

### General Duties – Service Summary

#### 1. SEIS Division

The SEIS, in addition to its school improvement duties, has several 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.

## **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.

Work has continued throughout the lockdown period; with significant additional work arising from completing daily school attendance data for the government. The team have also supported schools in advising schools on recording of pupil absence.

#### **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.

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, together with associated tasks of in-year budget changes, servicing School Forum, and submitting returns to the ESFA / DfE. .

### **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 2020/21 was £247,000 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 above services provided to schools is £291,000. This excludes the Schools Finance Team.

#### **b) Human Resources**

Schools and academies purchase a HR Advisory Service and for HR Payroll package from HR. The total contribution for this in 2019/20 was £522,000. This, and the additional responsibilities defined under ESG represents 36% of the cost of the HR department. Currently 60% of employees on the Council's payroll are working in schools.

The Schools HR Advisory Service offers a professional specialist service to all schools on a not for profit basis. A designated Advisor is provided for each school and offers a personal face to face service for complex matters and meetings involving Trade Unions together with telephone support and online access to a comprehensive range of best practice policies, procedures and templates covering the full range of employee relations issues including Grievance, Disciplinary, Sickness Absence Management and Capability issues.

HR Advisors ensure they understand the organisational outcomes schools are seeking to achieve and will support Heads and Governing Bodies to deliver these in the most effective and professional way including Management of Change and TUPE processes.

HR provide a comprehensive training offer to schools including Managing Allegations, Safer Recruitment, Sickness Absence management, Capability, Teachers Appraisal, Performance Development Review for support staff, Difficult Conversations and Employment Law. Mental Health First Aid Training.

The Employee Service Centre consists of transactional payroll and pensions, the Oracle Systems Team and the provision of management information.

The Payroll Team undertakes school visits to provide support and training where a need is identified as well as for new School Bursars / Finance Managers. The team also completes the Workforce Census Return on behalf of Schools and Academies.

The service seeks to introduce streamlined and digital means for processing additional payments such as overtime and supply teachers claims and the on-going enhancements of tools such as the SMBC element check.

The package for LGPS and Teachers also includes pensions administration. Real time information is now provided to administrators on a monthly basis.

In 2017 and 2018 the audits (both internal and external) of the Council's Payroll Service were assessed as Level 1 which equates to Substantial Assurance.

The Employment Services Team (EST) have engaged with all maintained schools advising them of potential apprenticeship training opportunities on offer. Currently there are 40 apprentices working across 20 schools.. This means that over half of maintained schools are currently employing apprentices or up skilling their current staff. EST provide advice and support regarding adverts and supporting documentation such as job descriptions and person specifications. EST also provide guidance around suitable apprenticeship training available for specific roles in schools. EST carry out procurement exercises to commission training providers to deliver apprenticeship training that schools are interested in. This includes Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools, School Business Manager, Children, Young People and Families Practitioner and Manager.

The cost of the additional ESG functions is estimated at £540,000.

### **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 £827,000. 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 60% of employees in the system are in schools. The cost is estimated at £165,000.

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 provision of strategic property advice and any negotiations in connection with all property related matters and transactions as well as providing the requisite conduit for instructing legal services in this regard. The cost of input from members of the Strategic Land Team has been estimated at £21,000.

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 both General and Retained Duties.

#### **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 then a reminder notice is issued. Prior to taking any recovery action the Income Team will attempt to make contact with the debtor through various communication methods such as telephone, email or letter. Should the debtor not engage then further recovery action is taken. This requires each individual case to be reviewed and progressed through the most appropriate action such as collection agents and county court.

The annual cost of staff time spent on collection is £167,000. Schools currently represent 7.49% of outstanding invoices at a cost of £12,000.

#### **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 provides quality assurance, support and training on the Stay Connected system that 'Head Lines' uses. 'Head Lines' is the one coordinated communications channel to Head Teachers and principals at primary and secondary schools in Solihull. The Communications Team also provides about 30mins per bulletin oversight which equates to approximately 20 hours per academic year.

The annual cost of the functions above is £2,000 a year.

#### **g) Procurement**

Support from Procurement includes:

- Provision of specific rules for contract for schools which have been revised and updated to suit maintained schools' changing needs.
- Reviews of purchase orders over £60,000.
- Training for governors.
- Procurement of corporate contracts which include school specific contracts such as secondary schools' transport and home to school transport.
- Ad-hoc advice and support on contract management issues.
- Work with SMBC teams on initiatives for schools e.g. sustainability team - greener schools and Love Solihull.

For 2020-21 there is no longer a DSG, Schools Forum approved contribution of £40,000 for the provision of a dedicated Schools Procurement Business Partner. The Council has absorbed this cost for this year. The additional direct cost of the above services, excluding the dedicated post but including time from other members of the team is £31,000. In total this is 222 days of staff time per year.

#### **h) Internal Audit**

Schools purchase an internal audit service package and for 2020/21 made a total contribution of £20,000. 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 of 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 cost of this additional audit work is £43,000.

#### **i) Health and Safety**

For 2020-21 there is no longer a DSG, Schools Forum approved annual contribution of £52,350 to Health and Safety in respect of training, the majority of which relates to first aid, including paediatric first aid (both of which are legal requirements). School specific health and safety training is also delivered covering a range of different topics, including health and safety awareness, fire safety, manual handling and COSHH. The training tends to be site or role specific and is therefore tailored as appropriate to suit the needs of the school setting. The contribution also includes the CLEAPPS annual subscription fee and the School Trips IT system. The costs of these services for maintained schools have been absorbed by the Council.

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 £59,000.

**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. An estimate of the costs of working on education matters of £27,000 has been included. 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. This includes an element of the work of the Chief Executive and other senior management which will be associated with school matters. The estimated cost is £64,000.

**l) Overheads**

For all of the additional 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%.