



Professional Services

for Schools and Academies

2026/2027

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01 Introduction from the CEO



Welcome to SIPS and thank you for your interest in our services brochure for 2026.

We're so proud to be the **not-for-profit** education support services provider for Sandwell, the Black Country, the West Midlands and beyond.

As a co-operative, we're 100% owned and governed by schools as members, and unlike many other providers to the sector, our focus isn't about making profits from the education system - it is centred on enriching children and young people's learning and well-being through genuine partnerships with Schools, Academies and Trusts. We understand just how difficult school budgeting is right now and we simply strive to balance our budget in support of excellence of service, local employment, and affordable pricing.

We have almost 400 schools as members, with services that include Music and Arts, Governance, IT, HR, Finance, Safety Management and Catering which offers Schools and Trusts the ability to get the support they need, when they need it – flexibly and affordably.

As a lean and efficient local organisation, we develop long-term, bespoke relationships and services on a School-by School or Trust-by-Trust basis, each with oversight by a senior decision-maker from SIPS. We would be delighted to have a conversation about how we can support you to support your leaders and teachers, and free up capacity and money to focus on giving your students the very best education.

We appreciate your custom and membership which is essential to ensure that SIPS can continue to be a unique, schools-owned, democratic organisation – one which works hard to provide the best services for your school.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Brian'.

Brian Cape
Chief Executive



02 Catering Service



Our Catering Team provide bespoke and innovative services based on a wealth of experience and a passion for food. In a region such as ours, hot meals at lunchtime are a lifeline for families and we cannot underestimate the importance of consistently good quality meals and their impact on health and learning.

We believe that three key elements at the core of excellent school catering:

Food – By instilling the knowledge that healthy lunches can be exciting, tasty and filling, we empower young people to make informed choices and develop a lifelong interest in good food. High-quality ingredients are used to prepare fresh and nutritious meals each day, and menus feature a mix of tried and tested favourites, and dishes that are on-trend for our target audience. We don't economise on portion sizes; servings across all food groups are generously in line with School Food Standards. Our offering is quality assured through responsible procurement, legislative compliance, and robust operational policies.

People – Our entire Catering Team work together to provide a welcoming and nurturing environment. Our school-based employees are ambassadors of our service, and we are committed to empowering them to provide consistently high-quality meals and excellent customer care. We invest in the continuous professional development of our kitchen teams by providing technical training to ensure legislative compliance, maintain and enhance craft and presentation skills, share ideas, promote good practice, and to provide career and succession planning opportunities. Our training has The School Food People's (LACA) School Workforce Development Professional Standards accreditation.

Partnership – We offer a range of catering service, each tailored to individual school requirements, and strive to create and maintain a trusted relationship with the whole school community. Each contract has a dedicated Area Catering Manager, ongoing contract monitoring and performance reviews.

We are always keen to engage with pupils and families to share information, and attend events including assemblies, School Council, and Reception intake days.

03 Early Career Teachers – Appropriate Body Service



SIPS Education is proud to be the Regional Partner for Haybridge Teaching School Hub in relation to the Appropriate Body Service for Early Career Teachers.



As the regional partner of Haybridge Teaching School Hub, SIPS work with schools across the West Midlands and support over 250 schools and 850 ECTs annually.

HTSH Appropriate Body Service includes:

- Induction consultancy – email, face to face and on the telephone
- High quality materials including electronic toolkits
- Model documentation and support
- Dedicated telephone helpline
- Robust quality assurance and feedback
- Support to senior management teams including governors
- Additional support to ECTs at risk at no additional cost

The 2 Appropriate Body Routes for ECTs:

There are two different Early Career Teacher Entitlement Appropriate Body routes a school can opt to follow. A school's pathway must go hand-in-hand with their chosen ITTECF induction type:

Provider Led - The ITTECF is delivered by a 'Lead Provider' and a 'Delivery Partner'. As the ITTECF is quality-assured by the DfE, schools following this route require no Appropriate Body fidelity checks.

School Led - The ITTECF is delivered by the school either using quality-assured material from the DfE or designing its own programme based on the ITTECF

Schools choosing this route must undergo a fidelity check to ensure their ECTs are receiving statutory entitlements, and the school are following a programme in line with ITTECF guidance.

Support can be provided to schools with School Led Programmes.

04 Careers/Education Business Partnership



Work Related Learning

In an ever-evolving economy, employers are increasingly looking for specific skills across their workforce and competition for jobs is high.

We can help prepare your young people for the world of work; support them to identify and develop their skills and gain a practical insight into what lies ahead.

We have unique and close links with business and commerce to ensure a variety of employer engagement during WRL activities.

