

FINANCIAL SERVICES SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Services for Schools maintained by Hertfordshire County Council

Reviewed by: Head of Financial Sustainability Services	Date: April 2025	Version: 1.1
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OBJECTIVE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide information on the standard and optional services provided by HFL Education's Financial Services (Financial Services, FS), describing the key services we provide and the quality standards we have agreed in terms of service delivery.

This Service Level Agreement sets out:

- The services we can provide to schools/settings
- The responsibilities of schools in relation to their contract type
- The overall standard that we aim to achieve in the provision of our services
- A mechanism for resolving any problems relating to the delivery of the service

OBJECTIVE OF THE SERVICE

- To ensure that Headteachers and Governing Boards feel supported and enabled in meeting their responsibilities for financial management and reporting of their schools' financial resources
- To deliver a value for money service to schools maintained by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)
- To deliver a reliable service
- To deliver continuity and consistency in the service delivered
- To drive forward innovative solutions to financial management to increase efficiency
- To provide a real choice in terms of financial support for schools

SERVICE USERS

Schools maintained by HCC.

SUMMARY OF KEY SERVICES

Financial Services offers the following accounting and budgeting services (see the summary of services and options on pages 4 - 5 with a definition of the terms to enable you to make the right choice for your school detailed in Appendix 1, page 18. Detailed information for each contract service is available on our website using the link provided below each service). Schools/settings choosing any of our accounting services will also be required to purchase the relevant accounting and budgeting systems licences and systems helpdesk, see page 5 and section 7.

CONTRACT ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- 1) If you want to keep your contract the same as last year, please tick the no changes box on the options form attached and return **ASAP** to fs.contracts@hfleducation.org
- 2) If you want to change your financial services contract and know what you want, please tick the correct box on the options form attached and return **ASAP** to fs.contracts@hfleducation.org
- 3) If you think you want to make some changes and would like to discuss them, please email fs.contracts@hfleducation.org **ASAP** to allow time for discussion and amendment before the final contracts are sent out.

FINANCIAL SERVICES OPTIONS 2025-2026

BOOKKEEPING & MONITORING	Diamond Service	Gold Service + OPTIONS available	Silver Service	Bronze Service
Bookkeeping – General Account	INCLUDED	+£59 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>	+£59 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>	+£59 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>
Accruals preparation	INCLUDED	+ £488 <input type="checkbox"/>		
Completion of payroll monitor & payroll entry to Arbor	INCLUDED	+ £488 <input type="checkbox"/>		
Salary Monitor variance analysis	INCLUDED	INCLUDED		
Complete System Reconciliation	INCLUDED	+ £244 <input type="checkbox"/>		
Bank Forecast – Cash Flow	INCLUDED	INCLUDED		
Year End 24-25 completion in April 25, YE submission/monitor	INCLUDED	INCLUDED		
Monthly Monitors x 7 to P10 incl. termly reforecasts	INCLUDED	INCLUDED		
Submission of HCC Returns	INCLUDED	+£61 <input type="checkbox"/>		
Capital Returns (if reqd.)	INCLUDED	INCLUDED		
Arbor Bulletin completion (including Housekeeping)	INCLUDED	+£244 <input type="checkbox"/>		
Silver Monitor QA (for periods 3&7), Mandatory YE workshop for 24-25 and digital YE preparation 25-26			INCLUDED	

NB: Gold Service – we would highly recommend you opt for Accruals Preparation, Completion of Payroll Monitor, Complete System Reconciliation and Bulletin completion as part of the contract. These areas can cause the most issues to the completion of efficient and successful monitoring. The additional cost of PAYU to catch up can be more expensive than including the hours on contract. Please amend your contract and return to fs.contracts@hflcontracts.org

BUDGETING	Diamond Service	Gold Service	Silver Service	Bronze Service
Budget May finalisation for 25-26	INCLUDED	+£74 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>	+£76 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>	+£76 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>
Budget March preparation for 26-27	INCLUDED	+£74 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>	+£76 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>	+£76 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>
Budget - Face to Face May & March	+£76 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>	+£83 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>	+£83 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>	+£83 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>
Budget PAYU		+£83 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>	+£83 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>	+£83 per hour <input type="checkbox"/>
Budget Submission to Solero	INCLUDED	+£73 <input type="checkbox"/>		
Budget Loading to Arbor and Profiling	INCLUDED	+£292 <input type="checkbox"/>		
Access Budget bulletin, software updates and staff changes	INCLUDED	+£292 <input type="checkbox"/>		
<p>NB: Hours calculated for Budget loading to Arbor and profiling, Access budget bulletins, staffing updates and submission to HCC are included in budgeting hours not monitoring hours. For budget loading to Arbor, your budget software MUST be coded in line with your accounting software. Hours required for options not previously bought should be discussed with your Service Delivery Manager via fs.contracts@hfleducation.org</p>				

