

GREAT OAK MULTI ACADEMY TRUST



GREAT OAK
— Multi Academy Trust —

Financial Regulation Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this manual is to ensure that the Trust maintains and develops systems of financial control which conform with 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 agreement with the Department for Education (DFE).
- 1.2 The MAT must comply with the principles of financial control outlined in the academies guidance published by the DFE. This manual expands on that and provides detailed information on the academy's accounting procedures and system manual and shall be read by all staff.

2. Organisation

- 2.1 The MAT has defined the responsibilities of each person involved in the administration of academy finances to avoid the duplication or omission of functions and to provide a framework of accountability for directors, governors and staff. The financial reporting structure is illustrated below:

2.2 The Board of Directors

- ensuring the annual accounts are produced in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 1985 and the DFE guidance issued to academies;
- authorising changes to the MAT personnel establishment; and
- reviewing the reports of the Responsible Officer on the effectiveness of the financial procedures and controls; submitting an annual summary report of the areas reviewed; key findings; recommendations and conclusions.

The Audit and Risk Committee

- 2.3 The Committee shall be appointed by the Board of Directors and shall include:
 - 3 Directors – to be appointed from those Directors other than the Chair of the Board or Executive Headteacher;
 - 2 independent members appointed for his/her experience and expertise by the Board.
- 2.4 The Audit Committee will have responsibility for:
 - **Monitoring the Multi Academy Trust's overall financial condition**
The Committee will review high level reporting on budgets and any deviation from the agreed annual Budget, the consistency of and any changes to accounting policies and practices, and whether the appropriate accounting standards have been followed.
 - **Monitoring the probity of the financial systems**
The Committee will review the audit management letter and the Trust's response to the auditors' findings and recommendations, and the Institute's risk management systems and reporting,
 - **Monitoring expenditure for probity and value**
The Committee will review the delegation and responsibility for budgets and internal controls including expenditure approval and BACS signatory limits.

The Governing Body

- 2.5 The Governing Body has overall responsibility for the administration of the academy's finances as delegated to it by the Board of Directors. The main responsibilities of the Governing Body are prescribed in the Funding Agreement between the academy and the DFE and in the academy's scheme of government. The main responsibilities include:
- ensuring that any grant from the DFE is used only for the purposes intended;
 - ensuring that funds from sponsors are received according to the Academy's Funding Agreement, and are used only for the purposes intended.

The Finance and Premises Committee

- 2.6 The Finance and Premises Committee is a committee of the Governing Body. The Finance and Premises Committee meets at least once a term but more frequent meetings can be arranged if necessary.

- 2.7 The main responsibilities of the Finance and Premises Committee are detailed in written terms of reference which have been authorized by the Governing Body. The main responsibilities include:

the regular monitoring of actual expenditure and income against budget;

- authorising the award of contracts over £5,000;
- authorising changes to the academy personnel establishment; and
- reviewing the reports of the Responsible Officer on the effectiveness of the financial procedures and controls.

The Headteacher

- 2.8 Within the framework of the academy development plan as approved by the Governing Body, the Headteacher has overall executive responsibility for the academy's activities including financial activities. Much of the financial responsibility has been delegated to the MAT Finance Manager but the Headteacher still retains responsibility for:

- approving new staff appointments within the authorised establishment, except for any senior staff posts which the Board of Directors have agreed should be approved by them;
- authorising contracts between £1,000 and £5,000;
- authorising payments in conjunction with the MAT Finance Manager/ MAT Office Manager or other authorized signatory.

The MAT Finance Manager

- 2.9 The MAT Finance Manager works in close collaboration with the Executive Headteacher through whom he or she is responsible to the directors. The MAT Finance Manager also has direct access to the governors via the Finance and Premises Committee. The main responsibilities of the MAT Finance Manager are:

- the day to day management of financial issues including the establishment and operation of a suitable accounting system;
- the management of the academy financial position at a strategic and operational level within the framework for financial control determined by the Governing Body;
- the maintenance of effective systems of internal control;
- ensuring that the annual accounts are properly presented and adequately supported by the underlying books and records of the academy;
- the preparation of monthly management accounts;
- authorising payments in conjunction with the Headteacher or other authorised signatory and
- ensuring forms and returns are sent to the DFE in line with the timetable in the DFE guidance.

