



BRIEFING PAPER

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School buildings and capital funding (England)

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Contents:

1. Levels and sources of funding
2. Priority School Building Programme
3. National Audit Office report: Capital funding for schools

Contents

Introduction	3
1. Levels and sources of funding	4
Duties on local authorities to provide school places	4
Basic Need funding for local authorities	5
School condition funding	6
Capital maintenance funding and support for multi-academy trusts (MATs)	7
Healthy Pupil Capital Fund (2018-19)	7
Targeted Basic Need Programme (2013-15)	8
Other information	9
2. Priority School Building Programme	10
2.1 Development of the PSBP	10
2.2 Education Committee evidence session	11
3. National Audit Office report: Capital funding for schools	13

Introduction

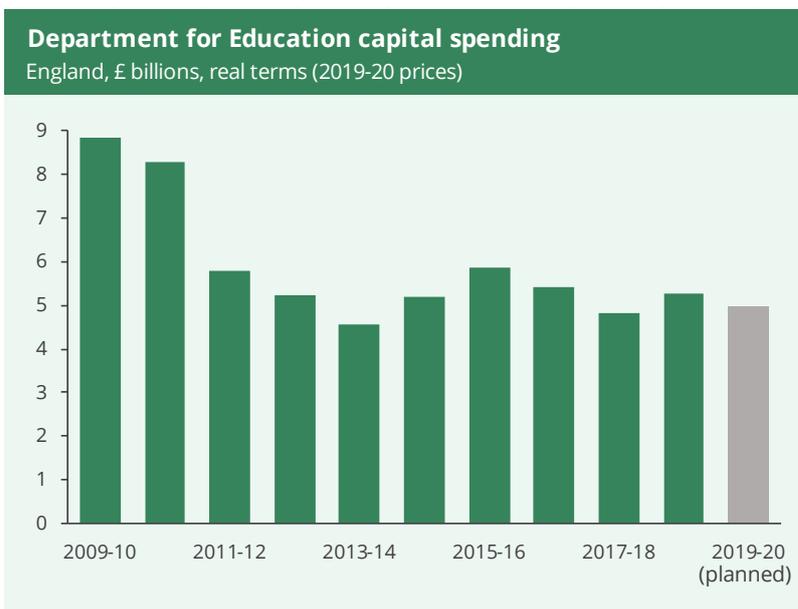
This paper provides information on the levels of funding available for capital projects in English schools, as well as on the streams of funding schools may access. The Priority School Building Programme, implemented by the Coalition Government as a replacement for the previous Building Schools for the Future programme, is discussed in a separate section.

The paper also includes an overview of the National Audit Office report on capital funding in schools, published in February 2017.

1. Levels and sources of funding

The real level of capital spending by the Department of Education¹ fell from £8.8 billion in 2009-10 to a low of £4.6 billion in 2013-14. It has since increased and reached a real level high of £5.9 billion in 2015-16 before declining again to £5.3 billion in 2018-19.² Between 2009-10 and 2018-19, capital spending declined by 31% in cash terms and 40% after adjusting for inflation.

The 2015 spending review set out the department’s capital budget up to 2019-20, when it is planned to decrease further to £5.0 billion. This figure would be worth 33% less than the 2009-10 level in cash terms and 44% less after adjusting for inflation.³



Source: [PESA: various years, HM Treasury](#) (Table 1.8)

Duties on local authorities to provide school places

Local authorities have a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, and parents can make representations about the supply of school places. Local authorities must respond to such representations under Section 14A of the *Education Act 1996*, which was inserted by Section 3 of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006*.

Nick Gibb, the Schools Minister, set out local authority responsibilities in response to a Parliamentary Question in 2011:

It is the responsibility of each local authority to manage the supply and demand for primary and secondary school places in its area and secure a place for every child of statutory school age who wants one. Ministers play no role in deciding primary and secondary school provision in individual authorities and constituencies but the Department allocates capital funding to enable local authorities to provide sufficient school places.⁴

¹ Includes some non-school spending
² [PESA: various years, HM Treasury](#) (Table 1.8); real terms ([2019-20 prices](#))
³ Ibid.
⁴ HC Deb 1 November 2011 c612W

How local authorities fulfil their statutory duties is a matter for each local authority to decide.

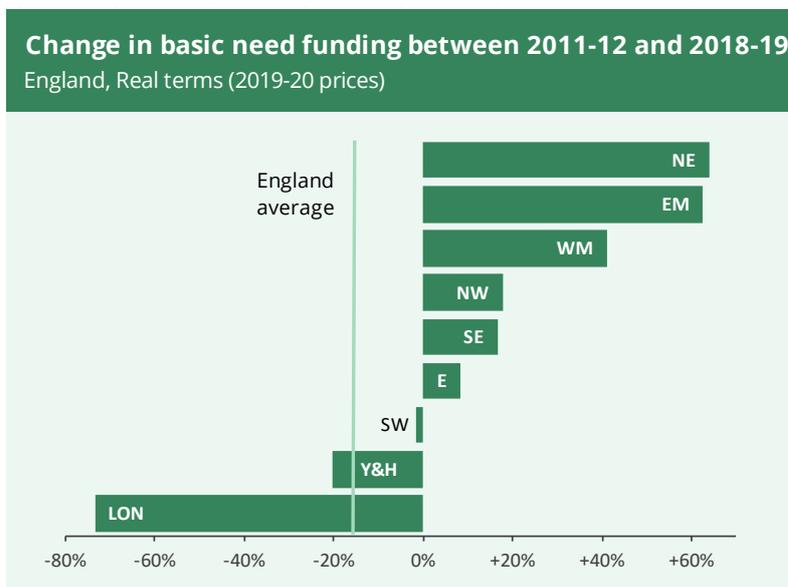
Basic Need funding for local authorities