LICENCES & HELPDESK	Bookkeeping Service	Diamond Service	Gold Service	Silver Service	Bronze Service
Financial Services Systems Helpdesk £561	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
*Arbor Finance Licence – General Account	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
*Access Education Budgeting Software	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
FUND ACCOUNT	Bookkeeping Service	Diamond Service	Gold Service	Silver Service	Bronze Service
*Arbor Finance Licence – Additional Acct.	£57	£57	£57	£57	£57
Fund Account Bookkeeping – 1 year	£310	£310	£310	£310	£310
Fund Account Audit – 1 year (max 3 hrs)	£227	£227	£227	£227	£227
Fund Account PAYU (hourly charge)	£76	£76	£76	£76	£76
<p>NB: The Fund Account bookkeeping service requires the school to have an additional Arbor account licence for each additional account (such as Fund account, Governors account etc.) The Fund Account can be completed without using the Arbor software but will need to have been fully and correctly recorded in Excel or ledger format for an audit to be completed. Please speak to the bookkeeping team to discuss via fs.contracts@hfleducation.org The price noted is for 1 year on 1 account. * All licence prices are still to be confirmed by the suppliers.</p>					

CHANGES FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-2026

The service overall remains largely unchanged from last year, but we are conscious that customer needs do change quite regularly depending on staffing changes and we are keen to support you through those changes. We are always happy to receive ideas to consider for future years.

Bookkeeping Service - A valuable addition to our services for schools this year is the ability to buy the Bookkeeping Service as a NEW standalone service for schools using the Arbor Accounting software. This can be on a contract or temporary PAYU basis. This can be one of the most challenging areas for schools to cover if they have illness, an unexpected leaver, if office staffing is reduced or whilst staff are training up. Please speak to our Bookkeeping Services Manager via fs.contracts@hfleducation.org

Diamond Service - renamed Diamond (incl. Bookkeeping) Service is unchanged but allows us to ensure our customers take full advantage of the bookkeeping element of the 24-25 hourly rate held for 25-26. Diamond remains the best value for money contract overall as, in addition to the held bookkeeping rate, the monitoring and budgeting are charged at the same hourly rates.

Gold Service remains the same. It has some core elements (as detailed in the above table) and some optional elements that schools can choose to add. We have put a price on those additional functions this year and do recommend that schools consider adding some of the more complex ones to their contract rather than find out at the last minute they do not have the expertise or time to complete them in-house. Getting the contract right at the outset will be beneficial to remove any misunderstandings or stressful scenarios both for the school and our Finance Business Partners. Please speak to our Service Delivery Managers via fs.contracts@hfleducation.org or tick the options sheet and return it to us. Schools have been quoted on the service they purchased last year.

Silver Service has been changed to complete a Quality Assurance (QA) of the school's P3 and P7 monitors rather than a 'health check'. The school will undertake the work in the normal way and the Finance Business Partner will ensure that the elements completed will allow an accurate revised termly forecast to be submitted to HCC. The topical updates and revised forecast workshops in September 2025 and January 2026 will support the revised forecasts and year end.

Bronze Service – remains the same. Unfortunately, we do not yet have the final licence price increase from suppliers. We have estimated their increase and will adjust the price, if necessary, when the final figure has been received.

Price increases – HFL Education, as a not-for-profit organisation, aims to keep price increases to a minimum so that schools can afford to purchase the support that they need with the confidence that staff are continuously developed and supported to understand and action funding changes and regulations. The FAQs detail the price increases by different elements of the service.

Previously capped schools have all been brought to one standard price this year to simplify the pricing structure and therefore, price increase percentages can vary slightly by school. Going forward we will be back to a standard increase for all schools.

1. Bookkeeping Service

This digital service for general account bookkeeping is included as standard in the Diamond (with bookkeeping) Service but can be added as an optional extra for £59 per hour either as part of Gold, Silver and Bronze service contracts or as PAYU at £71 per hour if the completion of this in-house becomes an issue mid-term. Our Bookkeeping Service starts with P12 transactions processed in April 2025 to complete Year End 24/25 and ends with P11 transactions being processed in March 2026.

2. Diamond (incl. Bookkeeping) Service

This digital service is for schools that would like Financial Services to undertake the routine financial management functions, in addition to advisory and Headteacher support. Although the submission of HCC returns remains the responsibility of the school/setting, Financial Services will complete this on the school's behalf.

The OneDrive is used to upload documentation from the school, and this is then available to our Bookkeeping Team to process and to our Finance Business Partners to check on specific queries quickly and easily.

Our Diamond monitoring service starts with year end for 2024/25 and seven further monitors per annum through to P10 including Summer and Autumn termly reforecasts.

