



# **Financial Support Services to Schools**

**Schools Finance  
Team**





## Financial Support Services to Schools

### Introduction

The Schools Finance Team offers a wide range of professional support services to assist schools in managing their budgets. Provided by our experienced team which enables you to access our breadth of skills and knowledge to suit your needs.

The team has a reputation throughout Lancashire for high quality support, advice, and training. We take pride in our ability to build strong working relationships helping to ensure our work with you delivers improved financial management throughout the school.

This ensures resources are spent wisely and properly allowing you to provide high-quality teaching and learning and so raise standards and attainment for all pupils.



# FINANCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

## Choosing your package

This booklet will guide you through the service options available and allows you to build your bespoke Service Level Agreement:

### 1. Service Level Agreement (SLA)

Please choose one support package from **table A** and any additional services you wish to buy from **table B**

### 2. Pay As You Use Services

Each section contains details of what is included and the options available to suit the needs of your school.

## Pricing Structure

Our services are fully costed to reflect the time taken to provide each service and our prices vary according to the size of school (based on pupil numbers). However, where we can deliver more than one service during a school visit (virtual or physical), we are able to pass on these savings thereby reducing the overall cost. As a result, please take time to consider what services you require, as overall it will always be more cost effective to increase your choice of support package in **table A**.

As in the past we are able to offer a discount to schools that buy our Premium Plan which includes the Monthly Support package plus selected Additional Services or Premium Plan PLUS which includes the Monthly Support package plus selected Additional Services and attendance at Governors meetings.

## What to do next

If you wish to continue with the current level of service for the financial year 2024/25 no action is required.

If, however, you prefer to opt for a different Service Level Agreement please email [schoolsfinanceSLA@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsfinanceSLA@lancashire.gov.uk) to confirm your requirements by **Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023**.

Please contact your Finance Officer should you require any clarification or wish to discuss your service needs.



## 1. Service Level Agreement (SLA)

In order to give maximum flexibility our Service Level Agreement (SLA) is based on a choice of three support packages in table A plus additional support services in table B. Please choose one package from Basic, Termly or Monthly support as shown in table A below. Prices are available in the appendix of this document.

<b>TABLE A</b>	<b>Basic Support</b>	<b>Termly Support</b>	<b>Monthly Support</b>
Telephone support	✓	✓	✓
Access to Schools Financial Services Website	✓	✓	✓
Budget Preparation Guidance Document	✓	✓	✓
Named Finance Officer	✗	✓	✓
Number of Meetings (hybrid of physical and virtual)	-	3	12
Health Check	✗	3	12
Close Year End	✗	✓	✓
Monthly Meeting with Finance Officer (physical or virtual)	✗	✗	✓
Monthly Reconciliation of Finance 6 / Bank Account Reconciliation	✗	✗	✓

### Additional Services

Please choose the additional services you wish to buy from table B below using the corresponding column from table A to determine availability. Prices are available in the appendix of this document.

<b>TABLE B</b>	<b>Basic Support</b>	<b>Termly Support</b>	<b>Monthly Support</b>
Staff Budget Preparation (including one staffing and payroll monitoring report)			
*Full Budget Preparation (including one staffing and payroll monitoring report)			
*Annual Income & Expenditure Return Support	<b>incl in above</b>	<b>incl in above</b>	<b>incl in above</b>
Full Budget PLUS (incl attendance at budget setting Finance Committee Governors meeting)			
*Monitoring including Updated Three Year Financial Forecast (only with full budget)	<b>not available</b>		
Monitoring including Updated Three Year Financial Forecast PLUS (includes attendance at Finance Committee meetings)	<b>not available</b>		
Stand Alone Three-Year Financial Forecast (only with full budget)			
Stand Alone Early Indication Budget (only with full budget)			
Premium Plan incl monthly support plus services marked* (discounted)			
Premium Plan PLUS incl Premium Plan plus attendance at Governors Meetings			

Please Note: For schools that use a private payroll provider there will be a 30% supplement in the price of the Budget Preparation service and Termly Monitoring Reports service. As our budget modelling system can import payroll data from the LCC system the additional cost is to reflect the time taken to manually input individual employee details.

