LCC Schools Finance Handbook

Section A:

Introduction

August 2026

Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Contents

SECTION A1: Requirements to comply with Financial Regulations and Procedures

A1.1 The Requirement to ensure the Proper Administration of Financial Affairs

Section 251 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the County Council to secure the "proper administration of its financial affairs". One aspect of achieving this is that the County Council sets out the appropriate procedures which must be complied with by all officers and establishments. These procedures are set out in the Scheme for Financing Schools, the Constitution of the County Council, Contract Regulations, Financial Regulations and Procedures and in other guidance e.g. circulars on financial procedures issued by the Executive Director of Children's Services.

Key relevant guidance and instructions contained in these various sources is collated within this handbook but further advice should be sought from the relevant contact officer where appropriate.

SECTION A2: Audit Arrangements

A2.1 Internal Audit

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, the Chief Finance Officer of the County Council has delegated responsibility for ensuring the proper administration of financial affairs. As part of this responsibility, they are required to undertake an adequate and effective internal audit. The provision of internal audit is a statutory requirement to enable the Chief Finance Officer to discharge her Section 251 responsibilities.

All schools are subject to the audit regime determined by the authority regarding internal audit and the authority's external audit regime. The Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's Services, and the Council's internal auditors, reserves the right to request an Internal Audit of any maintained school.

In reaching a view on audit coverage, risks will be assessed. This will take account of a number of factors which will be communicated to schools and which may change over time. The scope of the audits may include:

a) review of financial and non-financial systems and controls
b) probity work and special investigations
c) governance reviews
d) value for money exercises
e) systems under development
f) annual "health checks" or certification of financial statements where considered appropriate and necessary
g) advice on risks, the operation of controls and financial processes

Internal audit should be regarded as both an aid to management providing support, guidance and assurance, as well as an independent check to help the school achieve the proper administration of its financial affairs. At the end of each audit, any findings will be discussed and a report issued to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors making recommendations for improvement and agreeing an action plan for implementation with time scales agreed by the Headteacher.

Recommendations made must be communicated to the Governors within a formal Governors' meeting and action on those recommendations should be agreed at that level. A copy of every audit report is shared with Children's Service colleagues.

Internal audit visits are generally pre-arranged and visits are at a mutually agreed time. The Council's internal auditors have authority to visit all schools at reasonable times. They must be provided access to all relevant records and property and may require such information and explanations considered necessary.

Where the school has reason to believe there may have been any misuse of resources or other financial irregularity, there is a requirement within Financial Regulations that this is notified immediately to the County Council's Whistleblowing Confidential Hotline

Freephone:
0800 0853716

This dedicated reporting line operates between 9am-5pm. Outside normal working hours you can leave a message and we will get back to you.

Email:
whistleblowing@lincolnshire.gov.uk

In writing:
Lincolnshire Local Authorities
PO Box 640
Lincoln
LN1 1WF

A2.2 External Audit

The financial systems, records and activities of all maintained schools form part of the County Council's overall accounting and control arrangements and are covered by the same independent external audit arrangements applying to the County Council as a whole. Such arrangements are determined periodically by the Council's external auditors. Under a "managed audit" approach, the external auditors work closely with the Council's internal auditors in order to minimise the duplication of coverage. However, external auditors may also, on occasion, visit County Council establishments, requiring access to all relevant records including property controlled by schools and seek such explanations as required. Where a school is approached by external audit with a view to a visit being made, the school should satisfy itself (by liaison with Corporate Audit and Risk Management) that this visit is legitimate.

A2.3 Audit of Private and Voluntary Funds

Any private or voluntary funds administered by schools should be declared in a manner determined by the Chief Finance Officer. For all such funds, schools must complete an annual statement setting out the audited position. This statement will contain a summary position for the previous year and details of the auditor and charity registration. Schools must also seek compliance with the relevant Charities Act requirements, where appropriate.

A2.4 Whistleblowing

The Public Information Disclosure Act (1998) applies to the public, private and voluntary sectors. It aims to improve accountability and good governance in all organisations by assuring workers concerned about malpractice that it is safe to raise their concerns.

