



Reserves Policy

Author	C Bowyer	Source	NNOSS
Approved By	FARR Committee	Status	Committee
Last Review	January 2026	Next Review	January 2027

Details of Policy Updates

Date	Details
January 2023	Removed reserves figure from policy
January 2024	No change
January 2025	Introduction – included sentence on regulatory framework
	Annual Financial Statements – included sentence on pooled reserves
January 2026	Reference to ESFA changed to DfE throughout
	Target reserves changed from no. of months expenditure to % of revenue income, to align with DfE guidance

Introduction

The Trust Board and FARR Committee need to consider the level of reserves the Trust should hold. Levels of reserves which are too high tie up money which should be spent on current school activities. Levels of reserves which are too low may put the future activities of the schools at risk.

This policy complies with the Academy Trust Handbook requirements, the Charity Commission guidance on reserves and the Trust's funding agreement and articles of association.

Purpose

The purpose of the reserves policy is to ensure the stability of the Trust's organisational operations, so that it has the ability to adjust quickly to changes in financial circumstances, such as large unbudgeted expenditure, cyclical maintenance and working capital. Specific purposes include:

- Assists in strategic planning by considering how new projects or activities will be funded.
- Informs the budget process by considering whether reserves need to be used during the financial year or built up for future projects.
- Informs the budget and risk management process by identifying any uncertainty in future income streams.
- Cash flow management; to protect against cash flow issues at school and Trust level.

During the financial year

The level of the reserves will be monitored throughout the year as part of the normal budget monitoring process. Trustees will identify:

- When reserves are drawn on, so that they understand the reasons for this and confirm the use is consistent with the purpose of the reserve policy. Consideration will be given to what corrective action, if any, needs to be taken.
- When reserve levels rise significantly above target so that they understand the reasons and can consider the corrective action, if any that needs to be taken.
- Where the reserves level is below target and consider whether this is due to short term circumstance or longer-term reasons which might trigger a broader review of finances and reserves.

Definition of reserves

- Restricted Reserves; are those funds received by the school either from its main DfE funding grant, other grant contributions or donations that are received for a specific project or purpose. These funds are restricted for use according to the funding agreements or donors' instructions.
- Unrestricted Reserves; these are derived from the school's activities for generating funds, for example hiring's and donations which are expendable at the discretion of the Trustees to achieve the objectives of the school.
- Designated Funds; these are unrestricted funds that have been allocated by the Trustees for a particular purpose.

Development of the Trust's reserves policy

When considering an appropriate level of reserves, the trustees will consider factors identified in the Trust Risk Register and also:

- The risk of unforeseen emergency or other unexpected need for funds.
- Covering unforeseen day-to-day operational costs, for example employing temporary staff to cover a long-term sick absence.
- A fall in a source of income, such as lettings or SLA's.
- Planned commitments, or designations, that cannot be met by future income alone, for example plans for a major capital project.
- The need to fund potential deficits in a cash budget, for example money may need to be spent before a funding grant is received.

The financial risks identified determine the amount of reserves the Trust targets to hold.

Annual financial statements

The reserves policy disclosed in the trustees' annual report will include the following information:

- Why reserves are held.
- What amount/range of reserves is considered appropriate for the academy trust.
- What the level of reserves is at the year end.
- How the academy trust is going to achieve the desired level or range of reserves.
- How often the reserves policy is reviewed.

Reserves will be centrally pooled. Designated funds will be determined by Trustees, with reference to the trust's strategic priorities, as part of the annual accounts preparation process.

Target range of reserves for the financial year

The Trustees have decided that the reserves level for the current financial year will be equivalent to a minimum of 18% of total revenue income based on analysis of the points above and the likelihood that they may occur and the amount of funding that would be required if they did. The level of reserve will be reviewed and set on an annual basis as part of the budget setting plan.

Monitoring and evaluation of the policy

This policy will be monitored regularly for any changes in legislation or directions from the DFE which may have an effect and evaluated in the light of any comments made by the DFE, auditors and any other interested parties.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that any new or changed legislation is adhered to.