All our additional services meet the requirements of the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS). As part of our SLA schools purchasing any of these services will receive a certificate to evidence compliance with SFVS. Further details of all these services are included later in this booklet.

## 2. Pay As You Use Services

Our pay as you use services offer additional options to schools. These are shown below, with details of what they include provided later in this document.

- Attendance at Governor Meetings either physically or virtually (where this is not bought as Budget Preparation Plus or Governors Monitoring Reports Plus service)
- Recruitment and Selection of Finance Staff
- Early Years Consultation
- Additional School Visits either physically or virtually
- Training Programme for Leadership Staff and Finance Staff.

<b>Pay As You Use Service</b>	<b>Charge</b>
Attendance at Governors meeting	£124
Finance Staff Interview Support – Interview Questions	£53
Finance Staff Interview Support – Interview Panel	Charged at half/full day rate as applicable
Early Years Consultation	Charged at half day rate
Additional Visit – Half Day	£191
Additional Visit – Full Day	£382
Training for New Headteachers/Bursars	Charged at half/full day rate as applicable
School Based Governors Training	From £300



# DESCRIPTION OF SUPPORT PACKAGES

## BASIC SUPPORT

### Why choose Basic Support?

**The basic support option is an assurance support package which provides comprehensive financial advice to governors, headteachers and other teaching and administrative staff in schools.**

### What is included?

- Access to the Schools Financial Services website via the School's Portal which includes the provision and regular update of financial guidance notes and draft policies relating to all financial issues.
- Budget preparation guidance document which will be updated as changes occur, to take account of pay and price increases, changes in national insurance, superannuation contributions etc and will be available to enable budget setting and forecasting.
- The provision of financial advice by telephone, letter, or e-mail.



# TERMLY SUPPORT

## Why choose Termly Support?

The termly support option is an enhanced support package and is more suited and cost effective to schools which buy any additional services from the Schools Financial Services Team.

In addition to the services provided in the Basic Support option the termly support package provides access to a named Finance Officer and a termly visit either physically or virtually to the school.

## What is included?

All services included in the Basic Support option **plus:**

- Provision of a named Finance Officer who will provide all services for your school and be your key contact.
- A termly financial health check which provides headteachers and governors with an independent oversight of the school's financial affairs. It includes a comprehensive review to assist schools in meeting their financial responsibilities.



## MONTHLY SUPPORT

### Why choose Monthly Support?

The monthly support option is our comprehensive support package and is more suited and cost effective to schools that wish to access a greater range of our financial support services.

In addition to the services provided in the termly support option the monthly support package provides a regular (monthly) opportunity to meet with your Finance Officer either physically or virtually to consider and discuss current financial issues and to carry out the reconciliation of accounting information between the school's financial management system and the Authority accounting or reconcile the bank account for a 'bank account' school.

Note: A hybrid arrangement of physical school visits combined with virtual school visits may provide an appropriate balance of support for normal operations.

### What is included?

All services included in the Termly Support option plus:

- Monthly visit either physically or virtually from your named Finance Officer to discuss the budget and current financial issues including:
  - Feedback from the monthly reconciliation process identifying any outstanding transactions and queries or follow up action to be taken by the Finance Officer or the school
  - Impact of any staffing changes
  - Updates to funding and pupil numbers
  - School Development plan financial implications
  - Finance Committee decisions
  - School balances
  - Advice on any correspondence relating to finance
  - Checks to ensure integrity of the financial management system and Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) compliance
- In order to meet the requirements in the Scheme for Financing Schools, bank account schools need to reconcile the account on a monthly basis and submit the required returns by the 10th day of the following month. The monthly bank reconciliation service includes:
  - Reconciliation of financial management system to bank statement
  - Reconciliation of financial management system to the Authority accounting system
  - Completion and submission of returns required by the Authority





