

## Schools Payments System Framework – User Guide

### 1. Background

The Department of Education & Skills *Shared Services Plan 2017-2020* committed to exploring the potential for an external supplier to put a School Payments System in place for schools. The system would facilitate the handling of payments from parents to schools electronically, while continuing to allow parents that wished to make payments by cash, cheque, etc.

### 2. Procurement

The Education Procurement Service (EPS), on behalf of the Department, held a competitive tendering process with School Payments supply companies and three companies were selected to be placed on a framework to provide school payments solutions. Please find a table on page 2 which provides relevant Lot numbers, description of service and appointed suppliers.

Schools are, however, reminded of the importance of achieving value for money in the use of public monies and that central procurement arrangements are targeted at securing best value for money. It is Government policy that public bodies, where possible, should make use of all such central arrangements. All schools should review their current arrangements to ensure they are getting best value.

### 3. Selecting Supplier

**3.1 Cost:** The companies pricing structure is based on a price per pupil per annum. This price does not include charges from other third parties e.g. merchant bank charges, retail provider charges or standard bank charges. E.g. If you are a school with 400 pupils and the company charges €4.00 per capita the charge for the service for the year would be €1,600 for unlimited transactions. To get the full cost of the services other third-party charges will need to be added to this.

**3.2 Service:** The companies provide different levels of services from initial setup with the school to support throughout the term of the contract. The school will need to establish the level and type of service it will require and assess which company can deliver that service best. Each supplier has prepared a summary of the services they will provide please see attached.

**3.3 Which Payment Method(s):** The school will need to analyse how parents make their payments to the school. The school may also carry out a survey of parents to assess which method(s) of payment would suit them. The questions would be for e.g. online payments, paying in shop (retail), merchant card payments, etc. Having completed the analysis the school will select the supplier and lot (s) which will best meet the needs of the school.

#### 4. Contact the Supplier

It is important to inform the supplier that you are a school and are availing of the 'School Payments Framework'. This will lock the supplier into the prices, terms and conditions agreed in the framework.

The supplier will issue a contract to the school which should be reviewed in detail to ensure compliance with the framework before signing.

Once a school agrees to draw down the service from a supplier, the duration of the contract will be at the school's discretion. A 30-day notice period in terms of cancellation will apply to both parties. Once a provider has been contacted by a school, they must engage with the school, no matter how small.

#### 5. Merchant Card Account. (Merchant Acquiring Service and Payment Gateway Services)

Schools that choose to use the Online System and/or Card Terminals will need to set up a Merchant Card account (type of Bank Account) to process the payments.

There is currently an OGP framework for Acquiring Bank (Elavon) and Card processing services (Realex). Schools should avail of the favourable charges by signing up to these frameworks. The engagement forms to apply for inclusion on the frameworks are available from the external suppliers. Schools that currently have a Merchant Card account can also apply to the OGP to avail of the favourable charges.

#### 6. Procurement Lots Awarded

Lot No.	Supplier	Methods of Payment.	
Lot 1	Payzone	Cash, cheques, D/D, S/O	Schools take receipt of payments in cash, cheques and system reconciles.
		Card Terminals	Schools take receipt of payments through the use of card terminals and system reconciles.
		Online	An online payment service which caters for accepting credit and debit card payments securely.
		Retail	A 'retail footprint' throughout the country which allows payers flexible payment options.
Lot 2	Three Ireland	Cash, cheques, D/D, S/O	Schools take receipt of payments in cash, cheques and system reconciles.
		Card Terminals	Schools take receipt of payments through the use of card terminals and system reconciles.
		Online	An online payment service which caters for accepting credit and debit card payments securely.

Lot 3	Three Ireland	Cash, cheques, D/D, S/O	Schools take receipt of payments in cash, cheques and system reconciles.
		Online	An online payment service which caters for accepting credit and debit card payments securely.
Lot 4	MIT Educ. Solutions	Cash, cheques, D/D, S/O	Schools take receipt of payments in cash, cheques and system reconciles.
		Card Terminals	Schools take receipt of payments through the use of card terminals and system reconciles.
Lot 5	Payzone	Cash, cheques, D/D, S/O	Schools take receipt of payments in cash, cheques and system reconciles.

#### **Annotation**

- a. **Online:** An online payment service will cater for schools accepting credit and debit card payments securely and the supplier's system can be imbedded in individual school websites and must record and reconcile such payments with both the parents and school accounts.
- b. **Card Terminals:** Schools will be able to take payments through the use of card terminals and the suppliers system will enable the recording and reconciliation of such payments with both the parents and schools accounts.
- c. **Cash & Cheques:** Schools that take in payments of cash and cheques will be able to continue to do so and the suppliers system will cater for the recording and reconciliation of such payments with both the parents and schools accounts
- d. **Retail:** The supplier will provide an option for parents to pay at a retail outlet or post office throughout the country and give parents flexible payment options. This solution must record and reconcile such payments with both the parents and schools accounts.
- e. **Direct debit/Standing Order/ Electronic payments:** The suppliers system will cater for direct debit, standing orders and electronic payments securely and must record and reconcile such payments with both the parents and schools accounts.

#### **7. Framework Information**

Further information on the framework is available at

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Procurement/Procurement.html>

#### **MIT**

<http://www.mit.ie/index.php/news/schools-payment-solution/> (

#### **Payzone**

<http://www.easypaymentsplus.com/ogp-tender/>

#### **Three Ireland**

<http://www.way2pay.ie/images/Framework/ETBs.pdf>  
<http://www.way2pay.ie/images/Framework/Schools.pdf>

February 2018.