

Big Life Schools

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

Annual Report and Financial Statements

Year Ended 31st August 2023

Company Number: 07945230

Big Life Schools

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Big Life Schools

Reference and Administration Details for the year ended 31 August 2023

Members	The Big Life Company Nazia Parveen (Resigned 21 July 2022) Tayyaba Javed Liam McDaid (Resigned 21 July 2022) Matt Willis (Resigned 29 November 2022) Dolly Bedi (Appointed 16 January 2023) Richard Scorer (Appointed 16 January 2023) Karina Carter (Appointed 22 September 2022) Sayeeda Chowdhry (Appointed 16 January 2023)
Directors	Karina Carter (Chair) (Resigned 21 July 2022) Emma Perry (Appointed Chair –21July 2022) Andrea Heffernan Fay Selvan (Representative of the Big Life Company) Sandie Hayes (Resigned 31 March 2022) Philip Trohear Matt Willis (Appointed 9 December 2022) Lisa Brooks Liam McDaid (Appointed 21 July 2022) Colin Ralph (Appointed 12 May 2022) Annette Joseph (Appointed 21 July 2022 – Resigned 9 February 2023) Sandra Sinclair (Appointed 21 July 2022)
Company Secretary	Victoria Vickers (Resigned 14 November 2022) Teresa Chase (Appointed 9 February 2023)
Senior Management Team	Principal LCP - Rukhsana Ahmed Principal UCP – Jude Lee Director of Schools and Accounting Officer – Keith Smith (Appointed 13 May 2022) Chief Finance Officer – Phil Alty

Big Life Schools

Reference and Administration Details for the year ended 31 August 2023

Principle and Registered Office	1 st Floor, 463 Stretford Road Manchester M16 9AB
Company Registration Number	07945230
Bankers	Santander Bridle Road Bootle Merseyside L30 4GB
Auditors	Beever and Struthers One Express 1 George Leigh Street Manchester M4 5DL

Big Life Schools

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 year 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023. The annual report serves the purposes of both a trustees' report, and a directors' report under company law.

The trust operates two primary schools in Manchester, Longsight Community Primary (LCP) and Unity Community Primary (UCP). LCP academy has a pupil capacity of 210 and had a roll of 212 at the most recent school census date. In 2024-25, Unity will have a capacity of 420 pupils. It currently has capacity for 390 with a roll of 365. UCP also operates a nursery with a capacity for 78 full time children.

Principle Activities

LCP provided a Reception and Years 1-6 class for 213 pupils. There are 17 different languages spoken by children at the school and 80% had English as an additional language. 34.7% of children were in receipt of Pupil Premium and 13.1% had Special Education Needs. 45% of children achieved a 'Good Level of Development at EYFS (GLD) (2022:57%). 82.8% of children achieved the expected level in the Y1 Phonics check. At the end of KS1, 48.3% were at Age-Related Expectations in Reading, 51.7% in Writing, and 51.7% in Maths. At the end of KS2 SATs, 61.3% achieved ARE in Reading, 61.3% ARE in Writing, 65.4% ARE in Maths, and 48.4% of the cohort reached a combined ARE. Ofsted awarded the school 'Good' on inspection in September 2019.

Unity Community Primary provided classes for 325 children from Reception to Year 6 with two classes from Reception to Year 5. In addition the school currently has 76 children (aged 2-4 years) in its nursery. In the school 96% of children are from ethnic minorities: 83.1% had English as an additional language (EAL) and 38 different home language were used in school. 40% of children qualified for Pupil Premium and 13.8% have Special Educational Needs.

Statutory assessments in summer 2023 improved in every area from 2022. 59% of children achieved a Good Level of Development at EYFS. 75% of children achieved the expected level in the Y1 Phonics check. At the end of KS1, 70.6% were at Age-Related Expectation (ARE) in reading, 44.4% ARE in writing and 66.7% ARE in maths. At the end of KS2 SATs, 56.3% achieved ARE in Reading, 56.3% achieved ARE in Writing, 62.5% reached ARE in Maths, and 40.6% of the cohort reached combined ARE. Ofsted visited in May 2023 awarding the school as 'Requiring Improvement' in Early Years and Leadership with the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes and personal development identified as 'Good'. This is a downgrade from the previous 'Good' inspection in 2018. An action plan to redress the issues identified is in place.

There was a continued focus on developing Quality First Teaching and raising attainment across the year. SEND continues to be a key school improvement priority for 2023-24.

Structure, Governance and Management Constitution

The Multi Academy Trust (MAT) 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 Multi Academy Trust. The MAT is part of the Big Life group of social enterprises and charities.

On 22 October 2022 MAT members adopted revised Memorandum and Articles to reflect the latest guidance and requirements of the Academies Financial Handbook. Subsequently the Trustees appointed a CEO and CFO to create greater transparency in related party transactions with the Big Life group. They also established an independent Finance Risk and Audit Committee.

The trustees of Big Life Schools are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of Company Law. The charitable company is known as Big Life Schools.

Details of the trustees who served during the year are included in the Reference and Administrative details on page 3.

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.

Big Life Schools

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

Indemnities

The trust through its articles has indemnified its trustees to the fullest extent permissible by law.

Method of Recruitment and Appointment or Election of Trustees

The recruitment, appointment and election of the trustees is undertaken in accordance with the Articles of Association and the Free School Funding Agreement. The Trust Board currently comprises of 9 Trustees from a range of professional backgrounds and experiences. Trustees are recruited according to their skillsets, experience and ability to contribute to the strategic leadership of the Trust.

Policies and Procedures Adopted for the induction and Training of Trustees

The Training and Induction provided for new Trustees will depend on their existing experience and accordingly when necessary, induction is provided on charity, legal and financial matters. All governors are provided with copies of policies, procedures, minutes, accounts, budgets and strategic plans that they will need to undertake their role. The MAT has an active Board development plan which includes briefing sessions, and access to internal and external training. All Trustees receive a Handbook outlining their roles and responsibilities and undertake an annual appraisal with the Chair and have tailored training plans.

Organisational Structure

Trustees are responsible for setting and monitoring the strategic objectives, general policies, budgets and capital expenditure of the Trust.

The Senior Management Team (including the Accounting Officer) as detailed on page 3 implement the policies laid down by the Trustees and report back to them.

In addition, MAT Trustees are further supported by individual school's Local Governing Committees (LGC) that ensure each school's unique character and links with the local community are maintained. The Chair of each LGC is a Board member of the MAT and attends each LGC offering support and guidance. The Governor's role on the LGC is to monitor the individual school's approach to learning and ensure policies are implemented and applied effectively.

Day to day operational management is delegated to the school principal supported by the senior management team.

Governance overview for Big Life Schools is provided through the Big Life Schools Finance Risk and Audit Committee who report directly to the MAT Board.

Arrangements for setting pay of key management personnel

The Trustees of the MAT do not receive remuneration from the Trust.

Key Management Personnel comprise of the Senior Management Team identified on page 3 and include the Principals. The rules for determining the pay of Principals are laid down in School Teachers Pay and Conditions document (STPC). The Trustees will seek external independent advice as required. The pay of the CEO and CFO are set by the Finance Risk and Audit Committee and approved by the MAT Board.

Trade Union Facility Time

Big Life Schools has a Trade Union recognition agreement with all the main teaching and support staff unions. At present we do not have any trade union representatives within school, however we liaise with the unions on a regular basis to ensure that any changes/amends required are consulted with effectively.

Big Life Schools is committed to involving staff in its day to day running and decision making. Staff are supported to take on lead roles including as Health and Safety Representatives and Wellbeing Champions.

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Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

Connected Organisations including Related Party Relationships

The MAT operates in partnership and co-operation with the Big Life Company who provide staff and other resources at cost. The Big Life Company is a corporate trustee of Big Life Schools and transactions between these parties are fully disclosed in the notes 21 & 22 to the accounts. During the year the Trust (with the support of Tenet) undertook a procurement exercise to ensure value for money in the provision of support services. The Big Life Company were subsequently appointed.