Also included as standard in our Diamond service is assistance with Budget finalisation in May 2025, updating budget software, staffing and completing budget bulletins throughout the year. It finishes with preparation of the 2026-27 budget in March 2026 at the school/setting's preferential monitoring contract hourly rate. The Diamond package is the best value for money option as it allows Financial Services to track and follow any changes throughout the financial cycle. It also frees up time and cost in your school office for other activities.

Software currently supported includes Arbor Finance, FMS6 and Access Education Budgeting.

[Full details of the Diamond Service can be found here](#)

3. Gold

This digital service is for schools/settings who complete some or all their transactions themselves, are relatively confident in the use of those financial reporting and management systems supported by Financial Services, may monitor their accounts regularly themselves

and would like our support in managing their data files, some or all budget monitoring, advisory support, and meeting HCC's reporting requirements.

Bookkeeping can be added as a standalone contract product at £59 per hour or as PAYU at £71 temporarily if circumstances change.

Our Gold service starts with year end completion and monitor for 2024-25 and seven further monitors per annum through to P10 including Summer and Autumn termly reforecasts.

The Gold standard service does not include accruals preparation, completion of the payroll monitor, complete system reconciliation or bulletin completion as part of the standard contract.

We would highly recommend these options be added to your contract to enable the efficient and successful monitoring of your management accounts. Submission of HCC returns remains the responsibility of the school/setting, however, this can be added as an option. Included is the preparation and submission (once agreed with the Headteacher) of the Interim and Final Capital Return (if required).

Under a Gold service the school/setting is required to enter the budget to its financial accounting software, although this and other services can be purchased as options if required. **NB:** for budget entry to Arbor, the budgeting software **MUST** be coded in line with your accounting software. Assistance with Budget Finalisation 2025-26, loading to Arbor/FMS6, profiling, budget bulletins and staffing updates and budget preparation next March for the budget 2026-27. Support can be purchased as an optional extra at the cost of £74 digital or £83 face-to-face per hour. Software currently supported includes Arbor Finance, Access Budgeting and FMS6.

[Full details of the Gold Service can be found here](#)

4. Silver

This digital service is for schools who are confident in the use of those financial reporting and management systems supported by Financial Services. It is changing in 2025-26 and this year will provide a Quality Assurance (QA) check of your two completed financial monitors in periods 3 and 7 in readiness for the termly reforecasts.

Also included in the Silver service is our mandatory Year End 2024-25 finalisation workshop (for Arbor schools) in April 2025, which is delivered digitally or face to face. Silver schools should book these through the [HFL Education Hub](#); please note, the digital and face to face workshops are on different dates. Topical update webinars in September 2025 and January 2026 support the termly revised forecasts; booking is via a personalised link which is emailed direct to Silver customers. Mandatory year end 2025-26 digital preparation workshops will be held in February/March 2026.

The school is required to enter the budget to its financial accounting software, although this and other services can be purchased as options. **NB:** for budget entry to Arbor, the budgeting software **MUST** be coded in line with your accounting software.

This service does not include production of the interim and final capital returns nor the submission of all other HCC returns, which remain the responsibility of the school.

Assistance with Budget finalisation and preparation can be purchased as an optional extra at the cost of £74 digital or £83 face-to-face per hour. This can include loading and profiling the budget on Arbor/Access/FMS6 (if correctly coded).

Software currently supported in the Silver service includes Arbor Finance, Access Budgeting and FMS6.

[Full details of the Silver Service can be found here.](#)

Delivery of Diamond, Gold and Silver contracts

For Diamond, Gold and Silver contracts we will allocate a named Finance Business Partner (FBP) to support your school. However, we reserve the right to change Finance Business Partners in cases of sickness, career progression, or other staff circumstances. At times of peak demand such as forecast or year end it may be necessary to allocate a different Finance Business Partner so that collectively all schools are able to meet HCC statutory deadlines. Our Service Delivery Managers will always discuss any changes with you.

HFL Education has agreed with HCC that Financial Services can have a login to the Arbor Finance account specific to your school. This will be strictly controlled and monitored and only used by the Financial Services Partners working on your school's accounts. Should any of these members leave Financial Services, we will ensure that the password used for your accounting software is changed with immediate effect.

5. Bronze

This digital service provides a Financial Services Systems Helpdesk as part of the requirement to take advantage of the preferred supplier rates for Arbor Finance main and additional account licences and Access Budgeting software. Additional standalone Bookkeeping services can be purchased as a contract option with this service at £59 per hour, PAYU is available at £71 per hour (see summary of services and options on pages 4 and 5).

Software currently supported includes Arbor Finance, Access Education Budgeting and FMS6. Arbor Finance and Access Budgeting software is currently purchased through HFL; the FMS licence must be purchased directly with the supplier.

Our Financial Services Systems Help Desk support and guidance materials (bulletins) are provided for FMS6 as well as Arbor finance and Access Education budgeting systems.

