

Introduction to the schools financial value standard (SFVS) checklist

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The SFVS checklist asks a number of questions of governing bodies in six areas of resource management to provide assurance that the school is managing its resources effectively. This can be used to identify possible areas for change to ensure that resources are being used to support high-quality teaching and the best education outcomes for pupils.

The checklist was formerly part of a tool that also contained a dashboard. This is now available on the schools financial benchmarking website. It shows how a school's data compares to thresholds on a range of statistics that have been identified as indicators for good resource management and outcomes, which will help you to complete your checklist.

Outcome of schools financial value standard (SFVS)

Summary of agreed action and timetable for reporting back:

The only characteristic of concern from the self-assessment dashboard for 21/22 is that the school is now in the highest 10% of Pupil to Adult ratio. It has only increased by 0.6 in comparison to the previous year (up from 11.2 to 11.8 – the threshold is 11.54). As staffing levels have not changed we can only surmise that this is a result of an increase in pupil numbers from 383 in 20/21 to 399 in 21/22. No further action will be taken, but this characteristic will be reviewed for 22/23.

Signature: (Chair of governing body / management committee)	
Full name of signatory:	Linda Brook
Date SFVS agreed by full governing body / management committee:	24/04/2023
Date SFVS submitted to local authority for review:	24/04/2023

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School name:	The James Oglethorpe Primary School
School LAEstab number:	311/2003

Answer

Comments, evidence and proposed actions

A. Governance

1	In the view of the governing body and senior staff, does the governing body have adequate and up-to-date financial skills among its members to fulfil its role of challenge and support in the field of budget management and value for money? Is there a plan in place to address any gaps?	Q1 guidance	Yes	Finance & Premises Committee and Chair continue to be supported by Governors experienced in school finance. The school has an experienced Finance Officer who continues to undertake relevant training and makes a significant contribution to the Finance & Premises committee. Evidence: Governors' skills audit and minutes of committee meetings.
2	Does the governing body have a finance committee, or equivalent, with clear terms of reference and a	Q2 guidance	Yes	Finance comes under the remit of the Finance & Premises committee. Terms and conditions are reviewed annually by the Full

	knowledgeable and experienced chair?				Governing Body. Chair has business experience and has been in post for over a year. He is supported by the Chair of the GB, who acts as Vice Chair of the committee. She has undertaken a range of training in Financial Management in Schools. She also holds the Leadership and Governors qualification, as well as being a qualified Company Secretary (ACIS) although she no longer holds membership.
3	Does the governing body receive clear and concise monitoring reports of the school's budget position at least 6 times a year?	Q3 guidance		Yes	Agenda and minutes of Finance & Premises committee with comprehensive Finance Officer reports appended and filed. Minutes show when Governors' request information to be added to the Finance Officers report as required. Planned frequency meets requirement of twice per term.
4	Are business interests of governing body members and staff properly registered and taken into account so as to avoid conflicts of interest?	Q4 guidance		Yes	Pecuniary interest declarations completed annually. Opportunity to declare interests at start of each Governing Body and Committee meeting. Evidence: see agendas and minutes. Pecuniary for staff are reviewed each September to include new staff. These are kept in School office.
5	Does the school have access to an adequate level of financial expertise, including when specialist finance staff are absent, for example, on sick leave?	Q5 guidance		Yes	School currently buys the annual finance staff insurance and traded service for FMS. Can buy back extra support or training. Support from LMS team. Can also call on support from other schools.

