Company registration number 08782697 (England and Wales)

THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

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THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

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THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Members	
	Mrs J Motte
	Mr D Laing (Deceased 3 March 2024)
	Mrs V Martin
	Mr K Thomas
	Mrs D Mattock
Trustees	Mr D Allmark
	Ms R Brittle (Chair of Directors)
	Ms M Miller
	Mrs B O'Brien
	Mr D H Rosser (Accounting officer)
	Mr M Scoble
	Ms C Strudwicke (Resigned 19 October 2023)
	Mr C Howard
	Ms K Clough
	Dr M Mcdowell (Appointed 14 October 2024)
Staff Trustees	
	Mrs K Smith (End of term 14 October 2024)
	Mrs E Lavelle
	Mrs N Green (Appointed 14 October 2024)
Headship team	
- Principal	Mr D Rosser
- Senior Vice Principal	Mrs J Page
- Senior Vice Principal	Mrs J Steere
- Vice Principal	Mr G Treadgold
- Vice Principal	Mrs S MacDonnell
- Vice Principal	Mrs K Smith
- Business Manager	Mrs F Hedges (appointed Chief Operating Officer 1 September 2024)
- Chief Financial Officer	Mr A Campbell (appointed 1 September 2024)
- - Head Designate (Overstone Park Primary School)	Mrs N Green (from January 2025)
Company registration number	08782697 (England and Wales)
Registered office	Wootton Park School Wootton Hall Park Northampton NN4 0HZ United Kingdom
Independent auditor	Azets Audit Services Thorpe House 93 Headlands Kettering Northamptonshire NN15 6BL United Kingdom

THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Bankers	Lloyds Bank Plc 2 George Row Northampton NN1 1DJ United Kingdom
Solicitors	Browne Jacobson LLP Mowbray House Castle Meadow Road Nottingham NG2 1BJ United Kingdom

THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

The trustees present their annual report together with the accounts 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. The academy trust operates an academy providing primary, secondary school and sixth form education provision for pupils aged 4 to 19 in Northampton.

Our School
Wootton Park School is a place that invests all its passion in what is good, recognising that what our young people achieve and experience at our school will have a profound effect and impact upon their lives.

We recognise that all children are unique; we develop their talents using innovative approaches using academy freedoms to meet the diverse needs of our learning community, set within an extended school day.

Our school is the school of choice for parents and carers who are proud to be ambitious for their children, value academic success, and who want them to achieve to the fullest of their ability within a supportive and caring environment.

Our Ethos
The School is based on the following key principles:

- The development of young people to create a better society through the promotion of citizenship, community and service;
- A rigorous, broad and balanced academic curriculum which achieves high standards and at the same time builds the communication skills and confidence of young people;
- A school at the heart of its community, helping to promote cohesion by working with whole families, not just learners;
- Tailored support to individual learners, taking into account all the factors impacting on their educational achievement;
- A focus on public service that helps establish young people as engaged and active citizens with the ability to apply learning, skills and ideas in the community;
- The highest aspirations and ambitions for all.

This ethos and vision is shared with children, staff, Governors, parents and all other stakeholders on a regular basis in the way we teach, interact and communicate.

Our Curriculum
At Wootton Park School we have developed a curriculum which:

- Develop our learners' learning (Our head and body: what we learn)
- Develop the character of our learners (Our heart and character: Who we are when we learn)
- Develop behaviours and habits to become effective learners (Our actions and attitudes: How we act when we learn)
- Develop the moral compass of our learners (Our place in the community and wider world: Who we are)

Our curriculum has a clear purpose and is focused around excitement and love for learning. We ensure that learning is bespoke to the needs of our learners and demonstrates a strong understanding about specific needs to succeed in life. Wootton Park School offers a broad, balanced and bespoke curriculum. As a 4-19 all-through school, we always strive to exploit the advantages of continuity and progression to maximize learner achievement and well-being. SMSC underpins out curriculum as we develop the whole child and not just the academic.

At Wootton Park School, we derive maximum benefit from the longer-term teacher-learner relationships that can be established and the removal of discontinuity between KS2 and KS3 and between KS4 and KS5, alongside detailed planning for continuity and progression in terms of curriculum delivery.

Learners enjoy continuity of contact with teachers and support staff, which allows teachers to establish and maintain a greater depth of knowledge and understanding concerning learners' strengths and areas for development, and to support each learner individually in terms of both personal development and achieving their full academic potential. Our secondary subject specialists compliment the delivery of the primary curriculum thus ensuring we can offer a curriculum delivered by subject experts in all areas.

Our curriculum reflects the best of well-recognised and successful curricula as we wish our young people to aspire and experience opportunities available around the world. This curriculum offer, builds from the platforms of Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum with our areas of focus extending the learning experiences of learners.

The education provision on offer is appropriate to the school's inclusive intake profile and meets their learning needs exceedingly well. In creating an outstanding and unique all-through free school, we ensure high levels of achievement and personal development for all, while promoting the value of public service and building a stronger society. Our approach to teaching and learning at Wootton Park School develops children's intrinsic motivation by showing them the positive difference they can make to society and by giving them the confidence and skills to achieve at a personal level while contributing to the local community and global society. The core features of our curriculum offer development and support around Attainment for All, Public Service and a Stronger Society.

Structure, governance and management

Constitution

The academy trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. The charitable company's memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the academy trust.

The charitable company's academy is known as Wootton Park School.

The trustees of The Northampton Free School Trust are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law. Details of the trustees who served during the year, and to the date these accounts are approved, are included in the Reference and Administrative Details on page 1.

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.

Trustees' indemnities

In accordance with normal commercial practice the Academy has purchased professional indemnity insurance to protect Trustees from claims arising from negligent acts, errors or omissions occurring whilst on Academy business.

Method of recruitment and appointment or election of trustees

Trustees of the Academy are nominated by either the Secretary of State for Education or members of the charitable company. Parent governor Trustees are elected by parents of registered pupils at the Academy. The Principal is treated as an ex officio trustee. The articles of association require no less than three Trustees.

The term of office for any trustee, shall be up to 4 years except the Principal who remains a trustee whilst in post. Trustees are eligible for re-election at the meeting at which they retire.

Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees

The training and induction provided for new Trustees will depend on their existing experience. Where necessary induction will provide training on charity, educational, legal and financial matters. All new Trustees will be given a tour of the Academy and the chance to meet with staff and students. All Trustees are provided with copies of policies, procedures, minutes, accounts, budgets, plans and other documents that they will need to undertake their role as Trustees. Induction tends to be done informally and is tailored specifically to the individual.

Organisational structure

The management structure consists of three levels; the Trustees, the Principal, and the Senior leadership team. The aim of the management structure is to devolve responsibility and encourage involvement in decision making at all levels.

