



Sidcot
Live Adventurously

Policy Name: Money Laundering

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1. Introduction

1.1 The School is mindful that it could be used as a vehicle through which criminals seek to launder the proceeds of crime (**Illicit Funds**). Additionally, the School, or a member of staff, is at risk of committing a money laundering offence if they accept Illicit Funds in circumstances where they have knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that the payment is from Illicit Funds.

1.2 Members of staff need to be vigilant to the risk of accepting Illicit Funds and play their role in assisting law enforcement agencies in combatting money laundering. The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (**POCA**) (as amended from time to time) imposes obligations on the School and you personally, in respect of money laundering and associated activities. The purpose of this policy is to:

- assist staff with identifying red flags that may be indicative of money laundering activities;
- reduce the risk of the School being used as a vehicle through which criminals can launder Illicit Funds; and
- let staff know what they should do if they have a concern that the School is at risk of accepting Illicit Funds.

Linked to this, there are charity law requirements to ensure that reasonable skill and care are used when making decisions about procedures for the receipt and use of the School's funds.

2. What is money laundering?

2.1 Money laundering is the process by which Illicit Funds are processed or spent to create the appearance that the Illicit Funds have come from a legal source. Although cash-based money laundering continues to be a major method of laundering Illicit Funds in the UK, stricter rules have made it more difficult for criminals to introduce Illicit Funds into the UK banking system. Consequently, criminals are using more inventive methods to disguise the origins of their cash and staff should be alert to practices and payments that they consider to be suspicious, including payments made to the School via bank transfer.

2.2 The term 'money laundering' covers several offences each of which relate to the improper handling of Illicit Funds so that they appear to come from a legitimate source. Money laundering underpins most forms of organised crime, allowing criminals to further their operations. However, it can also benefit individuals engaging in bribery and dishonest activities such as receiving stolen goods or tax evasion.

Money Laundering is described as:

“a scheme in which criminals try to disguise the identity, original ownership, and destination of money that they have obtained through criminal conduct. The laundering is done with the intention of making it seem that the proceeds have come from a legitimate source”.

3. Risks to the School

3.1 The School is potentially vulnerable to being used as vehicle through which a criminal may seek to launder Illicit Funds, for example a criminal may use their Illicit Funds to pay fees or make a donation. Although fee payments are clearly an area of risk, as a member of staff you should remain alert to all payments and if a payment seems unusual, for example where it involves complex banking and transfer arrangements or payments from seemingly unconnected third parties you should refer the payment to the Finance Director.

3.2 Whilst the School is unlikely to have satisfied the threshold for committing a money laundering offence where the School or member of staff was unaware that a payment was made from Illicit Funds, as a member of staff you must not turn a blind eye. Where there are factors, 'red flags', that indicate a higher risk of potential money laundering activity, you must refer the concern to the Finance Director who will consider what further steps or investigations are required before accepting the payment.

3.3 Even if the School has not committed a money laundering offence, if criminals use Illicit Funds to make payments to the School, being involved in an instance of money laundering may have a severe impact on the School's reputation.

3.4 Money laundering can take many forms, but in relation to the School it could involve, but will not be limited to:

- the payment of fees;
- the payment of fees from third parties;
- the donation of sums to projects for which an appeal is being run;
- the donation of sums for no obvious reason;
- the payment in advance of fees; and
- the requested return of donation or fees paid in advance.

These examples are not exhaustive, and as a member of staff you should remain vigilant in relation to all payments the School receives.

3.5 On acceptance of a place at School, parents will be required to give details of who will be responsible for payment of fees. This will include name and address, job title, employer, relationship to student, date of birth, and name of bank making payments. The Finance Office will check this information against the first payment received; if someone other than the parent is to be the bill payer proof of the relationship to the student will be required. The School reserves the right to refuse to accept a payment from a third party.

3.6 Payment of fees via a company can be accepted if a reasonable explanation is provided and the students relationship to the company is proven.

3.7 Payment via an international agency may be accepted in certain circumstances. This must be agreed with the School before payment has been made and must be supported by copies of bank statements showing payment from the parent to the agent.

