

Company Registration Number: 07851337 (England & Wales)

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

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THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL**(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Members	Mrs Frances Sherry Mrs Celia Bennett Mr Gareth Jones
Trustees	Mr Adam Campbell, Headteacher and Accounting Officer ¹ Mrs Annette Anderson Mrs Louise Haigh, Vice Chair of Trustees (resigned 6 December 2022) ¹ Mr John Ashley, Chair of Trustees ¹ Mr Franco Cameli ¹ Mrs Kerry Mercer, Deputy Headteacher Mr Thomas Stean (resigned 11 January 2023) ¹ Mr Stuart Hobbs ¹ Mr Amaritpal Uppal (appointed 27 March 2023) Mrs Sarah Walker (appointed 27 March 2023) Miss Claudia Wallis (appointed 6 December 2022) Mr Grant Chaney (appointed 6 December 2022) ¹ Member of the Environment and Finance Committee
Company registered number	07851337
Company name	The Firs Lower School
Principal and registered office	Station Road Amphill Bedford Bedfordshire MK45 2QR
Company secretary	Elizabeth Barnicoat
Senior leadership team	Adam Campbell, Headteacher Kerry Mercer, Deputy Headteacher Katherine Jukes, School Business Manager Victoria Gamble, SENDco Sue A'Court, Office Manager
Independent auditors	MHA Statutory Auditor Century House 1 The Lakes Northampton NN4 7HD
Bankers	National Westminster Bank Plc 8 Church Street Amphill Bedfordshire MK45 2ET

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**REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

Solicitors

Browne Jacobson
Mowbray House
Castle Meadow Road
Nottingham
NG2 18J

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

The Trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements and auditor's report of the charitable company for the 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023. The annual report serves the purposes of both a Trustees' Report, and a Directors' Report and Strategic Report under company law.

The Academy Trust operates an academy for pupils aged 2 to 9 serving a catchment area to the west and south of Ampthill. It has a pupil capacity of 395 and had a roll of 326 in the school census on 5 October 2023.

Structure, governance and management

a. 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 The Firs Lower School Academy Trust Limited are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law.

The charitable company operates as The Firs Lower School.

b. 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.

c. Trustees' indemnities

In accordance with normal practice the Academy has purchased insurance to protect the Governors and officers from claims arising from negligent acts, errors or omissions whilst on Academy business. The cover under the policy is £5 million and in the period under review no sums were paid out.

d. Method of recruitment and appointment or election of Trustees

The Governing Body comprises of 3 members, and up to 12 Trustees, 2 of which are also Members (Chair and Vice Chair until December 2022), 4 Trustees have been appointed by the board. (2 are co-opted parents, 3 are elected parents, 2 are staff and 1 is the Headteacher). Additional Governors can be appointed under Article 62, 62A or 68A of the Articles of Association and further Governors under Article 63 or 68A.

The co-opted Governors are appointed by the Members of the Academy Trust. The Parent Governors are elected by the parent body of the School. The Staff Governors are elected by the School's staff. Individuals may request to join the Governing Body and the Members of the Academy Trust may decide to invite one of these individuals to join should a vacancy arise.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Structure, governance and management (continued)

e. Policies adopted for the induction and training of Trustees

All Governors undertake training as appropriate to their work at the School. New Governors will be provided with an induction programme. A log is kept of all Governor training and reviewed on a regular basis at the full Governing Body meetings.

The Governors, who are also the Charity Trustees, are responsible for the overall management and control of the School and meet at least three times a year. The work of reviewing and monitoring most policies is delegated to the members of the Committees as outlined below. They all work under the chairmanship of a Governor appointed at the first committee meeting in each academic year. Terms of reference of these committees are agreed annually at these meetings. The Clerk to the Governors co-ordinates the work of the Governors and their Committees, prepares agendas and papers and reviews matters arising. The Business Manager prepares the accounts on behalf of the Governors.

All Governors give their time to the role freely, no remuneration was paid to Governors, other than Staff Governors, and no expenses were paid in the period.

f. Organisational structure

The Governors determine the general policies of the School. The day to day running of the School is delegated to the Head teacher, supported by the Senior Leadership Team. The Head teacher undertakes the key leadership role overseeing educational, pastoral and administrative functions in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team. The day to day administration is undertaken within the policies and procedures approved by the Governors. Only significant expenditure decisions and major capital projects should be referred to the Governors for prior approval. The Head teacher, (who is the Accounting Officer) a Staff Trustee, attends all Governing Body meetings. The School Business Manager attends subcommittee meetings as appropriate.

Associate Governors attend Governors meetings by nature of their role in the Academy but do not have any voting rights and are not full Governors nor therefore directors under the Companies Act, Members of the company or Trustees of the Academy Trust.

Governor Committee Structure

Each of the sub-committees can make recommendations that must be endorsed by the Full Governing Board. The Committees and the Full Board meet at least three times per year.

The Governing Body

The Governing Body will take a strategic role, act as a critical friend to the School and be accountable for its decisions. It will set the vision and key goals and agree, monitor and review policies, targets and priorities.

The duties of the governing Body are as follows:

1. The conduct of the school (i.e. ethos, appearance, attitudes, level of parental support etc.) is under the direction of the Governors. The Headteacher is responsible for the internal organisation and management of the school and the Governing Body has ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the curriculum and its delivery.
2. The Governors must try to ensure that the right provision is made for students with special educational needs.
3. The Governors must have a policy on whether and how sex education should be provided at the school.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Structure, governance and management (continued)

4. The Governors must decide how the school's delegated budget is spent, and ensure that accurate accounts are kept.
5. The Governors must approve the school's staffing structure. They can recommend dismissal of staff and should set out disciplinary rules and procedures. They can use their discretion over the award of incentive allowances.
6. Discipline: The Governors must approve the school behaviour policy and must hear any appeals by parents against exclusion.
7. The Governors control the use of premises outside school time and should periodically inspect the premises and keep the LEA informed as to the condition and state of repair under the terms of a 125 year lease.
8. To agree constitutional matters including procedures where the Governing Body has discretion, as follows:
 - To recruit new members as vacancies arise and to appoint new governors where appropriate.
 - To hold at least three Governing Body meetings a year;
 - To appoint or remove the Chair and Vice Chair;
 - To appoint or remove a Clerk to the Governing Body;
 - To establish the committees of the Governing Body and their terms of reference.
 - To appoint the Chair of any committee;
 - To appoint or remove a Clerk to each committee.
 - To suspend a Governor;
 - To decide which functions of the Governing Body will be delegated to committees, groups and individuals;
 - To receive reports from any individual or committee to whom a decision has been delegated and to consider whether any further action by the Governing Body is necessary;
 - To provide final approval of the budget plan as recommended by the Environment and Finance Sub-committee;
 - To review Health and Safety issues and recommendations referred to the Governing Body by the Environment and Finance sub-committee;
 - To review the delegation arrangements annually;
 - To agree, by early in the autumn term, the programme of work and calendar of meetings for the Governing Body and its committees for the school year, based on known cycles of school improvement, financial management, staffing issues and communicating with parents;
 - To monitor the progress of work being undertaken by committees and individuals;
 - To consider recommendations made by committees with regard to the working of the Governing Body;
 - To establish and keep under review, the Governing Body 'Protocols' and 'terms of reference';
 - To establish and keep under review arrangements for Governors' visits to school;
 - To oversee arrangements for Governor involvement in formulating and monitoring the School Development Plan, the Ofsted SEF and School Profile;
 - To conduct reviews of the performance of the Governing body using an appropriate 'Governor HealthCheck' process;
 - To make recommendations to the Governing Body to establish working parties where particular circumstances arise e.g. a joint committee to oversee a building project or a special committee to oversee an Ofsted inspection; and
 - To be available and respond to matters of particular difficulty, sensitivity or emergency and offer advice to the Headteacher.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Structure, governance and management (continued)

The following Committees are sub-committees of the Governing Body.

Environment and Finance committee

- To assist the decision making of the Governing Body, by enabling more detailed consideration to be given to the best means of fulfilling the Governing Body's responsibility to ensure sound management of the Academy's finances and resources, including proper planning, monitoring and probity.
- To make appropriate comments and recommendations on such matters to the Governing Body on a regular basis.

Staff Pay Committee

- The Staffing Committee on Pay shall consider and decide upon all matters relating to staff pay as part of the annual review process in accordance with the whole school salary policy agreed by the Governing Body in respect of the following staff: school teachers; NJC Local Government Services Staff; any other staff as determined by the Governing Body.

Hearings Committee

- To make any determination to dismiss any member of staff.
- To make any decisions under the Governing Body's personnel procedures (e.g. disciplinary, grievance, capability) where the Headteacher is the subject of the action.
- To make any decisions relating to any member of staff other than the Headteacher, under the Governing Body's personnel procedures and pay policy.
- To make any determination or decision under the Governing Body's General Complaints Procedure for Parents and others.
- To make any determination or decision under the Governing Body's Curriculum Complaints Procedure, in respect of National Curriculum applications, and the operation of the Governing Body's charging policy.