Objectives and Activities **Objects and Aims**

The objects of Big Life Schools is in accordance with its Articles of Association "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."

Our Vision

"Together we can achieve the best future for our children and parents at the heart of Big Life Schools"

Big Life Schools began as a vision of local parents in Longsight and will always have parents and children leading the growth of the school. They will be involved in all aspects of the school community, their views will be listened to and valued.

Embracing Language and communication

Big Life Schools have a strong focus on language and communication and working with families to ensure children are confident communicators from an early age. We will celebrate and value all languages and recognise that communication and language is the foundation of children's attainment.

Aim

Our schools will deliver the highest standards of education and behaviour through the community, parents, teachers and children working together. Through learning together children, parents and teachers will:

- value and enjoy education;
- aspire to achieve the best we can;
- respect and value differences;
- express common values and standards;
- help each other to learn; and
- maximise the rich opportunities that life will bring.

Objective

Big Life School's objectives for when the pupils move onto their next stage of education are that all pupils will:

- be fluent in spoken English;
- have achieved success in English, Mathematics and Science;
- be confident and competent in the use of ICT;
- be able to integrate into the expected secondary school curriculum;
- have support from parents who understand the English education system and how best they can support their children's learning;
- enjoy learning;
- have experience and understanding of the wider world;
- respect the different gifts and values that each unique individual has;
- understand that learning is a lifelong process and that their parents as well as their teachers are partners in this process;
- be creative and courageous learners;
- demonstrate respect for others through their social skills, emotional development and behaviour; and
- be able and willing to challenge themselves to change their lives for the better.

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Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

Public Benefit

The Trustees have given due consideration to Charity Commission published guidance on the operation of the public benefit requirement. The trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty in section 4 of the Charities Act 2006 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance provided by the Charities Commission.

Strategic report

Achievements and Performance - MAT (LCP)

The MAT continued to invest in the development of the Big Life Curriculum, with a dedicated postholder working with senior leaders in both schools. We now have standardised 'Statements of Intent' for every subject area and have shared plans in History and Geography. Art, DT, RE and PSHE. The schools are utilising different but comparable schemes in Literacy, RE and PE. In the next year we will undertake moderation to evaluate effectiveness.

Achievements and Performance - Longsight Community Primary (LCP)

Longsight Community Primary completed its tenth full year as a school with currently 213 pupils on the roll and its main achievements during the year were

- It has been a settled year, with a high level of stability in terms of pupil numbers.
- Children overall, have made good progress across core subjects, in particular the attainment of pupil premium children.
- We benefitted from a strong and settled staff team. Despite the challenges this year, the staff have shown a high level of resilience.
- Outstanding delivery and rigour and impact of our RW Inc phonics programme, leading to our highest phonics check results.
- Another successful year working with Voice 21 on our Oracy programme from which the impact in the curriculum is clearly evidenced through pupil voice, learning walks and work scrutiny.
- Pupil voice has never been stronger, with the school council having a number of opportunities to speak at large business events and governors meetings. The space for talk has led to change and improvement.
- A high quality parental engagement programme led by parent voice. SWOT analysis has meant we have been able to tailor or offer and our parent's feedback has been very positive.
- Longsight Community Primary turned 10 during the year and to celebrate, the school hosted a special gathering of pupils (past and present) and other stakeholders to celebrate the landmark occasion.

Key Challenges

- Budget remains a challenge going forward. We need to add quality intervention into our T&L offer and we may need additional staffing to support SEND children starting in Reception in September.
- A highly skilled but small team, means that subject leadership is a challenge.
- High level of SEN coming through early years.
- Transience due to housing issues. The demographics of Longsight is changing. The high number of FSM (91 – 44%) is showing that the level of poverty in Longsight is increasing significantly.
- Staff shortage in the early part of this year impacted outcomes in certain year groups. We have 7 volunteers in school at present, making such a difference to us, and we hope making a difference to them.

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Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

LCP Key Priorities for 2023/24

LCP priorities for next year are noted in the table below:

Quality of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise standards in reading, writing and maths. To increase the number of children reading at home, leading to improved outcomes across all year groups. Implement the Leadership Module of our Voice 21 Oracy Programme. Effective training to all staff to better support SEND support and improve progress.
Behaviour and Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To train staff and implement restorative practice with a focus on peer relationships. Increase the number of lunchtime clubs and activities. Refine Well-being week to culminate in Well Fest. Improve overall attendance and punctuality. Show positive impact of behaviour system. Through close monitoring, analysis, and reporting.
Personal Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renew Rights Respecting Schools Gold Award for the school. Develop outdoor learning through coaching. Increase the number of cultural experiences both in and out of school. Monitor impact of adventure passport.
Leadership and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that systems and processes are monitored, analysed, and reported. To promote the Family Hub and increase the number of families accessing the wider offer of services. Ensure we are full in future Reception classes. Increase grant applications to focus on outdoor area and allotments. To increase T&L and Curriculum development collaboration with Unity Termly QA focus on SIP. Subject Leadership development to ensure consistency across the curriculum. Develop a sustainability action plan
Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the outcomes in Early Year through targeted provision and early intervention. To further develop the Early Years Curriculum and ensure that progression for all subjects is clear. To enhance the outdoor learning area to improve provision, learning opportunities and outcomes.

Achievements and Performance - Unity Community Primary (UCP)

Unity has completed its ninth year with 332 pupils on roll but having worked with 357 children through the year (31.3% transience). Key Achievements through the year were;

- Outcomes improved in all statutory assessments comparing favourably with local data and narrowing the gap with national average
- Introduction of Little Wandle phonics scheme has had positive impact on reading and phonics data
- One of only 10 schools chosen to take part in 'Making Manchester Fairer' project (the City Council's new action plan to tackle the Health Inequalities gap over the next five years)
- COVID catch up EY/Y1 project

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Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

Key Challenges that Unity faced in 2022-23 were;

- Attendance and transience rates
- Behaviour, particularly boys in Key Stage 2
- Pressure on Staffing due to maternity leave, requests for PT, inexperience/covid experience, holiday requests, wellbeing – resilience. QFT
- Recruitment to posts
- Ofsted Inspection
- Budget; Throughout the year, unfunded increases in energy costs, staffing costs and other supply costs.

UCP Key Priorities for 2023/24

UCP priorities for next year are noted in the table below

Quality of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise attainment in all year groups to narrow the gap between Unity and national averages. • To review and develop SEND processes so there is early identification and appropriate intervention. • To ensure that children with SEND make good progress and access high quality support through QFT and adaptive teaching/scaffolding/differentiation. Training for staff in inclusive classrooms • Develop Teaching and Learning so QFT is consistently good across school through a coaching model led by phase-leaders focusing on classroom routines, planning and adapting to need. • Developing teaching practice and interventions driven by evidence based current research with a focus on collaborative learning (peer assessment) • Develop the teaching of vocabulary to improve children's oracy skills (wider outcomes) • Develop assessment of foundation subjects and of SEND
Behaviour and Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure consistency through induction and training so the positive Tick system, Zones of Regulation and Restorative Practice are all embedded effectively across the school. • Develop the school grounds (use of field) to create more activities for children. • Access training to develop staff to lead lunch and play activities. • Develop the offer of after-school clubs so that there are wider opportunities (than sport) for children. • Review systems and processes in reporting incidents and ensure that consequences are consistent, and all staff are clear about this. • Reduce the levels of persistent absence and improve attendance and punctuality to within national levels. • Develop PHSE curriculum; embedding RRSA work, Think Equal programme, Being an Ally to all protected characteristics, Keeping Safe online. • Embed PHSE themes through curriculum, assembly plan and circle time. • Action plan for developing as trauma-informed school.
Personal Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop extra-curricular activities to widen opportunities for children and monitor the take up by gender and ethnicity. • Develop a family engagement plan; offer more parental workshops – focus on physical and mental health. • Develop roles and responsibilities within Y6; Sports and play leaders, librarians, school council (HB/HG), eco advocates, helpers in classes, readers for younger children, playtime buddies. • Improve pupil voice processes, termly pupil survey. • Involve children in creating a fundraising/charity plan for the year. • RRSA gold reaccreditation