# DESCRIPTION OF ADDITIONAL SERVICES

## BUDGET PREPARATION AND BUDGET PREPARATION PLUS SERVICE

### Why choose a Budget Package?

**Schools are required to submit a 3-year budget plan to the Local Authority on an annual basis. In buying the budget preparation service we will prepare the budget annually in consultation with you, incorporating your school development plan requirements. In order to maximise flexibility, this service is offered in relation to the staffing budget only or alternatively the full budget including all non-staffing costs.**

Our full budget service will allow your Governors to say 'Yes' to the following two SFVS questions:

- 7. Is the financial strategy integrated with the school's strategy for raising standards and attainment, through integrated curriculum and financial planning?
- 9. Does the school set a well-informed and balanced 3-year budget and has this been submitted to the local authority?

You will be provided with an annual budget in a suitable format that can be presented to Governors and complies with the requirements of Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR).

As standard the full budget package includes opening the new financial year on the financial management system, inputting the budget and support in the completion of the annual Income and Expenditure Return.

### What is included?

- Preparation of the draft budget prior to meeting with you
- Meeting with you to consider and agree options in order to finalise the budget
- Copy of the budget in the relevant CFR format with full breakdown of income and expenditure and staffing details
- Opening of the new financial year in the financial management system
- Input agreed budget onto the financial management system as working budget (prior to approval by governors)
- Support with the completion of the Income and Expenditure return for submission to the Local Authority
- Staffing and payroll monitoring – a report highlighting variances between budgeted staffing details and actual payroll data at the beginning of the financial year.



## BUDGET PREPARATION **PLUS** SERVICE

This service includes the attendance of a Finance Officer at the budget setting finance committee meeting either physically or virtually.

### **What is included?**

A Finance Officer will attend the finance committee meeting either physically or virtually to:

- Present the draft annual budget and explain the main assumptions
- Discuss the impact on school balances
- Identify any budget heading where governors may wish to pay particular attention
- Respond to questions and follow up on actions where required.

This service will normally be provided by the Finance Officer assigned to the school but is subject to availability.

### **Timescale**

The budget process normally takes place between March and April, with approval by governors in the summer term. Attendance will be arranged with you during this period.



# MONITORING REPORTS and MONITORING REPORTS PLUS

## Why choose Monitoring Reports?

**Setting the annual budget is a key task for the Governing Body at the start of the financial year. However, monitoring income and expenditure throughout the year is equally important. Accurate and meaningful budget monitoring reports allow governors to make well informed financial decisions. Our monitoring reports also include updated three-year budget forecasts showing the long-term impact on balances and sustainability.**

Our Monitoring Report service will allow your Governors to answer “Yes” to the following SFVS questions:

- 3. Does the governing body receive clear and concise monitoring reports of the school’s budget position at least six times a year?
- 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?
- 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 unforeseen circumstances?

*Please note the staffing and payroll monitoring report which accompanies the Budget Preparation service along with the five Monitoring Reports will allow Governors to answer “Yes” to question 3.*

The report will be in a suitable format that can be presented to governors, to enable them to review income and expenditure against the agreed budget. It will identify variances, provide meaningful explanations for these, where significant, and suggest what action may be taken to balance the budget.

## What is included?

Five reports over the financial year which includes:

- A summary of the current financial position
- Original, agreed budget allocation
- Current, revised budget allocation
- Profiled and actual income and expenditure to date
- Variance between profiled and actual income and expenditure to date
- Total estimated variance for the whole financial year
- Explanations of significant / material variances
- A summary of virements actioned during the financial year
- An estimate of the school’s outturn position based on all of the above, highlighting the impact on school balances compared to the Authority's guideline balances.



