THAMESFIELD COLLEGE

CHANGING LIVES | CREATING FUTURES

Finance Policy

For implementation from October 2026

Prepared for Thamesfield College

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Finance Policy

Changing Lives | Creating Futures

Policy statement
Thamesfield College will manage public funds lawfully, transparently and in the best interests of pupils. The school will maintain clear delegation, effective separation of duties, reliable financial information and demonstrable value for money.

Document control information

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This policy should be read with Surrey County Council's Scheme for Financing Schools and Schools Finance Manual, and with Thamesfield College's Whistleblowing Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Data Protection Policy and Procurement records.

1 Purpose, scope and framework

This policy establishes the financial governance and control arrangements for Thamesfield College. It applies to all employees, Management Committee members, agency workers and other people who commit, receive, authorise, process, record or monitor money or assets on the school's behalf.

Thamesfield College is a Surrey County Council maintained pupil referral unit with a delegated budget. The school must comply with the current Surrey Scheme for Financing Schools, Surrey's Schools Finance Manual and financial instructions, the Department for Education's maintained-schools finance and Schools Financial Value Standard requirements, the Procurement Act 2023 where applicable, tax and VAT rules, the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, and any lawful direction from Surrey County Council.

If this policy conflicts with legislation or a binding Surrey requirement, the legislation or Surrey requirement takes precedence. The School Business Manager will obtain advice before acting where the correct route is unclear.

2 Core financial principles

- Public money will be used only for proper school purposes and in the best interests of pupils.
- Decisions will be lawful, affordable, evidence based and capable of withstanding public scrutiny.
- No individual will control a transaction from initiation to final reconciliation.
- Commitments will be made only within an approved budget and delegated authority.
- Procurement will secure value for money, manage whole-life cost and risk, and treat suppliers fairly.
- Transactions will have a complete, timely and retrievable audit trail.
- Actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest will be declared and managed.
- Financial information and personal data will be accurate, secure and shared only where authorised.
- Suspected fraud, theft, bribery, corruption or financial irregularity will be reported promptly.

3 Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Management Committee

- approve this policy, the annual budget, the three-year financial plan and the scheme of delegation;
- ensure the budget supports the School Development Plan and curriculum and staffing priorities;
- receive, understand and challenge financial monitoring reports, forecasts and significant variances;
- approve expenditure, virements and other decisions outside delegated limits;
- maintain oversight of reserves, deficits, contracts, assets, audit actions, interests and related-party transactions;
- ensure the school completes and submits the Schools Financial Value Standard by the statutory deadline;
- ensure appropriate financial skills, succession and business continuity; and
- review this policy and the effectiveness of financial controls at least annually.

The Management Committee is provided with a Financial Monitoring Report. Members also make regular finance visits to review the report, supporting records and emerging risks with school leaders. Visits and any actions arising will be documented and reported back to the Management Committee.

3.2 Finance and Premises Committee

Where functions are delegated to the Finance and Premises Committee, it acts within its current terms of reference. It scrutinises the draft budget, monitoring information, forecasts, procurement, contracts, premises expenditure and control issues, and makes recommendations to the full Management Committee. Delegation does not remove the full Management Committee's collective accountability.

3.3 Headteacher

The Headteacher, Nick Elliott, is accountable to the Management Committee for the day-to-day management of the delegated budget. The Headteacher will:

- implement this policy and ensure staff understand their delegated responsibilities;
- prepare and recommend a balanced, sustainable budget and three-year forecast;
- authorise expenditure, virements, payments, payroll and write-offs within delegated limits;
- ensure reliable records, reconciliations, reports and evidence are maintained;
- ensure risks, forecast pressures, irregularities and significant control failures are escalated promptly;
- authorise and safeguard the school's purchase card and debit card; and
- ensure appropriate cover and separation of duties during absence or vacancy.

3.4 Deputy Headteacher

The Deputy Headteacher, Dan Gunn, may authorise purchase orders up to £250 where expenditure is within an approved budget. He is also an authorised BACS approver and provides operational resilience within the approved delegation. He must not approve his own expenditure or any transaction in which he has an interest.

