
EQUALS TRUST
(A company limited by guarantee)

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

EQUALS TRUST
(A company limited by guarantee)

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REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Members	S Kingan D Blackman (resigned 23 October 2024) A Demetriou A Beaumont A Devlin S Bates (appointed 23 October 2024)
Trustees	P Foale, Chair B Walker P Palmer, CEO and Accounting Officer L Williams, Vice Chair C Keast J Panagamuwa J Hughes (resigned 13 May 2024) B Kent V Hayles P Unsworth R Bines
Company registered number	10279606
Company name	Equals Trust
Principal and registered office	c/o Keyworth Primary and Nursery School Nottingham Road Keyworth Nottingham NG12 5FB
Company secretary	C Cox
Chief executive officer	P Palmer
Senior management team	P Palmer, CEO C Willimsky, CFO P Cresswell, Executive Head Teacher J Cook, Executive Head Teacher L Noble, Head Teacher L Jamson, Head Teacher J Dunderdale, Head Teacher L Barbuti, Head Teacher G Kenny, Head Teacher L Toom, Head Teacher K Smith, Head Teacher J Evelyn, Head Teacher J Crone, Head Teacher (joined 01/12/2023)

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REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Independent auditors	Forvis Mazars LLP Park View House 58 The Ropewalk Nottingham NG1 5DW
Bankers	Lloyds Banking Group 12-16 Lower Parliament Street Nottingham NG1 3DA
Solicitors	Stone King LLP 1 Aire Street Leeds LS1 4PR

EQUALS TRUST
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TRUSTEES' REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

The Trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements and auditor's report of the charitable company for the year 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024. The annual report serves the purposes of both a Trustees' report and a directors' report under company law.

Equals Trust ('the Trust') operated thirteen primary schools across the boroughs of Rushcliffe and Gedling within Nottinghamshire in the year ending 31 August 2024. It has pupil capacity of 4,240 and had a roll of 3,953 in the Autumn 2024 school census as two additional schools joined the Trust between the end of the year and the date of the census.

Structure, governance and management

a. Constitution

The academy trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity.

The charitable company's Memorandum and Articles of Association are the primary governing documents of the Trust.

The Trustees of Equals Trust are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law.

The charitable company operates as Equals Trust .

Details of the Trustees who served during throughout the year and to the date these accounts are approved are included in the Reference and administrative details on page 1.

b. Members' liability

Each member of the charitable company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the charitable company in the event of it being wound up while they are a member, or within one year after they cease to be a member, such amount as may be required, not exceeding £10, for the debts and liabilities contracted before they ceased to be a member.

c. Trustees' indemnities

The Academy Trust has opted into the Department of Education's Risk Protection Arrangement ('RPA'), an alternative to insurance where UK government funds cover losses that arise. The scheme protects Members, Trustees Officers from claims arising from negligent acts, errors or omissions occurring whilst on Academy Trust business. The scheme provides unlimited cover.

d. Method of recruitment and appointment or election of Trustees

The company's Memorandum and Articles are the primary governing documents of the Trust. Members of the Trust are nominated by the Secretary of State for Education.

The Articles of Association allow the members to appoint, by ordinary resolution, up to 10 Trustees. Trustees are appointed by members using a skills-based assessment in order that the Board achieves a balanced skill set that will aid the development of the Trust.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Structure, governance and management (continued)

e. Policies adopted for the induction and training of Trustees

The Compliance Manager manages the induction and training for new Trustees and ensures that all Trustees have access to all relevant information in order to adequately fulfil their role.

The Compliance Manager provides reports to LGBs following every Trust Board meeting. Matters referred from LGBs to the Trust Board are presented to Trustees by the Compliance Manager, providing a secure communication channel between layers of governance.

Termly briefings for Headteachers and Chairs of LGBs informs them of their responsibilities for the term.

f. Organisational structure

The management structure consists of four levels: the Members, Trustees and the appointed committees, the senior management of the Trust and Local Governing Bodies. The aim of this structure is to devolve responsibility to those best able to make the appropriate decisions.

The Trustees support the senior management team and the community in the running of each member school, and do not run the Trust on a day-to-day basis. Along with this governance role the trustees are there to set the strategic direction and fulfil their statutory obligations by setting policies and procedures and to be ambassadors for the Trust and its member schools and what they are trying to achieve.

The senior management team, referred to as the Leadership Group, is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of Equals Trust. In line with the latest edition of the Academies Financial Handbook, the CEO has delegated financial responsibilities to the Chief Finance Officer (CFO), governance responsibilities to the Compliance Manager and teaching and learning responsibilities to the Leadership Group, which consists of Executive Head Teachers and Head Teachers from each member academy.

Responsibilities and authorities are delegated to the local governing bodies via the Trust's scheme of delegation. The governors of each member academy are primarily responsible for monitoring the performance of their academy, focusing on academy standards and leadership.

g. Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of key management personnel

The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for pay and remuneration of key management personnel and has developed a Trust wide process and policy to ensure this is carried out fairly.

EQT has removed performance related pay from September 2024 but the process of ensuring suitable rigor and oversight of performance remains. A robust policy and collaborative working for appraisal was introduced and will be evaluated over the course of 2024/25.

The Trust HR Committee has delegated responsibilities in relation to Trust wide setting of pay and remuneration of key management personnel.

The Board of Directors appoints all non-teaching members of the leadership group and remuneration is set on appointment. The Board seeks relevant human resource advice where necessary to ensure that remuneration is appropriate and in line with the principles of best value and the latest edition of the Academies Financial Handbook.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Structure, governance and management (continued)

The Head Teachers or Executive Head Teacher appoint senior leaders in each member academy, in conjunction with local governing body approval.

Head Teachers or Executive Head Teachers have their pay determined under the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions document and related to the Individual Salary Range attached to their school, any other relevant factors including the requirements of TUPE.

h. Trade union facility time

Relevant union officials

Number of employees who were relevant union officials during the year	-
Full-time equivalent employee number	-

Percentage of time spent on facility time

Percentage of time	Number of employees
0%	-
1%-50%	-
51%-99%	-
100%	-

Percentage of pay bill spent on facility time	£000
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Total cost of facility time	-
Total pay bill	18,389
Percentage of total pay bill spent on facility time	- %

Paid trade union activities

Time spent on paid trade union activities as a percentage of total paid facility time hours	-	%
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i. Related parties and other connected charities and organisations

Each member academy works collaboratively with the local authority, other academy trusts, maintained schools, community organisations and parents to deliver better outcomes of all pupils.

Equals Trust owns 100% of the share capital of Equals Trading Company Ltd. This company was dormant for the year ending 31 August 2024.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Structure, governance and management (continued)

j. Engagement with employees (including disabled persons)

The Academy Trust's policy is to consult and discuss with employees, through unions, staff councils and at meetings and conferences, matters likely to affect employees' interests. Information about matters of concern to employees is given through information bulletins, reports and meetings which seek to achieve a common awareness on the part of all employees of the financial and economic factors affecting the Academy Trust's performance.

During employment, the Trust seeks to work with employees, taking into account their personal circumstances, to ensure appropriate training, development and advanced employment opportunities are available to them to reach their full potential.

Applications for employment by disabled persons are always fully considered, bearing in mind the aptitudes of the applicant concerned. In the event of members of staff becoming disabled, every effort is made to ensure that their employment within the Academy Trust continues and that the appropriate training and suitable adjustments are arranged. It is the Academy Trust's policy that the training, career development and promotion of disabled persons should, as far as possible, be identical to that of other employees.

The academy trust has implemented a number of detailed policies in relation to all aspects of personnel matters including:

- Equality and Diversity policy
- Anti Bullying policy
- Disciplinary policy
- Grievance policy
- Volunteers' policy
- Health & safety policy
- Wellbeing strategy

In accordance with the academy trust's equal opportunities policy, the academy trust has long-established fair employment practices in the recruitment, selection, retention and training of disabled staff.

Full details of these policies are available from the academy trust's offices.

k. Engagement with suppliers, customers and others in a business relationship with the academy trust

Please see Promoting Success section.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Objectives and activities

a. Objects and aims

Equals Trust is a primary phase multi-academy trust based on the principle of equality, founded with the aim of allowing member schools to maintain their ethos and unique identities within a tight local network, with strong mutual accountability, shared support services and a strong collaborative approach to staff development and school improvement.

We work collaboratively together with a clear purpose and direction, where:

- teaching and learning are at the centre of all we do;
- children enjoy, and are engaged in, a curriculum that challenges and excites them;
- we develop responsible citizens who value diversity;
- we ensure a culture of high expectations amongst all our children;
- children value themselves and each other, developing the self-confidence and resilience to face future challenges; and
- contributions made by all stakeholders are valued.

We work effectively in school partnerships to enhance our provision by:

- extending the learning opportunities and activities for pupils;
- enriching the curriculum through partnership working and shared resources;
- enabling the greater sharing of excellent teaching and learning;
- enhancing the professional development of teaching and support staff;
- building mutual support and accountability for Head Teachers and Governors; and
- securing cost and resource efficiencies through joint commissioning.

What makes Equals Trust distinctive?

- Equals is equal, created by Head Teachers.
- The right balance on the continuum between autonomy and control.
- Support and development without control; for example, a Reserves policy and an Asset Management Plan that recognises individual school need.
- EQT is proactive and not reactive, by developing positive relationships, good practice and good communication; for example, month end finance meetings, well-being strategy, open and honest school improvement, IT scheme.
- Schools are still called Primaries and remain distinctive to their communities.
- All schools have chosen to join Equals Trust.
- As a Leadership Group, Head Teachers shape the strategic development of Equals Trust, they are part of the governance.
- The emphasis is on collaborative working; there is a 1% budget for teaching and learning.

Quotes from Head Teachers

- 'What it isn't is what makes it attractive.'
- 'Schools can get on with being schools and Head Teachers can get on with being Head Teachers, but with a great level of support.'
- 'We live and work by the same values and so we have ownership of the trust we believe in what we do.'

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Objectives and activities (continued)

During the year ending 31 August 2024, the principal activity of the charitable company was the operation of 13 primary phase academies across the Rushcliffe and Gedling areas of Nottinghamshire. In operating these academies, the charitable company entered into a series of funding agreements with the Secretary of State for Education. The agreements specify, amongst other things, the basis for admitting students to the academies, the catchment areas from which the students are drawn and that the curriculum should develop the substance of the national curriculum.

b. Objectives, strategies and activities

After achieving the aim of our second phase of growth to 12 school or 3,300 pupils, whilst maintaining the Trust ethos, vision and values, we have grown to 15 schools with 4 more schools in the process of joining. Equals Trust has grown in a planned and manageable way to maximise economies of scales, efficiencies in working practices, local collaboration, and access to funding that enhances the high standards of education of pupils currently within the Trust. However, the changes in the governments approach to a variety of funding areas, for example, TCaF, the schools' conversion grant and other staffing funding agreements, has created unexpected financial pressures which have been and remain challenging.

Our Trust model has been proven successful and represents a significant opportunity for like-minded schools to share in the benefit of our genuinely collaborative approach. This model gives us a genuine USP within the local area.