The Internal Auditor

- 2.10 The Internal Auditor is appointed by the Board of Directors and provides an independent oversight of the Trust's financial affairs. The main duties of the Internal Auditor are to provide the Trust and each Governing Body with independent assurance that:
- the financial responsibilities of the Trustees are being properly discharged;
 - resources are being managed in an efficient, economical and effective manner;
 - sound systems of internal financial control are being maintained and
 - financial considerations are fully taken into account in reaching decisions.
- 2.11 The Internal Auditor will undertake a program of reviews to ensure that financial transactions have been properly processed and that controls are operating as laid down by the Board of Directors. A report of the findings from each visit will be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee. Specific guidance regarding internal scrutiny, including recommended checks is available in the ESFA 'Internal Scrutiny in Academy Trusts' on-line document.

Other Staff

- 2.12 Other members of staff, primarily: the MAT Finance Manager, MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant and MAT Officer Manager and budget holders, will have some financial responsibilities and these are detailed in the following sections of this manual. All staff are responsible for the security of academy property, for avoiding loss or damage, for ensuring economy and efficiency in the use of resources and for conformity with the requirements of the academy's financial procedures.

Register of Interests

- 2.13 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 academy directors, governors and staff with significant financial or spending powers are required to declare any financial interests they have in companies or individuals from which the academy may purchase goods or services. The declaration is posted on the website.
- 2.14 The register should include all business interests such as directorships, shareholdings or other appointments of influence within a business or organisation which may have dealings with the academy. 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 director or a member of staff by that person.
- 2.15 The existence of a register of business interests does not, of course, detract from the duties of directors, governors and staff to declare interests whenever they are relevant to matters being discussed by the Board of Directors, Governing Body or a committee. Where an interest has been declared, Directors, Governors and staff should not attend that part of any committee or other meeting.

3. Accounting system

- 3.1 All the financial transactions of the academy must be recorded on the Sage accounting system. The Sage system is operated by the MAT Finance Manager and MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant consists of the following modules:
- Nominal Ledger
 - Cash Book
 - Purchases Ledger
 - Sales Ledger

System Access

- 3.2 Entry to the Sage system is password restricted and the MAT Finance Manager is responsible for implementing a system which ensures that passwords are changed at least every 3 months.

Back-up Procedures

- 3.3 The MAT Finance Manager is responsible for ensuring that there are effective back up procedures for the system.
- 3.4 The MAT Finance Manager shall also manage the disaster recovery plan in the event of loss of accounting facilities or financial data. This should link in with the annual assessment made by directors / governors of the major risks to which the academy is exposed and the systems that have been put in place to mitigate those risks.

Transaction Processing

- 3.5 All transactions input to the accounting system must be authorised in accordance with the procedures specified in this manual. The detailed procedures for the operation of the payroll, the purchase ledger and the sales ledger are included in the following sections of the manual. Bank payments should be input by the MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant and the input should be checked and signed to evidence this check, by the Executive Headteacher / MAT Finance Manager.

Transaction Reports

- 3.6 The Executive Headteacher will obtain and review system reports to ensure that only regular transactions are posted to the accounting system. The report obtained and reviewed will include:
- the monthly payroll audit trail reports (including BACs);
 - the weekly suggested payment reports;
 - the monthly bank reconciliation;
 - management accounts summarising expenditure and income against budget at budget holder level.

Reconciliations

- 3.7 The MAT Finance Manager is responsible for ensuring the following reconciliations are performed each month, and that any reconciling or balancing amounts are cleared:
- purchase ledger control account;
 - payroll control account;
 - all suspense accounts and
 - bank balance per the nominal ledger and cash book to the bank statement.
- 3.8 Any unusual or long outstanding reconciling items must be brought to the attention of the Executive Headteacher. The Executive Headteacher will review and sign all reconciliations as evidence of this review.

4. Financial planning

- 4.1 The academy prepares both medium term and short-term financial plans.
- 4.2 The medium term financial plan is prepared as part of the development planning process. The development plan indicates how the academy's educational and other objectives are going to be achieved within the expected level of resources over the next five years. The five-year timeline links into the BFR submission.

- 4.3 The development plan provides the framework for the annual budget. The budget is a detailed statement of the expected resources available to the academy and the planned use of those resources for the following year.
- 4.4 The development planning process and the budgetary process are described in more detail below.

