

WISE Academies

(A company limited by guarantee)

**ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS**

for the year ended 31 August 2025

WISE Academies
CONTENTS

	Page
Reference and administrative details	1 – 2
Trustees' report	3 – 30
Governance statement	31 – 37
Statement on regularity, propriety and compliance	38
Statement of trustees' responsibilities	39
Independent auditor's report to the members of WISE Academies	40 – 43
Statement of financial activities	44
Balance sheet	45
Statement of cash flows	46
Notes to the financial statements	47 - 82

WISE Academies
REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Members	M E W Stephenson *^ R Bradshaw (resigned 23 January 2025) D R Sandbach O.B.E. G T Yarrow Dame I Hays
Trustees	M E W Stephenson (Chair) *^ Z Carr O.B.E. (CEO and Accounting Officer) J G Wood C.B.E. * D Pearson * R Symonds # N Vokes # P Smith # R Ward # C Collins ^ L Hall ^ (from 1 September 2024) E Grimes ^ (from 1 September 2024) * members of the Finance and General Purpose Committee # members of the Audit Committee ^ members serving on one or more Regional Hub Board Committees
Company Secretary	G Robinson
Senior Management Team:	
Chief Executive Officer and Accounting Officer	Z Carr O.B.E.
Regional Education Director	N Fountain
Regional Education Director	P Martindale
Finance Director	F Hardie
Director of Operations	G Robinson
Director of People and Culture	V Stonebridge
Principal and Registered Office	Borodin Avenue Sunderland SR5 4NX
Company Registration Number	07521946
Independent Auditor	RSM UK Audit LLP 1 St James' Gate Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4AD

WISE Academies
REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS (continued)

Bankers	Lloyds Bank Plc 15-21 Northumberland Street Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7DE
Solicitors	Ward Hadaway Sandgate House 102 Quayside Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3DX
Internal Auditor	TIAA Ltd Artillery House Fort Fareham Newgate Lane Fareham PO14 1AH

The Trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements and auditors' report of the charitable company for the year ended 31 August 2025. The annual report serves the purpose of both a trustees' report and a directors' report required under company law.

The Trust, for the period to 31 August 2025, operated with 16 first/primary school academies in the North East area of England:

- Town End Academy and Bexhill Academy which have been part of the Trust since March 2011;
- Welbeck Academy which joined the Trust in September 2012;
- Hasting Hill Academy which joined in December 2012;
- Adderlane Academy which joined in December 2016;
- Prudhoe West Academy which joined in July 2017;
- Shaftoe Trust Academy which was sponsored in February 2018;
- North View Academy (a specialist SEN primary) which was transferred from a Single Academy Trust (SAT) in September 2018;
- Haltwhistle Primary Academy (formerly Haltwhistle First Academy and Haltwhistle Middle Academy) which were transferred from a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) in September 2018;
- Croftway Academy, Malvin's Close Academy and Morpeth Road Academy which were transferred from a MAT in September 2018, and
- Ashley Academy which was sponsored from 1 September 2022
- Esh Winning Academy, St Andrew's Academy and Thornley Academy which joined in September 2024.

The academies within the Trust have a combined pupil capacity of 4,816 in the age range 4 – 11, which includes 85 special school places; 450 FTE nursery places; 103 FTE 2-year old places and an additionally resourced provision (ARP) of 10 places. A further ARP of 12 places was in operation until 31 August 2025 which has since closed.

The combined roll was 4,007 in the school census on October 2025. This includes 3,501 pupils in the age range 4 – 11 and 431 children accessing nursery provision (full time and part time) with an additional 75 accessing 2-year-old provision (full time and part time).

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Constitution

The academy trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. The charitable company's memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the academy trust. The Trustees of WISE Academies are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law. The charitable company is known as WISE Academies.

Details of the Trustees who served throughout the year are included in the Reference and Administrative Details on page 1.

Members' Liability

Each member of the charitable company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the charitable company in the event of it being wound up while they are a member, or within one year after they cease to be a member, such amount as may be required, not exceeding £10, for the debts and liabilities contracted before they ceased to be a member.

Trustees' Indemnities

Trustees benefit from indemnity insurance under the Department of Education's risk protection arrangement (RPA) which by virtue of any rule of law would otherwise attach to them in respect of any negligence, default or breach of trust or breach of duty of which they may be guilty in relation to the Trust, provided that any such insurance shall not extend to any claim arising from any act or omission which the Trustees knew to be a breach of trust or breach of duty or not and provided also that any such insurance shall not extend to the costs of any unsuccessful defence to a criminal prosecution brought against the Trustees in their capacity as trustees of the Trust. The indemnity is unlimited.

Method of Recruitment and Appointment or Election of Trustees

The Trust's Governing Body (the Trustees) is set out in the Articles of Association. The Board is no larger than necessary to secure the range of skills necessary to promote effective governance of the Trust. The Board of Trustees comprises the CEO, up to nine Trustees appointed by Members and up to three Co-opted Trustees. The Articles of Association require there to be a minimum of three Trustees to be responsible for the statutory and constitutional affairs of the Trust and its management.

The constitution and membership of the Board of Trustees and at Company Member level remain stable and fit for purpose for effective governance of the Trust. Prior to the reporting year it was decided to extend the size of the Board from nine trustees to eleven trustees to provide more scope for additional expertise to be included in the composition. These additional appointments were made by Members and took effect from 1 September 2024. These additional Trustees were skills based appointments, particularly centred on educational expertise.

Policies and Procedures Adopted for the Induction and Training of Trustees

There were two additional Trustees appointed with effect from 1 September 2024. A specific induction session took place led by the Company Secretary and CEO.

All Trustees are provided with copies of policies, procedures, accounts, budgets, plans and other documents that they need to undertake their role.

Training opportunities for Trustees and Members have included safeguarding updates, Safer Recruitment, Link Governor training and a School Inspection Data Summary report (IDSR) guide. Other opportunities included People Management and Attendance and Prevent training via DfE which was attended by a number of Trustees.

The Trust's governance structure also includes a number of committees which includes Local Governing Bodies. There are also four Regional Boards which oversee a number of academies in a geographical hub structure: North of Tyne; South of Tyne; Durham and Northumberland.

Induction training is provided to new local governors to provide context to the role and understanding of how local governance functions within a multi-layered trust governance structure.

There were also introductory sessions for the three Governing Bodies of schools that joined the Trust from 1 September 2024 to assist their understanding of the governance structure and the role of local governance within the Trust.

There will continue to be a range of opportunities for Trustees and Members to access development initiatives.

Organisational Structure

The company is set up as a multi-academy model, and the Board of Trustees is normally scheduled to meet six times per year to discuss its strategic objectives with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who is the Accounting Officer of the Multi Academy Trust (MAT). During the reporting year the Trustees met on six occasions. There are also two Regional Education Directors within the organisational structure who participate in Trustees' meetings to strengthen accountability and communication focussing on their respective areas of responsibility.

In this multi academy model, the CEO leads and develops the strategic vision of all academies in the chain. Each individual academy has a Headteacher who is responsible for the day to day management of the school supported by a senior management team and wider central teams comprising teaching and non-teaching staff.

There is only one legal entity accountable for all academies within the chain, the Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The MAT has one set of Articles which governs all Academies. The Articles of Association reflect the tiered governance structure which includes Members, Trustees, Regional Boards and Local Governing Bodies. The Regional Boards and Local Governing Bodies have the status of committees of the Board of Trustees in the governance structure and their roles and responsibilities are defined through the scheme of delegation. Local Governing Bodies have always existed in the WISE Academies governance framework and provide individual school focus and accountability. The Regional Boards are one of the mechanisms for holding Regional Education Directors / Regional Hub Lead to account for the performance of the academies within their area of responsibility.

Within the Articles of Association there are other measures available to those responsible for governance to discharge governance functions through written resolutions.

The Board of Trustees has also previously resolved to authorise the Chair of Trustees (or in her absence, the Vice-chair) to exercise any governance function which may properly be deemed urgent and where a delay in decision making would be detrimental to the Trust, academies, staff or pupils. There was no such exercise of powers of urgency within the reporting period.

Arrangements for Setting Pay and Remuneration of Key Management Personnel

The Trustees consider that they, together with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Finance Director, Director of People and Culture, Director of Operations and Regional Education Directors comprise the key management personnel of the Trust in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the Trust on a day-to-day basis (see note 9f to the accounts). The Trustees give of their time freely and no Trustee, other than the CEO, received remuneration in the year, and of the Trustees, only the Chair and CEO claimed travelling expenses during the period. WISE Academies did not engage in any related party transactions with key management personnel, members or trustees or their families during the reported year.

The pay and remuneration of the senior management team is reviewed annually by the Finance and General Purposes Committee taking account of national leadership pay scales and other benchmarking information available. There are also appropriate appraisal objectives set and any incremental progression takes account of performance. A number of criteria are used in setting pay:

- nature of the role and responsibilities
- the sector average salary for comparable positions
- trends in pay

Trade Union Facility Time

Under the provision of the trade union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017, where an academy trust has more than 49 full time equivalent employees throughout any 7 months within the reporting period, it must include information included in schedule 2 of the Regulations. The information to be published consists of four tables covering the period April 2024 to March 2025:

Relevant union officials

Number of employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period	Full-time equivalent employee number
4	6

Percentage of time spent on facility time

Percentage of time	Number of employees
0%	6
1% - 50%	-
51% - 99%	-
100%	-

Percentage of pay bill spent on facility time

Total cost of facility time	£nil
Total pay bill	£24.6m
Percentage of pay bill spent on facility time	0%

Paid trade union activities

Time spent on trade union activities as a percentage of total paid facility time hours	0%
--	----

Related Parties and Other Connected Charities and Organisations

The idea of partnership is important to WISE Academies. We use this approach in a way which is creative and which will allow our young people to achieve their full potential. Within the Trust our approach is the sharing of good practice for the mutual benefit of all.

A key component of the partnership working approach is provided through both the Town End Research School and the Great North Stronger Practice Hub. The mission of our Research School is to break the link between family income and educational achievement and build and strengthen networks of schools to help them access good quality, evidence-based education research and implement it in everyday classroom practice. Our Stronger Practice Hub is part of the Department for Education's early years recovery support package which provide advice, share effective practice and offer evidence-based professional development for early years practitioners.

The strategic partnership which existed between WISE Academies and Newcastle City Council for the furtherance of appropriate provision for children with communication and language difficulties through the additionally funded specialist ARC provision based at Welbeck Academy operated during the reported year, but was discontinued on 31 August 2025 following consultations with relevant stakeholders including the local authority, staff and parents.

The Trust is also engaged in a partnership with South Tyneside Council to provide special educational needs places for Foundation Stage pupils with complex learning difficulties based at Ashley Academy.

The land and buildings of Shaftoe Trust Academy are owned by a charitable organisation, Shaftoe Charities. WISE Academies has therefore worked with the trustees of Shaftoe Charities in relation to the sponsorship of Shaftoe Trust Academy and has entered into an agreement with the charity for the lease of the site, the value of which is included within land and buildings in fixed assets. Shaftoe Charities also make a number of donations at their discretion which benefit Shaftoe Trust Academy.

WISE Academies are conscious of the need for any person responsible for governance within the organisation, or, who are employees of the organisation, to declare any relevant business or pecuniary interests and this is particularly the case with related party relationships. The following declarations were made by Trustees and Company Members:

- J Wood C.B.E. – Director of The Beacon of Light Ltd.
- N Vokes – Director of Community Opportunities Limited. Trustee of All Together Consortia. Operations Manager of Hylton Castle Trust. Chief Executive of Sunderland North Community Business Centre.
- R Symonds – None.
- M Stephenson – None (although there is a standing declaration that her sister is a local governor of one of the academies within the Trust).
- P Smith – Member of IRIS trust (appointed November 2024).
- Z Carr O.B.E. – Husband a Director of Capital UK Electric Ltd. (not used by the Trust); Company Member of Melrose Learning Trust. Director of Schools North East.
- C Collins – Consultancy – Christine Collins Consultancy.
- D Pearson - Co-opted member of Board of Governors, Northumbria University.
- R Ward – CEO and Trustee of Melrose Learning Trust.
- R Sandbach O.B.E. - Trustee, The Reece Foundation; Trustee, The National Centre for Universities and Business; Chair and Trustee, The Technology Services Association; Trustee, Laidlaw Schools Trust; Governor, Beacon of Light School, Sunderland.
- R Bradshaw – None.
- G T Yarrow – None.
- Dame I Hays - Owner / Chair of Hays Travel Ltd incorporating the following: -
 - Hays Transport Limited (06428210)
 - Hays Property Services Limited (00288713)
 - Hays Foreign Exchange Limited (03277863)
 - Hays Transfers Limited (06390154)
 - Hays Beds Limited (04201735)
 - Hays Tour Operating Limited (03591401)
 - Hays Travel Foundation (09357982)
 - Hays Travel Limited (01990682)
- L Hall – Executive Headteacher of Bothal and Central Primary Schools, Ashington Learning Partnership.
- E Grimes – Early Years Consultant, carries out consultancy with Upperthorpe Nursery and Castle View Nursery.

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting

This content is included under that heading within the Strategic Report section.

Engagement with Employees (Including Disabled Persons)

WISE Academies encourages the involvement and communication with all employees. From a strategic perspective, all new staff receive induction which is conducted at Trust level and is run alongside initial induction training at each local academy; we have an Employee Engagement Forum which is a communication and consultation group and meets on a termly basis; we also utilise working parties to ensure we get feedback from all levels before implementing significant changes, for example, our Recruitment and Retention Working Party which considers strategies to help the Trust attract, retain and engage talent across the organisation, and annually, we complete a Staff Survey to obtain the views from all employees on their experiences working within the Trust.

The Trust has developed and rolled out a professional growth policy to all staff. This policy reinforces our Trust values and provides the Career Pathways framework for effective, continuous professional development. More specifically, the Trust continues to run Aspiring Leadership Development programmes whereby future leaders of the Trust are identified through an application process and then embark upon a bespoke training package developing their skills and knowledge leading to, and building upon, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

The Trust has a recognition agreement with Trade Unions and our Director of People and Culture chairs termly meetings of our Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) which is attended by the CEO and other members of the Trust Executive team. All HR policies are consulted upon through the JCC and contractual policies are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they remain compliant with all employment and statutory legislation.

The Trust has a comprehensive suite of HR policies that ensure all staff are treated fairly and equitably at all times during their employment. WISE Academies complies with the requirements of the Equality Act (2010) and recognises, respects and values diversity in the workforce and is committed to promoting and achieving equality of opportunity; no candidates or staff are disadvantaged or discriminated against because of the protected characteristics. Staff who require reasonable adjustments to remain in work are treated sensitively and with compassion and support is available to all staff from the Employee Assist Programme and Occupational Health services.

Engagement with Stakeholders

Business relationships with suppliers

Our procurement strategy prioritises value for money and to achieve this, we aim to develop and maintain strong relationships with our suppliers. We value all of our suppliers, including local providers of goods and services together with larger, national organisations and we apply comparative pricing exercises for our requirements in excess of £2,000. Regular weekly payment runs ensure that suppliers are paid within our standard 30 days' terms. These standard payment terms can be shortened on request to support smaller, local suppliers who may be more reliant upon maximising their cashflow.

Department for Education (DfE)

The Trustees ensure that WISE Academies remains compliant in respect of DfE governance and reporting requirements. Annual updates of the Academy Trust Handbook are reviewed together with any 'Accounting Officer' letters as received during the year, with any required actions being followed up with the management team of the Trust.

WISE Academies has supported Croftway Academy's successful application as a lead school as part of the RISE Attendance and Behaviour Hubs programme to promote and share learnings and best practice to help schools build a whole school culture to support attendance.

Ofsted

The Trust is led by a visionary executive leadership team headed by a CEO who is a trained Ofsted inspector, together with both of our Regional Education Directors. As a result of the expertise available within the Trust, we are well placed to respond to the latest Ofsted requirements. This has proved particularly effective when changes in inspection criteria take place, as a Trust-wide approach is deployed to implement measures in readiness for the changes.

