

All Saints Schools Trust



ASST Procurement Policy 2025-26

Date Policy approved:	Dec 2025	Chair of Trust Board:	Chair of Finance & Audit Committee:
Date of next review:	Dec 2026	<i>Signed:</i>	<i>Signed:</i>
		<i>Print name: Russell Ayling</i>	<i>Print name: Peter Robinson</i>

Background

The purpose of this policy and associated procedures is to ensure that the ASST (Trust) maintains and develops systems of financial control which conform to the requirements both of propriety and of good financial management. It is essential that these systems operate properly to meet the requirements of the Trust's Funding Agreement with the Department for Education (DfE).

The policy covers all aspects of purchasing and the placement of contracts by the Trust and its academies. The Trust wants to achieve the best value for money from all its purchases. This means getting what is needed in the correct quality, quantity and time at the best price possible. A large proportion of the purchases will be paid for with public funds and therefore there is a need to maintain the integrity of these funds by following the general principles of:

Probity: it must be demonstrable that there is no corruption or private gain involved in the contractual relationships of the Trust or its academies;

Accountability: the Trust is publicly accountable for its expenditure and the conduct of its affairs;

Fairness: that all those dealt with by the academy are dealt with on a fair and equitable basis.

Value for Money:

- **Economy:** Minimising the costs of resources used
- **Efficiency:** Relationship between outputs and the resources used to produce them
- **Effectiveness:** Extent to which objectives have been achieved

This policy relates to the Trust and all of the Trust's academies. Adherence to the principles and procedures contained in this policy is mandatory for all staff.

This policy is designed to be consistent with:

- DfE Academy Trust Handbook
- Trust Articles of Association / Constitution
- Master and Supplemental Funding Agreements
- HM Treasury's "Regularity, Propriety and Value for Money"
- The Procurement Act 2023.

This policy is an appendix to the main Trust Financial Regulations Policy.

Process	Value	Delegated Authority
Order Approval	up to £3,000	Executive HT / Headteacher
Order Approval	£3,001 to £5,000	CFO
Order Approval	£5,001 to £20,000	CEO
Order Approval	Over £20,000 to £50,000	Finance & Audit Committee
Order Approval	£50,001 to £180,000	ASST Board
3 competitive quotations (or appropriate benchmarking)	£5,000 to £50,000 (exception on emergency basis – to be overseen by CFO/CEO)	Finance & Audit Committee to oversee
Formal Tender Process required	Over £50,000	Formal tendering process required in accordance with procedures below
Authority to accept other than lowest quote / tender		Delegated authority / ASST Board

1 Routine Purchasing

In order to select the most appropriate procurement process, the whole-life value of the contract should be calculated. This should include initial purchase and implementation costs, and ongoing maintenance and support costs throughout the life of the contract.

Routine purchases with a whole-life cost up to the tender limit (see separate *ASST Authority Amounts*) can be requested by designated budget holders and are authorised as per the *Scheme of Delegation*, according to the value of the order being placed.

A quote or price must always be obtained before any order is placed. ASST Central Team (CT) have a list of regularly used suppliers. However, if the purchaser considers that better value for money can be obtained by ordering from a supplier not regularly used by the Trust then this must be discussed and agreed with the CT. New supplier forms must be submitted by the schools to ensure CT can verify the supplier and add to Sage Intacct (finance system) prior to orders being placed.

For orders of a value higher than the three quote threshold, but below the tender, multiple quotes (normally at least three) must be obtained and a justification must be provided where the lowest priced quote is not selected. Exceptions to this rule may apply if there are fewer than three companies capable of providing the required goods or services, there are appropriate benchmarking sites to utilise for cost comparison and assuring of best value or it is an emergency situation (to be overseen by CFO/CEO). IT procurement is to use the DfE Crown Commercial Services IT Purchasing Platform where this is appropriate.

All orders must be made in writing using an internal school order requisition form. Requisition orders must bear the signature of the member staff requesting the order; they will be countersigned by the Executive Headteacher (EHT) – or delegated to Head of School - and must be input onto Sage Purchasing to ensure adequate budgetary provision exists before the order is processed. Electronic authorisation by the EHT on Sage is required before submitting the order to the supplier. Online orders follow the approval workflow defined within the system, which is similar in principle to the paper approach.