Development Plan

- 4.5 The development plan is concerned with the future aims and objectives of the academy and how they are to be achieved; that includes matching the academy's objectives and targets to the resources expected to be available. Plans should be kept relatively simple and flexible. They are the "big picture" within which more detailed plans may be integrated.
- 4.6 The form and content of the development plan are matters for the academy to decide but due regard should be given to the matters included within the guidance to Academies and any annual guidance issued by the DFE.
- 4.7 Each year the Headteacher will propose a planning cycle and timetable to the Governing Body 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 by when to make the plan work and keep it on course" and
 - feedback into the next planning cycle – "what worked successfully and how can we improve?"
- 4.8 The timetable will specify the deadlines for the completion of each of the key stages described above. Lead responsibility for the completion of each of the stages will be assigned by the Headteacher.
- 4.9 The completed development plan will include detailed objectives for the coming academic year and outline objectives for the following two years. The plan should also include the estimated resource costs, both capital and revenue, associated with each objective and success criteria against which achievement can be measured.
- 4.10 For each objective the lead responsibility for ensuring progress is made towards the objective will be assigned to the Headteacher. The Headteacher should monitor performance against the defined success criteria throughout the year and report to the Finance and Premises Committee on a quarterly basis. The Finance and Premises Committee will report to the Governing Body if there is a significant divergence from the agreed plan and will recommend an appropriate course of action.

Annual Budget

- 4.11 The Headteacher is responsible for preparing and obtaining approval for the annual budget from the Board of Directors.
- 4.12 The approved budget must be submitted to the DFE by the published deadline each year and the Headteacher is responsible for establishing a timetable which allows sufficient time for the approval process and ensures that the submission date is met.
- 4.13 The annual budget will reflect the best estimate of the resources available to the academy for the forthcoming year and will detail how those resources are to be utilised. There should

be a clear link between the development plan objectives and the budgeted utilisation of resources.

- 4.14 The budgetary planning process will incorporate the following elements:
- forecasts of the likely number of pupils to estimate the amount of DFE grant receivable;
 - review of other income sources available to the academy to assess likely level of receipts;
 - review of past performance against budgets to promote an understanding of the academy cost base;
 - identification of potential efficiency savings and
 - review of the main expenditure headings in light of the development plan objectives and the expected variations in cost e.g. pay increases, inflation and other anticipated changes.

Balancing the Budget

- 4.15 Comparison of estimated income and expenditure will identify any potential surplus or shortfall in funding. If shortfalls are identified, opportunities to increase income should be explored and expenditure headings will need to be reviewed for areas where cuts can be made. This may entail prioritising tasks and deferring projects until more funding is available. Plans and budgets will need to be revised until income and expenditure are in balance. If a potential surplus is identified, this may be held back as a contingency or alternatively allocated to areas of need.

Finalising the Budget

- 4.16 Once the different options and scenarios have been considered, a draft budget should be prepared by the Headteacher for consideration by the Finance and Premises Committee and approval of the Board of Directors. The budget should be communicated to all staff with responsibility for budget headings so that everyone is aware of the overall budgetary constraints.
- 4.17 The budget should be accompanied by a statement of assumptions and hierarchy of priorities so that if circumstances change, it is easier for all concerned to take remedial action. The budget should be seen as a working document which may need revising throughout the year as circumstances change.

Monitoring and Review

- 4.18 Monthly reports will be prepared by the MAT Finance Manager. The reports will detail actual income and expenditure against budget both for budget holders and at a summary level for the Headteacher, the Finance and Premises Committee and the Board of Directors.
- 4.19 Any potential overspend against the budget must in the first instance be discussed with the Headteacher and a referral will be made to the Board of Directors where necessary.
- 4.20 The monitoring process should be effective and timely in highlighting variances in the budget so that differences can be investigated and action taken where appropriate. If a budget overspend is forecast it may be appropriate to vire money from another budget or from the contingency. All budget variances must be authorised by the Finance and Premises Committee. Appendix A details the virement limits.

5. Payroll

- 5.1 The main elements of the payroll system are:
- on-boarding and off-boarding of all staff;
 - payroll administration; and
 - payments.

Staff Appointments

- 5.2 The Governing Body has approved a personnel establishment for the academy. Changes can only be made to this establishment with the express approval of the Board of Directors
- 5.3 The Headteacher has authority to appoint staff within the authorised establishment except for a Deputy Headteacher and MAT staff whose appointment must follow consultation with the Board of Directors. The MAT Office Manager maintains personnel files for all members of staff which include contracts of employment.

