

Management letter

Prepared for the board of trustees of The Hamblin Education Trust

For the year ended 31 August 2022

Haines Watts

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1. Introduction

We are pleased to set out in this document our report to the trustees of The Hamblin Education Trust for the year ended 31 August 2022.

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 8 August 2014 in order to express an audit opinion for UK statutory purposes on the financial statements of The Hamblin Education Trust for the year ended 31 August 2022. 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 29 September 2022, 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 Juliette Jackson (CFO).

This report has been prepared for the sole use of the trustees of The Hamblin Education 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 Haines Watts 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 2022.

In addition to auditing the financial statements we also provided, through other individuals, the following services to The Hamblin Education Trust for the year ended 31 August 2022:

- Preparation of the statutory financial statements.
- Audit of the EOYC return.
- Preparation of the Annual Accounts Return.
- Payroll services

We have outlined below the safeguards that we have put in place to ensure that these services provided in 2021/22 do not cause any breaches in our independence and objectivity in relation to the audit.

Non audit service 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.

Payroll services

This service is provided by a separate individual from those who have audited the financial statements.

Haines Watts charged £1,600 for completion of the Annual Accounts Return and £10,465 for other services.

Haines Watts charged £12,500 for the audit of the academy trust and the Teachers' Pension EOYC audit.

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

- Haines Watts, its partners 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 2021 to 2022.
- Academy Trust Handbook 2021.
- 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 Jennifer Brennan, Jo Lacon and Juliette Jackson, 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 period ended 31 August 2022 and are satisfied that it continues to be appropriate.

Underpinning materiality is a level of triviality, £12,000, 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 group materiality level to The Hamblin Education Trust of £244,000 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 the following matters that we feel need bringing to the attention of the trustees:

Transactions with related parties were not declared to the ESFA as required by the Academy Trust Handbook 2021. This has resulted in a modified regularity audit report - see section 6 of this report.

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/Freehold land	125 years straight line/Nil
Leasehold/Freehold buildings	50 years straight line
Building improvements	25 years straight line
Fixtures, fittings & equipment	4 years straight line
Computer equipment	3 years straight line
Motor Vehicles	4 years straight line
Assets under the course of construction	nil until brought into use.

2.6 Funding position at 31 August 2022

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 deficit of £1,085,000, being £41,000 general funds less the pension deficit of £1,126,000.

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 £15,092,000. 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 £283,000.

Individually, the general reserves carried forward excluding pension deficits and fixed assets in Altrincham Grammar School for Boys and North Cestrian School are £1,056,000 and (£589,000) respectively.

Appropriate disclosure have been made in the trustees report and funds note in the financial statements regarding the deficit in North Cestrian School.

2.7 Reconciliation of audited surplus/deficit

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

	Balance sheet		SoFA	
	Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)	Dr (£'000)	Cr (£'000)
Surplus/(deficit) per the draft trial balance				359
Reversal of capitalisation of fixed assets		4	4	
Depreciation		528	528	
Correction to deferred income	41			41
Additional late accrual		16	16	
FRS102 pension adjustment	3,648			3,648
Total	3,689	548	548	3,689
Impact on reserves	3,141			3,141
Surplus/(deficit) per financial statements				3,500

There are no uncorrected material errors or omissions in isolation or aggregate.

2.8 Significant difficulties encountered during the audit

We did not encounter any significant difficulties during the audit.

2.9 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.

2.10 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.

2.11 Audit opinion

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

3. High risk audit areas

Issue	Audit risk	Audit procedures undertaken	Conclusion
<p>Fund Accounting</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Incorrect disclosure of restricted and unrestricted reserves in the financial statements.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Reviewed income and expenditure headings on a line by line basis to ensure compliance with the Academies Accounts Direction.</p>	<p>There are no uncorrected material mis-statements in respect of the allocation between restricted and unrestricted reserves in the financial statements.</p> <p>No issues were found during our income and expenditure testing.</p> <p>Restricted and unrestricted income and reserves appear appropriate.</p>
<p>Completeness of payroll costs</p>	<p>The payroll function is outsourced. Our knowledge of the academies market has shown some error risk posed over outsourced payrolls.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Payroll costs in the financial statements do not appear to be materially mis-stated.</p>

Issue	Audit risk	Audit procedures undertaken	Conclusion
<p>FRS 102 Accounting for Pensions</p> <p>Treatment of the academy trust's share of pension scheme deficits</p>	<p>Incorrect treatment of the pension valuation.</p> <p>Financial statements are not prepared in accordance with sector accounting guidance.</p>	<p>We obtained the FRS 102 pension valuation as at 31 August 2022 and assessed the disclosures and accounting entries made by the academy trust.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Pension valuation and disclosures in the accounts appear reasonable in line with the valuation received and the Academies Accounts Direction requirements.</p>
<p>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.</p> <p>Completeness of income is to be established to ensure all income receivable in the year has been recognised appropriately.</p>	<p>Grant/other income not being recognised in accordance with the Charity SORP (FRS 102) recognition criteria and per the underlying funding agreement.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>A review of grant funding agreements was performed to determine whether the grant income had been recognised in the appropriate period.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Income appears to have been appropriately recognised by the academy trust.</p> <p>The revenue recognition policy appears appropriate and in line with the Academies Accounts Direction.</p>

