



# Athena Learning Trust Trust-wide Policies Policy

## **Review**

Reviewed on: 16 December 2022

Reviewed by: Board

Review Period: 3 years





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This Athena Learning Trust Policy applies to the Athena Learning Trust as a whole and to all the schools and service units in the Trust.

This Policy sets out the policy framework adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Athena Learning Trust and the procedures for approval and review of Trust and school policies.

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body and Principal of each school, and the Trust Shared Services Committee and Athena Learning Trust CEO for the Trust Shared Service, to ensure that their school/service and its staff follow this Policy. In implementing this Policy the Governing Body, Principal, Trustees and Trust staff must take account of any advice given to them by the Athena Learning Trust CEO and/or Board of Trustees.

This Policy is subject to the Athena Learning Trust Scheme of Delegation for Governance Functions. If there is any ambiguity or conflict, then the Scheme of Delegation takes precedence.

If there is any question or doubt about the interpretation or implementation of this Policy, the CEO should be consulted.

The responsible officer for this policy is the Athena Learning Trust CEO.

### **Approval and review:**

Athena Learning Trust Policies Policy, October 2022

This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees on 31 October 2022

This policy is due for review by The Board of Trustees October 2023

The Athena Learning Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales, company number 08150106 registered at Athena Learning Trust, Dunheved House, Hurdon Road, Launceston PL15 9JR



## 1.1 Introduction

The Athena Learning Trust (Athena Learning Trust) is a charitable company limited by guarantee, constituted under a Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. The Board of Trustees is the 'governing board' of the Trust, and is responsible for the operation and performance of the Trust as a whole and all schools and services of the Trust.

The Board of Trustees has to ensure that the Trust as a whole and all the schools and services of the Trust operate in accordance with the Trust's Articles of Association and its Funding Agreements, and with all relevant legislation and Government Guidance.

To enable it to fulfil this responsibility, the Board of Trustees approves a range of policies and procedures that set out what its schools and services, its staff, governors and Trustees need to do, and what policies and procedures they are required to have and to follow.

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body and the Principal of each school, and the Trust Shared Services Committee and the Athena Learning Trust CEO, to adopt and maintain policies and procedures for their school / the Trust Shared Service, as required to implement the Policies and Procedures of the Trust, and to ensure that any such school/service policies and procedures are consistent with

the Articles of Association and Funding Agreements and the Policies and Procedures of the Trust.

In implementing such policies and procedures the Governing Body, Principal and school and service staff must take account of any advice given to them by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Board of Trustees of Athena Learning Trust.

## 1.2 Terminology:

- The Trust means the Athena Learning Trust.
- School means a school within the Athena Learning Trust.
- Principal means the Principal or Principal of the school.
- CEO means the Chief Executive Officer of the Athena Learning Trust.
- Trust Shared Service means the services, functions and staff of the Trust that are not contained within a school budget and/or are not the responsibility of a school Principal and/or Governing Body.
- Governing Body means the committee of the Board of Trustees to which Trustees have delegated appropriate powers and functions related to the governance of a school or group of schools.

References in this Policy to a school in the Trust should also be read as the Trust Shared Service for services, functions and staff of the Trust that are not contained within a school budget and/or are not the responsibility of a school Principal and/or Governing Body. With respect to the Trust Shared Service, references in this Policy to the responsibilities of the Principal and Governing Body should be read as the Athena Learning Trust CEO and the Trust Shared Services Committee respectively.

References in this Policy to ‘policies and procedures’ should be read as including ‘reports, statements and schedules etc’, as specified in the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule*** that can be found at Appendix A to this Policy.

## 2.1 Policy framework

General descriptions of the requirements for ‘policies’ often use the terms ‘policy’ and ‘procedure’ interchangeably. The Trust has adopted a standard ‘default’ structure for its policies and procedures as follows:

- **Policy** – statement of principles, aims and objectives, the requirements that the Board places on the Trust and its schools, or that the Governing Body places on its school community; non-negotiables; decision of ‘governors’ (Board or Governing Body).
- **Procedure** – what the Trust’s schools, staff, governors etc, and a school’s staff, students, parents etc, have to do to meet the requirements of the Trust’s/school’s policy and how the policy is implemented; what to do and who does it.
- \* **Guidance** – more detailed and specific advice and guidance on how to implement the policy and procedure for those having to do it – primarily Trust and school staff.

