

Schools Finance Support 2026-27

Introduction

2026-27 continues to present significant financial challenges to the public sector and the expectation on schools to achieve efficiency savings whilst delivering against their educational plans has only increased. The need for good medium-term planning becomes paramount whilst balancing these against obtaining best value from available financial resources.

For well over 30 years, since the introduction of local financial management, we have provided schools with a wide range of financial support to meet these goals.

We are therefore pleased to offer schools and governors our service packages for 2026-27. The current package of services offers comprehensive and relevant support to heads and governors and continues to allow for alternative delivery options enabling schools to choose from either virtual or ad hoc site visits.

The standard and enhanced packages within the brochure are designed to meet the needs of primary, nursery and special schools.

We help schools to make a success of forward planning and financial management. We pride ourselves on working on behalf of our schools and ensure we work effectively with our Cambridgeshire colleagues, other parts of the Local Authority and external organisations.

Our team is professional, experienced, and approachable and has considerable expertise working with and supporting schools. We very much look forward to working with you over the coming year.

Our Promise to you

As well as following the Cambridgeshire County Council customer service charter and its commitment to providing a high-quality service to all customers, we promise to:

- Act in a professional manner always.
- Respect the confidential nature of our work.
- Be open and accountable.
- Listen and act upon your comments and concerns.
- Constantly monitor our performance and continuously improve the service delivered.
- Ensure that our staff are competent and have the skills required to deliver appropriate financial advice.
- Deliver timely, clear and relevant advice.
- Reply to straightforward queries quickly and advise you when to expect a response for more complex ones.
- Respond to your written communications within five working days of receipt.
- Complete all requests for financial modelling within two weeks of receiving the request.

Standard Service

We have developed this service to be appropriate for the needs of the majority of primary, nursery and special schools. It combines regular strategic support from your school financial adviser with the operational backup provided by our helpline and budgeting support service. The service is delivered virtually.

Service includes:

- A termly meeting with your school financial adviser
- An additional meeting to assist with the annual budget build.
- Advice on the financial implications of your school development plan
- Advice and support with all aspects of Financial Management within schools
- Policy advice for Governors and for Ofsted preparation
- Telephone and email access to the Schools Finance team
- Resolution of financial queries
- Financial modelling
- Salary Budget calculations
- Salary Profiling
- Budget Building tools and support
- SBS Support through the Corporate Team

Enhanced Service

This is designed for schools who like to have frequent contact with their school financial adviser and provides a high level of strategic advice for the Head and Governors. It offers the security of effective operational backup. The service is delivered virtually.

Service includes:

- An agreed number of meetings with your school financial adviser
- Advice on the financial implications of your school development plan
- Support, advice and discussion of the issues arising from your annual budget
- Advice and support regarding Financial Management in schools
- Policy advice for Governors and for Ofsted preparation
- Telephone and email access to the Schools Finance team
- Resolution of financial queries
- Financial modelling
- Salary Budget calculations
- Salary Profiling
- Budget Building tools and support
- SBS Support through the Corporate Team

Light Touch

Designed for the more experienced schools wishing to avail themselves of operational backup but needing less strategic advice. Please note with the Light Touch package the meeting will be to assist with the building of the annual budget and schools will have to ensure they have the relevant information available in advance of the scheduled meeting.

Service includes:

- An annual meeting with your school financial adviser to discuss the issues raised by your budget plan and its financial implications in the longer term
- Telephone and email access to the Schools Finance team
- Resolution of financial queries

Please note: This package is only available by application and will be considered by the Strategic Finance Manager and Senior Finance Business Partner. Schools that apply for this package and are not eligible, will be reverted to the standard package.

Federation Package

This package is designed for schools in a hard federation arrangement under a single Governing Body. It delivers the same level of service as the standard package to each school in the federation.

Finance Forums

By purchasing any of the advisory packages, this grants access to finance forums. These are forums held each term virtually with at least one hosted centrally in person in the Spring Term. These forums will focus on providing schools with:

- information on the latest financial issues impacting on schools
- updates on best practice
- hints & tips on school financial issues
- presentations and guest speakers on financial issues
- networking opportunities with finance staff from other schools

Your Schools Finance Support Team

Strategic Finance Manager (Children's, Education & Schools):

Martin Wade – martin.wade@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Senior Finance Business Partner:

Jonty Holden – jonty.holden@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Finance Business Partner (Schools Advisory):

Stephanie Kirbyshire – stephanie.kirbyshire@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

School Financial Advisors (Schools Advisory)

Annette Magnus - annette.magnus@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Gaynor Pope - gaynor.pope@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Helen Birdsall – helen.birdsall@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Finance Business Partner (Schools Corporate):

Sam Walker – sam.walker@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Assistant Accountants (Schools Corporate):

Nicole Bone – nicole.bone@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Lewis Armstrong – lewis.armstrong@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Address for the team:

Schools Finance Team
Cambridgeshire County Council
Box ALC2618
New Shire Hall
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Enterprise Campus
Alconbury Weald
Huntingdon
PE28 4YE