This further growth included building capacity in the Executive Team, however with the changes in finance and despite the Trust being already regarded as strong and effective, retaining and increasing the Executive Teams capacity has proved to be very difficult. The government's ideal for a healthy trust to include 7,000 pupils led to the expectation that further growth would build a stronger platform to deliver innovative and successful developments in education to the benefit of children in our schools. We still try to ensure the future security of the Trust and ensure that management structures are sufficient to support our growth to the schools we are already committed to. Educational standards have remained strong, financial and governance procedures continue to allow clarity at Board level to allow Directors to fulfil their responsibilities.

The Trust's thirteenth school, Netherfield Primary School joined on 1st December 2023 and has been followed by Sutton Bonington Primary School on 1st September 2024 and Normanton-on-Soar Primary School on 1st October 2024. Three more primary schools are due to join the Trust during the next year and a further school has applied, taking us to 19 schools. The aim our third phase of growth is 24 schools, this would trigger a review of our overall philosophy including organisation and structures if this milestone was to be reached.

Our central team has been expanded to accommodate this growth. The next stage of growth is a very important one and we need to make the most of all opportunities open to us. Equals Trust believes it has a responsibility to share the good practice it is developing beyond the existing Trust schools and to further increase the provision and opportunities for the children in our care. The Trust is open to all opportunities presented to it and will consider the benefits they offer.

To accommodate further expansion, the Trust has implemented new strategies for finance, estates, technologies and procurement which enables Equals Trust to grow effectively. The organisation of the management and leadership structures, including the Leadership Group and governance, also ensure the ongoing integrity of the Trust.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Objectives and activities (continued)

c. Public benefit

The objects of Equals Trust are to advance for the public benefit in the United Kingdom, in particular but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, by establishing, maintaining, carry on, managing and developing schools offering a broad and balanced curriculum or education. Equals Trust will promote for the benefit of such inhabitants or the areas in which the academies are situated the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need for such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity of disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances or for the public at large in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of the said inhabitants. The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefits, "Charities and Public Benefit".

d. Employees and disabled persons

The Trustees recognise that equal opportunities must be an integral part of good practice within the workplace. The Trust aims to establish equal opportunity in all areas of its activities including creating a working environment in which the contribution and needs of all people are fully valued.

Lifts, ramps and accessible toilets are installed and door widths are adequate to enable wheelchair access to all main areas of the Trust estate where possible. The policy of the Trust is to support recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities. The Trust does this by adapting the physical environment, by making resources available and through training and continuing professional development where these are reasonable to do so. The Trust has inherited a large estate from the Local Authority with significant legacy issues in some areas, as such accessibility will form a crucial part of the Trust's own strategic estate management plan.

Strategic report

Achievements and performance

The Trust provided education for 3,734 primary school aged children in Nottinghamshire and the quality of education provided by Trust schools was sustained over the year. This was reflected in inspection judgements from Ofsted:

- Abbey Road Primary School – Inspected October 2023 – Good in Quality of Education, Leadership and Management, and Early Years Provision. Outstanding in Behaviour and attitudes and Personal Development.
- Richard Bonington Primary and Nursery School Inspected – December 2023 – Good in all areas.

a. Attainment and Progress

The information below is for academic year 2023/24 and the results are those from the end of this academic year. It must be noted at the stage of publication of this document the results are provisional and unvalidated ones (both national and EQT schools) as they are all that is available.

The performance of all schools in each individual assessment was reviewed by the EQT Trust Board (in July 2024) and used to prioritise support and focus the spending of the trust-wide 1% school improvement pot.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Strategic report (continued)

Achievements and performance (continued)

2024	National 2024	AR	Br	Bur J	CB	Cr	FI
RWM Combined EXS+	61%	73%	83%	58%	47%	76%	73%
RWM Combined HS	7%	6%	15%	16%	3%	10%	7%
Rea EXS+	74%	83%	83%	77%	66%	83%	100%
Rea GDS	28%	36%	34%	23%	9%	28%	47%
Wri EXS+	72%	81%	85%	77%	72%	79%	80%
Wri GDS	12%	19%	28%	30%	13%	14%	7%
Maths EXS+	73%	80%	90%	70%	63%	86%	87%
Maths GDS	23%	28%	51%	28%	19%	24%	33%
GPS EXS+	72%	86%	90%	77%	75%	76%	87%
GPS GDS	31%	52%	66%	42%	25%	31%	47%
EYFS GLD	68%	65%	77%	78%	70%	83%	75%
Yr1 Phonics	80%	98%	93%	92%	83%	100%	92%
Yr2 Phonics	91%	97%	100%	94%	93%	100%	83%

2024	National 2024	Hey	KPNS	Net	RB	RMJ	Tol	WF
RWM Combined EXS+	61%	82%	64%	75%	63%	61%	76%	56%
RWM Combined HS	7%	18%	9%	3%	5%	6%	7%	6%
Rea EXS+	74%	89%	77%	80%	72%	70%	90%	84%
Rea GDS	28%	38%	32%	25%	25%	22%	38%	22%
Wri EXS+	72%	88%	82%	87%	73%	83%	79%	81%
Wri GDS	12%	27%	9%	7%	9%	14%	17%	6%
Maths EXS+	73%	84%	86%	92%	80%	84%	93%	72%
Maths GDS	23%	38%	27%	24%	23%	23%	28%	25%
GPS EXS+	72%	83%	73%	78%	81%	73%	83%	81%
GPS GDS	31%	45%	23%	44%	34%	27%	52%	38%
EYFS GLD	68%	70%	57%	45%	64%		90%	65%
Yr1 Phonics	80%	88%	83%	86%	87%		77%	87%
Yr2 Phonics	91%	97%	86%	93%	96%		97%	93%

School Improvement

The Trust's School Improvement Team continued to deliver the Equals Trust Strategy for Collaborative School Improvement. This includes frequent school improvement visits by members of the team, an extensive range of CPD for leaders and teaching staff and personalised coaching and modelling of leadership and teaching. The recruitment of our two part-time Teaching and Learning Leads has significantly increased capacity to support schools and the benefits of this collaborative work have been identified in self-evaluation by school leaders but also external evaluation by reading hubs and OFSTED.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Strategic report (continued)

Achievements and performance (continued)

Governance

Local Governing Bodies have reported their monitoring to the Trust Board using a consistent format across ten broad areas. A calendar of monitoring and reporting enables the Trust Board to gain an overview of trends and exceptions in standards across schools.

LGBs have consistent clerking and half of all their meetings are attended by the Trust Executive Officer, who provides a secure communication and reporting channel to the Trust Board. The membership of the Trust Board has remained consistent this year, with all Trustees appointed for their skills and expertise.

HR Department

HR has continued to work hard to support Head Teachers and staff with a wide range of initiatives, case work, advice, support and guidance that the ever-changing education and legal landscape brings. This will continue this year with the change of government and the introduction of key employment rights laws.

Wellbeing remains high on our agenda and the Trust Wellbeing Strategy is on track. We continue to provide resources, guidance and practical support to our staff to aid their wellbeing. We have provided mindfulness sessions, access to occupational health, counselling sessions and wide range of other support through our employee assistance programme. The wellbeing Trust group continues to meet regularly and push forward the wellbeing agenda.

The Trust employed four new early career teachers in September 2024 and worked with them through our Trust ECT development programme of CPD and support. We continue to provide this programme to our Year 2 ECTs as well as support for those in their 3rd year of teaching. We continue to provide bespoke support and CPD opportunities tailored to them and their career stage.

The HR Department continues to help Trust schools to work within our policies and procedures and the law to ensure we do things right first time. The HR service supports our schools to achieve what they want to achieve whilst staying within the law, policy and operating with best practice in mind. HR combines strategic visioning and the operational, day to day queries and support with casework. Our work has been aided by the introduction of our new recruitment system, Face-Ed which has modernised our ability to recruit staff using an efficient and professional platform.

b. Key performance indicators

During the 2023/24 year two of our schools received an Ofsted inspection and number of our schools are expecting an Ofsted inspection in the 2024/25 year.

OFSTED visited Abbey Road Primary School in October 2023 and Richard Bonington Primary and Nursery School in December 2023 – we are really proud of what they said about our schools, and especially our children! The comments below have been taken directly from the reports:

- *The school has high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Friendly and well mannered, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In the playground, arguments are rare. In lessons, pupils focus on their work and pay careful attention to their teachers. Pupils feel safe and happy. They are confident that staff will always be on hand to help. As one pupil said, 'Every teacher is kind. You know that you can trust them. (Abbey Road Primary School)*
- *Pupils say that they are happy and feel safe at school. They appreciate the warm and welcoming atmosphere and the opportunities to learn about different subjects. Pupils value the many trips and visits to*

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Strategic report (continued)

Achievements and performance (continued)

local areas of historical interest, such as Creswell Crags. Many of them enjoy participating in sports and arts-based clubs. They like meeting pupils from other schools in the trust at performances and sports competitions. (Richard Bonington Primary and Nursery School)

c. Going concern

After making appropriate enquires, the Board of Trustees has reasonable expectation that the Trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements.

Trustees continue to assess the levels of funding available and the predictions of pupil numbers in future years against the expected rise in costs. The 3-year budget forecast shows an increase in income and costs over this time and that savings will be required to balance the budget and return reserves to a position in line with our finance Policy. Trust revenue reserves decreased in 2023/24 and are expected to decrease further in 2024/25 and savings will be required to return multiple schools to surplus budgets. Plans and options are already being considered to ensure this is addressed promptly.

Trustees are expecting five schools to join the Trust in 2024/25. Following in-depth financial due diligence Trustees expect all schools to have a positive impact on Trust finances. All five schools have some levels of reserves and four of the schools are expected to join with balanced budgets. One school is joining whilst running an in-year deficit, but plans are already in place to address this as it has been caused by a temporary issue. Additionally, the school currently has significant reserves that are greater than the expected deficit.

d. Promoting the success of the company

Under section 172(1)(a) to (f) of the Companies Act 2006, the Trustees have acted in the way which they consider, in good faith, promotes the success of the Academy Trust for the benefit of its pupils and their parents, the Department for Education and the Education and Skills Funding Agency as principal funders and regulators, its suppliers and local wider school community as a whole, and in doing so have given regard to (amongst other matters):

Our educational business relationships and community

With a highly committed and dedicated workforce, the Academy Trust takes great pride in listening to what our pupils, parents and local community want and continues to provide the level of education outcomes and results that they have come to expect. The Academy Trust continues to evolve and to adapt to the ever-changing educational environment, leading to the continued increase in the awareness of the Academy Trust's overall activities and educational performance.

As an educational focused charitable organisation, public benefit is also at the heart of all we do. The details in the "Objectives and Activities" and "Achievements and Performance" section of the Trustees' report above provide full details of the impact of our activities and our achievements for the year.

With respect to suppliers, the Academy Trust's policy for the payment of suppliers is to agree to terms of payment in advance in line with normal commercial practices and, provided a supplier performs in accordance with the agreement, to abide by such terms.