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Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

Leadership and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development plan for each member of staff, driven by SLT to improve QFT. Focus on coaching and individual CPD. • Further develop subject leaders so they are confident in monitoring, assessment and progression from EYFS in their subject • Refine induction process so all staff are aware of expectations of their role. • Review roles and responsibilities of SLT to ensure maximum time in class, delivering interventions and impacting on T&L • Refine reporting to governors to improve governors' oversight of safeguarding, bullying and racist incidents. • Create a marketing plan to influence recruitment processes to increase number of applicants to vacancies as well as increase numbers in younger year groups. • Review role of SBM (across MAT) and effectiveness/compliance of website
Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Identify the component knowledge that is to be taught in daycare and nursery) • Develop the curriculum so there are 'I can' statements for each stage of EYFS. • Develop parental engagement in teaching and learning. • Increase the numbers applying to Reception. • Recruit additional practitioners for daycare/Nursey. • Develop vocabulary across EYFS. • Develop transition from EYFS to Y1

Performance Indicators

The Trustees consider the following as key performance indicators:

- Quality of Education – Achievement of ARE across the statutory testing (phonics, KS1, KS2), compared to national.
- Quality assurance
 - Quality calendars in place and delivered to ensure oversight of T&L quality and feedback.
 - Quality framework and compliance with range of self-assessments, internal and external audits to comply with ATH.
- Engagement – completion of parental, pupil and staff surveys and analyse feedback for trends, gaps.
- Governance – Monitor governor and Trustee visits to schools across the academic year.
- Student Numbers - Funding is dependent on student numbers and is monitored as part of internal financial reporting.
- Ofsted grading as a measurement of current achievement and Improvements for the future – Latest Ofsted reports have graded both schools as 'Good'.
- Develop a Trust improvement strategy including; people and partners, school improvement, governance, financial and operational sustainability, and engagement.
- Growth: BLS to explore potential conversions, partnerships and contracts to ensure financial viability.
- Capital Improvements: Invest in development of buildings and playgrounds, with a focus on sustainability.
- Safeguarding/Wellbeing: safeguarding incidents, concerns and behavioural issues are monitored for trends.
- Attendance and Transience – Monitoring of attendance in line with national averages.
- Play Schemes – Secure funding to deliver playschemes across both schools

Going Concern

Longsight Community Primary completed its tenth full year as a school with marginal surplus in the year. Unity Community Primary completed its ninth full year as an operating school and made a marginal surplus. On the basis of current results and planned budgets the Trustees are of the opinion that both schools of Big Life Schools have adequate resources to continue for the foreseeable future. For this reason it has adopted the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements.

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Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

Financial Review

Big Life Schools is made up of two schools Longsight Community Primary (LCP) and Community Primary (UCP). Total income for the year amounted to £4,024,000 (2022: £3,716,000) the increase in income mainly due to the additional funding through ESFA grants.

The surplus on operations (excluding fixed asset funds) for the year was £84k (2022: Deficit £245,000).

The deficit for the year on Fixed Asset Funds was £181k (2022: Deficit £201,000).

The valuation of the defined benefit pension scheme is now an asset but this has not been included in the accounts..

The Balance Sheet shows net assets of £8,291,000 (2022: £8,388,000).

Reserves Policy

The aim of Reserves is to:

- Reduce the risks to delivery and operations should Income levels fall for a period.
- Allow entry into new projects and initiatives that require investment, be paid in arrears or that may not be profitable in the early periods.

Reserve level

The Trust has accumulated restricted reserves and a small level of unrestricted reserves as shown on the Balance Sheet. A reasonable reserves level is an aim of the Trust to allow its schools to respond to the changing needs of its pupils and the environment. Reserves are also held to maintain the capital assets of the company when required. The Trust has reviewed its target reserves and set a current target for free reserves of £583,000. The Trust continuously reviews its budgets and forecasts and is working towards achieving the target level of reserves. The year-end level of free reserves (excluding fixed asset reserves and pension deficit) at the year-end was £509,000 (2022: £413,000).

Investment Policy

At the year-end Big Life Schools used its bank balances as a current account only. The overriding policy is to ensure that funds are available when required to ensure that liabilities are met when due.

Financial and Risk Management Objectives and Policies

Big Life Schools reviews its strategic, financial, operational and people risks on a regular basis throughout the year. The management, Committees and Board all identify and manage risks and contribute to the Risk register and the management of risk. The Risk Register identifies the key risks, the likelihood of those risks occurring, their potential impact on Longsight Community Primary and Unity Community Primary, the actions taken to date and actions to be taken. Risks are prioritised using a consistent scoring system.

Risk Management

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which Big Life Schools be exposed, in particular those related to the operation and finances and are satisfied that there are systems in place to mitigate any exposure to major risks. A formal review of Risk management is undertaken on a regular basis and the key controls used by the multi academy Trust include:

- Formal agendas for all committee and board activity;
- Terms of reference for all committees;
- Comprehensive planning, budgeting and management reporting;
- An organisational structure with clear lines of reporting;
- Formal written policies;
- Clear authorisation and approval levels; and
- Vetting procedures as required by law for the protection of the vulnerable.

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Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

Principle Risks and Uncertainties

The schools' principle risks are concerned with the delivery of education services for its pupils. The trustees have identified the principle risks as follows:

- Achieving the attendance target of 96%
- Achieving educational outcomes in classes with high transience
- The need to grow the MAT
- The importance of appointing skilled teaching staff in future periods
- Inflationary Pressures (Pay and Non-Pay)
- Cyber Security
- That buildings and external environments meet the needs of schools and nurseries.
- Maintaining provision and Ofsted grade of 'Good' for both schools.

All risks including these principle risks and uncertainties are reviewed at each Governors' meeting.

Fundraising

The school does not undertake any major fundraising activity.

Plans for Future Periods

The plan for future periods is to continue to build on the good standards established at both schools and includes:

- Growth of UCP towards its full capacity of 420 pupils.
- Develop Big Life Schools improvement strategy including school improvement, people and partners, governance, financial and operational sustainability, and engagement.
- Develop Big Life Schools improvement strategy including school improvement, people and partners, governance, financial and operational sustainability, and engagement.
- Developing partnerships with potential convertor schools.
- Securing additional contracts for service delivery
- Opening a new Free School in the Greater Manchester area

Auditor

Following the result of a tender exercise for external audit services, the auditors for 2023-24 will be proposed for re-appointment at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

Insofar as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware
- the 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 auditor is aware of that information.

By order of the board of trustees 12 December 2023 the trustees' report, incorporating the strategic report, has been approved by:



Andrea Heffernan
Trustee

Date: 12 December 2023

Big Life Schools

Governance Statement

for the year ended 31 August 2023

Scope of Responsibility

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

As trustees, we have reviewed and taken account of the guidance in the DfE's Governance Handbook and Competency Framework for Governance.

The Board of Trustees has delegated the day to day responsibility to the 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 Big Life Schools and the Secretary of State for Education. They are also responsible for reporting to the Board of Trustees any material weaknesses or breakdowns in internal control.

Governance

The Information on governance included here supplements that described in the Trustees' Report and in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities. The Board of Trustees has formally met four times during the year with two additional special meetings being held. Attendance during the year at meetings of the Board of Trustees was as follows:

Multi Academy Trust

MAT Trustees formally met six times during the year, two of these occasions were special meetings held to approve the SLA with The Big Life Company and one to approve the 2021/22 annual report and accounts. In addition, the Local School Governors Boards (which included at least one MAT Trustee) also met 4 times to support effective oversight of funds through regular reporting and communication with the Board members.