Issue	Audit risk	Audit procedures undertaken	Conclusion
Going concern	<p>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.</p> <p>This is a key risk given the current economic climate and pressures on government spending.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the considerations of management including cash flow forecasts and budget reports in relation to the going concern assumptions made.</p> <p>We have confirmed grant funding to supporting statements.</p>	We concur with the trustees' decision that going concern is an appropriate basis on which to prepare the accounts.
Management override of internal controls	Potential risk of management override of internal controls (this being a presumed risk inherent within current auditing standards).	<p>A suitable level of professional scepticism was applied throughout all areas of audit testing.</p> <p>We reviewed manual journals and accounting estimates such as accruals and provisions and consider any pressures on management to achieve results.</p>	No evidence of management override was found during our audit procedures.
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 were not declared to the ESFA. The regularity audit report has been modified as a result.





Issue	Audit risk	Audit procedures undertaken	Conclusion
<p>COVID-19</p>	<p>Increased risk of fraud as a result of the pandemic.</p>	<p>The impact of COVID-19 has been considered throughout the audit. Income and expenditure relating to COVID-19 has been tested.</p>	<p>Appropriate disclosures have been made in line with the Academies Accounts Direction.</p>
<p>Fixed asset valuation and impairment</p>	<p>That assets inherited on conversion are incorrectly valued.</p> <p>Where CIF projects are on-going, that these costs are capitalised and recognised as assets under construction appropriately.</p> <p>Compliance with FRS102 in carrying out impairment reviews where impairment indicators arise, such as going concern.</p>	<p>We have performed calculations on asset values on conversion to verify the amounts stated in the financial statements.</p> <p>We have performed cut off testing on capital projects on-going around the year end.</p> <p>We have considered whether any impairment indicators have arisen in the year and assessed the need for an impairment review.</p> <p>We have physically verified assets brought forward in the financial statements. We have verified a sample of asset additions to supplier invoices.</p>	<p>Fixed assets in the financial statements are appropriately valued at cost and depreciated accordingly.</p> <p>Additions have been identified in the year and capitalised appropriately to the correct category.</p> <p>No impairment indicators have arisen in the year.</p>

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	<p>Should be urgently attended to by the directors and management.</p> <p>These are significant issues that may result in a qualification in the audit report in future periods if not satisfactorily addressed.</p>
Moderate	<p>Issues requiring the attention of the directors and management.</p> <p>Issues ranked as moderate require close monitoring by the board and senior management to ensure timely resolution.</p>
Low	<p>Issues requiring management attention and correction.</p> <p>Issues ranked as low are generally routine in nature and should be resolved by general management.</p> <p>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.</p>

Audit finding	Potential effect	Priority	Recommendation	Responsible Owner	Implementation Date
<p>1 Pecuniary interest forms for 20221-22 were not completed by 2 trustees.</p>	<p>The academy trust's register of interests is not complete in line with transparency requirements.</p> <p>Non-compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook 2021 section 2.50</p>		<p>We recommend that annual declarations be made at the start of each academic year.</p> <p>Any outstanding declarations should be chased up accordingly.</p>	<p>Trustees</p>	<p>Autumn term 2022</p>
<p>2 2 of the trustees omitted to note their directorships of other entities on their pecuniary interest declaration.</p>	<p>This could lead to unidentified related party transactions.</p>		<p>All key management personnel, director, trustee and governor positions and relevant family relationships are to be included on pecuniary interest forms going forward.</p>	<p>Trustees</p>	<p>Autumn term 2022</p>
<p>3 The academy trust does not have an executive pay policy.</p>	<p>The academy trust is at risk of not evidencing executive pay decision-making processes clearly as required by the Academy Trust Handbook 2021 section 2.30.</p>		<p>An executive pay policy is to be drafted and approved accordingly. This should cover the positions of CEO and CFO as a minimum along with any other trust level staff.</p>	<p>CFO/HET Pay Review Committee</p>	<p>Autumn term 2022</p>
<p>4 The skills audit completed doesn't reflect the full board with some trustee responses not being included in the matrix.</p>	<p>The academy trust is at risk of not complying with the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook 2021 section 1.27-1.31.</p>		<p>It is recommended that outstanding responses are obtained and a consolidated skills audit matrix is compiled and reviewed accordingly.</p>	<p>Trustees</p>	<p>Autumn term 2022</p>