The Academy Trust is also committed to contributing towards combating the threat of global warming by using energy efficient measures to reduce CO2 emissions throughout its buildings, facilities and operations.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Strategic report (continued)

Achievements and performance (continued)

Our stakeholders

In addition to our pupils, parents, suppliers and wider local community, the Trustees also recognise the importance of their relationship with the Department for Education (DfE) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), as principal funders, regulators and stakeholders. The Trustees are committed to the effective engagement with the DfE and the ESFA (and their representatives) and recognise that its success depends on the Trustees and senior management's ability to engage with them effectively and to work with them constructively, taking into account their guidance and best practice initiatives, whilst also working in line with the specific requirements of the Academy Trust's funding agreement and the Academies Financial Handbook.

Our people

The Academy Trust's key asset is its people. It employs over 600 staff, including agency workers, and it is only through the combined effort of this workforce, together with our supporters and volunteers, that we can change the lives of the children under our care. The Academy Trust encourages the involvement of all employees in decision making processes that impact on them directly and further details on our engagement with our people is detailed in the "Engagement with Employees (including Disabled Persons)" section of the Trustees' report above.

Our members

The Trustees are committed and openly engaged with our Members through regular and effective dialogue with them, including an Annual General Meeting. The Members are actively engaged in understanding our strategy and vision for the future, our culture and ethos, our people and our educational performance and standards.

Maintaining a reputation for high standards

The Academy Trust has been in existence for eight years, and is committed to continual improvement, which it achieves in a number of ways, including improvement planning, review meetings, continual professional development, lesson observations, performance management, self-evaluation, data analysis and action planning. The Academy Trust also continually develops strategies to maintain and grow its pupil base, including looking for new schools and academies to join the Trust, and further improve relationships with our suppliers.

The information in the "Achievements and Performance" section of the Trustees' report above provide full details of our achievements during the year and the standards of educational performance we have achieved for all our stakeholders.

Financial review

Review of activities

The majority of the Trust's income is obtained from the ESFA in the form of recurrent grants, the use of which is restricted to particular purposes. The grants received from the ESFA during the period ended 31 August 2024 and the associated expenditure are shown as restricted funding in the statement of financial activities.

During the year, the Trust received total funding of £26,486k compared to total resources expended of £24,390k to give a surplus for the year of £2,096k. The movement on the Trusts general reserves in the year, which excludes depreciation and FRS102 pension adjustments, was a deficit of £333k. This deficit was after a transfer from unrestricted general funds to capital funds of £239k.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
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Strategic report (continued)

The Trust has £46,569k of accumulated reserves carried forward, of which £782k were general reserves (comprising restricted income funds of £0 and unrestricted income funds of £782k).

The local government pension scheme, of which the Trust's non-teaching staff are entitled to membership, remains in deficit of £787k.

Key financial policies adopted during the year cover procurement of goods and services, tendering, gifts and hospitality, expenses and fraud procedures all of which are detailed in the Equals Trust Financial Policies and Procedures. The implementation of Trust wide policies and procedures are review internally by Trust staff and externally by the appointed auditors.

The majority of the Academy Trust's income is received from the Education and Skills Funding Agency ('ESFA') in the form of recurrent grants, the use of which is restricted to particular purposes. The grants received from the ESFA during the year ended 31 August 2024 and the associated expenditure of these grants are shown as restricted funds in the Statement of Financial Activities.

a. Reserves policy

The finance strategy has focussed the schools on their responsibilities to each other and the Trust. Monthly management account meetings support the setting and running of balanced operational budgets that are aimed at developing a surplus. This includes schools who have intermediate pressures on their budgets. Recovery and Sustainability Plans as part of the School Overview reporting, ensures that health and safety and standards in schools are supported, but any deficits are recovered and plans made that ensure a school's financial viability. All school schools Estates and IT are being planned for centrally to take further pressure off the school finances.

The Trust receives SCA capital funding for its programme of capital works. This funding is allocated to the Trust and the capital programme has to be planned within the limits of the funding available. The Trust manages its capital programme with the support of property consultants AMR. Following previous success with CIF bids the capital funding received is sufficient to manage and maintain our buildings and schools are no longer required to contribute revenue funding towards projects.

The Trust's 'free' reserves are its funds after excluding restricted funds. 'Reserves' are therefore the resources the Trust has or can make available to spend for any or all of its purposes once it has met its commitments and covered all levels of planned expenditure. More specifically 'free reserves' represent income to the Trust that is to be spent at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the Trust's objectives but which is not yet spent, committed or designated.

The Trustees review the level of Trust reserves as well as those held by each member academy on an annual basis. Additionally, reserves are reviewed against the Investment and Reserves Policy on at least an annual basis. The Trustees have determined that the appropriate level of free reserves should provide sufficient working capital to cover delays between spending and receipt of grants and to provide a cushion to deal with unexpected emergencies such as urgent maintenance.

The level of funds at the period end, excluding the restricted fixed asset fund; endowment funds and the pension reserve, amounted to £782k. The Trustees consider an appropriate level of restricted general reserves to be between 5% and 10% of annual revenue income.

The Trust is currently holding reserves below the 5% minimum threshold. Plans to make revenue savings and return to an in-year surplus in future years are being prepared to ensure the 2025/26 Financial Year is a return to surplus budgets and any opportunities for in-year savings during the 2024/25 Financial Year will be utilized to

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

minimise the forecast deficit for the year.

b. Investment policy

The Trust aims to manage its cash balances to provide for the day-to-day working capital requirements for its operations. The main purpose of the Trust's investment policy is to ensure there is no risk of loss in the capital value of any funds invested. Any surplus cash balances will be held in an instant access savings account and where cash flow allows fixed term deposits will be utilised to further enhance the interest received on balances.

c. Principal risks and uncertainties

The Trust has carried out an extensive risk assessment based on the Education, Skills and Funding Agency model and a detailed risk register is continually reviewed and updated.

We have identified that we need to remain focussed on our reputation within the local community to ensure the sustainability of all member schools within the Trust and future growth of the Trust. In line with our vision and values, we strive to ensure that education remains at the forefront of all decision making.

Future funding levels are unknown beyond 2025/26 and there is uncertainty regarding overall school funding across the country in the longer term. Additionally, the increased costs due to pay awards and inflation are not covered by the known funding increases over the next two years, a number of our schools are funded at the Minimum Per Pupil level within the National Funding Formula and this will not be increasing by as much as the formula core factors in September 2025, placing further pressure on some of our school budgets. The Trust considers that its current reserves policy will support our schools in the short term and enable longer term financial plans for savings to be implemented.

Failure to comply with statutory health and safety legislation remains a significant risk following conversion and as such the Trust's strategic plan includes the development of a comprehensive estates management strategy to address the inherited legacy issues around land, buildings and infrastructure. The Trust retains external advisors to ensure appropriate steps are being taken to mitigate the risk of non-compliance and specialist advice is sought when necessary.

The Leadership Group is sufficiently experienced and is supported by the Board of Trustees, who were appointed on a skills-based assessment and hold a wealth of professional knowledge. The planned growth of the Trust may highlight areas where more specific expertise is required, and the Trust is committed to proactively addressing this risk. Additionally, the scheme of delegation is reviewed annually to ensure it remains 'fit for purpose' with the delegation of responsibilities and authorities allowing schools to retain an appropriate level of autonomy within a robust quality assurance framework.

Fundraising

The Academy Trust raises funds for specific projects that will enhance the learning experience and environment for existing and future students, where funds cannot be accessed via existing channels such as government education funding. Fundraising is primarily undertaken by staff or parents, no professional fundraisers or commercial participators work with the Trust currently. Fundraising is undertaken in line with the Fundraising Regulator's Code of Fundraising Practice and is monitored by the central finance function of the Trust. The Academy Trust is mindful of the requirement to protect the public, particularly vulnerable people, from unreasonably intrusive or persistent fundraising approaches or undue pressure to donate. No complaints have been received in respect of fundraising activities, the general complaints policy of the Trust would be applicable if so.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Streamlined energy and carbon reporting

The academy trust's greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption are as follows:

	2024	2023
Energy consumption used to calculate emissions (kWh)	2,379,789	1,930,624
Energy consumption breakdown (kWh):		
Gas	1,564,427	1,132,146
Electricity	815,362	798,478
Wood pellets (tonnes)	75	61
Scope 1 emissions (in tonnes of CO2 equivalent):		
Gas consumption	286	204
Wood pellets	4	3
Total scope 1	<u>290</u>	<u>207</u>
Scope 2 emissions (in tonnes of CO2 equivalent):		
Purchased electricity	<u>169</u>	<u>165</u>
Scope 3 emissions (in tonnes of CO2 equivalent):		
Business travel in employee-owned or rental vehicles	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Total gross emissions (in tonnes of CO2 equivalent):	<u>461</u>	<u>374</u>
Intensity ratio:		
Tonnes of CO2 equivalent per pupil	<u>0.12</u>	<u>0.11</u>

The academy trust has used the following quantification and reporting methodology;

- the 2019 HM Government Environmental Reporting Guidelines;
- the GHG Reporting Protocol - Corporate Standard; and
- the 2024 UK Government's Conversion Factors for Company Reporting.

The chosen intensity measurement ratio is total gross emissions in metric tonnes CO₂e per pupil, the recommended ratio for the sector.

Measures taken to improve energy efficiency

Following the previous shock of increased energy prices and reduction in use of heating in 2022/23 we have now seen a return to previous levels of use in 2023/24. During the 2023/24 financial year we have continued with changes to our buildings to increase their energy efficiency where capital funding allows. This year we have completed projects for heating modernisation and switches to LED lighting in four schools, but our funding is limited due to the urgent need to replace the cladding at Keyworth Primary and Nursery School. This cladding project will use a significant proportion of available SCA funding in 2024/25, but additional insulation will be installed at the same time as the cladding is replaced to ensure further savings on heating costs, and energy use, at the school.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Plans for future periods

Equals Trust is based on the principal of equality with the aim of allowing member schools to maintain their ethos and unique identities within a tight local network, with strong mutual accountability, share support services and a strong collaborative approach to staff development and school improvement.

Equals Trust has 13 member schools and has achieved its original strategic milestone for growth. To enable further expansion the current review must ensure that the four current structures of governance, finance, education and estates enable this process to be supported.

With the further emphasis on growth, the Trust has developed its original expansion criteria to address the changes to national guidelines and strategy and the need for the Trust to develop financial resilience and provide capacity to further improve educational outcomes.

Equals Trust believes it has a responsibility to share the good practice it is developing beyond the existing Trust schools and to further increase the provision and opportunities for the children in our care. The Trust is open to all opportunities presented to it and will consider the benefits they offer, including sponsoring schools and opening Free Schools to support local pupil placement.

The Academy Trust strives to continually improve levels of attainment for all pupils, equipping them with the qualifications, skills and character to follow their chosen pathway, whether it is into further and higher education or employment, as well as promoting the continued professional development of its staff.

The Trustees have worked with the Equals Trust Leadership Group, comprising representatives from all member schools and executive team, to establish strategic aims for Equals Trust and its members. The Trust will focus on developing a sustainable financial strategy while implementing a manageable strategy for growth and embedding clear lines of communication and sufficiently delegated authorities.

Member schools will continue to embed the vision and values on which the Trust is established whilst celebrating achievements, encouraging personal development and delivering high standards of welfare for students and staff. A clear workforce strategy, which promotes common employment practices, aided by clear leadership and governance structures and associated quality assurance will ensure that the Trust maintains high standards in teaching and learning across all member schools.