3.5 School Business Manager

The School Business Manager, Sarah Huff, leads day-to-day financial administration and control. Responsibilities include maintaining the financial system and records, supporting budget setting and forecasts, preparing monitoring reports, completing reconciliations, administering procurement and contracts, checking card transactions and receipts, maintaining finance records and returns, coordinating audit evidence, and advising the Headteacher and Management Committee on financial risk and compliance.

3.6 Finance Assistant

The Finance Assistant, currently Marta Awramik, undertakes authorised finance processing and provides sustained cover for the School Business Manager. Access and tasks will be allocated so that cover does not compromise separation of duties. Transactions completed during cover will be independently reviewed by the Headteacher or another authorised person.

3.7 All staff and budget holders

- obtain approval before committing the school to expenditure;
- use approved suppliers and processes, and never split orders to avoid a threshold;
- check goods or services and submit receipts, invoices and supporting evidence promptly;
- protect school money, cards, devices, information and assets;
- declare relevant interests, gifts or hospitality; and
- report suspected error, loss, fraud or irregularity immediately.

4 Scheme of financial delegation

The limits below are maximum authorities, not spending targets. Expenditure must be necessary, within an approved budget, supported by appropriate procurement evidence and free from conflicts of interest. The Management Committee may impose a lower limit or additional condition at any time.

Decision	Authority	Conditions
Approve expenditure or contract award	Headteacher: up to £10,000	Within the approved budget and after the required procurement process.
Approve expenditure or contract award	Management Committee: over £10,000	Must be minuted; Surrey approval or advice obtained where required.
Authorise purchase orders	Deputy Headteacher: up to £250	Within budget; not own expenditure. Headteacher may authorise within his wider limit.
Approve budget virements	Headteacher: up to £10,000	Recorded and reported in the next FMR. Management Committee approval above £10,000.
Write off irrecoverable debt	Headteacher: up to £150	After reasonable recovery steps; recorded and reported. Larger amounts follow Surrey approval requirements.
Purchase card	Headteacher: £4,000 monthly limit	Business expenditure only; receipts required; reconciled by the School Business Manager and independently reviewed.
Debit card	Headteacher: £200 per transaction	Business expenditure only; receipts required; no cash withdrawal; reconciled by the School Business Manager.
Authorise BACS payments	One authorised approver up to £250; two over £250	Authorised approvers are the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher. Neither may authorise a payment to themselves without independent approval.
Approve payroll and contractual changes	Headteacher	Changes or additional payments relating to the Headteacher require Chair approval.
Approve budget and three-year plan	Management Committee	Normally before 1 May and within Surrey's timetable.

Temporary changes to delegations must be recorded in writing, state their purpose and duration, preserve separation of duties and be reported to the Management Committee. An individual may not further delegate authority unless this policy or a minuted Management Committee decision permits it.

5 Budget planning and monitoring

5.1 Budget setting

- The School Business Manager and Headteacher will prepare an annual budget and three-year forecast using prudent, documented assumptions.
- Planning will integrate staffing, curriculum, pupil-number and placement assumptions, premises, contracts, known commitments, grants, reserves and the School Development Plan.
- The Management Committee will approve the budget in sufficient time for submission to Surrey, normally by 1 May.
- Sensitivity and scenario analysis will be used where income, staffing or placement assumptions are uncertain.
- The school will not plan an unauthorised deficit. Any emerging or forecast deficit will be reported promptly to Surrey and the Management Committee, with a recovery plan where required.

5.2 Monitoring and forecasting

- The financial system will be updated promptly and reconciled to the bank and Surrey records at least monthly.
- The School Business Manager will review actual income and expenditure against budget, commitments and forecast outturn with the Headteacher.
- Financial Monitoring Reports will show the approved budget, actuals, commitments, forecast outturn, material variances, reserves, cash position where relevant, risks and proposed action.
- The Management Committee will receive FMRs regularly through the year and at least six times annually, supported by regular member finance visits.
- Significant adverse movement, control failure, fraud concern or risk of overspend will be escalated immediately rather than waiting for the next scheduled meeting.
- Approved virements and budget revisions will be recorded with date, reason, amount and approving authority.