4. Cash payments

4.1 Criminals are increasingly inventive in finding ways to introduce Illicit Funds into the banking systems and although payments made through a bank transfer cannot guarantee that the funds are not from Illicit Funds, the risk to the School is increased where the School accepts payments in cash. Therefore, the School will not accept any cash payments for fees.

5. Donations

5.1 Donations are a particular area of potential risk faced by the School. To mitigate the risk the School should know, at least in broad terms, where the money it is being given comes from and should be able to identify and be assured of the provenance of substantial donations. A good, open and transparent relationship between the School and its donors is essential for building trust and confidence.

5.2 Good due diligence will help to:

- assess any risks to the School that may arise from accepting a donation or types of donations;
- ensure that it is appropriate for the School to accept money from the particular donor;
- give the School reasonable assurance that the donation is not from any illegal or inappropriate source; and
- ensure that any conditions that may be attached to the donation are appropriate and can be accepted.

5.3 Where a donation is being made the Director of Marketing and Development should review what they know about the donor and the proposed payment and keep a record of the findings. If the Director of Marketing and Development identifies any red flags, the member of staff must report the concern to the Finance Director immediately.

6. Requests for repayments

6.1 The School's policy is that any refunds or repayments of sums paid to the School can only be remitted to the original payer. If a parent or donor asks for a refund to be made to someone other than the original payer, you must refer this to the Finance Director promptly.

7. Charity Commission

7.1 When accepting payments or donations the School needs to be confident that it knows both:

- who is making the payment or donation; and
- the source of funds that are being used to fund the payment.

7.2 The School will also use the following Charity Commission advice to assess the risk of money laundering:

- **'identify'** who the School is dealing with;

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- 'verify' where reasonable, and if the risks are high, verify identities;
 - 'know what the organisation's or individual's business is' and be assured this is appropriate for the School to be involved with;
 - 'know what their specific business is with the School' and have confidence that they will deliver what we want them to; and
 - 'watch out' for unusual or suspicious activities, conducts or requests.

7.3 If the School is not satisfied with the explanation or evidence provided to support these factors the School should obtain further information from the parent or donor. The section below "**What warning signs should staff be alert to?**" provides an indication of the circumstances when the School must carry out further investigations about the payer.

8. What warning signs should staff be alert to?

8.1 The Annex to this policy provides members of staff with a non-exhaustive checklist of potential 'red flags' that may indicate a higher risk of potential money laundering. These questions form part of the School's risk assessment when accepting payments. They are potentially relevant to all transactions and payments accepted by the School.

The School is not expected to consider every payment in detail against the red flag checklist and will consider payments on a risk basis. The Finance Director has identified the payments listed below as being payments that may expose the School to a higher risk of money laundering. If a proposed payment is within one of the specified risk categories, you must complete the 'red flag' checklist before the School can accept the payment:

- donations
- payments from high-risk countries
- payments from Politically Exposed People.

8.2 All staff, but particularly those staff who in the course of their day-to-day work are likely to deal with financial transactions, including the payments of fees and donations, must ensure that they are familiar with the checklist and understand the nature of the red flags that should be reported to the Finance Director. If you identify a red flag in relation to any payment or proposed payment you must report your concerns to the Finance Director immediately.

8.3 Where you make a report to the Finance Director **you must not discuss your concerns** with any other person, including other members of staff, pupils, parents or a donor as this could result in you, or the School, committing a secondary offence of prejudicing an investigation.

9. Role of the Finance Director

9.1 Where a member of staff identifies a red flag in relation to a payment the Finance Director must consider the relevant circumstances relating to the transaction that has raised the concern. The enquiries the Finance Director will make will depend on the circumstances, but could include:

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- asking the payer to explain who is making the payment where this is not clear;
 - asking for an explanation of why the payment is being made in a particular way, for example, where payments are being made from a variety of sources or accounts;
 - asking the payer for proof of the source of the funds; or
 - carrying out a google or other internet search to establish that the payer is not involved in alleged criminal activities.

