Multi Academy Trust Policy

Common Trust Policy, Use as Published

TRUST PAY POLICY 2026-27

SUPPORT STAFF

Date adopted by Trust Board: May 2026

Date of Review: May 2026

Date of next Review: May 2027

Version	Date	Author	Change Description
1.1	May 25	N Jackman	Update of Aquila Pay Levels
1.2	May 26	M Scally	Update of Aquila Pay Levels Inclusion of recruitment incentives (11.4)

Contents

	Page Number
Part A Policy Statement	
1 Policy Statement	1
2 Scope	1
3 Pay Arrangements & Date	2
Part B Framework for Pay Decisions	
4 Annual Pay Review	2
5 Notification of determinations	2
6 Equality considerations	2
Part C Pay for Support Staff	
7 Support Staff Pay Levels	2
8 Pay on appointment	3
9 Pay progression for support staff	3
10 Pay awards during Maternity Leave	3
11 Discretionary allowances and additional payments	3
11.1 Allowances	3
11.2 Overtime	3
11.3 Cash awards	4
11.4 Retention Bonus for Hard to Recruit areas	4
12 Acting up arrangements	4
13 Redetermination of grade	4
14 Salary protection	4
15 Termination of employment	5
Appendix 1: Terms of Reference	
Aquila	6
Governing Body of School	6
Pay Committee	6
Local Governing Body	6
Appendix 2: Pay Framework for Support Staff	6
Appendix 3: Retention Bonus for Hard to Recruit areas	7

Part A – Policy Statement

1 Policy Statement

This policy sets out the framework for making pay decisions for all support staff employees across Aquila, The Diocese of Canterbury Academy Trust.

A central aim of the Academy Trust's HR strategy is to develop Aquila as an employer of choice and in this aim we fully understand the importance of ensuring all employees are appropriately recognised and rewarded for the contribution they make to the performance of their school and to outcomes for all pupils.

Pay and reward decisions will be made within the framework of Aquila Pay Levels for Support Staff following annual pay bargaining with recognised unions, linked to Kent Scheme Conditions of Service, as appropriate. Aquila will use the discretions and flexibilities available within these terms and conditions to recruit, reward and retain staff with the skills, experience and aptitudes to meet the needs of all children in Aquila schools.

Aquila requires all schools within the Academy Trust to ensure that all employees are treated fairly and equitably and that pay determinations are managed in an objective, transparent manner whilst keeping within the overall budget available. Aquila will budget for Trust cost of living awards on annual basis and in good time prior to the timeframe for pay progression decisions.

Pay on appointment will be determined with reference to the accountabilities of the role and the skills / knowledge required to fulfil the responsibilities of the post.

Each school will review the pay position of all eligible employees on an annual basis. All pay decisions will give careful consideration to the cost of living increase. Where an employee has transferred into the Trust and has enhanced terms that are subject to TUPE, these enhanced terms will continue to apply.

Each school must ensure that employees are informed in a timely manner about any pay determination.

Whilst we understand pay is an important element in the recruitment, recognition and retention of staff Aquila is fully committed to developing effective reward strategies other than pay. In this respect Aquila has invested in making regular coaching opportunities available to all staff across schools in our Academy Trust as part of a wider learning and development strategy for all. We regard this as an important mechanism to support staff to achieve their potential and Aquila will continue to explore other strategies to develop all staff and to recognise their efforts, achievements and contributions.

This policy explains:

The School's pay framework for Support Staff
The criteria which will be considered when making pay decisions
The process by which pay determinations / decisions will be made
The role of Governors, the Executive/Headteacher / Line Manager with regards to pay decisions

2 Scope

This Policy applies to all current support staff employees of all academies in The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust including the Central Trust Team.

3 Pay Arrangements and Date

Aquila requires all schools within the Academy Trust to follow this policy and to ensure pay decisions and arrangements are fully consistent with the provisions set out below.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees annually or earlier if there is a need. Where changes are proposed this will involve consultation with the recognised unions.

Part B – Framework for Pay Decisions

4 Annual Pay Review

Aquila will determine annually the values for pay progression for all support staff in Academy Trust schools through entering into active trade union pay bargaining agreement with recognized unions: Unison Kent, GMB, NEU, Voice, Unite and ASCL. The Trust will enter into negotiations on pay as per the Trade Union Recognition & Facilities Agreement dated 1st March 2018.