The Trustees are responsible for setting general policy, adopting an annual plan and budget, monitoring the Academy by the use of budgets and making major decisions about the direction of the Academy, capital expenditure and appointment of the Principal.

The Senior Leaders are the Principal, two Senior Vice Principals, three Vice Principals, eight Assistant Principals, and the Business Manager. As a team, they combine skills and expertise in both primary and secondary education. These leaders steer the Academy at an executive level implementing the policies laid down by the Trustees and reporting back to them. As a group, the Senior Leaders are responsible for the authorisation of spending within agreed budgets and the appointment of staff. The leadership team grew in preparation for the Trust's wave 14 free school that was approved by the DfE in 2021 to enter its pre-opening phase and a new primary school planned to open in September 2025. It also ensures capacity for future trust growth over the coming years.

Trustees have a clear united vision to build on the highly successful results since start-up of the Trust and share a passion of high standards. They are actively engaged in particular at public events, such as open evenings and school functions. All Governors meetings are positive and inclusive with consideration given to the various talents within the Governing Body.

Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of key management personnel

The school has a pay policy which is linked to the appraisal policy. Pay at certain points of the pay scale is linked to performance. The Principal undergoes an annual appraisal by a committee of Trustees and an external adviser. The Vice Principals and Business Manager are appraised in line with the school appraisal policy by the Principal. The outcomes of their appraisals are discussed at the Pay Committee before any incremental pay awards are agreed. Where other staff are being considered for a pay increase related to performance, they too are discussed at the Pay Committee.

Trade union facility time

Relevant union officials

Number of employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period	-
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

Total cost of facility time	-
Total pay bill	-
Percentage of the total pay bill spent on facilty time	-

Paid trade union activities

Time spent on paid trade union activities as a percentage of total paid facility time hours	-

Related parties and other connected charities and organisations

The Academy has a policy which prohibits it from entering into transactions with connected parties whether they be members of staff or Trustees, or companies, charities or other organisations which are controlled by members of staff or Trustees or their families. Trustees and the senior management team are required to confirm that they are not related to any parties with which the Academy does business at each Trustees meeting. As shown in the financial statements there were no transactions with related parties in this or the previous reporting period.

Objectives and activities

Objects and aims

The principal object and activity of the Academy is to provide education for pupils of different abilities between the ages of 4 and 18.

In accordance with the articles of association the Academy has adopted a "Scheme of Governance" which is reviewed annually.

Objectives, strategies and activities

The main objectives of the Academy during the year ended 31 August 2024 are summarised below:

- to ensure that every child enjoys the same high quality education in terms of resourcing, tuition and care;
- to raise the standard of educational achievement of all pupils;
- to improve the effectiveness of the Academy by keeping the curriculum and organisational structure under continual review;
- to provide value for money for the funds expended;
- to comply with all appropriate statutory and curriculum requirements;
- to maintain close links with industry and commerce;
- to conduct the Academy's business in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, probity and openness.

The Academy's main strategy to achieve its objectives is to provide education for pupils of different abilities, in a learning environment utilising the best possible teaching facilities and staff. To this end the activities provided include:

- tuition and learning opportunities for all students to attain appropriate academic qualifications;
- training opportunities for all staff, and especially teaching staff;
- a programme of extra-curricular opportunities, clubs and experiences for all students;
- an independent careers advice and a guidance programme to help students obtain employment or move on to higher education.

Public benefit

In setting our objectives and planning our activities, the trustees have carefully considered the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

Within these objectives it is the Trustees drive to provide development of young people to create a better society through the promotion of citizenship, community and service.

A rigorous academic curriculum which achieves high standards and at the same time builds the communication skills and confidence of young people.

A school at the heart of its community, helping to promote cohesion by working with whole families, not just pupils.

Tailored support to individual pupils, taking into account all the factors impacting on their educational achievement.

A focus on community participation that helps establish young people as engaged and active citizens with the ability to apply learning, skills and ideas in the community.

Strategic report

Achievements and performance

Wootton Park School is committed to ensuring our learners achieve to their full potential and as such, use a variety of means to track and support learning. This has been particularly important following the Covid19 pandemic. Wootton Park School has in place plans to ensure that teaching staff fully understand where learners are with their learning and importantly, what areas are yet to be improved.

We are incredibly proud of the last 12 months from our learners, our staff, our Trustees and onward local community links. To name just a few:

- The Trust won a Local Authority presumption bid to open a new primary school planned for September 2025 in the Overstone Leys area of Northampton. The Trust looks forward to building local community links in the area.
- Wootton Park School achieved the Career Mark accreditation in June 2024. This is a nationally recognised benchmark of Careers Education, Information and Guidance quality. WPS joins only 24% of UK schools in successfully achieving the standards required to gain this award.
- Wootton Park School was awarded the Overall School of the Year award at the Northamptonshire Education Awards in November 2023,
- Wootton Park School was successful in maintaining its status as an Inclusion Quality Mark flagship school in July 2024.
- The school's Duke of Edinburgh programme resumed and is developing its plans for the Gold award.
- The school achieved the Gold standard School Games Mark Award; the first for an all through school.
- Launch and development of voluntary Workplace Wellbeing Champions
- Governors systematically challenge senior leaders so that the effective deployment of staff and resources, secures excellent outcomes for learners. Leaders and governors have a deep, accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness informed by the views of learners, parents and staff. Leaders and Governors use incisive performance management that leads to professional development that encourages, challenges and supports teachers' improvement.
- Safeguarding is a high priority throughout the school. It is successfully coordinated by the Senior Vice Principal who has ensured that all statutory requirements are met and vulnerable learners protected. Good actions have been taken to follow up on child protection issues. All staff have completed the statutory safeguarding training and there are clear policies and processes to ensure all children at Wootton Park School are safe. The school has clear policies and practices for e-safety, attendance, first aid, risk assessments, educational visits and preventing radicalization.
- The use of innovative staffing has ensured that all learners receive the support they need and that the school can offer a rich and vibrant curriculum that is personalized to meet the individual unique needs. The broad and balanced curriculum inspires learners to learn.
- The robust Performance Management Policy ensures a highly effective appraisal process, which links, to the Pay Policy and Formal Capability Policy. Staff appraisal is an integral part of our self-evaluation process and is implemented in relation to its impact on learners' progress.

Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the Board of Trustees has a reasonable expectation that the Academy 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. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the Statement of Accounting Policies.

Financial review

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

The Academy also receives grants for fixed assets from the ESFA/DfE. In accordance with the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice, such grants are shown in the Statement of Financial Activities as restricted income in the fixed asset fund. The restricted fixed asset fund balance is reduced by annual depreciation charges over the expected useful life of the assets concerned.

In addition funds are received from various activities carried out to generate funds, such as any running costs of the Academy not met by restricted grants. Any surplus is carried forward as an unrestricted fund in the balance sheet.

