



Control of Schools Assets

Schools Financial Services

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Governing Bodies need to ensure that adequate arrangements are made for the security of buildings and for the control of stocks and equipment.

It is recommended that:

1. A permanent record is maintained in school of all 'stock' items

These will include computer equipment, audio/visual equipment, musical instruments, cleaning or handicrafts equipment or any other 'desirable' items which the school may possess.

There is no need for the school to record furniture, although it may do so if it wishes.

The school stock record may be manual or computer-based using for example the SIMS Equipment module.

2. The stock report is updated regularly

Items should be entered into the stock record as soon as possible after their receipt or disposal by the school, or their loss through theft or damage. To facilitate this, it is useful to nominate a person to be responsible for the custody and control of stock items; in a larger school there may be several staff responsible for items held in each faculty area. The date of additions or disposals should be recorded in the stock record.

3. Items are clearly identified in the stock record

There should be sufficient detail in the stock record to allow individual items to be identified. To assist this process, serial numbers, in addition to make and model numbers, should be recorded. Schools may wish to enhance control by the marking of reference numbers on each item, which could then be recorded in the stock record.

4. Regular stock checks are undertaken

Physical checks of equipment and stores against relevant records should be undertaken at least annually by a person not responsible for their custody and control.

The number of items in stock should be verified and the stock record signed and dated by the checking officer. Larger schools may wish to stagger the stock checking process to prevent all faculties being checked at the same time.

5. Discrepancies are reported to the Governors

Governors should be informed of discrepancies between the actual and recorded stock where the value exceeds (£200).

6. There is a clear policy for the disposal of assets

Governors should ensure that assets purchased by the school are disposed of in an appropriate manner. A policy should be drafted setting out who has authority to declare items to be obsolete, surplus, or damaged beyond repair, and the means of disposal.

Where items are to be sold, Governors should be aware of their responsibility to follow local authority Standing Orders relating to contracts for sales but at all times should seek to achieve the best price for the items being sold. Where Governors choose not to accept the highest offer, their reasons for not doing so should be recorded and retained at the school. When disposing of equipment, it is important to be aware of information assurance responsibilities, i.e. ensuring that any data is wiped from any IT, documents are cleared from furniture draws etc.

7. There is separation of duties in the control of assets and disposal of assets

The same person should not be responsible for the custody and control of assets and the disposal and receipt of income for assets. Where payment is received at the school, a receipt showing the VAT element, if appropriate, should be issued to the purchaser, and the income banked to the school budget. The school will receive the net income in their delegated budget.

8. Delegation to school staff of Governors responsibilities is clearly recorded and approved

Where Governors choose to delegate their responsibilities for controlling assets to school staff, the extent of delegation should be clearly shown in the approved Internal Financial Regulations of the school. Further delegation to teaching or administrative staff should be recorded and staff made aware of their responsibilities.

DISPOSAL OF ASSETS

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that assets purchased by the school are disposed of in an appropriate manner.
- 1.2 This policy sets out a framework to identify who has the authority to declare items to be obsolete, surplus or damaged beyond repair, and to determine the means of disposal.

2.0 POLICY

- 2.1 Any item which is obsolete or damaged beyond repair and is not appropriate for sale may be written off by the Headteacher, but must be reported to the Governing Body at the next meeting for information.
- 2.2 Any item which is surplus to the school's requirements and has a saleable value may be sold by the most appropriate means to achieve the best possible price.
- 2.3 The Headteacher may arrange for the sale of items of estimated value up to £2,500. The sale of these items must be reported to the Governing Body at the next meeting.
- 2.4 The means of disposal of items with an estimated value of £2,500 or more shall be determined by the Governing Body.
- 2.5 All income received must be paid into the school budget and VAT identified where appropriate.
- 2.6 The disposal of an item of equipment must be recorded in the school's inventory together with the date of disposal, and the amount of sales proceeds if appropriate. The date of the Governing Body meeting when the disposal was reported/approved must also be recorded.

Use of Ebay

As the risk of using Ebay sits with the School it is up to individual schools to weight up the risks and benefits and then make an informed decision on whether to proceed with the use of Ebay. This is a guide only and if Schools are going to make use of Ebay it is for each school to determine its own procedures for use and to be mindful of the potential risks involved.

A comprehensive record should be maintained of all items sold to support the information held on Ebay. This could be in the form of a spreadsheet which clearly documents all income and expenditure in date order. All invoices and receipts should be retained to support these records. Evidence should be printed from Ebay as it is unclear how long these records are retained.

Each transaction should have a clear audit trail and the documents will have to be retained in line with the document retention guidelines.

- a) In order to sell an item a user name and associated details need to be registered, ie:
 - a user name;

- name and address of registered user;
- contact details, telephone number and email address;
- bank account, credit card details or a Paypal account in order to charge the user with fees for selling.

For non-bank account schools this obviously causes problems as it will probably have to be a named individual.

- b) Even though a school might have an unofficial school fund bank account this should not be used as the income is most likely to be official income.
- c) Fees are due for listing the item and also from a percentage of the final selling price. The amount of fees charged for listing an item is dependent on the starting price. The higher the starting price the higher the fees.
- d) Consider starting everything at a low starting price, as this may attract the most interest. **Unless there is an absolute minimum amount required for a particular item.**
- e) If items are to be posted or collected by courier, ensure the postage charges on the listing cover the actual costs.
- f) If large items (eg furniture) are listed, perhaps consider the need to stipulate that items can only be collected in school time. This may create its own problems with bidders not honouring the winning bid and not turning up.
- g) Problems may be experienced with buyers complaining about damaged or faulty goods. Consider having a policy of no refunds or a no returns policy or be prepared to accept returns with the obvious hassle this brings.
- h) Inevitably, queries will be received from prospective bidders. Need to ensure someone is available to monitor emails and answer the questions.

The points above are merely intended to highlight the potential problems and pitfalls from using ebay by schools. It is for individual schools to decide whether ebay is used and how, bearing in mind the need for accountability and transparency. Given the issues above, it is anticipated that if schools do go ahead then responsibility for selling, paying fees, accounting for the income and for answering queries or problems will rest with one individual and not the school. However, there are obvious control issues with this, not least accounting for the income.

If schools do go ahead then comprehensive records and robust procedures need to be put in place to account for all items sold this way. This needs to be formally approved by governors.