

The Charter Schools Educational Trust

Procurement & Tendering Policy

Author (s)	CFO
Functional Area (Finance, HR, Trust Board etc.)	Finance
Scope (Trust, School, Other)	Trust wide
Reviewer (s)	Head of Compliance
Approver (s)	Finance Committee
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POLICY STATEMENT

This policy aims to ensure that:

- The Charter Schools Educational Trust's (the 'Trust') funds are used only in accordance with the law, its articles of association, its funding agreement and the Academy Trust Handbook
- The Trust's funds are used in a way that commands broad public support
- Value for money (economy, efficiency and effectiveness) is achieved
- Trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities as charitable trustees and company directors
- Conflicts of interest are managed adequately and appropriately
- The trust has open and transparent procurement procedures

This policy includes procedures for open tenders. This approach allows anyone to submit a tender to supply goods or services required and offers an equal opportunity to any organisation to submit a tender.

1. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

The Academy Trust Handbook states that academy trusts are required to have a competitive procurement procedure in place and ensure that the procurement rules and thresholds in the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) and Find a Tender service are observed.

This policy is based on:

- Academy Trust Handbook
- [Department for Education \(DfE\) guidance on buying procedures and procurement law](#)
- [Procurement Act 2023](#)

This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

It is important to note that the Trust is the sole legal entity that can enter into contracts for itself and any of its schools. The schools themselves are not separate legal entities and any contracts awarded by individual schools will be binding on the Trust.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all procurement activities undertaken by the Trust, its schools and other organisations within the Trust, including but not limited to the purchase of goods, services and works. It is applicable to all staff involved in procurement activities. It does not cover contracts of employment or contracts for agency staff.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Trustees

Trustees will ensure that:

- Spending decisions represent value for money
- The trust's funds are used in a way that commands broad public support
- Relevant legal or professional advice (such as an external auditor) is used, where appropriate
- Goods or services provided by individuals or organisations connected to the trust are provided at no more than cost
- Nobody connected to the trust, directly or indirectly, uses their connection to the trust for personal gain
- Where any trustee has a pecuniary interest in a procurement decision, they exclude themselves from the process and records (e.g. meeting minutes) show that they had no influence on the decision

3.2 Finance committee

The Trust Board delegate competitive tendering responsibilities to the finance committee.

The committee is responsible for reviewing the Trust's procurement and tendering processes, and for reporting to the Trust Board on tenders.

3.3 Chief financial officer

The chief financial officer (CFO) is responsible for:

- Ensuring appropriate financial governance and risk management arrangements are in place
- Preparing and monitoring budgets
- Providing information to the finance committee and trustees, as appropriate
- Overseeing and supporting competitive tendering

4. PROCUREMENT PRINCIPLES

4.1 Valuation

The value of a contract must be estimated as the maximum amount that the Trust could expect to pay under the contract. This must include:

- amounts already paid
- expected future payments under the term of the contract
- payments for the supply of additional goods, services or works if included in contract terms
- amounts payable if an option to extend or renew the term of the contract were exercised.
- amounts representing premiums, fees, commissions or interest payable under the contract

- amounts representing prizes or payments that could be payable to participants in the procurement

4.2 Compliance

All procurement activities must comply with all relevant laws and regulations.

4.3 Value for Money

Procurement decisions should be based on achieving the best value for money, including economies of scale through consolidation, considering the whole life cost of the procurement and not just the initial purchase price.

4.4 Transparency

All procurement processes must be transparent, have clear documentation and good record keeping which demonstrates fairness and compliance. Notices to advertise opportunities will be published on the trust website for medium and high value contracts meeting the appropriate thresholds.

4.5 Ethical Sourcing

Goods and services must be sourced ethically, taking into account relevant legislation, avoiding conflicts of interest and considering the environmental and social impacts of the procurement decisions made.

4.6 Competition

Procurement activities should promote open and fair competition to encourage a diverse range of suppliers.