Financial Position

During the year ended 31 August 2024 total revenue expenditure (excluding depreciation and LGPS pension adjustments) was £9.8 million (2023: £8.4 million) and total income and endowments from the DfE and other sources were £9.3 million (2023: £8.4 million).

At 31 August 2024 the net book value of tangible fixed assets was £23.3 million (2023: £23.6 million) and movements in tangible fixed assets are shown in the notes to the financial statements. The assets were used exclusively for providing education and the associated support services to the pupils of the Academy.

The Academy held general fund balances at 31 August 2024 of negative (£138,000) (2023: positive £355,000) comprising negative (£161,000) (2023: positive £130,000) of restricted general funds and £23,000 (2023: £225,000) of unrestricted funds. The restricted pension reserve is currently £ Nil (2023: £ Nil). This relates solely to the actuarial assessment of Local Government Pension Scheme and future contribution rates have been agreed. The academy has included an asset ceiling cap to reduce the actual asset to Nil as required by current accounting standards.

Financial and risk management objectives and policies

The academy trust's financial and risk management objectives are documented in its:

- Official budgets
- Scheme of delegation
- Financial regulations
- Risk register
- Risk management policy

The deficit on the pension reserve relates to the non-teaching staff pension scheme where, unlike the teachers scheme, separate assets are held to fund future liabilities. The deficit can be met in the longer term from any combination of increased employer or employee contributions, increased government funding or changes to scheme benefits.

Reserves policy

The Trustees review the reserve levels of the Academy annually. Given increasing salary costs (increases in salaries, Teachers' Pensions contributions and National Insurance costs) and the downward pressure on grant income the Trustees currently aim to hold reserves to cover future budget gaps.

The Academy's current level of free reserves (total funds less the amount held in restricted pension and fixed asset funds) is negative (£161,000) (2023: positive £355,000).

Investment policy

The Academy Trust does not hold any investments other than cash at bank.

Principal risks and uncertainties

The Trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error.

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the Academy is exposed, in particular those relating to the fraud, technological disruption, specific teaching, provision of facilities and other operational areas of the Academy, and its finances. The Trustees have implemented a number of systems to assess risks that the Academy faces, especially in the operational areas (e.g. in computer security, financial systems controls and, relation to teaching, health and safety, bullying and Academy trips). They have introduced systems, including operational procedures (e.g. vetting of new staff and visitors, supervision of school grounds) and internal financial controls in order to minimise risk. Where significant financial risk still remains they have ensured they have adequate insurance cover. The Academy has an effective system of internal financial controls and this is explained in more detail in the Governance Statement.

The Trustees regularly review the risks faced by the Academy Trust and have completed a "Risk Register" to identify the critical areas of concern. As far as possible the Trustees have put in place management controls to minimise/ mitigate risks.

This should include consideration of those risks impacting on trustees' responsibilities to ensure the trust's estate is safe, well maintained, and complies with relevant regulations.

The Trustees regularly review the risks faced by the Academy Trust and have completed a "Risk Register" to identify the critical areas of concern. As far as possible the Trustees have put in place management controls to minimise/ mitigate risks.

Fundraising

The academy trust does not currently have in house resources. There is a parent committee that uses The Friends of Wootton Park School that fundraise on behalf of the academy trust. The Friends of Wootton Park School have their own charity status. The academy trust fundraisers for charity, all donations are given to the relevant charity. All fundraising undertaken during the year was monitored by the Trustees.

Achievements and Performance

The school has gone from strength to strength over the past academic year. Highlights have included:

Further growth and development of our new 6th Form (Opened in 2021) – now consisting of over 240 learners.

Outstanding key stage 1 and 2 results:

KS1		WPS 2024	Northampton '23	National '23
Expected	Reading	85.0%	68.0%	68.0%
	Writing	76.7%	60.0%	60.0%
	Maths	83.3%	70.0%	70.0%
Greater Depth	Reading	26.7%	18.0%	19.0%
	Writing	15.0%	8.0%	8.0%
	Maths	21.7%	16.0%	16.0%

EYFS	WPS 2024	Northampton '23 2024 not released yet
GLD	85%	67.2%

Phonics	WPS 2024	Northampton '24	National '24
Scoring 32+	91.6%	80.2%	80.0%

KS2		WPS 2024	W.Northants '24	National '24
Expected	Reading	83.9%	75.0%	74.0%
	Writing	87.1%	73.0%	72.0%
	Maths	91.7%	74.0%	73.0%
	GPaS	87.1%	73.0%	72.0%
Greater Depth	Reading	37.1%	27.0%	28.0%
	Writing	27.4%	12.0%	13.0%
	Maths	33.9%	23.0%	24.0%
	GPaS	58.1%	31.0%	32.0%

KS2		WPS 2024	W. Northants '24	National '23
Combined	Expected	82.3%	62.0%	61.0%
	Greater Depth	22.9%	7.0%	8.0%

In the KS2 SATS, the school exceeded national outcomes considerably in every single measure. All vulnerable groups performed in line with their peers.

Our GCSE learners also outperformed their peers in all national measures. These measures were:

- Progress 8 score of 0.65 which is 0.66 above national average
- Percentage of learners entering the Ebacc* of 69% which is 30% above national average
- Grade 5 or above in English and Maths of 60% compared to 45% nationally
- Attainment 8** score of 53.31 compared to national of 46.3 at national level
- Ebacc average point score of 4.96 compared to 4.05 nationally

Plans for future periods

The Trust will continue to put back in place plans and objectives held up as a result of COVID-19 and make full use of the educational facilities. To name a few of the plans for the next 12 months

- Transition from a Single Academy Trust to a Multi Academy Trust.
- Opening of Overstone Park Primary School in September 2025
- Development of plans for our secondary free school which was approved by the DfE in Wave 14
- Review and development of the Trust and Wootton Park School values
- Maintain and further develop the quality of education, personal development and wellbeing, and Sixth Form provision
- Further development of our staff well-being programme including the work of the school's voluntary workplace wellbeing champions.
- Ensuring ongoing outstanding all through provision and a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Collaborative working with member and associations in the local community
- Increased learner extra-curricular learning (school trips/competitions/additional classes).

Financial Management

The School has a clear Scheme of Delegation where the main financial operational procedures and due diligence are overseen by The Finance & Resources Committee.

This committee ensures value for money through regular reports and reviews of current and planned spending. The committee conduct these reviews through review of management accounts, an internal scrutiny report function and access to the interactive financial systems which show live dashboard performance against budgets along with KPIs.

The internal financial team structure has grown and evolved embracing technology, forward thinking and learning from COVID-19 impact of working. The team is monitored by the CEO, finance & resource committee, internal scrutiny, and external audit. Regular training and advisory, together with a forward thinking attitude to continue to improve and take advantage of emerging technologies and working relationships, is ensuring the financial functions integrates within the daily operations to provide transparency, efficiency and relevant information for joined up decision making and oversight.

