Risk Management Policy 2026

EKC Schools Trust

Approval Date: September 2026 Next Approval: September 2027

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1. Policy Statement

EKC Schools Trust is committed to maintaining a robust and systematic approach to risk management to safeguard its pupils, staff, assets, reputation, and financial sustainability.

The Trust recognises that effective risk management is essential to achieving its strategic objectives and ensuring compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

The Trust Board has overall responsibility for risk management and internal control, ensuring that risks are appropriately identified, assessed, managed, and monitored across all levels of the organisation.

The Trust promotes a culture of:

A. Proactive risk identification and management
B. Transparency and accountability
C. Continuous improvement in internal control systems

2. Risk Appetite

The Trust Board defines risk appetite as the level of risk it is willing to accept in pursuit of its objectives.

The Trust adopts:

A. **Low Risk Tolerance** in relation to:
   - Safeguarding and child protection
   - Financial compliance and stewardship
   - Health and safety
   - Legal and regulatory compliance

B. **Moderate risk tolerance** in relation to:
   - Educational improvement and innovation
   - Strategic growth and development

Risk appetite is reviewed annually by the Trust Board.

3. Risk Management Framework

The Trust operates a structured risk management framework to ensure consistency and effectiveness.

3.1. Risk Identification

Risks are identified through:

a) Being raised at the Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee Review
b) Strategic and operational planning processes

c) Performance monitoring and KPIs
d) Internal scrutiny and audit reports
e) External audit and regulatory findings
f) Incident and safeguarding reporting
g) Changes in legislation or guidance

3.2. Risk Assessment

All risks are assessed using a standard methodology based on:

a) Likelihood (1–5)
b) Impact (1–5)

This produces a risk score used to prioritise risks and determine appropriate responses.

3.3. Risk Registers

The Trust maintains:

a) A **Trust Risk Register** for strategic risks
b) **Local Academy Risk Registers** for operational risks

Each risk entry includes:

- Description of the risk
- Risk category
- Assigned risk owner
- Current controls in place
- Inherent and residual risk scores
- Planned mitigating actions
- Review date

3.4. Risk Categories

Risks are categorised to support effective oversight:

a) Strategic
b) Financial
c) Operational
d) Compliance
e) Safeguarding
f) Reputational

3.5. Risk Mitigation

Appropriate controls are implemented to:

a) Reduce likelihood

b) Minimise impact
c) Transfer or avoid risk where appropriate

3.6. Monitoring and Review

a) Trust-level risks are reviewed **termly** by the Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee
b) Local risks are reviewed **termly** by Local Governing Bodies
c) High or emerging risks are escalated immediately

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. Trust Board

The Trust Board is responsible for:

a) Setting the overall risk management strategy and culture
b) Determining the Trust's risk appetite
c) Approving the risk management framework
d) Monitoring significant risks
e) Ensuring effective systems of internal control
f) Reviewing risk management annually
g) Ensuring appropriate risk management training is in place

4.2. Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee

The Committee is responsible for:

a) Appointing internal and external auditors and receiving their reports
b) Reviewing the Trust Risk Register termly
c) Scrutinising risk management processes and controls
d) Monitoring trends and emerging risks
e) Overseeing internal scrutiny arrangements
f) Ensuring audit findings inform risk management improvements
g) Reporting to the Trust Board on risk assurance

4.3. Local Governing Bodies

Local Governing Bodies are responsible for:

a) Reviewing academy-level risk registers
b) Monitoring local risks and controls
c) Escalating significant risks to the Trust
d) Promoting a strong risk management culture

4.4. Trust Leadership Team

The Leadership Team is responsible for:

a) Embedding risk management across the Trust
b) Monitoring high-level risks and implementing actions
c) Ensuring alignment between strategic plans and risks
d) Reporting risks to the Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee
e) Ensuring staff are aware of risk management processes

4.5. Headteachers

Headteachers are responsible for:

a) Maintaining academy risk registers
b) Identifying and managing operational risks
c) Reporting significant risks to the Trust Leadership Team
d) Promoting good risk management practice within their schools

4.6. All Staff

All staff are responsible for:

a) Identifying and reporting risks or incidents
b) Following Trust policies and procedures
c) Supporting effective internal control systems

5. Risk Reporting

The Trust operates a clear reporting structure:

a) Staff report risks to Headteachers
b) Headteachers report to the Trust Leadership Team
c) The Leadership Team reports to the Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee
d) The Committee provides termly assurance reports to the Trust Board

Urgent or high-level risks are escalated immediately.

6. Internal Control and Assurance

The Trust maintains a strong system of internal control through:

a) Clearly defined policies and procedures
b) Financial regulations and controls
c) Segregation of duties
d) Performance monitoring

e) Internal scrutiny (internal audit)
f) External audit

Internal scrutiny findings are used to:

a) Strengthen controls
b) Identify emerging risks
c) Improve risk management processes

7. Review and Evaluation

The Trust Board will review the effectiveness of risk management annually, considering:

a) The Trust's risk profile
b) Effectiveness of controls
c) Outcomes of internal and external audit
d) Changes in regulatory requirements
e) Lessons learned from incidents

Improvements will be implemented where necessary.

8. Training and Awareness

The Trust ensures that:

a) Trustees and Governors receive appropriate risk management training
b) Senior leaders are equipped to manage risks effectively
c) Staff are aware of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting risks

9. Associated Policies and Documents

a) Finance Policy
b) Health & Safety Policy
c) Safeguarding Policy
d) Scheme of Delegation
e) Business Continuity Plans
f) Strategic Plan
g) Risk Registers (Trust and Local)