5.3 Reserves and balances

Balances will be held for identified needs, risk or planned investment, not accumulated without purpose. Commitments against balances will be recorded. The Management Committee will review the level and planned use of reserves as part of budget approval and monitoring.

6 Internal control and separation of duties

- No employee will initiate, authorise, process and reconcile the same transaction from end to end.
- System access will match current duties and be reviewed following role changes and at least annually.
- Supporting evidence will be retained for orders, deliveries, invoices, payments, income, payroll changes, journals, virements and reconciliations.
- Reconciliations will be prepared promptly and reviewed by someone independent of the underlying processing wherever practicable.
- Blank or retrospective approvals are not permitted. Electronic approval must identify the approver and date.
- The separation matrix at Appendix B applies during normal operation and cover arrangements.

Where staffing makes full separation temporarily impossible, the Headteacher will document the compensating control, such as enhanced review of source evidence and bank activity. This will be time limited and reported to the Chair or finance link member if sustained.

7 Procurement and contracts

7.1 Planning and authority

- A purchase must have an identified need, budget, specification and authorised procurement route before the school is committed.
- The school will comply with Surrey's current procurement and contract standing requirements and seek advice when thresholds or legal duties are unclear.
- Requirements must not be divided or contracts shortened to avoid competition, approval or publication thresholds.
- The total estimated value over the whole contract term, including extensions and options, will be used when selecting the route.
- Relevant DfE or public-sector frameworks will be considered where they offer a compliant and efficient route.

7.2 Competition and award

Competition and quotation requirements will follow the current Surrey Schools Finance Manual and procurement rules. The contract will be awarded to the most advantageous tender against published and proportionate criteria, not automatically to the lowest price. Assessment may include quality, whole-life cost, service continuity, safeguarding, data protection, social value, sustainability and implementation risk.

- The procurement record will include the business need, value calculation, route, specification, invitations, bids or quotations, evaluation, approvals, conflicts and award decision.
- Anyone involved in a procurement must declare any connection with a supplier and withdraw where necessary.
- Single-tender or emergency action must be exceptional, permitted by Surrey rules and supported by a written rationale and approval.
- Orders must be raised before goods or services are supplied unless an authorised exception is recorded.

7.3 Contract management

- The School Business Manager will maintain a contracts register showing owner, supplier, value, term, expiry, notice date, extension options, data-processing implications and review point.
- Contract owners will monitor delivery, performance, invoices, risks and any variations.
- Variations and extensions require the same level of authority as the resulting total commitment and must remain legally and procedurally compliant.
- Renewal planning will begin early enough to avoid unplanned rollovers or weak negotiating positions.
- Contracts involving personal data will include appropriate data-protection terms and assurance.

7.4 Related-party and connected-party transactions

A proposed transaction involving an employee, Management Committee member, close relative or connected organisation must be declared before discussion or commitment. The individual must not influence the decision. The school will demonstrate need, value for money, proper approval and compliance with Surrey requirements, and retain the decision and interest in the relevant records.

8 Banking, cards, income and debt

8.1 Bank and BACS controls

- School bank accounts and online banking access will be authorised and operated in accordance with Surrey requirements.
- Bank reconciliations will be completed at least monthly and reviewed by the Headteacher or another authorised person independent of preparation.
- BACS files or payment runs will be prepared from approved invoices and supporting evidence. One authorised approver may release payments up to £250; two authorised approvals are required above £250.
- Supplier bank-account changes will be independently verified using a known, trusted contact route. An emailed request alone is not sufficient.
- Unexpected or urgent requests to change payment details will be treated as a fraud risk and escalated.