Appeals Committee

- To consider any appeal against a decision to dismiss a member of staff made by the Hearings Committee.
- To consider any appeal against a decision short of dismissal under the Governing Body's personnel procedures (e.g. disciplinary, grievance, capability).
- To consider any appeal against selection for redundancy.
- To consider any appeal against a pay decision.

Pupil Discipline Committee

- To consider representations from parents in the case of exclusions of 5 days or less (Committee may not re-instate).
- To consider representations from parents in the case of exclusions totalling more than 5 but not more than 15 school days in one term (meeting to be held between 6th and 15th school days after receiving notice of the exclusion).
- To consider the appropriateness of any permanent exclusion or any exclusion where one or more fixed period exclusions total more than 15 school days in one term or where a pupil is denied the chance to take a public examination (meeting to be held between 6th and 15th school days after receiving notice of the exclusion).

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Structure, governance and management (continued)

Headteacher's Performance Review group

- To arrange to meet with the External Adviser / School Improvement Partner to discuss the Headteacher's performance targets.
- To decide, with the support of the External Adviser / School Improvement Partner, whether the targets have been met and to set new targets annually.
- To monitor through the year the performance of the Headteacher against the targets.
- To make recommendations to the Environment and Finance Committee in respect of awards for the successful meeting of targets set.

g. Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of key management personnel

The Governors of the Academy do not receive any remuneration in respect of their roles as Governors. Staff Governors are only remunerated as a result of their employment by the Academy Trust.

The Academy follows Bedford Borough's Pay Policy for support staff following national NJC and Senior Management pay grades and terms and conditions. For teachers and senior leaders the Academy follows the national pay scales and progression/increment policy linked to performance management.

Performance reviews are carried out by Adam Campbell, Headteacher and Kerry Mercer, Deputy Headteacher. Any changes in pay as a result of these reviews go to the Pay Committee. The Headteacher's performance is reviewed by the School Improvement Partner and recommendations are made by them to the Chair of Governors and presented to the Pay Committee.

Objectives and activities

a. Objects and aims

The Firs Lower School's objectives are specifically restricted to the following:

To advance for the public benefit education in the United Kingdom, in particular but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing by establishing, maintaining, carrying on, managing and developing a school offering a broad and balanced curriculum.

To promote, for the benefit of the inhabitants of Ampthill and the surrounding area, the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation, of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship or social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of the said inhabitants.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Objectives and activities (continued)

b. Objectives, strategies and activities

The School has identified the following key development areas:

1. Accelerating progress in writing and KS2 Reading

-Key Focus Area 1

- To ensure appropriate opportunities are created to teach key skills and to develop writing stamina.
- To enhance the provision for the teaching of handwriting and spelling.
- A continuing focus on stimulating activities, based on quality texts, that engender an enthusiasm for writing.
- To enhance provision for reading in KS2, to increase fluency and the development of comprehension skills.

2. Further Developing The Role of The Subject Leader

-Key Focus Area 2

- Planning fully covers the Firs themes
- Teachers have a good awareness of previous / future objectives
- There is clear planning for subject monitoring
- Accurate conclusions drawn
- Confidence in how to move forward and how to communicate SL knowledge

3. Developing The Saplings Pre School learning provision

-Key Focus Area 3

- New admissions policy leads to manageable no of 2 year olds
- Evidence of improving quality of learning provision offered
- Outdoor area enhanced to better support learning
- Sense of continuity with existing Foundation Stage provision.

c. Public benefit

In setting the Academy's objectives and planning its activities, the Governing Body have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit. The Academy Trust's object is specifically restricted to the following:

To advance for the public benefit education in the United Kingdom, in particular but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing by establishing, maintaining, continuing, managing and developing a school offering a broad and balanced curriculum.

To promote for the benefit of the inhabitants of Ampthill and the surrounding area the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship or social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of the said inhabitants.

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Strategic report

Achievements and performance

a. Key performance indicators

Section 1 - Intent

1. The Firs has always ensured that the curriculum is designed to meet the needs of all learners, including the most able and vulnerable learners (including SEND and disadvantaged pupils) with the following key drivers agreed by all stakeholders:
 - a. To develop our children's view of themselves as successful learners and to help them to develop stamina and resilience in embracing challenges.
 - b. To inculcate our agreed values in our children and develop key personal skills to enhance teamwork, communication skills, independence and confidence.
 - c. To ensure that children develop a sound grasp in all the key aspects of literacy and numeracy, with passionate focus on all children being fluent readers, who take pleasure in reading.
 - d. To help children to see themselves as successful writers, by providing an appropriate and exciting range of purposeful writing opportunities that appropriately develop their skills and inspire them to write.
 - e. To encourage mathematical thinking, so that children can talk about their learning, demonstrating a good level of maths fluency and confidence when tackling key processes and problems.
 - f. To cover all aspects of the curriculum in a stimulating way, by giving children a rich and varied range of experiences, including the use of IT resources.
 - g. To make sure that all our children develop an appreciation of the natural world, the threats it faces and the need for care and stewardship.
2. The school ethos promotes equal opportunities, high expectations and positive attitudes to learning as embodied by our 'Growth Mindset' learning culture and expressed in our Equality Policy.
3. The curriculum provides imaginative & stimulating learning opportunities that ensure pupils experience and have the opportunity to value music, artists, stories etc. including those from different times and places, to support the delivery of the 'cultural capital' we wish children to experience. The Redborne Upper School Sports Partnership has contributed very successfully to the curricular and extra-curricular provision for pupils. Visitors, themed days / weeks provide memorable and enjoyable experiences that make learning a joyful and enriching experience.
4. There is a passionate focus on working to ensure all children read fluently and at an age appropriate level or beyond, which is greatly supported by the RWI literacy programme, that provides a rigorous and carefully sequenced approach. This focus leads to very good outcomes for learners.
5. The school curriculum is designed to ensure the coverage of the national curriculum, with additional elements such as Forest Schools and Eco themed work and additional enrichment aspects such as the Grafham Water Residential visit in Y4 and drama productions (to support statement b and f).
6. Between September 18 and summer 20, a review of the key determining factors behind the design of our curriculum in first science and then the foundation subjects has been undertaken. There is now a clear picture of what we want the 'intent' to be, and the review of each area of the curriculum has ensured that we can more effectively achieve the highly successful outcomes desired for our learners.
7. The school has been working to support and strengthen the work of subject leaders and as part of this, statements have been created to set out the thinking behind each area of the curriculum. Following the Ofsted inspection in March 23, the focus will now be on ensuring learning is sequenced successfully to ensure the highest possible outcomes.

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Strategic report (continued)

Achievements and performance (continued)

Section 2 – Implementation

1. The school sets out clear guidelines to staff to reinforce and make explicit to all, the agreed vision for approaches to teaching in the school and the expected standards we expect to maintain.
2. Teachers' good subject knowledge, careful planning and use of strategies to include, challenge and engage all pupils, ensure a good pace of learning.
3. Achievement in the teaching of phonics and early reading skills is high as a result of the use of 'Read Write Inc.' which provides a very structured programme and high quality staff development.
4. Key points regarding our / the RWI approach:
 - RWI is led with considerable passion and dedication by Kerry Mercer our Deputy Head and Early Years leader
 - It is firmly founded in rigorous and ongoing staff development and training - initial induction training, weekly development sessions and termly RWI Development Days.
 - There is a consistent approach to teaching with efficient behaviour management systems and focus on children making rapid progress developing skills in sessions (e.g. moving from 'fred talking' - 'Fred in your head' - 'speedy reading').
 - There is regular monitoring with 1 to 1 assessments every 6 weeks or so and children placed in groups that match what they know and what they need to learn.
 - Informal and early assistance if children experience any slowing of progress, coupled with the formal 1 to 1 tutoring system, support more vulnerable pupils to make progress.
 - Termly development days with our RWI consultant Angela Jukes are demanding and rigorous. As well as watching and supporting teaching, we focus on data in a forensic way, looking at the outcomes for vulnerable children and seeking strategies to speed up progress.
5. The school reading scheme is closely aligned to children's reading ability / the sounds they know, ensuring reading practice at home is used to the greatest effect.
6. Teachers' good knowledge of the National curriculum ensures accurate and effective coverage.
7. Subject matter including learning objectives and success criteria, are used successfully and presented clearly, to communicate to children the key facts and skills involved in an aspect of learning and how to achieve well.
8. Learning partners are used increasingly well again in lessons. To ensure appropriate discussion about the subject matter being taught, with particularly effective use seen where the children were responding to an open ended 'fat' question.
9. The use of other adults is generally planned to maximise learning outcomes for all abilities.
10. Where practice was best in monitoring, there were good examples of questioning being used to identify misconceptions, deepen understanding, provide clear feedback and quicken the pace of learning. There has been good progress with a more consistent planned use of 'key questions', to direct questions based on the teacher's knowledge of the child to challenge, promote thinking and move learning on.
11. Pupils concentrate well, enjoy their learning and make generally good progress.
12. Vulnerable pupils, including those with special needs and disabilities, are given appropriate support in order to maximise their learning.