Whenever any academy is subject to an Ofsted inspection, Trust leaders work alongside academy leaders and meet with the inspection team. This extends to those responsible for governance with Trustees accompanying local governors at feedback following academy inspections.

Local communities

All WISE Academies' settings are at the heart of their communities and parental/carer engagement is achieved through a number of mechanisms. Key to this is the provision of a welcoming, caring and supportive learning environment which will nurture the development of each child in our care. In settings which support deprived communities, we employ dedicated Child and Family Liaison Teams to build strong relationships and support children and families through a variety of activities and programmes.

All academies regularly offer updates to parents and carers including events relating to the curriculum which helps parents understand how children are learning and helps them to gain confidence in supporting their own children's education. Academies operate friends' groups and regularly involve parents and carers in fund-raising events, fayres, trips and other school celebrations and activities.

The Trust places great importance upon community engagement and wherever possible takes local views into account, including Local Authority elected representatives, Town Councils and other community organisations and we have a strong commitment to work in partnership with other schools and academies in the areas we support through collaboration, sharing of expertise and provision of services, e.g., Governor Support and the work of the Town End Research School and Early Years Stronger Practice Hub.

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and National Children's Bureau (NCB)

The EEF fund the Research Schools Network and we were awarded full Research School status in July 2024 joining the national network of 33 schools. Our partnership-based working offers an opportunity for education settings and local leaders to work with the EEF and Research Schools Network in a sustained and structured manner. The NCB has been appointed the national delivery partner for the Early Years Stronger Practice Hub with the EEF supporting them as evidence partners. WISE Academies continues to support Haltwhistle Primary School as lead setting for the Great North Early Years Stronger Practice Hub which has worked to support other nurseries and childminders in our region to adopt evidence-based practices guided by research and training opportunities.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objects and Aims

The principal activity and objective of the academies is the advancement of education in the United Kingdom by establishing and maintaining high performing first and primary schools, offering a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of its communities by providing a high quality and flexible learning environment.

Our academies are based across the North East of England and serve diverse communities across Durham, Newcastle, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

In accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the company has adopted a scheme of governance approved by the Secretary of State for Education. Each academy will be governed by the Trust.

Objectives, Strategies and Activities

The Trust operates as one team who, together, commit to achieving our mission: '*We are a family of schools who exist to inspire each pupil to believe in themselves so they experience great success through our commitment to excellence*'. Our philosophy is one of boundless aspiration...the sky is the limit.

The main objectives and performance of the Trust during the year ended 31 August 2025 are summarised below:

Strategic aim 1: Providing an excellent standard of education for all pupils.

- **Pupil Outcomes:** Outcomes for all pupils at the end of KS2 have improved with a combined average score of 65% of children reaching the expected standard (2023-24: 62%) which compares favorably against the National Average score of 62%. Our Summer 2025 results are discussed in further detail within our Strategic Report (page 15).
In Writing, all Ofsted inspections during the year have been very positive regarding our approach to securing the basics in early writing. Mathematics outcomes are broadly in line with national averages and have improved slightly at greater depth, with further work planned during 2025-26 to improve the greater depth outcomes. A strong focus on reading fluency following on from phonics is now more embedded across the Trust, particularly in Year 2. Phonics outcomes are above the national average for Years 1 and 2 and have improved on last year. Focus schools (Bexhill Academy, Morpeth Road Academy and Croftway Academy) have shown strong improvements from last year.
- **WISE Teaching and Learning Principles:** The rollout is going very well to upskill teachers and the advocate model has been an effective structure, praised in all Ofsted inspections during the year.
- **SEND Curriculum:** Pupils are well supported across the Trust and largely access the same curriculum with some adaptations. All inspections have commented very positively on our SEND provision. A focus for next year is to review different curriculum models to better suit the needs of pupils with very complex needs.
- **Wider Curriculum:** There has been significant development in the writing curriculum and leaders across the Trust have audited their curriculum provision against Trust expectations. Further focus is planned for next year to monitor curriculum impact with the implementation of the 'Pupil Book Study' approach which places strong emphasis on pupil voice.
- **Quality Assurance:** The Trust Dashboard is now timetabled to update on a monthly basis, with further work planned in the next academic year to make quality measures more explicit.

Strategic aim 2: Ensure that Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural education underpins all activity, so pupils develop as well-rounded, responsible individuals.

- **Attendance:** Attendance has shown strong improvement with an overall Trust average of 94.8%. For mainstream schools in the Trust for longer than a year, attendance is 95.0% (national average: 94.8%). Persistent Absence (PA) has reduced significantly and for the whole Trust is 13.2% (national average 13.5%).

- **Childhood Pledge:** Childhood Pledge Ambassadors are appointed in each school to champion activities across the Trust and create enthusiasm amongst pupils.

Strategic aim 3: Deliver robust financial management.

- The Trust remains in a strong financial position with total reserves held of around £4.9 million across unrestricted and restricted general funds and meets its reserves policy.
- In the period the Trust received a strong end of year external audit with no key findings.
- The Trust cash flow has been reported each month and cash balances have remained steady during the year with an average £3.4m in hand and a further £5m invested in short term deposits and investments.
- All financial submissions have been made within required timescales and all financial regulations have been adhered to.
- During the year we ensured that our financial policies and procedures were fully adopted by our new schools.

Strategic aim 4: Ensure governance is highly effective and fit for purpose.

- Compliance systems give assurance to the Board of Trustees that the Trust is meeting its statutory and legal responsibilities. All compliance matters have been met.
- Governors at all levels have an appropriate skill set in order to fulfil their governance role as demonstrated by annual self-evaluation. Skills of governance are kept under review. Governance is strong across the Trust; two new Trustees were appointed in September 2024 and completed their induction.
- The new Durham Regional Board was constituted with the first meeting taking place in March 2025. At a local level, all three new Durham schools fully constituted Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) who met twice during the year.
- Governors maintain effective oversight and management of risk in all areas of the Trust's operation and Governance has been highly praised at the Trustee and LGB levels in all inspections this year.

Strategic aim 5: Be an employer of choice

- A Retention Working Party was established during the year and has contributed to our Trust Retention Strategy.
- Recruitment marketing documents have been produced to raise the profile and reach of our adverts.
- The use of our Apprenticeship Levy has been reviewed to help develop a strategy to address skills shortage and considers the deployment and promotion of Apprenticeship training across the Trust linking with our Retention Strategy.
- Our Headteacher's Development Programme has successfully rolled out across the organisation providing targeted leadership development with very positive feedback from this year's participants.
- New Starter Induction has been personalised with the view of delivering more engaging sessions to our new employees.

Strategic aim 6: Deliver high quality estate management

- The Estate Strategy identifies key priorities for estate improvement and capital investment. Capital reports have been submitted in relation to utilisation of capital funding and have been acceptable. Planning has been strategic and joined up with regular overview by the Trustees' Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- The Trust continues to work on the development of a Sustainability Strategy to meet with DfE expectations demonstrating our commitment to have a positive impact on our local communities beyond school, on the national education system and the wider world.
- All academy sites are compliant and safe. Health and Safety Audits that have taken place within the year have been positive and flag no areas of concern. There was 100% compliance on the statutory maintenance tracker and our systems and processes were embedded within our new schools.
- The Trust successfully completed an application for the ROSPA Health and Safety Award 2025 achieving the Gold level award in June 2025. This demonstrates our achievement and dedication to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all staff and visitors.

Strategic aim 7: Ensure a well co-ordinated, strategic approach to IT

- Strategic IT leadership and support has developed well across the year with the set up of a centralised system to enable further automation of tasks.
- Compliance with DfE Digital Standards across the organization continues to be monitored and reviewed against audit-standard documentation to identify strengths and gaps in each school provision.
- Cyber security resilience continues to be monitored and improved following the implementation of an Action Plan which evidences progress and completeness of actions by timescales. All items on the Trust Risk Register are mitigated and remain under review by the Audit Committee.

Strategic aim 8: Grow to secure sustainability, achieve greater efficiencies and support schools in need.

- The revised Trust oversight structure which includes Regional Education Directors and Regional Hub Leader is working effectively with schools being well supported. Issues and challenges are discussed on a weekly basis to ensure the timely action of support improvements.
- Growth opportunities continue to be reviewed and the Trust has positive relationships with Local Authority representatives. The Trust continues to work with a specific growth opportunity plan that has developed during the year with two schools in the Northumberland region.
- External collaboration with schools and Early Years settings in our surrounding areas has been supported through our sharing of expertise following the work of the Great North Early Years Stronger Practice Hub and Town End Research School.

Strategic aim 9: Ensure the Trust has an excellent reputation.

- The Trust continues to be viewed as a reliable voice in education, has received visits from other trusts across the country and received positive feedback. The CEO has also accepted an invitation during the year to join the MAT CEO Advisory Board to the Schools Minister.
- The Town End Research School and Great North Stronger Practice Hub continue to deliver high quality support throughout the region with positive feedback being received from the DfE in respect of projects ran by both initiatives. Funding has been secured for the stronger practice hub until 2029 to ensure we can continue to deliver support regional programmes. The Research School, having completed a support project in the Hartlepool and Middlesbrough areas, are working through the delivery of a programme in the North West region and plan to work with Durham Local Authority in the new academic year.

Public Benefit

The Trustees have paid due regard to guidance on public benefit issued by the Charity Commission in setting objects and aims and planning what activities the Trust should undertake. All charitable activities are undertaken to further the advancement of education to all students in its care and partnership organisations in the wider community.

STRATEGIC REPORT

Achievements and Performance

Summary

WISE Academies continues to build upon its reputation for success. The year started with three schools from the Durham region joining the Trust from 1 September 2024. Our wider support to schools and other settings across the North East region was served by the work of our Town End Research School and the Great North Early Years Stronger Practice Hub whereby both teams have delivered quality research-based training events and support networks during the year. The schools within the Trust have persistently focussed on ensuring that all pupils learn to read, write fluently and calculate accurately. Academic outcomes at the end of the year demonstrate that strategies have been successful. Trust outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 outcomes are broadly in line with national averages. Our disadvantaged pupils have performed very well when compared to other disadvantaged pupils across the country. Three academies in the Trust have received an Ofsted inspection in the period.

Ofsted Inspections

Town End Academy

Town End Academy was inspected by Ofsted in April 2025. Inspectors found that children enjoyed attending the school which was a friendly and happy place to learn. The inspection commented positively on the relationships between staff and pupils, and found that pupils flourished in the clam and purposeful environment. There was recognition of the high expectations around behaviour and the extra support that children received and the opportunities that they were given at Town End

Academy. The inspection found that the school was led well; that the curriculum was broad and ambitious and staff well trained. It was noted that children got off to a positive start in early years and that there was a sharp focus on learning important foundational knowledge. Feedback from Ofsted recognised that children with special educational needs were included well and that the school identified needs quickly. The school promotes attendance successfully and there was effective work undertaken with pupils and families. Inspectors commented upon pupils' access to experiences and opportunities such as through WISE Academies' 'Childhood Pledge'. The inspection confirmed that staff felt valued and respected, and worked in partnership with school leaders to further develop and strengthen the quality of education. Safeguarding was confirmed as effective.

Adderlane Academy

Adderlane Academy was inspected in June 2025 and inspectors found that the school provided a very warm welcome to pupils and their parents and carers. Pupils are safe and happy in school. They enjoy coming to school each day and enjoyed learning. It was noted that pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and at breaktimes. The school had high expectations of its pupils and by the time that they left Adderlane Academy at Year 4 they were prepared well for the demands of middle school education. Inspectors commented upon the school's calm and purposeful atmosphere for learning together with the opportunities that the children benefited from through other experiences whilst at Adderlane Academy through an extensive range of well-attended extra-curricular activities, educational visits, residential stays and visitors. Parents were overwhelmingly happy with the school's provision for their children's education and it was observed that appreciated the way in which the school recognised and supported their children's individual talents and needs. Inspectors reported that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieved very well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) played a full and active part in school life and their individual needs were met well. It was recognised that the school prioritises pupils' regular attendance and that staff swiftly identified and removed barriers that prevented pupils from attending well. The focus on improving attendance meant that the majority of pupils attended well. Governance, including the local governing body and the board of trustees, was found to be exceptionally strong, well organised, skilled and knowledgeable. The Trust supported and challenged the school's work well. Staff turnover was very low and staff morale was very high. Arrangements for safeguarding were found to be effective.

Ashley Academy

Ashley Academy was the subject of an Ofsted inspection in June 2025. This was the first inspection of the academy since academy conversion as part of WISE Academies in September 2022. The quality of education was judged to be Good with an outstanding judgement given in Behaviour and attitudes; Personal development; Leadership and management and Early years provision. The report noted that the school had high expectations for all pupils and was unwavering in its commitment to provide every pupil with the best educational experiences possible. It was found that there was a culture of community, belonging and friendship, where pupils felt safe and happy. The exceptional pastoral support and care meant that pupils thrive. Pupils left the school very well prepared for the next stage of their educational journey. Behaviour was found to be exemplary with high expectations for how pupils should behave. Staff led by example. The school's positive relationships with families and the wider community were also recognised. There were also favourable comments from the inspectors regarding the curriculum and early years provision. Provision for pupils with special

educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) was commended. It was recognised that the school used a range of initiatives and incentives to promote and reward attendance. Work to develop pupils' character was described as exemplary. The range of extra-curricular activities was highlighted. The Ofsted report concluded that the school had taken effective action to improve significant aspects of the school's work and this had been expertly and sensitively managed by leaders from the school and Trust. Staff were overwhelmingly positive about working at the school and felt their workload and well-being were prioritised. Inspectors observed that Trustees and governors knew the school exceptionally well and shared the same high aspirations for the school. The arrangements for safeguarding were effective.

Pupil Outcomes

Good Level of Development

The Trust ensures that pupils in early years are provided with a stimulating, knowledge rich curriculum to prepare children for the next stage of their education. The 2025 national average score of Good Level of Development (GLD) which pupils reach by the end of Reception was 68% and our Trust average score was in line with this measure. Many individual schools achieved better than average results. Our disadvantaged pupils across the Trust performed better than 2024 national average of 52% with an overall Trust average of 62% of disadvantaged pupils achieving the GLD within the Trust. Further details can be found in Table A overleaf.

Year 1 Phonics

The Trust continues to prioritise time and resource to ensure as many pupils as possible pass the Year 1 phonics check and the overall Trust outcomes in 2025 of 85% are better than the 2025 national average of 81%. Disadvantaged pupils in the Trust perform particularly well in phonics. 77% of these pupils passed the phonics check compared to the national disadvantaged figure of 67%. Further details can be found in Table A.

Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check

Children in Year 4 complete an assessment in multiplication checks to ensure fluency in times tables which is crucial for future success in mathematics. Our Year 4 pupils scored an average of 23% across the Trust which is better than the 2024 national average of 21%. Our disadvantaged pupils also performed well with a Trust average of 22% measuring favourably against the national average score of 19% in 2024. Further details can be found in Table B.

KS2 Outcomes

The Trust Key Stage 2 outcomes compare well with the 2025 national averages at the expected standard. Our combined score (reading, mathematics and writing) of 65% is favourably when compared to the national average of 62%. In reading the Trust average for pupils achieving the expected standard was 75%, in line with the national average; in writing, the Trust average was 75% and again, 75% in mathematics, both better than the respective national scores of 72% and 74%. Our 2024-25 cohort of disadvantaged pupils performed better than the national disadvantaged average scores across all measures. Our greater depth Trust combined average score is slightly lower than the 2025 national average, although we have schools within the Trust that have reported strong results individually. However, our Trust average for disadvantaged pupils is better than the 2024 national

averages in Reading: 19% vs 18%; Writing: 8% vs 6%, and significantly better in Maths: 21% vs 13% with the combined score of 7% an improvement on our previous year. Further details can be found in Tables C1 and C2.

