

General Duties – Service Summary

1. SEIS Division

As with Retained Duties, SEIS is currently subject to review. However, there are key General Duties as set out below.

a) Statutory moderation

Schools and local authorities (LAs) have a statutory duty to ensure that teacher assessment (TA) is accurate and in line with the national standards in the relevant frameworks. Solihull co-ordinates moderation across the authority and facilitates school based lead moderators to support this activity within collaboratives.

Solihull is required to externally moderate a sample of at least 25% of LA maintained schools, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, to validate KS2 writing TA judgements.

Academies are responsible for confirming their choice of LA external moderation provider to STA. Academies are treated in the same way as maintained schools in the external moderation process. LAs must ensure that academies are moderated once every 4 years or more frequently if required, in addition to the 25% sample of LA maintained schools. This technically would be part of the Retained Duties.

The same also applies to the moderation of KS1 teacher assessments.

b) Test arrangements

Solihull has a statutory responsibility to monitor the administration of KS2 national curriculum tests. This helps to ensure that the security and confidentiality of test materials are maintained, and that the assessments are administered correctly and consistently. Monitoring visitors are also asked to observe the security of the key stage 1 test materials (where applicable) when undertaking the KS2 monitoring visits.

Solihull also has a statutory responsibility to monitor the administration of the phonics screening check. This helps to ensure that the security and confidentiality of check materials are maintained, and that the check is administered correctly and consistently.

Academies have been asked by the DfE to ensure they have employed a local authority of their choice to undertake their monitoring activities.

If there is evidence that maladministration has occurred then appropriate investigations will be undertaken in liaison with STA.

c) Complaints

The information officer supports parents and schools with the schools' complaints procedures. Model policy and guidance is provided to schools. If necessary an adviser/officer will investigate a complaint further if the school's process has been exhausted or if there is a concern regarding the safeguarding of children. The local authority also receives complaints made to Ofsted and these are investigated with the school in order for a response to Ofsted to be completed.

d) Governors Services

This function is to ensure that the local authority appoints appropriate people to be LA governors in maintained schools. This is over/above the package arrangements that are in place for governor training.

Costs for the above are based on an apportionment exercise and cover management oversight, improvement advisor and admin officer time as set out in Appendix C.

2. Access and Development Division

a) Data and Performance Team

The Team supports schools in their submission of the end of key stage two teacher assessment (TA) submission. By submitting through the Council, schools can ensure that the data is quality assured before onward submission to the Standards and Testing Agency. This is of particular importance as the writing teacher assessment is used within the accountability framework.

b) School Census Team

The school census team is regulated by the Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations and other related legislation. In particular, the submission of the school census returns, including a set of named pupil records, is a statutory requirement under Section 537A of the Education Act 1996.

The service is delivered by 2 people, though the team is closely interlinked with both the Education IMS team (who supports the software that schools use to create the census returns), and the data and performance team (which uses the data to provide analysis to both school and across the directorate). Data is also used for school funding purposes and accountability.

The school census team is responsible for coordinating the termly data collection, validation and submission of the school census for maintained schools. This involves:

- Reviewing the guidance provided by DFE, providing schools with a set of data reports, guidance and access to a helpdesk to respond to queries schools experience while running the school census,
- The validation of school submissions against internal data sources where this is possible (free school meal, SEN and children adopted from care, as examples) which all impact on school funding.
- The collation of the school census return and submission to DFE.

The team is also responsible for the accurate submission of the post-16 census for maintained schools. The team works with schools to ensure that the maximum funding for courses is achieved. In autumn 2016, the team was able to gain over £70,000 for one school which would have been lost without this checking service.

The team is also responsible for the accuracy of the pupil data within the local authority central pupil database. The team makes contact with schools to validate any data queries which ensures that the vast majority of pupil data held within school is kept up to date, and therefore causes fewer issues during the schools census process.

The pupil data held within the central pupil database is used by a large number of teams across the authority. Having access to timely and accurate data means that the LA does not have to ask schools for separate data requests, therefore reducing the burden on schools.

The team is also responsible for the alternative provision (AP) census which takes place every January and which is a statutory return. The team works with others across the directorate to identify children and young people who are receiving education that cannot attend a mainstream school.

c) School Funding Related

Costs here cover the requirement to calculate and distribute budgets for maintained schools.

3. Asset Management

We feel for the most part that responsibilities are covered by the Property Services package with schools. However, there are issues around meeting the changing responsibilities around things like asbestos.

School Asset Support Team – there is a dedicated senior Project Manager with development officer support, to support our general duties towards a Maintained Estate of currently c.60 schools, overseeing SAST led projects and our strategic liaison with the Diocesan Authorities (LCVAP).

4. Corporate Services

a) Financial Operations

Schools and academies purchase a finance package from Accountancy for the support provided by the Schools Finance Team. The total contribution for this in 2017/18 was £242,000 which covers the direct costs of the team. In addition to this there are other activities within Accountancy in relation to schools.

There are a number of corporate financial reporting requirements and activities which require the Council to include LA schools expenditure, income and balances. These include the following; monthly VAT returns, the Council's annual financial Accounting Statement and associated Whole of Government Accounts return and separate annual Revenue out-turn and Revenue budget returns for central government.

In addition there are corporate exchequer, compliance and financial control activities which encompass the payments function, purchase cards, income generation, collection and processing, day to day banking services, petty cash, insurance services and the ongoing maintenance and help desk for the Councils financial system Oracle.