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Strategic report (continued)

Achievements and performance (continued)

13. Teachers design activities to provide appropriate challenge, (using a *,** and *** system, with an element of guided choice for the learner, so there are no barriers to aspiration).
14. The school endeavours to ensure parents are kept informed about their child's progress and how best to support them with their learning. This includes 2 consultation evenings, an interim and final written report (As well as Provision Plan reviews for SEND pupils). 91% of parents expressed said they agreed or strongly agreed that the school keeps them informed about how their child is achieving.
15. There has been good progress with the augmentation of the science curriculum, following our efforts to emulate elements of the highly successful Science Weeks in summer 18 and spring 22, with more engaging work seen in planning checks and work scrutiny and observed teaching. Strong leadership from the science leaders has enhanced progress, with good work on exploring the thinking behind our approach to teaching science. This contributed to the school achieving the Primary Science Quality Mark in 2020.

Section 3 – Impact

1. Standards in literacy lessons are good overall. Conclusions from monitoring in 22/23 indicated that:
 - There has been evidence in every year group of a good variety of writing activities this year.
 - Evidence of a very good use of texts as a focus for developing reading and writing skills e.g.
 - o Leon and The Place Between, The Iron Man, a Martin Luther King speech in Y4,
 - o 'Duncan's Treehouse', the Dragon poem Xfilious (from Tell Me a Dragon by Jackie Morris - teachers notes by Pie Corbett), in Y3
 - o Money Puzzle, The Twits, Handa's Surprise, The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch, The Day The Crayons Quit and Detective Dog in Y2
 - o We're Going on A Bear Hunt, No Room on The Broom, The Tiger Who Came To Tea, The Gruffalo and The Scarecrow's Wedding in Y1
 - There was good evidence of progress with improvements seen in use of vocabulary, punctuation and importantly, evidence of increased writing stamina.
 - There has been more evidence of activities designed to engage and motivate children in 22/23.

Areas to develop in our writing provision:

- More consistent opportunities for children to edit their work and or edit that of peers.
 - Evidence consistently across the school, in the regular provision of 'wow starters' to engage children.
 - Descriptive vocabulary was consistently chosen with care, referenced to its meaning.
 - Appropriate challenge and support was provided more consistently.
 - Learner partner work was more evident.
2. There was good evidence regarding the development of early reading skills being good:
 - Ofsted concluded:
'Leaders ensure that all pupils learn to read fluently. From as early as pre-school, children are introduced to books, stories and the basics of sounds. Pupils read books that are closely matched to the sounds they learn. They gain early confidence with reading. Staff regularly listen to pupils read and continuously assess whether they need extra help or are ready to move on. This ensures that pupils keep up, rather than fall behind.' (March 23 Ofsted report)
 - 98% of Y1 pupils passed the National Phonics screening test.
 - This is 23% more than the 2022 National results (75%) and 16% more than 2019 (82%).

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Strategic report (continued)

Achievements and performance (continued)

3. There was evidence of the positive impact of Accelerated Reader with older pupils:
- AR has provided a regular system of assessments to track reading achievement and progress.
 - It has helped us to identify and track the progress of more vulnerable, disadvantaged and SEND pupils.
 - In taking quizzes after each book, we have been provided with an inbuilt tracking system that monitors the amount of reading each child is doing and which encourages children to read for meaning.
 - The data that AR collects is being used in a number of ways to motivate and encourage children to read regularly and by acknowledging and rewarding success and effort, to generate an enthusiasm for reading.
 - We have received a lot of feedback from parents that children (particularly boys) who were not reading regularly before, are now doing so as they want to 'earn points' 'complete quizzes' etc.
 - Staff are very positive and committed to the scheme and see the benefits.
 - We have just conducted the 4th and final set of Star Tests for KS2 pupils.
 - There is good evidence over the year of AR having a very successful impact on standards i.e. 95% of children made progress Sept - May in their scaled score in KS2.
 - Sept - May (8 months) KS2 pupils made 14 months average progress in their reading age.
 - 35 Y2 children are on AR currently - 85% are at or above the expected standard, 12% on watching and 2% (1 child) on urgent intervention.
 - Ofsted evaluation - developing reading skills with older pupils concluding: Older pupils develop their comprehension through reading a range and variety of texts. Most pupils develop a love of reading. They are encouraged to read regularly. However, leaders recognise that a broader range of books would develop this further.' (March 23 Ofsted report)
4. Standards in numeracy are good. Children were engaged in a diverse range of activities and they demonstrated a good grasp of related knowledge and skills. Where practice was best, equipment was used effectively to support learning and to provide strong visual images / practical demonstrations of key concepts. (For example bead bars and counting sticks being used very effectively in oral mental starters). Key strengths included:
- Good use of visual images and practical apparatus to support learning, following the CPA approach
 - Consistency between classes
 - Appropriate levels of challenge seen in the majority of the work looked at including the use of the star system.
 - In the vast majority of classes, learning was built successfully in small steps.
 - In the vast majority of classes, school behaviour approaches were used consistently
 - Appropriate progression in learning could be seen through the school.
 - The children were actively engaged in all the lessons seen.

Areas to focus on in developing our numeracy provision included:

- Reinforcing children's understanding of key mathematical vocabulary and phrases e.g. the smaller the denominator, the larger the piece.
- Finding more opportunities for children to reason and solve problems and to work with their learning partner to 'conjecture' and 'convince'.
- To ensure there are sufficient opportunities to challenge more able children, including those targeted to be working at greater depth.
- Review the use of differentiation for children who are working at a markedly different level to their peers (where they are unable to access the concepts being taught), including occasionally meeting their needs in a different year group or key stage.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Strategic report (continued)

Achievements and performance (continued)

To move our maths provision on further and to provide more continuity and support (especially with many staff changes next year) we need a more developed maths scheme to work from (that provides us a level of guidance and support more comparable with the support offered by RWI in early literacy for example). For this reason we have decided that, like 80% of primary schools nationally, we will adopt the White Rose maths scheme from autumn 23.

5. YR pupils achieved well in 22/23:
- EYFS completed their baseline analysis using the assessments programme they have devised themselves in October 22. Their baseline assessment arrived at the conclusion that 66.7% were at expectations on entry.
 - We were targeting 80% to achieve a GLD in 2023.
 - Upon final assessment in summer 23 74% achieved a GLD. This would be 8% above the LA average for 2022 and 2% above the last National figure we have (2019).
6. Children have achieved very highly in the Y1 Phonics over the last five years:
- In 2018 96% passed, (letter from Nick Gibb indicating school was in top 7% of schools) and 96% again in 2019.
 - In 2022 91% passed (despite the impact of Covid) and if 2 pupils who joined the school in the summer term with very few sounds known are removed from the data, the outcome would have been 94%).
 - Y1 Phonics and Y2 re-tests 22/23:
 - o **Y1:**
 - 98% of Y1 pupils passed the National Phonics screening test.
 - This is 23% more than the 2022 National results (75%) and 16% more than 2019 (82%)
 - o **Y2 Recheck**
 - 4 children were re tested, 1 pupil was disapplied, as they were in Y1
 - 2 children passed out of the 4.
 - All 4 children tested increased their score by 16, 28, 29 and 40 points.
 - 95% of the children in Y2 have now met the standard (compared with 87% nationally in 22 / 91% in 2019).
7. Children have achieved well at the end of KS1 over the last few years, with a dip in 2022 linked with Covid disruption:

Subject	2018	Y2 % Expected +		2023	National 2020
		2019	2022		
Reading	77%	82%	75%	86%	67%
Writing	70%	79%	56%	81%	56%
Maths	77%	84%	79%	82%	68%

The cohort in 2018 contained a larger number of pupils than normal for The Firs with emotional, social and behavioural issues but made good progress despite this. In 2023 the % expected or better was well above National in all areas.

Subject	2018	Y2 % GDS			National 2019
		2019	2022	2023	
Reading	37%	46%	33%	37%	18%
Writing	12%	30%	2%	11%	8%
Maths	28%	39%	21%	26%	15%

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Strategic report (continued)

Achievements and performance (continued)

b. Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the Governing Body has a reasonable expectation that the Academy 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 and in guidance from the Financial Reporting Council.