Table A: Early Years Good Level of Development & Y1 Phonics Results 2025

	Reception GLD		Y1 Phonics Check	
	All Pupils	Disadvantaged	All Pupils	Disadvantaged
National Average	68%	*52%	81%	67%
Trust Average Overall	68%	62%	85%	77%
Adderlane Academy	69%	50%	83%	50%
Ashley Academy	69%	59%	88%	86%
Bexhill Academy	70%	78%	83%	82%
Croftway Academy	71%	86%	81%	64%
Esh Winning Academy	69%	62%	90%	89%
Haltwhistle Primary Academy	75%	63%	93%	80%
Hasting Hill Academy	68%	67%	84%	82%
Malvin's Close Academy	63%	35%	92%	91%
Morpeth Road Academy	56%	53%	96%	94%
Prudhoe West Academy	75%	58%	85%	57%
Shaftoe Trust Academy	80%	66%	100%	100%
St Andrew's Academy	63%	20%	81%	58%
Thornley Academy	55%	50%	74%	78%
Town End Academy	58%	38%	57%	54%
Welbeck Academy	63%	62%	82%	87%

NB: *2024 National Average Scores (GLD) as 2025 are not available.

Table B: Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check

	Y4 Multiplication Check	
	All Pupils	Disadvantaged
National Average	21%	19%
Trust Average Overall	23%	22%
Adderlane Academy	21%	21%
Ashley Academy	21%	19%
Bexhill Academy	23%	23%
Croftway Academy	23%	24%
Esh Winning Academy	23%	22%
Haltwhistle Primary Academy	23%	22%
Hasting Hill Academy	21%	21%
Malvin's Close Academy	23%	23%
Morpeth Road Academy	21%	20%
Prudhoe West Academy	23%	22%
Shaftoe Trust Academy	23%	24%
St Andrew's Academy	24%	23%
Thornley Academy	19%	15%
Town End Academy	24%	23%
Welbeck Academy	23%	23%

NB: 2024 National Average Scores

Table C1: KS2 Results 2025 – Expected Standard

KS2 - Expected Standard					
Key: R - Reading W - Writing M - Mathematics R/W/M - Combined		2025 National Average (All Pupils)	2025 All Pupils	*2024 National Average (Disadvantaged)	2025 Disadvantaged Pupils
Trust Average Overall	R	75%	75%	62%	67%
	W	72%	75%	58%	64%
	M	74%	75%	59%	63%
	SPAG	73%	68%	n/a	60%
	R/W/M	62%	65%	46%	52%
Ashley Academy	R	75%	62%	62%	48%
	W	72%	77%	58%	68%
	M	74%	55%	59%	39%
	SPAG	73%	43%	-	29%
	R/W/M	62%	45%	46%	29%
Bexhill Academy	R	75%	78%	62%	62%
	W	72%	84%	58%	67%
	M	74%	81%	59%	67%
	SPAG	73%	76%	-	57%
	R/W/M	62%	78%	46%	62%
Croftway Academy	R	75%	81%	62%	69%
	W	72%	72%	58%	56%
	M	74%	78%	59%	66%
	SPAG	73%	81%	-	66%
	R/W/M	62%	65%	46%	52%
Esh Winning Academy	R	75%	66%	62%	56%
	W	72%	63%	58%	47%
	M	74%	66%	59%	56%
	SPAG	73%	63%	-	44%
	R/W/M	62%	57%	46%	39%
Haltwhistle Primary Academy	R	75%	84%	62%	60%
	W	72%	84%	58%	46%
	M	74%	80%	59%	46%
	SPAG	73%	76%	-	50%
	R/W/M	62%	76%	46%	20%
Hasting Hill Academy	R	75%	77%	62%	79%
	W	72%	64%	58%	57%
	M	74%	64%	59%	57%
	SPAG	73%	68%	-	64%
	R/W/M	62%	54%	46%	38%

Table C1: KS2 Results 2025 – Expected Standard (continued)

KS2 - Expected Standard					
Key: R - Reading W - Writing M - Mathematics R/W/M - Combined		2025 National Average (All Pupils)	2025 All Pupils	*2024 National Average (Disadvantaged)	2025 Disadvantaged Pupils
Trust Average Overall	R	75%	75%	62%	67%
	W	72%	75%	58%	64%
	M	74%	75%	59%	63%
	SPAG	73%	68%	n/a	60%
	R/W/M	62%	65%	46%	52%
Malvin's Close Academy	R	75%	79%	62%	70%
	W	72%	75%	58%	66%
	M	74%	79%	59%	67%
	SPAG	73%	71%	-	55%
	R/W/M	62%	63%	46%	48%
Morpeth Road Academy	R	75%	82%	62%	78%
	W	72%	71%	58%	64%
	M	74%	76%	59%	72%
	SPAG	73%	56%	-	50%
	R/W/M	62%	64%	46%	58%
Shaftoe Trust Academy	R	75%	60%	62%	66%
	W	72%	80%	58%	
	M	74%	80%	59%	
	SPAG	73%	80%	-	100%
	R/W/M	62%	60%	46%	
St Andrew's Academy	R	75%	65%	62%	63%
	W	72%	58%	58%	50%
	M	74%	77%	59%	69%
	SPAG	73%	69%	-	63%
	R/W/M	62%	46%	46%	38%
Thornley Academy	R	75%	69%	62%	50%
	W	72%	62%	58%	33%
	M	74%	58%	59%	33%
	SPAG	73%	73%	-	50%
	R/W/M	62%	54%	46%	33%
Town End Academy	R	75%	68%	62%	60%
	W	72%	76%	58%	87%
	M	74%	76%	59%	87%
	SPAG	73%	52%	-	53%
	R/W/M	62%	60%	46%	60%
Welbeck Academy	R	75%	74%	62%	75%
	W	72%	71%	58%	70%
	M	74%	78%	59%	75%
	SPAG	73%	76%	-	73%
	R/W/M	62%	65%	46%	63%

NB: *2024 National Average Scores as 2025 are not available.

Table C2: KS2 Results 2025 – Greater Depth

KS2 - Greater Depth					
Key: R - Reading W - Writing M - Mathematics R/W/M - Combined		2025 National Average (All Pupils)	2025 All Pupils	*2024 Combined National Average (Disadvantaged)	2025 Disadvantaged Pupils
Trust Average Overall	R	33%	25%	18%	19%
	W	13%	12%	6%	8%
	M	26%	15%	13%	21%
	SPAG	30%	20%	20%	16%
	R/W/M	8%	7%	3%	7%
Ashley Academy	R	33%	15%	18%	3%
	W	13%	12%	6%	3%
	M	26%	7%	13%	0%
	SPAG	30%	13%	20%	3%
	R/W/M	8%	7%	3%	0%
Bexhill Academy	R	33%	43%	18%	33%
	W	13%	19%	6%	5%
	M	26%	22%	13%	5%
	SPAG	30%	27%	20%	5%
	R/W/M	8%	14%	3%	0%
Croftway Academy	R	33%	33%	18%	28%
	W	13%	7%	6%	7%
	M	26%	26%	13%	21%
	SPAG	30%	24%	20%	28%
	R/W/M	8%	7%	3%	7%
Esh Winning Academy	R	33%	14%	18%	11%
	W	13%	14%	6%	17%
	M	26%	11%	13%	6%
	SPAG	30%	17%	20%	17%
	R/W/M	8%	6%	3%	0%
Haltwhistle Primary Academy	R	33%	36%	18%	0%
	W	13%	16%	6%	0%
	M	26%	16%	13%	17%
	SPAG	30%	28%	20%	0%
	R/W/M	8%	4%	3%	0%
Hasting Hill Academy	R	33%	23%	18%	29%
	W	13%	0%	6%	0%
	M	26%	0%	13%	0%
	SPAG	30%	18%	20%	14%
	R/W/M	8%	0%	3%	0%

Table C2: KS2 Results 2025 – Greater Depth (continued)

KS2 - Greater Depth					
Key: R - Reading W - Writing M - Mathematics R/W/M - Combined		2025 National Average (All Pupils)	2025 All Pupils	*2024 Combined National Average (Disadvantaged)	2025 Disadvantaged Pupils
Trust Average Overall	R	33%	25%	18%	19%
	W	13%	12%	6%	8%
	M	26%	15%	13%	21%
	SPAG	30%	20%	20%	16%
	R/W/M	8%	7%	3%	7%
Malvin's Close Academy	R	33%	19%	18%	12%
	W	13%	16%	6%	6%
	M	26%	23%	13%	24%
	SPAG	30%	10%	20%	3%
	R/W/M	8%	7%	3%	3%
Morpeth Road Academy	R	33%	16%	18%	11%
	W	13%	4%	6%	6%
	M	26%	6%	13%	3%
	SPAG	30%	4%	20%	6%
	R/W/M	8%	0%	3%	0%
Shaftoe Trust Academy	R	33%	20%	18%	33%
	W	13%	20%	6%	33%
	M	26%	0%	13%	100%
	SPAG	30%	40%	20%	66%
	R/W/M	8%	20%	3%	
St Andrew's Academy	R	33%	19%	18%	13%
	W	13%	12%	6%	6%
	M	26%	12%	13%	0%
	SPAG	30%	23%	20%	6%
	R/W/M	8%	0%	3%	0%
Thornley Academy	R	33%	38%	18%	8%
	W	13%	15%	6%	0%
	M	26%	19%	13%	0%
	SPAG	30%	35%	20%	8%
	R/W/M	8%	4%	3%	0%
Town End Academy	R	33%	12%	18%	7%
	W	13%	16%	6%	21%
	M	26%	24%	13%	27%
	SPAG	30%	20%	20%	20%
	R/W/M	8%	4%	3%	7%
Welbeck Academy	R	33%	35%	18%	35%
	W	13%	10%	6%	3%
	M	26%	15%	13%	15%
	SPAG	30%	20%	20%	15%
	R/W/M	8%	4%	3%	0%

NB: *2024 National Average Scores as are not available.

NB: All data based on invalidated datasets and could be subject to slight changes.

Development of the Trust estate

WISE Academies has invested £0.9m in land and building capital projects to improve and develop the estate across the year which has largely been funded by School Condition Allocation (SCA).

Trustees have an agreed policy in line with the terms of the grant which set out the principles for how the funding would be allocated focussing on condition priorities including health and safety, weather tightness, energy efficiency and accessibility of buildings. Priority areas are reviewed each year and the central Estates Team's management of the estate and use of capital funding is subject to scrutiny by the Board of Trustees and its committees.

Some of the major works this year have included:

- Compliance works including water hygiene, electrical works and asbestos removal;
- Installation of new fire alarm systems and emergency lighting;
- Significant improvements and remodelling to internal and external early years settings;
- Upgrades to drainage systems, and
- Lighting improvements to upgrade lighting to LED.

Going Concern

The Board of Trustees have considered current performance and reserves, future developments and pupil numbers as documented within the Strategic Report. After making appropriate enquiries, the Board of Trustees has a reasonable expectation that the Trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the Statement of Accounting Policies.

Promoting the Success of the Company

The Trustees recognise that their role as directors of the company must promote the success of the Trust, and in doing so must act fairly and have regard to a range of consequences of their decisions on the Trust's long-term viability. These include the interests of employees; business relationships with suppliers, customers and stakeholders; the community and the environment, and our reputation for high standards of business conduct.

Annually, the Trustees undertake an in-depth review of the Trust Improvement Plan which details objectives and actions required towards the provision of an excellent standard of education, the safeguarding, wellbeing and behaviours of pupils, the development of teaching and learning operating systems, school to school support, governance and financial management, development of the workforce, estate management, IT development and the development and maintenance of regional and national reputation. The Trust Improvement Plan set standards which determine requirements and behaviours in respect of the activities of the Trustees and our workforce.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Most of the Trust's income is obtained from the Department for Education (DfE) in the form of recurrent grants, the use of which is restricted to particular purposes. The grants received from the DfE during the period 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025 and the associated expenditure are shown as restricted funds in the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA).

All of the expenditure shown in the SOFA is in furtherance of the Trust's objectives. During the year ended 31 August 2025, total expenditure of £33,294k (2024: £27,997k) (excluding net FRS102 adjustments of £108k made to the LGPS pension fund, depreciation and amortisation) was met by recurrent grant funding from the DfE, other incoming resources and funding carried forward from the previous year together with transfers to capital funds of £293k to support various capital projects.

Net income for the year included £12,027k of transferring funds from local authorities following the conversion of the three Durham schools and net operational expenditure of £795k, which when added to brought forward cumulative reserves, excluding pension and fixed asset reserves, of £4,473k (restricted general funds £1,010k and unrestricted general funds £3,463k), provides overall cumulative general reserves for the year ended 31 August 2025 of £4,864k, split as restricted general funds £974k and unrestricted general funds £3,890k.

The Trust also receives grants for capital investment, mainly from the DfE. In accordance with the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice, 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities' (SORP 2015), such grants are shown in the SOFA as restricted income in the fixed asset fund. The restricted fixed asset fund balance is reduced by annual depreciation charges over the expected useful life of the assets concerned. During the year, £113k (2024: £95k) was received in respect of Devolved Formula Grants and £715k (2024: £637k) of School Condition Allocation (SCA) funding. The Trust also received a grant of £47k from the RPA to further improve a secure boundary at one of our sites.

The Trust invested £1,145k (GAG surpluses £129k; unrestricted funds £164k and £236k from capital grants and donations) to further improve the assets of the Trust together with utilising £616k of brought forward capital grants. Major projects completed during the year include:

- Remodelling of, or upgrades to, Early Years' provisions (multiple sites) - £215k
- Fire Alarm Systems (multiple sites) - £142k
- Replacement of Town End Academy's fence - £53k
- Drainage upgrades (multiple sites) - £26k
- Installation of a safety barrier at Haltwhistle Academy - £20k
- Installation of LED lighting (multiple sites) - £19k
- Improved access (multiple sites) - £19k
- IT investment across the Trust - £89k
- Fixtures and fittings improvements across the Trust - £138k

Land and buildings transferring from the local authority in respect of the three schools that converted from September 2024 were valued as follows: Esh Winning Academy, £5,167k; St Andrew's Academy, £2,951k and Thornley Academy, £3,756k.

At 31 August 2025, the net book value of tangible fixed assets was £46,521k and movements in tangible fixed assets are shown in note 14 to the Financial Statements.

During the year, the Trust invested in an upgrade to the Finance System costing £26k and this movement in intangible fixed assets is shown in note 13 to the Financial Statements.

WISE Academies continues to maintain a strong cash position, as at 31 August 2025, cash in hand and short-term investments totalled £8,474k (2024: £6,597k).

Financial and Risk Management Objectives and Policies

The Trust continues to review and maintain its Risk Management Strategy and has a Risk Register which includes the potential financial risks. This exercise identifies and reviews key risks to which the Trust may be exposed to, together with the operating, financial and compliance controls that have been implemented to mitigate those risks.

At the year end, the Trust had no significant liabilities arising from trade creditors or debtors where there would be a significant effect on liquidity.

The Trust recognises that the defined benefit scheme deficit (Local Government Pension Scheme), which is set out in note 27 to the Financial Statements, represents a significant potential risk given the variability in position and required contributions at each valuation. However, the Trust considers that, as each individual academy, and hence the Trust, is able to meet its known annual contribution commitments for the foreseeable future, the risk from this liability is minimised. There is also an agreed guarantee from Parliament dated 18 July 2013 that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding local government pension scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education.

Key Performance Indicators

	2025	2024
Total staff costs / GAG income	133.7%	132.8%
Total staff costs / Total income from charitable activities	83.8%	81.9%
Working Capital / Total Reserves	10.6%	10.1%
Liquidity Ratio	2.2	2.1

Reserves Policy

The Reserves Policy has been prepared with reference to the following documents: Charities and Reserves (CC19) from the Charities Commission; Academies' Handbook and DfE Accounts Direction and considers the key factors around the management of public funds; consideration of our principal risks and uncertainties; ensuring resources are available to drive school improvement whilst safeguarding value for money and supporting a growth strategy. Trustees review the Reserves Policy at least annually.

Budgets are set for each academy with a view to being balanced each year whilst supporting the aims and goals of each individual setting at sustainable levels. Academies can request funding from reserves to support specific capital works or school improvement projects designed to boost school improvement requirements in the short term. Any depletion of reserves at individual settings below recommended levels are required to be built back within a medium-term target plan.

