

## Introduction to the FSSU

From September 2017, the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) will roll out its services to Primary Schools. Established by the Department of Education & Skills (DES) in 2005, the FSSU has operated as a support mechanism for school management in the Voluntary Secondary Schools sector for the last 12 years. The DES has now requested the FSSU to expand these services to the school management of Primary Schools. The DES has published a circular titled “Roll Out and Operation of the FSSU at Primary Level” (Circular No.0060/2017) in September 2017 outlining the arrangements of the FSSU’s service.

## Function of the FSSU

The main function of the FSSU is to provide a support mechanism which will enable school management to comply with Section 18 of the Education Act 1998.

*(1) Except in the case of a school established or maintained by a vocational education committee, a board shall keep all proper and usual accounts and records of all monies received by it or expenditure of such monies incurred by it and shall ensure that in each year all such accounts are properly audited or certified in accordance with best accounting practice.*

*(2) Accounts kept in pursuance of this section shall be made available by the school concerned for inspection by the Minister and by parents of students in the school, in so far as those accounts relate to monies provided in accordance with section 12.*

**The FSSU’s specific roles are outlined in the DES circular and are as follows:**

- a) Provision of advice and support to schools on financial governance matters.
- b) Development of templates for use by schools in relation to financial matters including, in particular, a standardised national template for school accounts.
- c) Acting as a central repository for receipt of school accounts prepared by an external accountant/ auditor.
- d) Carrying out financial audits as requested by the DES in relation to schools.
- e) Preparation of an annual report for the DES.
- f) Liaison with the DES in relation to financial matters pertaining to Primary Schools.
- g) Submission of financial information to the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) which will also satisfy the financial reporting obligations placed on schools by the Charities Act 2009.
- h) Provision of statistical information to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in relation to its requirements for financial information in respect of the school system.

Primary Schools are encouraged to engage and interact with the FSSU and avail of the services it offers.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management of Primary Schools to ensure financial accounts are submitted to the FSSU by its external accountant/auditor. This will satisfy the requirement under Section 18 of the Education Act 1998 for schools to make available their accounts for inspection by the Minister.

Schools will be required to submit accounts to the FSSU in respect of the 2018/19 school year and annually thereafter in the prescribed format and by the relevant deadline.

The following is the timeline for same:

<b>2017/18 school year</b>	FSSU will focus on provision of advice and support as part of preparations for the phased introduction of the standardised national template for annual school accounts.
<b>2018/19 school year</b>	This will be the first year for annual school accounts to be prepared using the standardised national template. This will be the required format for schools to fulfil obligations under Section 18 of the Education Act, 1998.
<b>End February 2020</b>	This will be the latest date for annual school accounts for the 2018/19 school year to be submitted to the FSSU.
<b>Annually thereafter</b>	Annual School Accounts to be submitted to the FSSU in the prescribed format by the end of February (6 months after the end of the school year).

The completed accounts must be accompanied by such other information as the FSSU may require.

The above requirements are in addition to any specific requirement of the Patron in relation to the submission of annual accounts.

**The FSSU will issue further guidance on the standardised national template for annual school accounts and our online submission process to all accountants to whom we can link a Primary School.**

The FSSU is currently in the process of gathering information to complete a database of all accountancy firms who are providing accounting services to Primary Schools and for no other purpose. We would appreciate if you are engaged by the BOM of **any Primary Schools** to email the following information to the FSSU at [primary@fssu.ie](mailto:primary@fssu.ie).

- **Accountancy / Audit Firm Name**
- **School Roll Number**
- **Full School Name**
- **Accountants Direct Email**

If you have any further queries please contact the FSSU at **01 910 4020**

email us **[primary@fssu.ie](mailto:primary@fssu.ie)**

visit our website **[www.fssu.ie](http://www.fssu.ie)**