

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:

Resources Committee maintain a sound overview of finances and resources, including staffing and the budget position against projected and actual costs. Resources Committee maintain an overview of the buildings and contents as well as service level agreements and capital expenditure. No specific actions to address at this time and the position will continue to be monitored regularly.

Signature: (Chair of governing body / management committee)	Antonia Nicholls
Full name of signatory:	Antonia Nicholls
Date SFVS agreed by full governing body / management committee:	6 March 2023
Date SFVS submitted to local authority for review:	13 March 2023

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.

School name:	Shire Oak C of E VC Primary
School LA Estab number:	3833929

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	Current Resources Committee members have been involved with Governor finance since: JAD – 2010 AD – 2002 SD – 2001 AN – 2017 MM – 2018
---	--	-----------------------------	------------	---

KW 2020

DW – 2022

Outside Experience:

AD: as a solicitor has legal expertise, extensive experience as a Governor and previous Chair of Resources Committee.

JAD: previous experience of managing best value process and project budgets as Head Teacher and, prior to that, Deputy Head.

SD: Change analyst for multi-million IT projects, project management including budget management for product development (circa 10 yrs), Company Secretary of small business (15 yrs), previous Chair of Resources Committee since 2000.

AN: Run own HR Consultancy since 2014, manages business finances and budgets, advises small businesses on their HR and people issues at both a strategic and operational level. Previous experience as Deputy Head of HR at a University working closely with senior leadership team including Finance and board of trustees.

MM: Deputy Head of School and involved in school finances, budgets and planning. Attended 2 day training on School Finances in January 2019.

KW: Experienced in project management, including budgets and resources. Attends other Boards with finance oversight and understanding.

				<p>DW: During employment experience as a senior manager (Quality Manager) and Vice Managing Director of a sister company in China, manage departmental budgets, salaries, project budgets up to 2.4m Euro's and monitor, comment and comprehend business financial balance sheets, P&L, and KPI's.</p> <p>Where there are gaps in knowledge and experience of the committee training and guidance will be sought.</p> <p>Minutes of the Resources Committee will demonstrate its role in challenging and supporting the School in managing its resources effectively, budget management and value for money.</p>
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>Financial matters are dealt with by the resources Committee, including overseeing budget, finances and school resources including staffing,</p> <p>The chair (AN) is an experienced chair in similar resource / pay committees from previous work experience. For further qualifications of committee, see answer to Q1.</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>An updated budget report is presented at each Resources Committee (3 times per year) and the budget position is included in the written Headteachers Report at FGB (3 times per year). This is included in the minutes of each meeting.</p> <p>In addition, a representative of Resources Committee usually attends one of the annual budget setting meeting in October and/or review meeting each Spring.</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>A record of all business interests of governors and relevant staff is held in the Governors' File maintained by school office.</p> <p>Conflict of interest is a standing agenda item on all FGB and sub committee agendas.</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 school has trained financial staff in the School office and on the Management team.</p> <p>The school has access to the local government Schools Finance Officer, who they meet with regularly and can call in for additional support.</p>

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	Yes	<p>The School undertakes an annual budget monitoring and review with the LA School Finance Officer each Spring.</p> <p>Over the course of the financial year 2022/23 there has been at least one additional budget review meeting with the LA Finance Officer (Autumn), in order to ensure that budget plans and financial strategy is based on realistic and accurate projections on funding, pupil numbers and planned changes.</p>
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	<p>The school monitors standards, strategy and finances to ensure that they are integrated and carefully and regularly monitored.</p> <p>Some additional funding has been procured over the last 3 years to support additional educational resources following the Coronavirus pandemic and the impact of such resources will be monitored and reviewed.</p>
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	<p>A Business continuity and disaster recovery plan is in place.</p>

				<p>An external agency conducted the Asset Register in 2020, which we continue to maintain.</p> <p>Appropriate insurances are in place and continue to be monitored and maintained.</p>
--	--	--	--	--