As we transition to become a MAT, all key services will transition to a central team. This model will ensure efficient use of Trust finances and capacity.

Risks going forward

The most significant risk for the coming academic year is ensuring a balanced school budget. With increasing pressure on grant monies available, energy costs and inflationary rises, pension and wage cost, budgets are tight. The risk is managed by the use of:

- Monthly management accounts reporting with onward review of in year budgets and forecast
- Interactive financial systems that show daily and forecast performance
- Training and support to finance team to ensure financial data is accurate
- Regular internal finance meetings with CEO/Principal
- Regular Finance Committee meetings
- Timely census returns confirming increased pupil numbers to ensure positive pupil number adjustments.
- Timely financial returns for grants ensuring allocations are spent accordingly and not clawed back
- Strategic staffing plans to ensure costs are kept to a minimum with costs including overtime

Auditor

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- *there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and*
- the 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 auditor is aware of that information.

A resolution proposing that Azets Audit Services be reappointed as auditor of the charitable company will be put to the members.

The trustees' report, incorporating a strategic report, was approved by order of the board of trustees, as the company directors, on 02/12/2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Ms R Brittle

Chair of Directors

THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Scope of responsibility

As trustees, we acknowledge we have overall responsibility for ensuring that The Northampton Free School 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.

The board of trustees has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the principal, 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 The Northampton Free School Trust and the Secretary of State for Education. The accounting officer is 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 5 times during the year. Attendance during the year at meetings of the board of trustees was as follows:

Trustees	Meetings attended	Out of possible
Mr D Allmark	5	5
Ms R Brittle (Chair of Directors)	5	5
Ms M Miller	4	5
Mrs B O'Brien	1	5
Mr D H Rosser (Accounting officer)	5	5
Mr M Scoble	3	5
Ms C Strudwicke (Resigned 19 October 2023)	1	1
Mr C Howard	3	5
Ms K Clough	4	5
Dr M Mcdowell (Appointed 14 October 2024)	0	0

As noted above the board met 5 times during the year and in addition to this the finance committee met 5 times. These meetings, together with other committee meetings and regular involvement of the Chair of Governors in day to day academy business (as required) provided effective oversight of funds.

Conflicts of interest

The Academy maintains an up-to-date and complete register of interests, which is shared on the school website and in the Trustees minutes. The Finance manual is in place, updated annually and is adhered to. All staff follow these processes and practices and this is monitored by the Finance Manager and the Accounting Officer.

Governance reviews

The Academy Trust carry out an annual skills audit using the latest National Governance Association (NGA) guidance and documents. The final report was very positive showing the board is strong in all areas when working together. The board carried out a self-evaluation to support the board's strategic growth and to identify any training needs. The report highlights the board's strengths and identified trustees wished to build on their own knowledge in new areas. Trustees understand the importance and value of ensuring these reports are completed annually to support the board's growth and in turn help the school to sustain outstanding practice. The board also completed a diversity questionnaire (via NGA template) and identified areas to strengthen and promote diversity. The surveys where completed in December 2023 and discussed at the next FGB meeting. The board plans to complete their next review to include an independent review in the next academic year.

Finance, Policy and Personnel Committee

The finance and operations committee is a sub-committee of the main board of trustees. Its purpose is to inter alia, to review and approve all matters relating to Finance, Human Resources, Premises, Risk Management and Health and Safety. The Committees make recommendations to the board of Trustees for approval as set out in the terms of reference.

Attendance at meetings in the year was as follows:

Trustees	Meetings attended	Out of possible
Mr D Allmark	4	4
Ms R Brittle (Chair of Directors)	4	4
Mr D H Rosser (Accounting officer)	4	4
Mr M Scoble	4	4
Mr C Howard	4	4

Review of value for money

As accounting officer, the Principal has responsibility for ensuring that the academy 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, as well as estates safety and management, achieved in return for the taxpayer resources received.

The accounting officer considers how the academy trust's 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 available. The accounting officer for the academy trust has delivered improved value for money during the year by:

Educational outcomes have been improved with the same resource

- Closely monitoring staff requirements and making appropriate decisions about replacement, or otherwise when existing staff leave.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the curriculum and the number of staff required to deliver the curriculum effectively.
- Reviewing the basis on which Teaching and Learning Responsibilities (TLRs) are awarded to make sure that the number awarded are rationalised, appropriate for the size of the school and consistent across the facilities.
- The Academy has been able to avoid using any agency cover for teaching staff ensuring that the high standards have been maintained.

Purchasing has been improved

- Enhancing shared resources that are used throughout the school for cross curricular learning reducing the financial burden on departmental budgets.
- Additional funding secured from the LA to improve the temporary building facilities.
- Additional Best Value checks undertaken against new companies to ensure compliance is adhered to when entering a new contract for goods.
- New suppliers sourced and requested new discounts from current suppliers in order to reduce costs.
- School Minibus utilised for suitable trips to reduce increasing coach costs to parents.

Financial oversight and governance has been strengthened

The Trust reviewed its financial accounting systems and has merged its current financial package in line with the ESFA charts of accounts. This will enable an efficient system allowing the Trust's finances to be managed more effectively. Financial reporting, Benchmarking and the Academies Accounts return will also benefit by this strengthening.

Income generation has been maximised

Increase to lettings bookings ensures income generation continues to grow. Our wrap around care facilities are full every day and we secured funding from our Local Authority to improve the temporary building provision.

Value for money: Areas for future focus

As the Trust enters its eighth year of operation, there will be a further focus on lettings income generation and a review of suppliers originally appointed for the Trust's opening.

In particular, accounting officers should consider demonstrating how they have effectively used relevant funding to ensure the trust's estate is safe, well-maintained, and complies with regulations.

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 on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of academy trust 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 The Northampton Free School Trust for the period 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accounts.

Capacity to handle risk

The board of trustees has reviewed the key risks to which the academy 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 ongoing process for identifying, evaluating and managing the academy trust's significant risks that has been in place for the period 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accounts. This process is regularly reviewed by the board of trustees.

The risk and control framework

The academy 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 resources 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;
- identification and management of risks.

The board of trustees has considered the need for a specific internal audit function and has decided to appoint Infinitas Accountants Limited as an internal auditor for another academic year.

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

- testing of payroll systems
- testing of purchase systems
- testing of petty cash and staff expenses
- testing of control account/ bank reconciliations
- review of various governance and associated business matters.

The internal auditor reports to the board of the Trustees, through the Finance and Operations committee on the operations of the systems of control and on the discharge of the board of Trustees' financial responsibilities three times a year.

The Academy trust confirms the internal auditor has delivered their schedule of work as planned and no material control issues arose from the internal auditor's work.