[Full details of the Bronze Service can be found here](#)

6. Financial Planning and Budget Support

The Annual School Working Budget

The responsibility for setting the school/setting's budget lies with the Headteacher and its Governing Board. Financial Services can work with the Headteacher (or nominated officer) to calculate the detailed working budget. Assistance can include costing the current staffing structure, modelling options and analysing the likely effect of changes in pupil numbers, etc. We will also look at the three-year plan for the school/setting, with a particular focus on the first two years' budget forecast. The third year will be based on the forecast produced by the Access budget software. Review of the third year will only occur where there is a need to incorporate significant changes to staff, such as restructuring or significant changes in pupil numbers, for example where there are reducing pupil numbers or planned changes to the Published Admission Number (PAN).

This service is standard for Diamond schools and is charged at their contract hourly rate. It is available to all other contract packages at the digital rate of £74 per hour or £83 per hour for face-to-face meetings. Requirement of this service would need to be identified at contract renewal in the spring term in advance of the financial year, to enable Financial Services to plan staff capacity accordingly.

Depending on the package purchased, the budget support from Financial Services will also work on the mid-year update and working budget throughout the year to reflect current updates in the software (released in the Autumn Term) and changes to the school/setting's profile e.g. pupil numbers, deprivation, and SEN.

Should you require Financial Services to do this work on your behalf, please contact your Service Delivery Manager to ask for a quote. This work would be chargeable at our digital consultancy rate of £74 per hour, or £83 per hour face to face.

HCC requires three years of budget assumptions to be entered into Solero.

Advice and support on longer term strategic planning and costing of the School Development Plan

Financial Services can work with the Headteacher (or nominated officer) to assist with planning of future developments and to calculate the cost of elements of the School Development Plan. Please note, this bespoke service is not included in the Budget Support services in our contract offer. It would need to be purchased separately on a PAYU basis, at our digital consultancy rate of £74 per hour, or £83 per hour face to face.

7. Financial Management Software and Systems Helpdesk

Financial accounting software and guidance

Schools and settings benefit from the bulk purchasing power of HFL Education and receive the software at lower than market cost. Financial Services tailors the Arbor software to produce the reports that HCC requires for submission of the year end, as well as configuring the software to meet the requirement for digital submission of VAT returns. (There is a slightly different process for FMS schools for their digital VAT submissions).

Financial Services issues regular guidance in the form of bulletins, to assist you in the completion of tasks within the annual financial management cycle, which include the year end process, entering the agreed budget to Arbor Finance or FMS and the two termly forecasts at P5 and P9. We also issue guidance on how to update the system so that it continues to reflect current HCC coding requirements and Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) reporting, such as grant or IT expenditure codes. Our guidance is also published on the Hertfordshire Grid.

Financial Services regularly innovates with the Arbor Finance software provider to offer additional features, such as sales invoices and automatic import of the budget, accruals, income and expenditure. Depending on the impact of any change, improvements would also be included either in a bulletin, e-learning modules, or On-Demand training i.e. training courses for new users to the software, loading the budget etc. Check the [HFL Education Hub](#) for the latest courses available to support you. Schools can be provided with bespoke face to face training if required.

Schools and settings who use FMS software will need to obtain their licence directly from their software supplier, ESS. This means that schools/settings will need to pay ESS for their FMS licence. Financial Services will continue to provide and charge for written guidance and the Systems Helpdesk support.

By purchasing financial management software via HFL Education, schools and settings consent to HFL Education reporting across all supported school data. This will enable us to develop benchmarking and dashboards for Financial Services' supported Hertfordshire schools and settings.

NB: Maintained schools must not change their financial or budget software without first consulting with and obtaining approval from the Principal Accountant at HCC: csf.sfu@hertfordshire.gov.uk. Some systems are not compatible with HCC systems and requirements.

NB: Schools who are considering academising, federating or closing may still need to purchase a further year of software licences to meet reporting requirements. Please discuss with the HFL Systems Manager on fs.contracts@hfleducation.org before considering any changes.

Financial Services Systems Helpdesk

In addition to the provision of financial management software to your school/setting, we will also provide front line support on Arbor Finance, Access Education Budgets and FMS. This support is provided via the Financial Services Systems Helpdesk, which provides advice and technical support on the use of the software and general advice on schools' finance, including accounting arrangements and procedures.

NB: School/setting staff using the supported finance software are expected to have received or attended training, as ***the helpline itself does not offer training***. Helpdesk calls of more than 15 minutes may be chargeable at £59 per hour, dependent on the circumstances. Schools and settings will be advised if calls are to be charged.

The Systems Helpdesk is open from:

Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 4.45pm

Friday 8.45am to 4.15pm

Please call: 01438 544466

Or email: help@sd.hertsforlearning.co.uk

The helpline may be closed on training days and at certain holiday periods such as Christmas. Closures will be notified via the Schools Bulletin or a flash on the Hertfordshire Grid website.

