

Swift Academies

Central Services and Appeal Process

Accepted by: Board of Trustees June 2018

Approving Body : Board of Trustees

Committee : Finance

Review Cycle: 1 year

Last reviewed: June 2018

Date for next review: June 2019

Relating to all member academies of Swift Academies Trust

1. Aim and objectives

This policy aims to provide transparency in the charging methodology for central trust services and outlines an appeals process to be followed in the case of a member academy's dissatisfaction with these charges, in line with sections 3.10.4 to 3.10.6 of the Academies Financial Handbook.

2. Central Services

Swift Academies Trust provides a number of central support services to its member academies to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the Trust. These services include the salary costs of staff working across the Trust on

- leadership
- standards and data
- finance
- governance
- legal
- marketing

The central trust also bears the costs of legal, financial and statutory Trust-wide services such as internal and external audit, accounts preparation, actuarial costs and insurance.

The costs of all these services are recharged based upon pupil numbers.

3. Communication of charges

The Head Teacher/Head of School will receive details of proposed expenditure and charges to be paid to the Trust for the forthcoming year as part of the budget preparation cycle in the spring term. Final charges will be confirmed to member academies no later than 31 July for the next academic year. Payments are due to be paid by equal monthly installments.

Any over or underspend during the year will be retained and carried forward.

4. Appeal Process

Upon receipt of the annual charge a member academy will have a period of 20 working days to submit an appeal.

- **Stage 1:**

The Head Teacher/Head of School of the academy should in the first instance appeal, in writing, directly to the Accounting Officer. The Accounting Officer in conjunction with the Chief Financial Officer will review and consider the appeal and respond within 15 working days.

Written records will be kept of any meetings and interviews held in relation to the appeal and details of all appeals together with the outcomes will be reported to the Board of Directors.

- **Stage 2:**

Where the Head Teacher/Head of School is not satisfied with the Accounting Officer's response to their appeal, they may have their grievance considered by an Appeals Panel of the Trust. The request for a further appeal must be made in writing to the Clerk of the Board of Directors. An Appeals Panel will be convened within 10 working days of receipt of the request.

5. Appeal Panel membership

The Panel will consist of three members of the Board of Directors who have not previously been involved in the appeal.

6. Appeal Panel remit

The Panel may

- dismiss the grievance in whole or in part
- uphold the grievance in whole or in part
- recommend, if relevant, the revised charges to be paid
- recommend if relevant changes to the methodology of calculating charges

7. Panel Attendance

The following are entitled to attend the panel hearing, submit written evidence and address the Panel;

- up to two representatives of the Academy.
- up to two representatives of the Accounting Officer and Chief Financial Officer.
- any other person who the Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision making.

8. Panel Evidence

All parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position.

All written evidence must be received by the Clerk no later than 5 working days in advance of the appeal panel hearing. The Clerk will distribute the evidence to all parties no later than 3 working days in advance of the panel hearing.

9. Panel Decision

The panel will reach a decision, and make any recommendations within 5 working days of the hearing. The decision reached is final.

10. Notification of the Panel's Decision

The panel's findings will be sent in writing to the Head Teacher/Head of School and copied to the Accounting Officer and Chief Financial Officer. The letter will state the reasons for the decision reached and any recommendations made by the Panel. Details of all panel hearings and decisions will be reported to the Board of Directors.

11. Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

If the Head Teacher/Head of School is not satisfied with the decision of the Appeals Panel an appeal may be taken to the Secretary of State (via the ESFA).