Service contracts

Where possible the Trust will negotiate service contracts for the whole Trust, in order to achieve economies of scale and best value.

If an academy wishes to enter into any service contract, the Headteacher must obtain authorisation from the CFO/CT to confirm that no alternative contract is in place elsewhere in the Trust.

All service contracts with a duration in excess of 1 year or a value in excess of a defined monetary threshold must be authorised by the CFO/CEO.

Written quotations should be obtained by the purchase originator or budget holder and should be attached to the order paperwork and forwarded to CT to be retained with the invoice.

New contracts likely to cost in excess of the tendering are subject to the competitive tendering process laid in section **Error! Reference source not found.** below and require Trust Board level authorisation.

Annual renewal of existing contracts which fall within the scope of previously approved multi-year quotes or tenders are not subject to the same limits and process. They may be paid directly under the authorisation gained previously. However, existing single-year contracts should not be renewed automatically with an existing supplier without giving due consideration to potential alternative provision and best value for money.

2 Procurement Procedures

The UK's Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) came in to force on 24 February 2025 and aims to simplify and streamline all public sector procurement. It seeks to create a more flexible, transparent and effective system, particularly benefiting small businesses and social enterprises by opening up public procurement to new entrants. PA23 also introduces stronger rules on supplier exclusion and enhanced payment terms.

The Trust and its schools are contracting authorities and the relevant thresholds, above which PA23 applies, are as follows*:

- **Goods and Services** - £214,904 including VAT which at the current VAT rate of 20% is £179,085 before VAT. This applies to the total value of the contract ie a 3-year contract with an annual value of £100k would be assessed as a £300k contract.
- **Works contracts** - £5,372,609 including VAT which at the current VAT rate of 20% is £4,477,174 before VAT. As these amounts apply across the whole of the public sector, the DfE are encouraging schools to adopt procurement policies that are judged fit for purpose for individual circumstances whilst being PA23 compliant.

Where PA23 applies, to ensure compliance, the Trust will continue with operating a tender process either through a DfE approved framework or by using a specialist consultant. The relevant thresholds are as follows:

- **Major procurement – Category A.** Above £179,085 for Goods & Services – PA23 does apply. Tender process operated via a DfE approved framework or a specialist procurement consultant, reporting to the Board. Final decision to be made by the Board at their next scheduled meeting.
- **Major procurement – Category B.** From £179,086 to £4,477,174 for Works – PA23 does not apply. However, given the significance of the amounts involved, a tender process would be operated via a DfE approved framework or a specialist procurement consultant, likely with surveying credentials, reporting to the Board. Final decision to be made by the Board at their next scheduled meeting.
- **Major procurement – Category C.** Above £4,477,174 for Works – PA23 does apply. Tender process operated via a DfE approved framework or a specialist procurement consultant, likely with surveying credentials, reporting to the Board. Final decision to be made by the Board at their next scheduled meeting.

Use of Purchasing Consortia and Frameworks

Frameworks are widely used agreements allowing contracting authorities to call off goods, works or services from a pre-approved list of suppliers over a fixed period. Where possible, a framework agreement should be used for purchases with a whole-life value in excess of the tender limit specified. Frameworks are available through Crown Commercial Services, ESPO, Crescent Purchasing Consortium for instance and the DfE Deals for [Schools](#).

A framework agreement is an arrangement that a 'contracting authority' (e.g. a local authority or a public sector buying organisation) makes with suppliers of goods, works or services, and sets the terms under which a purchase can be made.

Each framework will have guidelines that you must follow to select a supplier and place an order, and it will require the Trust to either:

- make a direct selection, i.e. choose the best-value option for the requirements from a list of suppliers
- run a mini-competition, i.e. ask all suppliers on the framework to send a bid (or 'tender') for the requirements

Use of such organisations has the following benefits:

- **Price** – economies of scale provided by the consortium should result in competitive prices from suppliers
- **Speed** – by using an established framework, suppliers are familiar with tender documents and specs and are able to respond and submit their tender responses in reduced time.
- **Reduced administration** – The consortium will normally offer downloadable tender documents for things like specification, scoring, contracts etc. which provide an excellent starting point for further tailoring, significantly reducing the work of defining and initiating the tender process.
- **Proven suppliers** – all suppliers that are party to a given framework have already been assessed and scored on previous tender exercises and meet a minimum scoring threshold.

