

ALT Central Support Funding Policy 2023/24

Document Control Table	
Author:	COO, Arété Learning Trust
Date of review:	September 2023
Approved by	Finance & Estates Committee – 12 October 2023
Review Cycle:	Annual review



The Academy Trust Handbook makes clear that a Multi-Academy Trust has the freedom to amalgamate a proportion of general annual grant (GAG) funding from all its academies to form one central fund to be used to meet the normal running costs at any of its constituent academies within the trust. Whilst this is often referred to as ‘*top-slicing*’, Arété Learning Trust (ALT) calls this our Central Support Fund (CSF).

The DFE recommend a top slice of between 4 and 10%. For the academic/financial year 2023/24 ALT will retain 5% of constituent academies GAG funding excluding:

- Pupil Premium Funding
- Any academy specific sports grants
- Free School Meals Funding
- Non-GAG Government Funding
- Top-Up Funding for special educational needs (SEN)
- Other self-generated income by individual academies

The Board seek to ensure that transparency, prudence and fairness underpin its planning in welcoming new partner schools. ALT will give consideration to the funding needs and allocations of each constituent academy. There is an appeals mechanism which is described within this policy document for academies who may feel that they are being treated unfairly by the ALT CSF.

ALT will bear the cost of its own due diligence processes, travel, time and training etc. and expect prospective partner schools to use the conversion grant to meet their initial legal costs and other expenses relating to conversion.

The CSF will be used to fund the following expenditure on behalf of the academies within ALT:

- External Audit Fees, and Internal Audit (Scrutiny) Fees
- Accountancy Fees (relating to preparation of accounts – monthly and annual)
- ESFA returns
- Bank charges
- Annual actuary re-valuation fees
- School Improvement Support (from the Trust)
- ALT salaries including: CEO, Deputy CEO, COO, FC, HR team, Governance Coordinator, IT Manager & Estates lead
- Trust wide lead practitioners in MFL, English, & Maths
- Early Career Teaching (ECT) support and guidance
- Specialist student inclusion support, advice & access to dedicated staff training via YES@Arété
- Budgeting software
- Estates guidance, support and project planning (Including CIF)
- Health & Safety support, advice and review services
- Admissions service
- Admissions Apps (SLA charge only)
- Agreed CPD for staff including access to The National College
- Free School Meals Eligibility Service
- Governance support & clerking
- GDPR support and DPO services
- Payroll administration and pension returns
- HR & Legal support
- Recruitment support
- Staff Wellbeing support and services
- Employee Benefits (Details available via the trust intranet)
- Marketing support and advice
- Support in training and up-skilling of administration and finance staff to meet academy standards

A statement will be issued to constituent academies no later than 31 August for the next academy year detailing the CSF included by ALT. The constituent academies will have a period of 10 working days to appeal. Separate accounts relating to the running of the trust will be maintained and made available to all ALT academies.

Academies joining the trust will be expected to fund the following from their conversion grant or from any Revenue or Capital reserves held to allow them to be fully integrated into ALT Financial Management systems:

- Implementation of the Financial Management System
- Any legal & HR support costs related to the conversion - including maintenance and upgrades for the above on an on-going basis

ALT reserves the right to amend this policy on an annual basis at the beginning of each financial year. Where appropriate the CSF may be adjusted to reflect the costs relating to that financial year, the increasing services provided directly by ALT or cost savings generated through streamlining of back-office functions. The CSF will be kept under regular review by the Executive Leadership Team, as the Trust's work develops, and recommendations from that body will be considered by the Finance & Estates Committee.

GAG Pooling

GAG pooling can help to alleviate financial pressures within individual academies during periods of fluctuating income and expenditure. In the immediate future, however, ALT will not retain any additional amount in addition to the CSF.

ALT reserves the right to review the relative benefits of introducing a pooling policy on an annual basis at the beginning of each financial year. The Executive Leadership Team will be fully consulted before a proposal is put to the Board. If implemented, where appropriate pooling may be adjusted to reflect the costs incurred in the previous financial year.

Appeals

The ALT appeals process is:

- The constituent academies have 10 working days from the issuing of an ALT statement from the ALT to the academy to appeal
- Appeals should be made in writing directly to the Chief Executive officer (CEO)
- The CEO will consider the appeal and notify the academy of her/his decision within 10 working days of receipt of the written appeal
- If dissatisfied with that response, a principal can appeal to the Chair of the Board for a review of the CEO's decision

Policy Ends

Policy Author: COO, Arété Learning Trust

Monitored by: Mr C Davidge

Next Review: September 2024