Basic Need capital allocations are made to local authorities (LAs) to support the capital requirement for providing new pupil places by expanding existing maintained schools, free schools or academies, and by establishing new schools.

The most recent [allocations](#) to local authorities were made in 2018. This funding is aimed at allowing local authorities to create the new school places they will need by September 2021.⁵

From 2011-12 to 2018-19 the overall basic need funding allocations for England were worth around £10.5 billion for the whole period (in 2019-20 prices) or around £1.3 billion per year.⁶ Total planned allocations between 2019-20 and 2020-21 are expected to be around £1.1 billion (in 2019-20 prices).⁷

In 2018-19 the allocation for England was around £1.3 billion (in 2019-20 prices), this was 16% lower in real terms than in 2011-12. However, there were inter year variations in funding over this period. There are also large regional differences in how this funding has changed, this reflects differences in the assessed need for additional school places, as shown in the chart below.⁸



Sources: Department for Education, [Basic need allocations for 2021](#); HM Treasury, [GDP Deflators: June 2019](#)

In June 2019 the Department for Education published the [Local Authority School Places Scorecards 2018](#) which provides data on basic

⁵ Department for Education, [Basic need allocations for 2021: Explanatory note](#), p1
⁶ Department for Education, [Basic need allocations for 2021](#); Real terms (2019-20 prices)
⁷ Ibid.; The DfE published a joint allocation for 2013-15, this calculation is based on the assumption that the funding was allocated equally between the two years.
⁸ Department for Education, [Basic need allocations for 2021](#); Real terms (2019-20 prices)

6 School buildings and capital funding (England)

needs allocations, new schools places created/planned, demand for new places, costs and the 'quality' of new places created.

School condition funding

School condition funding is the money allocated by the Government each year to improve and maintain the school estate (buildings and grounds), distributed through three separate allocations:

- devolved formula capital (DFC) allocations – direct funding for individual schools rather than via local authorities. Allocations are based on a simple formula which takes school type and pupil numbers into account.
- school condition allocations (SCA) – funding for organisations responsible for large numbers of schools, such as local authorities and large multi-academy trusts
- [condition improvement fund \(CIF\)](#) allocations – funding for smaller multi-academy trusts, single academy trusts and sixth-form colleges⁹ (The CIF replaced the Academies Capital Maintenance Fund (ACMF) and the Building Condition Improvement Fund (BCIF))

From 2015-16 to 2019-20 the overall school condition allocations were worth around £6.3 billion for the whole period (in 2019-20 prices), or around £1.3 billion per year.¹⁰

In 2019-20 the allocation for England was around £1.2 billion, this was 5% lower in real terms than in 2015-16.¹¹ However, there are large differences in how this funding has changed between different types of schools. Funding has shifted from maintained schools to academies. This reflects the process of academisation over this period. For further detail on these trends please see the table below.

School Condition Allocations (SCA)						
England, £ millions, real terms (2019/20 prices)						
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	% change over period
Local authority maintained schools	591	553	504	459	420	-29%
Voluntary aided schools	157	148	140	132	125	-20%
Multi-academy trusts and sponsors receiving SCA	74	104	135	186	236	+218%
Institutions eligible for condition improvement fund	472	469	476	467	452	-4%
Non-maintained special schools	2	1	1	1	1	-21%
Specialist post-16 institutions	1	1	1	1	1	+23%
Total	1,298	1,276	1,257	1,247	1,236	-5%

Note: 'Institutions eligible for condition improvement fund' includes single academies, small multi-academy trusts and sixth form colleges

Source: Department for Education, [School Capital Funding](#) [accessed 17/09/19]

⁹ Department for Education, [2010 to 2015 government policy: school building and maintenance](#), 8 May 2015

¹⁰ Department for Education, [School Capital Funding](#) [accessed 17/09/19]; Real terms (2019-20 prices)

¹¹ Ibid.