B. School Strategy

6	Does the school have a realistic, sustainable and flexible financial strategy in place for at least 3 years, based on realistic assumptions about future funding, pupil numbers and pressures?	Q6 guidance		In part	We continue to use the budget planning spreadsheet facility for multi-year planning with support from the LA. For the present, there is still some certainty over projected student numbers, however Governors are aware of Borough projections of dropping numbers of rising 5's and will actively plan for this in the coming years. There is also uncertainty about government funding which has resulted in a deficit budget being set for 23/24.
7	Is the financial strategy integrated with the school's strategy for raising standards and attainment, through integrated curriculum and financial planning?	Q7 guidance		Yes	As before, decisions on staffing are aligned to perceived changes in pupils' learning needs where possible. Costs arising from the strategic plan have been identified in the budget. Strategic plan facility in the budget planning spreadsheet has been used. Governors are aware of this and monitor expenditure through the Finance Officer's report and other specific reports as requested. This is presented to the Finance & Premises committee, and via the minutes to the Governing Body.
8	Does the school have an appropriate business continuity or disaster recovery plan, including an up-to-date asset register and adequate insurance?	Q8 guidance		In part	The ICT network backed-up daily remotely by LA. Cover arrangements are in place for absent staff. School has retained insurance with the council. Balance of Perils insurance was renewed on 1 April 2023. The asset register will be overhauled in the summer term on advice from the Audit team.

C. Setting the annual budget

9	Does the school set a well-informed and balanced 3-year budget and has this been submitted to the local authority?	Q9 guidance		In part	The Governing Body have set a deficit budget for 23/34 with the support of the local authority. A 3 year budget will be completed and submitted to the LA by 30 June deadline.
10	Does the budget setting process allow sufficient time for the governing body to scrutinise and challenge the information provided?	Q10 guidance		Yes	The budget is scrutinised fully by Finance and Premises Committee at a dedicated meeting, and a second meeting is organised where appropriate. The Committee have delegated powers under the ToR to approve the budget, although in practice it is usually approved at an FGB meeting.
11	Is the school realistic in its pupil number projections and can it move quickly to recast the budget if the projections and the reality are materially different?	Q11 guidance		Yes	Pupil number projections are provided prior to the budget being set. The school is a two-form entry, which still has capacity to welcome new pupils as there are still spaces in some year groups without employing additional staff. During 22/23 there has continued to be an exceptional increase in pupils with EHCPs who have required one-to-one support and this has added to the deficit budget set this year. The local authority have been consulted on this issue, with a request for their assistance due to the exceptional circumstances the school faces.
12	Is end year outturn in line with budget projections, or if not, is the governing body alerted to significant variations in a timely manner, and do they result from explicitly planned changes or from genuinely unforeseeable circumstances?	Q12 guidance		In part	The outturn was not in line with budget projections due to 3 main factors: * Unexpected level of pay rises for all staff which were not funded. * A large increase in sickness absence during the year (increase seen throughout the local authority) * Provision of 1-2-1 support for children we

					<p>expected to received EHCPs for – which were refused, appealed and refused again.</p> <p>The GB were alerted in a timely manner and the outturn was a result of genuinely unforeseen circumstances.</p>
13	Are balances at a reasonable level and does the school have a clear plan for using the money it plans to hold in balance at the end of each year?	Q13 guidance		No	The school has set a deficit budget

D. Staffing

14	Does the school review its staffing structure regularly to ensure it is the best structure to meet the needs of the school whilst maintaining financial integrity?	Q14 guidance		Yes	Annual review of staffing structure continues to be presented to Finance & Premises committee and Full Governing Body. Staffing budgets are monitored closely.
15	Has the use of professional independent advice informed part of the pay decision process in relation to the head teacher and is it tightly correlated to strong educational outcomes and sound financial management?	Q15 guidance		Yes	Headteacher's performance review continues to be supported by an independent school improvement partner agreed with the Governing Body. A Panel of three Governors is appointed annually, at least one of whom has relevant training. Interim performance management meeting is also held. Consideration as to increments are taken in line with results of performance management review and the pay policy. The SIP works alongside the headteacher on school improvement issues year-round as part of this process.
16	Has the school published on its website the number of employees (if any) whose gross salary exceeded £100k?	Q16 guidance		Yes	N/A

17	Does the school benchmark the size of its senior leadership team annually against that of similar schools?	Q17 guidance	Yes	The school completes the SFVS annually and part of this now is a benchmarking process, which the F & P Committee review.
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E. Value for money

