

**Schools Financial Value Standard - Best practice advice and example answers**
**Schools Forum - Appendix A**

	LA best practice advice	Example of Good Practice
Question 6 - Does the school have access to an adequate level of financial expertise, including when specialist finance staff are absent, eg on sick leave?	Answers should explain the level of financial expertise available to the school and what support these individuals provide. Include what the cover plans are when these specialist members of the team are absent. Schools may wish to consider whether they have or want to have the capacity within the school to prove this cover internally.	<p>This is a regular discussion point at finance meetings. Governors have discussed this at length and agreed that: with the expert knowledge in the school (senior admin manager, admin assistant, assistant Head Teacher and Head Teacher) as well as the accounting technician, governor support and knowledge and support from Governors themselves, that this risk is well covered. A reputable organisation, is used to provide financial services.</p> <p>Separation of duties and suitable financial controls are possible because of the number of qualified personnel within the staff team and clarity of roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>The school works in partnership with three other local schools in an informal Local Collaborative Partnership (LCP). We have established a network of school admin managers. Head Teachers support each other and information, training and best practice is shared. The skilled chair of finance and chair of governors are able to effectively support the Head Teacher.</p> <p>Short term absences are easily covered. The long-term absence of a key member of staff – especially the Senior Admin Officer or Head Teacher – would be covered by a qualified person in an ‘acting’ role.</p> <p>We buy back Financial services from an external company and have two admin officers who fulfil a job share. One half of the job share is very experienced and knowledgeable in all finance matters. The Deputy Head teacher is a member of the Resources committee and has a working knowledge of the budget, thus ensuring financial knowledge in case of long term Headteacher absence. We feel secure in the knowledge that we can buy in additional time should we require it and that the support will always be provided by the external officer linked to our school. This naturally supports continuity. Additionally we can contact the external team for additional support and guidance as required.</p> <p>The School Bursar is qualified and experienced in expenses and budget management. In the event of the Bursar being absent we buy the services offered by an external company who can carry out key responsibilities of the Bursar Role on behalf of the school. The School Admin team can also carry out several of the Bursar responsibilities e.g. paying invoices. The Head and Deputy Head will oversee budget and expenses. There is a policy in place to cover supply costs if additional support is required during a long term absence of the Bursar.</p> <p>Please see folder SFVS Q 6 for supporting evidence.</p>
Question 9 - Has the use of professional independent advice informed part of the pay decision process in relation to the headteacher?	Details of the professional independent advice should be documented as minimum with the dates of meetings included. Any Governors minutes held as evidence. Some schools did not explain the action taken by the independent person in relation to the question or whether there was any action. Some schools did not provide any detail or explanation or the response referred to 'previous years evidence' but did not list this evidence.	<p>We have not employed Independent advice specifically in relation to the headteacher's performance, however, We have utilised both former HMI inspector and a Head and Deputy Head from a neighbouring authority to perform a number of independent whole school reviews focusing on Leadership and Management. Equally Ofsted visited in the period and rated the schools Leadership and Management as Good. All of this independent feedback was utilised during the performance review/pay decision process.</p> <p>The Governing Body took advice from our School Improvement Advisor, when reviewing the performance of the Acting Headteacher and making pay decisions. This was recorded in the minutes of the finance &amp; personnel meeting held on 18.11.15.</p>