Trustees have reviewed the reserves policy for the Trust in view of balancing the needs of today's pupils and those of the future, ensuring that the organisation remains a going concern and supporting the management of key risks, effective management of public funds and decision making, whilst also supporting a growth strategy together with the existing portfolio of academies.

Reserves at each academy should be maintained around levels equivalent to 10% of total income to a maximum of £300k to support the key considerations as outlined above. A short-term increase may be approved by Trustees under exceptional circumstances to support the funding of specific projects.

At the year end, any balances being carried forward will be considered as part of the policies and guidance in relation to reserves and budget setting. All funds remain that of the Trust and will be consolidated into the Financial Statements.

The Trust's total reserves at the Balance Sheet date of 31 August 2025 were £52,053k (2024: £40,553k), this includes restricted general funds (excluding pension) of £974k (2024: £1,010k), restricted fixed asset funds of £47,189k (2024: £36,080k), with the level of unrestricted reserves being £3,890k (2024: £3,463k).

Analysis of reserves can be found in note 18 to the Financial Statements.

Trustees have approved the utilisation of c£417k reserves during 2025-26 to fund specific projects throughout the organisation. Further detail of these projects is discussed in note 18 on page 70. Other aims are discussed in the Plans for Future Periods section further in this report.

Investment Policy

The Investment Policy is reviewed periodically by the Trustees to ensure funds are used in accordance with the law, the Articles of Association, the funding agreement and the principles of the Academies Handbook. The objectives of the policy are:

- to achieve best financial return available whilst ensuring that security of deposits takes precedence over revenue maximisation
- to only invest funds surplus to operational need based on all financial commitments being met without the Trust bank account becoming overdrawn
- manage, control and track financial exposure

As at 31 August 2025, the cash balance of £8,474k included funds of £5,041k that are being held in a combination of interest-bearing accounts and short-term investments attracting interest rates between 3.42% and 4.37% as at 31 August 2025.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The Trust is subject to a number of risks and uncertainties in common with other academies and has in place a Risk Management process to identify risks and record and monitor each risk together with their mitigation on the Trust Risk Register, which classifies risk alongside our nine Strategic Aims: Educational Standards; SMSC Development; Financial; Governance; HR; Estate Management; IT; Growth and Reputation. The register is reviewed at each meeting of the Audit Committee together with our Estates Compliance tracker to ensure the Trust's estate is well maintained. The key risks and uncertainties which the Trust is exposed to are listed below:

- **Educational Risk of Low Pupil Outcomes:** The Trust identified that this risk may be caused by poor performance in statutory tests, driven by a number of factors including low writing outcomes; high percentages of disadvantaged pupils; phonics gaps and resource strain due to increased levels and complexities of needs of our SEND children. To reduce this risk across the organisation, the Trust has supported a programme of writing moderation utilising key leads and Research School resources. From September 2024, the Trust introduced RADY (Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters), an initiative funded by the Combined Authority and twelve of the Trust's schools participated. In addition, the Trust Read Write Inc package facilitates targeted practical support for pupils with half termly meetings involving the Trust Reading Lead, Regional Education Directors and the CEO. The development and implementation of a Trust-wide SEND audit focuses on SEND target setting and training for

Curriculum leads. Six SENCOs across the organisation are receiving high-quality training from the Autistic Education Trust.

- **Education Risk of a Poor Outcome in an Ofsted Inspection:** An ongoing risk was that schools may not achieve a good outcome in an Ofsted inspection. This was particularly a risk where results are not at the expected standard, as this has the potential to adversely affect Ofsted outcomes. To counter this, leaders have a clear understanding of the expectations of inspection and support will be given to any individual school to ensure that a structured School Improvement Plan will be met.
- **Financial Risk of a Loss of Income / Reserves:** The Trust completes an annual comprehensive budgeting exercise each year with 3-year projections and the approved annual budget is monitored with monthly management accounts being reported to Trustees. The Reserves Policy is also reviewed every year to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Budget reviews include pupil number trend analysis and included strategies to maximise 2-year-old and 30-hour Nursery provisions. Consideration is also given to different leadership structures to ease cost pressures whilst still enabling the provision of excellent education across our schools. An emerging risk relating to future income loss has been identified following the proposed Government changes to Free School Meals Eligibility and the Trust is working on the rollout of a process to mitigate against any losses.
- **IT Risk of Disruption of Service due to Key Server Failure:** Refresh strategies have been completed and programmed for annual review. Back up servers are in place to ensure business continuity in the event of any potential failure.
- **IT Risk of Disruption of Service due to Ransomware or Cyber-attacks:** The Trust completed an Action Plan following an IT audit and various work has been implemented and rolled out across the organisation including training to ensure we comply with RPA insurance requirements for cybercrime mitigation; review of accounts and user privileges to prevent the mis-use of accounts; improve decommissioning and disposal procedures to ensure any confidential data is irreversibly removed from obsolete devices; ensure that there is an appropriate consideration of security within contracting processes in the Supply Chain. Other actions continuing to be rolled out include the enhancement of management understanding of cyber security and training; annual programme of test activities; increased automation of IT processes and production of an IT refresh strategy across the organisation.
- **IT Risk of Disruption of Service due to Loss of Internet:** Work is ongoing to implement back up options to remove any potential single point of failure within the connectivity framework that could potentially leave schools without internet connectivity. Server locations are kept under review to ensure they meet Digital Standards.

Funds Held as Custodian Trustee on Behalf of Others

There are no funds held as Custodian Trustee on behalf of others.

Fundraising

The academies within the Trust periodically carry out fundraising activities in order to raise funds for school resources or projects. The Trust ensures that all academies are compliant with their legal duties ensuring that they are:

- acting in the best interest of the organisation

- managing each academy's resources responsibly, which includes protecting and safeguarding its reputation
- acting with reasonable care and skill
- protecting vulnerable people

The Trust does not use any external fundraisers.

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting

UK Greenhouse gas emissions and energy use data for the period	1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025	1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024
Energy consumption used to calculate emissions (kWh)	4,997,937	4,322,913
Energy consumption break down (kWh)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gas • electricity • transport fuel 		
Scope 1 emissions in metric tonnes CO ₂ e		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gas consumption • Owned transport – mini-buses 	673.93 <u>0.76</u>	568.11 <u>0.20</u>
Total Scope 1	674.69	568.31
Scope 2 emissions in metric tonnes CO ₂ e		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchased electricity 	221.69	242.85
Scope 3 emissions in metric tonnes CO ₂		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business travel in employee-owned vehicles 	13.80	10.05
Total gross emissions in metric tonnes CO ₂	910.17	821.22
Intensity Ratio Tonnes CO ₂ e per pupil	0.25	0.26

Quantification and Reporting Methodology

We have followed the 2019 HM Government Environmental Reporting Guidelines. We have also used the GHG Reporting Protocol – Corporate Standard and have used the 2025 UK Government's Conversion Factors for Company Reporting.

Intensity Measurement

The chosen intensity measurement ratio is total gross emissions in metric tonnes CO₂e per pupil, the recommended ratio for the sector.

Measures Taken to Improve Energy Efficiency

Using School Condition Allocation (SCA) the Trust continued to review its estate with a view to making improvements to premises to ensure that they are safe, compliant and energy efficient. During the year, we have completed energy efficiency projects across schools which include upgrading lighting systems, heating systems and kitchen equipment including ovens.

The Trust continued to promote the use of virtual meeting platforms during the year to provide an opportunity to reduce the need for travel between sites.

Plans for Future Periods

The latest Trust Strategic Business Plan was approved by Trustees at the start of the 2025-26 academic year. The Plan sets out our ambitious vision for the next five years, building upon our strong foundation as a prominent and nationally recognised Multi-Academy Trust and discusses six highly focused strategic aims including educational excellence; robust people development; prudent and transparent management of public funds; efficient operational delivery; impactful civic engagement and exemplary governance structures. Trustees have reviewed our Trust Improvement Plan for 2025-26 that are linked to this Strategic Business Plan.

Key priorities include actions to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs, reinforcing effective attendance strategies and adopting initiatives that have proven successful during 2024-25.

The plan includes various strategies to improve outcomes for all of our pupils across the curriculum involving reviews of other Trusts' approaches; working with our Research School to deliver focused training sessions; establish working parties to review and roll out effective targeted support, and further develop systems to identify children who need additional support and an adapted curriculum.

Understanding the changes of the new Ofsted inspection methodology and rolling out training to our senior leaders is set out to ensure that leaders are well supported in preparation of inspections.

Targeted training and line manager development around absence management and employee wellbeing is included within the plan to further strengthen employee relations. The continued development of our Workforce Plan aims to ensure that identified skills gaps may be addressed by the effective use of the Apprentice Levy.

The Finance team are working to develop better forecasting systems to support strategic decision making with particular focus on local authority income streams and cost variances between vacant posts and supply costs.

Our move to a new management information system at the beginning of the new academic year will facilitate the development of more accurate and efficient reporting systems concerning the production of Trust educational data. We aim to develop and produce a Trust AI Usage Policy to guide staff on the appropriate use of AI tools and explore ways AI could be used to support teachers and pupils to enhance their learning experience.

The central Estates team will continue to work with our schools to ensure that our operations are sustainable by establishing a steering group with representation from each school to monitor and review our Climate Action Plans.

Estate management processes are being reviewed to ensure that the Trust meets the requirements of the DfE's School Estate Management Standards.

Maintaining high standards of governance, as recognised in recent Ofsted inspections, remains a key priority, ensuring that those responsible for governance are appropriately equipped to discharge their functions, have a sound understanding of the latest Ofsted framework and are provided with opportunities to participate in training, reinforcing the key role of governance in the success of our schools.

The Trust continues to aim to be at the forefront of the school-led system by providing high-quality training and support to others within the sector through its roles of Early Years Stronger Practice Hub; Town End Research School and the recent appointment of Croftway Academy as a Behaviour and Attendance Hub.

Our Trust expansion programme includes the successful onboarding of two new schools, Bothal Primary School and Central Primary School, planned for January 2026. The onboarding process considers the strengths of the organisations to determine optimum ways of working together and the implementation of a rigorous programme phasing the alignment of systems over a 12-month period.

All teams with WISE are working to ensure that the integration of the two schools successfully results in a transition which encompasses our embedded Trust policies and procedures and the development of a stronger shared ethos.

Details of significant events since the reporting date are contained in note 29 (page 81) to the financial statements.

AUDITORS

RSM UK Audit LLP has indicated its willingness to continue in office.

Statement as to Disclosure of Information to Auditors

The Trustees have confirmed that, as far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditor is unaware. Each of the Trustees have confirmed that they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as Trustees in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that it has been communicated to the auditor.

The Trustees' Report is approved by order of the board of trustees and the Strategic Report (included therein) is approved by the board of trustees in their capacity as the directors at a meeting on 17/12/25 and signed on its behalf by:

M E W Stephenson
Chair of Trustees



Scope of Responsibility

As Trustees, we acknowledge we have overall responsibility for ensuring that WISE Academies has an effective and appropriate system of control, financial and otherwise. However, such a system is designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve business objectives, and can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.

As Trustees, we have reviewed and taken account of the guidance in DfE's Governance guidance.

The Board of Trustees has delegated the day to day responsibility to the Chief Executive Officer, as accounting officer, for ensuring financial controls conform with the requirements of both propriety and good financial management and in accordance with the requirements and responsibilities assigned to it in the funding agreement between WISE Academies and the Secretary of State for Education. They are also responsible for reporting to the Board of Trustees any material weaknesses or breakdowns in internal control.

Governance

The information on governance included here supplements that described in the Trustees' Report and in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities. The Board of Trustees has formally met six times during the year. Attendance during the year at meetings of the Board of Trustees was as follows:

Trustee	Meetings Attended	Out of a Possible
M E W Stephenson (Chair of Trustees)	5	6
Z E Carr O.B.E. (Accounting Officer)	6	6
J G Wood C.B.E.	5	6
R Symonds	5	6
N Vokes	5	6
P Smith	4	6
C Collins	6	6
D Pearson	5	6
R Ward	2	6
E Grimes	5	6
L Hall	2	6

At the start of the 2024-25 reporting year the Board of Trustees was expanded from nine Trustees to eleven Trustees and the two additional appointments took effect from September 2024 when L Hall and E Grimes took up office. This expansion of the membership was intended to widen the breadth of expertise available at Trust Board level, with a particular emphasis upon increasing educational expertise. Before they attended their first meeting of the Board of Trustees the Chair of Trustees, the CEO and Operations Director met up with them to set out the WISE governance structure and to explain the roles and responsibilities of Trustees.

A range of key performance data (financial and academic performance related) is monitored and analysed by the Board of Trustees through the provision of data supplied for meetings throughout the year, with data being challenged as necessary. There has been additional scrutiny of performance data by the Regional Boards during the course of the year. During 2024-25 the Board of Trustees and other levels of governance have continued to focus heavily upon pupil attendance data which is an area of increasing importance across the education sector. There has also been ongoing scrutiny around the use of suspension or exclusion from schools.

The Trustees have a clear focus on a culture of continuous improvement and the structure includes key roles within the Trust to deliver this vision including Regional Educational Directors and curriculum support roles. This is in addition to education specialists such as early years support and the activities of the Town End Research School. These professionals provide support to academies and additional capacity within the Trust to be deployed to areas where there is greatest need within the Trust. The structure of the Trust allows greater opportunity for sharing and dissemination of practice across academies, including moderation and benchmarking.

Other central functions that support academies within the Trust include specialist HR, Finance, Governance, Health & Safety, Estates Management, IT and Safeguarding and Attendance Support. Trustees represent those responsible for governance alongside local / regional governance representatives at any discussions with Ofsted. This model has always proved effective in earlier Ofsted inspections where those responsible for governance at each tier contributed to the conversation with inspectors but in each of the Ofsted inspections that took place during 2024-25 inspectors commented favourably upon the governance of the Trust being knowledgeable and well organised.

The rigorous approach to ensuring all aspects of safeguarding compliance continued to be very high profile throughout the governance structure. This was reflected in the comprehensive policies and procedures approved by Trustees. The role of Trustees, Audit Committee and the named Trustee with responsibility for safeguarding were set out in the Strategic Safeguarding Plan. At individual academy level the responsibilities of Senior Leadership, academy staff and Local Governing Body were outlined in the plan.

Trustees continue to keep under review the membership and constitution of Local Governing Bodies and Regional Boards. LGBs are strengthened wherever possible to ensure that governance is fit for purpose in securing school improvement where necessary.

At every level of governance close attention is paid to ensuring that there is the right balance of skills, experience, independence and knowledge in order to maximise performance. Trustees are well informed of latest educational developments and their responsibilities around regularity and compliance. The processes that help underpin the board's effectiveness include the provision of the necessary information to the board (and also local and regional governance) around Trust performance.

WISE Academies has a well-established multi-tier governance structure (Members, Board of Trustees, Regional Boards and Local Governing Bodies) in order to provide the scrutiny necessary for the size and geographical spread of the Trust and which streamlines accountability which more accurately reflects the executive structure of the MAT. A fourth Regional Board was therefore established in the reporting year with oversight of schools in the new Durham hub.

The governance functions across the structure are set out in a Scheme of Delegation which is available on the Trust website and which is reviewed at least annually.

The committee structure is used to improve decisions in key areas and for maintaining robust compliance around financial and Trust management. The Board keep under review the effectiveness of committees and how they interact with the main Board of Trustees.

The Members hold the Board of Trustees accountable for how they have discharged their duties during the course of the year.

All persons involved in the governance of the Trust are required to, at least annually, complete a declaration of business interests, of which the updated register is listed on page 7 of this report for Members of the Trust and Board of Trustees. With the exception of school-to-school support and community / networking opportunities, the Trust does not engage in any commercial activity with the businesses listed within this Register of Interests. Declarations of Interest is a standing item on each committee agenda and minutes of meetings record the status of this point.