Our WRL offer can include activities such as mock interview experiences, raising aspiration sessions, enterprise challenges, careers fairs and employer engagement activities tailored to your school's specific requirements. All activities include preparation sessions for pupils and evaluation processes in line with Gatsby Benchmarks.

Work Experience

We support schools to ensure that their pupils are safe on work experience. The service includes the following support:

- Health, safety, and safeguarding assessments of employers offering work experience, by the most suitable method, with results recorded on the work experience database.
- Access to SIPS' work experience database to input placements for checking.
- On-going consultancy and advice to schools on issues relating to work experience including DBS queries.
- Introduction of work experience to your young people with a launch assembly if this is how the school chooses to use their allocated assembly.
- Train and support school staff on work experience arrangements if required by the school including database support and general support through the process.
- Promote work experience with employers, including informing the school of new companies and employers agreeing to take pupils for work experience.

05 Governance Services



At SIPS we offer a high-quality governance professional clerking service that is tailored to each board and its own context.

Our team of Governance Professionals play pivotal roles in the smooth and efficient functioning of any governing board and will offer advice and guidance on all aspects of governance – including procedures and areas of compliance. Our service provides an invaluable contribution to the efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, and compliance of the governing board.

In addition to procedural and legislative advice, governing boards also benefit from our Governance Professionals sharing best practice and providing access to a range of governance resources.

In order to provide schools with access to a high-quality governance professional clerking service we directly employ a number of dedicated and knowledgeable Governance Professionals. Our Governance Professionals work flexibly during term time to meet the needs of their schools.

As well as offering a face-to-face service (dependent upon location), we are able to provide our service via a virtual arrangement.

Schools purchasing our service will be assigned a named Governance Professional and will, in addition, have access to a central team who are available to assist when their Governance Professional may be unavailable, and throughout school holiday periods. On the rare occasion that your Governance Professional may not be available, we will, subject to availability, provide cover from within our team.

We are really proud of our professional clerking and advice service, conducting around 3000 meetings a year with 290 Governing Boards and around 2800 governors, with a unique offer tailored to each board

In addition to our main service, we also offer:

- Minute taking for other meetings including, appeals, HR matters, admissions etc.
- A comprehensive governor training package which can be purchased as a package or individual courses
- Access to a discounted bundle package to include an online portal (Governor hub) to support boards to run efficiently and 'Knowledge' which provides access to integrated advice, training and guidance.
- Full and Mini-Governance Reviews
- Independent Review Panel Service

06 HR Services – Consultancy



Our HR solutions are available as an annual subscription or on a ‘pay as you go’ basis.

Capability, Disciplinary, Grievance, Harassment and Bullying

- Provision of general advice on all policies/terms and conditions, either by phone, e-mail or virtual platform
- Attendance and provision of advice at formal meetings
- Drafting of letters for review by school/Academy
- Review of investigation notes and/or reports

Safeguarding

- Attendance at Position of Trust meetings
- Employment advice upon receipt of allegations
- Additional support for disciplinary cases

Management of Absence

- Pro-active support in managing staff absence in accordance with your policy
- Attendance at formal meetings
- Production of outcome letters for meetings attended
- Advice and guidance on Occupational Health Referrals
- Advice and support in relation to phased return to work arrangements

Employment Tribunals

- HR attendance (upon request) at meetings with Legal Service provider
- Face-to-face meeting with you to review case history

Restructures/Redundancy/TUPE Transfers

- Ensure that statutory consultation requirements are met by the employer in accordance with employment law
- Attendance at face-to-face meetings
- Attendance and support with additional Trade Union consultation meetings

Annual HR Health Check

- Pro-active HR advice and guidance to plan key HR activities to support the school’s needs

HR Investigations

Our qualified and knowledgeable investigators have extensive experience of undertaking investigations and presenting cases within the education sector. All types of investigation are undertaken.

06 HR Services - Transactional

Recruitment and Selection

- Placement of the advert
- Provision of advice on all aspects of the recruitment process
- Provision of short-listing and interview documentation

Pre-employment checks and clearances – employees and volunteers

- References
- ID Check
- Asylum and Immigration check (Right to Work Check)
- Professional body qualification and Prohibition check (if applicable)
- Enhanced DBS Disclosure including Barring Check where appropriate
- Medical Check
- Identify if an overseas check is required and provide guidance

New employees

- Issue contracts of employment in accordance with relevant legislation
- Confirm salary/service details with previous employers as appropriate
- Undertake salary assessments for new teaching appointments in accordance with your pay policy
- Issue probation forms and monitor receipt of completed forms
- Issue variations to contracts of employment to existing employees where there are changes to terms and conditions