Review of effectiveness

As accounting officer the principal has responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. During the year in question the review has been informed by:

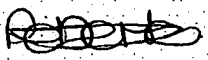
- the work of the internal reviewer;
- the work of the external auditor;
- the work of the executive managers within the academy trust who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework.

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

Conclusion

Based on the advice of the audit and risk 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 board of trustees on 02/12/2024 and signed on its behalf by:



Ms R Brittle
Chair of Directors

THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

STATEMENT OF REGULARITY, PROPRIETY AND COMPLIANCE

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

As accounting officer of The Northampton Free School 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 of all funding, including for estates safety and management, 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's board of trustees are able to identify any material irregular or improper use of 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 Academies 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.

Mr D H Rosser
Accounting Officer

THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

The trustees (who are also the directors of The Northampton Free School Trust for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the accounts in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024 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 accounts for each financial year. Under company law, the trustees must not approve the accounts 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 accounts, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024;
- make judgements 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 accounts; and
- prepare the accounts 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 accounts 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 that 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 accounts may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Approved by order of the members of the board of trustees on 04.12.2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Ms R Brittle
Chair of Directors

THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Opinion

We have audited the accounts of The Northampton Free School 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 accounts, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024 issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

In our opinion the accounts:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company'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;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the 'Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the accounts' section of our report. We are independent of the academy trust in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the accounts in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our 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 our 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.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the accounts and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the accounts 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 accounts or our 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 accounts 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.

Opinions 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 incorporated strategic report for the financial year for which the accounts are prepared is consistent with the accounts; and
- the trustees' report including the incorporated strategic report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the 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 incorporated 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 accounts 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, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts 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 accounts that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the accounts, 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 concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the accounts

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the accounts as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our 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 accounts.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

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

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

We obtain and update our understanding of the entity, its activities, its control environment, and likely future developments, including in relation to the legal and regulatory framework applicable and how the entity is complying with that framework. Based on this understanding, we identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. This includes consideration of the risk of acts by the entity that were contrary to applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud, we designed procedures which included:

- Enquiry of senior leadership, Governors/Trustees and those charged with governance around actual and potential litigation and claims as well as actual, suspected and alleged fraud;
- Reviewing minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Assessing the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company through enquiry and inspection;
- Reviewing financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations including compliance with the Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024 issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency;
- Performing audit work over the recognition of grant income and the allocation of expenditure to funds;
- Performing audit work over the risk of management bias and override of controls, including testing of journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness, evaluating the rationale of significant transactions outside the normal course of business and reviewing accounting estimates for indicators of potential bias.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company'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 charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's 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 charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Azets Audit Services

Mr Paul Tyler (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Azets Audit Services

18/12/2024

Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Thorpe House
93 Headlands
Kettering
Northamptonshire
United Kingdom
NN15 6BL

THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

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

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

In accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated 3 September 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 The Northampton Free School Trust during the period 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 The Northampton Free School Trust and ESFA in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the The Northampton Free School 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 The Northampton Free School Trust and ESFA, for our work, for this report, or for the conclusion we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of The Northampton Free School Trust's accounting officer and the reporting accountant

The accounting officer is responsible, under the requirements of The Northampton Free School Trust's funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education dated 1 July 2011 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 period 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:

- Assessment of the internal audit work and reliance placed upon this work for the review of internal control procedures
- Further testing of the internal control procedures has been carried out in the following areas:
    - Sample test of delegated authority procedures
    - Enquiry and review of transactions with connected persons
    - Review of governance procedures including inspection of Trustee and relevant Board minutes
    - Sample test of procurement procedures
- Communication with the Accounting Officer

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

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

Conclusion

In the course of our work, nothing has come to our attention which suggests that in all material respects the expenditure disbursed and income received during the period 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.

Azets Audit Services

Reporting Accountant
Azets Audit Services
Thorpe House
93 Headlands
Kettering
Northamptonshire
NN15 6BL
United Kingdom

Dated: 18/12/2024

THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £'000s	Restricted funds: General £'000s	Restricted funds: Fixed asset £'000s	Total 2024 £'000s	Total 2023 £'000s
Income and endowments from:						
Donations and capital grants	3	19	-	413	432	84
Charitable activities:						
- Funding for educational operations	4	413	8,636	-	9,049	8,216
Other trading activities	5	199	-	-	199	202
Total		631	8,636	413	9,680	8,502
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds	6	165	-	-	165	174
Charitable activities:						
- Educational operations	7	668	8,932	396	9,996	8,684
Total	6	833	8,932	396	10,161	8,858
Net income/(expenditure)		(202)	(296)	17	(481)	(356)
Transfers between funds	17	-	87	(87)	-	-
Other recognised gains/(losses)						
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	19	-	117	-	117	403
Adjustment for restriction on pension assets	19	-	(199)	-	(199)	(207)
Net movement in funds		(202)	(291)	(70)	(563)	(160)
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward		225	130	23,638	23,993	24,153
Total funds carried forward		23	(161)	23,568	23,430	23,993

THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 AUGUST 2024

	Notes	2024 £'000s	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s	2023 £'000s
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	12		23,345		23,638
Current assets					
Stock	13	6		6	
Debtors	14	433		448	
Cash at bank and in hand		416		429	
		855		883	
Current liabilities					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	15	(770)		(528)	
Net current assets			85		355
Net assets excluding pension asset			23,430		23,993
Defined benefit pension scheme asset	19		-		-
Total net assets			23,430		23,993
Funds of the academy trust:					
Restricted funds	17				
- Fixed asset funds			23,568		23,638
- Restricted income funds			(161)		130
Total restricted funds			23,407		23,768
Unrestricted income funds	17		23		225
Total funds			23,430		23,993

The accounts on pages 23 to 45 were approved by the trustees and authorised for issue on 02/12/2024 and are signed on their behalf by:

Ms R Brittle
Chair of Directors

Company registration number 08782697 (England and Wales)

THE NORTHAMPTON FREE SCHOOL TRUST

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

	Notes	2024 £'000s	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s	2023 £'000s
Cash flows from operating activities					
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	20		(323)		78
Cash flows from investing activities					
Capital grants from DfE Group		47		52	
Capital funding received from sponsors and others		366		13	
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(103)		(190)	
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities			310		(125)
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period			(13)		(47)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year			429		476
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year			416		429

1 Accounting policies

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

1.1 Basis of preparation

The accounts of the academy trust, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared under the historical 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.

The Northampton Free School Trust meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102 and is a private charitable company, limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales. The address of its principal place of business is given on page 1 and the nature of its operations are set out in the trustees' report.

The financial statements are prepared in Sterling, being the functional currency of the charitable company. Monetary amounts presented in these financial statements have been rounded to the nearest £'000.