A number of other schools have indicated an interest in joining Equals Trust during the past year and we expect to grow further over the coming years. Equals Trust continues to attract enquiries from other schools locally who are exploring potential Academy conversion.

Funds held as custodian on behalf of others

The Trust holds cash balances on behalf of Rushcliffe School Behaviour and Attendance Partnership. The organisation exists to improve the educational provision in Rushcliffe communities and so is aligned to the objectives of the Trust.

Any balances unspent at the year-end are shown as monies owed to the respective organisations.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Disclosure of information to auditors

Insofar as the Trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware, and
- that Trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

The Trustees' report, incorporating a strategic report, was approved by order of the Board of Trustees, as the company directors, on 19 December 2024 and signed on its behalf by:


Peter Foale (Dec 19, 2024 13:03 GMT)

P Foale
Chair of Trustees

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GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Scope of responsibility

As Trustees, we acknowledge we have overall responsibility for ensuring that Equals Trust has an effective and appropriate system of control, financial and otherwise. However, such a system is designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve business objectives and can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.

As Trustees, we have reviewed and taken account of the guidance in DfE's Governance Handbook and competency framework for governance.

The Board of Trustees has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the Chief Executive Officer, as accounting officer, for ensuring financial controls conform with the requirements of both propriety and good financial management and in accordance with the requirements and responsibilities assigned to it in the funding agreement between Equals Trust and the Secretary of State for Education. They are also responsible for reporting to the Board of Trustees any material weaknesses or breakdowns in internal control.

Governance

The information on governance included here supplements that described in the Trustees' report and in the statement of trustees' responsibilities. The Board of Trustees has formally met 6 times during the year.

Attendance during the year at meetings of the Board of Trustees was as follows:

Trustee	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
P Foale, Chair	6	6
B Walker	5	6
P Palmer, CEO and Accounting Officer	6	6
L Williams, Vice Chair	5	6
C Keast	5	6
J Panagamuwa	5	6
J Hughes (resigned 13 May 2024)	1	3
B Kent, Chair of Finance & Audit Committee	4	6
V Hayles	3	6
P Unsworth	4	6
R Bines	5	6

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for the administration of the Trust finances. The primary responsibilities of the Board of Trustees are prescribed in the funding agreement between the Trust and the DfE and in the Trust's Scheme of Delegation, and include but are not limited to the following;

- a) Ensuring that grant income from the DfE is used only for intended purposes;
- b) Ensuring that funds from sponsors are received in accordance with the funding agreement and are used only for intended purposes;
- c) Approval of the annual budget;
- d) Appointment of the Chief Executive Officer and Accounting Officer.

The Trust has reviewed the finance and governance arrangements against the external audit report as well as 'The 9 Characteristics of a Successful Multi Academy Trusts', which seeks to establish a working definition that categorises the development of each characteristic against found possible stages of maturity; beginning, developing, embedding and leading.

The Board of Trustees reviewed the Trust's governance structure during the year to evaluate its impact and effectiveness. The Board of Trustees has a wide range of skills that contribute to the successful governance of the Trust and are satisfied that the current structure in place is appropriate and effective for the Trust.

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GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (CONTINUED)

Governance (continued)

The Finance and Audit Committee is a committee of the Board of Trustees. The main financial responsibilities of the Finance and Audit committee include, but are not limited to the following;

- a) Initial review and authorisation of the annual budgets;
- b) Regular monitoring of actual income and expenditure against budgets;
- c) Ensuring annual accounts are produced in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act, the Charities SORP and the latest edition of the Annual Accounts Direction from the DfE;
- d) Authorising orders, purchases, payments and contracts as designated in the scheme of delegation.
- e) Authorising changes to Trust personnel;
- f) Reviewing the reports of the internal assurance services and external audit on the effectiveness of the financial procedures and controls.

Attendance during the year at meetings of the Finance and Audit Committee was as follows:

Trustee	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
B Kent, (Chair of Finance & Audit Committee)	3	4
B Walker	3	4
P Palmer, (CEO & Accounting Officer)	4	4
P Foale	3	4
J Panagamuwa	3	4
C Keast	1	4

The Pay and Remuneration Committee is a committee of the Board of Trustees. The main responsibilities of the Pay and Remuneration Committee include, but are not limited to the following;

- a) Prepare, review and submit for recommendation an appraisal policy.
- b) Prepare, review and submit for recommendation a pay policy.
- c) Select an external adviser to advise the committee undertaking the performance management of senior staff.
- d) Support the CEO with the annual report to the Board of Trustees on appraisal arrangements and outcomes.
- e) To moderate pay decisions across the Trust's academies
- f) To determine the outcome of the executive team's appraisal as proposed by the CEO
- g) To determine and manage the appraisal process of the CEO.
- h) To deal with any other matter relating to pay, appraisal and employment as may be referred to by the Trust Board.

The Pay and Remuneration Committee ensure the monitoring of appraisal standards for the CEO, Head Teachers and Executive Team. Consistency of approach is determined by a rigorous analysis of the targets set and the process followed, ensuring that high standards are set, while individuals are not disadvantaged by factors outside of their control.

The committee have determined that there is no excessive pay for the staff members analysed and the Trust is proud of its Gender Pay Gap report.

Attendance during the year at meetings was as follows:

Trustee	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
P Foale, (Chair of Pay & Remuneration Committee)	1	1
P Palmer, (CEO & Accounting Officer)	1	1

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GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (CONTINUED)

Governance (continued)

B Kent	1	1
B Walker	1	1
J Panagamuwa	1	1

The Standards Committee is a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees. The Standard Committee monitor the progress, attainment and absence data across all schools in the Trust. The monitoring of school improvement and development of staff through clearly planned CPD and bespoke programmes developed by the School Improvement Lead are analysed and assessed against the data drawn from standardised tests, teacher assessment and senior leadership and governor monitoring.

Attendance during the year at meetings was as follows:

Trustee	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
V Hayles	2	3
C Keast	2	3
P Palmer, (CEO & Accounting Officer)	3	3
P Unsworth	3	3
W Williams (Chair of Standards Committee)	3	3

Review of value for money

As accounting officer, the Chief Executive Officer has responsibility for ensuring that Equals Trust delivers good value in the use of public resources. The accounting officer understands that value for money refers to the educational and wider societal outcomes achieved in return for the taxpayer resources received.

The accounting officer considers how Equals Trust use of its resources has provided good value for money during each academic year, and reports to the board of Trustees where value for money can be improved, including the use of benchmarking data where appropriate. The accounting officer for Equals Trust has delivered improved value for money during the year by:

- Improving educational outcomes by targeted investment in curriculum areas
- Implementing a lean philosophy that is designed to avoid waste across all levels of the Trust.
- Implementing a 5-year strategic procurement plan, which will ensure all services and contracts are appraised and negotiated.
- Delivering economies of scale through shared and centralised procurement.
- Working in partnership with the Local Authority, professionals and local schools to share staffing expertise and create a sustainable model for continuing professional development.
- Reviewing staffing levels and structures across the Trust to ensure efficient deployment to support an improved curriculum and enrichment activities.
- Receiving regular monitoring reports from the external and internal audit process.
- Obtaining funding for capital projects across the Trust to improve the estates and deliver long-term energy cost savings.

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GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (CONTINUED)

The purpose of the system of internal control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Academy Trust's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The system of internal control has been in place in Equals Trust for the period from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and financial statements.

Capacity to handle risk

The board of Trustees has reviewed the key risks to which Equals Trust is exposed together with the operating, financial and compliance controls that have been implemented to mitigate those risks. The board of Trustees is of the view that there is a formal on-going process for identifying, evaluating and managing Equals Trust's significant risks that has been in place for the period 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 up to the date of approval of the annual report and financial statements. The board of Trustees regularly reviews this process.

The risk and control framework

Equals Trust's system of internal control is based on a framework of regular management information and administrative procedures including the segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability. In particular it includes:

- comprehensive budgeting and monitoring systems with an annual budget and periodic financial reports which are reviewed and agreed by the board of Trustees.
- regular reviews by the Finance and Audit Committee of reports which indicate financial performance against the forecasts and of major purchase plans, capital works and expenditure programmes.
- setting targets to measure financial and other performance.
- clearly defined purchasing (asset purchase or capital investment) guidelines delegation of authority and segregation of duties.
- identification and management of risks.

The Board of Trustees has decided to employ TIAA Ltd as internal auditor.

The internal auditor's role includes giving advice on financial and other matters and performing a range of checks on the academy trust's financial and other systems. In particular, the checks carried out in the current period included:

- Performance Monitoring
- HR Appraisals Process
- Creditor Payments
- Follow-up of last year's recommendations.

On an annual basis, the internal auditor reports to the Board of Trustees through the audit and risk committee on the operation of the systems of control and on the discharge of the Board of Trustees' financial responsibilities and annually prepares a summary report to the committee outlining the areas reviewed, key findings, recommendations and conclusions to help the committee consider actions and assess year on year progress.

The auditors delivered the schedule of work planned and identified improvements to existing procedures and controls and updates to policies. No significant areas of concern have been noted and recommendations will be

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GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (CONTINUED)

The risk and control framework (continued)

implemented.

Review of effectiveness

As accounting officer, the Chief Executive Officer has responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. During the year ended 31 August 2024 the review has been informed by:

- the work of the internal auditor;
- the financial management and governance self-assessment process;
- the review of existing procedures by the Chief Finance Officer
- the work of the external auditors;
- Trustees who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework.

The accounting officer has been advised of the implications of the result of their review of the system of internal control by the audit committee and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

Conclusion

Based on the advice of the Finance and Audit Committee and the Accounting Officer, the Board of Trustees is of the opinion that the academy trust has an adequate and effective framework for governance, risk management and control.

Approved by order of the members of the Board of Trustees and signed on their behalf by:


Peter Foale (Dec 19, 2024 13:03 GMT)

P Foale
Chair of Trustees

Date: Dec 19, 2024


Phil Palmer (Dec 19, 2024 12:58 GMT)

P Palmer
CEO and Accounting Officer


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STATEMENT OF REGULARITY, PROPRIETY AND COMPLIANCE

As accounting officer of Equals Trust, I have considered my responsibility to notify the academy trust Board of Trustees and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) of material irregularity, impropriety and non-compliance with terms and conditions including for estates safety and management, under the funding agreement between the academy trust and the Secretary of State for Education. As part of my consideration I have had due regard to the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook 2023, including responsibilities for estates safety and management.

I confirm that I and the academy trust Board of Trustees are able to identify any material irregular or improper use of all funds by the academy trust, or material non-compliance with the terms and conditions of funding under the academy trust's funding agreement and the Academy Trust Handbook 2023.

I confirm that no instances of material irregularity, impropriety or funding non-compliance have been discovered to date. If any instances are identified after the date of this statement, these will be notified to the Board of Trustees and ESFA.