4.7 Sustainability

Procurement activities should, where practical, support sustainable development goals, promoting environmental sustainability.

4.8 Using existing framework arrangements

Wherever possible and in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook and DfE policy, the Trust should avoid running its own procurement processes and instead use an existing framework arrangement or where appropriate, a dynamic market.

From time to time the Trust may also set up its own framework agreements which can be used by all its schools. Such frameworks will be notified to the schools from time to time.

In our dealings we aspire to be governed by the Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness	Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
Integrity	Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
Objectivity	Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
Accountability	Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
Openness	Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
Honesty	Holders of public office should be truthful.
Leadership	Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

5. THE PURCHASE

- 5.1** Awarding a contract will be based on a range of pre-agreed criteria and will not always be based on price alone. These criteria are outlined in appendix 2
- 5.2** Different rules apply depending on the value of the purchase you want to make. The Trust's current spend thresholds are set out below.
- 5.3** If your contract is of a value which exceeds the Upper Threshold, the Public Procurement Regulations will apply, and you must follow the procedure set out in this document.
- 5.4** Appendix 2a and 2b has the proforma for presenting the business case.

Value of Spend	Which Rules Apply?	Tender Process Required
Up to - £9,999.99	Low Value	1 Quotation Required, VFM should be Demonstrated at all times/Budget Holder Approval/SCA CEO Approval
£10,000.00 - £49,999.99	Medium Value	Minimum 3 Written Quotations/Business Case & Head Approval/SCA CEO Approval
£50,000.00 - £99,999.99	High Value	Business Case with Minimum 3 Quotations for Approval by CEO or CFO /SCA Finance Committee Approval

Over £100,000.00 +	Very High Value	Formal Tender Process with Minimum 3 Quotations to be presented by CFO to FAARC ahead of MAT Board
Over Find a Tender Threshold (Trigger values in Appendix 1)	Upper Threshold	Public Procurement Process with Minimum 3 Quotations to be Presented by CFO to Finance Committee ahead of Trust Board

Under the UK Procurement Act 2023 there is a new legal requirement to publish notices throughout the procurement process, via the Central Digital Platform. Set up by the Cabinet Office, the Central Digital Platform is a fully integrated digital platform where data sharing can be set up more efficiently, effectively and transparently to support the Procurement Act 2023 and its regulations.

5.5 Authority to Sign Contracts

Procuring and authorising a procurement is separate from signing the contracts for the goods, services and works. The table below highlights which roles must sign the contract following a compliant procurement process.

Value (for services value over life of the contract)	Responsible Person
Up to £20k	In school - Signed by Headteacher. Trust Central team - Signed by CEO and CFO.
£20-100k	Endorsed by Headteacher (or in central team by relevant director) and signed by CEO/CFO.
£100k -£500k	Approved at Finance Committee and signed by CEO.
£500k +	Approved by Board & signed jointly by Chair of Trustees & CEO.

4. VALUING YOUR CONTRACT

- 4.1. It is important that contracts are properly assessed for value. In particular, you must not deliberately divide one contract into smaller contracts with the effect of avoiding the procurement rules.
- 4.2. The contract value is based on the total value of the 'spend' which is the subject of the procurement. The requirements of all the schools of the trust should be combined into one procurement if they are the same or similar.
- 4.3. If you do not know what your exact spend is going to be over the life of the contract, you must take an average annual spend and multiply by the estimated duration of the contract.
- 4.4. If a service contract is for four years or more, the value is estimated by multiplying the amount it is expected will be paid each month by 48 (forty-eight).

- 4.5. The estimated duration of the contract must include any extensions or options to renew.
- 4.6. You must check with the finance business partner or Trust CFO if you are unsure about how to calculate contract value.

5. Low Value transactions (up to - £9,999.99)

- 5.1. For all transactions of a similar type with a total value up to £9,999.99, exclusive of VAT, only 1 competitive quote is required but value for money should always be demonstrated.
- 5.2. Schools must follow their own purchasing rules and comply with their own budget delegation and segregation of duties requirements.
- 5.3. Expenditure of up to £9,999.99 should use the best value for money approach.
- 5.4. Approved by Budget Holder or Headteacher.