In order to ensure that the Trust fulfils its statutory responsibilities all schools and service units in the Trust must follow Trust policies, procedures and guidance and must develop, maintain and implement their own policies, procedures and guidance where required by and consistent with those Trust policies and procedures.

**Trust policies** are statements by the Board of Trustees on behalf of the Trust as a whole; setting out the Trust’s position and intent to the Trust’s stakeholders, and placing requirements on the Trust’s schools and staff, and on governors/Trustees and anyone visiting a Trust establishment. Trust procedures are statements of how the Trust and its schools, staff and governors/Trustees will implement those policies. Trust policies and procedures are approved by the Board of Trustees.



**School / service unit policies** are statements by the school / service unit to its stakeholders setting out how it will operate and the requirements it places on its staff, students and parents, governors and anyone visiting the school / service unit. School / service unit procedures are statements of how the school / service unit and its staff and governing body will implement those policies.

School /service unit policies and procedures must be consistent with relevant Trust policies and procedures. Where a school /service unit policy or procedure is not consistent with the relevant Trust policies and procedures, or is silent, or if there is any doubt, the Trust policy or procedure will apply.

School /service unit policies and procedures are either:

- **Common** – a single policy / procedure applicable to all Trust schools and service units, approved by the Board of Trustees; or
- **Variable** – specific to an individual school or service units, approved by the school’s Governing Body or the Trust Shared Services Committee.

As specified by the relevant Trust Policy(ies) and the Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule.

The Guidance may be issued to provide additional details to those persons required to implement a policy or procedure to assist them and ensure the policy/procedure is implemented appropriately.

Guidance related to Trust policies and procedures, and to common school and service unit policies and procedures, will be issued by the appropriate officer(s) of the Trust; and guidance related to individual school policies and procedures will be issued by the appropriate Principal or Head of Shared Services.

Athena Learning Trust has grouped its policies and procedures under the classes of policy below and as listed in the **Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule**.

Each Governing Body and the Trust Shared Services Committee must ensure that its school(s) / service units operate in accordance with Trust policies and procedures, and must adopt and maintain policies and procedures for their school(s) / service units as required by and in accordance with this Policy and the **Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule**.



### **3.1 Trust Strategic Policies**

The Athena Learning Trust Board of Trustees has approved a set of Trust Strategic Policies that set out the Trust's high-level policy framework and the requirements that the Board places on its schools, shared services and staff, and its Committees and Governing Bodies.

Each Trust Strategic Policy covers an aspect of the responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and/or the functions of the Trust and its schools. Each Strategic Policy will have under it a set of Trust wide policies and procedures, and school policies and procedures.

A Strategic Policy gives the high-level policy framework to be followed by all schools and services across the Trust; setting the context and principles for the policies and procedures of the Trust's shared services and its schools, and which they and their own policies and procedures must follow.

It is the responsibility of the Principals and governing bodies with respect to schools, and of the Athena Learning Trust CEO and Board of Trustees and the Trust Shared Services Committee with respect to the Trust Shared Service, to ensure that their schools and services are managed in accordance with the Trust Strategic Policies, and they must adopt and maintain school and Trust Shared Service policies and procedures as required by and consistent with the Trust Strategic Policies.

New schools joining Athena Learning Trust will automatically adopt all Trust Strategic Policies immediately on conversion. However all schools will begin the movement to ALT policies at least 3 months prior to the point of conversion to ensure there is a thorough understanding of the policies and procedures.

### **3.2 Trust-wide policies and procedures**

The Athena Learning Trust Board of Trustees has approved a set of Trust-wide policies and procedures. A Trust-wide policy/procedure is a single policy/procedure that must be followed by all schools and services in the Trust.

Each Trust-wide policy is subsidiary to the appropriate Trust Strategic Policy.

Where the Board of Trustees has approved a Trust-wide policy/procedure, any pre-existing policy/procedure that is covered by the Trust-wide policy/procedure will fall; and where any school policy/procedure is superseded by or contradicted by a Trust-wide policy/procedure the Trust-wide

policy/procedure will override; and the Trust-wide policy/procedure will apply to the school.