Termination of employment

- Acknowledge employees' resignation and undertake administration in relation to leavers
- Liaison with payroll provider for the processing of payments, and where necessary, the recovery of payments
- Check entitlement to Long Service and Retirement awards in line with your policy and provide notification to you and the employee

MIS

- SIPS will update all Personnel MIS records on the school's behalf (subject to the school's approval) to ensure all information is accurate and up to date, complying with General Data Protection Regulations

HR Files and Records

- Maintenance and secure retention of a comprehensive electronic file for each employee
- Access to the file in accordance with policy

07 IT Services



At SIPS IT we want to be your trusted partner for all your IT requirements. With an extensive team of experts, we share your passion for giving young people a rewarding learning experience. Technology should be an enabler to school development and overall learning outcomes. We want to support you with this, offering a range of services and expertise and importantly value for money solutions.

Focusing on:

The effective day to day management of your School systems and data ensuring that the technology you use is available when you need it.

That your School is a safe and secure place to work and learn.

Optimising technologies and exploring new, to enhance the teaching and learning across your school.

Offering a full range of services including:

- MIS and Business Support
- Base and BasePlus+ Support for all SIMS, Arbor, Bromcom and Compass Modules
- Nova T6 and Timetabler support for all your timetabling needs
- SIMS FMS support, Access Finance Support, Bromcom Finance Support and Arbor Finance support
- Tali Fund Manager support
- Exam Organiser Support for SIMS, Arbor and Bromcom
- Training on all MIS' and all modules

Technical Support (on-site and remote)

- Onsite Technician Service giving you flexible, onsite technical support
- Remote Technical Support for those times your technician is not on site
- Microsoft 365 Managed Service - keeps your environment secure, compliant, and aligned with the latest best practices, so you can focus on running your organisation
- Filesafe Back-up solution, tailored to your schools' requirements of onsite only back up or to include your cloud data with our new Filesafe Unlimited
- DNS and Domain Management – support for your web domains
- LGfL Connectivity Support – support for Firewall & Filtering and your connectivity
- Web Hosting - our hosting facility for your website

IT Consultancy, Projects and Procurement Services

- Procurement service – where we source for you value for money Hardware and software solutions
- IT strategy and investment planning – with our 3–5-year Audit for your IT infrastructure
- Project work – working with you to plan, implement and support a wide range of IT projects
- Microsoft Licences – offering exceptional value on your Licences, ensuring your schools are protected and DfE compliant

08 Music Service – Sandwell Schools



SIPS Music is an educational music provider and a lead organisation within the Black Country Music Hub (BCMh), part-funded by Central Government through Arts Council England.

Music and the arts play a vital role in supporting children and young people’s creativity, self-expression and personal development. SIPS’ team of specialist music teachers delivers high-quality musical learning through a wide range of curriculum and classroom instrumental lessons, small group instrumental and vocal tuition, and targeted support, ensuring inclusive and equitable access to music education for all pupils.

We currently work with 90% of Sandwell schools, providing flexible, high quality music opportunities that enhance the curriculum and support every child’s opportunity to learn an instrument during their time at school.

Alongside employing over 50 specialist music teachers, we support schools through high-quality professional development. Our CPD helps school colleagues build confidence, develop skills and deepen subject knowledge to meet the needs of their pupils.

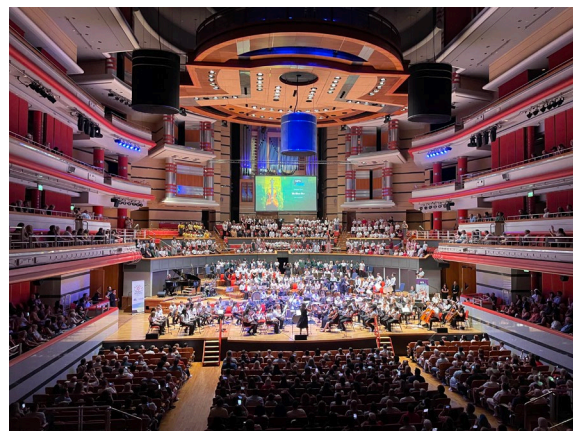
Working closely with local partners, we deliver inspiring large scale musical events for children and young people. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion sit at the heart of our work, supporting our approach to grow and develop. We actively listen to children and young people through survey and student voice, ensuring their views help shape our future.

We believe that music can change lives, supporting wellbeing, positive mental health and lifelong engagement. Around 40% of our workforce learned an instrument in a Sandwell school, and as a service rooted in the community, we are proud to understand and reflect the needs of the children and families we work with.

