



**South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust**

# **Reserves and Investment Policy**

Approved by the Trust Board on January 2019

This Policy will be reviewed and revised at least annually and in response to any audit or improvement recommendations.

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## **Purpose**

The policy of the Multi Academy Trust is to carry forward a prudent level of reserves designed to enable capital investment and maintenance, to fund development planning and to be prepared for any other unforeseen contingencies. This policy is subject to any constraints about the level of reserves that may be set by the appropriate government organisations.

## **Definitions**

### ***Restricted Funds Reserves***

This part of the Multi Academy Trust's reserves is represented by the main income for the Multi Academy Trust which is any carry forward at year end of General Annual Grant (GAG), other grant contributions or donations that are received for a specific project or purpose. These funds are restricted for use according to the funding agreement or instructions from donors and are used for capital and operational purposes.

### ***Unrestricted Funds Reserves***

These are made up of the Multi Academy Trust's activities for generating funds, investment income and other donations which are expendable at the discretion of the Trustees to achieve the objectives of the MAT.

### ***Designated Funds***

These are unrestricted funds that have been allocated by the Trustees for a purpose.

These funds are reviewed regularly and approved by the Trustees; they are obtained by designating funds from the unrestricted funds.

## **Introduction**

The Multi Academy Trust is required to apply effective financial management policies and ensure that cash is properly controlled. The Multi Academy Trust should hold a level of cash in reserve that most self-managing organisations would regard as prudent and no more. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) expects Trusts with larger cash balances to have a clear plan as to how they will use them and to be able to demonstrate they have acted accordingly.

There are several constraints placed upon academies in terms of financial management one of which is the inability to borrow funds. This represents a significant risk to the Multi Academy Trust in relation to financial planning and monitoring. One of the ways in which the Multi Academy Trust mitigates this risk is through the effective management of reserves in order to provide alternative temporary funding streams should there be a delay in the receipt of funds, sudden unforeseen increase in expenditure and also to manage the risk and uncertainty of future funding. The Multi Academy Trust may also need to take account of longer term plans such as capital investment, funding maintenance and expansion. Where those costs are considerable the Multi Academy Trust may need to build up reserves in order to do this.

## Level of Reserves

The recommendation from the Multi Academy Trust's auditors is to maintain a level of reserves at 8% of GAG and unrestricted income especially if there is an intention to expand the trust. It is noted that larger MATs hold a level of reserve of between 8% and 12%. A MAT that holds a level of reserve of below 8% would not be considered by the RSC to have the capacity to expand.

The main financial risk to the Multi Academy Trust is that of managing its short-term cash flow effectively. To mitigate this risk it has been agreed by the Trust Board that an appropriate reserves balance would be up to a maximum of 8% of income. Where there is a requirement for additional reserves in order to invest in assets or fund improvement / expansion projects, as per development planning, then this will be agreed by the Resources Committee as part of the budget approval process.

The Multi Academy Trust has confidence that it will meet the required pension contributions from its projected income without significantly impacting on its planned level of charitable activity, it continues to calculate its 'free' or general unrestricted reserves without setting aside designated reserves to cover the pension liability.

## Investment Policy

The Multi Academy Trust will, where possible, use its income in the financial and academic years it is acquired; except for that designated as Reserves. Investment therefore means placing that income in a low risk environment so funds are available when needed and maximising returns by making use of appropriate savings and other investment accounts.

To expedite this, the Chief Financial Officer is authorised to move funds among the Multi Academy Trust's accounts.

Any monies identified for a future purpose with an identified date will be invested appropriately.

The risk, advantages and disadvantages of having all the Multi Academy Trust's funding within one bank will be monitored annually by the Finance Trustee. The Chief Financial Officer will also ensure that the chosen bank is of a minimum of an A rating unless there is a compelling reason for it not to be. Other forms of investment for the Multi Academy Trust's funds will be regularly reviewed and adopted if approved by the Trust Board.