Some Trust-wide policies/procedures will have a school-specific element or annex; in these cases each school's Principal will need to tailor, and their Governing Body approve, those specific parts of the policy/procedure – and those parts only, as indicated in the policy/procedure – to their specific requirements.

New schools joining Athena Learning Trust will automatically adopt all Trust-wide Policies and procedures immediately on conversion.

### **3.3 Common / single school policies and procedures**

Common / single school policies and procedures are statements by the school to its local stakeholders, where the Board of Trustees has determined that all schools in the Trust must follow the same policies/procedures, so that the Trust can fulfill its statutory responsibilities and/or manage its schools effectively.

Common / single school policies and procedures are approved by the Board of Trustees.

New schools joining Athena Learning Trust will automatically adopt all Trust Strategic

Policies immediately on conversion.

### **3.4 School policy / procedure templates**

For some school policies and procedures, as specified in the Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule, the Board of Trustees will approve a base or template that is largely identical across all schools in the Trust, but will have specific sections within it that schools will need to add in or tailor to their local circumstances.

Where a template exists, that template must be used to create the appropriate school policy / procedure, and must be completed with accurate and appropriate details for the school, in accordance with the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule***.

For these policies/procedures, the Governing Body must approve the school-specific variations, but may not alter the base policy/procedure.





New schools joining Athena Learning Trust will automatically begin to use the school Policy procedure templates and agree with the CEO and Head of Governance a timeline for review of existing Policies.

### **3.5 Individual / variable school policies and procedures**

Individual / variable school policies and procedures are statements by the school to its local stakeholders and may vary from school-to-school within the Trust, and are approved by the school's Governing Body.

Where required by a Trust Strategic policy or Trust-wide policy/procedure, each school's Principal will need to draft, and their Governing Body approve, an appropriate school-specific policy/procedure, consistent with the appropriate Trust Strategic policy and/or Trust-wide policy/procedure.

In addition, and where not covered by a Trust Strategic policy or Trust-wide policy/procedure, each school's Principal will need to draft, and their Governing Body approve, any school specific policies/procedures that are required by legislation and guidance and/or that the Principal considers necessary for the operation of their school. Any such school policies/procedures must be consistent with the appropriate Trust Strategic policy.

School policies/procedures are written by appropriate school staff and approved by the Governing Body. It is the responsibility of the Governing Body and the Principal of each school to take advice from the Athena Learning Trust CEO and appropriate Athena Learning Trust officers to ensure that their school policies and procedures are consistent with Trust Strategic Policies.

Where the Board of Trustees has approved a Model School Policy/Procedure, then the Principal should adopt that Model to meet their requirements – see section 3.4.

Where the Board of Trustees has approved a Template for the policy/procedure, then the Principal must use that Template – see section 3.4.

The formal approval frequency for school policies/procedures will be determined by the Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule – see also section 5.

The Principal should not write policies which are In addition to the required school policies/procedures specified in the Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule. The Principal may adopt other procedures as they deem necessary to their responsibilities for running their school; in doing so, the Principal must ensure that any such school procedures are consistent with Trust Strategic



Policies and any appropriate Trust wide policies/procedures, and must take advice from the appropriate Athena Learning Trust Director of Education or Shared Service officer.

There is no requirement for a Governing Body to approve any policies/procedures beyond those in the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule***.

New schools joining Athena Learning Trust will automatically follow the individual variable Policies and procedures.

### **3.5.1 Model school policies / procedures**

The Athena Learning Trust Board of Trustees has approved a set of model school policies and procedures.

These models include many of the school-specific policies and procedures that Principals and Governing Bodies are required to, or may wish to, adopt, and which are not covered by Trust-wide policies or procedures.

The models contain a structure and example and suggested text that has been pre-approved, and provides guidance and represents 'good practice'. Principals and Governing Bodies should consider adopting or adapting the model, or at least have regard to it, when reviewing or creating their own school policies procedures.

Many model school policies and procedures are similarly applicable to non-school service units, and the Trust Shared Services Committee should consider adopting or adapting the model when reviewing or creating their own policies or procedures.

The currently available Athena Learning Trust model school policies and procedures are listed in the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule***.

New schools joining Athena Learning Trust will automatically begin using the model school Policies/procedures from the date of conversion.