18	Does the school benchmark its income and expenditure and investigate further where any category appears to be out of line?	Q18 guidance	Yes	The school completes the SFVS annually and part of this now is a benchmarking process. F & P review the document which compares our school to other schools, and ensure we understand why there is deviation if any, and what we can do about it if appropriate
19	Has the school leadership team considered the results of the self-assessment dashboard or other DfE benchmarking tools?	Q19 guidance	Yes	The Headteacher, is a member of both the Finance and Premises and Full GB where this is discussed.
20	Does the school have procedures for purchasing goods and services that both meet legal requirements and secure value for money?	Q20 guidance	Yes	School Financial Policy and Financial Regulations (including The Scheme of Delegation). Quotes and tender procedures observed. The school buys into Havering Procurement Services to provide best value for money. Audit health check. Evidence: Finance & Premises committee minutes and Governing Body minutes.
21	Is the governing body given the opportunity to challenge the school's plans for replacing contracts for goods and services that are due to expire shortly?	Q21 guidance	Yes	The Finance & Premises committee are given the opportunity to discuss these items, which can be raised individually or by the Headteacher in the Finance Officer or Headteachers report, in line with The Scheme of Delegation.

22	Does the school consider collaboration with others, for example, on sharing staff or joint purchasing, where that would improve value for money?	Q22 guidance	Yes	The Finance & Premises committee are given the opportunity to discuss these items, which can be raised individually or by the Headteacher in the Finance Officer or Headteachers report, in line with The Scheme of Delegation. Any such opportunities are kept under review and brought to F & P where appropriate.
23	Do you compare your non-staff expenditure against the DfE recommended national approved frameworks to ensure you are achieving best value?	Q23 guidance	Yes	The school uses Havering Brokerage Service and is part of the current LA review of energy contracts, to maximise value for money.
24	Does the school maintain its premises and other assets to an adequate standard and make best use of capital monies for this purpose?	Q24 guidance	Yes	The school takes advantage of the local authority to survey its buildings and work has been undertaken based on recommendations. All maintenance contracts budget for ongoing maintenance. Capital Devolved expenditure is being spent appropriately e.g. Outside paving works.

F. Protecting public money

25	Is the governing body sure that there are no outstanding matters from audit reports or from previous consideration of weaknesses by the governing body?	Q25 guidance	Yes	The Audit health check was completed in March 2023 and will be presented at the next Governing Body meeting for appropriate action.
26	Are there adequate arrangements in place to manage related party transactions and has a complete list of related party transactions been appended to the checklist document (see template for recording related party transactions)?	Q26 guidance	Yes	This would be addressed through the Pecuniary Declaration Process. At present there are no related party transactions.

27	Are there adequate arrangements in place to guard against fraud and theft by staff, contractors and suppliers?	Q27 guidance	Yes	No reported or detected incidents of fraud or theft in last 12 months. School follows best practise of separation of duties and purchasing procedures. Staff are regularly reminded that all orders must be presented in writing and signed before purchase. Robust budget monitoring is in place. Pecuniary interest forms are completed. Bank reconciliation is undertaken monthly. School has moved to BACS payments to reduce reliance on cash or cheques.
28	Are all staff aware of the school's whistleblowing arrangements and to whom they should report concerns?	Q28 guidance	Yes	School has adopted the LA whistleblowing policy which is readily available. Regular reminders are issued at staff meetings and bulletins and it is part of the induction process for new staff. Governors also monitor this as part of their safeguarding responsibilities.
29	Does the school have an accounting system that is adequate and properly run and delivers accurate reports, including the consistent financial reporting return?	Q29 guidance	Yes	School uses SIMS FMS. Reconciliations completed and returns to LA submitted.
30	Does the school have adequate arrangements for audit of voluntary funds?	Q30 guidance	Yes	School fund is audited by a suitably qualified person annually. This is reported to Finance & Premises committee and minuted.