



SCHOLARS ACADEMY TRUST

Fulfilling every child's potential

Top – Slice Policy 2021

Signed: *S.A.T.*

Chair of the Trust

Date:

Top Slice Policy

The Academy's Financial Handbook, states that a Multi-Academy Trust can collect a proportion of the general annual grant funding from all academies to form one central fund. This fund can then be used to meet the costs of running the trust. The collection of a percentage of an individual academies GAG funding for a Trust central fund is sometimes referred to as 'top slicing'.

Scholars Academy Trust will retain a percentage of the individual academies GAG funding. The current funding retained is 3% of the age weight pupil unit generated income.

Scholars Trust will give consideration to the funding needs and allocation of each Academy. There is an appeals mechanism which is described within this document for academies who may feel that they are treated unfairly by the top slice. A statement will be issued to individual academies no later than 31 of August for the next academic year detailing the fund to be retained by the trust. The academies will have a period of 10 working days to appeal.

The top-slice will be used to fund the following expenditure in the four key areas of:

- School improvement
- Leadership support
- Governance support
- Financial support

The top slice funding will support our ambition for all schools in Scholars Trust to provide a "World Class" education for our children by equipping them with the skills and knowledge for them to make a strong contribution to the communities they live in both now and in the future

School Improvement

Our School Improvement service is built around professional respect for colleagues and focuses on enabling capacity within organisations by supporting the following:-

- Curriculum planning
- Collaborative lesson planning
- Enable teachers to share good practice
- Access to joint resources for teaching and learning
- Moderation between schools
- Intervention strategies for children
- SEN audit and review to improve practice
- Subject quality assurance within and across academies
- Performance management advice
- Peer to peer review processes facilitated
- Access to high quality CPD
- Ensure career pathways are developed for individuals

Leadership Support

Our aim is to ensure that school leaders work together to provide the opportunities that our children should expect within our schools. In order to enable headteachers to develop this the following will take place:-

- Support headteachers with school improvement
- Provide support and challenge
- Provide mentors as required
- Support headteachers with statutory obligations
- Provide HR / legal support
- Provide business support e.g. management of land and buildings, health and safety
- Support schools with attendance and safeguarding procedures and compliance

Governance Support

Governors play an important part in supporting the leadership team to achieve the school aims and vision for their pupils. The trust board will assist with the following:-

- Provide clerking support
- Pay for LA governor services
- Support Chairs and vice chairs
- Provide a forum for governors to share good practice
- Provide advice and support for governors on schools matters, i.e. finance, legal, staffing, school improvement

Financial Support

The trust wants all schools to be in a strong financial position to ensure that resources are directed to ensuring pupils outcomes are good at all times. The finance team will support schools to ensure that the curriculum drives the school budget.

- Budget preparation and monitoring
- Statutory accounts and returns
- Financial Training
- Budget planning software
- Financial procedures and policies
- Curriculum costing
- Financial control and compliance
- Internal and external audit i.e. accountants
- Payroll and contract services
- Brokerage of insurance
- Brokerage of other core services as required

- Academy conversion process from start to finish

Overall, we aim to provide efficiencies and economies of scale for our schools to ensure the best outcomes for pupils.

Scholars Trust reserves the right to amend this policy on an annual basis at the beginning of each financial year. Where appropriate the top-slice may be adjusted to reflect the costs related to that financial year; the increasing of services provided directly by the Trust or cost savings generated through streamlining of back office functions.

Scholars Trust will give consideration to the funding needs allocation of each Academy. There is an appeals mechanism which is described within this policy document for academies may feel they are being treated unfairly by Scholars Trust GAG pooling. Any funds remaining at the end of the financial year are retained and carried forward to the new financial year.

Appeals

The academies Financial Handbook states:

'If a company academies principle feels that the Academy have been unfairly treated, they should appeal to the trust. If a constitute academies principle grievance is not resolved, they can then appeal to the Secretary of State, via the EFSA, whose decision is final and who can supply the provisions for pooling'.

Scholars Trust appeals process is:

- The constitute academies have 10 working days (1 September) from issuing of a settlement statement from Scholars Trust to the Academy to appeal.
- Appeal should be made in writing in the first incident directly to the executive head who will consider the appeal and notify the Academy of their decision within 10 working days of receipt of the written appeal.
- If the academy is dissatisfied with the decision from the executive head, they are entitled to appeal against this to the Scholars Trustees Board. A group of three trustees, minimum, from the Trust Board will investigate the original appeal from the Academy and come to the decision and advise the academy accordingly.
- If upon this decision from Scholars Trust, the academy is still dissatisfied with the outcome, they are entitled to appeal further to the Education and Skills Funding Authority. This is stage 3 and the final stage in the appeals process.

This policy is reviewed by the finance committee on a biannual cycle and approved by the full board of trustees.