Audit finding	Potential effect	Priority	Recommendation	Responsible Owner	Implementation Date
<p>5 Expense claims submitted in the year were not always processed in accordance with the policy in the financial procedures manual.</p> <p>Instances were identified where expense claims did not have matching receipts. Instances were identified where expenses had not been authorised in line with the trust's financial procedures manual.</p>	<p>Non-compliance with the trust's financial procedures manual can lead to weaknesses within the trust's internal systems and controls surrounding regularity and propriety over expenditure.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>It is recommended that all members of staff are reminded to keep receipts for any expenses they wish to have reimbursed.</p> <p>All expense claims should have evidence of approval before processing for payment.</p>	<p>F & P Manager</p>	<p>Autumn 2022</p> <p>On-going</p>
<p>6 T Gartside is not listed in the trustees section on Get Information About Schools.</p>	<p>Incomplete records being maintained on Get Information About Schools which are required to be maintained by the Academy Trust Handbook 2021.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>It is recommended that Get Information About Schools is updated as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Executive Head</p>	<p>November 2022</p>
<p>7 Purchase orders were not raised for several expenditure items as required by the trust's finance manual.</p>	<p>Unauthorised expenditure may be raised. Non-compliance with the academy trust's finance manual.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>All staff should be reminded of the requirement to raise purchase orders for all relevant items of expenditure going forward.</p>	<p>CFOO</p>	<p>On-going</p>

Audit finding	Potential effect	Priority	Recommendation	Responsible Owner	Implementation Date
<p>8 Instances were identified during our audit testing where purchases were not always authorised in line with the delegated authorities in the trust's finance manual</p>	<p>Non-compliance with the trust's financial procedures manual can lead to weaknesses within the trust's internal systems and controls surrounding regularity and propriety over expenditure.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Finance staff with responsibilities for processing purchase orders should be reminded of the financial authorisation levels as per the scheme of delegation to ensure these are adhered to.</p>	<p>F & P Manager</p>	<p>On-going</p>
<p>9 The academy websites do not contain several items required to be compliant with the DfE disclosure requirements.</p>	<p>Non-compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook 2021 section 2.50 and other DfE requirements.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>The academy websites should be updated accordingly to include all relevant information required.</p>	<p>CFOO</p>	<p>November 2022</p>
<p>10 Depreciation rates in the academy trust's financial procedures manual do not match those stated in the financial statements.</p>	<p>Inconsistency within the academy trust's internal financial reporting compared to the audited financial statements.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>The financial procedures manual is to be updated to reflect the depreciation rates as stated in the financial statements.</p>	<p>F & P Manager</p>	<p>November 2022</p>

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 2021

The Academies Financial Handbook (AFH) states that the DfE has a strong preference that academy trusts have at least 5 members and that the majority are independent of the board of trustees. Hamblin has 3 members, 1 was also a trustee.

There are discrepancies between the trust website, Get Information About Schools and Companies House.

2 of the trustees omitted to note their directorships of other entities on their pecuniary interest declaration.

The academy websites do not contain several items required to be compliant with the DfE disclosure requirements.

Purchase orders were not raised for several expenditure items as required by the trust's finance manual.

Update in 2022

The still has 3 members, 1 of which is also a trustee, however the board is aware of this and the composition of the members is under review.

No discrepancies

Similar issues were identified in our testing carried out in 2021-22. Point raised in section 4.

Similar issues were identified in our testing carried out in 2021-22. Point raised in section 4.

Similar issues were identified in our testing carried out in 2021-22. Point raised in section 4.

6. Regularity

The following matters of irregularity, impropriety and non-compliance came to our attention:

Audit finding	Financial/non financial effect	Priority	Recommendation	Responsible Owner	Implementation Date
1 Transactions with related parties were not declared to the ESFA as required by the Academy Trust Handbook 2021.	Non compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook 2021.	High	All transactions with related parties are to be declared to the ESFA in advance of proceeding with the purchase order.	J Jackson	On-going

The above matters have been reported to the ESFA and National Audit Office in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction.

The above matters have been included in the Accounting Officer's Statement on Regularity, Propriety and Compliance.

The Hamblin Education Trust
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WA14 2RS

Mr John Whittick
Partner
Haines Watts
Chartered Accountants
Bridge House
Ashley Road
Hale
Cheshire WA14 2UT

8th December 2022

Dear Mr Whittick,

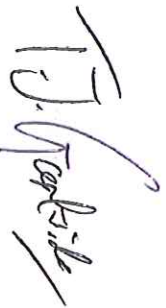
We hereby acknowledge receipt of the Report and Financial Statements, the Report to the Trustees and the Summary of Audit Findings for the financial year ending 31st August 2022.

The Board of Trustees and I have studied the reports and note the Audit Findings Report recommendations. The findings were discussed by the Directors of the Hamblin Education Trust.

We note that the Medium risks highlighted in the Audit Findings Report for the year 2021.2022 regarding declarations of pecuniary interest, whilst they remain a management point, are different to prior years and we will investigate and resolve any anomalies. We continue to do a full review of all interests annually to ensure compliance. We have introduced steps to ensure we have the correct information available as required and we continue to work on a more robust process for collating the necessary information.

In respect of further low risk management points we will work with Haines Watts to understand their Audit findings and put in place suitable actions to address any issues raised.

Yours sincerely



T. J. Gartside
Accounting Officer