Decisions relating to support staff eligible for salary progression will be effective from 1st September in any one school year.

CEO & CFO pay progression is determined by the Board of Trustees in conjunction with a benchmarking process and in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook.

5 Notification of pay determinations

The Trust will notify all employees of their new salary in writing via a salary assessment letter.

6 Equality Considerations

Aquila is committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness and consequently requires schools within the Academy Trust to give full regard to equality and equal pay considerations when making pay determinations. The local governing body and the Trust board will monitor the outcomes and impact of this policy on an annual basis, including trends in progression across specific groups of staff to assess its effect and the school's continued compliance with equalities legislation. It is a requirement that the Trust report annually to the Government Equalities Office and publish our Gender Pay Gap report on our website.

Part C – Pay for Support Staff

7 Support Staff Pay Level

Support staff will be appointed in accordance with the Aquila Pay Level Framework as attached in Appendix 2.

The consolidated Aquila pay award will be at least equal to or better than the KCC pay award (to be confirmed in the pay bargaining agreement). Aquila will not lag behind Kent pay. Annual leave

entitlements will be at least equal to KCC for all support staff and there will be no detriment to support staff annual leave.

8 Pay on Appointment

On appointment, the Executive/Headteacher will determine the starting salary to be offered within Aquila Pay Levels. New starters will normally be appointed at the minimum of the appropriate level for the role. However, the Executive/Headteacher has discretion to pay above the minimum in recognition of prior skills, qualifications and experience.

Where a member of support staff joins the school from another school, within or outside Aquila, there is no obligation for the school to match their current grade or salary.

Where an employee works part time (i.e. less than 37 hours per week / 52.143 weeks per year) their salary will be pro rata to the hours and weeks worked plus holiday entitlement. Employees engaged on a term time only basis will receive a payment in respect of their annual leave entitlement incorporated within their annual salary.

9 Pay Progression for Support Staff

Annual pay progression will be determined with reference to the Trust Cost of Living Pay Award.

10 Pay awards during maternity leave

An employee on maternity leave will be given any pay increase they would have received had they not been on maternity leave.

11 Discretionary allowances and additional payments

<u>All payments made under this section must be confirmed in writing with reason for payment.</u>

11.1 Allowances

The following allowances may be paid to eligible staff:

First Aid Allowance – payable to Employees undertaking first aid duties who have an appropriate recognised first aid at work qualification
Lead Lunchtime Supervisor- payable to employees undertaking this responsibility
SEN Allowance- payable to Teaching Assistants working in Special Schools and Special Units only

11.2 Overtime

Overtime for employees graded APL D or less who work in excess of 37 hours in any week will be paid as follows:

Monday to Friday	Saturday / Sunday	Public Holidays
1.33	X 1.33	X 2

Overtime for employees graded APL D or less who work part time will be paid at flat rate unless or until 37 hours have been completed, after which point they will be paid as per the table above.

PLEASE NOTE Overtime can only be worked with the prior written approval of the Executive/Headteacher and all claims must be appropriately authorised by the Executive/Headteacher or Line Manager as appropriate.

11.3 Cash Awards

The Governing Body / Executive/Headteacher may at its discretion make an Honorarium Cash Award to recognise members of Support Staff who have undertaken a specific or significant task or project outside the normal scope and expectation of their role. Cash Awards to an individual will not exceed £500.

11.4 Retention Bonus for Hard to Recruit Posts

In accordance with the provisions of the Department for Education School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and this policy, the Trust may award recruitment and retention incentives where it considers these necessary to secure and retain the services of high-quality teachers and support staff in posts that are difficult to recruit to or retain (see appendix 3).

12 Acting up arrangements

Where a member of staff takes on additional accountabilities on a temporary basis eg secondment the employee will move to a higher grade commensurate with the additional responsibilities for a time limited period, and a contract variation will be issued.

13 Redetermination of Grade

Where the Executive/Headteacher or employee determines that there has been a permanent change in the accountabilities of a post, a role may be regraded. Written notification will be provided of any change in salary or grade.

Any redetermination will be made with reference to provisions of the Kent Scheme conditions of service for Support Staff and will take place within a reasonable timeframe. Support staff also have the right to appeal the outcome of any regrading process.