6. Medium Value transactions from £10,000.00 up to £49,999.99

- 6.1. For medium value transactions, approval must be obtained from the appropriate Headteacher (or the CEO if this applies to a Trust purchase). A business case and three quotes must be submitted for the purchase approval.
- 6.2. The business case must include as minimum:
 - Detailed Specification of Requirements
 - Benefits to the organisation and best value for money
 - Reason for the choice of preferred supplier; and
 - The outcome of the evaluation process.
- 6.3. Approved by Headteacher or in the case of SCA expenditure, approved by the CEO.
- 6.4. Contracts over £12,000 require a transparency notice to be published on the trust website.

7. High Value transactions £50,000.00- £99,999.99

High value transactions will be subject to a business case and final approval from the CEO or CFO and will be managed by the Headteacher (read CEO for the Trust Central Services Team) and approved by the CEO and/or CFO.

8. Very High Value transactions £100,000 to Find a Tender Upper Threshold

All transactions will be subject to a business case and/or a formal tender process (if appropriate). Cases will need to be submitted by the CFO to the Finance Committee who will approve.

9. Upper Threshold Transactions

All transactions will be subject to a business case and formal tender process following guidelines and will be managed by the CEO and/or CFO for submission to the Finance Committee who will recommend to the Trust Board for approval of the spend/contract.

10. Procurement (Credit cards)

- 10.1. Trust or school procurement (credit) cards should only be used for low value spends which cannot be procured through an alternative means or the savings achieved are justifiable. Procurement cards are not a suitable method of procuring repeat items or higher value goods.
- 10.2. The nominal maximum spend for any one item on a Trust/school procurement card is £1000; full receipts must be submitted in respect of any procurement card purchase. Any exceptions require approval by the CFO, and justification must be provided, unless the supplier involved only accepts procurement cards for payment.
- 10.3. Procurement card expenditure must follow the same approval processes in place for all other expenditure.
- 10.4. Only named senior staff or designated staff with finance responsibility may use the procurement card and only with full authorisation from the CFO.
- 10.5. Cards are to remain on site unless needed off site for a purchase, the card will be locked away with only access for finance staff and named senior staff.

11. Extending or varying existing contracts

- 11.1. You may be considering extending an existing contract or using an existing Trust contract for your spend. You must contact the finance business partner and/or the Trust CFO to agree to any such extension or variation.
- 11.2. Extensions to existing contracts will only be sanctioned where a business case is made and approved in accordance with this policy.

12. Preferred Suppliers

It is possible to develop a list of preferred suppliers. These will be done through an open procurement process as outlined above or by exception, they can be put in place if there is demonstrable benchmarking data to support the move.

13. Dispensation (Waiver)

- 13.1. In limited circumstances a dispensation from the requirement to obtain alternative quotes may be granted.
- 13.2. This may include authority to solicit a single quotation, to award a contract or place an order without having obtained the requisite number of tenders or quotations or to directly award a contract.
- 13.3. All dispensations require prior approval in line with the Scheme of Delegated Authority (SoDA).
- 13.4. See Appendix 4 for the form to complete.
- 13.5. Contracts under £50k will be approved by the CEO or CFO. Contracts over £50k will be submitted to the Finance Committee for approval and will be able to be approved offline by at least two members if time is an issue.
- 13.6. All dispensations will be reported to the Finance Committee
- 13.7. Direct awards must follow legal justifications under the Procurement Act 2023.

14. Conflicts of interest

- 14.1** The Trust will **report** all contracts and other agreements with related parties to the Department for Education (DFE) in advance of the contract or agreement commencing. This is via the online form [HERE](#)

Related parties include persons and entities with control or significant influence over the Trust or any of its schools, and members of the same group (e.g. parent and subsidiary companies, key management personnel and close family members). This description is not comprehensive. See section 33 of the Financial Reporting Standard 102.