Phil Palmer (Dec 19, 2024 12:58 GMT)

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P Palmer
Accounting Officer

Date: Dec 19, 2024

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STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

The Trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law, the Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles of the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that in its conduct and operation the charitable company applies financial and other controls, which conform with the requirements both of propriety and of good financial management. They are also responsible for ensuring grants received from ESFA/DfE have been applied for the purposes intended.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Approved by order of the members of the Board of Trustees and signed on its behalf by:


Peter Foale (Dec 19, 2024 13:03 GMT)

P Foale
(Chair of Trustees)

Date: 19 December 2024

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**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO THE MEMBERS OF
EQUALS TRUST**

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Equals Trust (the 'academy trust') for the year ended 31 August 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law, United Kingdom Accounting Standards including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), Accounting and Reporting by Charities; Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to Charities (Charities SORP 2019) and the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023 issued by the Education & Skills Funding Agency.

In opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Academy Trust's affairs as at 31 August 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024.

Basis for opinion

We conducted audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of report. We are independent of the academy trust in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to audit of the financial statements in the United Kingdom, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the academy trust's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

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**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO THE MEMBERS OF
EQUALS TRUST (CONTINUED)**

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and auditors' report thereon. The Trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' report including the Strategic report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Trustees' Report and the Strategic Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the Academy Trust and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' report including the Strategic report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of Trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of trustees' responsibilities set out on page 25, the Trustees (who are also the directors of the academy trust for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the academy trust's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going

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**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO THE MEMBERS OF
EQUALS TRUST (CONTINUED)**

concern basis of accounting unless the Trustees either intend to liquidate the academy trust or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditors' report that includes opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud.

Based on our understanding of the Academy Trust and its activities, we considered that non-compliance with the following laws and regulations might have a material effect on the financial statements: employment regulation, health and safety regulation and anti-money laundering regulation.

To help us identify instances of non-compliance with these laws and regulations, and in identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect to non-compliance, our procedures included, but were not limited to:

- Inquiring of management and, where appropriate, those charged with governance, as to whether the Academy Trust is in compliance with laws and regulations, and discussing their policies and procedures regarding compliance with laws and regulations;
- Inspecting correspondence, if any, with relevant licensing or regulatory authorities;
- Communicating identified laws and regulations to the engagement team and remaining alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout our audit; and
- Considering the risk of acts by the Academy Trust which were contrary to applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.

We also considered those laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the preparation of the financial statements, such as the funding agreement with the Department of Education, tax legislation, pension legislation, the Companies Act 2006, the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024.

In addition, we evaluated the trustees' and management's incentives and opportunities for fraudulent manipulation of the financial statements, including the risk of override of controls, and determined that the principal risks related to posting manual journal entries to manipulate financial performance, management bias through judgements and assumptions in significant accounting estimates, in particular in relation to revenue recognition (which we pinpointed to the cut off assertion) and significant one-off or unusual transactions.

Our audit procedures in relation to fraud included but were not limited to:

- Making enquiries of the trustees and management on whether they had knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
- Gaining an understanding of the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud;
- Discussing amongst the engagement team the risks of fraud; and

EQUALS TRUST
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**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO THE MEMBERS OF
EQUALS TRUST (CONTINUED)**

- Addressing the risks of fraud through management override of controls by performing journal entry testing.

There are inherent limitations in the audit procedures described above and the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of irregularities including fraud rests with management. As with any audit, there remained a risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations or the override of internal controls.

A further description of responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of auditors' report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the academy trust's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the academy trust's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the academy trust and its members, as a body, for audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



David Hoose (Dec 19, 2024 14:16 GMT)

David Hoose (Senior Statutory Auditor) for and on behalf of Forvis Mazars LLP

Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor

Park View House
58 The Ropewalk
Nottingham
NG1 5DW

19 December 2024

EQUALS TRUST
(A company limited by guarantee)

INDEPENDENT REPORTING ACCOUNTANT'S ASSURANCE REPORT ON REGULARITY TO EQUALS TRUST AND THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY

In accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated 28 August 2024 and further to the requirements of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) as included in the Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024, we have carried out an engagement to obtain limited assurance about whether the expenditure disbursed and income received by Equals Trust during the year 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 have been applied to the purposes identified by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

This report is made solely to Equals Trust and ESFA in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to Equals Trust and ESFA those matters we are required to state in a report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than Equals Trust and ESFA, for our work, for this report, or for the conclusion we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of Equals Trust's accounting officer and the reporting accountant

The accounting officer is responsible, under the requirements of Equals Trust's funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education dated 14 July 2016 and the Academy Trust Handbook, extant from 1 September 2023, for ensuring that expenditure disbursed and income received is applied for the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

Our responsibilities for this engagement are established in the United Kingdom by our profession's ethical guidance and are to obtain limited assurance and report in accordance with our engagement letter and the requirements of the Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024. We report to you whether anything has come to our attention in carrying out our work which suggests that in all material respects, expenditure disbursed and income received during the year 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 have not been applied to purposes intended by Parliament or that the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.

Approach

We conducted our engagement in accordance with the Framework and Guide for External Auditors and Reporting Accountant of Academy Trusts issued by ESFA. We performed a limited assurance engagement as defined in our engagement letter.

The objective of a limited assurance engagement is to perform such procedures as to obtain information and explanations in order to provide us with sufficient appropriate evidence to express a negative conclusion on regularity.

A limited assurance engagement is more limited in scope than a reasonable assurance engagement and consequently does not enable us to obtain assurance that we would become aware of all significant matters that might be identified in a reasonable assurance engagement. Accordingly, we do not express a positive opinion.

Our engagement includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the regularity and propriety of the academy trust's income and expenditure.

The work undertaken to draw to our conclusion includes:

Conclusion

In the course of our work, nothing has come to our attention which suggest in all material respects the expenditure disbursed and income received during the year 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 has not been applied to purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.

EQUALS TRUST
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INDEPENDENT REPORTING ACCOUNTANT'S ASSURANCE REPORT ON REGULARITY TO EQUALS TRUST AND THE EDUCATION & SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY (CONTINUED)

Forvis Mazars LLP

Forvis Mazars LLP (Dec 19, 2024 14:16 GMT)

Reporting Accountant
Forvis Mazars LLP

Date: Dec 19, 2024

EQUALS TRUST
(A company limited by guarantee)

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCORPORATING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**

	Note	Unrestricted funds 2024 £000	Restricted funds 2024 £000	Restricted fixed asset funds 2024 £000	Total funds 2024 £000	Total funds 2023 £000
Income and endowments from:						
Donations and capital grants	3	87	-	1,195	1,282	2
Transfer on conversion	3	183	(304)	2,300	2,179	1,563
Other trading activities	5	490	-	-	490	467
Investments	6	10	-	-	10	-
Charitable activities: educational operations	4	706	21,819	-	22,525	18,714
Total income		1,476	21,515	3,495	26,486	20,746
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds	7	171	-	-	171	166
Charitable activities: educational operations	8	871	22,081	1,267	24,219	20,441
Total expenditure		1,042	22,081	1,267	24,390	20,607
Net income/ (expenditure)		434	(566)	2,228	2,096	139
Transfers between funds	17	(504)	265	239	-	-
Other recognised gains/(losses):						
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	25	-	71	-	71	1,075
Net movement in funds		(70)	(230)	2,467	2,167	1,214
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward		853	(558)	44,108	44,403	43,189
Total funds carried forward		783	(788)	46,575	46,570	44,403

EQUALS TRUST
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REGISTERED NUMBER: 10279606

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 AUGUST 2024

	Note	2024 £000	2023 £000
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	14	45,691	43,596
		45,691	43,596
Current assets			
Debtors	15	769	628
Cash at bank and in hand		3,303	3,277
		4,072	3,905
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	16	(2,407)	(2,350)
Net current assets		1,665	1,555
Total assets less current liabilities		47,356	45,151
Net assets excluding pension liability		47,356	45,151
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	25	(787)	(748)
Total net assets		46,569	44,403
Funds of the academy trust			
Restricted funds:			
Fixed asset funds	17	46,575	44,108
Restricted income funds	17	(1)	190
Pension reserve	17	(787)	(748)
Total restricted funds		45,787	43,550
Unrestricted income funds	17	782	853
Total funds		46,569	44,403

The financial statements on pages 32 to 67 were approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees and are signed on their behalf, by:

Peter Foale
Peter Foale (Dec 19, 2024 13:03 GMT)

P Foale
Chair of Trustees
Date: 19 December 2024

EQUALS TRUST
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STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

	Note	2024 £000	2023 £000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	19	(117)	165
Cash flows from investing activities	21	144	(211)
Cash flows from financing activities	20	(1)	(3)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		26	(49)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		3,277	3,326
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	22, 23	3,303	3,277

The notes on pages 35 to 67 form part of these financial statements

EQUALS TRUST
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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

1. Accounting policies

A summary of the principal accounting policies adopted (which have been applied consistently, except where noted), judgments and key sources of estimation uncertainty, is set out below.

1.1 Basis of preparation of financial statements

The financial statements of the academy trust, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared under the historic cost convention in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard Applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024 issued by ESFA, the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006.

1.2 Going concern

The Trustees assess whether the use of going concern is appropriate i.e. whether there are any material uncertainties related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the academy trust to continue as a going concern. The Trustees make this assessment in respect of a period of at least one year from the date of authorisation for issue of the financial statements and have concluded that the academy trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future and there are no material uncertainties about the academy trust's ability to continue as a going concern, thus they continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

1.3 Income

All incoming resources are recognised when the academy trust has entitlement to the funds, the receipt is probable and the amount can be measured reliably.

- **Grants**

Grants are included in the statement of financial activities on a receivable basis. The balance of income received for specific purposes but not expended during the period is shown in the relevant funds on the balance sheet. Where income is received in advance of meeting any performance-related conditions there is not unconditional entitlement to the income and its recognition is deferred and included in creditors as deferred income until the performance-related conditions are met. Where entitlement occurs before income is received, the income is accrued.

General Annual Grant is recognised in full in the statement of financial activities in the year for which it is receivable and any abatement in respect of the year is deducted from income and recognised as a liability.

Capital grants are recognised in full when there is an unconditional entitlement to the grant. Unspent amounts of capital grants are reflected in the balance sheet in the restricted fixed asset fund. Capital grants are recognised when there is entitlement and are not deferred over the life of the asset on which they are expended.

- **Donations**

Donations are recognised on a receivable basis (where there are no performance-related conditions) where the receipt is probable and the amount can be reliably measured.

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.3 Income (continued)

- **Other income**

Other income, including the hire of facilities, is recognised in the year it is receivable and to the extent the academy trust has provided the goods or services.

- **Transfer on conversion**

Where assets and liabilities are received by the academy trust on conversion to an academy, the transferred assets are measured at fair value and recognised in the balance sheet at the point when the risks and rewards of ownership pass to the academy trust. An equal amount of income is recognised as a transfer on conversion within 'Income from Donations and Capital Grants' to the net assets received.

- **Donated fixed assets (excluding transfers on conversion or into the academy trust)**

Where the donated good is a fixed asset it is measured at fair value, unless it is impractical to measure this reliably, in which case the cost of the item to the donor should be used. The gain is recognised as 'Income from Donations and Capital Grants' and a corresponding amount is included in the appropriate fixed asset category and depreciated over the useful economic life in accordance with the academy trust's accounting policies.

1.4 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

- **Expenditure on raising funds**

This includes all expenditure incurred by the academy trust to raise funds for its charitable purposes and includes costs of all fundraising activities events and non-charitable trading.