Payroll Administration

- 5.4 The academy payroll is administered through Dataplan payroll portal ("Vera").
- 5.5 All staff are paid monthly through Dataplan.
- 5.6
- (a) All new appointments are to be notified to Payroll via Vera. The information is completed by the MAT Office Manager and authorised by the Executive Headteacher or the school Headteacher. In addition to the above, for all appointments, the new staff member will complete a Personal Information Form and this information is submitted to Payroll through Vera by the MAT Office Manager. The original form will be kept in the employee's personal file. All new employees must complete the safer recruitment checks including the Disclosure and Barring Service check.
 - (b) Amendments to an employee's terms of employment are to be notified to Payroll via Vera by the MAT Office Manager and only authorised by the Executive Headteacher or the school Headteacher.
 - (c) Terminations of employment are to be notified to Payroll via Vera by the MAT Office Manager and authorised by the Executive Headteacher or the school Headteacher. Due regard is to be taken of the last day of service, annual leave etc. to be paid / deducted and any special instructions regarding final payment.
 - (d) With regard to staff overtime etc, the Headteacher is authorised to incur expenditure up to the level agreed within the annual budget. Beyond this limit, authorisation can only be made by the Finance Committee or the Governing Body. Claims for additional hours are recorded by staff on a claim form, authorised by the Headteacher submitted via Vera by the MAT Office Manager and authorised by the Executive Headteacher or the school Headteacher. The original form will be kept on file at the school. No additional hours should be undertaken without the prior approval of the school Headteacher or MAT Office Manager.
 - (e) It is the responsibility of the MAT Office Manager to ensure that systems are in place to record all staff contract details and that they are regularly updated to take account of new appointments, amendments and terminations of employment. This will ensure that all information on the school's financial accounting system is correct and will avoid distortion of financial information.

- (f) Any payroll expenses relating to the Headteacher will be authorised by the Executive Headteacher.
 - (g) Any payroll expenses relating to the Executive Headteacher will be authorised by the Chair of Directors.
 - (h) Any payroll amendments relating to the salaries of the Headteacher / Executive Headteacher will be authorised by the Chair of Directors.
- 5.7 Staff absences are submitted to Schools Advisory Service upon 10 days of the absence (sickness insurance) and recorded monthly on Arbor and submitted to Payroll via Vera by the MAT Office Manager.

Payments

- 5.8 All salary payments are made by BACS. Queries regarding draft salary reports are submitted to Payroll via Vera by the MAT Office Manager. Authorisation for the final drafts are approved by the Executive Headteacher via Vera.
- 5.9 The Consortium Manager should prepare a reconciliation between gross pay and estimated gross pay for staff every month. This reconciliation should be reviewed and signed by the Headteacher at the end of each year.
- 5.10 The payroll system automatically calculates the deductions due from payroll to comply with current legislation. The major deductions are for tax, National Insurance contributions and pensions. Dataplan pay these amounts on behalf of the Academy.
- 5.11 Postings will be made both to the payroll control account and to individual cost centres. The MAT Finance Manager or MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant should review the payroll control account each month to ensure the correct amount has been posted from the payroll system, individual cost centres have been correctly updated and to identify any amounts posted to the suspense account.
- 5.12 On an annual basis, the MAT Finance Manager must check for each member of staff that the gross pay per the payroll system agrees to the contract of employment held on the personnel file.

6. Special Payments

- 6.1 Certain transactions by the Trust may fall outside its usual planned range of activity, and may exceed statutory and contractual obligations. HM Treasury refers to these as special payments, (see annex 4.13 of Managing Public Money), and are subject to greater control than other payments. They include:
- staff severance payments
 - compensation payments
 - ex gratia payments

Special staff severance payments

- 6.2 If the Trust is considering making a staff severance payment above statutory or contractual entitlements, it **will** consider the following issues before making a binding commitment:
- that the proposed payment is in the interests of the Trust
 - whether such a payment is justified, based on a legal assessment of the chances of the Trust successfully defending the case at employment tribunal. If there is a

significant prospect of losing the case a settlement may be justified, especially if the costs incurred in maintaining a defence are likely to be high. Where a legal assessment suggests that the Trust is likely to be successful, a settlement should not be offered

- if the settlement is justified, the Trust would need to consider the level of settlement. This **must** be less than the legal assessment of what the relevant body (e.g. an employment tribunal) is likely to award

6.2.1 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 be successful in an employment tribunal because of employment law procedural errors. In the case of poor performance, an acceptable comparison would be the time and cost of taking someone through performance management and capability procedures.