The Trust will obtain the DFE's prior **approval** for contracts and other agreements for the supply of goods or services to the Trust by a related party where any of the following limits arise:

- A contract or other agreement over £40,000
- A contract or other agreement of any value that would mean the cumulative value of contracts and other agreements with the related party exceeds, or continues to exceed, £40,000 in the same financial year ending 31 August

Further guidance on reporting or seeking approval for related party transactions can be found online at: [Summary guidance: report or seek approval for related party transactions - GOV.UK](#)

- 14.2** The Trust must check for excluded/debarred suppliers under the new Supplier Debarment List before awarding a contract.

15. Contract Register and Contract Management

- A register detailing all contracts and information pertaining to the contract must be maintained.
- This should include details of ongoing monitoring and management of the contracts to ensure compliance with terms and conditions, agreed performance levels and value for money.
- Those approving the contracts are accountable for adding them to the contracts register which will be maintained on the Every platform.

APPENDIX 1

Tenders must be in line with the Procurement Act 2023 which came into effect from 24 February 2025.

The details for running such tenders are available on the DFE website - [Buying for schools: how to buy what you need - Route 5: run a process compliant with the Procurement Act 2023 for high value purchases - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

The triggers for the above process are in the table below.

	Type of Contract	Threshold (inc VAT)
1	Utilities contract that is a works contract	£5,372,609
2	Utilities contract that is a light touch contract	£884,720
3	Utilities contract not within row 1 or 2	£429,809
4	Light touch contract that is a concession contract	£5,372,609
5	Light touch contract not within row 4	£663,540
6	Concession contract not within row 4	£5,372,609
7	Works contract not within row 1.	£5,372,609
8	Contract for the supply of goods, services or works to a sub-central government authority not within any other row	£214,904

Extract of Procurement Act 2023 [[Procurement Act 2023](#)]

Light touch services are as follows;

Health, social and related services/Administrative social, educational, healthcare and cultural services/Compulsory social security services/Benefit services/Other community, social and personal services including services furnished by trade unions, political organisations, youth associations and other membership organisation services/Religious services/Hotel and restaurant services/Legal services, to the extent not excluded by regulation 10(1)(d)/ Other administrative services and government services/Provision of services to the community/Prison related services, public security and rescue services to the extent not excluded by regulation 10(1)(h)/Investigation and security services/International services/Postal services/Miscellaneous services (tyres & blacksmith services).

APPENDIX 2: Awarding a Contract – Evaluation Criteria

Contracts will be awarded based on a range of **pre-agreed criteria** to ensure transparency, fairness, and best value for the Trust. **Award decisions will not be based on price alone**, in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023,

Evaluation criteria will include the following considerations:

1. Cost and Affordability

- Overall cost-effectiveness, including the **whole-life cost** of the contract (purchase, maintenance, operational costs, and disposal).
- Consideration of budget constraints and value for money.

2. Quality and Performance

- Suitability of the goods, services, or works for the intended purpose.
- Compliance with relevant **technical, educational, and operational standards**.
- Supplier's past performance and ability to meet delivery and quality requirements.

3. Social Value & Community Benefit

- Contributions to local employment and apprenticeships.
- Support for SMEs, local businesses, and underrepresented groups.
- Initiatives that benefit pupils, schools, or the wider community.

4. Environmental Sustainability

- Compliance with the Trust's **sustainability strategies** and environmental impact reduction.
- Carbon footprint, energy efficiency, and sustainable procurement practices.
- Ethical sourcing of materials and fair-trade considerations.

5. Supplier Resilience & Risk Management

- Financial stability and business continuity planning.
- Ability to deliver under potential **supply chain disruptions**.
- Compliance with regulatory requirements, safeguarding, and data protection.