**Schools Financial Value Standard - Best practice advice and example answers**
**Schools Forum - Appendix A**

	LA best practice advice	Example of Good Practice
Question 10 - Is there a clear and demonstrable link between the school's budgeting and its plan for raising standards and attainment?	Evidenced by providing the detailed link between the school's budget and its school improvement plan and details of how Pupil Premium has been used to raise standards and attainment. Some schools just stated that they have a School Improvement Plan but not detailed why this alone is evidence towards the question.	<p>Targeted use of Pupil Premium</p> <p>The school uses School Pupil Tracker to monitor standards of attainment and progress, which in turn informs an integral part of the SIP. Due to a higher than average inward mobility, coupled with low attainment of those pupils, who often have complex learning, social and emotional needs, the school makes well informed decisions during the budget setting process to cover for these eventualities.</p> <p>Employment of additional class teacher to address challenges in behaviour which impacted on teaching and learning, which has been effective in raising attainment.</p> <p>Employment of 2 x (part time) Family Support Workers.</p> <p>Provision of a larger than average SEN team</p> <p>Frequent reporting via Governor monitoring, FGB &amp; Sub Committee meetings and financial reporting.</p> <p>Purchase of specific learning resources to support personalised learning for vulnerable groups and to further support the above interventions.</p> <p>Targeted support, advice and challenge from School Improvement Partner to address the school's attainment and progress.</p>
		<p>The School Development Plan depicts clear expenditure. Staff and student ratio is prudently set and budgeted according to need. Pupil Premium funding has been used to assist pupils to raise standards and attainment by funding new intervention staff to carry out 1:1 sessions. The effectiveness will be shown by utilising assessment tools and the outcome discussed. The expenditure is clearly articulated to all concerned. Accreditation for FEC budgeted and CPD for training all staff budgeted. IT budget for new technology and maintenance programme. Curriculum resource expenditure. After School Clubs. Constant reviews/revisions take place in the classroom, teachers meetings, SLT meetings and with parents/carers. The Senior Leadership Team and Governors are responsible for setting education priorities and budget.</p> <p>SDP Summary 2015-2016</p>
Question 17 - Does the school maintain its premises and other assets to an adequate standard to avoid future urgent need for replacement?	Include schools productivity, and any strategic plans in place for prevention. Some of the stronger answers from schools included a timeline for the maintenance schedule and detail of what the school's strategy involves.	<p>The local authority has invested in a major refurbishment for the school over the last 12 months.</p> <p>The school continues to deal with a high level of damage caused by students, and deal with issues relating to the age and unsuitability of the building for its purpose.</p> <p>Issues relating to the risk of Legionella and exposure to asbestos are ongoing with the local authority aiming to resolve those issues this academic year.</p> <p>The Head teacher, Site Manager, Health and Safety Governor and the full Governing body continue to monitor the situation.</p> <p>Evidence: Premises reports, H&amp;S audits.</p>
		<p>Within the Governing Body there is a Premises Committee who regularly 'walk the school' to proactively assess and identify any future improvements the school may require. Also ensuring the building is maintained in a good state of repair. The school actively uses the online TES system to monitor maintenance requirements ensuring checks are carried out on a regular basis. The Chair of Premises Committee is also registered to monitor this system so she can work with the school to ensure the checks are carried out in a timely manner. Staff are advised on the correct use of school equipment to ensure it is used appropriately and stored correctly, increasing its longevity.</p> <p>Please see folder SFVS Q 15 for supporting evidence.</p>

