Grove Learning Trust

Executive Pay Policy

Ratified by the Board of Trustees

Date: Oct 2025

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Scope

This policy specifically relates to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Executive Leadership Team and includes our approach to pay and how pay is determined and reviewed. The Executive Leadership team comprises the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and Deputy CEO (DCEO).

This policy may be applicable to other roles if/when appointed to the trust structure (such as Chief Operations Officer, Director of Education, Chief Finance & Operations Officer).

Introduction

As an academy trust, we are both a charity and a company limited by guarantee and as such we must operate to further The Trust's educational charitable purpose whilst being accountable to the Department for Education (DfE), the Secretary of State for Education as principal regulator, and the communities we serve for the education they provide to pupils.

It is essential that we have the best people to lead our academies, but at the same time, it is important that salaries:

- can be justified and are in the best interests of the charity
- reflect the individual's responsibilities
- demonstrate value for money

Objectives

The Board will ensure that executive pay is proportional and defensible to the public sector market and reflects value for money. As such, appropriate expenditure of public money and transparent reporting and accounting procedures, including around the setting of executive pay, are essential elements in maintaining public Trust and confidence.

The Trust recognises the competitive nature of the labour market within the sector when considering executive pay, and as such, this will have an impact on the reward package made available. Having a competitive reward offering is one of the many ways in which the Trust can secure the very best people to achieve our ambitious targets and support children and young people to reach their potential in educational achievements. It is our aim to accomplish this through fair salaries for talented people. The Trust's approach to pay recognises the importance of having the ability to attract and retain the right candidates with the right values, experience, knowledge and skills to lead. This document sets out arrangements that are designed to:

- recruit, retain and motivate high calibre individuals
- provide a framework that allows flexibility but that is fair and equitable
- works within the parameters of the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) and the DfE guidance on 'Setting executive salaries: guidance for academy trusts'

Nolan Principles

The Board of Trustees acknowledges that all school leaders are public servants in how they serve their pupils and surrounding communities. They are not only expected to lead schools but also to model best behaviours, including adhering to the Nolan Principles:

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

Legislation, Guidance and Best Practice

As an academy trust, we are free to determine our own approach in deciding executive pay, however the Board of Trustees must operate within the provisions set out in the Academy Trust Handbook when setting or agreeing increases to executive pay as follows:

- process – that the procedure for determining executive pay and benefits, and keeping them proportionate, is agreed by the board in advance and documented.
- independence – decisions about executive pay and benefits reflect independent and objective scrutiny by the board and that conflicts of interest are avoided.
- robust decision-making – factors in determining pay and benefits are clear, including whether educational and financial performance considerations, and the degree of challenge in the role, have been considered.
- proportionality – pay and benefits represent good value for money and are defensible relative to the public sector market.
- commercial interests – ensuring the board is sighted on broader business interests held by senior executives, and is satisfied that any payments made by the Trust to executives in relation to such interests do not undermine the transparency requirements for disclosing pay in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction
- documentation – the rationale behind the decision-making process, including whether the level of pay and benefits reflects value for money, is recorded and retained.
- a basic presumption that executive pay and benefits should not increase at a faster rate than that of teachers, in individual years and over the longer term.
- understanding that inappropriate pay and benefits can be challenged by the DfE, particularly in instances of poor financial management of the Trust.

The Trust is also legally required under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 to publish information on its website about the gender pay gap within the organisation.

Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Trustees are responsible for defining the executive pay policy and approving the salaries of the Chief Executive, and the executive leadership team.

The Board delegates this responsibility to the Remuneration Committee. The role of the committee is to oversee the administration of the executive pay policy, review the evaluation of the executive leadership team and the Chief Executive Officer's performance, and recommend changes to executive pay. The Remuneration Committee meets at least once a year to discuss executive pay.

Approach to Reviewing & Setting Executive Pay

Trust boards must be accountable and answerable for the decisions they make on setting executive pay and must robustly challenge escalating leadership costs where they are not clearly justifiable, or where it raises questions about financial sustainability.

It is important that executive pay is transparent, proportionate and justifiable. A key consideration for the Trust Board should be the Trust's financial context and statutory duty to set a balanced budget.

Decisions for executive pay will follow a robust evidence-based process, reflective of the role and responsibilities, be fair and equitable, made in line with employment law and follow the ATH. No individual executive is permitted to be involved in deciding their remuneration. It is possible that the CEO may need to be involved in certain pay discussions relating to the wider Trust, however, this will be by invitation and not be linked to discussions relating to their own pay.