1.2 Going concern

The trustees assess whether the use of going concern is appropriate, ie whether there are any material uncertainties related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the charitable company to continue as a going concern. The trustees have made this assessment in respect of a period of at least one year from the date of authorisation for issue of the accounts 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 accounts.

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 period for which it is receivable, and any abatement in respect of the period 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.

1 **Accounting policies** **(Continued)**

Other income

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

Donated goods, facilities and services

Goods donated for resale are included at fair value, being the expected proceeds from sale less the expected costs of sale. If it is practical to assess the fair value at receipt, it is recognised in stock and 'Income from other trading activities'. Upon sale, the value of the stock is charged against 'Income from other trading activities' and the proceeds are recognised as 'Income from other trading activities'. Where it is impractical to fair value the items due to the volume of low value items they are not recognised in the accounts until they are sold. This income is recognised within 'Income from other trading activities'.

Donated fixed assets

Donated fixed assets are measured at fair value unless it is impractical to measure this reliably, in which case the cost of the item to the donor is used. The gain is recognised as income from donations 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 are allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

All resources expended are inclusive of irrecoverable VAT.

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.

Governance costs

These include the costs attributable to the academy trust's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management, trustees' meetings and reimbursed expenses.

1 **Accounting policies** **(Continued)**

1.5 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

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 that require 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, at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset on a straight-line basis over its expected useful life, as follows:

Leasehold Land & Buildings	125 years
Computer equipment	20% on cost
Fixtures, fittings & equipment	20% on reducing balance

Assets in the course of construction are included at cost. Depreciation on these assets is not charged until they are brought into use.

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.

1.6 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 of services it must provide.

1.7 Leased assets

Rentals under operating leases are charged on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

1.8 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 basis are as follows.

Financial assets

Trade and other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost. 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. 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 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

1.9 Stock

Stock is valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

1.10 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 chapter 3 part 11 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.

1.11 Pensions benefits

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 and the assets are held separately from those of the academy trust.

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 projected unit method. The 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 are 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.

1.12 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 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 Education and Skills Funding Agency/Department for Education.

Restricted pension reserve funds represent the Academy Trust's share of the assets and liabilities of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

1.13 Agency arrangements - Post 16 bursary

The academy trust acts as an agent in distributing 16-19 bursary funds from ESFA. Payments received from ESFA and subsequent disbursements to students are excluded from the statement of financial activities as the academy trust does not have control over the charitable application of the funds. The funds received and paid, and any balances held are disclosed in note 26.

2 Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgement

Accounting estimates and judgements 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 19, 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 2019 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.

The fair value of the pension plan assets at 31 August 2024 is in excess of the present value of the defined benefit obligation at that date giving rise to a surplus of £406,000.

The surplus is recognised in the financial statements only to the extent that the Academy Trust can recover that surplus, either through a reduction in future contributions or through a refund to the Academy Trust. The Academy Trust is not able to determine that future contributions will be reduced and it is not possible to receive a refund, as the specific conditions for this have not been met. Therefore, an asset ceiling is in place such that the surplus of £406,000 is not ecognised as an asset at 31 August 2024 as the Academy Trust is not able to determine that future contributions will be reduced or that a refund of the surplus will be available in the foreseeable future.

3 Donations and capital grants

	Unrestricted funds £'000s	Restricted funds £'000s	Total 2024 £'000s	Total 2023 £'000s
Capital grants	-	47	47	65
Other donations	19	366	385	19
	19	413	432	84

The income from donations and capital grants was £432,000 (2023: £84,000) of which £19,000 was unrestricted (2023: £19,000) and £413,000 was restricted fixed assets (2023: £65,000).

4 **Funding for the academy trust's educational operations**

	Unrestricted funds £'000s	Restricted funds £'000s	Total 2024 £'000s	Total 2023 £'000s
DfE/ESFA grants				
General annual grant (GAG)	-	6,935	6,935	6,674
Other DfE/ESFA grants:				
- UIFSM	-	77	77	68
- Pupil premium	-	178	178	165
- Teachers pension grants	-	107	107	19
- Teachers pay grant	-	104	104	66
- Others	-	262	262	361
	-	7,663	7,663	7,353
Other government grants				
Local authority grants	-	734	734	398
Other incoming resources	413	239	652	465
Total funding	413	8,636	9,049	8,216

The income from funding for educational operations was £9,049,000 (2023: £8,216,000) of which £413,000 was unrestricted (2023: £71,000) and £8,636,000 was restricted (2023: £8,145,000).

Included within local authority grants is an amount of £220,000 (2023: £nil) in relation to a start up grant for Overstone Primary School. An amount of £185,040 is included within unspent grants carried forward as at 31 August 2024.

5 **Other trading activities**

	Unrestricted funds £'000s	Restricted funds £'000s	Total 2024 £'000s	Total 2023 £'000s
Other income	199	-	199	202

The income from other trading activities was £199,000 (2023: £202,000) of which £199,000 was unrestricted (2023: £202,000).

6 Expenditure

	Staff costs	Non-pay expenditure Premises	Other	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Expenditure on raising funds					
- Allocated support costs	151	-	14	165	174
Academy's educational operations					
- Direct costs	6,385	396	826	7,607	6,308
- Allocated support costs	1,382	425	582	2,389	2,376
	7,918	821	1,422	10,161	8,858

Net income/(expenditure) for the year includes:	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	396	398
Fees payable to auditor for audit services	11	11
Net interest on defined benefit pension liability	(12)	6

7 Charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds £'000s	Restricted funds £'000s	Total 2024 £'000s	Total 2023 £'000s
Direct costs				
Educational operations	-	7,607	7,607	6,308
Support costs				
Educational operations	668	1,721	2,389	2,376
	668	9,328	9,996	8,684

The expenditure on charitable activities was £9,996,000 (2023: £8,684,000) of which £668,000 was unrestricted (2023: £53,000), £8,932,000 was restricted (2023: £8,233,000) and £396,000 was restricted fixed assets (2023: £398,000).

Analysis of support costs	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s
Support staff costs	1,392	1,540
Premises costs	425	365
Legal costs	2	5
Other support costs	538	444
Governance costs	32	22
	2,389	2,376

8 Governance costs

All from restricted funds:	Total 2024 £'000s	Total 2023 £'000s
Amounts included in support costs		
Legal costs	11	5
Auditor's remuneration		
- Audit of financial statements	11	11
- Other audit costs	7	7
Other governance costs	5	4
	34	27

9 Staff

Staff costs and employee benefits

Staff costs during the year were:

	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s
Wages and salaries	6,005	5,310
Social security costs	602	511
Pension costs	1,311	1,189
Staff costs - employees	7,918	7,010
	7,918	7,010
Staff development and other staff costs	69	57
Total staff expenditure	7,987	7,067

Staff numbers

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

	2024 Number	2023 Number
Teachers	75	76
Administration and support	110	107
Management	19	19
	204	202

9 Staff (Continued)

Higher paid staff

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

	2024 Number	2023 Number
£60,001 - £70,000	7	5
£70,001 - £80,000	5	2
£80,001 - £90,000	2	1
£150,001 - £160,000	1	1

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 employee benefits (including employer pension contributions and employer national insurance contributions) received by key management personnel for their services to the academy trust was £855,182 (2023: £771,294).

