

# Executive Pay Policy

## 1 Purpose

Our purpose is to help autistic children and young people to be themselves and realise their ambitions. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities. Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything we do.

This policy applies to both Ambitious about Autism (AaA), the national charity standing with autistic children and young people, and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (AaAST, a multi academy trust that runs and supports the development of special education needs schools) to enable autistic children and young people to learn, thrive and achieve.

This policy sets out how the Board determines, reviews, and governs executive pay, ensuring decisions are **transparent, proportionate, defensible**, and aligned with the values, performance, and charitable purpose in representing value for money.

## 2 Statutory Guidance

- The Academy Trust Handbook 2025 - Schedule of Musts 2. 29 Executive Pay
- Non maintained Special Schools Regulations 2015
- Department for Education Setting Executive Salaries Guidance (Nov 2025)
- Charity Commission Regulations and Guidance
- National Governance Association – Guidance on Setting Executive Pay (non-statutory)

## 3 Policy Statement

To deliver on our goals it is essential that we can attract and retain people with the right values, experience, knowledge and skills required to lead. Having a competitive reward offering is one of the many ways in which the charity can secure the best people to achieve our ambitious goals. Thereby bringing professional expertise, significant leadership experience and strong capability to deliver our objectives. AaA/AaAST has adopted a clear and transparent policy that not only ensures the selection and retention of high calibre leaders but also ensures our donors, supporters, staff, volunteers, beneficiaries and public recognise the importance of accountability in all aspects of our work including the determination of pay and benefits of the senior team.

## 4 Key Principles

Our approach to executive pay is underpinned by the following principle:

*To pay a fair salary and reward package to attract and retain skilled and expert senior leaders for AaA/AaAST. Salaries and benefits should be competitive within the charity and education sectors, proportionate to the complexity of each role, responsibility, in line with our objectives and affordable.*

To achieve this, the Executive Pay policy aims to follow a robust evidenced-based process and:

- Take account of pay in similar organisations in the UK charity and education sectors market but not to compete on salaries with the private sector.
- Monitor charity sector salary trends through survey databases and reports produced by providers such as Brightmine, Croner and ACEVO; Education and Skills Funding Agency Academy Schools Financial benchmarking reports; and, where necessary, commission external benchmarking exercises.
- Ensure performance is reviewed by the Nominations and Remuneration Committee and recommended to the Joint Group Board Committee on an annual basis.
- Apply performance-related pay elements only where required by the relevant market sector.
- Mirror national standards for professional groups, such as Headteachers.

Policy Owner	Director of People & Culture	Next Review Date:	July 2027
Policy No.	041	Version No.	3.0

- Adhere to the Academy Trust Handbook Schedule of Musts 2.29.
- Monitor, benchmark and account for the difference between ELT pay and the lowest paid roles within AaA/AaAST, as well as median and average pay for the organisation.
- Minute pay decisions and rationale recording what evidence was considered
- Any severance payment must be: In line with contractual and statutory requirements, Value for money, supported by a clear business case and approved by the board.
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This policy applies to the Chief Executive (who is also the Accounting Officer of AaAST) and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

To successfully recruit and retain a high caliber ELT, it is essential that the salary and benefits offered are competitive in the relevant market. The market sector used for making this assessment will depend on the relevant area of profession the ELT member is recruited for and the value of the level of skills, knowledge and experience required performing in the role. This can range from the not-for-profit sector, such as other charities of similar size and complexity, to the public sector (for example for roles in education) or commercial sector (for roles such as finance, HR or IT).

Whilst the charity does not seek to compete on salary terms with the commercial sector, it does need to know what the comparator salaries are for those roles in commercial settings and the pay differentials should candidates consider a move to our not-for-profit special education sector.

The pay bands for those earning over £100,000 are published each year in the consolidated AaA/AaAST Annual Report & Accounts in £10,000 bandings. In addition, a summary of this policy and the current salary of the Chief Executive/Accounting Officer is available on the AaA and AaAST websites.

Further disclosure of names and individual salaries is not available as it is not felt to be in the interests of our beneficiaries and supporters.

## 5 Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees of AaA and AaAST are responsible for defining the Executive Pay policy and deciding on the salaries of the Chief Executive, and the Executive Leadership Team.

The Board delegates preparatory responsibility to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee of AaA and AaAST. This Committee is chaired by a trustee. The role of the Chair is to oversee the proper administration of the Executive Pay policy, review the evaluation of ELT (including the Chief Executive) performance and recommend changes to executive pay to the Board of Trustees.

The Nominations and Remuneration Committee meets at least once a year to discuss Executive pay, with the Chief Executive and the Director of People & Culture attending in an advisory and non-decision-making capacity, when required by the Committee.

The Director of People and Culture is responsible for providing benchmarking evidence to support the Nomination and Remuneration Committee making informed decisions.

## 6 Other Key Policies

- 033 AaA Pay and Benefits Policy
- 033a AaAST Pay and Benefits Policy

## 7 Monitoring Requirements

This policy will be reviewed by the Director and People and Culture and Nominations and Remuneration Committee and approved by the Joint Group Board Committee on an annual basis.

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