## MONITORING REPORTS PLUS

This enhanced service includes the attendance of a Finance Officer at each of your termly finance committee meetings either physically or virtually to present and discuss the budget monitoring report.

### What is included?

A Finance Officer will attend the finance committee meeting either physically or virtually to:

- Present the latest monitoring report
- Explain significant variances and their impact on estimated out-turn balances
- Advise on corrective actions and required virements

This service will normally be provided by the Finance Officer assigned to the school but is subject to availability.

### Timescale

Monitoring reports produced at regular intervals six times per year, for sharing with governors and discussion at termly governors meeting.



# STANDALONE THREE-YEAR FINANCIAL FORECAST

## Why choose a Three-Year Financial Forecast?

**Schools are required to budget beyond the current financial year. It is important to update the budget to see the impact on current and future years as budget assumptions are replaced with actual information. In buying the Standalone Three-Year Financial Forecast we will provide a financial plan, in consultation with you, showing an indication of costs and resources along with resulting balances, over three financial years, for financial planning purposes.**

Our Three-Year Financial Forecast service will allow your Governors to say 'Yes' to the following SFVS question:

- 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?

The Three-Year Financial Forecast will allow governors to consider projected balances over a three-year period in the light of local authority guidance on recommended levels of school balances.

## What is included?

A clear summary of estimated income, expenditure and balances over a three-year period which takes account of:

- Variations since budget setting including:
  - Anticipated changes in pupil numbers
  - Impact of known funding updates and assumptions
  - Staffing levels / staff turnover
  - Estimated pay awards / changes in employers oncosts

Please note: As the Three-Year Financial Forecast uses the full budget as a basis for this service it is only available to those schools that purchase the Full Budget Preparation Service.

## Timescale

This service will be delivered during the second half of the summer term.



# STANDALONE EARLY INDICATION BUDGET

## Why choose the Early Indication service?

Schools are increasingly aware of the need to plan ahead to allow time to consider budget options or any required corrective action, particularly where school balances are relatively high or low.

In buying the Standalone Early Indication Budget service you will receive a draft budget for the following financial year during the autumn term to allow time for governors to consider any significant issues.

## What is Included?

- An indicative budget for the following financial year prepared in consultation with you, linked to the school development plan
- Updated staffing information on an employee-by-employee basis including estimated pay awards and changes in oncosts
- Non staffing costs taking into account estimated price increases
- An estimate of the impact on school balances

## Timescale

As Individual School Budgets (ISB) are based on the October pupil census this service will be delivered during the second half of the autumn term to reflect the most up to date pupil information.



# PAY AS YOU USE SERVICES

## ATTENDANCE AT GOVERNORS' MEETINGS

### Why choose attendance at governors' meetings?

**Headteachers and governors often welcome an independent view and advice on financial matters, particularly where these are complex or there are financial difficulties.**

### What is included?

Attendance at governors' meetings either physically or virtually to provide:

- Professional advice on financial issues
- A briefing and to answer questions on the issues contained in any report produced for governors as part of any financial service purchased
- An explanation on local authority policies / procedures
- Follow up action where necessary

This service will normally be provided by the Finance Officer assigned to the school subject to availability. Schools should note that availability may be restricted at particular periods of the year due to other work pressures, for example, over the budget period. Priority will be given to schools that purchase the Budget Preparation PLUS or Governors Monitoring Reports PLUS services.

This service is chargeable per meeting attended.



## RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF FINANCE STAFF

### **Why choose Support for Recruitment and Selection of Finance Staff?**

Schools will generally have limited experience in recruiting to the post of bursar or business manager and appointing a suitably qualified and experienced person is key to the future financial management within the school.

This service provides support in the recruitment and selection process.

### **What is included?**

Schools can choose support in any or all of the following areas as required:

- Preparation of appropriate tests and provision of model answers.
- Provision of interview questions and key points to look for in answers.
- Participation in the interview process including marking of any tests.