10 Trustees' remuneration and expenses

One or more of the 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, and not in respect of their services as trustees.

The value of trustees' remuneration and other benefits was as follows:

Mr D Rosser (Principal and Trustee)		
Remuneration	£155,000-£160,000	(2023: £150,000-£155,000)
Employers' pension contributions	£40,000- £45,000	(2023: £30,000-£35,000)
Mrs E Lavelle (Staff Trustee)		
Remuneration	£30,000-£35,000	(2023: £25,000-£30,000)
Employers' pension contributions	£5,000- £10,000	(2023: £Nil-£5,000)
Mrs K Smith (Staff Trustee)		
Remuneration	£70,000-£75,000	(2023: £65,000-£70,000)
Employers' pension contributions	£15,000-£20,000	(2023: £15,000-£20,000)

During the year ended 31 August 2024 expenses totalling £Nil were reimbursed or paid directly to no Trustees (2023: £Nil).

Other related party transactions involving the Trustees are set out within the related parties note.

11 Trustees' and officers' insurance

The Academy Trust has opted into the Department for Education's risk protection arrangement (RPA), an alternative to insurance where UK government funds cover losses that arise. This scheme protect Trustees and officers from claims arising from negligent acts, errors or omissions occurring whilst on Academy business and provides cover up to £10,000,000. It is not possible to quantify the Trustees and officers indemnity element from the overall cost of the RPA scheme.

12 Tangible fixed assets

	Leasehold Land & Buildings £'000s	Computer equipment £'000s	Fixtures, fittings & equipment £'000s	Total £'000s
Cost				
At 1 September 2023	23,333	565	1,395	25,293
Additions	-	32	71	103
At 31 August 2024	23,333	597	1,466	25,396
Depreciation				
At 1 September 2023	561	423	671	1,655
Charge for the year	186	56	154	396
At 31 August 2024	747	479	825	2,051
Net book value				
At 31 August 2024	22,586	118	641	23,345
At 31 August 2023	22,772	142	724	23,638

13 Stock

	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s
Uniforms	6	6

14 Debtors

	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s
Trade debtors	10	46
VAT recoverable	24	51
Prepayments and accrued income	399	351
	433	448

15 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s
Trade creditors	220	228
Post 16 bursary creditor	8	-
Other creditors	295	-
Accruals and deferred income	247	300
	770	528

16 Deferred income

	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s
Deferred income is included within:		
Creditors due within one year	150	168
Deferred income at 1 September 2023	168	80
Released from previous years	(168)	(80)
Resources deferred in the year	150	168
Deferred income at 31 August 2024	150	168

At the balance sheet date the Academy Trust was holding funds received in advance of the next academic year for free school meals, growth funding and educational visits.

17 Funds

	Balance at 1 September 2023 £'000s	Income £'000s	Expenditure £'000s	Gains, losses and transfers £'000s	Balance at 31 August 2024 £'000s
Restricted general funds					
General Annual Grant (GAG)	130	6,935	(7,498)	87	(346)
UIFSM	-	77	(77)	-	-
Pupil premium	-	178	(178)	-	-
Other DfE/ESFA grants	-	473	(473)	-	-
Other government grants	-	514	(514)	-	-
Overstone start up grant	-	220	(35)	-	185
Other restricted funds	-	239	(239)	-	-
Pension reserve	-	-	82	(82)	-
	130	8,636	(8,932)	5	(161)
Restricted fixed asset funds					
DfE group capital grants	23,638	47	(396)	55	23,344
Overstone capital grant - start up	-	222	-	-	222
LA other capital funding	-	101	-	(101)	-
DfE Managed Free School capital grants	-	43	-	(41)	2
	23,638	413	(396)	(87)	23,568
Total restricted funds	23,768	9,049	(9,328)	(82)	23,407
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	225	631	(833)	-	23
Total funds	23,993	9,680	(10,161)	(82)	23,430

17 Funds (Continued)

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

Restricted General Funds represent unspent General Annual Grant (GAG), which must be used for the normal recurring costs of the Academy together with other restricted general funds.

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

Restricted Fixed Asset Funds represent resources which have been applied to specific capital purposes imposed by the funder together with cash resources still to be expended. During the year a transfer of £55,144 was made from restricted funds to restricted fixed asset funds in order to fund the acquisition of various tangible fixed assets. There was also a transfer of £101,369 from restricted fixed asset funds to restricted funds for items previously acquired out of GAG, for which capital funding has since been granted.

Included within the restricted fixed asset fund carried forward is £222,000 in respect of unspent capital grants in relation to the start up of Overstone Primary School.

Restricted Pension Reserve Funds represent the Academy Trust's share of the assets and liabilities of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

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

	Balance at 1 September 2022 £'000s	Income £'000s	Expenditure £'000s	Gains, losses and transfers £'000s	Balance at 31 August 2023 £'000s
Restricted general funds					
General Annual Grant (GAG)	134	6,674	(6,678)	-	130
UIFSM	-	68	(68)	-	-
Pupil premium	-	165	(165)	-	-
Other DfE/ESFA grants	-	446	(446)	-	-
Other government grants	-	398	(398)	-	-
Other restricted funds	-	394	(394)	-	-
Pension reserve	(112)	-	(84)	196	-
	22	8,145	(8,233)	196	130
Restricted fixed asset funds					
DfE group capital grants	23,846	65	(398)	125	23,638
Total restricted funds	23,868	8,210	(8,631)	321	23,768
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	285	292	(227)	(125)	225
Total funds	24,153	8,502	(8,858)	196	23,993

18 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted Funds £'000s	Restricted funds: General £'000s	Restricted funds: Fixed asset £'000s	Total Funds £'000s
Fund balances at 31 August 2024 are represented by:				
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	23,345	23,345
Current assets	-	632	223	855
Current liabilities	23	(793)	-	(770)
Total net assets	23	(161)	23,568	23,430

	Unrestricted Funds £'000s	Restricted funds: General £'000s	Restricted funds: Fixed asset £'000s	Total Funds £'000s
Fund balances at 31 August 2023 are represented by:				
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	23,638	23,638
Current assets	156	727	-	883
Current liabilities	69	(597)	-	(528)
Total net assets	225	130	23,638	23,993

19 Pension and similar obligations

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 Hyman Robertson LLP. Both are multi-employer defined benefit schemes.

