Management letter

Prepared for the board of trustees of Alexandra Academy Trust

For the year ended 31 August 2024

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1. Introduction

We are pleased to set out in this document our report to the trustees of Alexandra Academy Trust for the year ended 31 August 2024.

Our responsibilities as auditors are set out in the International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) ("ISAs"). We are responsible for forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities.

We have carried out our audit in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated 2 October 2023 in order to express an audit opinion for UK statutory purposes on the financial statements of Alexandra Academy Trust for the year ended 31 August 2024. We have complied with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard and all threats to our independence, as identified to you in our audit plan letter dated 19 June 2024, have been properly addressed through appropriate safeguards. No additional facts or matters have arisen during the course of the audit that we wish to draw to your attention and we confirm that we are independent and able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

In this report, we present the key findings from our audit, together with a commentary on the significant matters arising. The matters that have been reported are limited to those deficiencies identified during the audit which we have concluded are of sufficient importance to bring to the attention of those charged with governance. This report has been discussed comprehensively and agreed with Alan Guildford (Chair), Pamela Simpson (CEO) and Lyndsey Tasker (CFO).

This report has been prepared for the sole use of the trustees Alexandra Academy Trust. We understand that you are required to provide a copy of this report to the Education & Skills Funding Agency who may share this information internally within the Department for decision making purposes. With the exception of this, no reports may be provided to third parties without our prior consent. Consent is, and will only be, granted on the basis that such reports are not prepared with the interests of anyone other than the academy in mind and that we accept no duty or responsibility to any other party. No responsibilities are accepted by DJH Audit Limited towards any party acting or refraining from action as a result of this report.

We would like to express our thanks to all members of the academy trust's staff who assisted us in carrying out our work.

2. Statutory audit communication

2.1 Objectivity and independence

We conducted our audit in accordance with the Code of Ethics of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales and the Ethical Standards published by the United Kingdom Auditing Practices Board. We have considered our independence and objectivity in respect to the audit for the year ended 31 August 2024.

In addition to auditing the financial statements we also provided, through other individuals, the following services to Alexandra Academy Trust for the year ended 31 August 2024:

- Preparation of the statutory financial statements.
- Audit of the EOYC return.
- Preparation of the Annual Accounts Return.
- Support in the preparation of management accounts.
- Completion of the Companies House confirmation statement.
- Corporation tax advisory services.

We have outlined below the safeguards that we have put in place to ensure that these services provided in 2023/24 do not cause any breaches in our independence and objectivity in relation to the audit.

Non audit services provided	Safeguards put in place to reduce the threat to our integrity, independence and objectivity
Preparation of the statutory financial statements	Internally the accounts are reviewed by a separate individual from those who have prepared the financial statements. The accounts are reviewed in full by those charged by governance of the academy trust to ensure they comply with ESFA guidance. Any accounting judgements required are made by the audit client.
Preparation of the Annual Accounts Return	The return is prepared from data in the statutory financial statements and as such is covered by those safeguards above.
Audit of the EOYC return	This service is provided by a separate individual from those who have audited the financial statements.
Support with the preparation of management accounts	This service is restricted to being supporting with the key decisions over accounting still being made internally. Were this to change into full management accounts preparation, then a separate individual would be used.
Corporation tax advisory and compliance services	This service is provided by a separate individual from those who have audited the financial statements.
Maintenance of statutory records	This service is provided by a separate individual from those who have audited the financial statements.

The following fees have been charged for our audit services:

- Audit of financial statements - £10,000 + VAT
- Annual accounts return - £1,500 + VAT
- End of year certificate - £630 + VAT
- Management accounts support - £750 + VAT per day
- Corporation tax returns - £250 + VAT
- Confirmation statement – £63 + VAT

To maintain our independence as auditors we can also confirm that:

- DJH Audit Limited, its directors and the audit team have no family, financial, employment, investment or business relationship with the company; and
- Audit and non-audit fees paid by the company do not represent a significant proportion of total fee income for either the firm or office.

We confirm that, in our professional judgement, the firm is independent within the meaning of regulatory and professional requirements and the objectivity of the audit engagement partner and audit staff is not impaired.

