

Case study – Silvercote school

Let me show you how you can use ICFP to deliver the educational offer you want by telling you how it happened in my school.

First let me tell you a bit about Silvercote.

School background and context.

We are a secondary school with 1200 pupils. We have:

- Total revenue income of just over £7 million
- 74.1 FTE teaching staff
- Total teaching staff costs of £4.27 million



Stage 1

First of all start with the guiding principles of your school or trust, its values vision and strategy. Work out what are you trying to achieve for your pupils and what they should leave your school or trust knowing and being.

We had already established an ethos and values for the school.

We knew that Silvercote School needed to change and have more direction, and the prospect of the new Ofsted framework focused our minds even more.

To develop a new vision the board did a lot of work with the SLT and stakeholders, boiling down what we wanted our graduates to be like in terms of achievement, attributes, and attitudes.

Our aim was to make our new vision happen within the next four years.

Stage 2

Next you need to discuss and answer the key question which is “what does your school or trust’s educational offer need to look like to achieve your vision and ethos?”

On the basis of this work, SLT then worked with subject leaders and their teams and the GB standards committee, to develop a new broad and rich curriculum, suitable for Silvercote.

Can we afford to implement this?

In the autumn term this was presented to the board. The board asked some questions about if and how it could be resourced and realised that not enough work had been done looking at the financial planning, timetabling and staffing side of things. We needed to explore more rigorously how this curriculum was going to be delivered as part of the new vision and strategy.

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I had agreed with my head to do a CPD course on using a tool called ICFP as we both were aware of the need to improve the school's strategic financial planning. It opened my eyes to the opportunities for planning better use of our resources and improving our offer at the same time. I was very excited about its potential and we agreed we should use it immediately to generate some options to get the school back on track.

Things moved quickly then, and we agreed with the chair to set up a working party which included the chairs of the finance and standards committees, myself and the head. It didn't take long to agree an ICFP implementation plan with the aim of reporting back to the board at the end of the Spring term.

Stage 3

The third stage is to use relevant metrics to calculate the cost of the curriculum your school or trust can currently afford, against the curriculum it needs.

The first stage of our ICFP implementation plan was to review the following metrics to get a clear understanding of the cost of our curriculum.

The pupil teacher ratio (**PTR**) of **16.2** was well below the **17** it should be. This suggested that we might have up to **3.5 FTE** too many teachers. The average teacher cost (**ATC**) of **£57,635** is **£5,625** higher than the **£52,000** norm, which meant we might be overspending by **£417,000** in total.

The total teaching staff cost (**TTC**) at **61%** was beyond the **50-54%** range it should be and showed a potential inefficiency of between **£490,000** and **£770,000**, which further confirmed the overstaffing identified by the PTR.

We then looked at the teacher contact ratio (**TTR**) of **0.7** which was significantly below the **0.78-0.80** norm for secondary schools, which showed that our teachers were spending less time teaching than might be expected, and which was resulting in significant inefficiency.

The per lesson cost (**PLC**) at **£3,200** is higher than the normal **£2,600-£2,800** range. This, when combined with other metrics equates to around **£530,000 to £800,000** of teaching inefficiency.

Non staff % of total revenue income indicated there is not enough investment in the non-staffing side of the school by **7-10% of TRI or £490,000-£770,000**. This indicated that Silvercote's educational offer was being negatively affected by a lack of investment in buildings, environment, ICT refresh, educational and classroom resources.

The **weekly teaching** cycle at **23.75** was less than a more common 25 hour teaching week which meant that **10 days** of teaching time per teacher per year were being lost.

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Stage 3 – Activity

Which of the three options would be a suitable conclusion based on the previous metrics?

Answer:

Review the staffing profile and deployment using suitable benchmarking to see what options there are to deliver the new curriculum and ensure suitable spending on premises and equipment.

Stage 4

Stage 4 involves evaluating the costs and developing an integrated spending plan that provides your school or trust with the curriculum it needs.

Using this metrics analysis, the working party did some further work which concluded that Silvercote could deliver the curriculum we wanted on the basis of certain assumptions, scenarios and recommendations.

The metrics showed we had **too many teachers** who were inefficiently deployed. A full review enabled us to plan efficient deployment reducing teaching cost by 2.6 FTE.

We analysed the learning and management time given to those senior leaders and others receiving teaching and leadership responsibility payments (TLR) and concluded that this could be reduced in all cases.

The **ATC** was very high and we found that we could improve the staffing profile through:

- management action in three cases and early retirements in five others
- reduction of AT numbers to reflect the high proportion of UPS teachers
- reduction of management with one option being fewer assistant heads
- extending the teaching cycle from 23.75 to 25.2

We also concluded that if these changes could be made we could increase our non staffing expenditure to the right levels. So we didn't cut expenditure overall we just used it in a way that would allow us to deliver and support the curriculum Silvercote needed.

Building an understanding of the metrics meant that SLT was able to model options into a plan that:

- could be implemented over three years
- included the relevant financial data, planning assumptions and risks for each option
- contained a clear evidence-based narrative that explained the data

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Stage 5 - Activity 1

The next stage is for your governing board to receive and approve the integrated spending plan.

How do you think the integrated spending plan should best be presented to the board?

Answer:

A report in summary form, including options not requiring an in depth understanding of metrics and analysis, circulated at least seven days in advance.

Stage 5 - Activity 2

This stage requires the approval of the integrated spending plan by the governing board.

What do you think should happen at the board meeting?

Answer:

1. The school business manager, CEO, headteacher or other member of the senior leadership team should present the plan with the options to the whole board.
2. All board members should be invited to ask questions on the report options.
3. The board should aim to reach consensus in relation to the plan and any options.
4. If the plan is acceptable the board should approve the plan.
5. If the plan is unacceptable the board should not approve the plan and indicate why it is not acceptable, and what steps/changes would make it acceptable.

Stage 6

The final stage is to implement and then monitor the integrated spending plan.

The board asked that we review the integrated spending plan annually. As part of its routine monitoring and planning cycle, it will take into account cost adjustments, changes in circumstances, growth etc. but in the first instance we pulled this review forward by six months to deal with the consequences of the coronavirus.

I don't know how we would have managed with the coronavirus if we weren't using an integrated approach. Select the button to reveal more information on the review process.

Implementation

We started implementing the plan last year and, the coronavirus apart, the plan is going well with our new curriculum offer in place and our overall school improvement strategy still largely on track.

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The Ofsted visit we had six months ago confirmed this and we were pleased with the outcome and feedback particularly about the curriculum.

Interestingly, numbers on roll have increased by 3% which has enable us to further secure Silvercote’s funding base.

Monitoring

The board has asked that we review the plan annually. As part of its routine monitoring and planning cycle it will take into account the usual things like cost adjustments, changes in circumstances, growth but we did actually pull forward the first review by six months to deal with the consequences of the coronavirus. I actually don’t know how we would have dealt with the consequences if we weren’t using an integrated approach.