

	ATLAS Multi Academy Trust
Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy	
Trust Sub-Committee: Resources, Audit and Risk Committee	
Co-ordinator: Mr P O'Neill	
Last Reviewed: Spring 2024	Next Review: Spring 2026
St Albans Girls' School. Beech Hyde Primary School and Nursery. The Adeyfield Academy	
	
Signed by: Margaret Chapman <i>Executive Head Teacher</i>	Signed by: Rachael Kenningham <i>Chair of ATLAS Board of Directors</i>

1. RATIONALE	
1.1	<p>ATLAS Multi Academy Trust is a large and complex organisation and is committed to discharging its responsibility to safeguard public funds and the highest standards of integrity. It is committed to fighting fraud and corruption whether attempted from inside or outside. The Trust and each of its schools are committed to having effective measures to prevent and detect fraud and corruption.</p> <p>Any apparent fraud or financial irregularity will be investigated and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken where there is evidence of such. The recovery of money/assets from individuals found to be guilty of participating in fraudulent activity will be pursued (through formal criminal and civil action where appropriate). All staff have a duty to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● protect the assets of the Trust and its Academies ● report all reasonably held suspicions of fraud or irregularity - cooperate with any investigation.
2. AIMS	
2.1	<p>The Trust expects all members and employees to carry out their duties in accordance with appropriate legal requirements, internal codes of practice, rules and regulations and to act at all times with honesty and probity in the discharge of their functions.</p>
2.2	<p>In carrying out its duties and responsibilities, The Trust is determined to do everything it reasonably can to protect itself and the public from fraud and corruption and is committed to the rigorous maintenance of this Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy which will provide a framework for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● encouraging fraud deterrence and prevention;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● raising awareness of fraud and corruption and promoting their detection; ● performing investigations and facilitating recovery of losses; ● invoking disciplinary proceeding and referrals to the police ● monitoring, publishing and updating the Strategy and its related procedures and performance
2.3	The Trust also expects that all outside individuals and organisations, including suppliers, contracting partners and claimants will act toward it with honesty and integrity without thought or actions involving fraud and corruption.
2.4	This Strategy is part of The Trust’s Anti-Fraud and Corruption Framework and sits alongside policies and guidance including Whistleblowing Policy and employees’ Code of Conduct.
3. PROCEDURES	
3.1	<p>Definitions The Trust defines the following:</p> <p>Theft is ‘the dishonest taking of property belonging to another person with the intention of permanently depriving the owner of its possession’.</p> <p>Fraud is the deliberate use of deception and dishonesty to deprive, disadvantage or cause a loss or the risk of loss (usually financial) to another person or party.</p> <p>Under the Fraud Act 2006, the offence of fraud can be committed in one of three ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● by false representation ● by failing to disclose information; or ● abuse of position. <p>In each case, the perpetrator’s conduct must be dishonest and their intention must be to make a gain or cause a loss or the risk of a loss to another (no gain or loss needs actually to have been made).</p> <p>The Fraud Act 2006 also introduced other new offences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● possession, making or supplying articles for use in frauds obtaining services dishonestly with intent to avoid payment. <p>Bribery The Bribery Act 2010 introduces four offences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The offence of bribing another person. This can occur where a person offers, promises or gives a financial or other advantage to another individual to perform improperly a relevant function or activity. ● The offence of being bribed. This is where a person receives or accepts a financial or other advantage to perform a function or activity improperly. ● Bribery of a foreign public official. This is where a person directly or through a third party offers, promises or gives any financial or other advantage to a foreign public official in an attempt to influence them. ● A corporate offence of failure to prevent bribery. A commercial organisation could be guilty of bribery where a person associated with the organisation, such as an employee, agent or even a subcontractor, bribes another person intending to obtain or retain business for the organisation <p>Corruption is ‘The offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may influence actions taken by the body, its members or officers.’ Main areas of</p>

	<p>activity, which are susceptible to corruption may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● contracts ● asset disposal ● planning consents and licences ● employment of staff (see 4.6 below) <p>Other Irregularities</p> <p>Other irregularities could apply to the Trust as well as individual academies, and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● failure to observe the Trust’s Financial Regulations, policies and procedures ● breach of our Funding Agreement with the ESFA ● breach of the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook ● spending grant income in ways inconsistent with the purposes for which it was intended.
3.2	<p>Risks</p> <p>Examples of common types of internal fraud are documented in Appendix 2 of the CIMA document; Fraud Risk Management: a guide to good practice).</p> <p>The largest irregularities in educational establishments typically have involved regular misappropriations over a period of years. The three areas most vulnerable to fraud in schools are cash handling, cheque handling and the operation of the purchase ledger. The misuse of information technology is also a major risk and one that is potentially growing in importance with the increase in technology. The importance of publicly reported statutory information to educational establishments is significant and therefore this area could be susceptible to fraud.</p> <p>The Trust operates a Risk Management process, and the identification of fraud risk is an integral part of this process. In assessing the level of fraud risk the Trust refers to ESFA guidance such as the ‘Anti-fraud checklist for Academy Trusts’ and the ‘Fraud Indicators’ document’, and external guidance such as the CIMA document described above.</p>
3.3	<p>The Trust is determined that the culture and tone of the organisation meets the expectations of the Committee on Standards of Public Life and the Standards Board for England. It is committed to the seven principles of public life: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership.</p>
3.4	<p>Employees are expected, and are positively encouraged, to raise any concerns relating to fraud and corruption, of which they become aware. These can be raised in a number of ways including with the employee’s line manager, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or a member of the Trust Executive Team. Full information about concerns is set out in the Whistleblowing Policy documents.</p>
3.5	<p>The Trust expects members and employees to lead by example in ensuring opposition to fraud and corruption, and in ensuring adherence to rules and regulations, and to relevant Codes of Conduct, and that all procedures and practices are beyond reproach. The responsibility of the Executive Leadership team and School Senior Leadership Teams are to ensure that all employees are aware of what is expected of them.</p>
3.6	<p>The Trust requires all individuals and organisations with whom it deals in any capacity to behave towards the school with integrity and without intent or actions involving fraud and corruption.</p>
3.7	<p>The Trust employees and members of the public are important elements in the stance against fraud and corruption and are positively encouraged to raise any concerns they may</p>