Legal and regulatory requirements

In undertaking our audit work we considered compliance with the following legal and regulatory requirements, where relevant:

- Companies Act 2006.
- Charities Act 2011.
- Academies Act 2010.
- Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.
- Academies Accounts Direction 2023 to 2024.
- Academy Trust Handbook 2023.
- Statement of Recommended Practice, Accounting and Reporting by Charities (FRS 102).
- Applicable accounting standards.

2.2 Audit approach and materiality

Our audit planning has taken account of the issues highlighted through discussions with Alan Guildford (Chair), Pamela Simpson (CEO) and Lyndsey Tasker (CFO), together with our knowledge and understanding of the academy trust.

We confirm that there were no restrictions on the scope of our audit procedures and we have been able to undertake our work as set out in our planning meeting.

In our planning we have taken account of the results of our risk assessments made in accordance with the guidance set by the ISAs. Our consideration of high risk areas is documented in full within section 3 of this report.

Based on this rigorous process we have used our professional judgement and formed a materiality level. A matter is material if its omission or misstatement would reasonably influence the economic decisions of a user of the financial statements and the value at which if errors, on their own or in aggregate, were uncorrected would result in a potential qualified audit opinion. The audit materiality of the financial statements as a whole has been set at approximately 2% of total incoming resources.

We have considered this level of materiality based on the draft accounts for the year ended 31 August 2024 and are satisfied that it continues to be appropriate.

Underpinning materiality is a level of triviality, £6,000, at which any error or omission in excess of this value is recorded and reported to management.

In planning and carrying out our work, we applied a materiality level to Alexandra Academy Trust of £112,000 based on 2% of income.

2.3 Accounting policies

In preparing the financial statements of the academy trust, directors/trustees are required under FRS 102 to review the academy trust's accounting policies on an annual basis to ensure they remain appropriate to the academy trust's circumstances and are properly applied.

We have reviewed the accounting policies selected and operated by the academy trust, and are satisfied that they are acceptable.

2.4 Significant findings

There are no significant findings that we feel need bringing to the attention of trustees.

2.5 Accounting estimates and judgements

The property is recorded in the accounts at valuation. The basis of the valuation is existing use value calculated on a depreciated replacement cost basis.

Depreciation is provided on a straight line basis on the cost of tangible fixed assets, to write them down to their estimated residual values over their expected useful lives.

The principal annual rates used were as follows:

Leasehold land	125 years straight line
Leasehold buildings	50 years straight line
Leasehold improvements	50 years straight line
Computer equipment	3 years straight line
Fixtures, fittings & equipment	3-15 years straight line

2.6 Funding position at 31 August 2024

Restricted general funds are those resources that have been designated restricted by the grant provider in meeting the objects of the academy trust and are restricted to both the day to day running of the academy trust and capital expenditure. The balance carried forward on this fund is a nil balance, with no balance carried forward within either income funds of pension funds.

Restricted fixed asset funds are those funds relating to the long term assets of the academy trust used in delivering the objectives of the academy trust. The balance carried forward on this fund is £7,483,000. Additional analysis of this fund by nature has been provided to comply with the Academies Accounts Direction.

Unrestricted funds are funds to which the governing body may use in the pursuance of the academy trust's objectives and are expendable at the discretion of the trustees. The balance carried forward on this fund is a deficit of £108,000.

Individually, the general reserves carried forward excluding pension deficits and fixed assets are as follows:

Monks Coppenhall Academy	(£108,000)
Haslington Primary School	£22,000
Alexadra Academy Trust (Central)	(£22,000)

Following the trust entering a cumulative deficit position, we have ensured sufficient disclosure has been made throughout the trustees report, and in the funds note of the financial statements, based on the recovery plan that has been provided. The disclosure within the funds note is as follows:

Following the final financial position for the trust being worse than anticipated for the 2022/23 year, due to continuously tightening operating conditions for schools particularly surrounding staffing, this has had a significant effect on the trust, particularly in staffing at Monks Coppenhall Academy. Combined with lagged funding in a school that is in the process of growing from two to three form entry and the capital work required, and it becomes very challenging to balance delivering on objects of the trust while maintaining a suitable financial position. In the current year, this has continued and with further expenditure being necessary to incurred for new schools joining the trust in 2024/25, such as a new principal at Monks Coppenhall with the previous principal now acting solely as CEO of the trust. These factors when combined with increasing catering costs from Cheshire East as the trusts main catering provider who have since withdrawn the contract, and increasing energy costs nationally have limited the ability of the trust to maintain a balanced budget.

