

HUB

INTRODUCTION TO MAXIMISING SCHOOL FINANCES: DOING MORE WITH WHAT WE HAVE - OVERVIEW

In schools, financial pressures continue to grow. From rising costs to tighter budgets, school leaders are facing the challenge of doing more with less while still ensuring high-quality education for every pupil.

But maximising school finance isn't about cutting corners; it's about making smarter decisions, strengthening collaboration, and using available tools to their fullest potential. This article draws on insights from our work with schools across the country and focuses on practical steps to strengthen financial sustainability in England's education system.



<p>Focus on What You Can Control</p>	<p>While the national funding formula and grant allocations are beyond individual control, schools can manage how those funds are used. Strong financial management starts with understanding the relationship between spending and outcomes — ensuring that every financial decision aligns with the School Development Plan (SDP).</p>
<p>Harness the Power of ICFP (Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning)</p>	<p>ICFP is a DfE-endorsed approach that helps schools in England align their curriculum, staffing, and finance decisions. It allows leaders to see how resources are being deployed and whether they are sustainable long-term.</p> <p>Used effectively, ICFP provides insight into staffing costs, teacher contact ratios, class sizes, and curriculum delivery. It's not about achieving a single 'perfect' metric, but about using data to make informed, context-based decisions.</p>
<p>Collaborate and Procure Smarter</p>	<p>Collaboration between schools can unlock significant savings. The Department for Education's Schools Commercial Team offers a range of approved frameworks that ensure compliance and value for money. By joining forces through multi-academy trusts (MATs), local partnerships, or School Business Professional (SBP) networks, schools can access better pricing and share expertise.</p>

Practical Tip

Review each budget line against your school improvement priorities. Ask: does this expenditure directly support teaching, learning, or pupil wellbeing?

Practical Tip



Regularly review your ICFP metrics to understand where efficiencies can be achieved and where additional investment is needed.



Practical Tip



Review contracts annually. Use DfE frameworks or SBP networks to benchmark costs and negotiate improved terms for energy, ICT, facilities, and HR services.



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<p>Review Risk Protection and Insurance</p>	<p>For schools in England, the DfE’s Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) provides an alternative to commercial insurance. It covers the same key risks — from material damage and public liability to cyber cover — at a standard per-pupil rate. This consistency helps schools manage costs and maintain comprehensive protection.</p>
<p>Generate Income Creatively</p>	<p>In addition to managing costs, schools can explore new ways to increase income. Lettings, community use of facilities, and targeted grant applications can all provide valuable revenue streams. Marketing school facilities or offering CPD opportunities can also generate additional funds while strengthening community ties.</p>
<p>Use Data to Drive Decisions</p>	<p>Effective financial management depends on understanding what your numbers mean. Metrics such as pupil-teacher ratio, leadership costs, and total staffing expenditure provide vital insight into resource use. However, efficiency must always be balanced against quality of provision.</p>
<p>Continuous Improvement and Collaboration</p>	<p>Financial sustainability is an ongoing process. Schools that succeed in maximising their resources are those that regularly review, adapt, and share good practice. Collaboration through MATs, teaching school hubs, and regional SBP networks ensures that schools learn from each other’s successes and challenges.</p>

 **Practical Tip** 
 Review your school’s insurance arrangements annually. If not already part of the RPA, consider joining to simplify processes and ensure cost-effective coverage.

 **Practical Tip** 
 View your school as a community asset. Make use of your facilities outside school hours and explore local partnerships to diversify income sources.

 **Practical Tip** 
 Use the DfE’s benchmarking tools to compare your school’s performance with similar settings. Identify trends rather than one-off figures and use them to inform strategy.

 **Practical Tip** 
 Build financial review points into your school calendar. Regularly revisit assumptions, reforecast budgets, and engage governors in financial discussions.

SUMMARY

Maximising school finance is about sustainability, not austerity. With the right data, planning, and partnerships, schools can ensure that every pound works harder for pupils — supporting both immediate needs and long-term growth.