



Invitation to Tender

External Audit Services

March 2023





1. Background

The LEARNERS' Trust is a medium to large sized Trust with eighteen open schools across Rotherham, Derbyshire and Derby.

The Trust was formed in 2017, it has clear values, mission statement and culture. The Trust has clear strategic priorities that it is working towards.

The mission for the LEARNERS' Trust is to create choices and enrich lives by enabling the best learning experiences possible, provided through the best possible teaching.

- Our first job is to support and extend learning for pupils to provide them with the skills and knowledge to make those choices.
- Our second job is to make sure no child is ignored, no family is unsupported and no life is wasted, by providing intervention at the earliest opportunity.
- Our responsibility to education is to provide an environment where practitioners can collaborate, learn from each other, take risks and reflect.

The LEARNERS' Trust strategy is to:

- Focus on creating capacity (time and resources) for schools
- Ensure support is agile, providing intervention at the earliest opportunity
- Support schools to employ and invest in the best educators for children
- Seek continuous improvement and disruptive innovation

The LEARNERS' Trust culture is:



The LEARNERS' Trust is a private limited company with charitable status. Our company number is 10224802. We are based at Eckington Business Centre II, Gosber Street, Eckington, Sheffield, S21 4DA.

The main contact for the purpose of this procurement is: Fran Cowell – Chief Operations Officer

Email: COO@learnerstrust.org

2. Introduction

The Trust currently consists of eighteen open academies:



- Ashgate Croft School - Ashgate Road, Chesterfield, S40 4BN
- Brimington Junior School - Springvale Road, Brimington, Chesterfield, S43 1HF
- Brimington Manor Infant School - Manor Road, Brimington, Chesterfield, S43 1NT
- Brookfield Primary School - The Hollow, Mickleover, Derby, DE3 0BW
- Catcliffe Primary School - Rotherham Road, Catcliffe, Rotherham, S60 5SW
- Chaddesden Park Primary School - Carson Road, Chaddesden, Derby, DE21 6JW
- Eckington Junior School - School Street, Eckington, Sheffield, S21 4FL
- High Greave Infant School - High Greave Road, Rotherham, S65 3LZ
- High Greave Junior School - High Greave Road, Rotherham, S65 3LZ
- Hodthorpe Primary School – Queen’s Road, Hodthorpe, Worksop, S80 4UT
- Holme Hall Primary School - Taddington Road, Chesterfield, S40 4RL
- Mary Swanwick Primary School - Church Street North, Chesterfield, S41 9QW
- New Whittington Primary School - London Street, Chesterfield, S43 2AQ
- Old Hall Junior School - Old Road, Chesterfield, S40 3QR
- Somercotes Infant School - Nottingham Road, Somercotes, Alfreton, DE55 4LY
- Somerlea Park Junior School - Bank Street, Somercotes, Alfreton, DE55 4JE
- Walton Holymoorside Primary School - Holymoorside Road, Holymoorside, S42 7DU
- Westfield Infant School - Vincent Crescent, Brampton, Chesterfield, S40 3NW

We currently employ 608 staff across the eighteen schools and the Central Trust Team.

The Trust are anticipating growth over the next 3 years, though this is not guaranteed.

You can read more about the Trust and our schools on our website at <https://thelearnerstrust.org/>

The Trust’s latest audited financial statements are available for download from this site too.

The new arrangement will commence from 1st September 2023 with the first external audit and accounts preparation taking place for the 2022/23 academic year. Any additional schools added during the length of the contract will need to be added to the contract aligning the end date to the same as the other schools.

3. Financial Organisation of the Trust

The Trust has a centralised financial model. We employ four Trust Business Managers that look after a selection of schools each. Each school has a school administrator on a ratio of 1: 200 pupils who supports the financial roles at a school level. We do have two School Business Managers that support the work of the Trust Business Manager. Monthly management accounts are complete each month by the Trust Business Manager.

The Trust central finance team is relatively small consisting of a Chief Financial Officer and financial support from the Chief Operations Officer and Trust Business Assistant. The CFO is responsible for external reporting (the external audit process and reporting to the ESFA) and compliance activities such as VAT, alongside strategic financial activities.

The Trust implemented a single finance and budgeting system in 2018, Access finance and budgeting. Invoices are scanned and saved to Access finance.

Payroll is partially outsourced to Access People, with schools responsible for payment input and checking.

4. Requirements

We are seeking to procure a service that provides:

- External Audit Services

The Trust requirements are as follows:

- Preparation of the LEARNERS' Trust Annual Report and Accounts;
- Expressing an opinion of the above Financial Statements;
- Accounts Assurance Report on Regularity as required by the ESFA;
- Accounts Assurance Report on the Annual Accounts Return as required by the ESFA;
- Attendance at the Trust Board of Directors meeting at which the Statutory Accounts are scrutinised;
- Attendance at the appropriate Leadership & Management committee meetings to present the audit plan;
- Audit of the Teachers' Pension Scheme End of Year Certificate;
- Preparation and submission of the Academies Accounts return;
- A working knowledge of the Access financial management system;
- Other ad hoc services as required;
- Taxation advice as required;
- Accountancy advice as required;
- VAT advice as required;
- A working relationship with a company that matches our CHOICES culture.

5. Tender Evaluation

The tender proposal will be evaluated against the requirements set out above. The tender proposals will be reviewed by the selection panel. The tender proposals will be scored and a shortlist prepared of those to be invited to present to the panel.