During the year in anticipation of a worsened budgetary position, the trust has prepared a comprehensive recovery plan to return the trust to a strong position previously held as soon as practicably possible. Notably, a review of staffing and class structure has been carried out in order to reduce spending, with staffing cuts made across both teaching and other supporting functions. Furthermore, for reasons described above, reduced top slice and improved economies of scale across the trust is expected to benefit the trust. Furthermore, forming a strategic alliance with local schools to generate savings over a new catering contract is expected to generate further benefit to the trust.

2.7 Significant difficulties encountered during the audit

We did not encounter any significant difficulties during the audit.

2.8 Accounting and financial control systems

During our audit we examined the design and implementation of the internal controls relevant to the accounting systems and procedures.

The review of internal controls was carried out with a view to expressing an opinion on the financial statements for the year and was not directed primarily towards discovering weaknesses or towards the detection of fraud. Therefore our comments on these systems include only those matters that have come to our attention as a result of our normal audit procedures, and consequently our comments should not be regarded as a comprehensive record of all weaknesses that may exist or of all improvements that might be made. Please refer to section 4 of this report.

2.9 Management representations

We include a copy of the draft management representation letter. There are certain specific representations which we are required by auditing standards to obtain from management as part of our audit procedures. In addition, we are required to obtain other representations on matters material to the financial statements where other sufficient appropriate audit evidence cannot be reasonably expected to exist.

2.10 Audit opinion

Based upon the findings and conclusions of our work, we expect to issue an unmodified audit opinion on the financial statements.

3. High risk audit areas

Issue	Audit risk	Audit procedures undertaken	Conclusion
Fund Accounting The accounts include a number of restricted and unrestricted funds and the audit risk is that income and expenditure is not correctly allocated to the correct fund. Funding providers will impose restrictions on the use of funds given to the academy trust. Such funds should be allocated to the statement of financial activities in accordance with guidance by individual funders.	Incorrect disclosure of restricted and unrestricted reserves in the financial statements.	We reviewed the nature and purpose of each fund in line with supporting documentation and tested a sample of transactions to ensure that they are allocated to the correct fund. Reviewed income and expenditure headings on a line by line basis to ensure compliance with the Academies Accounts Direction.	There are no uncorrected material mis-statements in respect of the allocation between restricted and unrestricted reserves in the financial statements. No issues were found during our income and expenditure testing. Restricted and unrestricted income and reserves appear appropriate.
Completeness of payroll costs	The payroll function is outsourced. Our knowledge of the academies market has shown some error risk posed over outsourced payrolls.	We performed analytical procedures to ascertain whether the salary costs for the year were in line with our expectations. We carried out a reconciliation between the staff costs in the financial statements and the payroll summaries. In addition, tests of control to ensure key controls are being adhered to.	Payroll costs in the financial statements do not appear to be materially mis-stated.

Issue	Audit risk	Audit procedures undertaken	Conclusion
FRS 102 Accounting for Pensions Treatment of the academy trust's share of pension scheme deficits/assets	Incorrect treatment of the pension valuation. Financial statements are not prepared in accordance with sector accounting guidance.	We obtained the FRS 102 pension valuation as at 31 August 2024 and assessed the disclosures and accounting entries made by the academy trust. We confirmed that the basis of valuation was appropriate and that the disclosures made in the financial statements were prepared in accordance with FRS 102 and the sector standard as set out in Academies Accounts Direction.	Pension valuation and disclosures in the accounts appear reasonable in line with the valuation received and the Academies Accounts Direction requirements. The pension asset has been recognised in line with FRS102 accounting requirements.
Management override of internal controls	Potential risk of management override of internal controls (this being a presumed risk inherent within current auditing standards).	A suitable level of professional scepticism was applied throughout all areas of audit testing. We reviewed manual journals andaccounting estimates such as accruals and provisions and consider any pressures on management to achieve results.	No evidence of management override was found during our audit procedures.