6.2.2 The Trust's Board of Directors has delegated authority to approve individual staff severance payments provided any non-statutory/non-contractual element is under £50,000 gross (i.e. before income tax or other deductions). Where the Trust is considering a non-statutory/non-contractual payment of £50,000 or more, (gross, before deductions), ESFA's approval **must** be obtained before the Trust makes any binding offer to staff.

6.2.3 The Trust will demonstrate value for money by applying the same level of scrutiny to a payment under £50,000 as if it were over the £50,000 delegation and have a business case justifying the settlement. Settlements **will** not be accepted unless they satisfy the conditions in the Academy Trust Handbook and in the ESFA's guidance.

Use of confidentiality clauses

6.3 The Trust will ensure that the use of confidentiality clauses associated with staff severance payments do not prevent an individual's right to make disclosures in the public interest (whistleblowing) under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Compensation payments

6.4.1 Compensation payments provide redress for loss or injury, for example personal injuries, traffic accidents or damage to property. The Trust will base its decision on a careful appraisal of the facts, including legal advice where relevant, and ensure that value for money will be achieved.

6.4.2 The Trust's board of directors has delegated authority to approve individual compensation payments provided any non-statutory/non-contractual element is under £50,000. Where the Trust is considering a non-statutory/non-contractual payment of £50,000 or more ESFA's approval **must** be obtained.

6.4.3 The Trust's board of directors will consider whether cases reveal concerns about the effectiveness of internal control systems, and take steps to put failings right.

Ex gratia payments

6.5 Ex gratia transactions **will** always be referred to ESFA for approval. HM Treasury approval may also be needed. If there is any doubt about a proposed transaction, the Trust will seek ESFA advice.

7. Purchasing

- 7.1 The Trust wants to achieve the best value for money from all our purchases. This means they want to get what they need in the correct quality, quantity and time at the best price possible. A large proportion of their purchases will be paid for with public funds and they need to maintain the integrity of these funds by following the general principles of:
- **Probity**, it must be demonstrable that there is no corruption or private gain involved in the contractual relationships of the academy;
 - **Accountability**, the academy is publicly accountable for its expenditure and the conduct of its affairs;
 - **Fairness**, that all those dealt with by the academy are dealt with on a fair and equitable basis.
 - **Related Parties**, any such transactions must be notified to the DfE.

Routine Purchasing

- 7.2 Most orders must be made, or confirmed, in writing using an official internal order form, stocks of which are held in the School Office and online in the All Staff Teams folder. These orders must be forwarded to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will check to ensure adequate budgetary provision exists before signing the order. Please refer to Appendix B – Purchase Order Requirements for details of when an order form and purchase order should be raised.
- 7.3 Non-standard orders may be placed without an order form / purchase order. This can only be carried out by the MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant, MAT Finance Manager, MAT Office Manager and Headteachers. Please refer to Appendix B – Purchase Order Requirements for details of when a purchase is exempt from an order form / purchase order.
- 7.4 The Headteacher can authorise purchases up to £5,000. For purchases over £2,000, a comparison to current supplier costs will be sought. For purchases of £5,000 and above three supplier quotes will be obtained. Further quotes can be obtained at any time if they are deemed appropriate. If due to the nature of the work or timescale involved the required number of quotes cannot be met, Finance and Premises Committee can authorise purchases or contracts to commence with a reduced number of quotes. The Headteacher, MAT Finance Manager, MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant or MAT Office Manager have the authority to place orders, without an internal order form as detailed in Appendix B.
- 7.5 Purchase orders may only be placed by administrative staff, central staff and Headteacher. Under no circumstances should staff sign up to a free trial or new subscription on the school's behalf or using their school email account without the written consent of the Headteacher.
- 7.6 On receipt the administrative staff must undertake a detailed check of the goods received against the goods received note (GRN) and make a record of any discrepancies between the goods delivered and the GRN. Discrepancies should be discussed with the supplier of the goods without delay. Delivery notes should be attached to the Stock Order Form and Invoice.
- 7.7 If any goods are rejected or returned to the supplier because they are not as ordered or are of sub-standard quality, the MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant or MAT Office Manager should be notified. The MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant will keep a record of all goods returned to suppliers and ensure replacement goods or a credit note are received.

