The role of the school business management (SBM) professional

The SBM professional role is very context-specific and varies widely from school to school. The focus and scope of the role is determined by the size of the school/cluster, the status of the SBM within the school/cluster and the relationship with senior leadership teams, particularly headteacher(s).

Job titles (and associated salaries) also vary – ranging from finance officer or school administrator through to business manager or finance director – reflecting the mix of strategic and operational focus that they have in their school. Many schools employ their own SBM, but some smaller schools come together and share this key role across the cluster.

An SBM is most effective when they work in, or alongside, the school leadership team(s). The role can cover a number of areas of responsibility including strategic and operational management of finances (savings and fundraising), premises and facilities management, human resources, line management and the professional development of all non-teaching staff, marketing and communications.

Making a case for a school business management professional

Central to the case for recruiting a SBM is the need to make best use of budgets and resources. An SBM will play a key role in linking strong financial management to the school improvement planning process. An SBM will not only make significant savings, but will also identify new sources of funding and help put schools on a firmer footing by developing long-term financial plans. According to the National College for School Leadership\(^1\), an experienced and qualified SBM could help increase the average primary school budget by £18,000 and that of the average secondary by £56,000, by maximising other income sources and can cover their salary costs within a three-year period.

Another key area for an SBM is to support the headteacher(s) by taking on or sharing leadership, managerial and administrative complexities, thus freeing headteachers to focus more on leading teaching and learning. Research\(^2\) has shown that an effectively deployed SBM, operating at the correct level, can save headteachers up to one third of their time.

An SBM is well placed to take on the leadership, development and performance management of all non-teaching staff, contributing to the smooth and successful running of a school through their impact on the motivation and development of these staff.

An SBM will ensure the successful delivery of school improvement initiatives, such as improvements in ICT and the learning environment, which lead to better outcomes for pupils. An SBM can also develop and manage the extended services offered by schools, such as pre- and after-school childcare facilities, after-school activities, parenting support, and liaison with other agencies and specialist support services.

Most SBMs are strong networkers and whether they work across a number of schools or just one, there take every opportunity to share best practice and sound working alternatives to improve decision-making processes.

The annexes outline different perspectives on the characteristics of the SBM role.

- Annex 1: Overview of school business management.
- Annex 2: Functions of an SBM.

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\(^1\) Discover the benefits of school business managers (TDA/NCSL, 2009)

\(^2\) The Importance of Teaching, The Schools White Paper, 2010
Annex 1: Overview of school business management

The following table is from the School business management competency framework (NCTL/NASBM/ASCL, 2014). The framework provides information on the expected levels of achievement for SBM professional(s) and is a useful resource when writing job descriptions and person specifications.

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<tr>
<td>Manage own resources</td>
<td>Provide leadership</td>
<td>Plan, lead and implement organisational change</td>
<td>Allocate and monitor the progress of work</td>
<td>Manage financial resources</td>
<td>Manage projects</td>
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<td>Maintain CPD</td>
<td>Plan school/academy improvement</td>
<td>Develop innovation</td>
<td>Develop productive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders</td>
<td>Manage technology</td>
<td>Manage school/academy processes</td>
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<td>Develop personal networks</td>
<td>Ensure compliance with legal, regulatory, ethical and social requirements</td>
<td>Build capacity for organisational change</td>
<td>Recruit, staff and support workforce planning and reorganisation</td>
<td>Manage health and safety</td>
<td>Implement school/academy service improvements</td>
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<td>Maintain professional values and ethics</td>
<td>Manage risk</td>
<td>Manage physical resources</td>
<td>Manage environmental impact</td>
<td>Manage physical resources</td>
<td>Improve school/academy performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Foster school/academy culture</td>
<td>Build, develop and lead teams</td>
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Annex 2: Functions of an SBM

The following tables are adapted and updated from those provided in the document: Discover the benefits of school business managers (TDA/NCISL, 2009)

Core functions for every school business manager

I Strategic leadership and management

Resources

1.1 Ensure the school makes the best possible use of resources through effective planning, and considering all financial and other resource implications.

1.2 Produce timely and fully costed proposals, ensuring they are sustainable through long-term (five-year) financial plans.