Issue	Audit risk	Audit procedures undertaken	Conclusion
Revenue recognition in respect of ensuring that all income received by the academy trust is recognised in the correct period. The cut off on income needs to be established correctly to ensure that the academy trust's income is not over or understated. Completeness of income is to be established to ensure all income receivable in the year has been recognised appropriately.	Grant/other income not being recognised in accordance with the Charity SORP (FRS 102) recognition criteria and per the underlying funding agreement.	The accounting policies adopted by the academy were reviewed, considering the guidance available in Charity SORP (FRS 102) and the recognition criteria of entitlement, certainty and measurement. A review of grant funding agreements was performed to determine whether the grant income had been recognised in the appropriate period. Discussions were held with management and meeting minutes reviewed to identify any unexpected one-off sources of income and to ensure that the accounting treatment is appropriate.	Income appears to have been appropriately recognised by the academy trust. The revenue recognition policy appears appropriate and in line with the Academies Accounts Direction.
Going concern	It is the responsibility of the trustees to assess the ability of the academy to continue as a going concern for a period of not less than 12 months following the anticipated date of sign off. This is a key risk given the current economic climate and pressures on government spending.	We have reviewed the considerations of management including cash flow forecasts and budget reports in relation to the going concern assumptions made. We have confirmed grant funding to supporting statements.	We concur with the trustees' decision that going concern is an appropriate basis on which to prepare the accounts. This is based on the recovery plan produced, particularly the staffing changes, being adhered to.

Issue	Audit risk	Audit procedures undertaken	Conclusion
Payments made to related parties	That payments made to related parties are not in line with current guidance and the latest Academy Trust Handbook by being made at cost.	All related party transactions that have been identified have been reviewed to ensure that the most recent guidance has been followed correctly and that relevant documentation has been seen to prove this. Signed statements of assurance have been obtained.	Related party transactions have been disclosed appropriately in the financial statements.
Fixed asset valuation and impairment	That assets inherited on conversion are incorrectly valued. Where CIF projects are on-going, that these costs are capitalised and recognised as assets under construction appropriately. Compliance with FRS102 in carrying out impairment reviews where impairment indicators arise, such as going concern.	We have performed calculations on asset values on conversion to verify the amounts stated in the financial statements. We have performed cut off testing on capital projects on-going around the year end. We have considered whether any impairment indicators have arisen in the year and assessed the need for an impairment review. We have physically verified assets brought forward in the financial statements. We have verified a sample of asset additions to supplier invoices.	Fixed assets in the financial statements are appropriately valued at cost and depreciated accordingly. Additions have been identified in the year and capitalised appropriately to the correct category. No impairment indicators have arisen in the year.

4. Report of significant weaknesses in systems and internal controls

4.1 Introduction

We set out below the significant matters we became aware of during our audit, which relate to the effectiveness of the company's accounting and financial control systems. We have used the following grading system to indicate the significance of the issues we have raised and the priority that we believe should be given to our recommendations.

Rating	Description
High	Should be urgently attended to by the directors and management. These are significant issues that may result in a qualification in the audit report in future periods if not satisfactorily addressed.
Moderate	Issues requiring the attention of the directors and management. Issues ranked as moderate require close monitoring by the board and senior management to ensure timely resolution.
Low	Issues requiring management attention and correction. Issues ranked as low are generally routine in nature and should be resolved by general management. The board and senior management should be aware of these issues to enable monitoring of progress with their resolution. These issues may be reported to management in less detail than more highly rated issues.

