



School Business Manager (SBM) – Interview Question Framework

Scoring Key

- **5 – Excellent:** Clear, detailed, practical answer showing strong understanding, experience, and evidence.
- **4 – Good:** Solid answer with some evidence; minor gaps.
- **3 – Adequate:** General knowledge but lacks depth or specific examples.
- **2 – Weak:** Vague, unclear, little or no evidence of experience.
- **1 – Poor:** Incorrect or irrelevant response.

1. Strategic & Leadership

Q1. How would you ensure the school's resources (finance, staff, premises) are aligned with its educational priorities?

What to look for:

- Clear link between budget/resource allocation and school improvement plan / school development plan.
- Evidence of working collaboratively with Head, SLT, and governors.
- Strategic mindset, not just transactional focus.

Weighting: 10%

2. Financial Management

Q2. Can you walk me through how you would set, monitor, and adjust a school budget over the year?

What to look for:

- Knowledge of local authority budgeting cycles, forecasting, and cashflow management.
- Experience with school financial systems and reporting to governors.
- Balances compliance with creativity (finding savings, maximising grant or funding opportunities).

Weighting: 15%

Q3. How would you manage a sudden mid-year budget shortfall?

What to look for:

- Prioritisation of statutory and essential spend.
- Clear communication with Head, SLT, and governors.
- Practical, compliant solutions (e.g., phased expenditure, additional funding sources).

Weighting: 10%

3. Compliance & Governance

Q4. What systems would you put in place to ensure compliance with LA, DfE, and safeguarding requirements for finance and HR?

What to look for:

- Knowledge of relevant regulations, financial procedures, and safer recruitment practices.



- Emphasis on transparency, accountability, and proper documentation.
Weighting: 10%

4. HR & People

Q5. How would you ensure the school's HR policies and practices remain compliant with employment law and safeguarding requirements while supporting a positive staff culture?
What to look for:

- Awareness of statutory HR requirements (KCSIE, safer recruitment, Single Central Record, GDPR).
- Knowledge of employment law basics (contracts, pay, grievance, equality, absence management).
- Balances compliance with staff engagement and morale.
- Practical examples of implementing or updating policies.
- Collaboration with SLT and governors.
Weighting: 10%

5. Premises & Health & Safety

Q6. How would you prioritise and manage competing demands around site maintenance, health & safety, and capital projects?
What to look for:

- Risk assessment and prioritisation approach.
- Understanding of statutory compliance (fire safety, H&S regulations).
- Ability to balance safety, budget, and educational priorities.
Weighting: 10%

6. Income Generation & Value for Money

Q7. What approaches have you used (or would you use) to generate additional income or secure best value?
What to look for:

- Experience with grants, community partnerships, lettings.
- Procurement and contract negotiation.
- Evidence of tangible impact in previous roles.
Weighting: 10%

7. Communication & Stakeholder Management

Q8. How would you explain complex financial or operational information to staff, governors, or parents without a finance background?
What to look for:

- Ability to simplify without "dumbing down."
- Clear communication style and trust-building.
- Practical example: preparing an executive summary of financial data for governors or Head.
Weighting: 10%



8. Scenario / Problem-Solving

Q9. Imagine the Head wants to launch a new initiative (e.g., 1:1 devices for pupils), but there's no clear funding. How would you approach this?

What to look for:

- Balances enthusiasm with financial realism.
- Options appraisal (grants, phased rollout, partnerships).
- Ability to challenge constructively and offer practical alternatives.

Weighting: 10%

Extra Advice - any pertinent question to the school could be set here, could be around staffing, systems or any known shortcomings currently needing to be addressed

9. Personal Qualities

Q10. What would your first priorities be in your first 100 days as our SBM?

What to look for:

- Relationship-building with Head, SLT, and governors.
- Reviewing financial health, compliance, and contracts.
- Listening and understanding school needs before acting.

Weighting: 5%

Suggested Weighting Overview

Area	Weighting
Strategic & Leadership	10%
Financial Management	25%
Compliance & Governance	10%
HR & People	10%
Premises & Health & Safety	10%
Income Generation & Value for Money	10%
Communication & Stakeholder Management	10%
Scenario/Problem-Solving	10%
Personal Qualities	5%
Total	100%

Total Score Calculation

- **Maximum Weighted Score:** 500
- **Candidate's Weighted Score:** _____ / 500
- **% Achieved:** _____ %