8.2 Purchase and debit cards

The Headteacher is the authorised holder of the school's purchase card and debit card. Cards remain school property and must be stored securely. Card details and security credentials must not be shared.

- Cards may be used only for necessary school business where the normal purchase-order or invoice route is impracticable or less efficient.
- Personal expenditure, cash withdrawal, recurring commitments without approval and use to avoid procurement rules are prohibited.
- An itemised receipt and business purpose must be provided for every transaction. Missing evidence must be explained and escalated.
- The School Business Manager will reconcile statements to evidence and coding. A Deputy Headteacher or Management Committee finance member will periodically review the Headteacher's card transactions and reconciliations.
- Lost, stolen or compromised cards will be reported immediately to the provider and School Business Manager.

8.3 Income, cash and cheques

The school does not operate petty cash, issue cheques or maintain an unofficial or voluntary school fund. Income should be collected through approved electronic or invoicing routes. Any exceptional receipt of cash or cheque must be referred immediately to the School Business Manager, receipted, recorded, held securely and banked promptly under a documented two-person control.

8.4 Debtors and write-offs

- Invoices will be accurate, authorised, recorded and pursued promptly.
- Outstanding debt will be reviewed regularly and proportionate recovery action documented.
- No person may waive or write off an amount due without delegated authority.
- The Headteacher may write off irrecoverable debt up to £150 after reasonable recovery action. Larger amounts will follow Surrey approval requirements and be reported to the Management Committee.

9 Payroll, assets and insurance

9.1 Payroll

- Appointments, contractual changes, overtime, allowances, expenses and termination information will be supported by authorised evidence and submitted by published deadlines.
- The School Business Manager will prepare or coordinate payroll information and the Headteacher will authorise it. Matters relating to the Headteacher require Chair approval.
- Payroll output will be checked each month against staffing records, known changes and the financial system. Variances and unexpected payments will be investigated promptly.
- Employment-status checks and appropriate advice will be obtained before engaging individuals outside payroll.
- Leavers' access, cards and assets will be recovered or disabled promptly.

9.2 Assets and inventory

- An inventory will record capital assets, attractive and portable items, serial numbers, location, custodian and disposal details.
- Items with a value of £1,000 or more will be recorded, alongside lower-value portable items where loss or misuse presents a material risk.
- The inventory will be checked at least annually by people who are not solely responsible for maintaining it; differences will be investigated.
- Loans off site will be authorised and recorded. Disposal, sale, write-off or donation will follow Surrey rules and be supported by approval and evidence.

9.3 Insurance and losses

The School Business Manager will maintain appropriate insurance arrangements through Surrey, notify material changes and report loss, damage or potential claims promptly. Insurance does not replace suitable risk management or security.

10 Fraud, interests, data and cyber security

10.1 Fraud, bribery and irregularity

Concerns about fraud, theft, bribery, corruption, misuse of public funds or deliberate control override must be reported immediately to the Headteacher unless the concern involves him. The school's Whistleblowing Policy sets out alternative and external reporting routes, including direct reporting to Surrey. Evidence must be preserved and the subject of a concern must not be alerted where that could prejudice enquiries.

10.2 Interests, gifts and hospitality

- Management Committee members and relevant staff will complete and update declarations of business and financial interests at least annually and whenever circumstances change.
- A declaration must include interests that could reasonably be perceived to influence a school decision, including relevant close-family and connected-organisation interests.
- The School Business Manager will keep the register and record any declared gift or hospitality that is more than a token, could create an obligation or could reasonably be perceived as influencing a decision.
- Cash and cash-equivalent gifts must not be accepted. Procurement-related gifts or hospitality should normally be declined.
- The Headteacher decides whether staff may accept a declared item; the Chair decides in relation to the Headteacher. The decision and rationale will be recorded.

10.3 Data protection and records

- Financial and payroll information will be processed lawfully and securely in accordance with the UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and school policy.
- Records will be retained for the periods set by law, Surrey's finance requirements and the school's retention schedule, then disposed of securely.
- Access to finance systems, online banking and payment information will be role based, protected by individual credentials and multi-factor authentication where available.