	Audit finding	Potential effect	Priority	Recommendation	Responsible Owner	Implementation Date
1	The new trustees that joined in the year and their interests were not uploaded to the register of interests on the trust's website.	Non-compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook 2023 (point 2.46).		Interest forms should be completed both yearly but also as soon as a new trustee joins.	Trustees & CFO.	Already corrected.
2	One company directorship and one governorship were not declared as interests.	Potential of non-declaration of related party transactions.		All relevant directorships and governor positions should be declared on the interest form.	Trustees & SLT	Already corrected.
3	There was a difference noted between VAT per the trial balance and the VAT returns submitted.	This could result in VAT being declared inappropriately if this is not reconciled.		The VAT per the trial balance should be reconciled regularly to the VAT returns, with any timing differences calculated as part of a reconciliation to ensure these are subsequently claimed.	CFO & Finance Team.	August 2025.
4	2 purchase orders of a sample of 20 tested were dated after the invoice date.	If goods are purchased without an order then they may be unauthorised and result in a budget overspend.		Goods should not be purchased without prior authorisation. It may be appropriate to amend the Finance Policy to permit 'emergency' purchases up to a pre-determined limit without a purchase order.	CFO & Finance Team.	August 2025.

5. Status of audit recommendations from previous year

During the course of the audit we revisited the audit recommendations from the previous year's audit management letter and set out below the status of these recommendations.

Observations in 2023	Update in 2024
The fixed asset register was not reconciled to the trial balance provided.	Progress has been made over the accounting for fixed assets, in addition to accruals, prepayments, etc. Continuous work is required to maintain accurate management accounts particularly as two further schools join the trust.
The VAT return did not agree to the trial balance figure as a result of post year end invoices not included in the VAT return.	This issue appears to have continued and worsened, with the difference now exceeding triviality. Recommendation raised in section 4 above.
2 purchase orders of a sample of 20 tested were dated after the invoice date.	This issue appeared to continue, although remained at a similar level. Recommendation raised in section 4 above.

6. Regularity

There were no regularity, propriety and compliance matters that we became aware of during our audit, which relate to the responsibility to ensure that public money is spent for the purpose intended by Parliament (regularity) and a responsibility to ensure that appropriate standards of conduct, behaviour and corporate governance are maintained when applying the funds under the academy's control (propriety).

Appendix

Reconciliation of audited surplus/deficit

The surplus/(deficit) per the financial statements has been derived as follows:

		Statement of Financial Activities		Balance sheet		Effect on surplus/(deficit) for year
		£	£	£	£	£
	Surplus/(Deficit) per draft trial balance					**-141,948**
	1. Depreciation					
MC	Cr Leasehold land and buildings: depreciation charge (7030)	-	-	-	74,776	
	Dr Other fixed asset depreciation (6030)	74,776	-	-	-	
	Cr Leasehold improvements: depreciation charge (7025)	-	-	-	4,876	
	Dr Other fixed asset depreciation (6030)	4,876	-	-	-	
	Cr Computer equipment: depreciation charge (7040)	-	-	-	4,867	
	Dr Other fixed asset depreciation (6040)	4,867	-	-	-	
	Dr Other fixed asset depreciation (6035)	51,058	-	-	-	
	Cr Fixtures and fittings: depreciation charge (7035)	-	-	-	51,058	
H	Cr Leasehold land and buildings: depreciation charge (7030)	-	-	-	19,130	
	Dr Other fixed asset depreciation (6030)	19,130	-	-	-	
	Cr Leasehold improvements: depreciation charge (7025)	-	-	-	2,162	
	Dr Other fixed asset depreciation (6030)	2,162	-	-	-	
	Dr Other fixed asset depreciation (6040)	952	-	-	-	
	Cr Computer equipment: depreciation charge (7040)	-	-	-	952	
	Dr Other fixed asset depreciation (6035)	4,800	-	-	-	
	Cr Fixtures and fittings: depreciation charge (7035)	-	-	-	4,800	
	Being the depreciation charge					-162,621

2. *Bank and nursery write off*

	Cr Bank account (7082, 7084)	-	-	-	297	
	Dr Other support costs 3 (Write off acc)	297	-	-	-	
MC	Cr Other debtors (8055)	-	-	-	20,155	
	Dr Other support costs 3 (Write off acc)	29,155	-	-	-	
	Cr GAG fund (9000)	-	-	-	9,000	
	Being the bank and intercompany balance write off					-29,453