### **3.6 Operational procedures**

In order to implement the policies and procedures of the Trust and of the Governing Body and run



their school, the Principal may adopt and implement further operational procedures as long as they are consistent with the appropriate Trust strategic, Trust-wide and common school policies as set out in the Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule. Any such procedures are deemed to be operational matters within the delegated authority of the Principal.

The Principal may, if they deem it necessary or beneficial to their responsibilities for running their school, choose to consult the link governor and/or Chair and/or Governing Body on the procedure; but the procedure does not need to be, and should not be, presented to the Governing Body for approval.

New schools joining Athena Learning Trust will automatically follow the process for operational procedures on conversion.

#### **4 Trust Shared Service Policies / procedures**

In a similar way to schools having their own School policies and procedures, the Trust Shared Service will need to develop, and the Trust Shared Services Committee will need to approve appropriate Trust Shared Service policies and procedures.

It is the responsibility of the Trust Shared Service Committee and Athena Learning Trust CEO to ensure that the Trust Shared Service policies and procedures are consistent with the Trust Strategic Policies.

Where a required policy or procedure has not been approved for the Trust Shared Service by the Trust Shared Service Committee, the current Athena Learning Trust Model School Policy/Procedure (suitably adapted) will apply, unless a more appropriate policy or procedure is available within the Trust and endorsed by the appropriate Athena Learning Trust Director or the Athena Learning Trust CEO pending approval of an appropriate policy/procedure by the Trust Shared Services Committee.

#### **5.1 Approval**

Policies and procedures must be approved in accordance with the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule***.

All policies and procedures will identify a 'responsible officer' who is responsible for the maintenance and review of the policy/procedure. Where the responsible officer is identified as the Principal or

CEO, they may delegate that function to an appropriately senior and qualified member of their staff.

**Trust Strategic Policies** should be drafted by the identified responsible officer. Appropriate legislation and DfE guidance should be followed, and the appropriate link Trustee should be consulted before the final draft is produced. The draft policy/procedure should then be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

**Trust-wide policies and procedures** should be drafted by the identified responsible officer, in accordance with the appropriate Trust Strategic Policy. Appropriate legislation and DfE guidance should be followed, and the appropriate link Trustee should be consulted before the final draft is

produced. The draft policy/procedure should then be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

**Single/common school policies and procedures** should be drafted by the identified responsible officer, in accordance with the appropriate Trust Strategic Policy. Appropriate legislation and DfE guidance should be followed, and the appropriate link Trustee should be consulted before the final draft is produced. The draft policy/procedure should then be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

**Individual / variable school policies and procedures** should be drafted by the identified responsible officer, in accordance with the appropriate Trust Strategic Policy and Trust-wide policies and procedures. Where one exists, the approved model/template should be used or taken account of; appropriate legislation and DfE guidance should be followed; advice should be sought from the appropriate officers of the Trust Shared Service; and the appropriate link governor should be consulted before the final draft is produced. The draft policy/procedure should then be presented to the Governing Body for approval.

## **5.2 Formal review**

Policies and procedures must be reviewed by the responsible officer in a similar way to the process described in section 5.1 and in accordance with the **Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule**, and presented to the approving body for approval, at the latest before the formal review date in the Schedule.

The recommendation to the approving body should summarise the changes that have been made to the policy/procedure since it was last formally approved by them. Significant changes to the effect or operation of the policy/procedure should be identified and significantly changed sections in the

policy/procedure should be referenced; where appropriate and it adds clarity, new and changed text in the policy should be indicated eg by different coloured text.

If the amendments are only minor/technical drafting changes, equivalent to those covered by section 5.3, the appropriate link governor/Trustee should be informed of the proposed changes and the nature of the proposed changes should be made clear in the recommendation to the approving body.

If the policy/procedure does not require any changes, the appropriate link governor/Trustee should be informed of this; the recommendation to the approving body should state that the policy has not changed since it was last approved.

If the policy/procedure has only been subject to minor/technical drafting changes in accordance with section 5.3, this should be stated in the recommendation to the approving body.

### **5.3 Interim review and minor / technical changes**

The person named as the responsible officer for the policy or procedure is responsible for ensuring that the policy/procedure is kept up-to-date between formal reviews.

If minor/technical drafting changes are required to a policy/procedure that do not materially affect the nature of the policy/procedure, such changes can be made by the responsible officer without the policy/procedure being presented for approval to the approving body; for example a change to the name or contact details of a member of staff referred to, or technical updates required by legislation or guidance that do not materially alter the effect or operation of the policy/procedure.

If the required change is more significant and cannot be classed as a minor/technical drafting change, then the proposed revised policy/procedure must be presented to the next available meeting of the approving body for approval, as described in section 5.2.

If the change is deemed to be more significant, but is required urgently and cannot wait until the next meeting, the responsible officer should consult the appropriate link governor/Trustee and may propose, via the Clerk to the Governing Body/Board, that the revised policy/procedure be approved by written resolution of the Chair.

If the responsible officer is unsure whether the amendments required fall within their delegated authority, they should consult the Principal for a school policy/procedure, or the Athena Learning Trust

CEO for a Trust Strategic Policy or Trust-wide policy/procedure; if the Principal is unsure they should consult the appropriate Director of Education and/or the Clerk to the Board.

If the required changes are deemed to be minor/technical drafting changes, the responsible officer should provide a proposed amended policy/procedure to the Principal, the Chair of the approving body and the appropriate link governor/Trustee, with an explanation of the changes being proposed. If the Chair of the approving body believes that the proposed changes would materially alter the effect or operation of the policy/procedure and should therefore be considered by the approving body, they should refer the matter back to the responsible officer for it to be dealt with in accordance with section 5.2

The updated policy/procedure will be identified by a 'revision number' and date being entered on the front page of the policy/procedure; the title of the policy/procedure and the formal approval date should remain as the date it was last formally approved by the approving body.

## **6.1 Recording and Publication**

Whenever a Trust Strategic Policy or a Trust-wide policy or procedure or a common school policy or procedure has been approved or formally reviewed by a meeting of the Board, or by written resolution of the Chair if urgent, or has been amended by the responsible officer if minor/technical drafting change only, the policy/procedure should be provided to the Clerk to the Board.

The Clerk to the Board will check the policy/procedure and update the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule***. The Clerk to the Board will send a copy of the checked approved policy/procedure to the Athena Learning Trust CEO and store a copy of it in the Trust Policy folder on the governance Google Drive; and, for a common school policy or procedure, will send a copy of the checked approved policy/procedure to the Clerk to the Governing Body, who will send it to the Principal and store a copy of it in the School Policy folder on the governance Google Drive.

The Athena Learning Trust CEO must ensure that the latest approved and checked versions of Trust Strategic Policies and Trust-wide policies/procedures are made available to appropriate staff and that they are published on the Trust website as determined by the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule***.

Whenever a school policy/procedure on the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule*** has been approved or formally reviewed by a meeting of the Governing Body, or by written resolution of the Chair if urgent, or amended by the responsible officer if minor/technical drafting change only, the policy/procedure should be provided to the Clerk to the Governing Body.



The Clerk to the Governing Body will check the policy/procedure and update the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule***; and then send a copy of the checked approved policy/procedure to the Principal and the Clerk to the Board; the Clerk to the Clerk to the Board will store the approved school policy/procedure in the School Policy folder on the governance Google Drive.

The Principal must ensure that the latest approved and checked versions of Trust and school policies/procedures are made available to appropriate staff, and that school policies/procedures are published on the school website as determined by the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule***.

In addition to the requirements of the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Schedule***, the Principal may choose to issue an appropriate operational school procedure to staff and/or parents and/or to publish it on the school website.

For the definitive approved and checked policy/procedure, Governors, Trustees and Principals should refer to Trust Policy and School Policy folders on the governance google drive; or contact the Clerk to the Governing Body or the Athena Learning Trust Head of Clerking for advice.

## **6.2 Structure and style of policies and procedures**

The structure and layout, and style and wording, of Trust and school policies and procedures should follow the ***Athena Learning Trust Policy Style Guidance***.

Trust Strategic policies, and Trust-wide and Trust Shared Service policies, procedures and guidance should have Athena Learning Trust branding only.

School policies, procedures and guidance, both common and individual, should have the appropriate school branding.

**Athena Learning Trust POLICY SCHEDULE: October 22**

**INSERT POLICY SCHEDULE HERE**