Attendance during the year at meetings of the Board of Trustees was as follows:

	Name	Number of meetings attended	Out of possible meetings
MAT	Fay Selvan	5	5
	Emma Perry (Chair)	6	6
	Annette Joseph (resigned 9 February 2023)	2	2
	Andrea Heffernan	5	6
	Phil Trohear	5	6
	Matt Wallis (appointed 9 December 2022)	4	4
	Liam McDaid	6	6
	Sandra Sinclair	4	6
	Lisa Brooks	4	6
	Colin Ralph	5	6

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Governance Statement for the year ended 31 August 2023

Governance (continued)

Local Governing Committees

The Local Governing Committees School's Board of Governors formally met four times during the year and Attendance during the year at meetings of the Board of Governors was as follows:

Longsight Community Primary

	Name	Number of meetings of attended	Out of possible meetings
LCP	Charmain Alman	4	4
	Liam McDaid (Chair)	4	4
	Rukhsana Ahmed	4	4
	Alia Ali-Beag	2	4
	Sandra Saleh	3	4
	Holly Eckersley (resigned 12 May 2023)	2	3
	Priscilla Nkwenti	3	4
	Jenna Saide (appointed 12 June 2023)	1	1
	Sadaf Zahra (resigned 3 May 2023)	1	3
	David Grimes	3	4

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Governance Statement for the year ended 31 August 2023

Unity Community Primary

	Name	Number of meetings of attended	Out of possible meetings
UCP	Fay Selvan (resigned 3 November 2023)	1	1
	Farheen Bizzari (resigned 25 September 2022)	0	0
	Luana Cheng (appointed 9 December 2022)	1	3
	Ben Cook (appointed 9 December 2022)	3	3
	Iqra Akhtar (appointed 9 December 2022)	3	3
	Sundus Salam (appointed 9 December 2022)	3	3
	Katy Burton (resigned 2 February 2023)	3	4
	Matt Wallis(Chair)	4	4
	Nia Simpson (on Maternity Leave)	0	4
	Shaun Jackson	3	4

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Governance Statement

for the year ended 31 August 2023

Review of Value for Money

The Accounting Officer has responsibility for ensuring that the MAT 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 trust's use of its resources has provided good value for money during each academic year, and reports to the board of trustees where value for money can be improved, including the use of benchmarking data where available. The accounting officer for the academy trust has delivered improved value for money during the year by:

- Improving educational outcomes of its students whilst operating within the financial constraints of the budget.
- Increasing collaboration between its academies, both educationally and financially, and the trust generating savings by negotiating trust wide contracts.
- Maximising third party income for its academies.
- Robust governance and oversight of Academy finances:

The Multi Academy Trusts' Directors are committed to ensuring that governance of the Multi Academy Trust's financial management is robust. The Directors and each Local Governing Body are cognisant of their responsibilities in ensuring that the Academy Trust resources are managed effectively, to support the objectives in the Multi Academy Trusts' Development Plan, whilst considering the long-term development of the Multi Academy Trust. Directors, Governors, Senior Leadership Teams and staff strive for the best possible outcomes for pupils, achieved at reasonable cost.

A qualified finance team provide assurance over the suitability of, and compliance with, financial systems and controls. Its purpose is ensuring that Big Life Schools has a high quality staff team and operates efficient and effective management of its financial resources. It is responsible for

- Setting budgets and monitoring financial performance
- Approving financial policies and procedures

All Directors, Governors and senior leaders are required to complete a Register of Pecuniary Interests form annually. The opportunity to declare any pecuniary interests is provided at all governors' meetings. The MAT takes a prudent approach to expenditure and has an embedded Scheme of Delegation and Financial Procedures that are supported by a formal purchase order system (EReq) to ensure that all expenditure is within appropriate limits. 2022-23 was the tenth year of operation for Longsight and the eighth year for Unity. Budgets are developed using Integrated curriculum and financial planning principles including assumptions taken from the ASCL.

For both schools staffing structures are regularly reviewed in the year to ensure that they were fit for purpose and appropriate to the changing needs of its pupils and respond to support the attainment objectives of the MAT.

The MAT has a high proportion of skilled and experienced teaching and associate staff, who are very effectively deployed to provide best value. Teachers' performance management Governance Statement and support staff appraisal systems are in place, and HR policies, such as Managing Absence, Whistleblowing are implemented.

The MAT's payroll is operated by the Big Life Company Ltd and detailed monthly reconciliations of payroll are undertaken by the Chief Financial Officer to ensure that payments to staff are correct.

Each school has an on-site schools business manager and takes advantage of its corporate membership position with The Big Life Company. The schools have a service level agreement with Big Life Company to provide financial expertise, establish procedures and ensure robust internal control. The services provided by Big Life Company are at cost and it is viewed by the Trust as most cost effective way to manage the finances of the academy. We have recently awarded Big Life Company the contract to oversee these services for the next 3 years, following a competitive procurement route, managed by TENET.

Individual budget holders are held accountable for the use of their budgets and are helped by experienced accountants in sourcing best value.

Big Life Schools

Governance Statement

for the year ended 31 August 2023

The MAT is a member of a local cluster group of schools and can procure such services as Speech and Language Therapy as a group making significant savings. For services such as catering, cleaning and caretaking Big Life Schools joined the Big Life group to negotiate contracts as part of a larger agreement thus obtaining economies of scale. Full written quotes from several suppliers were obtained before any contract was agreed.

For all purchases over £5,000, Finance were able to review, obtain sufficient information and challenge the accounting officer for all significant expenditure requests before approval to ensure that an assessment of cost and benefits were duly considered. All purchases under £5,000 should be chosen from a list of approved suppliers.

Assessing value for money

The MAT is committed to providing a high quality, inclusive education for all. Through regular assessment we have a clear picture of the potential and progress of every student and provide support and extension work for those students for who it is required. Pupils that receive pupil premium are clearly identified and their individual performance reviewed to ensure that progress attainment is achieved.

The Chief Finance Officer scrutinises the academy's budget forecast, ensuring that it complies with agreed policies and procedures, whilst challenging on spending.

Departmental and curriculum allocations are allocated to specifically meet day to day needs, thus ensuring that significant expenditure remains within the control of senior management. Careful and prudent management of financial resources has ensured that the annual expenditure budget remains within the total income received for the year.

Governance Review - Effectiveness

The MAT assesses its effectiveness on an on-going basis by means of conducting annual appraisals of trustees, skills audits and formulating and monitoring Board Development Plan. During the year one new MAT Trustee and five new governors for Local Governing Committees were appointed to meet identified skills gaps. Additionally Board Development Plans identified training to be undertaken. Board Strategy and Forward View events were held to further assess and embed the strategic direction of the MAT.

The MAT formally met four times in the year with two additional special meetings. Local Governing Committees (which report to the MAT board) met four times in the year. At least one MAT Board member is also a member of the Local Governing Committees. This arrangement ensures that effective oversight of funds is achieved. The Finance, Risk and Audit Committee (FRAC) met four times during the year with one additional special meeting to recommend the Trusts annual accounts for approval. The FRAC is attended by four Trustees and is Chaired by Andrea Heffernan. The CEO, Accounting Officer and CFO attend these meetings to provide information and advice to the Committee.

The MAT formally met 4 times in the year and in addition Local Schools Board (which report to the MAT board) met 6 times in the year. At least one MAT Board member is also a member of the Local Schools Board. This arrangement ensures that effective oversight of funds is achieved.

A report by the National Leaders in Governance in January 2023 (commissioned by the ESFA) concluded that it was evident that

'trustees are holding the CEO and SLT to account for educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff through well-developed performance management reports to the board meetings. The effective use of resources of the trust is ensured through financial planning, strong budget management and effective governance that the finance, risk and audit committee bring to the trust'.

Big Life Schools

Governance Statement

for the year ended 31 August 2023

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 multi 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 Big Life Schools for the year 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 year to 31 August 2023 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and financial statements.

The Risk and Control Framework

The Multi 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 board of trustees;
- regular 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;
- delegation of authority and segregation of duties;
- Identification and management of risks.

The board of trustees considered the need for a specific internal audit function and as required by the ESFA appointed an external company, Red-Rambler Ltd to perform an agreed programme of internal scrutiny work. Red-Rambler Ltd report to the Board (through the Audit and Risk Committee) on completion of their work .On an annual basis Red Rambler Ltd prepare an annual report outlining key findings, recommendations and conclusions..

