specified authorisation levels in [Appendix A](#), prior approval will be obtained for purchases and payments as necessary, including from external parties such as the DFE and Charity Commission.

All agreements between the trust and an individual or organisation will be on the basis of an open book agreement, including a requirement for the supplier to demonstrate, if requested, that their charges do not exceed the cost of supply.

All agreements between the trust and an individual or organisation will be supported by a statement of assurance from the individual or organisation confirming that their charges do not exceed the cost of the goods or services supplied.

The DfE's '[Get Information About Schools](#)' (GIAS) will be kept up-to-date and the DFE will be notified about any changes relating to governance information.

Monitoring and review

This document is reviewed annually by the board of trustees, and at the next available board meeting where there has been a change in trust management or organisational structure that would impact this scheme of delegation

Any changes to this policy will be communicated to members of staff by the headteacher.

Appendix A - Authorisation levels

Value	Delegated authority	Method
Virements of budget provision between budget headings		
Within in-year funding	Headteacher	
Beyond in-year funding	CEO	Report to the board of trustees.
Authorising purchase orders for goods and services within the agreed budget		
Low - Up to £10,000 (single transaction)	Head Teacher	Route 1: Framework agreement Route 2: Use catalogues Route 3: Get at least three quotes from suppliers
Medium - £10,000 to £40,000	CEO	Route 1: Framework agreement Route 3: Get at least three quotes from suppliers
High - £40,001 up to procurement thresholds	CEO	Route 1: Framework agreement Route 4: Advertise a contract and run a buying process
Over procurement thresholds	Board of trustees	Route 1: Framework agreement Route 5: Run a process compliant with the Procurement Act 2023
Bank account signatories		
Any	CEO, Chair of Trust Board, COO	Two signatories per transaction are required.
BACs and Faster payment authorisation via online banking facilities		
Any	COO and CFO	Two signatories per transaction are required.
Signatories for DFE grant claims and DFE returns		
Any	CEO (in capacity as Accounting Officer); or as required by the DFE	
Authorising non-purchase order invoices		
Any	COO	Via financial software
Authorising purchase order invoices		
Any	Deputy Head Teacher, CFO	Via financial software
Authorising staff expenses		
Any	SBM, CFO	Authorisation to be obtained prior to expenditure incurred
Any	Head Teacher, Head of HR	Via payroll software
Unbudgeted expenditure		
Within in-year funding	Headteacher	
Beyond in-year funding	CEO	Report to the board of trustees.
Banking cash and cheques		
Any	SBM	Cash and cheques kept on the school property will not accumulate above £1,000. Banking will be checked and agreed by another member of staff.
Disposal of assets		

Value	Delegated authority	Method
Up to £1,000	Headteacher	Original cost, maintaining the principles of regularity, propriety and value for money.
Over £1,000	CEO	
Land, buildings and heritage assets	Board of trustees plus prior written approval of the DFE	
Acquiring of assets		
Freehold of land or buildings	Board of trustees plus prior written approval of the DFE	
Writing-off debts		
Up to £1,000	Headteacher	Anything above these limits requires approval by the Secretary of State through the DFE.
£1,001 to £10,000	CEO	
Below 1% of total annual income or £45,000 (whichever is smaller) per single transaction subject to a maximum of £250,000	Board of trustees and the DFE where applicable	
Special payments, including staff severance and compensation payments		
Up to £49,999	CEO	
£50,000 and above	Board of trustees plus DFE approval before an offer is made to the employee	
Ex-gratia payments		
Any	DFE prior approval required	
Novel or contentious payments		
Any	Board of trustees plus prior DFE approval	
Bank cards and online banking		
Up to £10,000	SBM, Head Teacher	Authorisation to be obtained prior to expenditure incurred
Up to £10,000	SBM	Charge cards will be kept in a safe and secure location when not in use. Orders require checking by another delegated authority.
Leasehold or tenancy agreement exceeding seven years		
Any	Board of trustees plus prior DFE approval	
Borrowing		
Any	DFE approval required	
Payroll checks		
Any	SBM, Office Manager, Head of HR	Via payroll software
Payroll authorisation		
Any	COO (or delegated to Head of HR)	
Creation and amendment of suppliers and bank details on finance system		

Value	Delegated authority	Method
Any	Central Team	Independent verification sought from supplier with written confirmation of any changes received prior to alteration within finance software

Appendix B - Separation of Duties

Initiating Officer

A member of staff authorised to approve purchase orders within the authorisation limits (see Appendix A). They should ensure budget provision is available and best value is obtained, by using their own knowledge and experience. The person who signs the order is deemed the Initiating Officer and he/she therefore cannot authorise or certify the invoice.

Authorising Officer:

A member of staff who confirms receipt of goods or services against the official order.

Certifying Officer

A member of staff authorised to certify individual invoices or staff expenses for payment. In certifying an invoice for payment, the Certifying Officer is indicating that all relevant Financial Regulations have been complied with and evidenced in paying the invoice.

BACs and Faster payment authorisation

The Trustees determine two authorisers are required to authorise each BACs or faster payment. The BACs authorisers are as follows:

- Chief Operating Officer
- Chief Finance Officer

Changes to bank mandates

The signatories to make changes to bank mandates are as follows:

- CEO
- Chair of Trust Board
- Chief Operating Officer

Purchase and Payments – Division of Duties

Any member of staff identifies need to purchase, investigates suppliers, cost etc. and completes a purchase order requisition form

Order raised on school finance system by Business/Finance Manager, or is delegated to the Finance Assistant

Order authorised by Head Teacher or CEO as published in the Scheme of Delegation

Order Placed by staff member requesting purchase, Business/Finance Manager or Finance Assistant

Delivery note checked against goods by Authorising Officer

Invoice certified by Certifying Officer

BACs run prepared by Business/Finance Manager, or delegated to Finance Assistant in line with payment terms of invoices

BACs report approved by Head Teacher

BACs authorised by COO and CFO

BACs remittance dispatched by Business/Finance Manager or Finance Assistant