Tenders

There are three forms of tender procedure: Open, Competitive Flexible Procedure and Requests for Proposals (RFP) and the circumstances in which each procedure should be used are described below. The CT will manage the tender process and will agree the tendering method in advance with the Finance & Audit Committee.

Open Tender: This is a single stage tendering procedure where all potential suppliers are invited to tender. This is the preferred method of tendering, as it is most conducive to competition and the propriety of public funds. The tender only needs to be open for 25 days (10 days if a Planned Procurement Notice has been published).

Competitive Flexible Procedure: This is a new tool introduced under the Procurement Act 2023 and replaces multiple previous procedures giving more freedom to design procurement exercises to meet needs:

- flexible design allowing stages, requirements and timelines to be determined,
- all suppliers have an equal opportunity to participate,
- suitable for most procurements including complex or innovative,
- greater efficiency by tailoring the process,
- a stage for optional negotiation can be included.

Requests for Proposals: This is a formal method of inviting suppliers to submit proposals when the procurement value is 'below threshold'*. The Light Touch Regime threshold limit (eg catering) is £663,640 (including VAT).

The key features of this procurement route are:

- suppliers submit detailed proposals addressing specific requirements
- no requirement to publish any notices on the Find a Tender Service,
- can operate on an 'invitation only' basis ensuring bids are received from only selected suppliers,
- usually a one stage process enabling shorter timetable and provides a structured yet flexible evaluation process.

Preparation for Tender

When preparing a specification for a tender process, full consideration will be given to:

- objective of project
- overall requirements
- technical skills required
- after sales service requirements
- form of contract.

If a restricted tender is to be used then an invitation to tender must be issued. If an open tender is used an invitation to tender may be issued in response to an initial enquiry.

An invitation to tender issued by the Trust or its academies will include the following:

- introduction/background to the project
- scope and objectives of the project
- technical requirements
- implementation of the project
- explanation of how the tenders will be evaluated
- terms and conditions.

Criteria for selection

The criteria should be defined in advance of placing the tender and potential suppliers should be made aware of the criteria that will be used. The scoring matrix should define the relative weighting of the different criteria that are being used. Relevant criteria are likely to fall into one of the following categories:

Financial

- like should be compared with like and if a lower price means a reduced service or lower quality this must be borne in mind when reaching a decision
- care should be taken to ensure that the tender price is the total price and that there are no hidden or extra costs
- Is there scope for negotiation?

Technical/Suitability

- qualifications of the contractor
- relevant experience of the contractor
- descriptions of technical and service facilities
- certificates of quality/conformity with standards
- quality control procedures
- details of previous sales and references from past customers.

Other Considerations

- pre-sales demonstrations
- after sales service
- financial status of supplier.

Suppliers in financial difficulty may have problems completing contracts and in the provision of after sales service. It may be appropriate to have an accountant or similarly qualified person examine audited accounts etc.

Tender submissions

The invitation to tender will state the date and time by which the completed tender document should be received by the Trust. All tenders submitted should be opened at the same time and the tender details should be recorded in the presence of at least one member of the Trust and the CFO.

A separate record should be established showing:

- the nature of the goods or materials to be supplied or the works or services to be provided
- the name of each supplier or subcontractor quoting/tendering
- the date and time of receipt of each quotation/tender
- the date and time of opening of the quotations/tenders
- the amount of each quotation/tender
- evaluation criteria and results
- the names of all individuals present at the opening of the quotations/tenders.

Tender evaluation and decision making

The evaluation process should involve at least two people. Those involved should disclose all interests, business and otherwise, that might impact upon their objectivity. If there is a potential conflict of interest then that person must withdraw from the tendering process.

Those involved in making a decision must take care not to accept gifts or hospitality from potential suppliers that could compromise or be seen to compromise their independence.

Full records should be kept of all criteria used for evaluation and a report should be prepared for the Finance & Audit Committee highlighting the relevant issues and recommending a decision.

Each supplier should be scored against each of the defined criteria as objectively as possible based on their response (and any subsequent demonstrations that form part of the tender process). The scoring result sheets should be kept and stored with the tender records.

Where required by the conditions attached to a specific grant from the DfE, the department's approval must be obtained before the acceptance of a tender. The accepted tender should be the one that scores most highly when assessed against the evaluation criteria. All parties should then be informed of the decision.