Finance Manual
Section V
Schools’ Financial Value Standard (SFVS)
November 2024

SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Contents

1. Management Overview

Schools manage many billions of pounds of public money each year. Effective financial management is essential to ensure this money is spent wisely and properly allowing schools to optimise their resources to provide high-quality teaching and learning to raise standards and attainment for all their pupils.

The Schools' Financial Value Standard is a mandatory requirement for local authority maintained schools. Schools are required to complete and return to their local authority (LA) an annual self-assessment of financial management in their school.

The SFVS self-assessment is intended to help schools to manage their finances and provide assurance to the local authority each year that they have secure financial management in place.

The guidance applies to ALL maintained schools and is for:

- governing bodies of maintained schools
- management committees of pupil referral units

As governing bodies/management committees have formal responsibility for the financial management of their schools, the standard is primarily aimed at them.

The SFVS return is not externally assessed but is used by the LA to inform their programme of financial assessment and audit. The DfE will seek assurance from the LA that funding is being used with regularity and propriety and that value for money is being secured.

All LAs will be required to state the number of SFVS statements they have received and if necessary additional assurance of good financial management of their schools may be sought.

2. Detailed Guidance

Self-assessment form
The self-assessment form is published annually – See Annexe 1
The form is updated from time-to-time so care should be exercised to ensure that the current version is used.

Structure of the self-assessment
The self-assessment consists of a series of questions which cover the following broad areas:

- **Governance**
- **School strategy**
- **Setting the annual budget**
- **Staffing**
- **Value for money**
- **Protecting public money**

The self-assessment dashboard that was formerly part of the SFVS has been moved to new the Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool. This provides an automated assessment which shows how a school's data compares to the thresholds on a range of statistics that have been identified by the DfE as indicators of good resource management.

The governing body should benchmark the school's income and expenditure and investigate further where any category is out of line. A question in section E requires confirmation that this has taken place.

Guidance on the Completion of the Self-assessment Form

- Each question requires an answer of Yes, No or In-Part.
- If the answer is Yes, the comments column can be used to indicate the main evidence on which the governing body has based its answer.
- If the answer is No or In Part, the comments column should contain a summary of the reason and proposed remedial action.

Additional guidance is also available on:

- the completion of the self-assessment form
- supporting notes providing clarification of the questions
- examples of good practice
- information on further support to assist schools in addressing specific issues.

The introduction and outcomes section of the assessment should be used by governors to summarise:

- all remedial actions and timetable for completion
- agreed owner for each action

The governing body may delegate the consideration of the questions to the relevant committee, but a detailed report should be provided to the full governing body and the chair of governors **must sign** the completed form before it is submitted to the LA.

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Timetable

- The LA will publish the deadline for submission of completed self-assessment forms each year
- The deadline for submission is usually in early/mid-March but will vary from year to year depending on the date of the Easter school holidays
- The form should be emailed to the Schools Finance and Monitoring Team.

*nb Maintained schools where an Academy Order is **in place** by 31st March are not required to make a submission.*

Key Surrey Documents

- The LA has **our counter fraud initiatives and strategies** and advice is available on the Surrey website link: **Our counter fraud initiatives and strategies**

Whistle Blowing Policy

The LA Whistle Blowing Policy is available on Surrey Website (see link to **Our counter fraud initiatives and strategies** above).

- To provide staff with a confidential and accessible contact for Whistle Blowing the LA retains the services of Navex Global and their contact details are provided on the LA website using the above link**.**
- School staff need to be aware of who they should raise any concerns with and how to use the services of Navex Global and contact details should be provided in staff induction packs.

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3.Model Finance Policy

A model finance policy is available to schools; the content may be adapted to ensure it meets the school's needs, whilst complying with the model of governance, committee terms of reference, and adheres to the requirements of the Local Authority's Scheme for Financing Schools.

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