Financial review

The Academy had a satisfactory financial period to 31 August 2023 with a total income of £1,756,001 and expenditure of £1,641,307 and a net profit of £114,694. There is a surplus arising on the restricted funds amounting to £99,270 but this includes pension adjustments of £9,000 arising from the LGPS pension actuarial valuation. The remaining in year deficit of £15,424 is a result of spending brought forward revenue reserves.

Most of the Academy Trust's income is obtained from the Department of Education via the Education and Skills Funding Agency in the form of recurrent grants, the use of which is restricted to particular purposes. The grants received from the Department of Education during the period ended 31 August 2023 and the associated expenditure are shown as Restricted Funds in the Statement of Financial Activities and the grants received are detailed in note 4 to the financial statements.

Any surplus funds are swept nightly into a Liquidity Select bank account earning interest. No further Investment activities are undertaken.

Throughout the year there were a number of areas that the Governors considered/ratified, as follows:

A review of our reserves and a decision made about what investment could be made towards a CIF bid for replacement doors and windows.

Continued to review the Finance Risk Assessment and Register in light of the challenges faced by inflation and the financial climate.

Reviewed the budget against teacher headcount and falling pupil numbers.

Discussed the charging structure for Kids Club / Saplings / lettings and school meals whilst considering the financial climate.

The completed Internal Scrutiny report was received by the Governors in June 2023, and recommendations were discussed.

Received various policies in line with the E&F policy review structure.

The Governors considered the top 10 Governors musts at the March 2023 E&F meeting.

The final forecast for the year ended 31 August 2023 was reviewed in detail within the Environment and Finance Committee June 2023 along with a 3 year budget plan going forward.

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Strategic report (continued)

The principal risks and uncertainties going forward are that there will be insufficient funding to cover the increased costs that we are forecasting. These increased costs include, inflation, energy costs, teachers' pay increases and NJC pay increases. To manage these risks we will take a cautious approach to expenditure and will discuss and review any employee changes or employee recruitment. We will ensure that purchases are made considering best value for money. We have a school energy reduction plan outlining steps we are taking to reduce our energy consumption. There is also a risk that future year's budgets will end in deficit due to reduced pupil numbers

The Firs Lower School PTFA continues to support the school by raising money throughout the year by holding various fundraising events. The school then makes requests to the PTFA to support specific purchases or projects. The School Business Manager will continue to ask for funding from various external organisation to contribute towards school projects, the current project being the development of The Saplings outdoor area.

a. Reserves policy

The level of reserves held takes into account the nature of income and expenditure streams, the need to match them with commitments, including future capital projects, and the nature of reserves. This applies particularly to funds earmarked for future capital projects. The level of reserves will be kept under review by the Governors. The Governors have the reserves policy as a standing item within the Environment and Finance Committee. Reserves at the end of the period 31 August 2023 were £2,684,322 comprising £184,207 of restricted general funds, £135,761 of unrestricted general funds, £2,364,354 of restricted fixed asset fund and a pension reserve deficit of £nil.

The fair value of the pension plan assets at 31 August 2023 is £1,598,000, which is £41,000 in excess of the present value of the defined benefit obligation at that date of £1,557,000. This surplus of £41,000 is recognised in the financial statements only to the extent that the academy trust can recover that surplus, either through a reduction in future contributions or through a refund to the academy trust.

Following discussions with actuaries and consultations, the academy trust is not able to determine that future contributions will be reduced. It is not possible for the academy trust to receive a refund, as the conditions for this have not been met. Therefore an asset ceiling surplus of £41,000 is not recognised as an asset at 31 August 2023 as the academy trust is not able to determine that the academy trust will benefit from reduced future contributions or by a refund in the foreseeable future. Further details are provided in note 24.

The restricted funds will be spent in accordance with the terms of the particular grants or funding received. Unrestricted funds are for use of the general purpose of the Academy and future capital projects, at the discretion of the Governors.

At 31 August 2023 the total funds comprised:

Unrestricted		135,761
Restricted:	Fixed asset funds	2,364,354
	Pension reserve	nil
	Other	184,207
		<u>2,684,322</u>

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

b. Investment policy

The School's Investment Strategy is:

1. Regularly monitor cash flow and current/fund account balances to ensure immediate financial commitments can be met (payroll and payments runs) and that the accounts have adequate balances to meet forthcoming commitments.
2. Funds surplus to immediate cash requirements (set at £10k) are transferred nightly to the School's liquidity deposit account bearing a higher interest rate.
3. Periodically review interest rates and compare with other investment opportunities.
4. The School's current policy is to only invest funds in risk free and immediately accessible deposit accounts.

Any change in policy requires the approval of Governors via the E&F committee.

c. Principal risks and uncertainties

The Governors conduct an annual review of the major financial risks to which the Academy Trust is exposed.

The Governors are responsible for oversight of the financial risks faced by the School. Detailed considerations of risk are delegated to the Head teacher and School Business Manager. Risks were identified, assessed and controls established throughout the period with 3 reviews being submitted to the Environment and Finance Committee in October 2022, February 2023 and June 2023. The Governors were satisfied that the actions agreed to mitigate these risks gave assurance that they could be adequately managed.

The major financial risks identified by the Trust for over the period September 2022 to August 2023 were:

- Risk that the budget will be in deficit in the current year 22/23.
- Risk that future year's budgets will end in deficit due to reduced pupil numbers.
- Risk that there will be no additional funding to support with increased energy costs.
- Risk that there will be no additional funding to cover teachers and NJC pay increases.
- Risk of inflation increases.

Risk is managed under the headings of strategic and reputational risks, operational risks, compliance risks and financial risks as recommended by the DfE's Academy Financial Handbook. Through the risk management processes that are formalised by the School, the Governors are satisfied that the major finance risks identified will be adequately mitigated where necessary. It is recognised that systems can only provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that major risks will be adequately managed.

d. Financial risk management objectives and policies

The financial risks the Academy faces are mitigated by the fact that they relate largely to bank balances, cash and trade creditors, with limited trade (and other) debtors. The exception is the Pension Scheme for Local Government.

Fundraising

The school does not use any external fundraisers. All fundraising is undertaken by The Parent Teacher Association

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Plans for future periods

The Governors intend to continue their current strategies of improving the School's reputation by aiming to provide excellent education for all students. Achieving high standards in academic results is a constant aim whilst maintaining the breadth and depth of the wider curriculum, to develop the whole child. The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team continue to review the curriculum and standards in teaching and learning, to ensure that the education provided remains appropriate for our pupils' development.

Our future plans are financed from income direct from the ESFA, related to student numbers and other factors. Governors will ensure funding is invested appropriately for the next generation of children as they have done in the past for current pupils. Maintaining, and where necessary, developing the fabric of the facilities and updating internal fixture and fittings with sustainability and the environment in mind. The development and growth of The Saplings preschool is central to our strategy to ensure an outstanding provision for 2 -9 year olds. The school has also been able to maintain the availability of wrap around care from 7.50am to 6pm for 2-9 year olds, whilst continuing to enhance the quality of the provision on offer. This continues to be a great help to working parents.

Funds held as custodian on behalf of others

No such funds are held by The Firs Lower School.

Disclosure of information to auditors

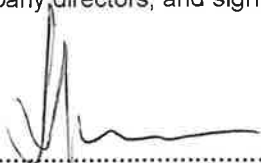
Insofar as the Trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware; and
- that Trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

Auditors

Following a rebranding exercise on 15 May 2023 the trading name of the company's independent auditor changed from MHA MacIntyre Hudson to MHA. A resolution to reappoint MHA as independent auditor will be proposed at the next Annual General Meeting.

The Trustees' Report, incorporating a strategic report, was approved by order of the Board of Trustees, as the company directors, and signed on its behalf by:



Mr John Ashley
Chair of Trustees

Date: 11-12-23

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Scope of responsibility

As Trustees we acknowledge we have overall responsibility for ensuring that The Firs Lower School 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 Governing Body, we have reviewed and taken account of the guidance in DfE's Governance Handbook and competency framework for governance.

The Board of Trustees has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the Headteacher 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 The Firs Lower School 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 Governing Body has formally met 6 times during the year.

Attendance during the year at meetings of the board of Governing Body was as follows:

Trustee	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
Mr John Ashley, Chair of Trustees	6	6
Mrs Louise Haigh	1	2
Mr Adam Campbell, Headteacher and Accounting Officer	6	6
Mr Franco Cameli	6	6
Mr Thomas Stean	2	2
Mr Stuart Hobbs	6	6
Mrs Kerry Mercer, Deputy Headteacher	6	6
Mrs Annette Anderson	5	6
Miss Claudia Wallis	4	5
Mr Amaritpal Uppal	2	2
Mrs Sarah Walker	2	2
Mr Grant Chaney	5	5

Conflicts of interest

The Firs Lower School has a number of processes in place to manage conflicts of interest. These include maintaining an up-to-date and complete register of interests, a six monthly declaration is completed and kept on file, and governors are also asked to verbally declare any conflicts of interest at the start of every committee meeting which are recorded in meeting minutes.