For 2022-23 the internal scrutiny work included giving advice on financial matters and performing a range of checks on the academy trust's financial systems. In particular, the work carried out in 2022/23 covered Website compliance and Risk Management processes. The internal scrutiny work concluded there were no items of an urgent nature that required reporting to the Audit Committee and that overall risk was graded as Low.

Review of Effectiveness

The Accounting Officer 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 peer reviewer;
- the work of the external and internal auditors; and
- the work of the executive managers within the academy trust who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework.

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

Approved by order of the members of the board of trustees on 12 December 2023 and signed on its behalf by:



Andrea Heffernan
Trustee



Keith Smith
Accounting Officer

Big Life Schools

Statement on Regularity, Propriety and Compliance for the year ended 31 August 2023

As Accounting Officer of Big Life Schools I have considered my responsibility to notify the academy trust board of trustees and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) of material irregularity, impropriety and non-compliance with EFSA terms and conditions of funding, under the funding agreement in place between the academy trust and the Secretary of State. As part of my consideration I have had due regard to the requirements of the Academies Trust Handbook 2022.

I confirm that I and the academy trust board of trustees are able to identify any material irregular or improper use of funds by the academy trust, or material non-compliance with the terms and conditions of funding under the academy trust's funding agreement and the Academies Trust Handbook 2022.

I confirm that, other than the Finance Issue highlighted below, there were no instances of material irregularity, impropriety or funding non-compliance have been discovered to date and if any instances are identified after the date of this statement these will be notified to the Board of Trustees and the ESFA.

Finance Issue

Related Party Transactions

As outlined in the previous years accounts the Trust had an on-going transaction with Big Life Company Ltd (the Trust's sponsor) to provide Central Support services for the two schools to the value of £94,164 (excluding VAT) which included Budgeting Finance Payroll', Health & Safety, Information Governance, Quality, IT, Communication & Marketing, Legal Support, Human Resources, Strategic & Business Planning and Company Secretarial Services.

The services provided by Big Life Company to Big Life Schools have always been provided at a significant discount on actual costs and evidence of this arrangement was provided to the ESFA. The ESFA advised that the above transactions did not meet their requirements in that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the services supplied to the trust by Big Life Company Ltd were procured through an open and fair process as required at paragraph 5.57 of the Academies Financial Handbook (AFH) and that a competitive tendering process was in place as required at paragraph 2.28 of the AFH.

Therefore, as required by the ESFA during 2022-23 Big Life Schools undertook a full market tender exercise to evidence that the services supplied to the trust by Big Life Company Ltd were procured through an open and fair process. External consultants were employed to administer the tender and one bid was received which was Big Life Company (which was as expected and as informed to the ESFA previously, given the significant discount that Big Life Company offered to Big Life Schools – see paragraph above).

The ESFA approved the results of the tender on 21 July 2023 and Big Life Company were accepted as the successful bid to provide services for 2023/24 onwards.



Keith Smith
Accounting Officer

Date: 12 December 2023

Big Life Schools

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities for the year ended 31 August 2023

The trustees (who act as governors of Big Life Schools and 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 Annual Accounts Direction issued by the Education 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 period. 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 year. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 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; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

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

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

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

Approved by order of the members of the Board of Trustees on 12 December 2023 and signed on its behalf by:



Andrea Heffernan
Trustee

Big Life Schools

Independent Auditor's Report

to the Board of Trustees of Big Life Schools

for the year ended 31 August 2023

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Big Life Schools

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Big Life Schools (the 'academy trust') for the year ended 31 August 2023, which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 August 2023 (including Income and Expenditure Account), Balance Sheet as at 31 August 2023, Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 August 2023, and Notes to the Financial Statements including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and the 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 trust'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 & 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 Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the academy trust in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

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

Big Life Schools

Independent Auditor's Report

to the Board of Trustees of Big Life Schools

for the year ended 31 August 2023

Other information

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, 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 audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

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

- the information given in the trustees' report (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; and
- 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 trust and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the strategic report and the directors' 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 directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement set out on page 21 the trustees (who are also the directors of the academy trust 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 trust'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 trust or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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

Big Life Schools

Independent Auditor's Report to the Board of Trustees of Big Life Schools for the year ended 31 August 2023

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 specific procedures for this engagement and the extent to which these are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

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

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows:

- the engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- we identified the laws and regulations applicable to the academy through discussions with trustees and other management, and from our knowledge and experience of the academy sector.
- we focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the academy, including the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011, and the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023 and Academies Trust Handbook 2022, both issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency
- we assessed the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations identified above through making enquiries of management and inspecting legal correspondence.
- identified laws and regulations were communicated within the audit team regularly and the team remained alert to instances of non-compliance throughout the audit.

We assessed the susceptibility of the academy's financial statements to material misstatement, including obtaining an understanding of how fraud might occur, by:

- making enquiries of management as to where they considered there was susceptibility to fraud, their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud.
- considering the internal controls in place to mitigate risks of fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations.

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- performed analytical procedures on material balances for which robust, substantive analytical procedures have been undertaken to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships.
- tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions.
- investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions.

There are inherent limitations in our audit procedures described above. The more removed that laws and regulations are from financial transactions, the less likely it is that we would become aware of non-compliance. Auditing standards also limit the audit procedures required to identify non-compliance with laws and regulations to enquiry of the directors and other management and the inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

Material misstatements that arise due to fraud can be harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

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 auditor's report.

Big Life Schools
Independent Auditor's Report
to the Board of Trustees of Big Life Schools
for the year ended 31 August 2023

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the academy trust'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 trust's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the academy trust and the academy trust's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Helen Knowles LLB, FCA

For and on behalf of Beever and Struthers, Statutory Auditor
One Express
1 George Leigh Street
Manchester
M4 5DL

Date: 19 December 2023

Big Life Schools

Independent Reporting Accountants Assurance Report on Regularity for the year ended 31 August 2023

In accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated 18 September 2023 and further to the requirements of the Education & 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 Big Life Schools during the period 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 Big Life Schools and ESFA in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to Big Life Schools 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 Big Life Schools and ESFA, for our work, for this report, or for the conclusion we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of Big Life Schools' accounting officer and the reporting accountant

The accounting officer is responsible, under the requirements of Big Life School's funding agreements with the Secretary of State for Education dated 20 March 2015 and the Academies Financial 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.

Approach

We conducted our engagement in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023 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 trust's income and expenditure.

The work undertaken to draw our conclusions includes:

- Review and testing of financial systems of internal control
- Sample testing of transactions
- Discussions with management

Big Life Schools

Independent Reporting Accountants Assurance Report on Regularity for the year ended 31 August 2023

Independent Reporting Accountant's Assurance Report on Regularity to Big Life Schools and the Education & Skills Funding Agency (CONTINUED)

Conclusion

In the course of our work nothing has come to our attention which suggests that in all material respects the expenditure disbursed and income received during the period 1 September 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.

Matter 1

Related Party Transactions - Our testing on related party transactions identified that the Service Level Agreement between Big Life Schools and its parent entity, The Big Life Company Limited is in excess of £20k per annum. As such it falls into the scope of the Academies Trust Handbook paragraph 5.42, which requires that Trusts obtain prior approval from the ESFA for all related party transactions in excess of £20k. Approval from the ESFA has been sought by the Trust previously, as per correspondence dated 14 November 2022, the ESFA have not approved the trust's related party transaction requests for the last four academic years, dating back to October 2019. We have noted that The ESFA have approved the trust's related party transaction request on 21 July 2023 for the 2023/24 academic year however the issue remains for 2022/23. The trust is therefore in breach of the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) and its Funding Agreement.



