

Introduction to the schools financial value standard (SFVS) checklist


The schools financial value standard (SFVS) helps to provide schools with assurance that they are meeting the basic standards necessary to achieve a good level of financial health and resource management.

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:

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| Signature: (Chair of governing body / management committee) |  |
| Full name of signatory: | Marie Costigan & Simon Enright |
| Date SFVS agreed by full governing body / management committee: | 08/03/2022 |
| Date SFVS submitted to local authority for review: | 18/03/2022 |

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| School name: | Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School |
| School LAEstab number: | 207/3542 |

Answer

Comments, evidence and proposed actions

A. Governance

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| 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 | <p>Finance Committee members complete a competency matrix annually. NGA skills audit completed in Spring 2021 by all Governors.</p> <p>Governors pro-actively and constructively challenge the School's financial position as 'critical friends'. Meetings allow time for probing questions and discussion as demonstrated within the FB and FPP minutes.</p> <p>Autumn 2021 Governors both attended online LA training on financial strategy and a one-off, bespoke event was organised in person for all governors of the federation.</p> |
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| 2 | Does the governing body have a finance committee, or equivalent, with clear terms of reference and a knowledgeable and experienced chair? | Q2 guidance | Yes | <p>Committee meets at least three times a year.</p> <p>Chair is a finance professional of long standing with many years service on the Board and several years as Chair of Committee.</p> <p>Terms of Reference detailed in Finance Manual which is reviewed by the FPP.</p> |
| 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 | <p>At each Finance committee meeting (three times a year) the latest budget monitoring report and year end forecast along with a written summary report are distributed in advance and reviewed in detail.</p> <p>A further finance update is delivered by the Head at Board meetings (three times a year).</p> |
| 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 | <p>Pecuniary / business interest forms are completed annually at the inaugural meeting in September by all members of the Board and SLT. There is also an opportunity to declare any interests at the start of every governors' meeting.</p> <p>All employees are annually asked to review and sign a series of declarations including noting any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests.</p> |
| 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 | <p>The federation with St Charles gives Executive Headteacher access to a range of finance professionals, in addition to the support SLA with 3BM.</p> |

B. School Strategy

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| 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 | Yes | The SIP is a rolling three year plan and feeds into the budget planning process. Capital planning is led by the Executive Headteacher working with Site Manager and Diocesan consultants as well as Board. We are facing a falling roll exacerbated by the movement of families out of inner London due to the pandemic. Our financial plans show us in surplus in current FY, balanced in 2022-23 and surplus exhausted in the 2023-4. |
| 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 | Staffing and Curriculum spend is outlined in the SIP and the impact is monitored by SLT and forms part of the regular formal reporting to Governors. Funding linked to C-19 has been assigned through 2021-22 against specific interventions to identify and support lost learning. |
| 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 | Yes | Asset register will be reviewed during March 2022. Business Continuity plan was reviewed by Governors in May 2021. Insurances are in place from the diocese . |

C. Setting the annual budget

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| 9 | Does the school set a well-informed and balanced 3-year budget and has this been submitted to the local authority? | Q9 guidance | Yes | Detailed annual budget is developed by EH with Consultant FD, with input from the SLT, and linked to SIP. Budget comes to committee for review and Board for approval, before going to LA. We had a small surplus 2020-21 and will have again in 2021-22. Thereafter we recognise the risk of in year deficit eliminating our reserves. |
| 10 | Does the budget setting process allow sufficient time for the governing body to scrutinise and challenge the information provided? | Q10 guidance | Yes | Individual school budgets are presented as outline in the spring term and as full proposal a second time (early summer term) to Federation finance committee, and are then approved at Board in May. |
| 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 | School is managing a falling roll but has some flexibility over classes across year groups and to date has been able to offset the loss of income. Deficit reduction plans are now required for FY 2022-23 onwards. |
| 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 | Yes | Current FY outturn is better than budget although staffing costs are up. Governors are updated throughout the year in a written report to committee |
| 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 | Yes | We currently hold a small surplus of 5% of revenue in 2021-22. These surpluses will under current projections be exhausted in FY 2023-24 |

D. Staffing

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| 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 | Staffing needs and structure are reviewed annually in preparation for start of academic year, with a flexible approach due to the challenges of the falling roll, but with the objective of minimising the reliance on the surplus going forward. |
| 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 | An independent external consultant is engaged to assist Governors with the preparation of the EH's annual performance and pay review with a committee of Governors. |
| 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 | Reviewed annually (qualitative) Remuneration supports federation development. |

E. Value for money

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| 18 | Does the school benchmark its income and expenditure and investigate further where any category appears to be out of line? | Q18 guidance | Yes | Benchmarking against other similar schools using the DfE tool is reviewed at finance committee annually (March 2022) |
| 19 | Has the school leadership team considered the results of the self-assessment dashboard or other DfE benchmarking tools? | Q19 guidance | Yes | Benchmarking against other similar schools using the DfE tool is due for review at SLT, Spring 2022. |

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| 20 | Does the school have procedures for purchasing goods and services that both meet legal requirements and secure value for money? | Q20 guidance | Yes | Close budget monitoring and constant assessment of suppliers' prices, performance, products and services ensure value for money to the School. Procedures are clearly understood by staff and adhered to. Statements of Internal Control and Best Value, and financial procedures as outlined in the Finance Manual are approved annually by FPP. |
| 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 | Large value contracts that are due for renewal are reviewed termly at FPP |
| 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 school is in a federation and that allows for the development of a joint purchasing strategy. For example, this year the two schools are looking at jointly going out to tender for the contract to clean the two schools. The joint catering is also an example of collaboration leading to best value. |
| 23 | Do you compare your non-staff expenditure against the DfE recommended national deals to ensure you are achieving best value? | Q23 guidance | Yes | When entering into high value contracts, the experiences of ASCC and St Charles are available and contracts are scrutinised against recommended DfE and Diocese suppliers. An example of this is the current review of school cleaning and telecommunication contracts. |
| 24 | Does the school maintain its premises and other assets to an adequate standard and make best use of capital | Q24 guidance | Yes | Asset registers for IT assets and non-IT assets up to a value of £500 are maintained and were updated for review March 2022. |

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| | monies for this purpose? | | | | The School is part of the new Diocesan premises management interface Statlog that supports with premises management. |
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F. Protecting public money

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| 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 last School audit report was January 2020. Recommendations have been put in place. Voluntary funds were reviewed in March 2021 and there were no outstanding recommendations |
| 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 | Finance Manual details procedures as follows: segregation of duties, banking, monthly reconciliations, authorised spending limits imposed, limited signatories on accounts |
| 27 | Are there adequate arrangements in place to guard against fraud and theft by staff, contractors and suppliers? | Q27 guidance | Yes | Finance manual procedures are followed and registers of pecuniary & business interests maintained, with segregation of duties where appropriate. There have not been any instances of internal fraud or financial theft in the last year. However, there was one case of external fraud for £60 in 2020-2021 which was reported to the LA who advised no further action. The record is in the school office. |
| 28 | Are all staff aware of the school's whistleblowing arrangements and to whom they should report concerns? | Q28 guidance | Yes | Staff are aware of the school whistleblowing policy and a bound copy is accessible in the school library. |

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| 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 FMS, which is compatible with the requirements of LA monthly and year end reporting. The CFR return is a standard part of the year end reporting procedure and returned to the LA quarterly. |
| 30 | Does the school have adequate arrangements for audit of voluntary funds? | Q30 guidance | | Yes | The school has an internal audit for the voluntary funds. These were reviewed in March 2021 Recommendations on the School Fund are update to committee termly. |