	have on these issues which may impact on The Trust activities using the Whistleblowing Strategy Complaints Procedures.
3.8	Although The Trust encourages its employees to report concerns acting in good faith, any maliciously motivated and unfounded allegations may be dealt with through its disciplinary procedures.
3.9	<p>The Trust will ensure that management procedures for the Trust and within Academies, as described below, are effective and that staff receive training in their operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● segregation of duties and appropriate oversight in the use of financial systems ● clear roles and responsibilities, with set levels of authority for authorising transactions ● system protection with electronic access restrictions to prevent the possible misuse of information technology. <p>In particular, the following sections of the Atlas MATs Finance Policy Manual help to define the requirements in relation to the above points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Financial Accounting System ● Segregation of Duties and Financial Oversight.
4. PREVENTION	
4.1	It is the corporate responsibility of The Trust to put in place preventative measures to fight fraud and corruption to minimise risk.
4.2	The Trust's Procedures, Rules, Standing Orders, Schemes of Delegation together with Financial Regulations, Codes of Conduct and Codes of Practice set out a framework for dealing with the affairs of The Trust and all members and employees have a duty to comply with their provisions. This includes the duty of employees to act within statutory regulations.
4.3	Governors must operate in accordance with The Trust's Procedure Rules and Code of Conduct.
4.4	The Trust has put in place systems and procedures to manage and discharge its functions in an efficient and effective way. These systems incorporate internal controls to prevent and deter fraud and corruption. Employees must ensure that working practices comply with the systems.
4.5	Thorough documentation, including manuals and operating procedures, and effective control is expected of all financial and operational systems and they must be issued to relevant staff. These must be regularly reviewed to ensure in line with best practice and effective internal controls.
4.6	<p>Employee recruitment is required to be in accordance with procedures laid down in the Academy's human resources procedures and, in particular adequate checks made appropriate to the posts and before any appointment is made. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identity and right to work checks are made ● References should cover a reasonable, continuous period and any gaps should be explained ● An official employer's reference should be obtained ● Offers of appointment to be made subject to receipt of satisfactory references and any doubts about the contents of the reference should be resolved before confirming the appointment. If this is done by telephone, a written record of the discussion should be kept to comply with employment law

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essential qualifications and DBS checks are made. <p>Recruitment procedures require that members of recruitment panels will declare any relationships or connections with candidates prior to their involvement with the process.</p>
4.7	Employees are required to disclose any offers of gifts, hospitality or interests that could conflict with the interests of The Trust or might affect their judgement. The Trust HR Manager will maintain a register to record and monitor disclosures.
4.8	<p>Internal Audit</p> <p>The Internal Auditors may provide independent assurance on the processes and controls put in place by management to prevent or detect fraud and irregularity or to manage the risk of fraud and irregularity.</p> <p>Members of the Internal Audit Team, with the requisite skills and expertise, may also provide advice on, lead or conduct special investigations into suspected fraud, irregularities, misconduct or alleged impropriety.</p>
4.9	<p>External Audit</p> <p>The External Auditors provide independent oversight of the financial controls and activities within the Trust and its Academies as part of their work in auditing the yearend financial statements</p>
4.10	<p>Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)</p> <p>The ESFA carries out periodic funding audits and financial management reviews. They also conduct or commission investigations into suspected fraud and irregularity and they publish reports on the outcome of such investigations.</p>
5. DETECTION AND INVESTIGATION	
5.1	All line managers are responsible for the prevention and detection of fraud, corruption and other irregularities. Managers should pay special attention to particular circumstances, which may indicate an irregularity.
5.2	<p>It is the responsibility of all employees, in particular line managers, to immediately inform the Trust Chief Operating Officer (COO) and/or Executive Headteacher (EHT) if a fraud or other irregularity is suspected. They should also ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> any supporting documentation or other evidence is secured; and confidentiality is maintained so as to not prejudice any subsequent investigation
5.3	<p>Reporting of suspected irregularities to the COO is essential because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensures the consistent treatment of information; facilitates proper investigation, including compliance with statutory requirements and appropriate liaison at correct stages with the Police; and ensures the proper implementation of relevant system improvements
5.4	The Trust will take appropriate action following an investigation including action, civil recovery and/or referral to the Police.
5.5	<p>Potentially Suspicious Behaviour</p> <p>Staff members who have committed serious financial irregularities may attempt to conceal this by taking few holidays, regularly working alone, late or at weekends, being resistant to delegation or resenting questions about their work. The ESFA 'Fraud Indicators' document may be helpful to refer to where concerns may exist. If in doubt, staff members should report their suspicions anyway, provided they are supported by at least one piece of</p>

