



## **Information for Headteachers and Chairs of Governors**

### **School Business Management programmes**

**December 2024**

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The School Business Management Partnership (SBMP) is a collaboration between Serco, Adfecto and ISBL (Institute of School Business Leadership) to jointly deliver school business management and leadership programmes. This guidance document is intended to provide background information for headteachers and chairs of governors.

### School business management programmes

Schools that employ competent business managers benefit both from being able to make the most effective use of the funding available to them, and from reducing the administrative burdens on headteachers and senior teachers.

A key part of the rationale for training and recruiting more school business managers (SBMs) is to lever more productivity from existing resources for schools through better management, and to allow headteachers to actively lead the teaching and learning activity.

### How trained school business managers can help

Teaching Schools, academies, free schools, etc., have changed the educational landscape but we still expect our schools and teachers to provide improvements in education year on year. During difficult economic times it is important that we make the best use of all resources to maximise the benefits and be more efficient. Providing school business managers with the skills and competencies they need has the potential to lead to a better use of resources and embed the disciplines of business management in schools.

#### Benefits to the school and school business manager

Our partnership has delivered school business management programmes on behalf of the National College for Teaching & Leadership (NCTL) since 2003 and our participant evaluations consistently show that the work that they complete during the programmes greatly benefits their schools.

A PricewaterhouseCoopers report<sup>1</sup> on the benefits of the Level 4 and 5 Diploma in SBM (CSBM/ DSBM) qualifications cited evidence that qualified SBMs achieve, on average, net financial benefits of £16,000 per school per annum. In addition, qualified SBMs are better able to evaluate value for money and are more likely to bring other benefits such as the more efficient use of resources and collaboration with other schools. It was also shown that, in some cases, a qualified SBM could offer significant savings of headteacher time.

Areas of improvement have been seen in finances, health and safety, playground development work, school environmental improvement, strategic planning and in other areas. The benefits have included improvements in teaching and learning, and significant financial savings and gains to the schools where distributed leadership has been used to further use the skills of the school business manager.

<sup>1</sup> *School Business Management: A quiet revolution (part 2)*. NCSL 2010

A NCTL report into the responses of schools to the new financial environment challenges they faced conducted a survey of schools and found that 7 in 10 SBMs in

the sample are members of the school leadership team (SLT), '*making them pivotal to discussions on financial matters but also key in whole-school planning and improvement. Indeed, co-ordination between financial and curriculum planning is critical to success*'. The report also makes particular reference to the role of the SBM in generating additional funds to address priorities in the school improvement plan and ensuring value for money and cost-effectiveness within existing budgets. (Groves, et al, 2011, 6-7).

Ofsted (2008a, 7) has also identified that support from well qualified and experienced personnel from professions outside education enables headteachers and senior teams to spend more time on strategic leadership and management.

### **Headteacher and governor references**

Each SBM programme or Individual Unit requires the participant to invest time and energy into their professional development. They will also require help and guidance from their school, along with a financial contribution (if the school is funding an employee of theirs).

The School Business Management Partnership (SBMP) must therefore confirm that the headteacher and the chair of governors have understood this commitment and wholly support the individual's application; the applicant is required to confirm this on the application form (supporting letter is not required).

### **What is expected of the headteacher and colleagues?**

Participants on the Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers are often 'returners-to-learning'. Even if this is not the case, whilst undertaking a busy role at school many have other commitments at home. Participating in professional development at this level and calibre is often new to them and can at times present some challenges to their work/life balance.

It is beneficial if the participant, regardless of the level of programme, can negotiate time to discuss their development and progress on the programme with their line manager/mentor or headteacher on a regular basis. Often a 10–30 minute catch-up is all that's required each month.

The process of sharing information gained from these programmes within their school, and focusing on school improvements, has been shown to be beneficial to both participant and school. For example, the participant may find out about ways to attract extra funding or learn about a procedure that might benefit the school.

The participant's line manager may give guidance on task priority or be able to assist in identifying project work. The line managers' commitment will give the participant the confidence and guidance they need to be successful on the programme and enable them to deliver improvements for the school.

Participants may need to speak to colleagues across all areas of the school. They will be looking to place their learning into their own school's context and may therefore wish to discuss how the distinct areas of the school's organisation work. They will draw upon the expertise and experience of their own colleagues and peers as well as their line and senior managers.

## Study times

Study times will vary depending upon the participant and their prior learning. We anticipate that participants will need to commit between 6 to 8 hours (approximately) per week for study on the Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers (formerly known as CSBM). Study times for all programmes may increase as assessment and project deadlines approach.

Some schools are able to release participants from their professional duties for a period of time each week to enable them to complete their work. As previously indicated, many schools find that they benefit directly from the work that participants undertake during the programme, as systems are reviewed and developmental work is undertaken. This means that, resources permitting, the school can make a sound investment through supporting their participant and providing some remission from their duties.

## Assessment

Level 4 Diploma participants will be assessed throughout the programme receiving assessment outcomes at the end of each unit they complete. Participants are required to produce a portfolio of evidence, which will include assessment tasks. Participants have up to 15 months to complete the full programme of four units, or 14 – 16 weeks if studying for an Individual Unit.

The four units studied within the full Level 4 Diploma programme (from 2018) are:

1. Leading Support Services in a School
2. Finance in a School
3. Procurement in a School
4. Supporting Human Resource Management in a School

## Programme costs

Please see our website [www.sbmpartnership.org.uk](http://www.sbmpartnership.org.uk) for details of latest prices. The school (or participant) are invoiced 2 to 4 weeks before a programme starts. ILM accreditation is included in the cost of the ILM-accredited programmes.

Most of the learning materials are provided through the SBM Partnership's e-learning platform located on the learning centre website [www.leadershiplearningcentre.com](http://www.leadershiplearningcentre.com)

Participant handbooks, and other resources, are available online.

Participants sometimes choose to work together in informal support groups. This is not a requirement of the programme but can help participants through their studies. These groups are self-funded although they are sometimes hosted at one of the participating schools.

## ICT resources required to complete the programme

Participants are involved in a significant amount of online learning as they progress through the programme (or units) and they will therefore need access to a computer in order to participate.

Most participants have access to a PC or laptop at home, but some may be dependent upon the school's ICT equipment. You may wish to discuss with the applicant how the school can help in terms of access to equipment and time to complete their work for the programme, as appropriate.

Participants will also need to visit a number of websites in order to undertake research into government policy and best practice. As a result, participants often become well-informed about current developments in education and business practice. Sometimes they may need to use the school's system to access these documents (web access from the school's system permitting).

Participants will also often need to access the internet outside office hours and term-time. Research from previous participants has shown that online work often takes place during evenings, weekends and school holidays.

**More information can be found on our main SBM website [www.sbmpartnership.org.uk](http://www.sbmpartnership.org.uk)**

### **Enquiries**

If you wish to discuss the commitment required by your school any further, or have any other queries, please contact the Serco or Adfecto school business management teams:

[sbmpartnership@serco.com](mailto:sbmpartnership@serco.com) or call 0121 2815215 (during normal office hours)

Alternatively, contact [sbmpartnership@adfecto.org.uk](mailto:sbmpartnership@adfecto.org.uk) or call 01242 220684 (during normal office hours)