



SBS case study Muscliff Primary

Muscliff Primary is a single academy trust school in Bournemouth. The school is part of Bringing Schools Together, a local collaborative trust formed in partnership with four other local primary schools.

Paula Harvey is School Business Manager and IT Manager, a role covering a wide range of operational and strategic responsibilities, including HR, premises, compliance and day to day financial management.

The remit was placing demands that couldn't be met without bringing in external expertise, explains Paula. "I have strong knowledge across most areas of school operations, but the more technical aspects of finance, particularly month end processes and year end requirements have always been more challenging," she said.

"I oversee invoicing, purchasing, and general financial administration, but historically I've struggled with producing accurate month end reports for governors and trustees, as well as meeting the expectations of external auditors.

"After receiving management points in previous external audits, particularly around accruals, deferred income, and other technical accounting procedures we recognised that we needed additional support to ensure accuracy, compliance, and consistency."

In 2025 the school brought in School Business Services to provide that additional expertise. School Business Services supports the school in the areas of financial management that are more technical and time sensitive. This includes completing month end processes accurately and on schedule, preparing reliable financial reports for governors and trustees, and ensuring compliance with accounting standards and audit expectations.

Muscliff Primary enjoys a collaborative and supportive relationship with School Business Services, says Paula. "They work closely with us each month, guiding us through the processes and completing the technical elements on our behalf," she explains.

"Communications are clear and consistent, and they are always available to answer questions or explain the rationale behind adjustments. It feels like having an extended finance team – one that brings specialist expertise while still working in a way that fits our school's needs and timelines," she says.

"The involvement of School Business Services has significantly reduced the risk of errors and has helped us avoid the issues that previously arose during external audits," Paula adds.

Working with School Business Services has given Paula confidence that the school's financial information is accurate, compliant, and professionally managed. "It means our Resource Management Committee receives timely, reliable reports, and we have a much clearer understanding of our financial position throughout the year.



"It also reduces pressure on the internal team, allowing us to focus on day to day operations while knowing that the more technical elements are being handled correctly. Overall, it has improved the quality of our financial management and strengthened trust with governors, trustees, and auditors."

Paula says she would wholeheartedly recommend the business to other schools. "School Business Services provides a level of financial expertise that is difficult for many schools to maintain in house, especially when dealing with complex month end and year end requirements, along with all their other jobs that are undertaken on a daily basis," she says.

"Their support improves accuracy, compliance, and confidence in financial reporting. For anyone who finds the technical side of school finance challenging or simply wants reassurance that everything is being done correctly, School Business Services is an invaluable partner."

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