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (CONTINUED)

Governance (continued)

Governance reviews:

The committee reviews the "must haves" on an annual basis and reviews the risk register at least three times a year.

The Governors undertook a Governing Body Health Check using a check list as a process of self-valuation.

The Environment and Finance Committee is a sub-committee of the main Governing Board. Its purpose is to:

- Assist the decision making of the Governing Body, by enabling more detailed consideration to be given to the best means of fulfilling the Governing Body's responsibility to ensure sound management of the Academy's finances and resources, including proper planning, monitoring and probity.
- Make appropriate comments and recommendations on such matters to the Governing Body on a regular basis.
- Review the financial position of the school through cash flow, income and expenditure reports. Assess current and possible future risks and discuss how to manage these. Discussions about strategies for improving the schools financial position as well as the planning of any future projects including how these will be funded also take place. Health and safety and property concerns are also discussed as well as E&F policies.

Attendance during the year at meetings was as follows:

Trustee	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
Mr Franco Cameli	6	6
Mr Stuart Hobbs	6	6
Mr Adam Campbell, Headteacher and Accounting Officer	6	6

Katherine Jukes also attended all 6 of the E&F meetings in her role as School Business Manager

Review of value for money

As accounting officer, the Headteacher has responsibility for ensuring that the Academy 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 achieved in return for the taxpayer resources received.

The accounting officer considers how the Academy 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 appropriate. The accounting officer for the Academy Trust has delivered improved value for money during the year by:

- The Governing Body is accountable for the way in which the school's resources are allocated to meet the objectives set out in the school's development plan. Governors need to secure the best possible outcome for pupils, in the most efficient and effective way, at a reasonable cost. This will support the schools efforts to continuously improve standards achieved and services provided.
- Governors and school leaders have adhered to the purchasing procedures which are laid down in The Firs Lower School Finance Manual. Goods and services have been obtained which provide "value for money" in terms of the school purchasing what it needs in the correct quantity, the appropriate quality and at the time the best price possible.
- The Governors reviewed its preschool, Kids Club, Holiday Club and lettings Charges. The schools charges were bench marked against a number of local providers and it was decided to increase fees in line with inflation and energy cost increases.
- Multiple quotations gained and benchmarked for larger purchases in line with the requirements set out in our finance manual.
- The school has implemented parent pay across all its income collection arear which ensures prompt and complete cash collection.

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (CONTINUED)

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 on-going 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 The Firs Lower School Academy Trust for the period 01 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 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 Academy 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 on-going process for identifying, evaluating and managing the Academy Trust's significant risks that has been in place for the period 01 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 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 Academy Trust's system of internal financial 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 Governing Body;
- 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; and
- identification and management of risks.

The Board of Trustees has decided not to appoint an internal auditor. However, the Governing Body have appointed Mr Gareth Jones a member and previous Chair of Governors, a Trustee, to carry out a programme of internal checks.

This option has been chosen because Gareth Jones is qualified accountant regulated by the FCA who acts as an independent, trusted 'critical friend'. Gareth Jones also has a good knowledge of The Firs Lower School gained through his former role as chair of governors. Gareth Jones was also happy to provide this service on a voluntary basis.

The internal auditor's role includes giving advice on financial matters and performing a range of checks on the Academy Trust's financial systems. In particular, the checks carried out in the current period included:

- Cash and Bank
- Procurement
- Monthly financial Closedown
- Payroll and HR
- Efficiency, funding and budgets
- Fraud, theft and bribery
- Safeguarding and Whistleblowing
- Management information and reports
- Data and IT issues

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (CONTINUED)

The risk and control framework (continued)

- Premises Issues
- Business Continuity Plans/Disaster Recovery

On an annual basis, the internal auditor documents a report to the E&F Board of Trustees, on the operation of the systems of control and on the discharge of the Board of Trustees' financial responsibilities. On an annual basis the internal auditor 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.

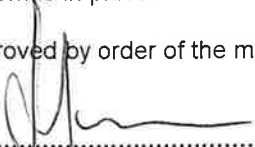
Review of effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, the Headteacher 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 financial management and governance self-assessment process or the school resource management self-assessment tool;
- the work of the Senior Leadership Team within the Academy who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework;
- the work of the external auditors;
- correspondence from ESFA e.g. FNtl/Ntl and 'minded to' letters.

The Accounting Officer has been advised of the implications of the result of their review of the system of internal control by the committee and a plan to address recommendations and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

Approved by order of the members of the Board of Trustees and signed on their behalf by:


.....
Mr John Ashley
Chair of Trustees

Date: 11-12-23


.....
Mr Adam Campbell
Accounting Officer

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

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STATEMENT ON REGULARITY, PROPRIETY AND COMPLIANCE

As Accounting Officer of The Firs Lower School I have considered my responsibility to notify the Academy Trust's Governing Body and the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) of material irregularity, impropriety and non-compliance with terms and conditions of all funding received by the Academy, under the funding agreement in place between the Academy and the Secretary of State for Education. As part of my consideration I have had due regard to the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook 2022.

I confirm that I and the Academy Trust's Governing Body are able to identify any material irregular or improper use of all funds by the Academy, or material non-compliance with the terms and conditions of funding under the Academy's funding agreement and the Academy Trust Handbook 2022.

I confirm that no instances of material irregularity, impropriety or funding non-compliance have been discovered to date. If any instances are identified after the date of this statement, these will be notified to the Governing Body and ESFA.



Mr Adam Campbell
Accounting Officer

Date: 11-12-23

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

The Trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, 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:

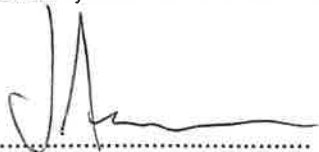
- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles of the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting 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 ESFA/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 and signed on its behalf by:



Mr John Ashley
Chair of Trustees

Date: 11-12-23

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of The Firs Lower School (the 'academy') for the year ended 31 August 2023 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law, United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland', the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023 issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Academy's affairs as at 31 August 2023 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; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023 issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

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 Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the Academy in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the United Kingdom, including the Financial Reporting Council'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 Academy'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.

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
FIRS LOWER SCHOOL (CONTINUED)**

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our Auditors' 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.

Opinion 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 (incorporating the Strategic Report and the Directors Report) for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.
- the Strategic Report and the Directors Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the Academy and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' Report including the Strategic 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.

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL (CONTINUED)

Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the Trustees (who are also the directors of the Academy 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 Academy'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 Academy or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors' 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 Auditors' 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.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

- Enquiry of management and those charged with governance around actual and potential litigation and claims;
- Enquiry of entity staff to identify any instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- Performing audit work over the risk of management override of controls, including testing of journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness and reviewing accounting estimates for bias;
- Reviewing minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Reviewing internal audit reports;
- Reviewing financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

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

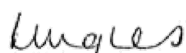
THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
FIRS LOWER SCHOOL (CONTINUED)**

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the Academy'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 Academy's members those matters we are required to state to them in an Auditors' 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 Academy and its members, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Rebecca Hughes BSc (Hons) FCCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)

for and on behalf of

MHA

Statutory Auditor

Northampton

MHA is the trading name of MacIntyre Hudson LLP, a limited liability partnership in England and Wales (registered number OC312313).

Date: 14 December 2023

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

INDEPENDENT REPORTING ACCOUNTANT'S ASSURANCE REPORT ON REGULARITY TO THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL AND THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY

In accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated 21 September 2022 and further to the requirements of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) as included in the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023, we have carried out an engagement to obtain limited assurance about whether the expenditure disbursed and income received by The Firs Lower School during the year 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 have been applied to the purposes identified by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

This report is made solely to The Firs Lower School and ESFA in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to The Firs Lower School and ESFA 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 The Firs Lower School and ESFA, for our work, for this report, or for the conclusion we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of The Firs Lower School's accounting officer and the reporting accountant

The accounting officer is responsible, under the requirements of The Firs Lower School's funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education dated January 2012 and the Academy Trust Handbook, extant from 1 September 2022, for ensuring that expenditure disbursed and income received is applied for the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

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 Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023. 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 year 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 have not been applied to purposes intended by Parliament or that the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

INDEPENDENT REPORTING ACCOUNTANT'S ASSURANCE REPORT ON REGULARITY TO THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL AND THE EDUCATION & SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY (CONTINUED)

Approach

We conducted our engagement in accordance with the Framework and Guide for External Auditors and Reporting Accountant of Academy Trusts issued by ESFA. We performed a limited assurance engagement as defined in our engagement letter.

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 consequently 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.

Our engagement includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the regularity and propriety of the Academy's income and expenditure.