**Schools Financial Value Standard - Best practice advice and example answers**
**Schools Forum - Appendix A**

	LA best practice advice	Example of Good Practice
Question 19 - Can the school give examples of where it has improved the use of resources during the past year?	Details of examples of improvements should be listed. Schools should provide more detail and examples than 'written evidence' as this does not give the LA assurance that the school has been able to improve the use of resources.	<p>Liaising with catering company to introduce online meal ordering and payment direct to the catering company. This has reduced the time spent by school admin staff.</p> <p>Willingness of caretaker to undertake some repairs and maintenance priorities has reduced financial outlay to outside companies.</p> <p>Use of qualified teacher employed as a teaching assistant to cover long term staff sickness instead of employing supply agency staff This reduced costs to Teaching Assistant cost centre as well as supply teachers cost centre.</p> <p>Greater use of electronic methods to communicate with parents (Schoop, Twitter, Website) to eliminate the need to produce and send letters, saving time and resources.</p> <p>The school has secured a 5% discount rising to 10% with a regular supplier for all stationery and supplies.</p> <p>Increased use of online purchasing to obtain best value on purchases.</p> <p>Appointments of two Higher Level Teaching Assistants to reduce the need for expensive agency supply teachers and ensure continuity of teaching and learning.</p> <p>Use of in-house staff to carry out building work/repairs reducing the need to employ construction companies.</p> <p>Review of the cost of school visits versus parental contributions and in-school visits has resulted in a change to the process allowing for tighter budget management.</p> <p>Following an extensive review of the school's catering provision, all food orders are now verified and payments made by FAO. Portion control has been reviewed with the result that strict portion guidelines have been implemented. Certain (expensive) fruit is no longer purchased and other fruit is no longer offered to clubs. Meal choices have been limited to reduce wastage and to give greater food control and the Catering Manager now adheres to a budget of producing a meal for £x per head.</p>
Question 20 - Is the governing body sure that there are no outstanding matters from audit reports or from previous consideration of weaknesses by the governing body?	Previous outcome of last years audit report should be included, any actions recommended should be detailed with their outcome. Stronger answers made reference to 'no LA action outstanding'. School has referred to previous years SFVS return but unless this held extensive detail from the previous years audit report this would not provide written evidence, the evidence would be the audit report itself.	<p>Governors form working parties to focus on specific areas of school improvement. In 2015 the chair of finance worked alongside admin staff and the Head Teacher to ensure that financial processes and procedures were robust and efficient. Attention was focused on ensuring financial probity irrespective of who the incumbents were in the relevant roles. Action was taken as a result of this review.</p> <p>There are no outstanding LA audit actions that need to be considered. We organise for an annual audit review to be carried out by an external company and work to promptly put in place requested improvements following their check. The Finance Committee discuss recommendations from their report and put timescales to action points which are monitored and reviewed by the Finance committee. We continually review our reporting to ensure it remains effective and fit for purpose.</p> <p>Please see folder SFVS Q 18-22 for supporting evidence.</p>
Question 25 - Does the school have an appropriate business continuity or disaster recovery plan, including an up-to-date asset register and adequate insurance?	Business Continuity Plans and asset registers should be detailed in the document. All schools have referred to their disaster recovery plan, their provider of school insurance and the majority of answers were quite strong.	<p>Insurance is complete and fully up-to-date. It is obtained through Swindon Borough.</p> <p>The school has a Business Continuity Plan and an ICT Disaster Recovery Plan. These plans were looked at as part of Swindon Borough's internal audit completed at the school in June 2015 and was deemed to be of a high standard.</p> <p>The asset register is recorded using a piece of software. This is capable of producing reports instantly for insurance and annual auditing purposes. It also takes into account depreciation. A technician came and did an audit in August 2015 to make sure all the data was in place.</p> <p>Business Continuity Plan reviewed by Governors November 2015. Meeting held with SBC Health &amp; Safety to check that Emergency Plan covered everything necessary.</p> <p>Insurance purchased through Swindon Borough Council. Additional travel insurance purchased through Swindon Borough Council.</p> <p>Absence insurance purchased to cover all teaching staff, caretaker, Senior Admin Officer. This includes maternity and stress cover.</p> <p>Asset register kept up to date and stock check carried out annually.</p>

**Schools Financial Value Standard - Best practice advice and example answers**
**Schools Forum - Appendix A**

	LA best practice advice	Example of Good Practice
Summary of remedial action and timetable	Outcomes from last year should be presented as complete/work in progress and individuals/committees should be assigned to future requirements/actions and timelines stated.	<p>PREVIOUS ACTIONS</p> <p>To Plan the budget on the assumption that the school could lose income from the preschool letting with just 6 month's notice - Achieved</p> <p>To extend benchmarking against local school - Achieved</p> <p>To invest in a high interest account - Not achieved – very little difference between interest that would be received</p> <p>To ensure the school secures value for money across the school through the implementation of new procedures - Achieved</p> <p>Action and Date</p> <p>Action point 1 News skills matrix to be completed for the newly formed Governing Body for the federation - June 2016</p> <p>Action Point 2 / 3 New Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation to be drawn up for the newly formed Governing Body - May 2016</p> <p>Action Point 10 To ensure the school budget specifically highlights the financial implications identified in the School Development Plan for raising standards June 2016</p> <p>Action Point 12 To ensure that the school works within its annual budget and is not relying on the rollover for essential services - On going</p> <p>Action Point 14 To continue to improve benchmarking against local school and to contact school directly to discuss specific variations, to look at the Efficiency Metric - June 2016, to work with the SBM at the Infant School and use the federation as a tool for securing best value - On going.</p> <p>Action Points 15/21/24 To ensure financial procedures are consistent across both schools following federation June 2016</p> <p>Action Point 24 To update and share with appropriate staff procedures for the school fund account to ensure they meet auditing requirements - Completed</p>

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Anne Mackay, 01793 465742, amackay@swindon.gov.uk.