10.4 Cyber and payment fraud

- Staff will verify unusual payment requests and changes of bank details through an independent, trusted route.
- Passwords, authentication codes and banking credentials must never be shared or approved at another person's request.
- Suspected compromise, phishing or misdirected payment must be reported immediately to the bank, Headteacher, School Business Manager and IT support, with Surrey notified where appropriate.
- Finance access and continuity arrangements will be tested periodically and reviewed after an incident.

11 Assurance, audit and review

11.1 Schools Financial Value Standard

The Management Committee will complete the Schools Financial Value Standard annually, approve the return and ensure it is signed by the Chair and submitted to Surrey by the statutory deadline. The exercise will be evidence based and used to improve practice, not treated as a stand-alone compliance task.

11.2 Audit and control review

- The school will cooperate fully with Surrey, internal and external audit and provide complete records promptly.
- Audit and assurance recommendations will have an owner, deadline and recorded evidence of completion.
- The Headteacher and School Business Manager will review reconciliations, access, delegations, cards, contracts, payroll controls, assets, interests and business continuity at least annually.
- Significant control failures or suspected losses will be reported promptly to the Chair and Surrey rather than deferred to the annual review.

11.3 Policy approval and review

The Management Committee approves this policy and will review it annually, or sooner following material legislative or Surrey change, audit recommendation, fraud, significant control failure, restructuring or change in financial systems. Operational procedures may be updated by the Headteacher and School Business Manager where they remain consistent with this policy and Surrey requirements.

Approval	Name	Signature	Date
Chair of Management Committee	Steve Price		
Headteacher	Nick Elliott		

Appendix A Declaration of financial interests

Complete on appointment, annually and whenever circumstances change. Declare anything that could reasonably be perceived to influence your school duties. If uncertain, declare it.

Field	Declaration
Name and role	
Business, employment, trusteeship, directorship or partnership interests	
Ownership or financial interest in a current or potential supplier	
Relevant interests of close family or connected persons	
Relationship with another school, local authority service or education provider	
Relevant gifts or hospitality offered or received	
Other actual, potential or perceived conflict	
If none, write 'None'	

I confirm that this declaration is complete to the best of my knowledge. I will update it promptly if my circumstances change and will declare a relevant interest before participating in a decision.

Signature	Date	Reviewed/recorded by	Date

Appendix B Separation of duties matrix

The role allocation below is the normal control. Cover may be arranged, but one person must not complete all stages and any temporary compensating control must be documented.

Activity	Prepare / perform	Approve / review	Key control
Raise requisition	Requesting staff / budget holder	Relevant approver	Need and budget identified.
Approve purchase / PO	Headteacher; Deputy Headteacher to £250	School Business Manager checks authority	No self-approval.
Enter order / supplier invoice	Finance Assistant or School Business Manager	Different person checks coding and evidence	Order raised before supply unless exception recorded.
Confirm receipt	Requesting staff / recipient	Finance team matches order and invoice	Discrepancies resolved before payment.
Create BACS payment run	School Business Manager or Finance Assistant	Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher	One approval to £250; two above.
Change supplier bank details	One finance officer enters	Another independently verifies using known contact	Email alone is insufficient.
Bank reconciliation	School Business Manager; Finance Assistant as cover	Headteacher	Completed at least monthly.
Card transaction	Headteacher	School Business Manager reconciles; DHT or MC finance member reviews	Receipt and purpose required.
Payroll input	School Business Manager	Headteacher	Chair approval for Headteacher changes.
FMR / forecast	School Business Manager	Headteacher, then Management Committee	Variances and risks explained.
Virement	School Business Manager records	Headteacher to £10,000; MC above	Reported in next FMR.
Debt write-off	School Business Manager recommends	Headteacher to £150; Surrey route above	Recovery action evidenced.
Asset register	School Business Manager maintains	Independent annual check	Differences investigated.