3. *Income reconciliation*

	Cr School budget share (1000)	-	64,167	-	-
	Dr Local authority grants (1400)	64,167	-	-	-
	Cr Rates relief (1150)	-	9,137	-	-
	Dr Rates (3140)	9,137	-	-	-
	Cr ESFA pupil premium (1200)	-	7,202	-	-
	Dr Accrued income (non capital) (7065)	-	-	7,202	-
	Dr Universal infant free school meals (1250)	7,426	-	-	-
	Cr Deferred income < 1 year (8025)	-	-	-	7,426
	Dr Accrued income (non capital) (7065)	-	-	39,824	-
	Cr Deferred income < 1 year (8025)	-	-	-	39,824
MC	Cr Accrued income (non capital) (7065)	-	-	-	164
	Dr Other DfE or ESFA income (1300)	164	-	-	-
	Dr Accrued income (non capital) (7065)	-	-	11,137	-
	Cr Local authority grants (1400)	-	11,137	-	-
	Cr Deferred income < 1 year (8025)	-	-	-	9,608
	Dr Other support costs 3 (4105)	9,608	-	-	-
	Dr Unrestricted AGF other (1495)	12,146	-	-	-
	Cr Local authority spare (6305)	-	12,146	-	-
	Dr Local authority grants (1400)	4,140	-	-	-
	Cr Local authority SEN funding (1285)	-	4,140	-	-
	Cr Buildings maintenance (1905)	-	2,642	-	-
	Dr Government loans - DfE group (8060)	-	-	2,642	-

H	Cr Rates relief (1150)	-	6,443	-	-	
	Dr Rates (3140)	6,443	-	-	-	
	Cr ESFA pupil premium (1200)	-	872	-	-	
	Dr Accrued income (non capital) (7065)	-	-	872	-	
	Cr Universal infant free school meals (1250)	-	76	-	-	
	Dr Deferred income < 1 year (8025)	-	-	76	-	
	Dr Accrued income (non capital) (7065)	-	-	29,660	-	
	Cr Deferred income < 1 year (8025)	-	-	-	29,660	
	Dr Accrued income (non capital) (8025)	-	-	7,127	-	
	Cr Supply staff - teachers (2030)	-	7,127	-	-	
	Dr Local authority spare (1495)	15,585	-	-	-	
	Cr Deferred income < 1 year (8025)	-	-	-	15,585	
	Dr Unrestricted AGF other (1425)	16,250	-	-	-	
	Cr Local authority grants (1400)	-	16,250	-	-	
	Dr Local authority spare (1495)	11,178	-	-	-	
	Cr Unrestricted AGF other (1425)	-	11,178	-	-	
	Dr Bank and loan interest (interest expense code)	1,054	-	-	-	
	Cr Government loans - DFE group (8015)	-	-	-	1,054	
	Dr Other DfE or ESFA income (1300)	2,319	-	-	-	
	Cr Other amounts owed to ESFA (8015)	-	-	-	2,319	
	Being the various adjustments to correctly present income					-7,100

4. Accruals

MC	Dr Energy costs (3130)	4,718	-	-	-
	Dr Energy costs (3125)	1,416	-	-	-
	Dr Water (3120)	1,380	-	-	-
	Cr Catering (5005)	-	-	-	-
	Dr Other support costs 3 (5105)	286	-	-	-
	Cr Accruals (8020)	-	-	-	7,799
H	Dr Energy costs (3125)	395	-	-	-
	Dr Energy costs (3130)	2,402	-	-	-
	Dr Water (3120)	364	-	-	-
	Cr Accruals (8020)	-	-	-	3,161

A	Dr Auditors remuneration (5060)	10,400	-	-	-	
	Cr Accruals (8020)	-	-	-	10,400	
	Being the accruals adjustments					-21,361

Actual Surplus/(Deficit) per Financial Statements **-362,482**

There are uncorrected misstatements totalling £9,018 as set out below:

	Statement of Financial Activities		Balance sheet		Effect on surplus/(deficit) for year
	£	**£**	**£**	**£**	**£**
1. VAT difference					
Dr SOFA	9,018	-	-	-	
Cr VAT	-	-	-	9,018	
The difference between the VAT returns and trial balance.					-9,018
2. Payroll control difference					
Dr Wages (SOFA)	5,577	-	-	-	
Cr Payroll Control Account	-	-	-	5,577	
The difference between wage payments and trial balance.					-5,577

Actual Surplus/(Deficit) per Financial Statements **-14,595**