Salary changes as a result of a regrading will take effect from the beginning of the month in which the assessment took place, however, in the event the procedure is unduly delayed, the salary change will be backdated to when the benchmarking activity took place. Where an individual is upgraded they will normally be placed at the bottom of the new grade or receive a salary increase of at least 2.5%, whichever is the greater.

14 Salary Protection

Employees who are engaged on Kent Scheme terms may be eligible to be paid salary protection for up to 18 months should the grade of their post be reduced or if they are redeployed to a lower graded post as a result of organisational change subject to the rules of the Kent Scheme. In this situation the sum of the difference between the two salaries would be protected for 18 months.

Where the redeployment is to a post which is more than two grades below the Employee's previous post, the Loss of Earnings compensation will only apply to a maximum of two grades above the grade of the new substantive post.
Changes in hours / weeks worked will not attract salary protection.

15 Termination of Employment

In accordance with individual contracts, when leaving employment, the Trust will ensure that all contractual pay, including holiday is calculated and any underpayment or overpayment will be adjusted in the employee's final salary.

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Aquila

It is the role of Aquila to:

- establish the Academy Trust's pay policy, including the criteria and framework for pay decisions including moderation across the Academy Trust and to review these provisions annually
- determine the annual budget for pay and any uplift to be applied to the school's pay scales for teachers and support staff

Governing Body of the school

It is the role of the Governing Body of this school to:

- accept the pay policy for application in this school
- determine which functions are to be delegated to the Pay Committee / Executive/Headteacher
- to ensure the school meets its statutory and contractual obligations with regards to pay

Appendix 2: Pay Framework for Support Staff

Trust cost of living pay award 3.80% – 6.86%

APL	Bottom	Top	Bottom	Top
A	26432	26432	13.70	13.70
B	26497	28057	13.73	14.54
C	28182	32990	14.61	17.10
D	33059	41756	17.14	21.64
E	41849	46234	21.69	23.96
F	46471	54292	24.09	28.14
G	54552	62250	28.28	32.27
H	62557	72664	32.43	37.66
I	73018	81259	37.85	42.12
J	81444	91574	42.21	47.46
K	91804	103650	47.58	53.72
L	103849	126006	53.83	65.31
M	129286	153378	67.01	79.50
N	160796	190919	83.34	98.96
O	191438	260412	99.23	134.98
P	261131	267827	135.35	138.82

Appendix 3: Retention Bonus for Hard-to-Recruit Posts

In accordance with the provisions of the Department for Education School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and the support staff Pay Policy, the Trust may award recruitment and retention incentives where it considers these necessary to secure and retain the services of high-quality teachers and support staff in posts that are difficult to recruit to or retain.

Where a post has been formally identified as hard to recruit or retain, the Trust may approve a retention bonus payable to staff who remain in post for two years. The purpose of the payment is to support workforce stability in areas where the Trust has experienced sustained recruitment challenges.

Retention bonuses will normally be structured as a one-off lump sum payment made following two full academic years of successful continuous service in the designated post. The value of any payment will be determined by the Trust in advance and confirmed in writing to the employee.

All retention bonuses will:

- be clearly linked to a specific post identified as hard to recruit or retain
- be approved in advance through the Trust's governance process
- specify the amount, duration and review arrangements
- be paid as a one-off lump sum unless otherwise stated
- be non-pensionable and not consolidated into base salary

The Trust Board retains overall responsibility for ensuring that recruitment and retention payments are applied consistently, represent value for money and remain affordable within the Trust's staffing budget.

Eligibility Criteria

A teacher or support staff may be eligible for a retention bonus where all of the following conditions are met:

- The applicant was appointed to a post formally designated by the Trust HR as hard to recruit or retain.
- The employee has completed two full academic years of continuous service in that post.
- The employee remains employed in the post at the point the payment is due.
- The employee has successfully completed statutory induction, where applicable.
- The employee has demonstrated satisfactory performance and professional conduct, as evidenced through the Trust's appraisal arrangements.
- The employee is not subject to formal capability procedures or disciplinary sanctions at the time the payment is made.
- The employee has not submitted notice of resignation prior to the payment date.

Meeting the eligibility criteria does not automatically entitle an employee to a payment; all retention bonuses remain discretionary.

