Finance, audit and risk committee terms of reference

Name of trust:	Cygnus Academies Trust
Name of committee:	Finance, Audit, and Risk
Date agreed:	September 2025
Review date:	*Terms of reference must be reviewed by the full trust board annually.*

Chair of committee:	Ashish Majithia
Clerk:	*Hannah Thompson*
Membership:	*Trustees*
Quorum:	*Minimum of three trustees*
Meetings:	*Three times a year.*

The committee will monitor, evaluate and report on:

Finance

1. review an annual budget, ensuring resources are allocated in line with the trust's strategic priorities and curriculum plans
2. present the annual balanced budget to the trust board for approval
3. review and approve a realistic three-year financial plan, taking into account the trust's vision, known risks and opportunities
4. receive the trust's management accounts in order to monitor the trust's cash position and income and expenditure against the approved budget
5. review pupil number estimates (that underpin revenue projections) termly
6. report back to each meeting of the trust board, alerting them to potential problems and significant variations to the approved budget at the earliest opportunity

7. ensure that the trust board's approach to pay and benefits is transparent, proportionate and justifiable
8. develop a framework for the pay of the senior executive leader and the leadership team
9. comply with statutory requirements to publish trust staff rates of pay and benefits.
10. ensure that sufficient funds are allocated for staff pay increments
11. monitor spending of pupil premium, PE and sport premium (and other relevant premiums); ensure that funding is spent effectively and is having the intended impact on pupil outcomes
12. review and approve any adjustments to the trust's approved budget (subject to the scheme of delegation)
13. undertake detailed scrutiny and recommend approval of the school resource management self-assessment checklist annually
14. ensure that the trust's financial procedures are complied with
15. review and act upon any issues identified by benchmarking against similar trusts, internal or external scrutiny
16. ensure that the trust follows basic procurement rules and achieves best value for money when acquiring goods and services
17. review, adopt and monitor all policies delegated by the board:

Delegated policies:

Policies (that may be delegated to the committee to review) include:

- Reserves
- Charging and remissions
- Governor allowances and expenses

Audit and risk

18. oversee and approve the trust's programme of internal scrutiny
19. support development and review of the trust's risk management policy, setting out the framework the trust has adopted for risk management.
20. ensure that risks are being addressed appropriately through internal scrutiny
21. evaluate the adequacy of the trust's internal control framework, including financial and non-financial controls and management of risks and report this to the trust board
22. assess whether procedures are designed effectively and efficiently, and check whether agreed procedures have been followed
23. review the external auditor's plan each year
24. review the annual report and accounts
25. review the auditor's findings and actions taken by the trust's managers in response to those findings
26. review findings from other assurance activities by third parties including ESFA financial management and governance reviews, funding audits and investigations
27. assess the effectiveness and resources of the external auditor – refer to section 4.17 of ATH
28. produce an annual report of the committee's conclusions on the above assessment to advise the board of trustees and members, including recommendations on the reappointment or dismissal or retendering of the external auditor, and their remuneration
29. to seek assurance that the risks identified are those which may occur, for example, operational risk, financial risk, compliance risk, regulatory and legal risk, major accident

30. review the ratings and responses on the risk register to inform contingency and business continuity planning and the programme of work, ensuring risks and control measures are adequately identified and modified as appropriate
31. provide reports for each full trust board meeting, highlighting emerging risks or significant anomalies at the earliest opportunity
32. agree a programme of work annually to deliver internal scrutiny that provides coverage across the year
33. agree who will perform the work
34. consider reports at each meeting from those carrying out the programme of internal scrutiny
35. consider progress in addressing recommendations
36. recommend to members the appointment of an external auditor (in accordance with the trust's articles of association)
37. receive the external auditors' annual plan, annual report, and accounts and recommend appropriate actions to the trust board in response to the findings
38. to review the trust's insurance cover in compliance with its legal obligations

Sustainability

39. To review the sustainability leadership and climate action plans within the setting.