It will consider the unique setting and trust environment which includes the geographical context. It is highlighted that there are many factors to consider beyond for example, the number of schools within a trust that may/may not be a determining factor. Executive pay is linked to performance and if an executive does not achieve their targets, this will be addressed accordingly.

When determining the level of salary of executive leaders, the following interdependent factors will be considered:

- Academic performance and key outcomes of the Trust
- Educational and organisational challenge based on the context of the Trust.
- Financial performance of the Trust and affordability
- Any broader factors that indicate the degree of challenge in the role
- Individual performance – achievement of appraisal targets
- Experience & qualifications of the individual
- Levels of pay for comparable roles within other Trusts and across government organisations.
- Impact on the general levels of pay within the Trust.
- Size and complexity of the Trust
- Gender Pay Reporting.

The Remuneration Committee must be satisfied that there is an evident link between the levels of achievement of the individual and across the trust. Pay ranges should only be reviewed when there have been significant changes to responsibilities and not just because the top of the current range has been reached.

Gathering Evidence

With emphasis placed on decisions being made based on consideration of relevant evidence, it is recommended that the Trust draws the evidence from multiple sources. Some non-exhaustive examples include:

- Utilising the DfE's search facility to check the performance of schools and colleges in England i.e. https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables
- GIAS
- Financial Statements
- The DfE's Schools Benchmarking Tool to compare your trust's income and expenditure with similar establishments in England
- The Gender Pay Gap service to compare your trust's gender pay gap data
- KS2 National Performance Data
- The DfE's guide providing information to help school governors and academy trustees analyse and understand performance data for their setting
- School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Guidance
- Wider benchmarking data sets produced by sector bodies
- Advisory input form sector specialists

Performance and Pay Review Process

To ensure executive pay does not increase at a faster rate than that of teachers and wider employees, it is necessary to take account of the teachers' appraisal and pay determination cycle and support staff pay review that takes place each September.

The Trust ensures there is a 'golden thread' around the setting of performance objectives that filter down from the CEO to all individuals to ensure everyone is aligned to the trust's vision, values and strategic direction, therefore starts with the performance review of the executive team.

Reviewee	Assessment Panel Members	Process
CEO	2 Trustees +External expert	• Meet with reviewee to undertake individual appraisal review. • Assessment Panel Members meet to discuss outcome of appraisal and initial review of Executive Pay Assessment. • Meet with reviewee to discuss and complete Executive Pay Assessment. • Assessment Panel complete the Executive Pay Assessment form. • Submit to Remuneration Committee for consideration & recommendation to trust board. • Outcome letter to be prepared and signed by Rem Comm
Executive Team Member	CEO + Chair of relevant board committee (RAR / S&P)	• CEO undertakes individual appraisal review. • Discuss and complete Executive Pay Assessment. • CEO completes the Executive Pay Assessment form. • Submit to Remuneration Committee for consideration & recommendation to trust board. • Outcome letter to be prepared and signed by Rem Comm

Appeals

If the CEO, or executive team are unhappy with the outcome of their executive pay review, they should confirm this in writing to the Governance & Compliance Lead. The appeal will be heard by a panel consisting of three trustees who were not previously involved in the matter.

Grounds of appeal should be based on one or more of the following:

- incorrectly applied any provision of the relevant terms and conditions of employment;
- failed to have proper regard for statutory guidance;
- accounting for irrelevant or inaccurate evidence;
- failing to consistently apply the Executive Pay Policy;
- was biased; or
- otherwise unlawfully discriminated against.

Any appeal should normally be heard within 20 working days of the receipt of the written appeal notification and give the employee the right to be accompanied and make representations in person.

Employees who are dissatisfied in relation to their pay have a statutory right to raise a formal complaint about that decision, which is termed a 'grievance'. The process defined within this section meets the statutory requirements for raising a grievance and therefore an issue raised as a pay appeal cannot then be raised again under the Trust's formal Grievance Procedure.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days, stating if it has been upheld or not upheld. There will be no further right of appeal.

Monitoring & evaluation

The Trust Board will monitor the outcomes and impact of this policy on a regular basis, including trends in progression across specific groups to assess its effect and the Trusts continued compliance with equalities legislations and monitoring of the gender pay gap reporting.

Version Control

Version	Date	Status	Author (AU) / Approver (AP)
Draft 01	Summer 24	Completion of first draft	PHP & MB (AU)
Draft 02	Autumn 24	Additional line added specifying roles, as per rem comm request	SR (AU)
Final – A	Autumn 24	Signed off by Rem Comm	Rem Comm (AP)
Updated Draft	Autumn 25	Changes made to the policy to align it with the removal of the ESFA and the changes made to the 2025 Academy Trust Handbook.	AW (AU)

Review

Next Review	Summer 26