Helen Knowles LLB, FCA
Reporting Accountant
Beever and Struthers

Date: 19 December 2023

Big Life Schools

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 August 2023

	Note	Unrestricted funds £'000	Restricted General Funds £'000	Restricted Fixed Asset Funds £'000	Total 2023 £'000	Total 2022 £'000
Income from:						
Donations and capital grants	2	-	-	13	13	13
<i>Charitable activities:</i>						
Funding for the academy trust's educational operations	3	159	3,852	-	4,011	3,703
Total		159	3,852	13	4,024	3,716
Expenditure on:						
<i>Charitable activities:</i>						
Academy trust educational operations	4,5	174	3,753	194	4,121	4,162
Other						-
Total	4,5	174	3,753	194	4,121	4,162
Net (expenditure)/income		(15)	99	(181)	(97)	(446)
Transfers between funds	12	-	11	(11)	-	-
Other recognised gains and losses						
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension schemes	12, 20	-	-	-	-	737
Net movement in funds		(15)	110	(192)	(97)	291

Big Life Schools

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 August 2023

		Unrestricted funds	Restricted General Funds	Restricted Fixed Asset Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	Note	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Reconciliation of funds						
Net movement in funds		(15)	110	(192)	(97)	291
Total funds brought forward at 1 September 2022	12	231	182	7,975	8,388	8,097
Total funds carried forward at 31 August 2023		216	292	7,783	8,291	8,388

All of the academy trust's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two financial periods.

The notes on pages 32 to 55 form part of these accounts.

The comparative SOFA is included in note 23.

Big Life Schools
Balance Sheet
as at 31 August 2023
Company Number: 07945230

	Note	2023 £'000	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2022 £'000
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	9		7,781		7,975
			<u>7,781</u>		<u>7,975</u>
Current assets					
Debtors	10	101		41	
Cash at bank and in hand		852		663	
		<u>953</u>		<u>704</u>	
Liabilities					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	(443)		(285)	
			<u>510</u>		<u>419</u>
Net current assets			<u>510</u>		<u>419</u>
Total assets less current liabilities			8,291		8,394
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	20		-		(6)
Total net assets			<u>8,291</u>		<u>8,388</u>
Funds of the academy trust					
Restricted funds					
Fixed asset fund	12	7,783		7,975	
Restricted income fund	12	292		188	
Pension reserve	12	-		(6)	
Total restricted funds			<u>8,075</u>		<u>8,157</u>
Unrestricted income funds	12		<u>216</u>		<u>231</u>
Total funds			<u>8,291</u>		<u>8,388</u>

The financial statements on pages 28 to 55 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on 12 December 2023 and are signed on their behalf by:



Andrea Heffernan
Trustee

Big Life Schools
Statement of Cash Flows
for the year ended 31 August 2023

	Note	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash provided by operating activities	15	176	210
Cash flows from investing activities			
	16	13	(10)
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		189	200
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 September 2022		663	463
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 August 2023	17	852	663
		<hr/>	<hr/>

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

1. Accounting Policies

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

Basis of Preparation

The financial statements of the academy trust, which is a public benefit entity under FRS102, have been prepared under the historical cost convention in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard Applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102), 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 (FRS102) (Charities SORP (FRS102)), the Academies Accounts Direction 2021 to 2022 issued by EFA, the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006.

Big Life Schools meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS102.

Basis of Preparation

These financial statements for Big Life Schools are prepared in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (FRS 102) and the Charities SORP 2019 (SORP 2019).

Going Concern

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

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

1. Accounting Policies (continued)

Income

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

- Grants Receivable

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 entitlement of receipt its recognition is deferred and included in creditors as deferred income. Where entitlement occurs before income is received, the income is accrued.

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

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

- Donations

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

- Other Income

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

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.

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

1. Accounting Policies (continued)

- Expenditure on Raising Funds

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

- Charitable Activities

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

All resources expended are inclusive of irrecoverable VAT.

Tangible Fixed Assets

Assets costing £3,000 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. 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 such assets is charged to the restricted fixed asset fund in the Statement of Financial Activities so as to reduce the fund over the useful economic life of the related asset on a basis consistent with the academy trust's depreciation policy. 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 other than leasehold land, at rates calculated to write-off the cost of each asset on a straight-line basis over its expected useful life, as follows:-

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------|
| • Long leasehold buildings | 50 years |
| • Furniture and equipment | 4 years |
| • Computer equipment | 4 years |

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.

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

1. Accounting Policies (continued)

Liabilities

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

Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the academy trust has an obligation at the reporting date as a result of a past event which it is probable will result in the transfer of economic benefits and the obligation can be estimated reliably.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the provision is based on the present value of those amounts, discounted at the pre-tax discount rate that reflects the risks specific to the liability. The unwinding of the discount is recognised within interest payable and similar charges.

Leased Assets

Rentals under operating leases are charged on monthly basis over the lease term.

Financial instruments

The academy trust only holds basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and financial liabilities of the academy trust and their measurement basis 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 10. Prepayments are not financial instruments. Amounts due to the charity'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 11. 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 charity's wholly owned subsidiary are held at face value less any impairment.

Taxation

The academy trust 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 trust 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.

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

1. Accounting Policies (continued)

Pensions Benefits

Retirement Benefits to employees of the academy trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). 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 trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. As stated in note 20, the TPS is a multi-employer scheme and there is insufficient information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of the academy trust 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/asset is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses.

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

Fund Accounting

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

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

Restricted general funds comprise all other restricted funds received and include grants from the Department for Education.

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

1. Accounting Policies (continued)

Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgement

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

Critical accounting estimates and assumptions

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

- Local Government Pension Scheme

The present value of the Local Government Pension Scheme defined benefit liability depends on a number of factors that are determined on an actuarial basis using a variety of assumptions. The assumptions used in determining the net cost (income) for pensions include the discount rate. Any changes in these assumptions, which are disclosed in note 20, 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 2022. 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.

- Tangible fixed assets (see note 9)

Tangible fixed assets are depreciated over their useful lives, taking into account residual values, where appropriate. The actual lives of the assets and residual values are assessed annually and may vary depending on a number of factors. In re-assessing asset lives, factors such as technological innovation, product life cycles and maintenance programmes are taken into account. Residual value assessments consider issues such as future market conditions, the remaining life of the asset and projected disposal values.

Critical areas of judgement

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees have made the following judgements:

- Determine whether there are indicators of impairment of the group's tangible assets. Factors taken into consideration in reaching such a decision include the economic viability and expected future financial performance of the asset and where it is a component of a larger cash-generating unit, the viability and expected future performance of that unit.

The main critical areas relating to the financial statements are the overall profitability, the management of net current assets, the fixed assets value and during the year the management of financial matters within budget agreed by the Trustees. The year-end has resulted in a minor deficit for the year but maintained a positive net current assets position throughout the year to ensure that creditors are paid when due. The fixed assets position reflects the addition of the new school building and the depreciation of assets over their useful lives. Close performance against budget is monitored by management on a monthly basis and reported to the Trustees.

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

2. Donations and Capital Grants

	Restricted Funds £'000	Total 2023 £'000	Total 2022 £'000
Capital grants	13	13	13
	13	13	13
<i>2022 analysis by fund</i>	13	13	13

During the year capital grant income of £13k (2022: £383k) was received.