The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS related to the period ended 31 March 2016, and that of the LGPS related to the period ended 31 March 2019.

At the reporting date £165,075 (2023: £nil) was due in respect of employees and employers LGPS and TPS pension contributions. This amount is included within other creditors in note 15.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

Introduction

The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for teachers in academy trusts. 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 ensure scheme costs are recognised and managed appropriately and the review specifies the level of future contributions.

19 Pension and similar obligations **(Continued)**

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 outcome 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 result of this valuation will be implemented from 1 April 2024.The next valuation result is due to be implemented from 1 April 2028.

The employer's pension costs paid to the TPS in the period amounted to £1,172,252 (2023: £830,341).

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 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 contributions are as noted below. The agreed contribution rates for future years are 17.8% for employers and 5.5% - 12.5% for employees.

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.

Total contributions made	**2024**	**2023**
	£'000s	**£'000s**
Employer's contributions	336	281
Employees' contributions	111	98
Total contributions	447	379

19 Pension and similar obligations **(Continued)**

Principal actuarial assumptions	**2024**	**2023**
	%	**%**
Rate of increase in salaries	3.2	3.5
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/inflation	2.7	3.0
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	5.0	5.2
Inflation assumption (CPI)	2.7	3.0
Commutation of pensions to lump sums - Pre April 2008 service	50	50
Commutation of pensions to lump sums - Post April 2008 service	75	75

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

	2024	**2023**
	Years	**Years**
Retiring today		
- Males	21.0	21.1
- Females	23.8	23.9
Retiring in 20 years		
- Males	21.0	21.2
- Females	25.3	25.3

Scheme liabilities would have been affected by changes in assumptions as follows:

	2024	**2023**
	£'000s	**£'000s**
Discount rate + 0.1%	(66)	(52)
Discount rate - 0.1%	66	52
Mortality assumption + 1 year	77	59
Mortality assumption - 1 year	(77)	(59)
CPI rate + 0.1%	68	52
CPI rate - 0.1%	(68)	(52)

19 **Pension and similar obligations** (Continued)

Defined benefit pension scheme net asset	**2024 £'000s**	**2023 £'000s**
Scheme assets	2,325	1,670
Scheme obligations	(1,919)	(1,463)
Asset ceiling adjustment	(406)	(207)
Net asset	-	-

The fair value of the pension plan assets at 31 August 2024 is in excess of the present value of the defined benefit obligations at that date, giving rise to a net surplus of £406,000.

The surplus is recognised in the financial statements only to the extent that the Academy Trust can recover that surplus, either through a reduction in future contributions or through a refund to the Academy Trust.

The Academy Trust is not able to determine that future contributions will be reduced and it is not possible for the Academy Trust to receive a refund from the scheme, as the the specific conditions for this have not been met. Therefore, an asset ceiling is in place such that the surplus of £406,000 is not recognised as an asset at 31 August 2024 and the net surplus/deficit recognised in the financial statements is capped at £Nil.

The academy trust's share of the assets in the scheme	**2024 Fair value £'000s**	**2023 Fair value £'000s**
Equities	1,232	1,035
Debt instruments	651	401
Property	349	217
Cash	93	17
Total market value of assets	2,325	1,670

The actual return on scheme assets was £209,000 (2023: £284,000).

Amount recognised in the statement of financial activities	**2024 £'000s**	**2023 £'000s**
Current service cost	266	359
Interest income	(98)	(51)
Interest cost	86	57
Total operating charge	254	365

19 Pension and similar obligations (Continued)

Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s
At 1 September 2023	1,463	1,120
Current service cost	266	359
Interest cost	86	57
Employee contributions	111	98
Actuarial gain	(6)	(170)
Benefits paid	(1)	(1)
At 31 August 2024	1,919	1,463

Changes in the fair value of the academy trust's share of scheme assets	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s
At 1 September 2023	1,670	1,008
Interest income	98	51
Actuarial gain	111	233
Employer contributions	336	281
Employee contributions	111	98
Benefits paid	(1)	(1)
At 31 August 2024	2,325	1,670

20 Reconciliation of net expenditure to net cash flow from operating activities

	Notes	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s
Net expenditure for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)		(481)	(356)
Adjusted for:			
Capital grants from DfE and other capital income		(413)	(65)
Defined benefit pension costs less contributions payable	19	(70)	78
Defined benefit pension scheme finance (income)/cost	19	(12)	6
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets		396	398
(Increase) in stocks		-	(2)
Decrease/(increase) in debtors		15	(81)
Increase in creditors		242	100
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities		(323)	78

21 Analysis of changes in net funds

	1 September 2023 £'000s	Cash flows £'000s	31 August 2024 £'000s
Cash	429	(13)	416

22 Contingent liabilities

During the period of the funding agreement, in the event of the sale or disposal by other means, of any asset for which a government capital grant was received, the academy trust is required either to re-invest the proceeds, or to repay to the Secretary of State for Education the same proportion of the proceeds of the sale or disposal as equates with the proportion of the original cost met by the Secretary of State.

Upon termination of the funding agreement, whether as a result of the Secretary of State or the academy trust serving notice, the academy trust shall repay to the Secretary of State sums determined by reference to:

(a) the value at that time of the academy site and premises and other assets held for the purposes of the academy trust; and

(b) the extent to which expenditure incurred in providing those assets was met by the Secretary of State under the funding agreement.

Since the Academy Trust has been in occupation of its new building it believes it has not been correctly charged for the water usage within its building. The Academy Trust management have been in discussions with its supplier to correct this position, however as at the date of approving these accounts has been unable to estabilish the correct position with the supplier. As the amounts involved can not be estimated with any degree of reliability no creditor has been provided within these accounts and the Academy Trust will recognise the liability once a reliable estimate can be estabilished.

23 Long-term commitments

Operating leases

At 31 August 2024 the total of the academy trust's future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases was:

	2024 £'000s	2023 £'000s
Amounts due within one year	7	7
Amounts due in two and five years	9	16
	16	23

24 Related party transactions

Owing to the nature of the Academy Trust's operations 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 Trust has an interest. All transactions involving such organisations are conducted at arm's length and in accordance with the Academy Trust's financial regulations and normal procurement procedures.

No related party transactions took place in the period of account other than certain trustees' remuneration and expenses already disclosed in note 10.

25 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 or she is a member, or within one year after he or she ceases to be a member, such amount as may be required, not exceeding £10 for the debts and liabilities contracted before he or she ceases to be a member.

26 Agency arrangements

The academy trust distributes 16-19 bursary funds to students as an agent for ESFA. In the accounting period ending 31 August 2024 the academy trust received £14,502 and disbursed £6,362 from the fund. As at 31 August 2024, the unspent 16-19 bursary fund is £8,140, of which £nil relates to undistributed funding that is repayable to ESFA. The unspent balance can be seen within creditors in note 15.