Lincolnshire County Council has a 'whistleblowing' policy **that makes provision for staff or others to report concerns confidentially if they have a genuine concern about disclosing their own identity.**

Examples of issues encouraged to be raised include:

a) conduct which is a criminal offence or breach of law
b) a breach of our code of conduct for staff or Councillors
c) sexual, physical or verbal abuse of our clients, employees or public
d) dangerous procedures risking the health and safety of our clients, employees or public
e) unauthorised use of public funds
f) suspected fraud or corruption
g) damage to the environment (for example land, buildings, highways, water, air, waste, energy, transport, natural habitat etc.)
h) unethical or improper conduct
i) services that fall seriously below approved standards or practice
j) failure to follow our policies and procedures

This Policy is not a substitute for existing employment policies (e.g. Grievance, Dignity at work or Disciplinary policies) that support staff to address situations where they feel they have been treated wrongly or unfairly, nor does it replace the school's normal complaint procedures.

The whistleblowing arrangements can be used by a Local Authority school or school governor (if the school has adopted LCC's policy)

The policy also applies to agency staff, contractor staff and suppliers providing goods or services to the school, or on the school's behalf.

A full copy of the whistleblowing policy is available:
Whistleblowing policy – Introduction and scope - Lincolnshire County Council

SECTION A3: Roles and Responsibilities

A3.1 Governing Body

The responsibility for the financial management of the school is delegated to the school's governing body.

The governing body is entitled, subject to any provisions made under the Scheme for Financing Schools, to spend any sum made available to it in respect of the school's budget share for any financial year as it thinks fit for the purposes of the school.

The governing body may delegate any of the responsibilities for financial matters to either a Finance Committee or the Headteacher, whilst retaining overall responsibility for the proper exercise of its duties. The roles and responsibilities of all parties should be set out in writing and be formally agreed by the full governing body and reviewed annually.

The governing body's responsibilities include:

a) managing the budget made available to it by the County Council both efficiently and economically, ensuring value for money at all times;

b) adhering to the County Council's financial regulations and procedures;

c) compliance with the County Council's Scheme for Financing Schools as approved by the Secretary of State;

d) approval of the school's medium term financial plan (A plan needs to be submitted by 31st May each year; guidance on the content is available from the Schools Finance Team);

e) approval of the content, format and frequency of financial monitoring reports for the Finance Committee and full governing body (guidance on the content is available from the Schools Finance Team);

f) regular monitoring of actual and forecast income and expenditure against the budget (the Council recommends that forecast reports are considered at least termly);

g) taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the school does not overspend;

h) seek the County Council's prior approval to overspend;

i) approval of virements of budgets (the Council recommends that virements of £5,000 or more should be approved by resolution of the full governing body. Where the power to vire amounts of less than £5,000 has been delegated, these should be reported to the next governors' meeting);

j) reviewing the County Council's audit reports and ensuring that wherever possible, the recommendations are implemented;

k) overseeing the financial administration of privately raised funds (the County Council requires schools to submit a statement confirming that the fund's accounts have been independently audited within six months of the year end).

Where a governing body is responsible for a substantial or persistent failure to comply with any of the requirements set out in the Scheme for Financing Schools or is not managing its delegated budget in a satisfactory manner, the County Council, through the Executive Director of Children's Services, may suspend the governing body's right to a delegated budget.

A3.2 Headteacher

The Headteacher's responsibilities include:

a) obtaining in writing, details of his / her responsibilities with respect to the financial management of the school;

b) managing the budget made available to the school by the County Council both efficiently and economically, ensuring value for money at all times;

c) adhering to the County Council's financial regulations and procedures;

d) ensuring compliance with the County Council's Scheme for Financing Schools;

e) preparing the school's medium term financial plan for the governing body's consideration, incorporating costings of School Development Plan priorities (a plan should be produced by all schools each year and guidance on the content is available from the Schools Finance Team);

f) submission of the school's approved annual budget to the County Council by 31st May following the start of the financial year;

g) monitoring the school's income and expenditure against budget on a monthly basis (this should include a review of each month's transactions to ensure they are complete, have been properly coded and contain no errors);

h) preparation of regular budget monitoring reports, covering actual and forecast income and expenditure against the budget, for the governing body or Finance SubCommittee (the Council recommends that budget forecast reports are considered at least termly);

i) making recommendations, where appropriate, to the school's governing body on action needed to avoid overspending;

j) seeking prior approval to overspend from the County Council as soon as this appears unavoidable;