- **Charitable activities**

These are costs incurred on the academy trust's educational operations, including support costs and costs relating to the governance of the academy trust apportioned to charitable activities.

All resources expended are inclusive of irrecoverable VAT.

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.5 Taxation

The academy trust is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes.

Accordingly, the academy trust is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Part 11, chapter 3 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Assets costing £1,000 or more are capitalised as tangible fixed assets and are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment.

Where tangible fixed assets have been acquired with the aid of specific grants, either from the government or from the private sector, they are included in the balance sheet at cost and depreciated over their expected useful economic life. Where there are specific conditions attached to the funding requiring the continued use of the asset, the related grants are credited to a restricted fixed asset fund in the statement of financial activities and carried forward in the balance sheet. Depreciation on the relevant assets is charged directly to the restricted fixed asset fund in the statement of financial activities. Where tangible fixed assets have been acquired with unrestricted funds, depreciation on such assets is charged to the unrestricted fund.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets other than freehold land and assets under construction, at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset on a straight-line basis over its expected useful life, as follows:

Depreciation is provided on the following basis:

Leasehold property	-	2% 50 years
Furniture and fixtures	-	10% 10 years
Computer equipment	-	33% 3 years
Motor vehicles	-	25% 4 years

Assets in the course of construction are included at cost. Depreciation on these assets is not charged until they are brought into use and reclassified to freehold or leasehold land and buildings.

A review for impairment of a fixed asset is carried out if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of any fixed asset may not be recoverable. Shortfalls between the carrying value of fixed assets and their recoverable amounts are recognised as impairments. Impairment losses are recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.7 Investments

The Trust's shareholding in the wholly owned subsidiary, Equals Trading Company Ltd, is included in the balance sheet at the cost of the share capital owned less any impairment. There is no readily available market value and the cost of valuation exceeds the benefit derived.

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.8 Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

1.9 Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short-term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

1.10 Liabilities

Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the academy trust anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

1.11 Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the academy trust has an obligation at the reporting date as a result of a past event which it is probable will result in the transfer of economic benefits and the obligation can be estimated reliably.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the provision is based on the present value of those amounts, discounted at the pre-tax discount rate that reflects the risks specific to the liability. The unwinding of the discount is recognised within interest payable and similar charges.

1.12 Financial instruments

The academy trust only holds basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and financial liabilities of the academy trust and their measurement bases are as follows:

Financial assets - trade and other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost as detailed in note 15. Prepayments are not financial instruments.

Cash at bank is classified as a basic financial instrument and is measured at face value.

Financial liabilities - trade creditors, accruals and other creditors are financial instruments, and are measured at amortised cost as detailed in note 16. Taxation and social security are not included in the financial instruments disclosure definition. Deferred income is not deemed to be a financial liability, as the cash settlement has already taken place and there is an obligation to deliver services rather than cash or another financial instrument.

1.13 Operating leases

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the statement of financial activities on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.14 Pensions

Retirement benefits to employees of the academy trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ("TPS") and the Local Government Pension Scheme ("LGPS"). These are defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the academy trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. TPS is an unfunded multi-employer scheme with no underlying assets to assign between employers. Consequently, the TPS is treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded multi-employer scheme and the assets are held separately from those of the academy trust in separate trustee administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/asset is also recognised in the statement of financial activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses.

Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

1.15 Fund accounting

Unrestricted income funds represent those resources which may be used towards meeting any of the charitable objects of the academy trust at the discretion of the Trustees.

Restricted fixed asset funds are resources which are to be applied to specific capital purposes imposed by the funders where the asset acquired or created is held for a specific purpose.

Restricted general funds comprise all other restricted funds received with restrictions imposed by the funder/donor and include grants from the Department for Education Group.

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

2. Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgment

Estimates and judgments are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

Critical accounting estimates and assumptions:

The academy trust makes estimates and assumptions concerning the future. The resulting accounting estimates and assumptions will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results. The estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year are discussed below.

The present value of the Local Government Pension Scheme defined benefit liability depends on a number of factors that are determined on an actuarial basis using a variety of assumptions. The assumptions used in determining the net cost or income for pensions include the discount rate. Any changes in these assumptions, which are disclosed in note 25, will impact the carrying amount of the pension liability. Furthermore a roll forward approach which projects results from the latest full actuarial valuation performed at 31 March 2022 has been used by the actuary in valuing the pensions liability at 31 August 2024. Any differences between the figures derived from the roll forward approach and a full actuarial valuation would impact on the carrying amount of the pension liability.

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**

3. Income from donations and capital grants

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £000	Restricted funds 2024 £000	Restricted fixed asset funds 2024 £000	Total funds 2024 £000	<i>Total funds 2023 £000</i>
Donations	87	-	-	87	135
Capital Grants	-	-	1,195	1,195	1,335
Donated assets	-	-	-	-	95
Transferred on conversion	183	(304)	2,300	2,179	-
Total 2024	<u>270</u>	<u>(304)</u>	<u>3,495</u>	<u>3,461</u>	<u>1,565</u>
<i>Total 2023</i>	<u>135</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,430</u>	<u>1,565</u>	

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**

4. Funding for the academy trust's charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £000	Restricted funds 2024 £000	Total funds 2024 £000	<i>Total funds 2023 £000</i>
DfE/ESFA grants				
General Annual Grant (GAG)	-	16,761	16,761	14,582
Other DfE/ESFA grants				
Pupil Premium	-	865	865	599
Universal Infant Free School Meals	-	521	521	475
Sports Premium	-	230	230	222
Teachers Pay and Pension	-	431	431	26
Supplementary grant	-	-	-	403
Others DfE/ESFA grants	-	979	979	390
	-	19,787	19,787	16,697
Other Government grants				
Local authority grants	-	1,753	1,753	1,092
Special educational projects	-	95	95	84
	-	1,848	1,848	1,176
Other income from educational operations	-	184	184	188
Other Income	706	-	706	653
	706	184	890	841
Total 2024	706	21,819	22,525	18,714
<i>Total 2023</i>	653	18,061	18,714	

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**

5. Income from other trading activities

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £000	Total funds 2024 £000	<i>Total funds 2023 £000</i>
Hire of facilities	133	133	121
Income from other charitable activities	309	309	314
Income from ancillary trading activities	48	48	32
	<u>490</u>	<u>490</u>	<u>467</u>
<i>Total 2023</i>	<u>467</u>	<u>467</u>	

6. Investment income

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £000	Total funds 2024 £000	<i>Total funds 2023 £000</i>
Short term deposits	10	10	-
	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	
<i>Total 2023</i>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**

7. Expenditure

	Staff Costs 2024 £000	Premises 2024 £000	Other 2024 £000	Total 2024 £000	<i>Total 2023 £000</i>
Expenditure on raising funds:					
Allocated support costs	162	-	9	171	166
Academy's educational operations:					
Direct costs	15,448	-	1,145	16,593	13,641
Allocated support costs	2,779	1,430	3,417	7,626	6,800
	<u>18,389</u>	<u>1,430</u>	<u>4,571</u>	<u>24,390</u>	<u>20,607</u>
<i>Total 2023</i>	<u><u>15,278</u></u>	<u><u>1,154</u></u>	<u><u>4,175</u></u>	<u><u>20,607</u></u>	

8. Charitable Activities

	Activities undertaken directly 2024 £000	Support costs 2024 £000	Total funds 2024 £000	<i>Total funds 2023 £000</i>
Direct and Support costs	<u>16,593</u>	<u>7,626</u>	<u>24,219</u>	<u>20,441</u>
<i>Total 2023</i>	<u><u>13,641</u></u>	<u><u>6,800</u></u>	<u><u>20,441</u></u>	

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**

8. Charitable Activities (continued)

Analysis of support costs

	Educational operations 2024 £000	Total funds 2024 £000	<i>Total funds 2023 £000</i>
Staff costs	2,779	2,779	2,539
Technology costs	150	150	101
Premises costs	1,430	1,430	1,153
Governance costs	131	131	129
Depreciation	1,267	1,267	1,126
Other Support Costs	1,869	1,869	1,752
	<u>7,626</u>	<u>7,626</u>	<u>6,800</u>
<i>Total 2023</i>	<u>6,800</u>	<u>6,800</u>	

9. Net income/(expenditure)

Net income/(expenditure) for the year includes:

	2024 £000	<i>2023 £000</i>
Operating lease rentals	39	39
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	1,267	1,173
Fees paid to auditors for:		
- audit	36	32
- other services	4	3

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**

10. Staff

a. Staff costs and employee benefits

Staff costs during the year were as follows:

	2024	2023
	£000	£000
Wages and salaries	13,707	11,182
Social security costs	1,327	1,071
Pension costs	3,069	2,781
Other employee benefits	-	-
	18,103	15,034
Agency staff costs	286	207
Staff restructuring costs	-	37
	18,389	15,278

Staff restructuring costs comprise:

	2024	2023
	£000	£000
Severance payments - statutory	-	25
Severance payments - non-statutory	-	12
	-	37

b. Severance payments

The academy trust paid - severance payments in the year (2023 - 1), disclosed in the following bands:

	2024	2023
	No.	No.
£0 - £25,000	-	1

c. Special staff severance payments

Included in staff restructuring costs are special severance payments totalling £0 (2023: £12,277).

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**

10. Staff (continued)

d. Staff numbers

The average number of persons employed by the academy trust during the year was as follows:

	2024	2023
	No.	No.
Teachers	212	186
Administration and support	346	296
Management	12	11
	570	493

The average headcount expressed as full-time equivalents was:

	2024	2023
	No.	No.
Teachers	169	150
Administration and support	204	167
Management	12	11
	385	328

e. Higher paid staff

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) exceeded £60,000 was:

	2024	2023
	No.	No.
In the band £60,001 - £70,000	8	3
In the band £70,001 - £80,000	3	6
In the band £80,001 - £90,000	5	-
In the band £90,001 - £100,000	2	2
In the band £100,001 - £110,000	1	-

f. Key management personnel

The key management personnel of the academy trust comprise the Trustees and the senior management team as listed on page 1. The total amount of key management personnel benefits (including employer pension contributions and employer national insurance contributions) received by key management personnel for their services to the academy trust was £1,395k (2023 - £1,185k).

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11. Central services

The academy trust has provided the following central services to its academies during the year:

- Financial Services and Payroll
- Human Resources
- Legal Services
- Governance and clerking services
- School Improvement Services
- ICT Replacement Programme

The academy trust charges for these services on the following basis:

Flat percentage of General Annual Grant (GAG) income at 6.2% (6.2% in 2022/23).

The 6.2% charge to schools is split into three separate budgets:

- 4% for Central Services,
- 1% for School Improvement projects, led by the Leadership Group (Headteachers of all academies in the Trust),
- 1.2% for the ICT Replacement Programme (including classroom devices for pupils).

For 2023/24 we have allowed schools to use their Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) Funding to pay for their contribution towards the ICT Replacement Programme. The scheme meets the requirements for the use of capital funding and schools using this facility keep more of their GAG funding to be spent on revenue expenditure. This will be offered in future years to allow schools to make their own decisions on the best use of their available capital funding.