The work undertaken to draw out conclusion includes:

- reviewing the Minutes of the meetings of the Governing Body and other evidence made available to us, relevant to our consideration of regularity;
- a review of the objectives and activities of the Academy, with reference to the income streams and other information available to us as auditors of the Academy;
- testing of a sample of payroll payments to staff;
- testing of a sample of payments to suppliers and other third parties;
- consideration of governance issues and;
- evaluating the internal control procedures and reporting lines, testing as appropriate and making appropriate enquiries of the Accounting Officer.

Conclusion

In the course of our work, nothing has come to our attention which suggest in all material respects the expenditure disbursed and income received during the year 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 has not been applied to purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.



MHA

Statutory Auditor

Date: 14 December 2023

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCORPORATING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

	Note	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Restricted fixed asset funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Income from:						
Donations and capital grants	3	-	19,984	112,179	132,163	43,511
Other trading activities	5	190,511	-	-	190,511	181,629
Investments	6	3,731	-	-	3,731	168
Charitable activities	4	-	1,434,983	-	1,434,983	1,314,419
Total income		194,242	1,454,967	112,179	1,761,388	1,539,727
Expenditure on:						
Charitable activities		173,348	1,313,309	86,403	1,573,060	1,638,840
Other expenditure	8	73,634	-	-	73,634	74,315
Total expenditure		246,982	1,313,309	86,403	1,646,694	1,713,155
Net (expenditure)/ income		(52,740)	141,658	25,776	114,694	(173,428)
Transfers between funds	17	-	(42,388)	42,388	-	-
Net movement in funds before other recognised gains		(52,740)	99,270	68,164	114,694	(173,428)
Other recognised gains:						
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	24	-	11,000	-	11,000	1,177,000
Net movement in funds		(52,740)	110,270	68,164	125,694	1,003,572

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCORPORATING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
(CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

Note	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Restricted fixed asset funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward	188,501	73,937	2,296,190	2,558,628	1,555,056
Net movement in funds	(52,740)	110,270	68,164	125,694	1,003,572
Total funds carried forward	135,761	184,207	2,364,354	2,684,322	2,558,628

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

The notes on pages 35 to 59 form part of these financial statements.

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL**(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**
REGISTERED NUMBER: 07851337

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 AUGUST 2023

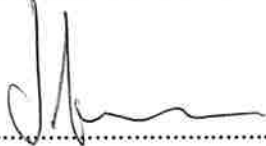
	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	14	2,348,962	2,296,190
Current assets			
Debtors	15	39,653	26,248
Cash at bank and in hand		378,563	335,959
		<u>418,216</u>	<u>362,207</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	16	(82,856)	(99,769)
Net current assets		<u>335,360</u>	<u>262,438</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>2,684,322</u>	<u>2,558,628</u>
Total net assets		<u>2,684,322</u>	<u>2,558,628</u>
Funds of the Academy			
Restricted funds:			
Fixed asset funds	17	2,364,354	2,296,190
Restricted income funds	17	184,207	73,937
Total restricted funds	17	<u>2,548,561</u>	<u>2,370,127</u>
Unrestricted income funds	17	<u>135,761</u>	<u>188,501</u>
Total funds		<u>2,684,322</u>	<u>2,558,628</u>

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)
REGISTERED NUMBER: 07851337

BALANCE SHEET (CONTINUED)
AS AT 31 AUGUST 2023

The financial statements on pages 30 to 59 were approved by the Trustees, and authorised for issue and are signed on their behalf, by:



.....
Mr John Ashley
Chair of Trustees

11-12-23

The notes on pages 35 to 59 form part of these financial statements.

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash provided by operating activities	19	65,869	66,872
Cash flows from investing activities	20	(23,265)	13,975
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		42,604	80,847
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		335,959	255,112
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	21, 22	378,563	335,959

The notes on pages 35 to 59 form part of these financial statements

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

1. Accounting policies

The Firs Lower School is a private company limited by guarantee, incorporated in England. Its registered number and address of registered office are detailed on page 1. The nature of the academy trust's operations and principal activity are detailed in the Trustees' Report.

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

The financial statements are prepared in £ sterling, rounded to the nearest £1.

1.1 Basis of preparation of financial statements

The financial statements of the Academy, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared under the historic 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 2022 to 2023 issued by ESFA, the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006.

1.2 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 Academy to continue as a going concern. 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 has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future and there are no material uncertainties about the Academy's ability to continue as a going concern, thus they continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.3 Income

All incoming resources are recognised when the Academy 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 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 year is deducted from income and recognised as a liability.

Capital grants are recognised in full when there is an unconditional entitlement to the grant. Unspent amounts of capital grants are reflected in the Balance Sheet in the restricted fixed asset fund. Capital grants are recognised when there is entitlement and are not deferred over the life of the asset on which they are expended.

- **Donations**

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

- **Other income**

Other income, including the hire of facilities, is recognised in the year it is receivable and to the extent the Academy has provided the goods or services.

- **Donated goods, facilities and services**

The value of donated services and gifts in kind provided to the Academy Trust are recognised at their open market value in the period in which they are receivable as incoming resources, where the benefit to the Academy Trust can be reliably measured. An equivalent amount is included as expenditure under the relevant heading in the Statement of Financial Activities incorporating Income and Expenditure Account, except where the gift in kind was a fixed asset in which case the amount is included in the appropriate fixed asset category and depreciated over the useful economic life in accordance with the Academy Trust's policies.

1.4 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.

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.4 Expenditure (continued)

- **Charitable activities**

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

All resources expended are inclusive of irrecoverable VAT.

1.5 Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the Academy; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the institution with whom the funds are deposited.

1.6 Taxation

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

Accordingly, the Academy is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Part 11, chapter 3 of the 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.

1.7 Tangible fixed assets

Assets costing £500 or more are capitalised as tangible fixed assets and are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment.

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 there are specific conditions attached to the funding requiring the continued use of the asset, the related grants 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.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible 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:

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.7 Tangible fixed assets (continued)

Depreciation is provided on the following bases:

Leasehold land	- over the term of the 125 year lease
Leasehold buildings	- over 50 years on a straight line basis
Furniture and equipment	- 12.5% per annum on a straight line basis
Plant and machinery	- 12.5% per annum on a straight line basis

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.

Land is depreciated as held under a long term lease.

1.8 Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

1.9 Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short-term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

1.10 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 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.

1.11 Financial instruments

The Academy only holds basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and financial liabilities of the Academy and their measurement bases are as follows:

Financial assets - trade and other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost as detailed in note 15. Prepayments are not financial instruments. Amounts due to the Academy's wholly owned subsidiary are held at face value less any impairment.

Cash at bank - is classified as a basic financial instrument and is measured at face value.

Financial liabilities - trade creditors, accruals and other creditors are financial instruments, and are measured at amortised cost as detailed in note 16. Taxation and social security are not included in the financial instruments disclosure definition. Deferred income is not deemed to be a financial liability, as the cash settlement has already taken place and there is an obligation to deliver services rather than cash or another financial instrument. Amounts due to the Academy's wholly owned subsidiary are held at face value less any impairment.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.12 Operating leases

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the lease term.

1.13 Pensions

Retirement benefits to employees of the Academy are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ("TPS") and the Local Government Pension Scheme ("LGPS"). These are 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 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. TPS is an unfunded multi-employer scheme with no underlying assets to assign between employers. Consequently, the TPS is treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded multi-employer scheme and the assets are held separately from those of the Academy in separate Trustee administered funds. 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 operating surplus are the current service 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 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 in other recognised gains and losses.

Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

1.14 Fund accounting

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

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

Restricted general funds comprise all other restricted funds received with restrictions imposed by the funder/donor and include grants from the Department for Education Group.

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

2. Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgment

Estimates and judgments 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.

Critical accounting estimates and assumptions:

The Academy 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.

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 or income for pensions include the discount rate. Any changes in these assumptions, which are disclosed in note 24, 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 2019 has been used by the actuary in valuing the pensions liability at 31 August 2023. Any differences between the figures derived from the roll forward approach and a full actuarial valuation would impact on the carrying amount of the pension liability.

Critical areas of judgment:

The judgments that have had a significant effect on amounts recognised in the Financial Statements are those concerning the choice of depreciation policies and asset lives.

The pension scheme surplus is recognised in the balance sheet to the extent to which it can be recovered through reduce contributions in the future or through refunds to the plan. Further details in note 24.

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL**(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

3. Income from donations and capital grants

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Restricted fixed asset funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Donations	-	19,984	-	19,984	11,389
Capital Grants	-	-	112,179	112,179	32,122
	<u>-</u>	<u>19,984</u>	<u>112,179</u>	<u>132,163</u>	<u>43,511</u>

4. Funding for Academy Trust's Charitable Activities

	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
DfE/ESFA grants			
General Annual Grant (GAG)	1,086,871	1,086,871	1,075,515
Other DfE/ESFA grants			
Pupil Premium	25,458	25,458	17,865
Teachers pension grant	4,827	4,827	2,025
Other government grants	212,859	212,859	138,637
Other funding	26,960	26,960	17,905
Other DfE/ESFA grants	78,008	78,008	62,472
	<u>1,434,983</u>	<u>1,434,983</u>	<u>1,314,419</u>
	<u>1,434,983</u>	<u>1,434,983</u>	<u>1,314,419</u>

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

5. Income from other trading activities

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Rental income	6,465	6,465	5,800
Pre School	41,011	41,011	50,203
School Clubs	133,419	133,419	107,012
Other income	9,616	9,616	18,614
	<u>190,511</u>	<u>190,511</u>	<u>181,629</u>

6. Investment income

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Investment income	3,731	3,731	168

7. Expenditure

	Staff Costs 2023 £	Premises 2023 £	Other 2023 £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Educational operations:					
Direct costs	1,002,310	-	68,978	1,071,288	996,501
Allocated support costs	224,585	97,148	180,039	501,772	642,339
Other expenditure	70,821	-	2,813	73,634	74,315
	<u>1,297,716</u>	<u>97,148</u>	<u>251,830</u>	<u>1,646,694</u>	<u>1,713,155</u>

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL**(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

8. Other expenditure

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
School clubs - costs	2,813	-	2,813	3,939
School shop - costs	-	-	-	130
School clubs - wages and salaries	55,864	-	55,864	54,959
School clubs - NI	2,997	-	2,997	3,586
School clubs - pension costs	11,960	-	11,960	11,701
	<u>73,634</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>73,634</u>	<u>74,315</u>

9. Analysis of expenditure by activities

	Activities undertaken directly 2023 £	Support costs 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Charitable activities expenditure	<u>1,071,288</u>	<u>501,772</u>	<u>1,573,060</u>	<u>1,638,840</u>

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL**(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

9. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)**Analysis of support costs**

	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Pension cost	-	16,000
Staff costs	224,585	328,553
Depreciation	86,403	81,242
Bought in professional services	29,472	31,104
Other costs	653	89
Maintenance of premises & equipment	10,745	58,845
Cleaning	1,630	1,780
Rates & water	9,820	4,972
Heat & light	28,953	14,805
Insurance	5,813	5,270
Catering	57,380	52,377
Security & transport	1,630	2,310
Other support costs	34,538	32,992
Governance costs	10,150	12,000
	501,772	642,339

10. Net (expenditure)/income

Net (expenditure)/income for the year includes:

	2023 £	2022 £
Operating lease rentals	871	89
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	86,403	81,242
Fees paid to auditors for:		
- audit	8,700	8,700
- other services	1,450	3,300

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL**(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

11. Staff**a. Staff costs**

Staff costs during the year were as follows:

	2023 £	2022 £
Wages and salaries	955,163	872,376
Social security costs	71,740	68,932
Pension costs	235,765	364,559
	<u>1,262,668</u>	<u>1,305,867</u>
Agency staff costs	35,048	19,552
	<u>1,297,716</u>	<u>1,325,419</u>

b. Staff numbers

The average number of persons employed by the Academy during the year was as follows:

	2023 No.	2022 No.
Teachers	11	9
Administration and support	35	32
Management	5	5
	<u>51</u>	<u>46</u>

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL**(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

11. Staff (continued)**c. Higher paid staff**

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

	2023 No.	2022 No.
In the band £60,001 - £70,000	-	1
In the band £70,001 - £80,000	1	-

The above employee participated in the Teacher's Pension Scheme. During the year ended 31 August 2023 pension contributions for this staff member amounted to £16,994 (2022 - £16,185).

d. Key management personnel

The key management personnel of the Academy comprise the Trustees and the senior management team as listed on page 1. The total amount of employee benefits (including employer pension contributions and employer national insurance contributions) received by key management personnel for their services to the Academy was £284,421 (2022 - £296,058).

12. Trustees' remuneration and expenses

One or more Trustees has been paid remuneration or has received other benefits from an employment with the Academy. The principal and other staff Trustees only receive remuneration in respect of services they provide undertaking the roles of principal and staff members under their contracts of employment. The value of Trustees' remuneration and other benefits was as follows:

		2023 £	2022 £
Mr Adam Campbell, Headteacher and Accounting Officer	Remuneration	70,000 -	65,000 -
		75,000	70,000
	Pension contributions paid	15,000 -	15,000 -
Mrs Kerry Mercer		20,000	20,000
	Remuneration	50,000 -	45,000 -
		55,000	50,000
	Pension contributions paid	10,000 -	10,000 -
		15,000	15,000

During the year ended 31 August 2023, no Trustee expenses have been incurred (2022 - £NIL).

13. Trustees' and Officers' insurance

The Academy 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 membership.

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

14. Tangible fixed assets

	Leasehold land and buildings £	Furniture and equipment £	Plant and machinery £	Total £
Cost or valuation				
At 1 September 2022	2,731,148	38,524	80,195	2,849,867
Additions	132,058	1,830	5,287	139,175
At 31 August 2023	2,863,206	40,354	85,482	2,989,042
Depreciation				
At 1 September 2022	490,693	20,853	42,131	553,677
Charge for the year	74,485	4,771	7,147	86,403
At 31 August 2023	565,178	25,624	49,278	640,080
Net book value				
At 31 August 2023	2,298,028	14,730	36,204	2,348,962
At 31 August 2022	2,240,455	17,671	38,064	2,296,190

The leasehold property is held under a 125 year lease from Central Bedfordshire Council ending 31 December 2136. No rent is payable under the terms of the lease.

Included in the leasehold land and buildings are improvements to leasehold buildings with a net book value of £272,625 and land with a net book value of £281,067.

The acquisition of the leasehold which was purchased by the Academy Trust has a value of £132,058. All additions related to the refurbishment of existing buildings.

15. Debtors

	2023 £	2022 £
Due within one year		
VAT recoverable	5,015	12,204
Prepayments and accrued income	34,638	14,044
	39,653	26,248

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL**(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

16. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2023	2022
	£	£
Other creditors	32	32
Accruals and deferred income	82,824	99,737
	82,856	99,769
	2023	2022
	£	£
Deferred income at 1 September	46,138	30,517
Resources deferred during the year	47,393	46,138
Amounts released from previous periods	(46,138)	(30,517)
	47,393	46,138
	2023	2022
	£	£
Town Council grant	-	250
Inclusion funding	-	2,000
Autumn and Spring	-	3,000
CBC Kids Club	1,997	4,310
Saplings	702	2,562
Free School Meals	32,668	26,845
Virtual School funding	4,145	-
EYSENIF	771	-
Formula Capital	7,110	7,171
	47,393	46,138

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

17. Statement of funds

	Balance at 1 September 2022 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/out £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 August 2023 £
Unrestricted funds						
Unrestricted funds	188,501	194,242	(246,982)	-	-	135,761
Restricted general funds						
General Annual Grant (GAG)	-	1,086,871	(940,125)	(33,215)	-	113,531
Other restricted funds	73,937	368,096	(362,184)	(9,173)	-	70,676
Pension reserve	-	-	(11,000)	-	11,000	-
	73,937	1,454,967	(1,313,309)	(42,388)	11,000	184,207
Restricted fixed asset funds						
Fixed asset funds	2,296,190	112,179	(86,403)	42,388	-	2,364,354
Total Restricted funds	2,370,127	1,567,146	(1,399,712)	-	11,000	2,548,561
Total funds	2,558,628	1,761,388	(1,646,694)	-	11,000	2,684,322

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

The General Annual Grant (GAG) must be used for the normal running costs of the Academy.

The other restricted funds relate to various school and educational activities which are not funded by the General Annual Grant. This includes items such as school trips for which income received is used to cover costs in association with these activities. Unrestricted funds are used for charitable purposes at the discretion of the Trustees.

The restricted fixed asset fund was funded predominantly by the funds inherited on conversion from the Central Bedfordshire local authority following the transfer of the land and buildings. The fund represents the net book value of capitalised fixed assets and unspent capital funds of £15,390 (2022 - £nil).

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

17. Statement of funds (continued)

The transfers from restricted funds to restricted fixed asset funds of £42,388 is in respect of amounts capitalised during the year.

Under the funding agreement with the Secretary of State, the Academy was not subject to a limit on the amount of GAG it could carry forward at 31 August 2023.