NB: We only support the current version of FMS6. We are unable to support older versions of FMS and therefore schools/settings will need to keep their FMS software

updated (and may need to speak to their own IT support first before a resolution can be found).

Financial Planning software and Systems Helpdesk support

Financial Services also provides Access Education Budgeting software, tailored to Hertfordshire schools/settings and HCC's funding arrangements. This includes such information as pay scales, budgeting assumptions for inflation and pre-populating the schools block data in the Section 251 area for mainstream schools. This enables schools/settings to set and submit a budget quickly and reliably and benchmark current and future years.

Please refer to the Access Education budgeting bulletins provided for budgeting guidance. Support is also provided via our Systems Helpdesk on the use of this product.

By using Access Budgeting software provided by HFL Education, schools and settings consent to publishing their Annual Budget Return (ABR), to enable HFL Education to report across published schools/settings. This is a service that Headteachers have consistently fed back to us that is of benefit to their schools/settings.

8. Fund Account Bookkeeping

Financial Services offers a Fund Account Bookkeeping Service. This is being delivered digitally by the Bookkeeping Service. It is being charged as an annual fee of £310 for each additional account a school holds. The service is only for schools who are using Arbor Finance for their main accounting software; an additional licence is required for each extra account held. Enquiries about additional licences should be made to fs.contracts@hfleducation.org. Please tick the options form and return it to us ASAP but no later than Monday 3rd March 2025; if you would like to add the Fund Account Bookkeeping Service outside of the contracting period, please speak to your Service Delivery Manager via fs.contracts@hfleducation.org.

9. Fund Account Audits

Schools and settings are required to have an independent examination/audit of their private accounts within three months of every financial year end. Financial Services offers a Fund Account Audit service, providing a statement of assurance on the operation of your fund account as well as a full audit and certificate to verify the audit.

Requirement of this service would need to be identified at contract renewal in the spring term in advance of the financial year, to enable Financial Services to plan staffing capacity accordingly.

There is a minimum charge of 3 hours per year at a fee of £227. This service is delivered face to face. A very complex fund or additional account may need more hours (this would be unusual), the additional cost if required would be charged at £76 per hour. The Service Delivery Managers will discuss your specific requirements with you. If you have more than 1 year to complete, then each additional year would be charged for. It is the school's responsibility to keep financial records for 7 years; this includes accurate records (bookkeeping) of your Fund Account transactions.

10. Training

Courses for new and existing staff, both face to face and digital; live webinar training sessions, interactive workshops and a full range of On-Demand training are available from the [HFL Education Hub](#). Apply date filter to get current courses.

New courses are being added each term when requests from schools are noted. Our experienced Financial Services training team have developed an excellent range of courses and undertaking these may deepen your understanding, save you time and money and allow you to pass more accurate information on to your colleagues.

Bespoke training for individual schools can be provided either online or face to face. Please speak with your Service Delivery Manager via fs.contracts@hfleducation.org with any requests in the first instance.

11. Additional information

The new Financial Services contract you have received for 2025-26, has been based on the contract and options you commissioned in the 2024-25 financial year. Adjustments have been made to schools who changed contracts mid-year and to those who have previously advised of a formal change to take place with effect from 1st April 2025.

In addition, a detailed review of usage by each school has been undertaken by our records and in discussion with our Finance Business Partners and Service Delivery Managers. This has resulted in adjustments both up and down in hours being charged. This review of hours helps Financial Services ensure a minimum number of hours to service each aspect of the work that is completed, but also for the HFL Financial Services staff resource to be balanced correctly against the contract hours required. **NB:** It is cheaper for a school to pay for hours within a contract than it is to go over hours and pay PAYU at a higher rate.

Budget bulletins, staff updates, budget loading and profiling to Arbor (or FMS6) is included under the Budget Support heading in the contract. There is continuing pressure on school finances and a need for detailed work to get an accurate, transparent budget. We need to plan the correct resource of staff hours to be available to support you.

The Service Delivery Managers (SDMs) will be contacting any schools with slightly higher than average increases as there may be changes you could make in your own setting and practice which could help reduce your costs over time. There are a range of new digital courses available which the school could undertake to improve your staff's knowledge and decrease their reliance on various elements of the contract. These can be found on the HFL Education Hub: search Financial to find the latest courses available.

NB: Please be advised that every school needs to provide one term's notice at the end of each term to be able to reduce their contract (as we employ staff to match/support the contract hours we have committed to). If schools need to increase their contract at short notice because of changing circumstances, we will try to accommodate this request as quickly as we are able.

NB: The annual financial contracts start with year end completion in April 2025 of year end for 2024-25 and finalisation of the budget setting process in May for the financial year 2025-26. Please bear this in mind when considering the timing of any changes to your financial services contracts.

ACTION REQUIRED: You will receive an options form with this Service Level Agreement (SLA) and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), alongside your draft contract based on the table on pages 4 and 5.