3. Funding for the Academy Trust's Educational Operations

	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Total 2023 £'000	Total 2022 £'000
DfES/ESFA revenue grants				
General Annual Grant (GAG)	-	2,940	2,940	2,798
Other DfES/ESFA Grants		518	518	387
	-	3,458	3,458	3,185
Other government grants				
Local Authority Grants	-	394	394	344
	-	394	394	344
Other income from the academy trust's educational operations	159	-	159	174
	159	-	159	174
	159	3,852	4,011	3,703
<i>2022 analysis by fund</i>	174	3,529	3,703	3,703

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

4. Expenditure

	Staff Costs	Non-Pay Expenditure		Total 2023	Total 2022
	£'000	<i>Premises</i> £'000	<i>Other</i> £'000	£'000	£'000
Academy Trust educational operations:					
• Direct costs	2,760	306	748	3,814	3,829
• Allocated support costs	171	-	136	307	333
	<u>2,931</u>	<u>306</u>	<u>884</u>	<u>4,121</u>	<u>4,162</u>

Net income/(expenditure) for the period includes:

	Total 2023 £'000	Total 2022 £'000
Depreciation	194	214
Fees payable to auditor for:		
• Audit	15	12
• Non-audit	3	2
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

5. Charitable Activities

	Total 2023 £'000	Total 2022 £'000
Direct costs – educational operations	3,814	3,829
Support costs – educational operations	307	333
	<u>4,121</u>	<u>4,162</u>
Analysis of support costs:	Total 2023 £'000	Total 2022 £'000
Support staff costs	171	133
Other support costs	108	166
Governance Costs	28	34
Total support costs	<u>307</u>	<u>333</u>

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

5. Charitable Activities (continued)

Total cost analysis by Academy

Expenditure incurred by each academy during the year was as follows:

	Teaching and Educational Support Staff Costs 2023 £'000	Other Support Staff Costs 2023 £'000	Educational Supplies 2023 £'000	Other Costs (excl Dep'n) 2023 £'000	Total Costs 2023 £'000
Longsight Community Primary	999	-	165	147	1,311
Unity Community Primary	1,519	-	246	236	2,001
Big Life Schools Trust	-	413	-	202	615
Total	2,518	413	411	585	3,927

	Teaching and Educational Support Staff Costs 2022 £'000	Other Support Staff Costs 2022 £'000	Educational Supplies 2022 £'000	Other Costs (excl Dep'n) 2022 £'000	Total Costs 2022 £'000
Longsight Community Primary	1,043	-	125	121	1,289
Unity Community Primary	1,612	-	222	210	2,044
Big Life Schools Trust	-	368	-	247	615
Total	2,655	368	347	578	3,948

6. Staff

a. Staff costs

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Staff costs during the period were:		
Wages and salaries	2,333	2,209
Social security costs	177	170
Operating costs of defined benefit pension schemes	364	543
	2,874	2,922
Supply staff costs	57	101
	2,931	3,023

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

6. Staff (continued)

b. Staff numbers

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

	2023 No.	2022 No.
Teachers	31	30
Administrations and support	57	66
Management	3	2
	<u>91</u>	<u>98</u>

The average number of persons employed by the academy during the period expressed as full time equivalents (35 hours per week) was as follows:

	2023 No.	2022 No.
Teachers	30	27
Administrations and educational support	46	54
Management	3	2
	<u>79</u>	<u>83</u>

c. Higher paid staff

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension and employer's national insurance contributions) that exceeded £60,000 was:

	2023 No.	2022 No.
£70,000 - £80,000	3	3
£65,000 - £70,000	-	-
£60,000 - £65,000	1	-
	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>

d. Key management personnel

The key management personnel of the academy trust comprise the trustees and the senior management as listed on page 3. The total amount of employee benefits (including employer pension and national insurance contributions) received by key management personnel for their services to the academy trust was £352,471 (2022 £320,114).

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

7. Related party transactions – Trustees’ remuneration and expenses

During the year ended 31 August 2023, £nil remuneration was paid to the trustees and travel and subsistence expenses totalling £0 (2021: £0) was paid to no trustees.

8. Trustees and officer insurance

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

9. Tangible Fixed Assets

	Long Leasehold land and buildings £'000	Furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Total £'000
Cost				
At 1 September 2022	9,029	384	478	9,891
Additions	-	-	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
At 31 August 2023	9,029	384	478	9,891
Depreciation				
At 1 September 2022	1,088	363	465	1,916
Charged in year	178	7	9	194
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
At 31 August 2023	1,266	370	474	2,110
Net book values				
At 31 August 2023	7,763	14	4	7,781
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
At 31 August 2022	7,941	21	13	7,975
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

10. Debtors

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Trade Debtors	12	1
VAT recoverable	53	9
Prepayments and accrued income	36	30
	<u>101</u>	<u>40</u>

11. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Trade creditors	140	57
Other creditors	37	30
Accruals and deferred income	266	198
	<u>443</u>	<u>285</u>

Deferred income

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Deferred income at 1 September 2022	80	52
Released from previous years	(80)	(46)
Resources deferred in the period	165	74
	<u>165</u>	<u>80</u>

Deferred income is income received in the reported financial period which is intended for use within a future period. The deferred income balance at the end of the financial year was due to the academy trust holding funds received in advance for School Meals, SEN and other MAT development projects.

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

12. Funds

	Balance at 1 September 2022	Incoming Resources	Resources expended	Gains, Losses and Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Restricted general funds					
General Annual Grant (GAG)	53	2,939	(2,846)	(9)	137
Pupil Premium	-	255	(255)	-	-
Property Sinking Fund	135	-	-	20	155
Covid Premium	-	-	-	-	-
Pension reserve	(6)	-	6	-	-
Other Funds	-	658	(658)	-	-
	<u>182</u>	<u>3,852</u>	<u>(3,753)</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>292</u>
Restricted fixed asset funds					
DfE/EFA grants	7,975	13	(194)	(11)	7,783
	<u>7,975</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>(194)</u>	<u>(11)</u>	<u>7,783</u>
Total restricted funds	<u>8,157</u>	<u>3,865</u>	<u>(3,947)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,075</u>
Unrestricted funds					
Unrestricted funds	231	159	(174)	-	216
Total unrestricted funds	<u>231</u>	<u>159</u>	<u>(174)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>216</u>
Total funds	<u><u>8,388</u></u>	<u><u>4,024</u></u>	<u><u>(4,121)</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>8,291</u></u>

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

- General Annual Grant (GAG) must be used for the normal running costs of the Trust's academies.
- Other restricted funds comprise funds received from the DfE, EFA, Local Authorities and other government bodies for the use of trust development.
- Under the funding agreement with the Secretary of State, the Academy Trust was not subject to a limit on the amount of GAG that it could carry forward at 31 August 2023.

During the year a transfer of £10k was made from the GAG Fund to Restricted Fixed Asset Funds in respect of fixed asset additions.

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements
for the year ended 31 August 2023

12. Funds (continued)

	Balance at 1 September 2021	Incoming Resources	Resources expended	Gains, Losses and Transfers	Balance at 31 August 2022
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Restricted general funds					
General Annual Grant (GAG)	59	2,792	(2,753)	(45)	53
Pupil Premium	88	217	(305)	-	-
Other Funds	-	491	(491)	-	-
Sinking Fund	100	-	-	35	135
Covid Premium	32	23	(55)	-	-
Pension reserve	(535)	6	214	737	(6)
	<u>(256)</u>	<u>3,529</u>	<u>(3,818)</u>	<u>727</u>	<u>182</u>
Restricted fixed asset funds					
DfE/EFA grants	8,166	13	(214)	10	7,975
	<u>8,166</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>(214)</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>7,975</u>
Total restricted funds	<u>7,910</u>	<u>3,542</u>	<u>(4,032)</u>	<u>737</u>	<u>8,157</u>
Unrestricted funds					
Unrestricted funds	187	174	(130)	-	231
Total unrestricted funds	<u>187</u>	<u>174</u>	<u>(130)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>231</u>
Total funds	<u><u>8,097</u></u>	<u><u>3,716</u></u>	<u><u>(4,162)</u></u>	<u><u>737</u></u>	<u><u>8,388</u></u>

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

12 Funds (continued)

Total funds analysis by academy

Fund balances were allocated as follows:

	Balance at 31 August 2023 £'000	Balance at 31 August 2022 £'000
Longsight Community Primary	593	542
Unity Community Primary	149	59
Big Life Schools	(234)	(172)
Total before fixed assets and pension reserve	508	429
Restricted fixed asset fund	7,783	7,965
Pension Reserve	-	(6)
	8,291	8,388

13. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances at 31 August 2023 are represented by:

	Unrestricted funds £'000	Restricted general funds £'000	Restricted fixed asset funds £'000	Total funds £'000
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	7,783	7,783
Current assets	239	714	-	953
Current liabilities	-	(445)	-	(445)
Pension scheme liability	-	-	-	-
Total net assets	239	269	7,783	8,291

Fund balances at 31 August 2022
represented by

	Unrestricted funds £'000	Restricted general funds £'000	Restricted fixed asset funds £'000	Total funds £'000
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	7,975	7,975
Current assets	231	472	-	703
Current liabilities	-	(285)	-	(285)
Pension scheme liability	-	(6)	-	(6)
Total net assets	231	181	7,975	8,388

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

14. Capital Commitments

There were no capital commitments.