1.3 Ensure an effective link between the school financial plan and the school improvement plan – necessary to achieving the schools financial value standard (SFVS) and sustainable school improvement.

1.4 Understand the implications of government policies and educational trends and developments.

1.5 Plan for and implement new initiatives.

Management

1.6 Provide strategic support to the headteacher and governing body on all aspects of school business management.

1.7 Manage the disciplines of finance, human resources, ICT, estate management, whole-school administration and marketing as required.

1.8 Lead in the training and development of the increasing number and diversity of support staff in schools.

1.9 Ensure teaching and support staff work effectively together.

1.10 Take an active role in coordinating and managing the relationship of the interested parties and agencies involved in delivering effective extended school services. These include children, parents, school staff, the LA, the voluntary sector and national/regional organisations such as the police and health service.

Risk management

1.11 Ensure effective risk management, for example, in health and safety and in the management of any third-party service contracts.

1.12 Develop a detailed disaster recovery plan.

1.13 Negotiate, manage and monitor contracts, tenders and agreements ensuring ‘best value’ at all times.

1.14 Manage all aspects of school business management in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner.
Variable functions according to a school’s needs

2 Finance and managing resources

Resource management

2.1 Prepare the annual estimates of income and expenditure for approval by the headteacher and governors.
2.2 Obtain agreement of budgets and monitor them against accounts.
2.3 Prepare regular management accounts for budget holders and report on the financial state of the school to the governors.
2.4 Advise the headteacher and governors on investment and financial policy, preparing appraisals for particular projects and developing a long-term business plan or financial strategy for the future development of the school.
2.5 Maximise income generation within the ethos of the school.
2.6 Ensure best value principals are adopted, for example, in extended schools activities.
2.7 Act as point of contact with central and other agencies with regard to grant applications, gifts and other donations.
2.8 Ensure the school complies with SFVS.
2.9 Use financial management information, especially benchmarking tools, to analyse trends and identify opportunities for greater efficiency.
2.10 Manage the school accounting function effectively to agreed procedures, and maintain those procedures by conducting at least an annual review.

2.11 Monitor all accounting procedures and resolve any problems, including:
- ordering, processing and payment for all goods and services;
- operation of all bank accounts, ensuring that a full reconciliation is undertaken at least once per month;
- maintaining an assets register, and preparation of invoices and collection of fees and other dues, taking legal action where necessary to recover bad debts.
2.12 Prepare the final accounts and liaise with the auditors.
2.13 Provide detailed management accounts for the governors and headteacher according to an agreed schedule, reporting immediately any exceptional problems.
2.14 Provide a comprehensive payroll service for all school staff, including operation of the various pension schemes and other deductions in which the school participates.
2.15 Prepare all financial returns for the all central and local government agencies within statutory deadlines.
2.16 Deal with the school’s rating assessment and VAT liabilities, and advise on the financial implications of charitable status with respect to the current and any future tax legislation.

Bids and contracts

2.17 Secure bid-based competitive funds by effective use of bidding systems and contacts.
2.18 Negotiate, manage and monitor contracts, tenders and agreements for the provision of support services.
2.19 Purchase, either directly or indirectly, the school’s energy supplies.
2.20 Arrange school facilities to include:
- catering;
- transport, including minibus(es) and drivers;
- school shop;
- bookings for school facilities, and provision of facilities for additional tuition out of school hours, including music.
2.21 Seek professional advice on insurance and advise the governors on the appropriate insurances for the school.
2.22 Implement the approved insurances, and handle any claims that arise.

Developing sponsorship links

2.23 Secure sponsorship funding using commercial flair.
2.24 Act as an articulate ambassador to develop contacts and raise the school profile.
3 Human resources

Personnel issues, support staff management and development

3.1 Take responsibility for general personnel matters including employment clearance for new staff (medical checks, child protection) and issuing contracts of employment.

3.2 Advise governors on the assessment of salaries, expenses, sickness and maternity procedures, redundancy and other matters of dismissal.

3.3 Attend employment tribunals as necessary.

3.4 Maintain confidential staff records and ensure that staff records held in the school by others are kept confidential.