Criteria	Maximum Score	
Service		
Delivery and audit approach	10	
Understanding the Learners' Trust specifically and alignment to the Trust's culture	10	
Ensuring accounts comply with regulations	10	
Audit reporting	5	
Valued added services	5	
		40
Organisation Experience		

Audit Team	10	
Multi Academy Trust Experience	5	
		15
Price		
Core contract price including audit, accounts and annual return preparation	30	
Teachers' Pension Audit price	5	
		35
Presentation		
Delivery of presentation and alignment to the Trust's culture	10	
		10
Total		100

In respect of each pricing aspect, the tender with the lowest price will score the maximum marks available. All other tenders will then be scored on a percentage difference method. For example if the lowest tender for the core annual audit and accounts preparation was a cost of £20,000 (this is not meant to be indicative) then this would score 30. A tender priced at £25,000 would score $\text{£}20,000 / \text{£}25,000 \times 30 = 24$.

Scores will be allocated for each quality aspect as per the criteria below.

% of Max. Score	Criteria for awarding score
0%	No response or response show an unacceptably poor level of understanding of the requirements or completely fails to meet the required standard.
25%	Response shows an inadequate understanding of the requirements or substantially fails to meet the required standard or is inconsistent with other proposals in several significant respects.
50%	Proposal shows a satisfactory understanding of the requirements and meets the required standard in most material respects, but falls short of achieving the required standard in several respects or is inconsistent with other proposals in at least one significant respect.
75%	Proposal shows a satisfactory understanding of the requirements and is consistent with other proposals and meets the required standard in most material respects, but falls short of achieving the required standard in one material respect.
100%	Proposal shows a satisfactory understanding of the requirements, and is consistent with other proposals and fully meets the required standard in all material respects.

6. Procurement Timeline

Event	Date
Tender Notice posted	6 th March 2023

Tenderers to express interest and submit clarification questions via email	15 th March 2023
Learners' Trust to issue responses to clarification questions	20 th March 2023
Tender response deadline	29 th March 2023
Tender review process	30 th March 2023
Shortlisted/ unsuccessful tenderers notified	31 st March 2023
Meet with shortlisted tenderers	18 th April 2023
Initial contract award – Confirmation by Directors	24 th April 2023
Initial Contract award/ unsuccessful tenderers notified	25 th April 2023
Stand still period	25 th April – 2 nd May 2023
Contract Award	2 nd May 2023

Tenderers should raise any queries they have about the requirements via email to COO@learnerstrust.org. Any questions will be included on an FAQ document and posted on the Trust website alongside the Tender Notice, to ensure all interested parties have access to the same information.

The LEARNERS' Trust will endeavour to answer all written enquires prior to tenders been submitted and reserves the right not to respond to a request for information or clarification.

All tenders are required to be submitted by the date quoted in the table: 29th March 2023. It is the responsibility of the tenderer to ensure that the tender is submitted and delivered on time. The Trust will not consider late or incomplete submissions. The submission should be via email to COO@learnerstrust.org although tenderers may also submit paper copies of any documents to the Chief Operations Officer, Learners Trust, Eckington Business Centre II, Eckington, Sheffield, S21 4DA.

The Trust will shortlist tenders and then invite providers to present a short presentation to the panel. The presentation should be no longer than 20 minutes. Additional time will also be allocated to allow the evaluation panel the opportunity to ask questions. The Trust reserves the right to vary the timetable, and is also under no obligation to appoint a preferred bidder from this exercise.

7. Submission of Tender

All tenders should specifically identify:

- A total annual cost proposal;
- A clear indication of services provided as part of the fee;
- The variable costs for the proposal, including charge per new school/ ad-hoc advice, if applicable;
- Any inflationary or other provisions for periodic increase in fees;
- Fees chargeable for additional services that are not included in as part of the annual cost proposal;
- Your firms approach to client management and how you offer ongoing support;
- Evidence of working with Multi Academy Trusts and/ or charitable trusts;
- Evidence of working with Access Finance software;
- Example management letter;
- Statistics on client retention and recruitment rates;
- Biographies of staff the Trust will be working with, listing expertise and experience;
- The reports available to the Trust;
- Two references from organisations that you have worked with within the educational sector;
- Compliance measures for meeting the requirements of the Data Protection Act;
- A brief description of your business continuity plan that mitigate against an interrupted service should this arise;
- Confirmation that you will carry out code of conduct of the professional body;
- Details of any additional measurable benefits you can provide in terms of quality and cost which impact on social value indicators;
- Explanation of training/ events provided to clients. Are these FOC?
- What “added value” you can offer LEARNERS’ Trust

8. Contracting and Invoicing

The contract will be for a three year period, commencing 1st September 2023 and ending 31st August 2026, this would include the audit and accounts preparation work for financial years 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25. Unless terminated earlier in accordance within the terms of the contract.

The contract will be reviewed after the three year period and can be extended for an additional two years.

The Trust is under no obligation to appoint a provider from this exercise and reserves the right not to appoint or to re-run the exercise. The Trust will not be liable for any costs prior to appointment, including submission of Tender.

Invoicing arrangements will be made clear with the appointed provider as part of their confirmation of appointment.

9. Instructions to Tenderers



Please submit your tender offer in accordance with all of the instructions, requirements and specification.

Please ensure your proposal is no longer than 10 pages or up to 15 slides.

All tenderers must be complete and submitted to COO@learnerstrust.org by the specified deadline.

The email title should be Audit Tender Submission 2023.

No tenders will be opened before the 30th March 2023. All information intenders will be kept confidential.

10.Compliance

The LEARNERS' Trust reserves the right to disqualify or reduce the evaluation score of any tenders who do not fully comply with the requirements in the tender documentation, in particular the closing date and time.

The Trust reserves the right to evaluate proposals on a variety of criteria.

11.Termination

Either party may terminate the contract by giving 6 months' notice.