The service will be provided by Schools Finance Team Managers, all of whom have received interview / selection skills training.

This service is chargeable as per individual school requirements.

Please Note:

- Schools have the overall responsibility for the operation of the recruitment and selection process including, in particular, compliance with equal opportunities policies.
- We reserve the right to withdraw from the interview and recruitment process in the event of any conflict of interest.





## EARLY YEARS CONSULTATION

### **What is included?**

For schools looking to lower their school age or open a Nursery under Section 27 a consultation with the Local Authority led by Early Years will take place. As part of this process half a day finance support will be provided at our standard rate by a Finance Officer.

## ADDITIONAL SCHOOL VISITS

### **Why choose Additional School Visits?**

Our service options in Table A provide a choice of annual SLA reflecting the number of school visits either physically or virtually included in each option. However, we recognise there are many reasons why schools may require an additional visit from their Finance Officer.

### **What is included?**

This service provides a half or full day visit to the school. Please note for schools that buy the termly or monthly SLA their named Finance Officer will normally attend.

This service is chargeable per each additional visit.

## FOR NEW HEADTEACHERS AND BURSARS

### **Why choose a Training Package?**

Whether new to the post or new to the school this half day initial training session will help in supporting an individual to better understand their role.

This service is chargeable per training session.



# ACADEMISATION

## Service Offer

Should the school be considering conversion to an academy, please be assured that we are offering our Schools Financial Services SLA to both maintained schools and academies.

For any potential/pending academy convertors, we would like to assure you that we do offer all the financial support packages above to academies. We also want to meet individual academy requirements, and therefore we will aim to tailor our services to respond to the changing needs of your school.

## Rebates

Schools converting to an academy are required to give us 3 months' notice to terminate our contract with the school. Following this, refunds will be given for any undelivered services in the following way:

- Reports will be reimbursed pro rata for any no longer required to be produced and not started.
- Rebate can be arranged for any full term remaining after the end of the given notice period or conversion date (latter), based on 1/3 of the total price per term.
- HCSS fees are non-refundable.

## How to contact us

Schools Finance Team  
Financial Management (Development and Schools)  
PO Box 100  
County Hall  
Preston, PR1 0LD

**Email:** [schoolsfinanceSLA@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsfinanceSLA@lancashire.gov.uk)



		Support Package	Staffing Budget Preparation	Full Budget Preparation	Full Budget Preparation PLUS	Enhanced Monitoring Reports including Updated Three Year Financial Forecast	Enhanced Monitoring Reports including Updated Three Year Financial Forecast PLUS	Standalone Three Year Forecast	Standalone Early Indication	Premium	Premium PLUS
<b>Schools with LCC Payroll</b>											
Band A	<i>Primary Schools &lt; 200 On Roll, All Nursery Schools</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,122	£674	£878	£1,007	-	-	£306	£306	-	-
	Termly Support	£1,452	£674	£824	£962	£1,503	£1,892	£278	£278	-	-
	Monthly Support	£2,874	£612	£788	£915	£1,447	£1,836	£195	£195	£4,088	£4,501
Band B	<i>Primary Schools 200-399 On Roll</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,122	£700	£906	£1,035	-	-	£306	£306	-	-
	Termly Support	£1,534	£700	£852	£979	£1,670	£2,059	£278	£278	-	-
	Monthly Support	£3,116	£639	£815	£941	£1,614	£2,003	£195	£195	£4,435	£4,848
Band C	<i>Primary Schools &gt; 399 On Roll, Short Stay Schools &amp; Special Schools</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,122	£728	£934	£1,062	-	-	£306	£306	-	-
	Termly Support	£1,642	£728	£878	£1,007	£1,836	£2,226	£278	£278	-	-
	Monthly Support	£3,385	£668	£842	£967	£1,781	£2,170	£195	£195	£4,806	£5,218
Band D	<i>Secondary Schools &lt; 600 On Roll</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,152	£782	£1,042	£1,171	-	-	£367	£367	-	-
	Termly Support	£1,809	£782	£960	£1,089	£2,003	£2,393	£334	£334	-	-
	Monthly Support	£3,979	£720	£923	£1,048	£1,948	£2,337	£234	£234	£5,480	£5,892
Band E	<i>Secondary Schools 600-999 On Roll</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,152	£864	£1,097	£1,228	-	-	£367	£367	-	-
	Termly Support	£2,000	£837	£1,016	£1,143	£2,170	£2,560	£334	£334	-	-
	Monthly Support	£4,382	£773	£976	£1,102	£2,115	£2,504	£234	£234	£5,978	£6,391
Band F	<i>Secondary Schools &gt; 999 On Roll</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,151	£920	£1,153	£1,282	-	-	£367	£367	-	-
	Termly Support	£2,139	£891	£1,070	£1,199	£2,337	£2,727	£334	£334	-	-
	Monthly Support	£4,808	£828	£1,029	£1,155	£2,282	£2,671	£234	£234	£6,495	£6,908