The **Finance and General Purposes Committee** is a committee of the main board of trustees. Its purpose includes the initial review and authorisation of the annual budget; approving financial statements for filing in accordance with Companies Act and Charity Commission requirements; ensuring compliance with the Funding Agreement and all relevant financial regulations are observed; to oversee capital investment programmes; the regular monitoring of actual expenditure and income against budget; authorising the purchases of goods and services of value in excess of limits specified within the Trust's financial procedures which is not provided for within the budgets of the individual academies or which exceeds the thresholds determined for spending decisions being taken by the CEO; authorising the disposal of assets with a value of greater than the sums specified in the Trust's financial procedures; set and monitor remuneration levels for members of staff within the Head Office function and other senior staff in accordance with schemes of delegation. The Finance and General Purposes Committee is also the forum where detailed consideration is given to premises related issues and some employment matters.

Attendance at meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee in the year was as follows:

Trustee	Meetings Attended	Out of a Possible
J G Wood C.B.E.	6	6
M E W Stephenson	6	6
D Pearson	6	6
Z E Carr O.B.E. (in attendance)	6	6

The **Audit Committee** is a committee of the main board of trustees. Its primary purpose is to advise the Academy Trust on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Trust's systems of internal control and its arrangements for risk management, control and governance processes, and securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money). This year, the Audit Committee adopted an additional role in scrutinising safeguarding reports produced by the external safeguarding service provider.

Attendance at meetings of the Audit Committee in the year was as follows:

Trustee	Meetings Attended	Out of a Possible
R Symonds	3	4
N Vokes	3	4
P Smith	4	4
R Ward	4	4
Z E Carr O.B.E. (in attendance)	2	4

Governance Reviews

A governance review has previously formed part of the internal audit scrutiny during 2022. This was carried out by an audit firm, independent to the Trust. The findings were favourable with any minor

recommendations for improvement having all been acted upon. As part of our Internal Assurance strategy, the next review of governance has been planned in for 2026-27.

The most recent review undertaken analysed the impact and the effectiveness of the Board of Trustees, Trust Executive Leaders and Local Governance. The review included:

- Key governance documentation;
- Website compliance review;
- Register of Interests;
- Policies;
- New Trustees/Governors Induction;
- Self-Evaluation of Financial Competencies;
- Related Party Transactions;
- Year End Procedures;
- Gifts and Hospitality;
- Compliance and Governance;
- Handbook Requirements (Top 10 Checks);
- Roles and Responsibilities;
- Main Financial Requirements; and
- Delegated authorities.

Review of Value for Money

As accounting officer, the chief executive has responsibility for ensuring that the Trust delivers good value in the use of public resources. The accounting officer understands that value for money refers to the educational and wider societal outcomes, as well as estates safety and management, achieved in return for the taxpayer resources received.

The accounting officer considers how the Trust's use of its resources has provided good value for money during each academic year, and reports to the Board of Trustees where value for money can be improved, including the use of benchmarking data where available or by using a framework where appropriate. The accounting officer for the Trust has delivered improved value for money during the year by continuing to embed good procurement practice throughout the organisation which include our requirement of obtaining three written quotations for the supply of goods and services that exceed £2,000 to ensure value for money is maximised across the Trust. The net effect of this regulation across our schools results in goods and services being procured with savings of 15% when comparing Purchase Order values to the value of the highest quotations received.

Wherever possible, the Trust engages with DfE approved frameworks to support individual procurement exercises for key Trust-wide contracts. During the year, our annual procurement exercise for the provision of staff absence insurance and staff wellbeing services was run through the Crescent Purchasing Consortium to test market rates and ensure that we were fully compliant with the requirements of the New Procurement Act 2023. We also used national frameworks, ESPO and Herts for Learning to secure compliant contracts for Estates Management professional services and licences and training to support our move to a new management information system.

WISE Academies receives an annual allocation capital funding, Schools Condition Allocations (SCA) to help maintain and improve the condition of the Trust estate in addition to any revenue works funded by General Annual Grant amounts. The Trust prioritises key buildings and site upgrades through a strategic Estates plan to identify projects that ensure school buildings and grounds remain in a safe working condition. Our procurement policy is applied to ensure buildings works secure value

for money and during the reporting year, of the key projects awarded, the following apply:

- Purchase Orders totalling £1.2m were raised during the reporting period in relation to Estate maintenance and upgrades across the Trust.
- Of these works, 73% of the Purchase Orders raised followed the evaluation of a minimum of three written quotations with the most competitive option being selected. This represented a saving across the Trust of £124k (10.7%).
- Of the remaining 27%, where the most competitive quotation was not selected, or the minimum of three written quotations could not be obtained, waivers were complete with adequate reasoning, approved by the CEO and Finance Director and reported to our Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of academy trust policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The system of internal control has been in place in WISE Academies for the year ended 31 August 2025 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and financial statements.

Capacity to Handle Risk

The Board of Trustees has reviewed the key risks to which the Trust is exposed together with the operating, financial and compliance controls that have been implemented to mitigate those risks. The Board of Trustees is of the view that there is a formal ongoing process for identifying, evaluating and managing the Trust's significant risks that has been in place for the year ending 31 August 2025 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and financial statements. This process is regularly reviewed by the Board of Trustees.

The Risk and Control Framework

The Trust's system of internal control is based on a framework of regular management information and administrative procedures including the segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability. In particular, it includes:

- comprehensive budgeting and monitoring systems with an annual budget and periodic financial reports which are reviewed and agreed by the Board of Trustees;
- regular reviews by the Finance and General Purposes Committee of reports which indicate financial performance against the forecasts and of major purchase plans, capital works and expenditure programmes
- setting targets to measure financial and other performance
- clearly defined purchasing (asset purchase or capital investment) guidelines
- identification and management of risks

The Board of Trustees has considered the need for a specific internal audit function and appointed TIAA Ltd following the evaluation of a full procurement exercise in October 2024 to provide internal assurance reviews during the period.

Outside of the internal audit plan, the Audit Committee had asked that the Health & Safety and Estates Manager pursue a RoSPA 'Achievement Award' to provide external validation of the Trust's procedures around accident management. WISE Academies was successful in being awarded the RoSPA gold standard award for Health & Safety provision.

Periodically throughout the year, the internal auditor reports to the Board of Trustees, through the Audit Committee on the operation of the systems of control and on the discharge of the Board of Trustees' financial responsibilities and annually prepares a summary report to the committee outlining the areas reviewed, key findings, recommendations and conclusions to help the committee consider actions and assess year on year progress. The internal auditor's role includes giving advice on financial matters and performing a range of checks on the academy trust's financial systems. The audit committee agreed an annual internal audit programme that considered areas of risk to be reviewed during 2024-25, in particular, the audits completed in the current period included:

- Finance - Budgetary Control - The review assessed the Trust's budget preparation, financial planning, and monitoring processes, including the evaluation of underlying assumptions, sensitivity analysis, and the effectiveness of related controls.
- Corporate Performance - Attendance Reporting - The audit evaluated WISE Academies' processes for managing attendance data, focusing on the accuracy, completeness, and timeliness of attendance metrics for pupils across all schools within the Trust.
- Procurement (including readiness for revised procurement rules) - The review considered the processes and guidance in place for procuring goods and services, including the application of the Trust's procurement policy and delegated powers, the identification of procurement routes and frameworks, and compliance with relevant legislation, notably the Procurement Act 2023. It assessed how value for money is achieved in larger procurement activities and the effectiveness of fraud mitigation measures.
- Confirmation that previous report outstanding findings were either in hand or agreed actions had been completed during the reporting period.

No recommendations were made in respect of the Budgetary Control audit; the review provided assurance to the Audit Committee regarding the robustness of the Trust's budgetary control arrangements and the assurance assessment was substantial.

The Corporate Performance (Attendance Reporting) internal audit provided assurance around compliance with DfE requirements, the integration of attendance data within the performance management framework, and its role in monitoring pupil progression, safeguarding, and achievement. The audit also reviewed intervention strategies for addressing persistent absence, the adequacy of controls to ensure data integrity. The assurance rating was substantial and confirmed that robust governance, risk and control processes were in place. There was one operational recommendation which related to additional staffing capacity in respect of the Trust's special school. The Trust had confirmed that staff capacity was in place at the Academy to ensure that the high expectations around attendance were maintained and that procedures could continue to be followed in order to maintain the improved attendance levels. An additional person was put in place to support with the administration of attendance and the implementation of interventions. Ongoing support and monitoring from the Trust would continue with processes being reviewed again under the new leadership of the school.

The procurement audit had confirmed that the Trust had robust governance, risk and control processes. There were two routine recommendations made: the first, to introduce a section on social

value and sustainability considerations within the Trust's Procurement Policy and the second, was to publish the policy on the Trust's website. The policy has been updated to reflect this recommendation and the amended policy will be published following Trustees' approval in Autumn 2025.

Review of Effectiveness

As accounting officer, the chief executive has responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. During the year in question the review has been informed by:

- the work of the internal auditor
- the work of the external auditor
- the financial management and governance self-assessment process or the school resource management self-assessment tool
- the work of the executive managers within the Academy Trust who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework

The accounting officer has been advised of the implications of the result of their review of the system of internal control by the audit committee and a plan to ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

Conclusion

Based on the advice of the Audit Committee and the Accounting Officer, the Board of Trustees is of the opinion that the Trust has an adequate and effective framework for governance, risk management and control.

Approved by order of the members of the Board of Trustees on 17/12/2025 and signed on its behalf by:



M E W Stephenson
Chair of Trustees



Z Carr
Accounting Officer

WISE Academies
STATEMENT ON REGULARITY, PROPRIETY AND COMPLIANCE

As accounting officer of WISE Academies, I confirm that I have had due regard to the framework of authorities governing regularity, propriety and compliance, including the Trust's Funding Agreement with the DfE, and the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook, including for estates safety and management. I have also considered my responsibility to notify the academy trust board of trustees and DfE of material irregularity, impropriety and non-compliance with terms and conditions of all funding, including estates safety and management.

I confirm that I and the Board of Trustees are able to identify any material irregular or improper use of all funds by the academy trust, or material non-compliance with the framework of authorities.

I confirm that no instances of material irregular, impropriety or non-compliance have been discovered to date. If any instances are identified after the date of this statement, these will be notified to the Board of Trustees and DfE.



Z Carr
Accounting Officer
Date: 17/12/2025.

WISE Academies
STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees who are also the directors of the WISE Academies for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report (including the Strategic Report) and the financial statements in accordance with the Annual Accounts Direction issued by the Department for Education, United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Charitable Company and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2024 to 2025
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charitable Company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the Charitable Company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charitable Company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charitable Company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for ensuring that in its conduct and operation the Charitable Company applies financial and other controls, which conform with the requirements both of propriety and of good financial management. They are also responsible for ensuring grants received from the DfE have been applied for the purposes intended.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the Charitable Company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Approved by order of the members of the board of trustees on 17/12/2025 and signed on its behalf by:



M E W Stephenson
Chair of Trustees

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of WISE Academies (the "charitable company") for the year ended 31 August 2025 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cashflows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), and the Academies Accounts Direction issued by the Department for Education.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction issued by the Department for Education.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the Annual Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives

rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report, which includes the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report included within the Trustees' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Directors' Report or the Strategic Report included within the Trustees' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' responsibilities set out on page 39, the trustees (who act as trustees for the charitable activities of the charitable company are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. The objectives of our audit are to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding compliance with laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, to perform audit procedures to help identify instances of non-compliance with other laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements, and to respond appropriately to identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations identified during the audit.

In relation to fraud, the objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud, to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud through designing and implementing appropriate responses and to respond appropriately to fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit.

However, it is the primary responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations and for the prevention and detection of fraud.

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud, the audit engagement team:

- obtained an understanding of the nature of the sector, including the legal and regulatory framework that the charitable company operates in and how the charitable company is complying with the legal and regulatory framework;
- inquired of management, and those charged with governance, about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, including any known actual, suspected or alleged instances of fraud;
- discussed matters about non-compliance with laws and regulations and how fraud might occur including assessment of how and where the financial statements may be susceptible to fraud.

As a result of these procedures we consider the most significant laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the financial statements are FRS 102, Charities SORP (FRS 102), Companies Act 2006, Department for Education's Academy Trust Handbook and Academies Accounts Direction. We performed audit procedures to detect non-compliances which may have a material impact on the financial statements which included reviewing the financial statements including the Trustees' Report.

The most significant laws and regulations that have an indirect impact on the financial statements are those in relation to the Education Inspection Framework under the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Keeping Children Safe in Education under the Education Act 2002, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. We performed audit procedures to inquire of management and those charged with governance whether the charitable company is in compliance with these law and regulations and inspected correspondence with regulatory authorities.

The audit engagement team identified the risk of management override of controls as the area where the financial statements were most susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. Audit procedures performed included but were not limited to testing manual journal entries and other adjustments, evaluating the business rationale in relation to significant, unusual transactions and transactions entered into outside the normal course of business, challenging judgments and estimates.

WISE Academies
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF WISE ACADEMIES YEAR
ENDING ON 31 AUGUST 2025

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at <http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Lucy Robson

LUCY ROBSON (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of RSM UK AUDIT LLP, Statutory Auditor
Chartered Accountants
1 St James' Gate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4AD
18 December 2025

WISE Academies
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (including Income and Expenditure Account) for the
year ended 31 August 2025

	Note	Unrestricted funds £000	Restricted general funds £000	Restricted fixed asset funds £000	Total 2025 £000	Total 2024 £000
Income from:						
Donations and capital grants	2	-	106	875	981	844
Transfer from local authority on conversion	2	503	(376)	11,900	12,027	-
Charitable Activities:						
Funding for the Academy Trust's educational operations	3	1,155	31,988	-	33,143	27,769
Other trading activities	4	16	-	-	16	31
Investment income	5	210	-	-	210	199
Total		<u>1,884</u>	<u>31,718</u>	<u>12,775</u>	<u>46,377</u>	<u>28,843</u>
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds		16	-	-	16	30
Charitable activities:						
Academy Trust's educational operations		1,277	31,893	1,959	35,129	29,529
Total	6	<u>1,293</u>	<u>31,893</u>	<u>1,959</u>	<u>35,145</u>	<u>29,559</u>
NET INCOMING / OUTGOING RESOURCES BEFORE TRANSFERS		591	(175)	10,816	11,232	(716)
Gross transfers between funds	18	(164)	(129)	293	-	-
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) FOR THE YEAR		427	(304)	11,109	11,232	(716)
OTHER RECOGNISED GAINS AND LOSSES						
Actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit schemes	27	-	268	-	268	(114)
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		427	(36)	11,109	11,500	(830)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS						
Total funds brought forward		3,463	1,010	36,080	40,553	41,383
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>3,890</u>	<u>974</u>	<u>47,189</u>	<u>52,053</u>	<u>40,553</u>

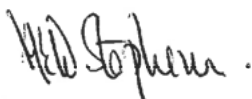
The notes on pages 47 to 82 form part of these financial statements.

WISE Academies
BALANCE SHEET
31 August 2025

Company Registration No. 07521946

	Notes	2025 £000	2024 £000
Fixed Assets			
Intangible Assets	13	25	4
Tangible Assets	14	46,521	35,457
		<u>46,546</u>	<u>35,461</u>
Investments			
Long term investments		-	1,000
Current Assets			
Debtors	15	1,462	1,364
Cash at bank and in hand		3,433	3,597
Short term investments		5,041	3,000
		<u>9,936</u>	<u>7,961</u>
Current Liabilities			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	16	(4,424)	(3,861)
Net Current Assets		<u>5,512</u>	<u>4,100</u>
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		52,058	40,561
Creditors: Amounts falling due after one year			
Salix Loan	17	(5)	(8)
Net Assets excluding Pension Liability		<u>52,053</u>	<u>40,553</u>
Defined Benefit Pension Scheme Liability	27	-	-
Total Net Assets		<u>52,053</u>	<u>40,553</u>
Funds of the Academy Trust:			
Restricted Funds			
Fixed Asset fund	18	47,189	36,080
General fund		974	1,010
Pension reserve		-	-
Total Restricted Funds		<u>48,163</u>	<u>37,090</u>
Unrestricted Income Funds			
General Fund	18	3,890	3,463
Total Funds		<u>52,053</u>	<u>40,553</u>

The financial statements on pages 44 to 46 were approved by the board of trustees and authorised for issue on 17 December 2025 and are signed on their behalf by:



M E W Stephenson
Chairperson

The notes on pages 47 to 82 form part of these financial statements

WISE Academies
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

For the year ended 31 August 2025

	Notes	2025 £000	2024 £000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash provided by operating activities	22	874	1,263
Cash flows from investing activities	23	1,006	(2,114)
Cash flows from financing activities		<u>(3)</u>	<u>(2)</u>
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		<u>1,877</u>	<u>(853)</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 September		<u>6,597</u>	<u>7,450</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 August	25	<u>8,474</u>	<u>6,597</u>

The notes on pages 47 to 82 form part of these financial statements

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

General Information

WISE Academies is a charitable company. The address of its principal place of business is given on page 1 and the nature of its operations are set out in the trustees' report.