Roles and Responsibilities

<p><u>Schools are responsible for:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively managing the school budget within available resources. • Submitting a balanced annual budget approved by the governing body. • Ensuring accurate school accounts are maintained and cashflow monitored. • Regular maintenance of budget updates in the budgeting software (SBS) • Submitting monthly and quarterly returns to the local authority in line with corporate requirements. • Understanding and ensuring compliance with the Scheme for Financing Schools. • Timely implementation of agreed audit recommendations. • The introduction and maintenance of adequate and cost-effective systems of internal control. • The procurement and implementation of the prime financial and management information system within the school. • Completing and submission of the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) on an annual basis. • Training and developing themselves and their staff in relation to financial competencies. • Alerting the local authority when there is risk of deficit or cashflow concerns. • Providing Schools Financial Advisers with accurate information to support financial analysis. 	<p><u>Schools Corporate Team are responsible for:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing annual budgets based on the agreed local funding formula (subject to approval by the DfE). • Providing monthly funding and funding statements to schools (recognising some funding will be based on information received from other council services). • Passporting of grant funding as per conditions of grant published by the DfE. • Providing advice and guidance on key corporate requirements. • Updating and publishing the revised Scheme for Financing schools to reflect national and local changes. • Monitoring returns from schools and providing timely feedback on material issues. • Monitoring and challenging schools on revenue balances and cashflow. • Scrutinising Budget Submissions and providing positive challenge • Providing regular finance sessions for schools • Collating and completing Government assurance returns. • Checking and reimbursing School VAT 	<p><u>Under the Standard Package the Schools Advisory Team are responsible for:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termly meetings with the school (3 per year) • Additional meeting to support the budget build process. • Promoting sound financial management within schools. • Keeping up to date on relevant financial issues. • Interpreting financial information to assist schools with meeting their financial responsibilities. • Ensuring technical accuracy of all financial modelling. • Providing constructive challenge to schools' financial decisions. • Advice on the financial implications of your school development plan. • Advice and support with all aspects of Financial Management within schools. • Policy advice for Governors and for Ofsted preparation. • Scrutinising financial forecasts and providing positive challenge • Utilising financial and data analytics to inform decision making
<p><u>The local authority Schools finance teams are not responsible for the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing technical support on the prime financial system within schools. • Providing financial administration support. • Producing cashflow forecasts on behalf of schools. 		



Our Service Fees 2026-27

Enhanced Service	Dependant on level of service required
Standard Service	£2,910 virtually
Light Touch	£1,790 virtually
Federation Pack (min 2 schools)	£2,395 per school
Recruitment Service*	£700
Additional Financial Adviser meetings**	£350
On-site Visit	£150 per visit

* Support with shortlisting and participation on the interview panel.

** Cost applies to extra visits for schools who have bought in to a Standard or Enhanced package as a minimum, for light touch schools additional visits are charged at £440 per visit.



Service Level Agreement with Schools

1. **Duration** – This agreement is for the 2026-27 financial year (April – March).
2. **Services to be provided** – the services to be provided by Schools Finance are as outlined in this brochure.
 - **Charge for the service** – The charge for the service packages will be processed at mid-year (September) for those schools buying a package. Ad-hoc services will be charged termly in September, January and closedown.
3. **Price increases** – The prices shown in this brochure may be subject to an annual increase. Schools will receive detailed information on price changes before budget building each year.
4. **Variation of service at the request of the school** – Additional services may be requested at any point in the year by contacting either your Financial Adviser or the Group Accountant.
5. **Notice of withdrawal from the service by the school** – The school may withdraw from this agreement by giving one months' notice in writing to the Senior Finance Business Partner. Where a school withdraws or converts to academy in year they will still be charged to the end of the current term.
6. **School visits** – School visits will be expected to take place during normal office hours. A standard visit is expected to last no longer than two hours.
7. **Virtual School visits** – Schools can opt for virtual visits if this is seen as a more efficient way of delivering support.
8. **Attendance at Governor Meetings** – We will be happy to attend Governor Meetings at your request which can be as part of the agreed package or charged as additional meeting. Where these are held in the evening our attendance should normally last no longer than one hour.
9. **Cancelled visits** – No charge will be made for meetings cancelled by the school provided an unnecessary journey has not been made. Where an unnecessary journey is made Schools Finance may charge the school for the costs incurred. We will endeavour to rearrange any visits cancelled by the school, but where this is not possible the cancelled visit may have to be forfeited.
10. **Responsibilities of Schools Finance** – Schools Finance aims to provide you with professional advice on financial planning, decision-making and management. In delivering this we see our main responsibilities as being:
 - To promote sound financial management
 - To keep up to date on relevant financial issues
 - To interpret financial information to assist you with your financial responsibilities
 - To ensure technical accuracy of all financial modelling



- To provide constructive challenge to schools' financial decisions

11. **Responsibilities of the school** – In order for Schools Finance to provide an effective service certain responsibilities are placed on the school:

- To provide all necessary financial information
- To check all financial modelling for completeness and factual accuracy
- To request financial modelling at least two weeks before it is needed
- To take appropriate financial decisions
- To provide an agenda and details of the finance issues to be discussed where a financial adviser attends a governor meeting
- To provide appropriate working conditions to allow the financial adviser to carry out their tasks
- To keep the budgets up to date in the dedicated budgeting software (SBS).

12. **Performance standards** – Schools Finance aims to provide a quality service to its customers.

- To reply to all straightforward queries quickly and advise you when to expect a response for more complex queries
- To complete requests for financial modelling within two weeks of receiving the request
- To endeavour to meet all requests for attendance at a governor meeting where one months' notice is given of the date.

13. **Complaints procedure** – Should you have any comments, suggestions or wish to make a complaint about any aspect of the service you receive from us, you may do so by contacting Martin Wade or Jonty Holden.