- 7.9 All invoices should be sent to the Finance Office for processing. If the invoice agrees to the purchase order raised no further authorisation is required, the Finance team will process the invoice for payment. The invoice is also considered authorised for payment if the items ordered are invoiced within 5% of the order value or carriage and packing has been added to the invoice. Invoices which do not agree to the authorised purchase order or are outside these parameters will be sent to the Headteacher for further authorisation before payment is made.
- 7.10 The MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant will then input details of payments to be made to the purchase ledger and generate the BACS required. The BACS and associated paperwork must be authorised by two of the nominated bank signatories.
- 7.11 BACS payments will be made to suppliers by the MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant.
- 7.13 All direct debits to be authorised by the Executive Headteacher / MAT Finance Manager and reviewed annually.

Orders over £5,000 but less than £50,000

- 7.14 Any purchase orders over £5,000 must be agreed and countersigned by the Chair of Governors. At least three written quotations should be obtained for all orders between £5,000 and £50,000 to identify the best source of the goods/services. Written details of quotations obtained should be prepared and retained by budget holders for audit purposes. Telephone quotes are acceptable if these are evidenced and emailed confirmation of quotes has been received before a purchase decision is made. This level of purchasing must be approved by the local governing body.

Orders over £50,000

- 7.15 All goods/services ordered with a value over £50,000 or for a series of contracts which in total exceed £50,000 must be subject to formal tendering procedures.

The procurement rules and thresholds in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Find a Tender service are to be observed. Find a Tender, the new UK e-notification service where notices for new procurements are required to be published, is to be used in place of the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) since the UK has left the EU. Government departments and other public bodies are subject to these rules.

Threshold levels from 1st January 2020 per The Public Contracts Regulations (per Annex A)

Supplies & Services (except subsidised services contracts)

Schedule 1 bodies £122,976

Others £189,330

Subsidised services contracts

All bodies £189,330

Works (including subsidised works contracts)

All bodies £4,733,252

Light Touch Regime for Services

All bodies £663,540

Small lots

Supplies and services £70,778

Works £884,720

This level of purchasing must be approved by the board of Trustees.

Forms of Tenders

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

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

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

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

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

- the above methods have resulted in either no or unacceptable tenders,
- only one or very few suppliers are available,
- extreme urgency exists,
- additional deliveries by the existing supplier are justified.

Preparation for Tender

7.17 Full consideration should be given to:

- objective of project
- overall requirements
- technical skills required
- after sales service requirements
- form of contract.

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

Invitation to Tender

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

7.20 An invitation to tender should include the following:

- introduction/background to the project;
- scope and objectives of the project;
- technical requirements;
- implementation of the project;
- terms and conditions of tender and
- form of response.

Aspects to Consider

Financial

- Like should be compared with like and if a lower price means a reduced service or lower quality this must be borne in mind when reaching a decision.
- Care should be taken to ensure that the tender price is the total price and that there are no hidden or extra costs.
- Is there scope for negotiation?

Technical/Suitability

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

Other Considerations

- Pre sales demonstrations
- After sales service
- Financial status of supplier. Suppliers in financial difficulty may have problems completing contracts and in the provision of after sales service. It may be appropriate to have an accountant or similarly qualified person examine audited accounts etc.

Tender Acceptance Procedures

- 7.21 The invitation to tender should state the date and time by which the completed tender document should be received by the academy. Tenders should be submitted in plain envelopes clearly marked to indicate they contain tender documents. The envelopes should be time and date stamped on receipt and stored in a secure place prior to tender opening. Tenders received after the submission deadline should not normally be accepted.

Tender Opening Procedures

- 7.22 All tenders submitted should be opened at the same time and the tender details should be recorded. Two persons should be present for the opening of tenders as follows:
- For contracts up to £75,000 – any two of the following – the MAT Finance Manager, a member of the Senior Management Team and the Headteacher;
 - For contracts over £75,000 - the Headteacher plus a member of the Finance and Premises Committee.

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

Tendering Procedures

- 7.24 The evaluation process should involve at least two people. Those involved should disclose all interests, business and otherwise, that might impact upon their objectivity. If there is a potential conflict of interest then that person must withdraw from the tendering process.
- 7.25 Those involved in making a decision must take care not to accept gifts or hospitality from potential suppliers that could compromise or be seen to compromise their independence.