The total direct cost in Accountancy of the service provided to schools is £411,000. This includes the Schools Finance Team plus percentages of a number of other staff.

b) Human Resources

Schools and academies purchase a HR Advisory Service and for HR Payroll package from HR. The total contribution for this in 2017/18 was £528,000. The direct cost of staff within HR providing a service to schools which covers functions provided as part of the packages and responsibilities defined under ESG is £794,000. This represents 36% of the cost of the HR department. Currently 59% of employees on the Council's payroll are working in schools.

The Schools Shared Services Team is currently 10.74 fte and costs £300,000. The remaining cost is made up of percentages of staff in the rest of the department who do

elements of work for both schools and core Council including the Resourcing Team and the Oracle HR Systems team.

Services also include recruitment with 607 vacancies placed for schools last year, DBS arrangements (queries, setting up new users, DBS invoices) and the maintenance of the NQT database.

Note that the General Duties cost has been reduced by £94,000 to reflect the impact from the review of service packages and costs.

c) ICT

This cost relates to the use of Oracle including General Ledger, HR, Payroll and Iprocurement. The total annual cost of ownership which sits in ICT is £651,000. This cost has been apportioned based on numbers of users. For I-procurement, General Ledger and HR modules of Oracle, schools account for 7% of the total users of the systems. For Oracle Payroll 59% of employees in the system are in schools.

There are additional costs of maintaining and developing these systems included in the costs for Financial Operations and HR.

d) Strategic Land and Property

Strategic Land provide professional input into the strategy and development of asset management plans as well as providing development appraisal, technical valuation and leasing advice as required. The team will take a lead role in the negotiation of any property related transactions as well as providing the requisite conduit for instructing legal services in this regard.

The direct project costs for the School Asset Support Team and Building Design Group are recovered directly from charges to the capital programme. There are functions and costs of SAST under Retained Duties. The cost of input from members Strategic Land Team has been estimated at £19,000.

e) Income and Awards

Income and Awards take an energetic and proactive approach to the collection of monies owed to the Council and schools. If payment is not made within the terms on the invoice/reminder notice, action to recover debt is taken through collection agents and county court. The collection rate of this debt is 99%.

The annual cost of staff time spent on collection is £110,000. Schools currently represent 5.2% of invoices outstanding.

f) Communications

The Communications team provide bespoke communications and PR advice to senior managers, principals or head teachers in emergency situations for our maintained schools. This is difficult to quantify as it is provided as and when required - it can be anything from one long telephone call, to intensive media management over a number of weeks/months. Costs of £1,700 have been included for an estimated 32 hours of staff time per year.

The team directly supports the Council's Solihull Education Improvement Service with a weekly e-mail bulletin 'Head Lines' with the aim of providing one coordinated communications channel to Head Teachers and principals at primary and secondary schools in Solihull. Creating, editing and checking the bulletin amounts to 2-3 hours per week. The annual cost of this is £2,900.

g) Procurement

Support from Procurement includes:

- Provision of specific rules for contract for schools.
- Reviews of purchase orders over £60k.
- Training for governors.
- Procurement of corporate contracts which include schools such as utilities.
- Ad-hoc advice and support on contract management issues.

Schools Forum make an annual contribution of £40,000 for the provision of a dedicated Schools Procurement Business Partner. The total cost of the service provided including this post plus time from other members of the team is £69,000 which includes a total of 288 days of staff time per year.

h) Internal Audit

Schools purchase an internal audit service package and for 2017/18 made a total contribution of £21,000. Internal Audit provide a series of independent reviews necessary to ensure a stable and effective control environment, provision of control advice, prevention, detection and investigation of fraud. Over a year this accounts for 240 audit days. This includes:

- 140 days for delivery of the schools audit plan.
- 30 days for audit work in line with responsibilities under ESG such as reviews such as Governing Body effectiveness.
- 45 days for fraud related work – including whistleblowing, fraud awareness and fraud investigation.
- 25 days to represent a portion of the time spent on general audits which will include schools such as payroll, accounts payable, exception reporting.

The direct cost of this in Internal Audit is £52,000.

i) Health and Safety

Schools Forum pay an annual contribution of £42,000 to Health and Safety in respect of training. A charge is made to each school for annual Fire Risk Assessments carried out by Health and Safety which totalled £32,000 in 2017/18.

In addition to this specific work, there is an estimated 250 days per year necessary to ensure compliance with the Authority's duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This time includes provision for Health & Safety Audits, accident investigation and reporting, general Health and Safety advice and consultancy. The direct cost to schools of this in Health and Safety is £54,000.

j) Legal Services

Legal Services ceased to be a fully traded service a number of years ago but still maintain a record of cases and time expended as a management tool. A report of time logged in 2016/17 indicates a cost of £22,000 against education matters. This includes legal advice which may not be provided directly to schools such as advising Strategic Land officers on sales of school property. It excludes advice provided for other support services when dealing with school matters e.g. HR.

k) Strategy

This represents a portion of Council costs for governance and management. An element of the work of the Chief Executive and Council Members including the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills and Scrutiny will be associated with school matters.

l) Overheads

For all of the direct costs detailed above there will also be an overhead for provision of office accommodation, ICT equipment, paying staff salaries etc. which has been calculated at 32.6%.