6. Innovation and Added Value

- Innovative approaches that improve efficiency or educational outcomes.
- Additional benefits offered by the supplier beyond the basic requirements.
- Use of technology or new methods to enhance service delivery.

7. Compliance with Legal & Ethical Standards

- Adherence to **Procurement Act 2023, Academy Trust Handbook**, and public procurement best practices.
- Transparency in pricing and contract conditions.
- No engagement with suppliers listed on the **UK Debarment List** for corruption, fraud, or poor performance.

The **weighting of these criteria** may vary depending on the nature of the procurement but will always be published **prior to tender submission** to ensure transparency and fairness.

APPENDIX 2a: Business Case Pro forma – Goods & Services

Department			
Name	Contact No	Email	
Detailed Requirement (Full Specification) – What would you like?			
Existing Alternatives – Does the school have anything that already does what you want?			
Business Case – Brief Explanation to support your request. I.e. Why do you want and/or need it? Include benefit to the Academy			
Timeline – When would you Require your Request? Earliest and Latest Dates.			
Cost – How Much? You Must Supply at Least 3 x Quotes			
Supplier 1 - £ Supplier 2 - £ Supplier 3 - £ Please attach the quotes.			
Any other Comments			
1st tier Approval	Yes	No	Comments
Name	Signature		
Final Approval	Yes	No	
Name	Signature		

Appendix 2b

Business Case - Works

- To be completed and attached to all orders placed over £10,000 for capital or building works and associated professional fees
- The procurement method should follow the limits in TCSET's financial procedures based on an estimated value.
- Where quotations are given as a percentage of a construction contract sum (eg professional fees), note the percentage in the cost column along with an indicative estimate of the likely actual cost.

Project Name			
Location (School)		Funded by (e.g. SCA)	
PSF Nominal Code		PSF Account Code	

Cost type (e.g. construction costs)		Pre-quote cost estimate	
Procurement process		Date	

Quotations received (add more lines if necessary)

1		£
2		£
3		£

Agreed Supplier		Agreed Cost	£
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Best Value Review

- Please clarify the rationale used when placing this order if the lowest price has not been selected. Include the pre-tender criteria that was issued & how that has been assessed in coming to a final recommendation.
- Such criteria, whilst not an exhaustive list, should consider using the following –
 - Price,
 - Social Value,
 - Quality,
 - Compliance,
 - Alignment to TCSET strategy.

Approved By:

Name:

Position:

Date: _____

Appendix 3 – Advice for Schools Purchasing

There are existing frameworks that can help with purchasing decisions. Check with the following organisations to see if there is an existing contract / framework agreement for the goods or service you want to buy:

[Crown Commercial Service \(CCS\)](#)

[The Crescent Purchasing Consortium \(CPC\)](#)

[DfE Approved Framework](#)

Registration with some of these organisations may be necessary, but this is a simple process

15.1. More information can be found on the DfE website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-training-for-schools>

Appendix 4 – Dispensation Form

DISPENSATION FORM

From: _____ (Budget holder / School)

Date: _____

To: CEO/CFO

What is the total value of the contract or purchase (net of VAT):	£
If a contract, what is the duration? (in months):	
When does the contract need to be in place or the purchase received? (latest date):	

What is the reason for the dispensation from obtaining the relevant quotes or tenders (tick as appropriate):

Limited field of suppliers / providers and no possibility of the school or Trust's requirements being met in any other way.	
Emergency that might pose a risk to a school, or Trust.	
Compatibility issue.	
An extension is required to a current contract to allow enough time to complete a competitive process.	
Seeking tenders and the subsequent contract award could cause significant operational difficulties, and any potential savings would be outweighed by those operational issues.	

What are the circumstances i.e. when did the situation arise, when did you first become aware?

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What actions has been taken to overcome the problem?

What are the consequences of not receiving approval?

Signature: _____ (Headteacher or Function lead)

Date: _____

CEO or CFO to complete

Dispensation: Approved / Not approved / decision deferred until: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____