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	Yes	<p>See record of past budgets. We have a budget deficit plan in place since 2020 which continues to be monitored but is due to be rectified within the next 12 months.</p> <p>Resources Committee continue to monitor the situation closely</p>
10	Does the budget setting process allow sufficient time for the governing body to scrutinise and challenge the information provided?	Q10 guidance	Yes	<p>The budget is reviewed in detail at each Resources Committee (3 times a year) and an overview presented to the FGB (3 times a year).</p> <p>Any unplanned variations or resource requirements would be discussed at Resources Committee, or reviewed by Chairs action.</p> <p>Where possible, a Governor from Resources will attend the Budget review and setting meeting with the LA School Finance Officer in the Spring and will attend in-year reviews as deemed appropriate.</p>
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	<p>Budget projections based on pupil numbers are reviewed regularly and are updated accordingly.</p>
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	<p>Any significant variations would be discussed by Resources having been identified from budget overview.</p> <p>Resources Committee understand the causes of the deficit since 2020 which is due to be</p>

				rectified imminently and will continue to monitor these over the course of the three year budget monitoring process.
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	The governors limit the amount carried forward each year unless the balance is to be carried forward for a specific project.

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	<p>In year staffing overview is reported on in Headteacher's Report, presented at Full Governing Body meetings (3 per year).</p> <p>The Management Team review the staffing structure in totality prior to the start of the School year, which is presented to the Resources Committee Meeting in the Summer term for further scrutiny. Where the opportunity exists, staffing structures are adjusted within the school year in line with resource requirements and pupil need and this is reported in to Resources Committee.</p>
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	<p>The HT Performance Review meeting is chaired by the Chair of Resources Committee who is an experienced HR Consultant. It also includes an independent Consultant who, until recently, was employed as School Improvement Officer with the Local Authority, following the LEA procedure for the Performance Review of the Headteacher.</p> <p>Pay decisions are taken based on the achievement of stated objectives and in line with the Model Pay Framework. The decision is approved by a Pay Committee, which is a sub group of the Resources Committee. it is known</p>

				that any pay decisions out of norm should be discussed with LA HR &/or SIA.
16	Has the school published on its website the number of employees (if any) whose gross salary exceeded £100k?	Q16 guidance	No	N/A
17	Does the school benchmark the size of its senior leadership team annually against that of similar schools?	Q17 guidance	yes	Yes, in 2022 Resources Committee have reviewed benchmarking data provided by LCC and the SVFS exercise to guide and review the situation at Shire Oak.

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	Resources Committee in January 2022 considered the situation at Shire Oak compared to schools included in the Benchmark data. It was felt that we were comparable.
19	Has the school leadership team considered the results of the self-assessment dashboard or other DfE benchmarking tools?	Q19 guidance	Yes	Yes, the School regularly reviews the information available to benchmark services and resources.
20	Does the school have procedures for purchasing goods and services that both meet legal requirements and secure value for money?	Q20 guidance	Yes	The Resources committee reviews any new/changed Service Level Agreements in Resources meetings with dedicated meeting in Summer/Autumn term to agree majority. Minimum of 3 quotes for high value goods and services sought
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	Resources Committee review all SLA's during the Spring term and a spreadsheet is maintained by the School, taking note of those due for renewal in the new financial year in line with the budget setting process. This is monitored annually by Resources as well as when decision made to review or change contracts in order to ensure that School is making effective decisions on contract renewals.

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	<p>In the financial year 2022/23 the School was working party with a cluster of local schools to this end.</p> <p>We maintain good contacts and networks with other schools in order to create opportunities where they exist.</p>
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	<p>See minutes of Resources Committee for evidence of asset maintenance. Resources/HT take guidance from LA Condition survey (LA) which was conducted in the Autumn 2019. In September 2020 School completed the two year project to replace the roof and in 2021 replaced a faulty old boiler.</p>
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	<p>Yes, review past minutes of Resources Committee and items agreed for action.</p>

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	<p>Yes, review past minutes of Resources Committee and items agreed for action.</p>
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	<p>No current conflicts of interest in place, as stated above, in the event of a potential conflict the register is maintained.</p>
27	Are there adequate arrangements in place to guard against fraud and theft by staff, contractors and suppliers?	Q27 guidance	Yes	<p>Review policies discussed at FGB and recorded in the minutes of the first meeting in the academic year. Also review Resources Committee minutes for accountability There have been no recorded instances of fraud or theft in the last 12 months.</p>

28	Are all staff aware of the school's whistleblowing arrangements and to whom they should report concerns?	Q28 guidance	Yes	Policy approved and readily available for Staff. Staff Survey in 2022 highlighted a high number of staff who replied either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement "if I have a problem, issue or concern I know who to talk to about it"
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 LSS system
30	Does the school have adequate arrangements for audit of voluntary funds?	Q30 guidance	Yes	School Funds audited yearly by an independent auditor