k) approving virements of budgets, up to limits set by the governing body;

l) reviewing the County Council's audit reports and responding to its recommendations in consultation with the governing body;

m) supervising the day-to-day administration of the school's finances (including bank reconciliations, where appropriate), and the monitoring of expenditure;

n) ensuring that checks, reconciliations and returns are completed in accordance with the timetable published by the Schools Finance Team;

o) ensuring that proper internal checks and controls are in place covering day-to-day activities (advice on internal checks and controls will be given during the course of an audit or can be obtained by contacting the Council's Corporate Audit and Risk Management section);

p) establishing effective internal budget monitoring and reporting arrangements for budgets delegated to departments;

q) supervising the recording and maintaining of the school's financial records including authorising transactions;

r) overseeing the financial administration of privately raised funds (the County Council requires schools to submit a statement confirming that the fund's accounts have been independently audited within six months of the year end).

Further advice regarding roles and responsibilities can be obtained by contacting the Schools Finance Team. Spreadsheets and word documents have been issued to all schools to help them produce financial plans and budget monitoring reports for governing bodies. The Schools Finance Team also runs an annual training programme for administrators, Headteachers and governors which provides further information.

SECTION A4: Finance Policy

A4.1 Draft Finance Policy

Schools are currently expected to have a whole series of plans and policies covering all aspects of their work.

The Schools Finance Team has put together a draft finance policy that can be adopted and amended to suit school's individual needs. It is intended to bring together the key aspects of finance under one policy document. It deals with roles and responsibilities, budget setting, budget monitoring, financial planning and many other important financial issues.

The Local Authority recommends that all schools produce a finance policy. To assist schools, the draft policy con can be accessed on Perspective Lite:

Schools Finance Team > Policies

More detailed information and guidance relating to this policy can be found throughout the School Finance Handbook. This can be located at:

Schools Finance Team > Finance Handbook > Schools Finance Handbook (New)

School staff and governors should also be familiar with the Scheme for Financing Schools available at:

Scheme For Financing Schools

or use the menu path from the Lincolnshire County Council website: Council and councillors > Finances and budgets > Schools finances > Scheme for financing schools

SECTION A5: Timetable of Key Dates

A5.1 Timetable of Key Dates

A timetable of key dates for schools and the Schools Finance Team is available on Perspective Lite. It refers to the main areas of work undertaken by both parties and informs schools when they can expect tasks to be completed by the Schools Finance Team.

LA Documents > Schools Finance Team > Guidance Documents

SECTION A6: List of Contacts

NAME	POST TITLE	HELP / ADVICE ON	TEL	EMAIL ADDRESS
Jackson Mapfumo	Associate Strategic Finance Lead – Children's Services	Policy Issues		Jackson.mapfumo@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Schools Finance Helpdesk	Helpdesk	Finance related queries, MTFP Support, Business World finance queries	01522 555550 (option 5)	Schools_Finance@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Schools Business Support Service (SBSS)	SBSS	This address should be used to book finance support meetings for Silver and Gold schools		Sbss@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Schools Finance Sickness Insurance Scheme	Schools Finance Sickness	Submission of Schools Sickness Insurance Scheme templates and queries specifically relating to the scheme. Note: Queries relating to employees sickness should be directed to HR/Payroll	01522 555550 (option 5)	School_Sickness_Ins@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)	SFVS	Submission of SFVS return	01522 555550 (option 5)	SchoolFinanceReturns@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Schools Finance Training	Schools Finance Training	To book onto financial training courses offered by the Schools Finance Team	01522 555550 (option 5)	Schools_Fin_Training@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Elizabeth Bowes	Strategic Finance Manager	Responsibility for Schools Finance Team, oversight of schools funding including grants, budget setting, budget monitoring, closure of accounts, monitoring and intervention, service support to schools – including Sickness Insurance Scheme and SBSS buyback service.	01522 554905	Elizabeth.bowes@lincolnshire.gov.uk