- 7.26 Full records should be kept of all criteria used for evaluation and a report should be prepared for the Finance and Premises Committee highlighting the relevant issues and recommending a decision.
- 7.27 Where required by the conditions attached to a specific grant from the DFE, the department's approval must be obtained before the acceptance of a tender.
- 7.28 The accepted tender should be the one that is economically most advantageous to the academy. All parties should then be informed of the decision.

8 Income

- 8.1 The main sources of income for the academy are the grants from the DFE and from our sponsors. The receipt of these sums is monitored directly by the Headteacher who is responsible for ensuring that all grants due to the academy are collected.
- 8.2 The academy also obtains income from:
- students, mainly for trips;
 - donations; and
 - lettings.

Trips

- 8.3 Parents should make payments online via Arbor – the MIS system.
- 8.4 The Administrative staff should maintain an up to date record for each student showing the amount paid and the amount outstanding.

Lettings

- 8.5 The school admin team is responsible for maintaining records of bookings and for identifying the sums due from each academy. Payments must be made in advance for the use of facilities.
- 8.6 The MAT Finance Manager or MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant is responsible for issuing invoices to hirers.
- 8.7 No debts should be written off without the express approval of the Governing Body (the DFE's prior approval is also required if debts to be written off are above the value set out in the annual funding letter). Authority has been delegated to the Executive Headteacher to write off individual debts up to a maximum amount of £100.

Custody

- 8.8 All cheques must be kept locked in the Finance Office prior to banking. Banking should take place every week or more frequently if the sums collected exceed the insurance limit.
- 8.9 Monies collected must be banked in their entirety in the appropriate bank account. The MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant is responsible for preparing reconciliations between the sums collected, the sums deposited at the bank and the sums posted to the accounting system. The reconciliations must be prepared promptly after each banking.

9 Cash Management

Bank Accounts

- 9.1 The opening of all accounts must be authorised by the Directors who must set out, in a formal memorandum, the arrangements covering the operation of accounts, including any transfers between accounts and cheque signing arrangements. The operation of systems such as Bankers Automatic Clearing System (BACS) and other means of electronic transfer of funds must also be subject to the same level of control.

Deposits

- 9.2 Particulars of any deposit must be entered on a copy paying-in slip, counterfoil or listed in a supporting book. The details should include:
- the amount of the deposit and
 - a reference, such as the number of the receipt or the name of the debtor.

Payments and withdrawals

- 9.3 All cheques and other instruments (including inter-company bank transfers) authorising withdrawal from academy bank accounts must bear the signatures of two of the following authorised signatories:
- Chair of Directors;
 - Headteacher;
 - Member of Senior Management Team;
 - MAT Finance Manager;
 - MAT Office Manager;
 - MAT Premises Manager and Finance Assistant.

Administration

- 9.4 The MAT Finance Manager must ensure bank statements are received regularly and that reconciliations are performed at least on a monthly basis. Reconciliation procedures must ensure that:
- all bank accounts are reconciled to the academy's cash book on the accounting system;
 - reconciliations are prepared by the Finance Manager
 - reconciliations are subject to an independent monthly review carried out by the Executive Headteacher
 - adjustments arising are dealt with promptly.

Cash Flow Forecasts

- 9.5 The MAT Finance Manager is responsible for preparing cash flow forecasts to ensure that the academy has sufficient funds available to pay for day-to-day operations. If significant balances can be foreseen, steps should be taken to invest the extra funds. Similarly plans should be made to transfer funds from another bank account or to re-profile APG to cover potential cash shortages.

Investments

- 9.6 Investments must be made only in accordance with written procedures approved by the Directors.
- 9.7 All investments must be recorded in sufficient detail to identify the investment and to enable the current market value to be calculated. The information required will normally be the date of purchase, the cost and a description of the investment. Additional procedures may be required to ensure any income receivable from the investment is received.

10 Fixed assets

Asset register

- 10.1 All items purchased with a value over the academy's capitalisation limit of £1,000 must be entered in an asset register. The asset register should include the following information:
- asset description
 - asset number
 - serial number
 - date of acquisition
 - asset cost
 - location
 - name of member of staff responsible for the asset
- 10.2 The Asset Register helps:
- ensure that staff take responsibility for the safe custody of assets;
 - enable independent checks on the safe custody of assets, as a deterrent against theft or misuse;
 - to manage the effective utilisation of assets and to plan for their replacement;
 - help the external auditors to draw conclusions on the annual accounts and the academy's financial system and
 - support insurance claims in the event of fire, theft, vandalism or other disasters.