- ✓ Consider the options that best meet your school/setting's needs. If the change highlights any major differences which the Service Delivery Managers believe you are still likely to need, they will make contact with you to discuss.
- ✓ Tick the options required on the options form
- ✓ **Please return this form to us whether you have changes or not.** There is a 'no changes' box to tick, so that we can be sure you have considered your options.
- ✓ The latest deadline for return of both the contract and options form is **Monday 3rd March 2025.**
- ✓ **We can support you better if you have any queries if you return this form as early as possible in the cycle.** Any change requests received after the deadline date above will not become effective until 1st September.
- ✓ **Return the form to fs.contracts@hfleducation.org**

You can contact your Service Delivery Manager to discuss any potential contract changes by sending an email to fs.contracts@hfleducation.org. Please do this as early as possible in the contract period, as it such a busy time.

GENERAL CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Service Objectives/Standards

- We will investigate and remedy complaints about our service
- We will monitor and review our service provision
- We will carry out quality assurance checks
- We will listen to our customers about their needs
- We will arrange appointments (digital or face to face) within a mutually agreed timescale
- We will train and develop our staff to be able to meet service needs
- We will recruit staff with the appropriate qualifications and skills
- We will ensure that we have adequate helpline cover within working hours
- We will keep to prearranged appointments unless circumstances beyond our control arise. In such cases, we will contact you by telephone and speak with your office. If this is not possible, we will email the Headteacher and our named contact.
- All of our staff are Enhanced DBS checked.

This document must be read in conjunction with HFL Education's standard terms and conditions, which set out the legal basis under which services by HFL Education are provided. This document is available on request from HFL Education by calling 01438 544464.

In addition, this document should be read in conjunction with the more detailed specification for the service chosen; links have been provided to those services within this SLA.

NON-SOLICITATION

The school/setting agrees that it will not, without the written consent of HFL Education, whether directly or indirectly, and whether alone or in conjunction with, or on behalf of, any other person, and whether as a principal, shareholder, director, employee, agent, consultant, partner or otherwise, during the period of the provision of the Goods and/or Services, and for a period of 6 months following termination of the Contract:

- (a) solicit or entice, or endeavour to solicit or entice, away from HFL Education, or employ, or offer employment to, any person employed by HFL Education and providing Goods and/or Services to the school/setting at the date of termination of the Contract, or at any time during the previous 3 months immediately preceding that date.
- (b) knowingly assist, or procure that, any other person to do the above.

Breach of the above will entitle HFL Education to levy a charge equal to up to 25% of the employee's full time annual salary, which the school/setting agrees is a reasonable pre-estimate of the loss that HFL Education will suffer in such circumstances.

CONTRACT AMENDMENT AND CANCELLATION

Schools/settings may be able to increase their contract, subject to the service having sufficient capacity, however, they cannot reduce to a lesser contract in-year without a term's notice. Should a school/setting wish to reduce or cancel its contract mid-year, a term's notice is required.

For all Financial Services contract renewals please contact us via fs.contracts@hfleducation.org only please.

FEEDBACK ON OUR SERVICE IS WELCOME

Jackie.Keegan@hfleducation.org – Head of Financial Sustainability Services

AndrewJ.Griffiths@hfleducation.org - Service Delivery Manager (please include the J)

Marselle.Mercer@hfleducation.org – Service Delivery Manager

Tina.Shackleton@hfleducation.org – Bookkeeping Services Manager

Karon.Liles@hfleducation.org - Systems Helpdesk Manager

Terri.Barden@hfleducation.org – Training and Development Manager

Should you wish to discuss any of the above, please contact your Service Delivery Manager, via the main contract renewal service desk fs.contracts@hfleducation.org and not via their individual email addresses at this busy time. Some queries can be responded to by other members of the team, leaving more complex queries to be handled by the SDMs.

APPENDIX 1 - A DEFINITION OF THE TASKS

To help you decide the right service for your school and to understand what each of the elements mean, the definition of the tasks are below and advise which options can be added to the main service you purchase.

Bookkeeping Service – General Account Financial Processing

This digital service may cover a range of work depending upon the requirements of the school/setting including:

- Recording expenditure
- Recording income received
- Recording and reconciliation of petty cash payments
- Reconciliation to the bank statement
- Performance of the period end routine
- General upkeep and maintenance of the financial accounting software

NB: The service uses HFL OneDrive for you to transfer your information securely and swiftly to the team.

Available to:	Diamond – Included	Gold Option available	Silver Option available	Bronze Option available
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Accruals - generation and maintenance

Record items throughout the year which will need to be considered for accrual at the year end (2025/26) e.g. trip income and expenditure. Check previous year's (2024/25) accruals are cleared.