The actual amounts charged during the year were as follows:

	2024	<i>2023</i>
	£000	<i>£000</i>
Heymann	156	<i>169</i>
Burton Joyce	84	<i>81</i>
Cropwell	44	<i>49</i>
Tollerton	55	<i>52</i>
Robert Miles	72	<i>68</i>
Keyworth	43	<i>45</i>
Crossdale	43	<i>52</i>
Willow Farm	58	<i>56</i>
Flintham	31	<i>28</i>
Richard Bonington	111	<i>111</i>
Brookside	86	<i>80</i>
Abbey Road	117	<i>113</i>
Netherfield	90	<i>-</i>
Total	990	<i>904</i>

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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12. Trustees' remuneration and expenses

One or more Trustees has been paid remuneration or has received other benefits from an employment with the academy trust. The principal and other staff Trustees only receive remuneration in respect of services they provide undertaking the roles of principal and staff members under their contracts of employment. The value of Trustees' remuneration and other benefits was as follows:

		2024	<i>2023</i>
		£000	<i>£000</i>
P Palmer, CEO and Accounting Officer	Remuneration	105 - 110	<i>90 - 95</i>
	Pension contributions paid	25 - 30	<i>20 - 25</i>

During the year ended 31 August 2024, expenses totalling £1,065 were reimbursed or paid directly to 1 Trustee (*2023 - £NIL to 1 Trustee*).

13. Trustees' and Officers' insurance

In accordance with normal commercial practice, the academy trust has purchased insurance to protect Trustees and officers from claims arising from negligent acts, errors or omissions occurring whilst on academy business. The insurance provides unlimited cover on any one claim and the cost for the year ended 31 August 2024 was £86,135 (*2023 - £72,261*). The cost of this insurance is included in the total insurance cost.

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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14. Tangible fixed assets

	Long-term leasehold property £000	Furniture and equipment £000	Computer equipment £000	Total £000
Cost or valuation				
At 1 September 2023	49,031	216	598	49,845
Additions	757	37	269	1,063
Transfer on conversion	2,300	-	-	2,300
At 31 August 2024	52,088	253	867	53,208
Depreciation				
At 1 September 2023	5,748	78	424	6,250
Charge for the year	1,042	23	202	1,267
At 31 August 2024	6,790	101	626	7,517
Net book value				
At 31 August 2024	45,298	152	241	45,691
At 31 August 2023	43,283	139	174	43,596

15. Debtors

	2024 £000	2023 £000
Due within one year		
Trade debtors	34	35
Other debtors	17	18
Prepayments and accrued income	555	379
VAT recoverable	163	196
	769	628

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16. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2024	<i>2023</i>
	£000	<i>£000</i>
Other loans	-	1
Trade creditors	481	397
Other taxation and social security	359	295
Other creditors	422	378
Accruals and deferred income	1,145	1,279
	<u>2,407</u>	<u>2,350</u>
	<u>2,407</u>	<u>2,350</u>
	2024	<i>2023</i>
	£000	<i>£000</i>
Deferred income at 1 September 2023	480	419
Resources deferred during the year	(480)	(419)
Amounts released from previous periods	696	480
	<u>696</u>	<u>480</u>
	<u>696</u>	<u>480</u>

Deferred income relates to £330k of UIFSM and £366k of other LA grants.

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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17. Statement of funds

	Balance at 1 September 2023 £000	Income £000	Expenditure £000	Transfers in/out £000	Gains/ (Losses) £000	Balance at 31 August 2024 £000
Unrestricted funds						
General Funds - all funds	853	1,475	(1,042)	(504)	-	782
Restricted general funds						
General Annual Grant (GAG)	190	16,760	(17,216)	265	-	(1)
Other income	-	2,032	(2,032)	-	-	-
Pupil Premium	-	865	(865)	-	-	-
Universal Infant Free School Meals	-	521	(521)	-	-	-
Sports Premium	-	230	(230)	-	-	-
Teachers pay and pension	-	431	(431)	-	-	-
Recovery premium	-	78	(78)	-	-	-
Other DfE/ESFA grants	-	902	(902)	-	-	-
Pension reserve	(748)	(304)	194	-	71	(787)
	(558)	21,515	(22,081)	265	71	(788)

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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17. Statement of funds (continued)

**Restricted
fixed asset
funds**

Transfer on conversion	34,686	2,300	(1,055)	-	-	35,931
DfE/ESFA capital grants	8,901	1,195	(202)	-	-	9,894
Capital expenditure from GAG	521	-	(10)	239	-	750
	<u>44,108</u>	<u>3,495</u>	<u>(1,267)</u>	<u>239</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>46,575</u>
Total Restricted funds	43,550	25,010	(23,348)	504	71	45,787
Total funds	44,403	26,485	(24,390)	-	71	46,570

The specific purposes for which the funds are to be applied are as follows:

The pension reserve of £787k (overdrawn) represents the Academy Trust's share of the deficit in the Nottinghamshire pension funds.

The unrestricted fund of £782k represents the surplus generated by the Academy Trust on activities for generating funds. The transfer from unrestricted reserves to the fixed asset reserve in the year of £239k was to part fund capital expenditure (including the ICT Replacement Programme).

Restricted Fixed Asset Funds relate predominantly to the assets acquired on conversion to an academy trust, being properties.

Under the funding agreement with the Secretary of State, the academy trust was not subject to a limit on the amount of GAG it could carry forward at 31 August 2024.

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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17. Statement of funds (continued)

Comparative information in respect of the preceding year is as follows:

	<i>Balance at 1 September 2022 £000</i>	<i>Income £000</i>	<i>Expenditure £000</i>	<i>Transfers in/out £000</i>	<i>Gains/ (Losses) £000</i>	<i>Balance at 31 August 2023 £000</i>
Unrestricted funds						
Unrestricted funds	708	1,255	(895)	(215)	-	853
Restricted general funds						
General Annual Grant (GAG)	397	14,581	(14,788)	-	-	190
Other income	-	1,365	(1,365)	-	-	-
Pupil Premium	-	599	(599)	-	-	-
Universal Infant Free School Meals	-	475	(475)	-	-	-
Sports Premium	-	222	(222)	-	-	-
Teachers pay and pension	-	26	(26)	-	-	-
Supplementary grant	-	403	(403)	-	-	-
Other DfE/ESFA grants	-	390	(390)	-	-	-
Pension reserve	(1,552)	-	(271)	-	1,075	(748)
	<u>(1,155)</u>	<u>18,061</u>	<u>(18,539)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,075</u>	<u>(558)</u>

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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17. Statement of funds (continued)

**Restricted
fixed asset
funds**

Transfer on conversion	35,671	-	(985)	-	-	34,686
DfE/ESFA capital grants	7,653	1,430	(182)	-	-	8,901
Capital expenditure from GAG	312	-	(6)	215	-	521
	<u>43,636</u>	<u>1,430</u>	<u>(1,173)</u>	<u>215</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>44,108</u>
Total Restricted funds	<u>42,481</u>	<u>19,491</u>	<u>(19,712)</u>	<u>215</u>	<u>1,075</u>	<u>43,550</u>
Total funds	<u><u>43,189</u></u>	<u><u>20,746</u></u>	<u><u>(20,607)</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>1,075</u></u>	<u><u>44,403</u></u>

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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17. Statement of funds (continued)

Total funds analysis by academy

Fund balances at 31 August 2024 were allocated as follows:

	2024	<i>2023</i>
	£000	<i>£000</i>
Burton Joyce	107	<i>148</i>
Cropwell Bishop	(291)	<i>(280)</i>
Crossdale	21	<i>54</i>
Heymann	222	<i>322</i>
Keyworth	77	<i>62</i>
Robert Miles	213	<i>187</i>
Tollerton	87	<i>106</i>
Flintham	(137)	<i>(84)</i>
Willow Farm	(7)	<i>11</i>
Richard Bonington	35	<i>36</i>
Brookside	198	<i>195</i>
Abbey Road	405	<i>453</i>
Netherfield	120	<i>-</i>
Equals Trust - Central services	(230)	<i>(196)</i>
Equals Trust - School Improvement	(27)	<i>6</i>
Equals Trust - ICT Programme	(12)	<i>23</i>
Total before fixed asset funds and pension reserve	781	<i>1,043</i>
Restricted fixed asset fund	46,575	<i>44,108</i>
Pension reserve	(787)	<i>(748)</i>
Total	46,569	<i>44,403</i>

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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17. Statement of funds (continued)

Schools in deficit

The Trust had three schools in deficit as at 31 August 2024 and there was a deficit on the provision of central services.

Cropwell Bishop Primary School had a significant drop in pupil numbers several years ago. This has now fully reversed following the building of a new housing development within the school's catchment area and the increased pupil numbers have now resulted in increased GAG funding. The school has set an in-year surplus budget for 2024/25, and pupil numbers are continuing to increase. The three year forecast for the school currently shows an in-year surplus in all three years.

Flintham Primary School has had a steady drop in pupil numbers over several years. The school has been advertising themselves more widely over the last two years but this has not result in an increase in pupil numbers. The school has made some significant savings for the 2024/25 year and has set an in-year surplus budget for the year. Pupil numbers continue to fall each year as the larger year groups move to secondary school and are replaced with fewer pupils joining the school in Reception. We will be considering all options to ensure the budget remains balanced, or in surplus, so the deficit is repaid.

Willow Farm Primary School has been maintaining a balanced budget, but low reserves for several years. The school has slipped into deficit following Long Term Sickness of key staff during the year. The school has already made changes to improve their financial position and has set a healthy in-year surplus budget for 2024/25. The three-year forecast for the school is incredibly healthy and the school is expected to return to surplus balance and achieve the level of reserves required by our Finance Policy within two years.

Central Services was forecast to return to an in-year surplus from 2023/24 onwards. However, delays in the conversion of schools due has done significant harm the Central Services Budget. The Trust has expanded its Central Services Team to accommodate the five schools now due to join the Trust in 2024/25. Three of these five schools were originally expected to join Equals Trust during 2023/24 and are now not expected until later in the 2024/25 year. The Central Services budget will return to surplus when all schools have joined the Trust.