15. Reconciliation of net income/(expenditure) to net cash inflow from operating activities

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Net (expenditure)/ income for the reporting period	(97)	291
<i>Adjusted for:</i>		
Capital grants from DfES and other capital income	(13)	(13)
Depreciation (note 9)	194	214
Defined benefit pension scheme cost less contributions payable (note 20)	(6)	(530)
Decrease/(Increase) in debtors	(61)	178
Increase in creditors & provisions	159	70
Net cash provided by/(used in) Operating Activities	176	210

16. Cash flows from investing activities

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	-	(23)
Capital grants from DfE/ESFA	13	13
Net cash provided by financing activities	13	(10)

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

17. Analysis of cash

	At 1 September 2022 £'000	Cashflow £'000	At 31 August 2023 £'000
Cash in hand and at bank	663	189	852
Total cash outflow and cash equivalents	663	189	852

	At 1 September 2021 £'000	Cashflow £'000	At 31 August 2022 £'000
Cash in hand and at bank	463	200	663
Total cash outflow and cash equivalents	463	200	663

18. Contingent liabilities

During the period of the Funding Agreement, in the event of the sale or disposal by other means of any assets for which a Government capital grant was received, the Academy is required either to re-invest the proceeds or to repay the EFA the same proportion of the sale or disposal as equates with the proportion of the original cost met by the Secretary of State.

Upon termination of the Funding Agreement, whether as a result of the Secretary of State or the Academy serving notice, the Academy shall repay to the Secretary of State sums determined with reference to

- the value, at the time, of the Academy's site and premises and other assets held for the purpose of the Academy; and
- the extent to which expenditure incurred providing those assets was met by payments by the Secretary of State under the Funding Agreement.

19. Members' liabilities

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.

20. Pension and similar obligations

The Trust's employees belong to two principal pension schemes: the Teachers' Pension Scheme England and Wales (TPS) for academic and related staff; and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for non-teaching staff, which is managed by Greater Manchester Pension Fund. 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.

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

20. Pension and similar obligations (continued)

The Trust's employees belong to two principal pension schemes: the Teachers' Pension Scheme England and Wales (TPS) for academic and related staff; and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for non-teaching staff, which is managed by Greater Manchester Pension Fund. 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 teachers in academy trusts. 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.

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 period amounted to £320,000 (2021/22: £251,000).

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

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

The total pension contributions paid to TPS in the period amounted to £451,000 (2021/22: £355,000) of which employers contributions were £320,000 (2021/22: £251,000).

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

20. Pension and similar obligations (continued)

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

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

Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a funded defined-benefit scheme, with the assets held in separate trustee-administered funds. The total contribution made for the year ended 31 August 2023 was £115,000 (2022: £94,000), of which employer's contributions totalled £86,000 (2022: £70,000) and employees' contributions totalled £29,000 (2022: £24,000). The agreed contribution rates for future years are 17.2 per cent for employers and between 5.5 to 12.5 per cent for employees.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013.

Principal actuarial assumptions

	At 31 August 2023	At 31 August 2022
Rate of increase in salaries	3.75%	3.8%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment / inflation (CPI)	2.95%	3.05%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	5.2%	4.25%
Commutation of pensions to lump sums (pre Apr 08/post Apr 08)	55%	55%

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

	At 31 August 2023	At 31 August 2022
<i>Retiring today</i>		
Males	20.1	20.3
Females	23.3	23.2
<i>Retiring in 20 years</i>		
Males	21.2	21.6
Females	23.9	25.1

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

20. Pension and similar obligations (continued)

Sensitivity Analysis

	At 31 August 2023	At 31 August 2022
	£000	£000
Discount Rate +0.1%	9	18
Discount Rate -0.1%	(9)	(18)
Mortality Assumptions – 1 year increase	(11)	(18)
Mortality Assumptions – 1 year decrease	11	18
CPI rate +0.1%	(9)	(18)
CPI rate -0.1%	9	18

The academy trust's share of the assets and liabilities in the scheme and the expected rates of return were;

	Fair value at 31 August 2023	Fair value at 31 August 2022
	£'000	£'000
Equity instruments	472	299
Debt instruments	94	61
Property	54	39
Cash	54	35
Total market value of assets	674	433
Present value of scheme liabilities	(480)	(439)
Surplus/(Deficit) in the scheme	194	(5)

The actual return on scheme assets was -1.3% (2022:1.3%).

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities

	2023	2022
	£'000	£'000
Current service cost (net of employee contributions)	(90)	(267)
Interest income on Assets	20	6
Interest cost on obligations	(21)	(17)
Total operating charge	(91)	(278)

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

20. Pension and similar obligations (continued)

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

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
At 1 September	439	869
Current service cost	90	267
Interest cost	21	17
Employee contributions	23	24
Actuarial (Gain)/Loss	(93)	(738)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
At 31 August	480	439

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

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
At 1 September	432	333
Interest income	20	6
Employer contributions	69	70
Employee contributions	24	24
Return on assets excluding amounts included in net interest	(26)	(1)
Other Experience Remeasures	155	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
At 31 August	674	432

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

21. Related party transactions

Owing to the nature of the academy trust 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 trust has an interest. All transactions involving such organisations are conducted at arm's length and in accordance with the trust's financial regulations and normal procurement procedures. The following related party transaction took place in the period of account.

The Multi Academy Trust has a Service Level Agreement with the Big Life Company Ltd, The Corporate shareholder of Big Life Schools. The agreement provides for the supply of various central services such as Finance, Legal and Payroll services, Communications and Marketing activity and Clerk to the Governors.

In addition to this the Big Life Company Ltd pays all staff costs and re-charges these costs to the Trust. There is no profit gained from the re-charges made to Big Life Schools.

For 2022/23 all costs amounted to £3,106,000 of which the activities relating to the SLA amounted to £94,164.

For 2021/22 all costs amounted to £2,895,000 of which the activities relating to the SLA amounted to £134,304.

As at 31 August 2023 Big Life Company Owed £7,545 to Big Life Schools.

As at 31 August 2022 Big Life Company owed £795 to Big Life Schools.

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

22. Central Services

The academy trust has provided the following central service to its academies during the year:

- Finance
- Legal
- Payroll & HR services
- Communications Marketing and Training
- Time from dedicated and qualified management and Clerk to the Governors.

The trust charges for these services on the following basis:

A not for profit, real cost basis apportioned to the relative size of the school based on GAG income

The actual amounts charged during the year were as follows:

	2023	2022
	£000	£000
Longsight Community Primary	83	81
Unity Community Primary	109	105
Unity Nursery	15	13
	<hr/> 207 <hr/>	<hr/> 199 <hr/>

The central Academy Trust currently operates on a planned deficit as resources are invested in cross academy projects such as curriculum development and community engagement. As the Trust grows the central trust will break even.

Big Life Schools

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023

23 Comparative SOFA

The SOFA for 2021-22 is shown below

	Note	Unrestricted funds £'000	Restricted General Funds £'000	Restricted Fixed Asset Funds £'000	Total 2022 £'000	Total 2021 £'000
Income from:						
Donations and capital grants	2	-	-	13	13	383
<i>Charitable activities:</i>						
Funding for the academy trust's educational operations	3	174	3,529	-	3,703	3,352
Total		174	3,529	13	3,716	3,735
Expenditure on:						
<i>Charitable activities:</i>						
Academy trust educational operations	4,5	130	3,818	214	4,162	3,599
Other						-
Total	4,5	130	3,818	214	4,162	3,599
Net income/(expenditure)		44	(289)	(201)	(446)	136
Transfers between funds	13	-	(10)	10	-	-
Other recognised gains and losses						
Actuarial (loss)/gain on defined benefit pension schemes	12, 20	-	737	-	737	(389)
Net movement in funds		44	438	(191)	291	(253)