		Support Package	Staffing Budget Preparation	Full Budget Preparation	Full Budget Preparation PLUS	Enhanced Monitoring Reports including Updated Three Year Financial Forecast	Enhanced Monitoring Reports including Updated Three Year Financial Forecast PLUS	Standalone Three Year Forecast	Standalone Early Indication	Premium	Premium PLUS
<b>Schools with Private Payroll</b>											
Band A	<i>Primary Schools &lt; 200 On Roll, All Nursery Schools</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,122	£876	£1,141	£1,308	-	-	£306	£306	-	-
	Termly Support	£1,452	£876	£1,071	£1,250	£1,503	£1,892	£278	£278	-	-
	Monthly Support	£2,874	£795	£1,025	£1,189	£1,447	£1,836	£195	£195	£4,277	£4,720
Band B	<i>Primary Schools 200-399 On Roll</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,122	£910	£1,178	£1,346	-	-	£306	£306	-	-
	Termly Support	£1,534	£910	£1,107	£1,273	£1,670	£2,059	£278	£278	-	-
	Monthly Support	£3,117	£831	£1,059	£1,223	£1,614	£2,003	£195	£195	£4,632	£5,075
Band C	<i>Primary Schools &gt; 399 On Roll, Short Stay Schools &amp; Special Schools</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,122	£946	£1,214	£1,380	-	-	£306	£306	-	-
	Termly Support	£1,642	£946	£1,141	£1,309	£1,836	£2,226	£278	£278	-	-
	Monthly Support	£3,385	£868	£1,095	£1,257	£1,781	£2,170	£195	£195	£5,008	£5,450
Band D	<i>Secondary Schools &lt; 600 On Roll</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,152	£1,016	£1,355	£1,522	-	-	£367	£367	-	-
	Termly Support	£1,809	£1,016	£1,248	£1,416	£2,003	£2,393	£334	£334	-	-
	Monthly Support	£3,979	£936	£1,200	£1,362	£1,948	£2,337	£234	£234	£5,701	£6,143
Band E	<i>Secondary Schools 600-999 On Roll</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,152	£1,123	£1,427	£1,596	-	-	£367	£367	-	-
	Termly Support	£2,001	£1,088	£1,320	£1,486	£2,170	£2,560	£334	£334	-	-
	Monthly Support	£4,382	£1,005	£1,268	£1,433	£2,115	£2,504	£234	£234	£6,212	£6,656
Band F	<i>Secondary Schools &gt; 999 On Roll</i>										
	Basic Support	£1,151	£1,196	£1,499	£1,666	-	-	£367	£367	-	-
	Termly Support	£2,139	£1,158	£1,391	£1,558	£2,337	£2,727	£334	£334	-	-
	Monthly Support	£4,808	£1,076	£1,338	£1,502	£2,282	£2,671	£234	£234	£6,742	£7,185