Available to:	Diamond Included	Gold Option recommended	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Payroll entry to Salary Monitor and Accounting package

- Entry of payroll including additional hours, expenses, unpaid days and Apprenticeship Levy (if applicable) from the payroll system to the salary monitor
- Entry to the accounting package Arbor/Access/FMS

Available to:	Diamond – Included	Gold Option recommended	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Salary Monitor variance analysis

- Any variances checked against the budget software and nominal roll with queries discussed with school
- Variance comments are recorded on the salary monitor

Available to:	Diamond – Included	Gold Included	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Comprehensive System Reconciliation

- A check of the accounting package to ensure that the system is recording information correctly, including a reconciliation of the VAT, system checks, capital reconciliation and, if purchase orders and sales invoicing are used, these are checked also.
- A number of reports need to be run from the system and entered to the spreadsheet and any anomalies identified and corrected.

NB: Schools who buy the Gold service as an option, will need to complete the steps below:

- Payroll reports authorised in accordance with the delegated authority of the school/ setting. The person with relevant responsibility in the school/ setting must check the monthly payroll report to ensure that the correct staff are being paid
- Central Payments (also known as Biscuit and Central Billing) reports, coded to relevant budget accounts and authorised in accordance with the delegated authority of the school/setting
- HFL Education invoice, coded to relevant budget accounts and authorised in accordance with the delegated authority of the school/setting
- Other Direct Debit statements, coded to relevant budget accounts and authorised in accordance with the delegated authority of the school/setting
- VAT receipts/invoices to support expenditure in respect of expenses, purchases via school/ setting commercial card and any other purchases, coded to relevant budget accounts and authorised in accordance with the delegated authority of the school/ setting
- Details and supporting documents provided for any electronic bank payments made, including future dated payments
- Summary reports from electronic income collection, for example for parent payments, coded to relevant budget accounts

Available to:	Diamond – Included	Gold Option recommended	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Financial Reporting for Year End 2024/25 and Monitoring x 7

- Production of Year End 24/25 and seven further budget monitoring reports to P10.
- Meeting with the Headteacher or nominated officer to discuss the school/setting's current and future financial position and cash flow and advising of any changes that may impact the outturn of their accounts.
- This includes the preparation and review, in accordance with HCC deadlines, of the termly forecast to HCC. Our termly forecast appointment provides an in-depth review of your budget position and a revised outturn of the expected budget position of your school/setting at the end of the financial year.

Forecast for period to	HCC deadline
P5 - 31 st August	15 th October
P9 - 31 st December	15 th February

- Completion of year end in accordance with HCC specifications to the deadline set by HCC, including an outturn budget monitor that compares the year end position with the last agreed budget.
- Reconciliation of VAT returns to HCC monthly.
- Completion of the interim and final capital returns to HCC specification (where relevant).

Available to:	Diamond – Included	Gold Included	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Bank Forecast for cashflow

The monthly monitor will be updated to include a cash flow and bank balance forecast to allow the careful management of the school's payroll, invoices and commitments.

Available to:	Diamond – Included	Gold Included	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Submission of Financial Returns to HCC

Submission of all HCC returns remains the responsibility of the school/setting, and Finance Business Partners must receive authorisation from the school/setting of final figures prior to submission on Solero (on AnyComms).

Available to:	Diamond Included	Gold Option available	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Capital Returns

A mid-year Interim submission and Final submission (just before Year End) is required to be provided to HCC to detail the capital spent or committed for that year. The dates are published on Herts Grid and a bulletin and reminders sent by the Financial Services Team. If capital is funding is provided through an alternative route to HCC, then these hours have already been removed.

Available to:	Diamond Included	Gold Included	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Bulletins

To undertake the changes required on the bulletins issued by HFL Financial Services Team. This might include coding changes; report changes and additional funding lines being added to the accounting or budgeting software.

Available to:	Diamond Included	Gold Option recommended	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Asset Register and Leases – School responsibility

The school/setting is required to maintain its asset register and, where required to do so, be able to provide supporting information to HCC on its assets. Schools and settings are also responsible for ensuring that they maintain and update the register of leases that HCC requires and to ensure that they comply with regulations that prevent schools/ settings from taking on finance leases.

Available to:	Diamond N/A	Gold N/A	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Budget Support

Budget finalisation – May 2025 (for year 2025/26)

- Update any known staff changes – leavers/starters since March
- Include income for any final funding elements
- Update SEN income
- Review all other expenditure lines with school
- Look at 3 year picture to ensure the school does not forecast a deficit budget
- Consider and discuss actions required to balance the budget

Available to:	Diamond Included – digital	Gold Optional – digital	Silver Optional – digital	Bronze Optional – digital
	Optional face to face	Optional face to face	Optional face to face	Optional face to face

Budget submission to Solero

The Approved Budget Return (ABR), once agreed with governors and the school at Full Governing Body (FGB) in May, is submitted to HCC on Solero as per the financial Bulletin instructions.