Basis of Preparation

The financial statements of the Academy Trust, have been prepared under the historical cost convention in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard Applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Academies Accounts Direction 2024 to 2025 issued by DfE, the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006.

WISE Academies meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102 and has therefore applied the relevant public benefit requirements of FRS 102.

The principal accounting policies adopted in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been applied consistently applied, in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the financial statements, to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

The financial statements are presented in sterling which is also the functional currency of the Academy Trust. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest whole £1,000, except where otherwise indicated.

A summary of the principal accounting policies adopted (which have been applied consistently, except where noted), judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty, is set out below.

Going Concern

The trustees assess whether the use of going concern is appropriate i.e., whether there are any material uncertainties related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the company to continue as a going concern. The trustees have considered current performance, reserves levels, future developments and pupil numbers on the Trust as documented within the Strategic Report. The trustees make this assessment in respect of a period of at least one year from the date of authorisation for issue of the financial statements and have concluded that the academy trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future and there are no material uncertainties about the academy trust's ability to continue as a going concern, thus they continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

Incoming Resources

All incoming resources are recognised when the academy trust has entitlement to the funds, the receipt is probable and the amount can be measured reliably.

Grants

Grants are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on a receivable basis. The balance of income received for specific purposes but not expended during the period is shown in the relevant funds on the Balance Sheet. Where income is received in advance of meeting any performance-related conditions there is not unconditional entitlement to the income and its recognition is deferred

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

and included in creditors as deferred income until the performance-related conditions are met. Where entitlement occurs before income is received, the income is accrued.

General Annual Grant is recognised in full in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year for which it is receivable and any abatement in respect of the period is deducted from income and recognised as a liability.

Capital grants are recognised when there is entitlement and when performance related conditions have been met and are not deferred over the life of the asset on which they are expended. Unspent amounts of capital grant are reflected in the balance in the restricted fixed asset fund.

Other grants from government agencies and other bodies are recognised in the period in which they are receivable to the extent the conditions of funding have been met. Where income is received in advance of entitlement of receipt its recognition is deferred and included in creditors as deferred income. Where entitlement occurs before income is received the income is accrued.

Donations

Donations are recognised on a receivable basis where there are no performance-related conditions, where the receipt is probable and it can be measured reliably.

Other Income

Other income is recognised at fair value of the consideration received or receivable in the period it is receivable and to the extent the Academy Trust has provided the goods or services.

Interest Receivable

Interest receivable is included in the Statement of Financial Activities on a receivable basis, and is stated inclusive of related tax credits.

Donated Services and Gifts in Kind

Gifts in kind, being the gift of a fixed asset, are measured at fair value, unless it is impractical to measure this reliably, in which case the cost of the item to the donor should be used. The gain is recognised as income from donations and a corresponding amount is included in the appropriate fixed asset category and depreciated over the useful economic life in accordance with the Academy Trust's accounting policies. Donated services are measured on the basis of the value of the gift to the Academy Trust.

Transfer from local authority on conversion

The conversion from a state-maintained school to an academy trust involved the transfer of identifiable assets and liabilities and the operation of the schools for £nil consideration. The substance of the transfer is that of a gift and it has been accounted for on that basis as set out below.

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

The net assets transferred on conversion from the maintained schools: Esh Winning Primary School; St Andrew's Primary School and Thornley Primary School to the academy trust have been valued at their fair values. The fair value has been derived based on that of equivalent items. The amount has been recognised under the appropriate balance sheet categories, with a corresponding amount recognised in Donations – transfer to the academy trust on conversion in the Statement of Financial Activities and analysed under unrestricted funds, restricted general funds and restricted fixed asset funds. Further details of the transaction are set out in note 30.

Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity.

Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

Expenditure on Raising Funds

This includes all expenditure incurred by the academy trust to raise funds for its charitable purposes and includes costs of all fundraising activities events and non-charitable trading.

Charitable Activities

These are costs incurred on the academy trust's educational operations, including support costs and costs relating to the governance of the academy trust apportioned to charitable activities.

All resources expended are inclusive of irrecoverable VAT.

Intangible fixed assets

Intangible assets costing £1,000 or more are capitalised and recognised when future economic benefits are probable and the cost or value of the asset can be measured reliably. Intangible assets are initially recognised at cost and are subsequently measured at cost net of amortisation and any provision for impairment. Amortisation is provided on intangible fixed assets at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset on a straight-line basis over its expected useful life as follows:

- Purchased computer software 20% per annum

Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets costing £1,000 or more are capitalised at cost and are carried at cost net of depreciation and any provision for impairment.

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Subsequent costs are capitalised only when it is probable that such costs will generate future economic benefits. All other costs of repairs and maintenance are charged to the statement of financial activities as incurred.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets other than freehold land, at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset on a straight-line basis over its expected useful lives, as follows:

- Long leasehold buildings 2% per annum
- Refurbishments to buildings 10% per annum
- Fixtures, fittings and equipment 20% per annum
- ICT Equipment 33% per annum

Assets in the course of construction are included at cost. Depreciation on these assets is not charged until they are brought into use.

Residual value is calculated on prices prevailing at the reporting date, after estimated costs of disposal, for the asset as if it were at the age and in the condition expected at the end of its useful life.

A review for impairment of a fixed asset is carried out if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of any fixed asset may not be recoverable. Shortfalls between the carrying value of fixed assets and their recoverable amounts are recognised as impairments. Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Where tangible fixed assets have been acquired with the aid of specific grants, either from the government or from the private sector, they are included in the balance sheet at cost and depreciated over their expected useful economic life. Where the related grants require the asset to be held for a specific purpose and continued use, they are credited to a restricted fixed asset fund in the Statement of Financial Activities and carried forward in the Balance Sheet. Depreciation on the relevant assets is charged directly to the restricted fixed asset fund in the Statement of Financial Activities. Where tangible fixed assets have been acquired with unrestricted funds, depreciation on such assets is charged to the unrestricted fund.

Investments

The Investment Policy is reviewed periodically by the Trustees to ensure funds are used in accordance with the law, the Articles of Association, the funding agreement and the principles of the Academies Handbook. The objectives of the policy are:

- to achieve best financial return available whilst ensuring that security of deposits takes precedence over revenue maximisation
- to only invest funds surplus to operational need based on all financial commitments being met without the Trust bank account becoming overdrawn
- manage, control and track financial exposure

Investments are recognised at the value of investments held at the period end, with any known interest accrued.

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Liabilities

Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the Academy Trust anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

Leased assets

Rentals under operating leases are charged on a straight line basis over the lease term.

Assets under lease

Rental income from assets leased under operating leases is recognised on a straight-line basis over the term of the lease. Rent free periods or other incentives given to the lessee are accounted for as a reduction to the rental income and recognised on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

Leasing Arrangement

The Trust provides accommodation for the Esh Winning Library within the site of Esh Winning Academy in the form of a lease arrangement between WISE Academies and Durham County Council. Annual lease income in the form of rent and service charges of £11k is recognised as unrestricted income in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Financial Instruments

The Academy Trust has chosen to adopt Sections 11 and 12 of FRS 102 in full in respect of financial instruments.

Financial assets and liabilities

Financial assets and financial liabilities are recognised when the Academy Trust becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial liabilities are classified according to the substance of the financial instrument's contractual obligations, rather than the financial instrument's legal form.

All financial assets and liabilities are initially measured at transaction price (including transaction costs), unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction. A financial asset or financial liability that is payable or receivable in one year is measured at the undiscounted amount expected to be received or paid net of impairment, unless it is a financing transaction. If an arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, the financial asset or financial liability is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest for a similar debt instrument.

Financial assets and financial liabilities are offset only when there is a current legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and the intention to either settle on a net basis, or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Derecognition of financial assets and liabilities

A financial asset is derecognised only when the contractual rights to cash flows expire or are settled, or substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership are transferred to another party, or if some significant risks and rewards of ownership are retained but control of the asset has transferred to another party that is able to sell the asset in its entirety to an unrelated third party. A financial liability (or part thereof) is derecognised when the obligation specified in the contract is discharged, cancelled or expires.

Taxation

The academy trust is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes.

Accordingly, the academy trust is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Short-term Employment Benefits

Short term employment benefits such as salaries and compensated absences (holiday pay) are recognised as an expense in the year in which the employees render service to the Academy Trust. The cost of any unused holiday entitlement the Academy Trust expects to pay in future periods is recognised in the period the employees' services are rendered.

Pensions benefits

Retirement benefits to employees of the Academy Trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS') which are multi-employer defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the Academy Trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. As stated in Note 27, the TPS is an unfunded multi-employer scheme with no underlying assets to assign between employers, consequently there is insufficient information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate. Differences between contributions payable in the year and contributions actually paid are shown as either accruals or prepayments.

The LGPS is a funded scheme multi-employer scheme, of which the Academy Trust is a sponsoring employer in a number (each scheme exists independently under the LGPS Regulations) as set out in note 27 and the assets are held separately. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to net income/(expenditure) are the current service

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/asset is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations.

The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised as other comprehensive income.

Actuarial gains and losses and the effect of the asset ceiling are recognised immediately as other comprehensive income.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted income funds represent those resources which may be used towards meeting any of the charitable objects of the academy trust at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted general funds are resources subject to specific restrictions imposed by funders or donors, and include grants from the Department for Education.

Restricted fixed assets funds are resources which are to be applied to specific capital purposes imposed by funders, where the asset acquired or created is held for a specific purpose.

Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgement

Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

The academy trust makes estimates and assumptions concerning the future. The resulting accounting estimates and assumptions will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results. The estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year are discussed below.

Critical accounting estimates and assumptions

The present value of the Local Government Pension Scheme defined benefit liability depends on a number of factors that are determined on an actuarial basis using a variety of assumptions. The assumptions used in determining the net cost (income) for pensions include the discount rate. Any changes in these assumptions, which are disclosed in note 27, will impact the carrying amount of the pension liability. Furthermore, a roll forward approach which projects results from the latest full actuarial valuation performed at 31 March 2022 has been used by the actuary in valuing the pensions liability at 31 August 2025. Any difference between the figures derived from the roll forward approach and a full actuarial valuation would impact on the carrying amount of the pension obligation.

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Critical areas of judgement

Determining the existence of a minimum funding requirement for the Local Government Pension Scheme to be included in the asset ceiling in measuring and recognising a surplus in the scheme. This judgement is based on an assessment of the nature of the scheme as a statutory scheme and its inherent implied continuance as well as the operation of the primary and secondary contributions.

2. DONATIONS AND CAPITAL GRANTS

	Unrestricted funds £000	Restricted general funds £000	Restricted fixed asset funds £000	Total 2025 £000	Total 2024 £000
DfE capital grant	-	-	875	875	772
Transfer of schools from Local Authorities	503	(376)	11,900	12,027	-
Other donations	-	106	-	106	72
	<u>503</u>	<u>(270)</u>	<u>12,775</u>	<u>13,008</u>	<u>844</u>
2024 total split by fund:					
Restricted general funds	-	72	-	72	
Restricted fixed asset funds:	-	-	772	772	
	-	72	772	844	

3. FUNDING FOR CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Total
	£000	£000	2025 £000	2024 £000
DfE REVENUE GRANTS				
General annual grant (GAG)	-	20,767	20,767	17,128
Start Up Grants	-	-	-	75
Other DfE grants				
Pupil Premium	-	2,658	2,658	2,254
Teachers' Pay grant	-	342	342	286
Teachers' Pension grant	-	416	416	146
Universal infant free school meals	-	386	386	345
PE Sports grant	-	288	288	236
Supplementary grant	-	-	-	570
NI grant		182	182	-
Core schools budget grant		726	726	-
Catch up premium	-	-	-	237
School-led tutoring	-	-	-	99
Rates Relief	-	93	93	86
Other DfE group grants	-	164	164	145
	-	26,022	26,022	21,607
OTHER GOVERNMENT GRANTS				
Local authority grants	-	5,533	5,533	4,478
Special educational projects	-	433	433	806
		5,966	5,966	5,284
OTHER FUNDING				
Catering income	352	-	352	295
Other miscellaneous income	803	-	803	583
	1,155	-	1,155	878
TOTAL FUNDING				
	1,155	31,988	33,143	27,769
2024 total split by fund:				
	878	26,891	27,769	

4. OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Total
	£000	£000	2025 £000	2024 £000
Other income	16	-	16	31
	<u>16</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>31</u>
2024 total split by fund:	<u>31</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>31</u>	

5. INVESTMENT INCOME

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Total
	£000	£000	2025 £000	2024 £000
Bank Interest	210	-	210	199
	<u>210</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>210</u>	<u>199</u>
2024 total split by fund:	<u>199</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>199</u>	

6. EXPENDITURE

	Staff Costs £000	Non-Pay Premises Costs £000	Expenditure Other Costs £000	Total 2025 £000	Total 2024 £000
Expenditure on raising funds:					
Direct Costs	16	-	-	16	30
Academy Trust's educational operations:					
Direct costs	23,340	-	1,672	25,012	21,088
Allocated support costs	<u>4,407</u>	<u>1,659</u>	<u>4,051</u>	<u>10,117</u>	<u>8,441</u>
	<u>27,763</u>	<u>1,659</u>	<u>5,723</u>	<u>35,145</u>	<u>29,559</u>
2024 total split by category:	<u>22,744</u>	<u>1,495</u>	<u>5,320</u>	<u>29,559</u>	

Expenditure on raising funds was £16k of which £16k (2024: £30k) was unrestricted and £nil (2024: £nil) was restricted general funds.

Net income/(expenditure) for the period includes:	2025 £000	2024 £000
Operating lease rentals	37	28
Depreciation	1,954	1,671
Amortisation of intangible fixed assets	5	4
Fees payable to RSM UK Audit LLP and its associates in respect of both audit and non-audit services are as follows:		
- Audit services – statutory audit	45	40
- Other services	5	4
Net interest on defined benefit pension liability (note 27)	(122)	(27)

7. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
Direct costs – educational operations	25,012	21,088
Support costs – educational operations	10,117	8,441
	35,129	29,529
Analysis of support costs – educational operations		
Support staff costs (including FRS102 section 27 pension credit of £97k (2024: £87k credit))	4,407	3,361
Depreciation	1,954	1,671
Amortisation	5	4
Technology costs	67	83
Premises costs	1,659	1,495
Legal costs – conversion	1	25
Legal costs – other	4	95
Other support costs (including FRS102 section 27 pension credit of £11k (2024: £27k credit))	1,935	1,647
Governance costs	85	60
	10,117	8,441

8. GOVERNANCE COSTS

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
Legal and professional fees	12	7
Auditor's remuneration		
Audit of financial statements	45	44
Other audit costs		
- Internal audit costs	12	11
- Annex G audit costs	4	4
- Other audit costs	5	1
- Accrual Adjustment	7	(7)
	85	60

9. STAFF NUMBERS AND COSTS

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
a) STAFF COSTS AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS		
Staff costs during the period were:		
Wages and salaries	19,976	16,452
Social security costs	2,135	1,570
Pension costs	4,395	3,453
Apprenticeship levy	85	68
	<u>26,591</u>	<u>21,543</u>
Supply staff costs	1,161	1,161
Staff restructuring costs	11	40
	<u>27,763</u>	<u>22,744</u>
Staff restructuring costs comprise:		
Redundancy payments	-	1
Severance payments	11	39
	<u>11</u>	<u>40</u>

b) SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

The academy trust made 4 severance payments in the year, disclosed in the following bands:

	Number
£0 - £25,000	4
	<u>4</u>

c) SPECIAL STAFF SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

There were no non-statutory / non-contractual payments included in staff restructuring costs (2024: £nil).

d) STAFF NUMBERS

The average number of persons (including senior management team) employed by the Academy Trust during the year was as follows:

	2025	2024
	Average	Restated
	Headcount	Average
		Headcount
Teachers	238	213
Administration and support	514	436
Management	24	22
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	776	671
	<hr/>	<hr/>

e) HIGHER PAID STAFF

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) exceeded £60,000 was:

	2025	2024
	Number	Number
£60,000 - £70,000	15	11
£70,001 - £80,000	15	4
£80,001 - £90,000	2	6
£90,001 - £100,000	2	1
£100,001 - £110,000	1	2
£110,001 - £120,000	2	-
£140,001 - £150,000	-	1
£150,001 - £160,000	1	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	38	25
	<hr/>	<hr/>

f) KEY MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL

The key management personnel of the Academy Trust comprise the trustees and the senior management team as listed on page 1. The total amount of employee benefits (including employer national insurance and pension contributions) received by key management personnel for their services to the Academy Trust was £794,600 (2024: £748,103).