Total cost analysis by academy

Expenditure incurred by each academy during the year was as follows:

	Teaching and educational support staff costs £000	Other support staff costs £000	Educational supplies £000	Other costs excluding depreciation £000	Total 2024 £000	Total 2023 £000
Burton Joyce	1,152	152	84	284	1,672	1,546
Cropwell Bishop	749	99	68	213	1,129	1,066
Crossdale	741	89	67	192	1,089	975
Heymann	2,679	613	134	449	3,875	3,606
Keyworth	831	158	57	183	1,229	1,005

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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17. Statement of funds (continued)

	Teaching and educational support staff costs £000	Other support staff costs £000	Educational supplies £000	Other costs excluding depreciation £000	Total 2024 £000	Total 2023 £000
Robert Miles	998	154	86	168	1,406	1,317
Tollerton	754	133	68	160	1,115	1,017
Flintham	444	94	36	112	686	594
Willow Farm	847	142	77	139	1,205	1,113
Richard Bonington	1,725	273	118	302	2,418	2,287
Brookside	1,150	143	70	262	1,625	1,492
Abbey Road	1,648	239	140	379	2,406	2,239
Netherfield	1,578	187	70	307	2,142	-
Equals Trust - Central services	152	465	70	438	1,125	1,177
Academy trust	15,448	2,941	1,145	3,588	23,122	19,434

18. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances at 31 August 2024 are represented by:

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £000	Restricted funds 2024 £000	Restricted fixed asset funds 2024 £000	Total funds 2024 £000
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	45,691	45,691
Current assets	782	2,406	884	4,072
Creditors due within one year	-	(2,407)	-	(2,407)
Provisions for liabilities and charges	-	(787)	-	(787)
Total	782	(788)	46,575	46,569

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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18. Analysis of net assets between funds (continued)

Comparative information in respect of the preceding period is as follows:

	<i>Unrestricted funds 2023 £000</i>	<i>Restricted funds 2023 £000</i>	<i>Restricted fixed asset funds 2023 £000</i>	<i>Total funds 2023 £000</i>
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	43,596	43,596
Current assets	853	2,540	512	3,905
Creditors due within one year	-	(2,350)	-	(2,350)
Provisions for liabilities and charges	-	(748)	-	(748)
Total	853	(558)	44,108	44,403

19. Reconciliation of net income to net cash flow from operating activities

	2024 £000	2023 £000
Net income for the period (as per statement of financial activities)	2,096	139
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	1,267	1,126
Capital grants from DfE and other capital income	(1,195)	(1,335)
Interest receivable	(10)	-
Defined benefit pension scheme cost less contributions payable	(218)	223
Defined benefit pension scheme finance cost	24	48
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(142)	99
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	57	(40)
Donated assets	(1,996)	(95)
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	(117)	165

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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20. Cash flows from financing activities

	2024 £000	2023 £000
Repayments of borrowing	(1)	(3)
Net cash used in financing activities	(1)	(3)

21. Cash flows from investing activities

	2024 £000	2023 £000
Interest receivable	10	-
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(1,061)	(1,546)
Capital grants from DfE Group	1,195	1,335
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities	144	(211)

22. Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2024 £000	2023 £000
Cash in hand and at bank	3,303	3,277
Total cash and cash equivalents	3,303	3,277

23. Analysis of changes in net debt

	At 1 September 2023 £000	Cash flows £000	At 31 August 2024 £000
Cash at bank and in hand	3,277	26	3,303
Debt due within 1 year	(1)	1	-
	3,276	27	3,303

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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24. Capital commitments

	2024	<i>2023</i>
	£000	<i>£000</i>
Contracted for but not provided in these financial statements	140	<i>98</i>

25. Pension commitments

The academy trust's employees belong to two principal pension schemes: the Teachers' Pension Scheme England and Wales (TPS) for academic and related staff; and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for non-teaching staff, which is managed by Nottinghamshire Pension Fund. Both are multi-employer defined benefit schemes.

The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS related to the period ended 31 March 2020 and of the LGPS 31 March 2022.

Contributions amounting to £389,460 were payable to the schemes at 31 August 2024 (2023 - £178,037) and are included within creditors.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for full-time teachers in academies. All teachers have the option to opt-out of the TPS following enrolment.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme to which both the member and employer makes contributions, as a percentage of salary - these contributions are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by Parliament.

Valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Government Actuary, using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2014 published by HM Treasury every 4 years. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions. Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS was carried out as at 31 March 2020. The valuation report was published by the Department for Education on 27 October 2023, with the SCAPE rate, set by HMT, applying a notional investment return based on 1.7% above the rate of CPI. The key elements of the valuation and subsequent consultation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 28.68% of pensionable pay (including a 0.08% administration levy). This is an increase of 5% in employer contributions and the cost control result is such that no change in member benefits is needed.
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £262,000 million and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £222,200 million, giving a notional past service deficit of £39,800 million.

The next valuation result is due to be implemented from 1 April 2028.

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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25. Pension commitments (continued)

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS in the year amounted to £2,173,234 (2023 - £1,669,803).

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is an unfunded multi-employer pension scheme. The academy trust is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities of the plan. Accordingly, the academy trust has taken advantage of the exemption in FRS 102 and has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The academy trust has set out above the information available on the scheme.

Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate trustee-administered funds. The total contribution made for the year ended 31 August 2024 was £1,390,000 (2023 - £1,081,000), of which employer's contributions totalled £1,093,000 (2023 - £842,000) and employees' contributions totalled £297,089 (2023 - £239,000). The agreed contribution rates for future years are 21.8% for employers and 5.5% - 12.5% for employees.

As described in note 25 the LGPS obligation relates to the employees of the academy trust, who were the employees transferred as part of the conversion from the maintained school and new employees who were eligible to, and did, join the Scheme in the year. The obligation in respect of employees who transferred on conversion represents their cumulative service at both the predecessor school and the academy trust at the balance sheet date.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013 and on 21 July 2022, the Department for Education reaffirmed its commitment to the guarantee, with a parliamentary minute published on GOV.UK.

In June 2023 the High Court ruled in the case of Virgin Media Limited v NTL Pension Trustees. The ruling was that certain pension scheme rule amendments were invalid if they were not accompanied by the correct actuarial confirmation. This High Court ruling was appealed. In a judgement delivered on 25 July 2024, the Court of Appeal unanimously upheld the decision of the High Court.

At the date of approval of these financial statements, while it is known there is potential for additional pension liabilities to be recognised as a result of this ruling, the impact in monetary terms is not known and it is reasonable to form the view that it cannot be reasonably estimated. Accordingly, no adjustments to reflect the impact of the ruling have been made in these financial statements.

The Trustees will continue to monitor the developments and consider the impact on the LGPS liabilities recognised by the Trust.

Principal actuarial assumptions

	2024	2023
	%	%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.80	3.85
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/inflation	2.80	2.85
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	5.10	5.30

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25. Pension commitments (continued)

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement age 65 are:

	2024	<i>2023</i>
	Years	<i>Years</i>
<i>Retiring today</i>		
Males	20.4	<i>20.4</i>
Females	23.3	<i>23.2</i>
<i>Retiring in 20 years</i>		
Males	21.6	<i>21.7</i>
Females	24.7	<i>24.6</i>

Sensitivity analysis

	2024	<i>2023</i>
	£000	<i>£000</i>
Discount rate +0.1%	351	<i>256</i>
Discount rate -0.1%	(361)	<i>(263)</i>
Mortality assumption - 1 year increase	(431)	<i>(309)</i>
Mortality assumption - 1 year decrease	420	<i>302</i>
CPI rate +0.1%	(343)	<i>(248)</i>
CPI rate -0.1%	333	<i>240</i>
Salary increase +0.1%	(26)	<i>(22)</i>
Salary increase -0.1%	26	<i>22</i>

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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25. Pension commitments (continued)

Share of scheme assets

The academy trust's share of the assets in the scheme was:

	At 31 August 2024 £000	<i>At 31 August 2023 £000</i>
Equities	9,855	6,981
Gilts	371	220
Corporate bonds	768	625
Property	1,645	1,312
Cash and other liquid assets	932	689
Inflation linked	787	549
Infrastructure	1,119	883
Total market value of assets	15,477	11,259

The actual return on scheme assets was £989,666 (2023 - £792,800).

The amounts recognised in the Statement of financial activities are as follows:

	2024 £000	<i>2023 £000</i>
Current service cost	(1,175)	(1,063)
Interest income	695	442
Interest cost	(719)	(490)
Administrative expenses	(5)	(5)
Total amount recognised in the Statement of financial activities	(1,204)	(1,116)

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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25. Pension commitments (continued)

Changes in the present value of the defined benefit obligations were as follows:

	2024	2023
	£000	£000
At 1 September	12,007	11,462
Conversion of academy trusts	2,184	-
Current service cost	871	1,063
Interest cost	719	490
Employee contributions	297	240
Actuarial losses/(gains)	443	(1,165)
Benefits paid	(257)	(83)
At 31 August	16,264	12,007

Changes in the fair value of the academy trust's share of scheme assets were as follows:

	2024	2023
	£000	£000
At 1 September	11,259	9,910
Conversion of academy trusts	1,880	-
Interest income	695	442
Actuarial gains/(losses)	514	(90)
Employer contributions	1,094	845
Employee contributions	297	240
Benefits paid	(257)	(83)
Administration expenses	(5)	(5)
At 31 August	15,477	11,259

26. Members' liability

Each member of the charitable company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the company in the event of it being wound up while he/she is a member, or within one year after he/she ceases to be a member, such amount as may be required, not exceeding £NIL for the debts and liabilities contracted before he/she ceases to be a member.

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27. Related party transactions

Owing to the nature of the academy trust and the composition of the Board of Trustees being drawn from local public and private sector organisations, transactions may take place with organisations in which the trustees have an interest. All transactions involving such organisations are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook, including notifying the ESFA of all transactions made on or after 1 April 2019 and obtaining their approval where required, and with the academy trust's financial regulations and normal procurement procedures relating to connected and related party transactions.

The academy trust employed Mrs C Palmer, close family member of Mr P Palmer (Trustee, CEO and Accounting Officer of Equals Trust). She received remuneration commensurate with that of other employees holding the same position in the academy trust and Mr P Palmer did not partake in the decision-making process regarding their remuneration or performance management.

Mrs K Foale is a close family member of Mr P Foale (Chair and Trustee and of Equals Trust) and is an elected member of Nottinghamshire County Council. Equals Trust receive grant fundings from Nottinghamshire County Council as disclosed in note 4. In addition, Nottinghamshire County Council provide payroll, cleaning, and other support services to Equals Trust on normal commercial terms.

28. Local Authority Conversion into the Academy Trust

On 1 December 2023, Netherfield Primary School joined the trust.

The transfer has been accounted for as a combination that is in substance a gift. The assets and liabilities transferred were valued at their fair value and recognised in the balance sheet under the appropriate headings with a corresponding net amount recognised as a net gain in the Statement of Financial Activities.

The following table sets out the fair values of the identifiable assets and liabilities transferred and an analysis of their recognition in the SOFA.

	Unrestricted Funds £000	Restricted General Funds £000	Restricted Fixed Asset Funds £000	Total £000
Leasehold land and buildings	-	-	2,300	2,300
LGPS pension surplus / (deficit)	-	(304)	-	(304)
Cash balance	183		-	183
Net assets / (liabilities)	183	(304)	2,300	2,179

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29. Post balance sheet events

Sutton Bonington Primary School joined the Trust on 1st September 2024. The school has an in-year deficit budget for 2024/25 due to taking on additional temporary staff in the short term due to increasing pupil numbers. The school will be returning to a balanced budget in future years and joins with healthy reserves of approximately £65,000. The school is forecast to have income and expenditure around £900,000. Sutton Bonington Primary School is currently being rebuilt by the DfE as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme.

Normanton on Soar Primary School joined the school as a sponsored conversion on 1st October 2024. The school has a balanced budget for 2024/25 with income and expenditure expected to be approximately £475,000. The school will be joining with very healthy reserves of approximately £50,000. Pupil numbers are increasing as the school previously had no pupils in its higher year groups.

30. Agency arrangements

The academy trust distributes funds as an agent for Rushcliffe Behaviour Partnership to schools in relation to social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs for children with special educational needs. In the accounting year ended 31 August 2024 the academy trust received £143,800 and disbursed £208,614 from the fund. Comparatives for the accounting year ended 31 August 2023 are £129,401 received, £122,607 disbursed.