9.2 After having made appropriate enquiries, the Finance Director will decide whether:

- the payment can be accepted;
- further explanation or evidence as the legitimacy of the funds is required;
- the School should submit a SAR; and
- the School should make a report to the Charity Commission.

The Finance Director will keep a record of the decision made in relation to the payment and the evidence supporting the decision.

10. Reporting to the National Crime Agency and Charity Commission

10.1 If the parent (or payer) or donor is not able to provide a satisfactory explanation or where there are other factors (for example adverse media publicity) that cause the Finance Director to have a reasonable suspicion or knowledge that the funds being used to make the payment may be Illicit Funds the Finance Director must make a suspicious activity report (**SAR**) to the NCA and, where appropriate, request consent to proceed with the transaction.

10.2 If the School has requested a defence against a money laundering offence (**DAML**) in the SAR the School should not accept, pay away, return or otherwise use the suspicious payment for any purpose until the time limit for the NCA to respond to the SAR has expired.

The Finance Director will also consider whether the incident needs to be reported to the Charity Commission.

11. Training

11.1 The School will update its staff from time to time on how to limit the money laundering risks faced by the School, by enabling staff to spot potential 'red flags' and what steps they must take if a potential risk factor is identified. These updates are provided by the School's UKVI consultants when required.

11.2 If any member of staff has any concerns or would like further information on what they should do in the event of a concern about money laundering the member of staff should contact the Finance Director in the first instance.

12. Document Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Director of Finance every three years, or sooner if changes in law or procedures affect the content of the policy.

13. Document Change History

Date of change	Detail significant changes and any new legislation / guidance taken into account
02.06.16	Reformatted, no other changes
24.10.19	No changes.
15.02.23	Updated to cover visa requirements
02.06.23	Reviewed by Director of Finance, updated format
02.07.24	Minor wording amendments
30.06.25	No changes
26.06.26	No changes

Appendix 1

Form for identifying potentially suspicious transactions

You must consider the following questions in relation to each high-risk payment. If any of the answers to the questions are “yes”, you must refer the payment to the Finance Director for further consideration. This list is not exhaustive. Even if all the answers to the questions are “no” if something seems unusual you must raise your concern with the Finance Director.

	Potential red flags	Ask...	Yes/ No
1.	Transactions	Are payments to the School unusual because of their size, frequency or the manner of their execution? For example: Is the parent unexpectedly or unusually making lots of small payments from several different accounts? Are the payments unexpectedly being paid from a different account?	
2.	Bank account:	Is the payment being made from an account that is not in the same name as the payer?	
3.	Arrangements	Does the payment involve complex or illogical arrangements that make it unclear who is making the payment?	

		For example: Is the payment coming from a variety of sources or payers? Is the payer seemingly unconnected to the pupil, parent or donor?	
4.	Third party payments	If the payment is from an account that is not the parent's account is the connection between the third-party making the payment and the pupil unclear? For example, is the payment from someone who is not the parent's employer or a known relative of the pupil?	
5.	Internet search	Are there any adverse media articles about the payer suggesting an involvement in criminal activities?	
6.	Erroneous payments	Has the School been asked to reverse a payment made because the payment was made in error? Has the School been asked to send a repayment to a person that is different to the original payer?	
7.	Country of residency	Is the parent resident in or have they recently relocated from, a high-risk country?	
8.	PEP (Politically Exposed Person – broadly an individual who is performing a prominent public function)	Are either of the parents or the person paying the fees (where different) a PEP? If the parent is a PEP, is their business activity unusual given the public role they hold?	
9.	Assets:	Does it seem that a parent's assets are inconsistent with their known legitimate income?	

10.	Resources	Are the funds being used bearer's cheques or cash?	
11.	Identity	Is the payer difficult to identify?	
12.	Early or quick payments	Is the parent unusually anxious to make a payment? Is the parent unable to justify why they need to make the payment quickly or early?	
13.	False documents	Do any documents appear to be falsified?	
14.	Representative	Have you, or other professionals involved been instructed at a distance, asked to act outside of your usual specialty, or offered an unusually high fee?	