Comparative information in respect of the preceding year is as follows:

	Balance at 1 September 2021 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/out £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 August 2022 £
Unrestricted funds						
Unrestricted funds	85,662	193,186	(190,577)	100,230	-	188,501
Restricted general funds						
General Annual Grant (GAG)	38,358	1,175,745	(1,127,680)	(86,423)	-	-
Other restricted funds	90,919	138,674	(155,656)	-	-	73,937
Pension reserve	(1,019,000)	-	(158,000)	-	1,177,000	-
	(889,723)	1,314,419	(1,441,336)	(86,423)	1,177,000	73,937
Restricted fixed asset funds						
Fixed asset funds	2,359,117	32,122	(81,242)	(13,807)	-	2,296,190
Total Restricted funds	1,469,394	1,346,541	(1,522,578)	(100,230)	1,177,000	2,370,127
Total funds	1,555,056	1,539,727	(1,713,155)	-	1,177,000	2,558,628

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL**(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

18. Analysis of net assets between funds**Analysis of net assets between funds - current year**

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Restricted fixed asset funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	2,348,962	2,348,962
Current assets	135,761	267,063	15,392	418,216
Creditors due within one year	-	(82,856)	-	(82,856)
Total	135,761	184,207	2,364,354	2,684,322

Analysis of net assets between funds - prior year

	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Restricted fixed asset funds 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	2,296,190	2,296,190
Current assets	188,501	173,706	-	362,207
Creditors due within one year	-	(99,769)	-	(99,769)
Total	188,501	73,937	2,296,190	2,558,628

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

19. Reconciliation of net income/(expenditure) to net cash flow from operating activities

	2023 £	2022 £
Net income/(expenditure) for the year (as per Statement of Financial Activities)	114,694	(173,428)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation	86,403	81,242
Capital grants from DfE and other capital income	(112,179)	(32,122)
Interest receivable	(3,731)	(168)
Defined benefit pension scheme cost less contributions payable	16,000	140,000
Defined benefit pension scheme finance (income)/cost	(7,000)	16,000
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(13,405)	7,294
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(16,913)	26,054
Defined benefit pension scheme administration cost	2,000	2,000
Net cash provided by operating activities	65,869	66,872

20. Cash flows from investing activities

	2023 £	2022 £
Interest receivable	3,731	168
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(139,175)	(18,315)
Capital grants from DfE Group	112,179	32,122
Net cash (used in)/provided by investing activities	(23,265)	13,975

21. Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2023 £	2022 £
Cash in hand and at bank	378,563	335,959

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

22. Analysis of changes in net debt

	At 1 September 2022 £	Cash flows £	At 31 August 2023 £
Cash at bank and in hand	335,959	42,604	378,563
	<u>335,959</u>	<u>42,604</u>	<u>378,563</u>

23. Capital commitments

	2023 £	2022 £
Contracted for but not provided in these financial statements		
CBC Access grant for footpath	-	32,122
	<u>-</u>	<u>32,122</u>

24. Pension commitments

The Academy'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 Central Bedfordshire Council. Both are multi-employer defined benefit schemes.

The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS related to the period ended 31 March 2016 and of the LGPS 31 March 2019.

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

Teachers' Pension Scheme

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

The TPS is an unfunded scheme to which both the member and employer makes contributions, as a percentage of salary - these contributions are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by Parliament.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

24. Pension commitments (continued)

Valuation of the Teachers' Pension 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 2016. The valuation report was published by the Department for Education on 5 March 2019. The key elements of the valuation and subsequent consultation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 23.68% of pensionable pay (including a 0.08% administration levy)
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £218,100 million and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £196,100 million, giving a notional past service deficit of £22,000 million
- the SCAPE rate, set by HMT, is used to determine the notional investment return. The current SCAPE rate is 2.4% above the rate of CPI, assumed real rate of return is 2.4% in excess of prices and 2% in excess of earnings. The rate of real earnings growth is assumed to be 2.2%. The assumed nominal rate of return including earnings growth is 4.45%.

The next valuation result is due to be implemented from 1 April 2024.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS in the year amounted to £109,765 (2022 - £87,380).

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website (<https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/news/employers/2019/04/teachers-pensions-valuation-report.aspx>).

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is an unfunded multi-employer pension scheme. The Academy has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The Academy has set out above the information available on the scheme.

Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate trustee-administered funds. The total contribution made for the year ended 31 August 2023 was £135,000 (2022 - £114,000), of which employer's contributions totalled £108,000 (2022 - £92,000) and employees' contributions totalled £ 27,000 (2022 - £23,000). The agreed contribution rates for future years are 23.3 per cent for employers and 5.5 - 12.5 per cent for employees.

As described in note the LGPS obligation relates to the employees of the Academy, who were the employees transferred as part of the conversion from the maintained school and new employees who were eligible to, and did, join the Scheme in the year. The obligation in respect of employees who transferred on conversion represents their cumulative service at both the predecessor school and the Academy at the balance sheet date.

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.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

24. Pension commitments (continued)

Principal actuarial assumptions

	2023 %	2022 %
Rate of increase in salaries	3.85	3.95
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/inflation	2.85	2.95
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	5.30	4.25
Commutation of pensions to lump sums	50.00	50.00

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

	2023 Years	2022 Years
Retiring today		
Males	21.1	22.0
Females	23.9	24.4
Retiring in 20 years		
Males	22.1	22.9
Females	25.5	26.1

Sensitivity analysis

	2023	2022
Discount rate +0.1%	34,000	64,000
Discount rate -0.1%	(35,000)	(66,000)
Mortality assumption - 1 year increase	42,000	90,000
Mortality assumption - 1 year decrease	(40,000)	(93,000)
CPI rate +0.1%	35,000	62,000
CPI rate -0.1%	(34,000)	(61,000)

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL**(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

24. Pension commitments (continued)**Share of scheme assets**

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

	At 31 August 2023	At 31 August 2022
	£	£
Equities	1,011,000	962,000
Corporate bonds	290,000	369,000
Property	235,000	224,000
Cash and other liquid assets	62,000	64,000
Total market value of assets	1,598,000	1,619,000

The actual return on scheme assets was £(102,000) (2022 - £(7,000)).

The amounts recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities are as follows:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Current service cost	(124,000)	(232,000)
Interest income	70,000	25,000
Interest cost	(63,000)	(41,000)
Total amount recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities	(117,000)	(248,000)

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

	2023	2022
	£	£
At 1 September	1,603,000	2,428,000
Current service cost	124,000	232,000
Interest cost	63,000	41,000
Employee contributions	27,000	23,000
Actuarial gains	(183,000)	(1,209,000)
Benefits paid	(36,000)	88,000
At 31 August	1,598,000	1,603,000

THE FIRS LOWER SCHOOL**(A Company Limited by Guarantee)**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

24. Pension commitments (continued)

Changes in the fair value of the Academy's share of scheme assets were as follows:

	2023 £	2022 £
At 1 September	1,603,000	1,409,000
Actuarial losses	(172,000)	(32,000)
Employer contributions	108,000	92,000
Employee contributions	27,000	23,000
Benefits paid	(36,000)	88,000
Interest income	70,000	25,000
Administration expenses	(2,000)	(2,000)
At 31 August	1,598,000	1,603,000

	2023 £	2022 £
The amounts recognised in the Balance Sheet are as follows:		
Closing defined benefit obligation	(1,557,000)	(1,485,000)
Fair value of scheme assets	1,598,000	1,603,000
Surplus not recognised - asset ceiling	(41,000)	(118,000)
	-	-

Total remeasurements recognised in Other Comprehensive Income:

	2023 £	2022 £
Changes in financial assumptions	489,000	1,331,000
Changes in demographic assumptions	82,000	-
Other remeasurements	(560,000)	(36,000)
	11,000	1,295,000

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
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Other finance income

	2023	2022
	£	£
Interest income on pension scheme assets	70,000	25,000
Interest on pension scheme liabilities	(63,000)	(41,000)
	<u>7,000</u>	<u>(16,000)</u>

25. Operating lease commitments

At 31 August 2023 the Academy had commitments to make future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Not later than 1 year	871	871
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	436	1,307
	<u>1,307</u>	<u>2,178</u>

All commitments above relate to assets other than land and buildings.

26. Members' liability

Each member of the charitable company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the 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.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

27. Related party transactions

Owing to the nature of the Academy and the composition of the Board of Trustees being drawn from local public and private sector organisations, transactions may take place with organisations in which the Trustees have an interest. All transactions involving such organisations are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook, including notifying the ESFA of all transactions made on or after 1 April 2019 and obtaining their approval where required, and with the Academy's financial regulations and normal procurement procedures relating to connected and related party transactions.

The wife of the Trustee John Ashley is employed by the Academy as a Teaching Assistant:

- As a member of staff, this individual is remunerated by the Academy and their remuneration is in line with all other members of staff of a similar grade. The remuneration of all staff is discussed by the Trustees as a body but Mr J Ashley is not involved in the discussions relating to the remuneration of his wife.

No further related party transactions took place in the period other than certain Trustees' remuneration and expenses already disclosed in note 12.