3.5 Provide leadership and guidance for support staff, including direct line management responsibility where appropriate – administrative and clerical, financial, technicians, medical, welfare and teaching assistants, premises and maintenance, ground staff, cleaners and caterers.

3.6 Manage the recruitment, professional development, appraisal and training of all support staff.

3.7 Plan for, arrange and report on staff development aspects for all staff.

Contracts administration – managing employment contracts

3.8 Oversee all staff contracts and coordinate the administration of staff recruitment.

Advising on employment law

3.9 Advise governors on the policy needed to comply with legislation in areas such as employment protection, equal pay, sex discrimination and the implementation of these policies in school.

3.10 Formulate, monitor and implement the school’s safety policy to comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act and other legislation.

3.11 Act as the school’s health and safety coordinator and fire officer.
4 Estate management

Premises and health & safety management

4.1 Manage the maintenance of the school site and buildings, the preparation of maintenance schedules and the efficient operation of all facilities on the property.

4.2 Oversee the supply of lighting, heating, domestic hot water, cooking, ventilation, water softening, energy conservation, etc.

4.3 In cooperation with the fire service, to manage the installation and maintenance of equipment for protection against, and escape from, fire.

4.4 Initiate and keep records of regular fire practices and alarm tests.

4.5 Ensure emergency procedures are current and timely.

4.6 Manage the security of the school site.

4.7 Manage the upkeep of playing fields, gardens, all-weather surfaces, tennis courts and land drainage.

4.8 Ensure the maintenance of boundaries, footpaths, roads and rights of way.

4.9 Purchase, repair and maintain all furniture and fittings.

4.10 Know about health and safety regulations, particularly the main issues specific to the school and how they relate to students, staff, visitors, contractors and other users of school premises and facilities.

4.11 Know the elements of fire safety and the associated risks to the school through the process of risk assessment.

Letting and risk assessment

4.12 Manage the letting of the school premises to outside organisations and school staff, and the development of extended schools activities, with particular reference to the local community.

4.13 Acquire and dispose of land and buildings as authorised by the headteacher and governing body.

4.14 Draw up outline specifications for new buildings, obtaining tenders, obtaining planning permission, and liaising with building contractors and the school architect.

4.15 Know about risk assessment tools and how to use them to establish hazards within the school and the associated risk involved.

4.16 Be aware of the importance of a disaster recovery plan and its place within the management procedures of the school.

Loss prevention strategies

4.17 Know the elements of a comprehensive disaster and recovery plan and to action the plan responsibly if necessary.

4.18 Implement risk management and loss prevention strategies to reduce insurance costs.
5 Whole school administration

ICT management

5.1 Manage the administrative function including the administrative ICT facilities, school reception, reprographics, records and telephones.

5.2 Manage the school’s administrative and financial computer network systems.

5.3 Oversee the implementation of appropriate information management systems; and the full computerisation of the administration accounting and record system.

5.4 Act as system manager for the administrative computer network and curriculum network if appropriate.

5.5 Provide for the preparation and production of all school records and publications.

5.6 Maintain pupil records including those for the assessment process.

5.7 Analyse the data and, in conjunction with teaching colleagues, to form strategies to address specific issues.

5.8 Act as correspondent for the DCSF and be responsible for the records and returns required.

5.9 Obtain the necessary licenses and permissions, and ensure their relevance and timeliness.

Admissions

5.10 Advise the headteacher and governors on the need for an admissions and appeals policy; and develop a school admissions and appeals policy.

Relationship management

5.11 Act as a bridge to facilitate closer working relationships between teaching and support staff; and develop school policies for working with contractors and outside agencies.
6 Marketing and liaison

Promoting the school

6.1 Promote the school to different audiences and raise the profile within the local community.

Links to other schools and agencies

6.2 Ensure effective liaison with other schools. For example by linking to a learning network and accessing training on a group basis to reduce costs and/or improve accessibility.

6.3 Ensure effective liaison with all interested parties and agencies involved in delivering successful extended school services.

Business community links

6.4 Liaise with local businesses for fundraising, arranging vocational experience and joint projects.