Available to:	Diamond Included	Gold Optional	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Budget loading to Arbor Finance system

The Approved Budget Return agreed with governors is entered to the Arbor Finance/FMS systems. Profiles of income and expenditure are set up with a range of options recommended via the bulletin guidance.

Available to:	Diamond Included	Gold Optional	Silver Optional	Bronze N/A
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Budget updates in Access including bulletins and mid-year updates

The Systems team completes a mid-year update (in the Autumn term) on the latest funding and formula factors and pay increases known at that time to maintain the future year forecast is as up to date as possible.

Staffing contract details in Access Budget software will be checked against the latest nominal roll. The budgeting software is then updated with the information provided by the school prior to the completion of P5, P9 and at March budget preparation, before the budget software is upgraded to the new financial year.

A balancing figure (in E24) is included to match the monitor with the budget software in P5 and P9 to allow future year forecasts. This is removed when the budget is upgraded into the next financial year.

Available to:	Diamond Included	Gold Optional	Silver N/A	Bronze N/A
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Budget Preparation – March 2026

- Update staffing to include all known current and future changes (school to provide detail)
- Include any other updates advised by the Access Budget bulletin
- Upgrade budget software into the next financial year 2026/27
- Check prepopulated amounts against the School Budget Share document, SBS
- Include all known school funding lines as directed by the bulletin not included in the Age Weighted Pupil Unit, AWPU

- Update Additional Targeted Funding (ATF), and SEN High Needs funding lines by anonymised pupils
- Update future pupil numbers based on HCC forecasts
- Start conversations on other income /expenditure lines

Available to:	Diamond Included – digital	Gold Optional – digital	Silver Optional – digital	Bronze Optional – digital
	Optional face to face	Optional face to face	Optional face to face	Optional face to face

Silver Service P3 and P7 QA, YE and mid-year workshops

Schools and settings that purchase the Silver service will complete their own monthly bookkeeping and monitoring. In P3 and P7 the Finance Business Partner will Quality Assure (QA) the school's completed monitor to ensure that the latest information has been applied. There is a minimum of 10 hours required for the service, but schools can purchase more if required. The first QA is in the summer term by 31st August and the second in the Autumn term by 31st December.

In addition, it is a requirement that schools purchase and attend our mandatory Year End 2024-25 finalisation workshop in April 2025 (which is delivered both digitally and face to face). Silver schools should book these through the [HFL Education Hub](#). Attendance is also required for the digital Year End 2025-26 preparatory workshops in September and January. Schools will be emailed a link directly to book on to these workshops.

Available to:	Diamond N/A	Gold N/A	Silver Included	Bronze N/A
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Financial Services Systems Helpdesk

(See detailed information in section 7 above)

Available to:	Diamond Required	Gold Required	Silver Required	Bronze Required
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Arbor Finance Licence – General Account

A main finance licence is required to operate the Arbor finance software to enable your school accounts to be processed throughout the year and at year end to be submitted to HCC to comply with the Financial Handbook for schools.

NB: Schools must not change their accounting software without approval from HCC.

Available to:	Diamond Required	Gold Required	Silver Required	Bronze Required
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Access Budgeting Software Licence

A licence is required to use the budget software to forecast your staffing and other budget costs. The software is prepopulated with your School Budget Share and adapts the inflationary factors in the background using the latest information provided by HCC and the DfE. There is also a mid-year update (in the Autumn Term) completed for these factors, using the latest information known.

NB: Schools must not change their budgeting software without approval from HCC.

Available to:	Diamond Required	Gold Required	Silver Required	Bronze Required
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Arbor Finance Additional Licence (e.g. Fund Account)

A main Arbor Finance licence is required to be able to purchase an additional licence. Schools are likely to use this for their Fund Account and if there are additional Governor Accounts.

Available to:	Diamond Optional	Gold Optional	Silver Optional	Bronze Optional
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Fund Account Bookkeeping

The Bookkeeping Team offers this digital service to support schools to comply with the Financial Handbook and maintain the appropriate records to report to Governors and HCC. The cost is a flat rate for 1 year and Service Delivery Managers can provide a quote if further years' bookkeeping is required. A school cannot be audited unless all the paperwork has been posted/recorded.

NB: Arbor Finance schools only

Available to:	Diamond Optional	Gold Optional	Silver Optional	Bronze Optional
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Fund Account Audit (and additional accounts) - Face to Face service

This service provides reassurance to the School and Governors that financial compliance is in place for each additional account. Recommendations will be provided if there are areas that could be improved. A certificate will be issued to each school that achieves the audit standard. The price quoted is for an audit for 1 year. Each additional year that requires auditing will need to be charged. Please contact the Service Delivery Managers for a quote.

NB: The fund account must be maintained throughout the year and audited annually.

Available to:	Diamond Optional	Gold Optional	Silver Optional	Bronze Optional
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Additional services

We can support schools and settings with all areas of their financial management and reporting. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive list, but we would be pleased to discuss your specific requirements.