Identification of Hard-to-Recruit Posts

The Trust may designate a post as hard to recruit or retain where evidence demonstrates two or more of the following:

- Two or more unsuccessful recruitment campaigns
- a limited or low-quality applicant field

- reliance on supply staff or temporary appointments
- subject-specific or phase-specific national shortages
- local labour market pressures

Evidence supporting this designation will be recorded and retained as part of the Trust's governance process.

Approval and Financial Controls

To ensure transparency and affordability, the following approval process will apply:

1. Recommendation
   The Headteacher may recommend the use of a retention bonus where a post has demonstrated recruitment difficulty. The recommendation must include:
   - the rationale for the payment
   - the proposed value of the bonus
   - confirmation that funding is available within the staffing budget.
2. Trust Approval
   The proposal must be approved by the Trust's Pay Committee or delegated Trust leadership, in accordance with the Trust's scheme of delegation.
3. Written Confirmation
   Where approved, the new employee will receive written confirmation outlining:
   - the amount of the retention bonus
   - the qualifying service period
   - the expected payment date
   - any conditions attached to the payment.
4. Payment Limits
   The Trust will set a maximum retention bonus value within its financial regulations to ensure payments remain proportionate and affordable.
5. Review and Reporting
   All recruitment and retention payments will be reviewed annually and reported to the Trust Board as part of pay policy oversight.

Governor Decision Framework

Determining Hard-to-Recruit or Retain Posts

This framework supports governing bodies or Trust governance structures when considering whether a post should qualify for a retention bonus under the Trust's pay policy and the provisions permitted within the Department for Education School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD).

Objective evidence across the following areas must be considered before approving a retention payment.

1. Recruitment Evidence
The post may be considered hard to recruit where there is clear evidence of recruitment difficulty, including:

- Two or more unsuccessful recruitment campaigns
- Fewer than three appointable candidates in the most recent recruitment round
- Withdrawal of preferred candidates before appointment
- Posts requiring repeated advertisement over an extended period

- Reliance on agency staff or supply teachers to fill the vacancy

Evidence should include recruitment data, advertisement dates, and applicant numbers

2. Workforce Stability Risk
Indicators may include:

- Difficulty replacing the role due to local or national teacher shortages
- The teacher holding specialist knowledge or expertise essential to the curriculum
- Impact on school improvement priorities if the post becomes vacant
- Previous disruption caused by turnover in the role

3. Financial Affordability
Before approving a retention bonus, the finance officer must confirm:

- The payment can be fully funded within the existing staffing budget
- The payment represents value for money compared with recruitment costs
- The payment does not create unsustainable long-term financial commitments

Typical comparison costs may include:

- recruitment advertising
- agency fees
- supply teacher costs
- leadership time spent on recruitment

4. Equity and Consistency
Governors must ensure that decisions:

- are fair and transparent
- do not create unintended pay inequalities
- are applied consistently across the Trust

All decisions should be formally recorded.

Retention Bonus Approval Template
This template should be completed when a school proposes a retention bonus payment.

Retention Bonus Approval Record

School:

Post Title:

Employee Name:

Date of Appointment:

1. Rationale for Hard-to-Recruit Designation

Please summarise the evidence supporting the designation:
☐ Multiple unsuccessful recruitment campaigns
☐ Low number of suitable applicants
☐ Reliance on temporary or agency staff
☐ Local recruitment challenges

Details:

2. Recruitment History

Number of advertisements for the role:

Dates advertised:

Number of applicants:

Number of appointable candidates:

3. Risk to School if Post Becomes Vacant

Please outline the potential impact on:

- curriculum delivery
- school improvement priorities
- pupil outcomes

Summary:

4. Proposed Retention Bonus
Amount proposed: £
Payment structure: One-off lump sum after two years

Proposed payment date:

5. Financial Approval
Annual staffing budget impact: £

Funding confirmed within staffing budget:
☐ Yes

Business Manager / Finance Officer confirmation:

Name:
Signature:
Date:

6. Headteacher Recommendation

I confirm that the above information is accurate and that the proposed payment aligns with the Trust Pay Policy.

Headteacher Name:
Signature:
Date:

7. Trust Approval

Decision:

☐ Approved
☐ Not Approved

Approved retention bonus amount: £

Executive / Committee / Trust body approving:

Chair / authorised signatory:

Signature:
Date:

8. Payment Confirmation

Payment authorised by HR / Payroll:

Name:
Signature:
Date: