



Thameside Primary School: Quotations and Tendering Policy

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Policy reviewed by:	Vicki Lucas
Key Changes:	<p>Reviewed links and threshold amounts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the amounts in the threshold table <i>have changed</i>, because new UK public procurement thresholds take effect from 1 January 2026 under the <i>Procurement Act 2023 (Threshold Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations 2025</i>.

1. Introduction

The school is using public funds, therefore it is vital that it achieves the best value for money it can from all purchases, whether they are of goods or services. In this context, value for money is about getting the right quality at the best available price. This often means looking further ahead than the immediate purchase, especially when selecting service or goods, and taking into account associated costs such as supplies and maintenance. It is important that contract specifications contain detailed service and quality provisions.

Whether an existing contract is coming to an end or a new service or good is required, schools need to follow an agreed procurement process.

The over-riding procurement policy requirement is that all public procurement must be based on value for money, defined as “the best mix of quality and effectiveness for the least outlay over the period of use of the goods or services bought”. This should be achieved through competition unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary.

Reading schools must abide by the Authority's financial regulations relating to all purchasing, tendering and contracting matters (including leases). Schools are required to take account of the Authority's Scheme of Financing for schools and the DfE guidance on Buying for Schools. The [Get help buying for schools](#) service provides help and support from DfE procurement specialists on buying goods and services.

Governors and staff have a responsibility to avoid any conflict between their business and personal interests and the interests of the school. This includes potential conflicts of interest such as a personal interest in a contract for goods or services which is directly commissioned by the school, for example a family connection or investors interest. Governors or any members of the school should declare any business interests they or any member of their immediate family have in relation to school contracts.

Schools must conduct thorough assessments to ensure that no unfair advantages are granted to any suppliers, particularly those with connections to decision-makers within the institution.

2. Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (replaced by Procurement Act 2023)

The new **Procurement Act**, which came into force on **24 February 2025** (replacing the Public Contracting Regulation 2015) introduces new procurement rules for public bodies. The changes in procurement regulation and practices, aimed at bringing about a more flexible, strategic approach to public procurement.

Although in some cases, schools are exempt from the new regulations, depending on the value of the contract, they must ensure they are familiar with the obligations set out in the Procurement Act 2023 to be compliant when handling contract tendering processes for higher value contracts.

The government set contract values inclusive of VAT which need to be considered when calculating the value of procurement exercises. These are reviewed every two years.

The current financial thresholds are summarised below. Schools are classified as ‘sub central contracting authorities’ in respect of the threshold for Public Supply and Services.

Type of Contract	Threshold (incl. VAT): 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026
Utility works contract	£5,193,000
Utility contract (not works, defence/security, light)	£415,440
Concession works and services contract	£5,193,000
Works contract	£5,193,000
Goods/services to central government authority	£135,018
Goods/services to sub-central government authority	£207,720

*Any contract, considering the cost over the full contract term, which is more than £207,720 would need to be fully compliant with the tendering and procurement processes as set out in the Procurement Act 2023.

Any purchasing requirements below this value would be determined by the guidance in the Local Authority Scheme of Financing for Schools and the DfE 'Buying for Schools' guidance which sets out various purchasing routes best suited depending on the value of the contract.

3. Exemptions for Schools, Academies, and Multi-Academy Trusts

While the Procurement Act 2023 establishes comprehensive guidelines for public procurement, it also recognises the unique context of educational institutions. To reflect this there are some key exemptions and considerations specifically relevant to schools. Schools and academies are exempt from the rules governing below-threshold procurements. This means that for contracts valued below a certain threshold, they can operate under internal financial regulations rather than the stringent requirements set out in the Act. This exemption provides greater flexibility in managing smaller contracts without the burden of extensive regulatory compliance.

4. Application of contracts to schools

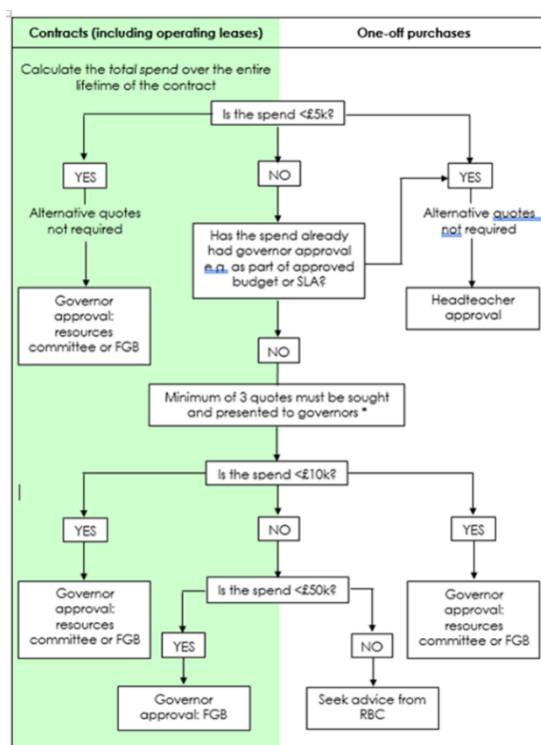
Schools are free to elect to opt out of contracts arranged by the Authority.

Whilst governing bodies are empowered under paragraph 3 of schedule 1 to the Education Act 2002 to enter contracts, in most cases they do so on behalf of the Authority as maintainer of the school and the owner of the funds in the budget share. For this reason, the Authority will require all contracts exceeding £100,000 entered by the school to be counter-signed by the Authority. Other contracts may be made solely on behalf of the governing body, when the governing body has clear statutory obligations approve school contracts.

However, as the Authority is providing the funds, any school which places a contract that will be funded by more than £50,000 from delegated funds, should advise the Authority. In practice this notification will normally happen in the ordinary course of events.

Furthermore, there is a requirement on schools to have regard to good tendering procedures. Schools should:

- Seek tenders for all contracts over £50,000
- Obtain 3 quotes or tenders for contracts above £10,000
- Ensure that the Chair of Governors of all schools (or a nominee) opens tenders above £100,000
- Ensure that an Authority Member is involved in the opening of tenders above £250,000 (community schools only)



Thameside Primary School governing body agrees that all purchases under the value of £20,000 may be delegated to the authority of the Head Teacher as long as the value of the contract has been approved by Governors as part of the budget/SLA approval process.

Purchases over this value up to £50,000 must be subject to governing body approval. Thereafter the school will seek approval from the LA. Where possible frameworks will be exhausted first before seeking quotations and running a tendering process. Where any contract is required above £20,000 specification and details of suppliers will be submitted to the governing body for approval. In the case of emergencies, the approval of the Chair of Governors must be sought.

Where a quotation other than the lowest is accepted, the reasons for this decision will be reported to the governing body and included in the minutes of the relevant meeting.

Low Value Procurement

For low value procurement below £10,000, competitive quotations/tenders are not required, although the purchase order must specify the services, supplies or works to be provided and set out the price and terms of payments.

Intermediate (Medium) Value Procurement

For intermediate value procurement (£10,000-£50,000) at least 3 written quotations or tenders must be invited before a formal purchase order is issued specifying the supplies, services or works to be provided. Emailed quotations are acceptable for these purposes. For procurements over £20,000, the contract opportunity shall be advertised in the South East Business Portal or equivalent as directed by the LA accessible here <https://sebp.due-north.com/>

This portal is used to bring buyers and suppliers together electronically making it easier to communicate business opportunities for the benefit of our local economies.

The Local Authorities listed use the South East Business Portal to advertise forthcoming contract opportunities and as a register of awarded contracts.

High Value Procurement requiring advice from RBC

The following shall be regarded as High Value Procurement:

- Procurements valued between £50,000 and above
- Where the risk in a specific procurement is perceived to be high
- Any procurement of any value that may involve a transfer of staff

To calculate the total contract value for the purpose of establishing which route to take, the school will always be sure to factor in the full duration of the contract (not the annual value), any optional extensions and the cost of any ancillary services, maintenance, equipment or spare parts that may increase total whole-life cost.

5. How to buy for the school

How you buy contracts for services or goods for the school depends on the amount it is spending.

The route you can take may depend on whether this value is below or above the amounts in the [Procurement Act 2023](#).

For reference, the Department for Education (DfE) Buying for schools, considers contracts that are:

- Low, are typically under £10,000
- medium is between £10,000 to £40,000
- high is over £40,000

6. Find the right route to buy (5 routes)

There are 5 different purchasing routes depending on the value of contract.

All details are set out step by step here [Buying for schools: how to buy what you need - Find the right route to buy - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

If the value is greater than £40,000 for the contract term, the school must run its own buying process, inviting suppliers to submit bids if:

- you cannot get what you need through a framework agreement
- you are buying high-value goods or services.

However, if what you are buying is [over the threshold set out in the Procurement Act 2023](#), over £207,720 over the entire contract term, the school would have to run a compliant buying process which is explained in Route 5, under Route to Buy.

Route 1: use a framework agreement

DfE have reviewed and approved framework agreements for schools to buy goods and services.

Framework agreements help schools to procure goods and services from a list of pre-approved suppliers, with agreed terms and conditions and legal protections. These will have already followed an OJEU tender process, which schools then access via direct award (usually by appointing a pre-approved supplier), or a mini-competition process (by inviting all pre-approved suppliers to bid).

Framework agreements are provided by third parties. They run a tender to select the right suppliers to provide specific goods and services.

Each framework agreement tells you how to choose a supplier and place an order.

You will have 2 options:

1. Select the supplier from a list
2. [Run a 'mini-competition'](#), this is where you ask all suppliers on the list to send you a bid and you choose the best one

Route 2: use catalogues to find low value goods

Buy this way if you are buying goods that are low value.

Check your school's procurement policy to see what they class as low value. We generally say low is under £10,000.

Route 3: get at least 3 quotes from suppliers

Buy this way if:

- you cannot get what you need through a framework agreement
- what you are buying is low to medium value

Generally, the DfE say:

- low to medium value contract is under £10,000 up to £40,000

Route 4: advertise a contract and run a buying process in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023 for procurements under the threshold

You must run your own buying process, inviting suppliers to submit bids if:

- you cannot get what you need through a framework agreement
- you are buying high-value things

Your school's procurement rules will set what is classed as high. We generally say high is over £40,000. The LA set this as £60,000.

However, if what you are buying is [over the threshold set out in the Procurement Act 2023](#), you may have to run a compliant buying process which is explained in Route 5.

Route 5: run a compliant buying process over the public procurement threshold

You need to run this kind of process if:

- you cannot get what you need through one of our framework agreements
- you are buying something over the public procurement thresholds set out in the [Procurement Act 2023](#)

Some services for education, health and care are covered by the 'light touch regime'.

Check the list of all the services covered by the light touch regime in [the legislation](#).

7. Process to run a compliant buying process either below or over the public procurement threshold

In cases where the school is required to follow a compliant buying process, it is likely that based on the fact we are purchasing for a small school, mainly goods and service contracts such as the cleaning contract, that we will adopt an 'open procedure' for its procurement and tendering process. An open procedure is usually applied when the contracting authority, in this case the school, know clearly the requirements of what is needed and does not anticipate to enter a design phase. This is rather than adopting the competitive flexible procedure which provides the flexibility to design and run a bespoke procurement procedure and utilise the necessary commercial skills such as negotiation.

8. Open Procedure

The open procedure remains a single stage procedure where there is no restriction on who can submit tenders and all information needs to be provided at the point of tender and is made available to all suppliers. Exclusion grounds must be considered prior to assessing tenders so in the event we have high number of tenders, the school have the ability to shortlist against exclusion criteria.

The school will take steps to ensure no potential supplier/provider is put at an unfair advantage by being involved in service development or co-production and ensure there is no distortion of competition as a result of early engagement/co-production.

Under the Act, there is no longer a requirement to set conditions of participation, or selection criteria as they were previously known. Where conditions of participation are set, and a supplier fails to meet them, you are not obliged to consider the tender any further and the supplier must not be awarded the public contract.

Timescales (tendering period)

The timescales for determining how long a supplier has to submit its tender (tendering period) have now reduced to three:

- Minimum 25 days where tenders are submitted by electronic means
- Minimum 10 days where a qualifying planned procurement notice has been published

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- Minimum 10 days in a state of urgency where any other minimum timescale is impractical

Tendering period means the period beginning with the day following the day on which a contracting authority invites the submission of tenders as part of a competitive tendering procedure and ending with the day by which tenders must be submitted.

The school would consider at least 30 days as a deadline for tenders to be submitted but will have regard to various factors when setting time limits including (but not limited to) the nature and complexity of the contract and the procurement objective to have regard to SME barriers and whether these can be removed or reduced.

Further consideration should be given to ensure that timescales are realistic and do not result in unnecessary delays to the process if sufficient time is not allowed.

The timescales start once all tender documentation, which includes all relevant and necessary information required by suppliers to submit a response, has been issued. There are no maximum time periods.

Tender notice and specification for the open procedure

Under the Procurement Act 2023 the tender notice is still used to invite suppliers to submit a tender under the open procedure and must be published prior to commencing the process. Regulation 18 of the Procurement Regulations sets out the information that must be contained in a tender notice for the open procedure, which includes, amongst other things:

- The subject matter and estimated value of the contract
- Initial specifications need to be drawn up as precisely as possible and schools need to ensure that all suppliers' bids are based on exactly the same specifications.

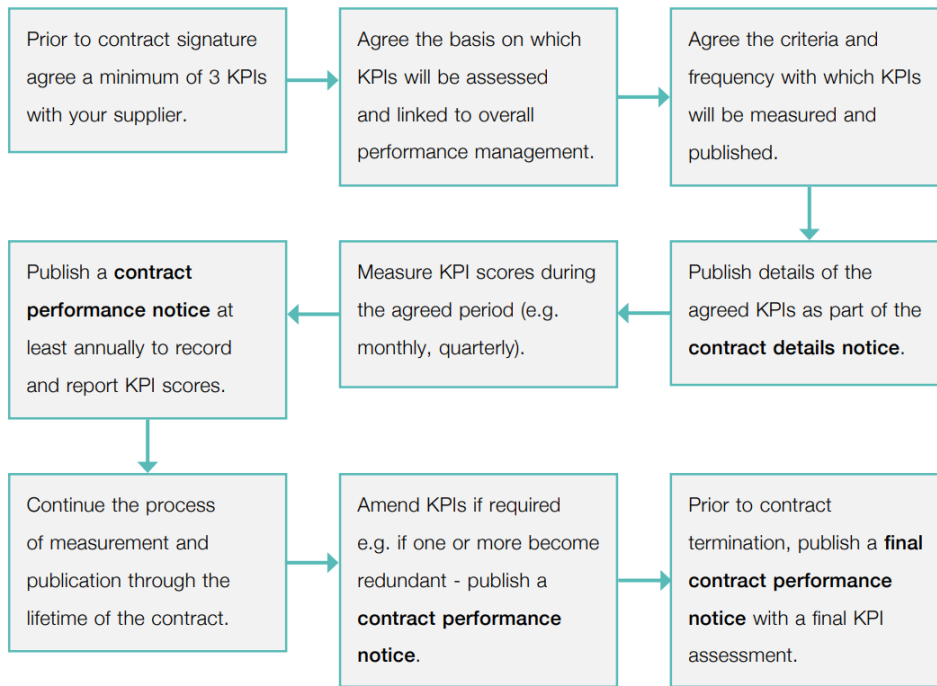
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-procedures-and-procurement-law-for-schools/writing-a-specification>

- How the tenders will be assessed including any conditions of participation and the criteria for awarding the contract

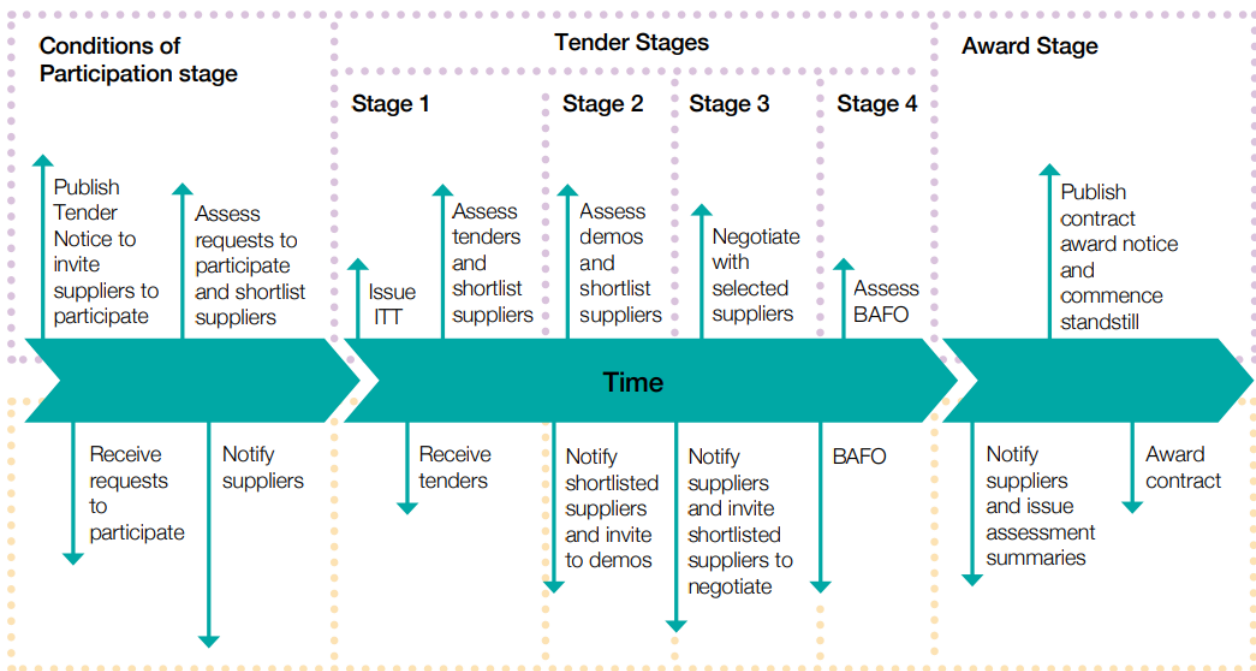
- The timescales for both the procurement process and delivery of requirements
- Any other relevant information such as publishing details of at least 3 KPIs (as shown below)

In addition, to follow the thread of transparency, contracting authorities must also provide in the tender notice:

- The reasons why a preliminary market engagement notice was not published if preliminary market engagement had been carried out
- Confirmation that a conflicts assessment has been undertaken.



9. Tendering process - Flowchart



10. Sustainable and Ethical Procurement

The school should take the time to understand the fundamentals of ethical behaviour when selecting and managing suppliers as well as being aware of our own personal responsibilities and demonstrate integrity at all times. This covers issues including human rights, employment rights, environmental management, and bribery and corruption.

The school will consider the impact of **environmental**, economic and social factors along with price and quality when procuring and purchasing goods and services.

When it is deemed appropriate, the school will seek assurances from suppliers that they are compliant with ethical and environmental practices including treatment and protection of workers and environmental practices such as disposal of any equipment or rubbish from the school property.

V Lucas, SBM Jan 26