Audit Committee

Constitution and Terms of Reference 2025

The Link Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, regulated by the Department of Education (DfE). All Members of the Board of Trustees are also Directors of the exempt charity; the term 'Trustee' used in this Policy also means Director.

1. **Constitution**
The Board of Trustees of the Link Academy Trust has established the Audit Committee. The Constitution and Terms of Reference should be reviewed annually; any amendments must be approved by the Board of Trustees.

2. **Membership**
The Board of Trustees will appoint a Trustee to chair the Audit Committee. Membership will include not less than three Trustees. The quorum shall be two Trustees. The Board may appoint a co-opted member who is not a Trustee if there is a candidate with specific skills and expertise to complement those of the Trustees.

3. **Attendance at Meetings**
The Chief Executive Officer will attend meetings as an officer; the Chair may invite other officers to attend according to the agenda and business to be discussed. The Chief Financial Officer will attend any meeting that requires input.

   At least once a year, the Committee will meet with the External Audit Service and with the Internal Audit Service without officers present. The Committee may also meet with the Chief Executive Officer without auditors present. The purpose of such discussions will be so the Committee can satisfy itself on the performance of both the audit services and officers.

4. **Frequency of Meetings**
The Committee will normally meet three times per financial year.

5. **Authority**
The Committee is authorised to approve expenditure within the levels agreed by the Board of Trustees, in accordance with the Link Academy Trust's Financial Regulations, Scheme of Delegation, funding bodies' and other legal requirements.

6. **Duties**
In accordance with the Companies Acts, Charities Acts, the Academies Financial Handbook and the Trust's Scheme of Delegation, the Audit Committee has the following duties:

   6.1 **External Audit Service**

   6.1.1. The Audit Committee will conduct the arrangements for periodic testing of the External Audit Service and make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on the appointment of suitably qualified accountants.

   6.1.2 The Audit Committee will review the performance of the External Audit Service after the annual audit has been completed and report accordingly to the Board of Trustees in order that any issues can be considered as part of the formal annual appointment to be approved by the Members at the Annual General Meeting.

6.1.3 The Audit Committee will be the principal committee to liaise with the External Audit Service and ensure that the annual audit process is conducted in compliance with best practice. The EAS will present the Management Letter at the autumn meeting of the Audit Committee to discuss the process of the audit, the outcomes and any outstanding issues as well as issues arising within the sector and/or region which the Trust should take account of.

6.1.4 The Audit Committee will review the EAS Management Letter and ensure that an Action Plan is prepared with a timescale for the implementation of any recommendations and observations. These should be reviewed at each meeting until all have been implemented or the Committee and EAS have reached an agreement on how it will be dealt with. This process will be completed before the end of the relevant school year.

6.2 **Internal Audit Service**

6.2.1. The Audit Committee will conduct the arrangements for periodic testing of the Internal Audit Service and make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on the appointment of suitably qualified accountants.

6.2.2 The Audit Committee will review annually, at the end of the year, the performance of the Internal Audit Service and report accordingly to the Board of Trustees prior to any new appointment being approved.

6.2.3 The Audit Committee will receive all reports of the Internal Audit Service and the Management Responses to any recommendations or observations. The Committee will then ensure the timely implementation of agreed recommendations, setting deadlines or, in liaison with the Finance & General Purposes Committee, finding additional resources where this might be required.

6.3 **Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)**

6.3.1 The Audit Committee will review the Academies Financial Handbook and the Academies Governance Handbook, as updated from time to time; the Chief Executive Officer will report how changes in the Handbooks have been followed up.

6.3.2 The Audit Committee will review reports by the ESFA on the operation of the Trust and its academies and ensure that any recommendations for improvement to meet best practice are followed up and implemented within an agreed timescale.

6.4 **Fraud**

The Audit Committee will initiate, where appropriate, and oversee any arrangements into alleged fraud, using the External or Internal Audit Service or other agency and to report the findings to the appropriate authority.

6.5 **Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing)**

The Audit Committee will review the arrangements by which staff of the Trust may, in confidence, raise concerns about possible improprieties in matters of financial reporting or other matters. The Audit Committee will ensure that arrangements can be put in place for the proportionate and independent investigation of such matters and, where found, outcomes are followed up using the most appropriate policies.

6.6 **Risk Management**

The Audit Committee will ensure that there are arrangements in place throughout the Trust to capture external and internal risks for the creation of the Trust's Risk Register.

The Audit Committee will review the detail of the Risk Register not less than twice a year with a view to challenging its accuracy and scope and the adequacy of the mitigating actions.

The Chair of the Audit Committee will consider those sections of the Risk Register which should be brought to the attention of the full Board and, working with the Chief Executive Officer, Trust Business Manager and other senior management ensure that a highlight report is presented to the Board on a regular basis (i.e. half yearly in January and July).

6.7 **Business Recovery**
The Audit Committee will review the arrangements for establishing normal operation during and after an incident. Examples may include accident, flood, fire, theft, extreme weather, IT disruption, data breach etc. The review will ensure that periodic exercises are conducted to ensure the arrangements are satisfactory.

6.8 **Compliance Testing**
The Audit Committee will review the arrangements for the periodic testing in respect of:

	4th December 2025	5th March 2026	2nd July 2026
Disclosure and Barring Service and Safer Recruitment			
Safeguarding			
Health and Safety and compliance with local authority environmental arrangements			
Legionella, Asbestos and other relevant checks			
Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and other electrical systems			
IT Protocol			
Data Protection, ensuring arrangement comply with the General Data Protection Regulation, Cyber Security			
The Trust Risk Register			
Due Diligence Reports for new schools to be reviewed by the Audit Committee			
Website compliance			
Recommend the External Auditor for Members approval			
Internal Auditor			
Review the annual External Auditor's report and accounts			
Review progress of addressing External Auditor's recommendations			
Strategy Plan			
Policies for Audit Committee recommendation/approval			
Whistleblowing compliance – policy/procedures			

The F&GP Committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Trust's Health and Safety Policy and ensuring that adequate resources are available to do this.

7. **Communication and Reporting Procedures**
The Minutes of the Committee will be circulated to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees. Once approved but subject to any items deemed confidential, the Minutes will be made available to the academies within the Trust and added to the Trust's website.

8. **Clerking Arrangements**
The Clerk to the Trust will minute the meetings with the support of the Governance Professional.

Reviewed by Audit Committee: 4th December 2025
Approved by the Board of Trustees: 15th December 2025