10. CENTRAL SERVICES

The Academy Trust has provided the following central services to its academies during the year:

- Human Resources
- Financial Services
- Educational Support Services
- Health and Safety Services
- Governance Services
- Estates Management

10. CENTRAL SERVICES (continued)

The Trust charges for these services on the basis of a flat percentage of 6.4% on GAG and Early Years funding streams. The actual amounts charged during the year were as follows:

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
Adderlane Academy	38	35
Ashley Academy	136	131
Bexhill Academy	128	114
Croftway Academy	140	121
Esh Winning Academy	106	-
Haltwhistle Primary Academy	76	73
Hasting Hill Academy	87	77
Malvin's Close Academy	145	138
Morpeth Road Academy	114	115
North View Academy	69	62
Prudhoe West Academy	77	74
Shaftoe Trust Academy	41	38
St Andrew's Academy	66	-
Thornley Academy	59	-
Town End Academy	79	76
Welbeck Academy	182	160
	<u>1,543</u>	<u>1,214</u>

11. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES

One trustee has been paid remuneration from employment with the Academy Trust. The CEO only receives remuneration in respect of services provided undertaking the role of CEO under her contract of employment and not in respect of their services as trustee. Other trustees were not paid any remuneration nor received any other benefits from employment with the Academy Trust.

The value of trustees' remuneration and other benefits was as follows:

Z Carr (Chief Executive Officer)
Remuneration £151,450 (2024: £140,602)
Employers' pension contributions £43,436 (2024: £35,883)

During the year ended 31 August 2025, travel and subsistence expenses totalling £1,560 (2024: £949) were reimbursed to 2 trustees (2024: 2).

Related party transactions involving the trustees are set out in note 28.

12. TRUSTEES' AND OFFICERS' INSURANCE

The academy trust has opted into the Department for Education's risk protection arrangement (RPA), an alternative to insurance where UK government funds cover losses that arise. This scheme protects trustees and officers from claims arising from negligent acts, errors or omissions occurring whilst on academy business, and provides cover up to £10,000,000. It is not possible to quantify the trustees and officers' indemnity element from the overall cost of the RPA scheme.

13. INTANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Computer Software £000	Total £000
Cost		
At 1 September 2024	79	79
Additions	<u>26</u>	<u>26</u>
At 31 August 2024	<u>105</u>	<u>105</u>
Amortisation		
At 1 September 2024	75	75
Charged in year	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
At 31 August 2025	<u>80</u>	<u>80</u>
	<u>25</u>	<u>25</u>
Carrying Amount		
At 31 August 2024	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
	<u>25</u>	<u>25</u>
At 31 August 2025	<u>25</u>	<u>25</u>

14. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Land and buildings	Furniture and equipment	Computer Hardware	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost				
At 1 September 2024	43,597	1,186	1,233	46,016
Transferred from local authority on conversion (note 29)	11,874	-	-	11,874
Additions	918	138	89	1,145
Disposals	(2)	(16)	(281)	(299)
At 31 August 2025	<u>56,387</u>	<u>1,308</u>	<u>1,041</u>	<u>58,736</u>
Depreciation				
At 1 September 2024	8,617	831	1,111	10,559
Charged in year	1,760	121	73	1,954
Disposals	(1)	(16)	(281)	(298)
At 31 August 2025	<u>10,376</u>	<u>936</u>	<u>903</u>	<u>12,215</u>
Net book value				
At 31 August 2024	<u>34,980</u>	<u>355</u>	<u>122</u>	<u>35,457</u>
At 31 August 2025	<u>46,011</u>	<u>372</u>	<u>138</u>	<u>46,521</u>

Included within land & buildings is £40,385k (2024: £29,426k) relating to leasehold land & buildings.

15. DEBTORS

	2025 £000	2024 £000
Trade Debtors	83	63
VAT Recoverable	117	229
Other Debtors	4	-
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>1,258</u>	<u>1,072</u>
	<u>1,462</u>	<u>1,364</u>

16. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year

	2025 £000	2024 £000
Trade creditors	120	1,089
Other creditors	18	101
Accruals and deferred income	<u>4,286</u>	<u>2,671</u>
	<u>4,424</u>	<u>3,861</u>

Deferred income

	2025 £000
Deferred income at 1 September 2024	639
Released from previous years	(533)
Resources deferred in the year	<u>703</u>
Deferred income at 31 August 2025	<u>809</u>

At the balance sheet date, the Academy Trust was holding funds received in advance in respect of the following:

	£000
Local Authority Funding Autumn Term 2025	312
UIFSM 1st Instalment for 2025-26	228
School Fundraising Income	136
Rates Relief 2025-26	61
Miscellaneous project funding 2025-26	37
School trip contributions 2025-26	26
Shaftoe Trust 2025-26 resource	4
Governance Services Autumn Term 2025	<u>5</u>
	<u>809</u>

17. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due in greater than one year

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
Salix Loan	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>
	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>

18. FUNDS

	At 1 September 2024 £000	Incom e £000	Expenditure £000	Gains, losses and transfers £000	At 31 August 2025 £000
RESTRICTED GENERAL FUNDS					
General Annual Grant (GAG)	894	20,767	(20,665)	(129)	867
Start Up Grant	9	-	(9)	-	-
Pupil Premium	-	2,658	(2,658)	-	-
Other DfE grants	-	3,030	(3,030)	-	-
Other Government Grants	-	5,533	(5,533)	-	-
Other Restricted Reserves	107	106	(106)	-	107
Pension reserve	-	(376)	108	268	-
	<u>1,010</u>	<u>31,718</u>	<u>(31,893)</u>	<u>139</u>	<u>974</u>
RESTRICTED FIXED ASSET FUNDS					
DfE capital grants	5,930	875	(710)	-	6,095
Capital Expenditure from revenue transfers	701	-	(274)	293	720
Capital Expenditure from Start-up Grants	2	-	(2)	-	-
Donated Assets	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer/sponsor ed LA funds	12,475	11,900	(570)	-	23,805
Transfer from existing academy	16,972	-	(403)	-	16,569
	<u>36,080</u>	<u>12,775</u>	<u>(1,959)</u>	<u>293</u>	<u>47,189</u>
TOTAL RESTRICTED FUNDS	<u>37,090</u>	<u>44,493</u>	<u>(33,852)</u>	<u>432</u>	<u>48,163</u>
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	<u>3,463</u>	<u>1,884</u>	<u>(1,293)</u>	<u>(164)</u>	<u>3,890</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>40,553</u>	<u>46,377</u>	<u>(35,145)</u>	<u>268</u>	<u>52,053</u>

18. FUNDS (continued)

The specific purposes for which the funds are to be applied are as follows:

General Annual Grant must be used for the normal running costs of the Trust and the intention is to utilise remaining GAG for continued improvement works to the Trust's estate.

Pupil Premium funding is used for the educational benefit of pupils registered at each academy and funding is targeted according to the specific needs of those pupils at each setting, details of which can be found on our schools' websites.

The pension reserve is the liability arising from the deficit on the Local Government Pension Scheme as detailed in note 27.

Other DfE grants received and spent during the year relate largely to Sports Grant (£288k) and Universal Free School Meals grant (£386k) which have been fully expended in year and other supplementary grants (NI grant and Core Schools Budget grant) to support pay awards and increasing pension costs during 2024/25 (£1,666k).

Other Government Grants reported above include £5.5m funding from local authorities and relate to the receipt of Early Years funding together with High Needs top up, Special Educational Needs grants and other smaller miscellaneous funding. Our schools operate within the following local authority areas: Durham County Council; Sunderland City Council; South Tyneside Council; Newcastle City Council and Northumberland County Council. WISE Academies received £428k funding to deliver two significant DfE supported projects: one run by our Research School to provide Primary Language and Reading support to schools within the Middlesbrough / Hartlepool region (£195k) and the other, Great North Early Years Stronger Practice Hub (£234k). All funding received during the year has been fully allocated to the educational operational expenditure of the Academy Trust.

Other Restricted Funds relate to the transfer of surplus balances in relation to Prudhoe West Academy.

Restricted fixed asset funds are made up of funds received from the DfE during the year of £875k in respect of Devolved Formula Capital Grants (£113k), Schools Condition Allocation (£715k) and a DfE grant (£47k) to improve security at Town End Academy, together with transfers from restricted and unrestricted funds in the year to match against capital expenditure incurred.

Unrestricted income largely relates to various activities generating funds, e.g. income for school meals, wraparound care provisions, contributions towards school trips, insurance receipts and interest earned.

Under the funding agreement with the Secretary of State, the Academy Trust was not subject to a limit on the GAG that it could carry forward at 31 August 2025.

A comparative funds note detailing the closing position at 31 August 2024 is listed overleaf:

18. FUNDS (continued)

Prior Year Funds 2023-24	At 1 September 2023	Income	Expenditure	Gains, losses and transfers	At 31 August 2024
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
RESTRICTED GENERAL FUNDS					
RESTRICTED GENERAL FUNDS					
General Annual Grant (GAG)	1,243	17,128	(17,401)	(76)	894
Start Up Grant	-	75	(66)	-	9
Pupil Premium	-	2,254	(2,254)	-	-
Other DfE grants	-	2,956	(2,956)	-	-
Other Government Grants	-	4,478	(4,478)	-	-
Other Restricted Reserves	107	72	(72)	-	107
Pension reserve	-	-	114	(114)	-
	<u>1,350</u>	<u>26,963</u>	<u>(27,113)</u>	<u>(190)</u>	<u>1,010</u>
RESTRICTED FIXED ASSET FUNDS					
DfE capital grants	5,727	772	(569)	-	5,930
Capital Expenditure from GAG	782	-	(366)	285	701
Capital Expenditure from Start-up and Growth Grants	15	-	(13)	-	2
Donated Assets	29	-	(29)	-	-
Transfer from LA	12,787	-	(312)	-	12,475
Transfer from existing academy	17,359	-	(387)	-	16,972
	<u>36,699</u>	<u>772</u>	<u>(1,676)</u>	<u>285</u>	<u>36,080</u>
TOTAL RESTRICTED FUNDS	<u>38,049</u>	<u>27,735</u>	<u>(28,789)</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>37,090</u>
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	<u>3,334</u>	<u>1,108</u>	<u>(770)</u>	<u>(209)</u>	<u>3,463</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>41,383</u>	<u>28,843</u>	<u>(29,559)</u>	<u>(114)</u>	<u>40,553</u>

18. FUNDS (continued)

ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIES BY FUND BALANCE	2025 £000	2024 £000
Adderlane Academy	9	42
Ashley Academy	-	-
Bexhill Academy	300	300
Croftway Academy	300	300
Esh Winning Academy (from 1 September 2024)	300	-
Haltwhistle Primary Academy	88	83
Hasting Hill Academy	129	142
Malvin's Close Academy	300	300
Morpeth Road Academy	53	253
North View Academy	300	300
Prudhoe West Academy	163	169
Shaftoe Trust Academy	11	12
St Andrew's Academy (from 1 September 2024)	100	-
Thornley Academy (from 1 September 2024)	41	-
Town End Academy	144	157
Welbeck Academy	155	137
Central Trust Funds	<u>2,471</u>	<u>2,278</u>
Total before fixed assets and pension reserve	<u>4,864</u>	<u>4,473</u>
Restricted fixed asset fund	47,189	36,080
Pension reserve	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
TOTAL RESERVES	<u>52,053</u>	<u>40,553</u>

18. FUNDS (continued)

Reserves at each academy should aim to be maintained generally around levels equivalent to 10% of total income to a maximum of £300k to support the strategic aims of the Trust and reserve transfers totalling £428k were made to support this reserves policy. Trustees have discretion to release reserves to support particular improvements in our academies.

The above reserves include ring-fenced amounts for the following projects during 2025-26:

- **Educational Environment Improvements - £168k**
Three schools have applied for a release of reserves to support upgrades to various learning spaces including Early Years' and outdoors areas.
- **Support Additional Capacity - £46k**
Hasting Hill Academy are being supported to increase capacity in their Child and Family Team to help further embed attendance strategies to improve their performance.
The central catering function requires some additional capacity to support the roll out of WISE Academies catering management processes in its newly converted schools.
- **Thornley Academy: School Improvement Plan - £50k**
- **System Improvements - £50k**
Trust-wide implementation and training costs to support further use of MIS reporting functionality and future efficiency savings.
- **Morpeth Road Academy: Transition of PAN reduction - £103k**
The consolidated 2025-26 budget was balanced at Trust level but included an assumption that Morpeth Road Academy would be supported with an in-year deficit whilst in a period of transition having reduced its PAN from 60 pupils to 30 pupils due to a continual decline in pupil numbers.

