



Education & Skills  
Funding Agency

Education and Skills Funding Agency  
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[www.gov.uk/esfa](http://www.gov.uk/esfa)

3 October 2019

**Chair of trustees**  
**Trust name**

**Sent via email**

Dear [chair's name]

**Request for information regarding high executive salaries**

Your 2017 to 2018 submitted accounts return show that you are one of a very small number of academy trusts who have **[an executive salary above £150,000] / [multiple salaries between £100,000 and £150,000]**. I am writing to you in your capacity as the Chair of Trustees to request further information on your process and the rationale for setting these levels of salaries within your academy trust.

Please note that a list of academy trusts issued with this letter will be published on GOV.UK on 17 October 2019. This forms part of our ongoing campaign to challenge academy trusts with high levels of executive pay.

Last year I wrote to 212 academy trusts that reported paying salaries in excess of £100,000. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) challenges academy trusts paying salaries that seem disproportionate to the size and/or level of challenges faced by the trust. Since this activity began in December 2017, around 25% of the trusts we have engaged with have reported salary reductions.

Trusts have a responsibility to ensure value for money and that salary and other remuneration payments are transparent, proportionate, reasonable and justifiable. The ESFA has a responsibility to ensure that best practice is exemplified in the system to ensure this accountability.

As the person responsible for the governance of your trust, I would suggest that there are some simple and helpful principles to consider when setting the pay of your most senior employees:

1. the educational performance of your organisation;
2. ensuring effective financial performance of your trust and a healthy, balanced budget; and
3. the number of pupils being educated in your trust and the degree of challenge in the roles of the highest paid.

Further guidance on [Setting executive salaries: guidance for academy trusts](#) has been published.

The Academies Financial Handbook 2019 sets out in more detail the requirements for setting executive salaries:

**2.31** *The board **must** discharge its responsibilities effectively, ensuring its approach to pay is transparent, proportionate and justifiable, including:*

- *process - that the procedure for determining executive pay is agreed by the board in advance and documented*
- *independence - decisions about executive pay reflect independent and objective scrutiny by the board and that conflicts of interest are avoided*
- *decision-making - factors in determining pay are clear, including whether performance considerations, and the degree of challenge in the role, have been taken into account*
- *proportionality – pay is defensible relative to the public sector market*
- *documentation - the rationale behind the decision-making process, including whether the level of pay reflects value for money, is recorded and retained*
- *a basic presumption that non-teaching pay should not increase at a faster rate than that of teachers, in individual years and over the longer term*
- *understanding that inappropriate pay can be challenged by ESFA, particularly in any instance of poor financial management of the trust.*
- *In line with this strengthened position, please update me as to how you propose to address the issue of high pay in your trust by completing the annex attached for each of those individuals in your trust earning more than £100,000.*

**I would be grateful if you would send the completed annex together with a copy of your trust's current pay policy to [academy.questions@education.gov.uk](mailto:academy.questions@education.gov.uk) by [XX] 2019.**

You should be aware that all of your employees participating in the Teachers' Pension Scheme will have benefited from a rise in employer contributions of some 42% from 1st September 2019. This is a very significant increase and I am sure will be considered in the remuneration structure of your senior staff, if they are currently benefiting from this scheme. This alone is equivalent to a 7% pay rise, double that awarded last year to teaching staff. It is important for boards to note that this pension scheme, one of the best public sector schemes in the UK, was designed for teaching staff.

The 2019 edition of the [Academies Financial Handbook](#) introduces a new requirement for academy trusts to provide a direct email address for all members and trustees using the governance section of [get information about schools \(GIAS\)](#).

At the time of writing, we can't see member and trustee contact information for your trust. Please ensure your trust supplies these contacts using our guide to [providing or updating academy trusts governance contact information](#).

Many thanks in advance for your co-operation on something that I regard as being a critically important matter.

Yours sincerely

*Eileen M. Milner*

**Eileen Milner**

Chief Executive, Education and Skills Funding Agency

**Annex**

Trust Name	[XX]
Companies House Number	[XX]
Rationale for setting salary level and evidence that a robust process was followed in line with the requirements set out in the Academies Financial Handbook 2018.	
Basic salary.	
Contractual notice period.	
Performance-related pay and other bonuses awarded during the financial year.	
Pension contributions and payments in lieu of pension contributions, including information on participation in the Teacher Pension Scheme and/or the Local Government pension scheme.	
Salary sacrifice arrangements.	
Compensation for loss of office.	
Any sums paid under any pension scheme in relation to employment with the provider.	
Non-taxable benefits that are available only to senior members of staff.	
Other remuneration and the cost to the provider of providing each type of remuneration.	
Details of succession planning for highly paid incumbents including any intention to reduce the level of salary.	
Details on whether these salaries were inherited from a Local Authority following conversion to an academy trust.	