Security of assets

- 10.3 Stores and equipment must be secured by means of physical and other security devices. Only authorised staff may access the stores.
- 10.4 All the items in the register should be permanently and visibly marked as the academy's property and there should be a regular (at least annual) count by someone other than the person maintaining the register. Discrepancies between the physical count and the amount recorded in the register should be investigated promptly and, where significant, reported to the Governing Body. Inventories of academy property should be kept up to date and reviewed regularly. Where items are used by the academy but do not belong to it this should be noted.

Disposals

- 10.5 Items which are to be disposed of by sale or destruction must be authorised for disposal by the Headteacher and, where significant, should be sold following competitive tender. Any academy must seek the approval of the DFE in writing if it proposes to dispose of an asset for which capital grant in excess of £20,000 was paid.
- 10.6 Disposal of equipment to staff is not encouraged, as it may be more difficult to evidence 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 licenses for software programmes have been legally transferred to a new owner.
- 10.7 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.
- 10.8 All disposals of land must be agreed in advance with the Secretary of State.

Loan of Assets

- 10.9 Items of academy property must not be removed from academy premises without the authority of the Headteacher. A record of the loan must be recorded in a loan book and booked back in academy when it is returned.
- 10.10 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.

Adopted

Adopted by directors (signed): _____ date: December 12th 2024
Review date: December 2024

Appendix A - Authorisation and Monetary Limits

These limits are taken from the financial regulations that were approved by the Directors of Great Oak Multi Academy Trust on: 11.12.2024

Please note that all limits below exclude VAT.

Authorisation Limits

Expenditure Limits

MAT Finance Manager, MAT Premises Manager & Finance Assistant and MAT Office Manager (emergency order) Headteacher Finance & Premises Committee/LGB	Up to £500 Up to £5,000 Expenditure exceeding budget or is from £5,001 to £50,000
Board of Trustees	Over £50,000

Payments Authorisation

Two signatories	Up to £10,000
Chair of Governors (plus one other)	Over £10,000

Virement Limits

Headteacher	Up to £5,000
Finance and Premises Committee/LGB	From £5,001 to £50,000
Board of Trustees	Over £50,000

Writing off bad debts

Headteacher	Up to £500
Local Governing Body	From £501 to £10,000
Board of Trustees	Over £10,000

Disposal of Surplus Stock, Stores & Assets (estimated value)

Headteacher	Up to £500
Finance and Premises Committee/LGB	From £501 to £10,000

DFE approval in writing required for asset disposal of an asset for which a capital grant in excess of £20,000 was paid.

Loans of assets

Headteacher	All Academy assets
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Ordering Procedures

Current Cost and alternative comparison	£2,000 - £5,000
3 Competitive quotations - evidence required	£5,001- £50,000
Tendering procedure	Over £50,000

Note. Purchases over £189,330 may fall under the procurement rules more detail provided in section 7 of this policy.

Investments

To be approved by the Board of Directors

Authorisation Approval Procedures

Personal Expenses and Petty Cash reclaimed through payroll

Executive Headteacher	Chair of Trustees
Other Staff	Executive headteacher

Purchase Card Expenditure

Executive Headteacher or MAT Finance Manager	School corporate card purchases
Chair of Trustees	Trust corporate card purchases

Special Payments

Individual staff severance payment (non- statutory/non contractual)

Board of Trustees	Under £50,000
ESFA approval	£50,000 or more

Individual compensation payments

Board of Trustees	Up to £50,000
ESFA approval	Over £50,000

Ex Gratia payments

ESFA approval	All
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Appendix B – Purchase Order Requirements

The table below defines which purchases require internal Purchase Order Forms to be raised.

Purchase Order Must be Raised	No Purchase Order Required
Commencement of a new contract of any value	Monthly or periodic charges related to approved contracts
Purchase of all goods/services/repairs over £50	All utility bills
Transport & events not funded by parents	Regular scheduled budgeted costs (such as fire checks, services, groundworks)
Annual Renewals where renewal exceeds 5% increase.	Food & caretaking costs up to agreed weekly budget allowance
All unbudgeted expenditure	Urgent repairs up to £500
	Trips & Transport Costs funded by parents