	reliable information or evidence and they are made in good faith.
6. RESPONSE PLAN	
6.1	The Trust will work in partnership with other organisations for the investigation of fraud and corruption. These organisations include the Police, the Academy’s Auditors, National Anti Fraud Network and Audit Commission.
6.2	<p>Acting on the suspicions – what to do and not to do: Where staff have raised concerns or reported their suspicions to senior management:</p> <p>Do:</p> <p>✓ Be responsive to staff concerns The Trust expects all managers to encourage staff to voice any reasonably held suspicion as part of developing an anti-fraud culture. Managers should treat all staff concerns seriously and sensitively.</p> <p>✓ Note details Note all relevant details. Get as much information as possible from the reporting staff member. If the staff member has made notes, obtain these also. In addition, note any documentary evidence which may exist to support the allegations made, but do not interfere with this evidence in any way.</p> <p>✓ Evaluate the allegation objectively Before taking the matter further, determine whether any suspicions appear to be justified. Be objective when evaluating the issue. Consider the facts as they appear, based on the information to hand.</p> <p>✓ Advise the appropriate person If a suspicion is justified, deal with the matter promptly as any delay may cause the Trust to suffer further financial loss. Full details should be recorded and reported in line with section 4.3 above and in all cases involving suspected fraud or financial crime the Trust’s Internal Audit Manager should be informed.</p> <p>Do not:</p> <p>X Ridicule suspicions raised by staff. <i>The Trust cannot operate effective anti-fraud and whistleblowing policies if staff are reluctant to pass on their concerns to management. All staff concerns should be given a fair hearing. In addition, staff should be reassured that they will not suffer recrimination as a result of raising any reasonably held suspicion.</i></p> <p>X Approach or accuse any individuals directly.</p> <p>X Convey your suspicions to anyone other than those with the proper authority.</p> <p>X Try to investigate the matter yourself</p>
6.3	<p>Redress (Recovery of Losses) The Investigating Officer shall, where possible, quantify the amount of any loss. The Chief Operating Officer, with the Chief Executive shall consider what redress is appropriate in each particular case.</p> <p>Where a loss is considered to be significant, legal advice will be obtained without delay about the need to trace and/or freeze the suspect’s assets through the court, pending conclusion of the investigation. Legal advice will also be obtained on the recovery of losses</p>

	<p>through the civil and criminal courts, or deducting losses from any salary payments outstanding, where the perpetrator is a member of staff and refuses repayment. The Trust would normally expect to recover costs in addition to losses.</p> <p>An individual may, in the course of an investigation, offer to repay the amount that has been obtained improperly. The Investigating Officer should neither solicit nor accept such an offer (as it may be construed as having been obtained under duress). Any offer made should be recorded and the individual referred to the Chief Executive.</p> <p>If an offer of restitution is made while disciplinary or legal proceedings are still under way, legal advice will be sought before such an offer is accepted.</p> <p>In certain circumstances it may be possible, at the completion of the investigation, to make a claim against the Trust's insurance policy. The Chief Operating Officer and Investigating Officer should provide the insurers with any information that is required to substantiate a claim, or to support an attempt by the insurers to secure recovery from the perpetrator.</p>
6.4	<p>Notifying the ESFA and External Auditor</p> <p>The Academy Trust Handbook includes a requirement that: "The Trust must notify the ESFA, as soon as possible, of any instances of fraud, theft and/or irregularity exceeding £5,000 individually, or £5,000 cumulatively in any academy financial year.</p> <p>Any unusual or systematic fraud, regardless of value, must also be reported." The ESFA reserves the right to conduct or commission its own investigation into actual or potential fraud, theft or irregularity. At an appropriate point in time, the Chief Executive will notify the ESFA and/or the Trust's External Auditors, where appropriate. They will also formally notify the Audit Committee and Trust Board.</p>
7. TRAINING	
7.1	<p>Training and guidance is vital in maintaining the effectiveness of this Strategy and its general credibility. The Trust supports induction and work related training, particularly for employees involved in internal control systems, to ensure that their responsibilities and duties are regularly highlighted and reinforced and best practice is followed</p>
8. MONITORING	
8.1	<p>The Trust has in place a clear framework of systems and procedures to deter and investigate fraud and corruption. It will ensure that these arrangements are fair, monitored and updated to keep pace with future developments in preventative, deterrent and detection techniques.</p>
8.2	<p>ATLAS Trust monitors and reviews its policies and procedures on a regular basis to ensure that there is compliance.</p>