NAME	POST TITLE	HELP / ADVICE ON	TEL	EMAIL ADDRESS
Shaun Brown	Finance Manager	Overview of service support to schools – including Sickness Insurance Scheme and SBSS buyback service. Overview of budget monitoring and closure of accounts	01522 554927	Shaun.brown@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Teresa Rowson	Finance Manager	Overview of schools funding including grants, budget setting, budget monitoring, closure of accounts and monitoring and intervention	01522 555498	Teresa.rowson@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Adam Emson	Senior Finance Technician	Schools Funding and Grant Funding	01522 550923	Adam.Emson@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Ebuka Ani	Senior Finance Technician	Grant Funding and Loans	01522 550263	Ebuka.ani@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Allan Ndiweni	Senior Finance Technician	Helpdesk / Sickness Insurance Scheme / CFR	01522 555688	Allan.ndiweni@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Lee Mason	Senior Finance Technician	Silver & Gold Finance Meetings	01522 554937	Sbss@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Joy Nguyen	Senior Finance Technician	Silver & Gold Finance Meetings	01522 554603	Sbss@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Higher Needs Funding	SEND Finance Team	Higher Needs – Queries on top up, targeted and post 16 funding	07717 878980 07810 527839	SENFinanceProject@lincolnshire.gov.uk
John Rossington	Senior Finance Technician	Looked After Children Pupil Premium Funding		John.rossington@lincolnshrie.gov.uk
Geraldine O'Neill	Sustainability & Development Manager	Early Years Funding and Advice	07747 757533	Geraldine.O'Neill@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Hannah Edwards	Senior Finance Technician	Secondary Contact Early Years Funding		Hannah.edwards@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Tracey Harrison	Finance Team Manager	Secondary Contract Early Years Funding		Tracey.harrison@lincolnshire.gov.uk

NAME	POST TITLE	HELP / ADVICE ON	TEL	EMAIL ADDRESS
Insurance Advice	Insurance Team	Risk management and insurance	07825 342827	insurance@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Audit		All Audit enquiries Risk & controls, Whistle Blowing, Fraud Advice		Schools&Academies@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Credit Control	Credit Control Team	Matters in respect of unpaid debts, disputes raised on debtor invoices, advice on further action via County Court, reminder letters, debt write off, bad debt provisions	01522 555555	Creditcontrol@lincolnshire.gov.uk
VAT Advice	VAT Team	VAT advice and submission of VAT returns		VAT@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Karen Tonge	Treasury Manager	Advice on leasing	01522 553639	karen.tonge@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Thomas Spencer	Treasury Officer	Advice on leasing	01522 553075	Thomas.spencer2@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Corporate Property Team	Devolved Capital	Manage the Devolved Capital process for maintained schools and provide advice and guidance on capital projects		CorporatePropertyTeam@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Pensions	Pensions Team	Employees/members emailing in forms for payroll action e.g. Opt out / Opt in / Move to 50/50 scheme etc.	01522 555555	LGPSPensionsEnquiries@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Pensions	West Yorkshire Pension Team	Member Pension queries	01274 434999	www.wyfp.org.uk
Pensions	Teachers Pensions	Communications and requests from TP and internally regarding missing service queries etc.	01522 555555	TPS.enquiries@lincolnshire.gov.uk

NAME	POST TITLE	HELP / ADVICE ON	TEL	EMAIL ADDRESS
Payroll	Schools Payroll Team	Input and payment of variable pay and deductions in salary. Maternity and overpayment calculations.	01522 782075	schoolsteam@lincolnshire.gov.uk
People Administration Team	Schools HR Team	Contracts – starters, leavers and changes	01522 782075	HRSchoolsteam@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Jane Bridgewater	HR Administration and Payroll Manager	Overall responsibility for operations in the Payroll, Pensions and HR Teams.	01522 550939	Jane.Bridgwater@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Mark Davies	Schools HR Business Manager	Overseeing HR advisory support to schools		MarkZ.Davies@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Bethy Guyver	HR Business Partner Schools	Provide HR advisory support to schools		Beth.guyver@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Emily Thorpe	HR Business Partner Schools	Provide HR advisory support to schools		Emily.thorpe@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Accounts Payable	AP Payment Team	General advice on invoice payment and procurement card	01522 782075	Suppliers@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Income	AR Income Team	Heycentric, EReturn template & maintenance, Revenue code, Pay Point and Lodgement area creation. Setup and updating of school voucher / online payment EReturns, issue paying-in books, cash deposit cards and Exc~~e~~el receipt spreadsheets		income@lincolnshire.gov.uk eremittance@lincolnshire.gov.uk rmasterdata@lincolnshire.gov.uk