18. FUNDS (continued)

ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIES BY COST

Expenditure incurred by each academy during the year (excluding FRS 102 pension adjustment) was as follows:

	Teaching and Educational Support Staff Costs £000	Other Support Staff Costs £000	Educational Supplies £000	Other Costs (exc Depn and Amortn) £000	Total 2025 £000	Total 2024 £000
Adderlane Academy	515	105	25	108	753	697
Ashley Academy	1,977	169	108	430	2,684	2,741
Bexhill Academy	1,787	287	90	201	2,365	2,206
Croftway Academy	1,854	351	104	288	2,597	2,376
Esh Winning Academy	1,438	198	82	230	1,948	25
Haltwhistle Primary Academy	1,033	226	62	240	1,561	1,584
Hasting Hill Academy	1,213	221	62	232	1,728	1,661
Malvin's Close Academy	1,866	346	108	338	2,658	2,611
Morpeth Road Academy	1,788	337	67	245	2,437	2,543
North View Academy	1,387	134	44	141	1,706	1,698
Prudhoe West Academy	1,146	197	41	219	1,603	1,571
Shaftoe Trust Academy	530	104	37	132	803	782
St Andrew's Academy	995	114	38	214	1,361	19
Thornley Academy	837	132	58	205	1,232	17
Town End Academy	1,124	209	76	194	1,603	1,633
Welbeck Academy	2,655	431	190	339	3,615	3,540
DfE Projects	195	32	13	183	423	800
Central Services	1,000	927	6	284	2,217	1,493
WISE Academies	<u>23,340</u>	<u>4,520</u>	<u>1,211</u>	<u>4,223</u>	<u>33,294</u>	<u>27,997</u>

19. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

Fund balances at 31 August 2025 are represented by:

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted general funds	Restricted fixed asset funds	Total funds
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Intangible fixed assets	-	-	25	25
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	46,521	46,521
Current assets	3,890	5,403	643	9,936
Current liabilities	-	(4,424)	-	(4,424)
Salix Loan > 1 year	-	(5)	-	(5)
Pension scheme asset	-	-	-	-
TOTAL NET ASSETS AT 31 August 2025	3,890	974	47,189	52,053

Fund balances at 31 August 2024 are represented by:

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted general funds	Restricted fixed asset funds	Total funds
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Intangible fixed assets	-	-	4	4
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	35,457	35,457
Long term investments	-	1,000	-	1,000
Current assets	3,463	3,879	619	7,961
Current liabilities	-	(3,861)	-	(3,861)
Salix Loan > 1 year	-	(8)	-	(8)
Pension scheme liability	-	-	-	-
TOTAL NET ASSETS AT 31 August 2024	3,463	1,010	36,080	40,553

20. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
Contracted for, but not provided in the financial statements	<u>202</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>202</u>	<u>-</u>

21. COMMITMENTS UNDER OPERATING LEASES

OPERATING LEASES

At 31 August 2025 the total of the Academy Trust's future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases was:

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
Amounts due within one year	36	26
Amounts due between one and five years	51	52
Amounts due after five years	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>87</u>	<u>78</u>

22. RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOME TO CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
Net income / (expenditure) for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	11,232	(716)
Adjusted for:		
Net gain on transfer from local authority on conversion (note 29)	503	-
Amortisation (note 13)	5	4
Depreciation (note 14)	1,954	1,671
Capital grants from DfE and other capital income	(875)	(772)
Interest receivable (note 5)	(210)	(199)
Loss on Disposal of Fixed Assets (note 14)	1	7
Defined benefit pension scheme cost less contributions payable (note 27)	(97)	(87)
Defined benefit pension scheme finance credit (note 27)	(11)	(27)
Transfer of net assets from LA following conversion of academies	(12,027)	-
(Increase) in debtors	(164)	(105)
Increase in creditors	563	1,487
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>874</u>	<u>1,263</u>

23. CASHFLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
Interest received	276	144
Cash inflow / (outflow) from investment	1,000	(1,000)
Purchase of intangible fixed assets	(26)	(2)
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(1,145)	(2,028)
Capital grants from DfE	875	772
Net capital surplus on conversion of academies	26	-
Net cash used in investing activities	<u>1,006</u>	<u>(2,114)</u>

24. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
Cash in hand and in bank	3,433	3,597
Short term investments	<u>5,041</u>	<u>3,000</u>
TOTAL	<u>8,474</u>	<u>6,597</u>

25. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET DEBT

	At 1 September 2024 £000	Cash flows £000	Acquisition – transfers in £000	At 31 August 2025 £000
Cash and short-term investments	<u>6,597</u>	<u>1,348</u>	<u>529</u>	<u>8,474</u>
TOTAL	<u>6,597</u>	<u>1,348</u>	<u>529</u>	<u>8,474</u>

26. MEMBERS' LIABILITY

Each member of the charitable company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the charitable company in the event of it being wound up while he/she is a member, or within one year after he/she ceases to be a member, such amount as may be required, not exceeding £10 for the debts and liabilities contracted before he/she ceases to be a member.

27. PENSION AND SIMILAR OBLIGATION

The academy trust's employees belong to two principal pension schemes: the Teachers' Pension Scheme England and Wales (TPS) for academic and related staff; and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for non-teaching staff, which is managed by Tyne and Wear Pension Fund and Durham County Council Pension Fund. Each LGPS exists independently under the LGPS Regulations and therefore accounted for separately. Both are multi-employer defined benefit schemes.

The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS related to the period ended 31 March 2020 and of the LGPS to the period ended 31 March 2022.

There were no outstanding or prepaid contributions at either the beginning or the end of the financial year.

The LGPS obligation reflects employees of the Academy Trust who transferred as part of the conversion of maintained schools who were already members of the scheme and new employees who were eligible to and did join the Scheme whose cumulative retirement benefit was transferred to the Academy Trust in the year. The obligation in respect of employees who transferred represents their cumulative service to the date of transfer.

Teachers' Pension SchemeIntroduction

The Teachers' Pensions Scheme ("TPS") is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pension Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for teachers in academies. All teachers have the option to opt out of the TPS following enrolment.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and members contribute on a 'pay as you go' basis – these contributions along with those made by employers are credited to the Exchequer. The academy trust has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The academy trust has set out below the information available on the scheme.

Valuation of the Teachers' Pensions Scheme

The Government Actuary using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2014 published by HM Treasury every 4 years. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions.

Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS was carried out as at 31 March 2020 in accordance with The Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2014 and the Employer Contribution Rate was assessed using agreed assumptions in line with the Directions and was accepted at the original assessed rate as there was no cost control mechanism breach.

27. PENSION AND SIMILAR OBLIGATION

The valuation report was published by the Department for Education on 26 October 2023. The key elements of the valuation are:

- Total scheme liabilities for service (the capital sum needed at 31 March 2020 to meet the stream of future cash flows in respect of benefits earned) of £262 billion.
- Value of notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the proceeds from the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £222 billion.
- Notional past service deficit of £39.8 billion (2016 £22 billion).
- Discount rate is 1.7% in excess of CPI (2016 2.4% in excess of CPI) (this change has had the greatest financial significance).

As a result of the valuation, new employer contribution rates have been set at 28.6% of pensionable pay from 1 April 2024 until 1 April 2027 (compared to 23.68% under the previous valuation including a 0.08% administration levy).

The pension costs paid to TPS in the year amounted to £3,273k (2024: £2,444k).

Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a funded defined-benefit scheme, with the assets in each separate scheme held in separate trustee-administered funds. The Trust is a member of the Tyne and Wear Pension Fund (TWPF) and Durham County Council Pension Fund (DCCPF). The total contribution made for the year ended 31 August 2025 was £1,642k (2024: £1,471k) of which employer's contributions totalled £1,219k (2024: £1,096k) and employees' contribution totalled £423k (2024: £375k). The agreed rates for future years are between 15.8% and 17.4% for employers' contributions and between 5.5 and 12.5 per cent for employees.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013 and on 21 July 2022, the Department for Education reaffirmed its commitment to the guarantee, with a parliamentary minute published on GOV.UK.

27. PENSION AND SIMILAR OBLIGATIONS (continued)

Principal actuarial assumptions

The following information is based upon a full actuarial valuation of the fund at 31 March 2022 updated to 31 August 2025 by a qualified independent actuary.

	TWPF		DCCPF	
	At 31 Aug 2025	At 31 Aug 2024	At 31 Aug 2025	At 31 Aug 2024
	%	%	%	%
Rate of increase in salaries	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.5
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/inflation	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	6.0	4.9	6.0	4.9
Inflation assumption (CPI)	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement are 65 are:

	TWPF		DCCPF	
	At 31 Aug 2025	At 31 Aug 2024	At 31 Aug 2025	At 31 Aug 2024
	Years	Years	Years	Years
Retiring today				
Males	21.2	20.8	21.9	21.5
Females	24.2	24.0	22.8	22.4
Retiring in 20 years				
Males	22.1	21.7	22.8	22.4
Females	25.3	25.1	24.7	24.6

27. PENSION AND SIMILAR OBLIGATIONS (continued)

The Academy Trust's share of the assets in the scheme:

	Fair value at 31 August 2025 £000	Fair value at 31 August 2024 £000
Equities	14,959	12,961
Property	3,328	2,690
Government bonds	504	310
Corporate bonds	5,350	4,812
Multi Asset Credit	1,602	1,164
Cash	360	207
Other	4,534	3,725
Total market value of assets	30,637	25,869

The actual return / (loss) on scheme assets was £1,952k (2024: £2,071k).

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities

	2025 £000	2024 £000
Current service cost	(1,122)	(1,009)
Net interest credit	11	27
Total operating charge	(1,111)	(982)

27. PENSION AND SIMILAR OBLIGATIONS (continued)

Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
At 1 September	23,601	21,791
On conversion	-	-
Current service cost	1,122	1,009
Interest cost	1,257	1,089
Employee contributions	423	375
Actuarial gains	(5,093)	(230)
Benefits paid	(563)	(433)
Transferred in on schools joining the academy trust	2,113	-
At 31 August	22,860	23,601

Changes in the fair value of the Trust's share of scheme assets:

	2025	2024
	£000	£000
At 1 September	25,870	22,761
On conversion	-	-
Interest income	1,379	1,164
Return / (loss) on plan assets (excluding net interest on the net defined pension liability)	573	907
Employer contributions	1,219	1,096
Employee contributions	423	375
Benefits paid	(563)	(433)
Transferred in on schools joining the academy trust	1,737	-
At 31 August	30,638	25,870

The Academy Trust is aware that the Court of Appeal upheld the decision in the Virgin Media vs NTL Pension Trustees II Limited case. The decision puts into question the validity of any amendments made in respect of the rules of a contracted-out pension scheme between 6 April 1997 and 5 April 2016. The judgment means that some historic amendments affecting s.9(2B) rights could be void if the necessary actuarial confirmation under s.37 of the Pension Schemes Act 1993 was not obtained.

On the 5 June 2025, the Government announced its intention to introduce legislation to give affected pension schemes the ability to retrospectively obtain written confirmation that historical benefit changes met the necessary standards. However, details of the legislation have not been announced and it's not clear how this interacts with the investigations made by the UK Government's Actuary's Department therefore the potential impact if any, on the valuation of scheme liabilities remains unknown.

27. PENSION AND SIMILAR OBLIGATIONS (continued)

	2025	2024
	£k	£k
Present value of defined benefit obligations	22,860	23,601
Fair value of plan assets	30,637	25,870
Net asset	<u>7,777</u>	<u>2,269</u>
Restriction to level of asset ceiling	<u>(7,777)</u>	<u>(2,269)</u>
Net asset recognised in the balance sheet	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

The value of the Trust's share of net assets of TWPF and DCCPF schemes has been restricted due to the effect of the asset ceiling being the maximum value of the present of the economic benefits available in the form of the unconditional right to reduced contributions from the plan. A corresponding charge has been made to other comprehensive income in the period.

28. RELATED PARTIES

All transactions involving related parties or connected parties are conducted at arm's length and in accordance with the requirements of the Academies Trust Handbook, including notifying the DfE of all transactions made on or after 1 April 2019 and obtaining their approval where required, the trust's financial regulations and normal procurement procedures, unless otherwise stated.

No related party transactions took place in the period of account, other than certain trustees' remuneration and expenses already disclosed in note 11.

Key management personnel disclosure is included in note 9.

29. EVENTS AFTER THE END OF THE REPORTING PERIOD

After the year end, WISE Academies and Ashington Learning Partnership have completed a MAT Consultation for the following schools to convert to academy status and join WISE Academies during Spring 2026:

- Bothal Primary School
- Central Primary School

30. SCHOOLS TRANSFERRED FROM LOCAL AUTHORITY ON CONVERSION

On 1 September 2024 the following schools converted to academy trust status under the Academies Act 2010: Esh Winning Academy; St Andrew's Academy and Thornley Academy. All operations, assets and liabilities were transferred to WISE Academies from Durham County Council Local Authority for £nil consideration.

The substance of the transfer is that of a gift and it has been accounted for on that basis. The assets and liabilities transferred were valued at their fair value and recognised as a net gain in the Statement of Financial Activities.

**30. SCHOOLS TRANSFERRED FROM LOCAL AUTHORITY ON CONVERSION
(continued)**

The following table sets out the fair values of the identifiable assets and liabilities transferred and an analysis of their recognition in the SOFA. All three schools are members of the Durham County Council Pension Fund who provided an aggregated value on transfer.

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted General Funds	Restricted Fixed Asset Funds	TOTAL 2025
	£k	£k	£k	£k
Tangible Fixed Assets				
Esh Winning	-	-	5,167	5,167
St Andrew's	-	-	2,951	2,951
Thornley	-	-	3,756	3,756
Total Tangible Fixed Assets	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>11,874</u>	<u>11,874</u>
School Funds				
Esh Winning	289	-	16	305
St Andrew's	146	-	0	146
Thornley	68	-	10	78
Total School Funds	<u>503</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>529</u>
LGPS Pension Deficit (aggregate value)	-	(376)	-	(376)
Net Assets	<u>503</u>	<u>(376)</u>	<u>11,900</u>	<u>12,027</u>

The total income and endowments and net expenditure comprise total income of £305k and net income of £11k contributed by Esh Winning Academy between the date of transfer and the 31 August 2025.

The total income and endowments and net expenditure comprise total income of £146k and net expenditure of £46k contributed by St Andrew's Academy between the date of transfer and the 31 August 2025.

The total income and endowments and net expenditure comprise total income of £68k and net expenditure of £27k contributed by Thornley Academy between the date of transfer and the 31 August 2025.

APPENDIX
INDEPENDENT REPORTING ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT ON REGULARITY TO WISE
ACADEMIES AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION

Conclusion

We have carried out an engagement in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated 3 October 2025 and further to the requirements of the Department for Education ('DfE') as included in the Framework and Guide for External Auditors and Reporting Accountants of Academy Trusts issued by the DfE, to obtain limited assurance about whether anything has come to our attention that would suggest, in all material respects, the expenditure disbursed and income received by WISE Academies during the period 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025 have not been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament or the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.

In the course of our work, nothing has come to our attention which suggests that in all material respects the expenditure disbursed and income received during the period 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025 has not been applied for the purposes intended by Parliament or that the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for conclusion

The framework that has been applied is set out in the Framework and Guide for External Auditors and Reporting Accountants of Academy Trusts.

We have complied with the independence and other ethical requirements of the FRC's Ethical Standard and the ethical pronouncements of the ICAEW. We also apply International Standard on Quality Management (UK) 1 Quality Management for Firms that Perform Audits or Reviews of Financial Statements, or Other Assurance or Related Services Engagements and accordingly maintain comprehensive systems of continuing quality management. We believe the assurance evidence we have obtained is sufficient to provide a basis for our conclusion.

Responsibilities of the accounting officer of WISE Academies and trustees

The accounting officer is responsible, under the requirements of WISE Academies' funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education and the Academy Trust Handbook, for ensuring that expenditure disbursed and income received are applied for the purposes intended by Parliament, and that the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them. The accounting officer is also responsible for preparing the Statement of Regularity, Propriety and Compliance. The trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the proper conduct and financial operation of WISE Academies and appointment of the accounting officer.

Responsibilities of the reporting accountant

Our responsibilities for this engagement are established in the United Kingdom by our profession's ethical guidance and are to obtain limited assurance and report in accordance with our engagement letter and the requirements of the Framework and Guide for External Auditors and Reporting Accountants of Academy Trusts.

The objective of a limited assurance engagement is to perform such procedures as to obtain information and explanations in order to provide us with sufficient appropriate evidence to express a negative conclusion on regularity. A limited assurance engagement is more limited in scope than a reasonable assurance engagement and the procedures performed vary in nature and timing from, and are less in extent than for a reasonable assurance engagement; consequently, a limited assurance engagement does not enable us to obtain assurance that we would become aware of all significant matters that might be identified in a reasonable assurance engagement. Accordingly, we do not express a positive opinion.

We report to you whether anything has come to our attention in carrying out our work, which suggests that in all material respects, expenditure disbursed and income received during the period 1 September

APPENDIX
INDEPENDENT REPORTING ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT ON REGULARITY TO WISE
ACADEMIES AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION

2024 to 31 August 2025 have not been applied for the purposes intended by Parliament or that the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.

Our work included identification and assessment of the design and operational effectiveness of the controls, policies and procedures that have been implemented to ensure compliance with the framework of authorities including the specific requirements of the funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education, the Academy Trust Handbook and high level financial control areas where we identified a risk of material irregularity is likely to arise. It also included areas assessed as presenting a higher risk of impropriety. We undertook detailed testing, on a sample basis, based on the identified areas where a material irregularity is likely to arise, or potential impropriety where such areas are in respect of controls, policies and procedures that apply to classes of transactions. Our work was undertaken with due regard to the 'Evidence to support conclusion on regularity' guidance in the Framework and Guide for External Auditors and Reporting Accountants of Academy Trusts.

This work was integrated with our audit on the financial statements and evidence was also derived from the conduct of that audit to the extent it supports the regularity conclusion.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to WISE Academies and the Secretary of State for Education in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated 3 October 2025. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to WISE Academies and the Secretary of State for Education those matters we are required to state in a report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than WISE Academies and the Secretary of State for Education, for our work, for this report, or for the conclusion we have formed.

RSM UK AUDIT LLP

RSM UK AUDIT LLP

Chartered Accountants
1 St James' Gate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4AD
18 December 2025