We are committed to equality of opportunity for all pupils, regardless of background, gender, income, additional needs, disability or care status.

As a learning organisation, we share schools’ commitment to continuous improvement. Our in-school services are enhanced by out-of-school opportunities, including over 20 free progressive bands, choirs and orchestras, ensuring sustained musical progression for Sandwell’s children and young people.

For more information on the services offered please see the [Music Brochure](#) or contact the music office music@sips.co.uk



09 Safety Management Services



Keeping Your School Safe

For school leaders and governors, managing risks is of paramount importance, but it is a huge responsibility and wide reaching. SIPS is here to professionally support you and your staff at every step.

Health, Safety and Site Facilities

Provision of specialist technical advice and support in line with current legislation and your legal responsibilities. From whole school health and safety audits to subject specific health and safety audits, policy, guidance and procedures to investigations, cleaning audits, site and facilities support including Site Manager mentor support, advice on cleaning hours, appropriate cleaning processes and training. There are a variety of packages available as well as bespoke or one-off support to meet your individual needs.

Health and Safety Training Programme

A comprehensive portfolio of Health and Safety courses tailored to all staff. Courses include accredited courses such as First Aid and CIEH, non-accredited courses such as General Risk Assessment, RIDDOR, DSE, COSHH, Introduction to Health and Safety, Legionella awareness etc. There are also a variety of eLearning packages available, bespoke, and flexible, bite-size courses.

Fire Safety Assessment/Management

Provision of specialist technical advice and support including the provision of a fire risk assessment, that meets the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The fire risk assessment will comprise of a full site survey, including schematic building plans. Supporting your building requirements through communication with the Fire Enforcing Authority if required. Specific fire related training available as well as In the Line of Fire online training course for all your staff.

Data Protection (GDPR)

Accredited Data Protection Officer advice and support provided to either your in-house DPO or Data Protection Lead in school. We help to ensure that your data protection processes, policies and procedures are robust and comply with all GDPR Principles. We carrying out data walks around school, data audits and step by step support when responding to Subject Access Requests, Freedom of Information Requests, and data breaches.

10 School Finance Service



Our School Finance Team offers tailored support to school leadership and business management teams, to help unravel the numbers and assist with budgeting and monitoring – leaving you more time to focus on education and welfare.

The service provides advice and support to schools and contribute to their effective financial reporting through:

- Preparing monthly management accounts, bank reconciliations and year end accounts
- Preparing VAT returns
- Monitoring staff and non-staff budgets, advising schools on any significant budget variances
- Prepare forecasts of likely financial position at year end
- Maintain internal systems to enable reporting requirements to be met
- Attend meetings to present finance reports and offer advice to Headteachers and governors
- Ensure reports are prepared in line with the appropriate financial standards and reporting requirements

We can also provide advice and support to schools in relation to effective financial planning through:

- Preparing annual budgets and cash flow statements;
- Assist schools in the preparation of medium to long term budget projections;
- Offer advice and support to clients as required;
- Keep up to date in relation to key financial developments.

On-Site Visits

On-site visits are provided by SIPS Education to enable us to carry out the Finance Support Service whilst working in conjunction with individuals at the school with responsibility for the school's finances. On-Site visits are to be arranged throughout the year to fall in line with key dates (e.g. month end, financial returns, budget setting, etc). Dates for visits can be re-arranged dependent upon the requirements of the school, subject to prior notice and availability.

Remote Access

SIPS Education use several methods of secure remote connection to access individual schools' live data. This is used in order to give a swift, efficient response to enquiries when we are unable to attend site. This can also be used to enable us to prepare for any on-site visits.

11 School Office Operational Review



The service provides a high-quality school office operational review that can be tailored to each school and its own context.

We will conduct a structured evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the school's administrative office functions, identifying areas for improvement and supporting enhanced operational performance.

We will focus on systems, processes and day to day procedures that support the running of the school.

The review will evaluate several key operational areas:

- MIS systems and records;
- Financial and resource management;
- HR and Payroll;
- Policies, regulations and statutory requirements;
- School Office/Reception duties;
- Workload management and staff effectiveness;
- General observations.

The review will conclude with a comprehensive report outlining key findings, highlighting best practices and setting out structured recommendations for improvement.

- Identify strengths and areas for improvement in office operations;
- Ensure processes are efficient, consistent and well-documented;
- Maximise the use of digital tools and information systems;
- Check compliance with policies, regulations and statutory requirements;
- Reduce administrative risk (e.g. errors, data issues, missed deadlines);
- Improve service delivery to pupils, parents, and staff;
- Support workload management and staff effectiveness.