In 2019-20 the devolved formula capital allocations in England were around £208 million, this was 5% lower than in 2015-16 (after adjusting for inflation).¹² Between 2015-16 and 2019-20 the allocations were worth around £1.1 billion for the whole period (in 2019-20 prices), or around £0.2 billion per year.¹³

Earlier allocations for the school condition allocations and the devolved formula capital allocations can be found in the following links below:

- [2008-11](#)
- [2011-12](#)
- [2012-13](#)
- [2013-14](#)
- [2014-15](#)

Capital maintenance funding and support for multi-academy trusts (MATs)

Multi-academy trusts (MATs) with at least 5 academies and more than 3,000 pupils receive a capital funding allocation to deploy across their estate, designed to address their priority maintenance and expansion needs. This [funding](#) is provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency to keep school buildings in good condition so pupils can learn in a safe and effective environment.¹⁴

Healthy Pupil Capital Fund (2018-19)

On 28 February 2017, the DfE announced that £415 million of funding from the soft drinks industry levy would be allocated to schools in 2018-19 to “pay for facilities to support physical education, after-school activities and healthy eating.” It added that schools would be able to use the funding – referred to as the healthy pupils capital fund (HPCF) – to “improve facilities for children with physical conditions or support young people struggling with mental health issues.”¹⁵

Reduction of funding for HPCF

On 17 July 2017, the Education Secretary announced an additional £1.3 billion for the core schools budget across 2018-19 and 2019-20, which would, she said, be “funded in full from efficiencies and savings that I have identified in my Department’s budget.” She went on to explain that “efficiencies and savings” from the Department’s capital budget would release £420 million, £315 million of which would come from the money originally committed for the HPCF:

Efficiencies and savings across our main capital budget can, I believe, release £420 million. The majority of this will be from healthy pupils capital funding, from which we can make savings of £315 million. This reflects reductions in forecast revenue from the soft drinks industry levy. I will be able to channel the planned budget, which remains in place, to frontline schools, while

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Department for Education, [Capital funding for multi-academy trusts \(MATs\)](#), 13 March 2019

¹⁵ Department for Education, [New funding to boost schools facilities and healthy lifestyles](#), 28 February 2017.

8 School buildings and capital funding (England)

meeting our commitment that every single pound of England's share of spending from the levy will continue to be invested in improving children's health; that includes £100 million in 2018-19 for healthy pupils capital.¹⁶

A subsequent response to a parliamentary question confirmed that £100 million would be invested in the HPCF in 2018-19, with the funding for one year only.¹⁷ The funding for the PE and Sports Premium announced at the 2016 Budget remained unchanged.¹⁸

HPCF allocations

The HPCF was allocated through the existing arrangements for schools' capital funding. Single and small academy trusts and sixth form colleges were able to bid for funding through the Condition Improvement Fund, with [guidance](#) published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency stating that the HPCF "is intended to improve children's and young people's physical and mental health by enhancing access to facilities for physical activity, healthy eating, mental health and wellbeing and medical conditions, such as kitchens, dining facilities, changing rooms, playgrounds and sports facilities."¹⁹ In March 2018 the Education and Skills Funding Agency [published](#) the list of schools who had successfully bid for funding from the Condition Improvement Fund. £38 million was provided for specific projects supported by the HPCF in 2018-19.²⁰

Local authorities, large multi-academy trusts and other bodies are not eligible to bid for the Condition Improvement Fund and instead receive School Condition Allocations (SCA). They received a direct allocation from the HPCF in addition to their normal SCA for 2018-19.²¹ School Condition Allocations for 2018-19 were [published](#) in March 2018.²²

Targeted Basic Need Programme (2013-15)

The Targeted Basic Need Programme, launched in March 2013 by the then Coalition Government, aimed to provide additional funding for school places in areas where they are most needed. It was worth around £0.8 billion in total for the years it covered (2013-15). A breakdown by local authority can be found alongside the most recent Basic Need [allocations](#).

In a July 2013 [Written Ministerial Statement](#) announcing the successful applicants, the then Schools Minister David Laws stated:

[...] we invited applications from local authorities for additional new places, particularly focused on places in outstanding or good schools, and on creating new academies sponsored by organisations with a good track record in educational success. [...] I am delighted to announce that the Targeted Basic Need

¹⁶ HC Deb 17 July 2017, [cc563-66](#).

¹⁷ [PQ 107301](#), 18 October 2017.

¹⁸ [PQ 3745](#), 24 July 2017; [HC Deb 17 July 2017, c564](#).

¹⁹ Education and Skills Funding Agency, [Condition Improvement Fund](#), last updated 14 December 2017.

²⁰ [Condition Improvement Fund: 2018 to 2019 outcome](#), Education and Skills Funding Agency, March 2018.

²¹ [PQ 118920](#), 19 December 2017.

²² [School capital funding allocations](#), Education and Skills Funding Agency, March 2018.

programme will provide £820 million to fund an additional 74,000 high-quality school places on top of those already created and funded - all in areas that face the greatest pressure on places. These new places will be in 45 new schools and in 333 expanding schools that are rated as outstanding or good.²³

In December 2013 the Government announced details of the [new academies being built under the Targeted Basic Need Programme](#).²⁴

The places created through the programme became available between September 2014 and September 2015.

Other information

Information is also available from the DfE on:

- [Academy Property Transactions](#)
- [Disposal of school land: Decisions](#)
- [An overview of school building and maintenance policy under the Coalition Government](#)

General information on [schools' capital expenditure and funding](#) is provided on the gov.uk website.²⁵

The Department for Education's [Governance Handbook](#), most recently updated in March 2019, also includes a useful overview of school capital funding (see section 6.10.4).

²³ [HC Deb 18 July 2013 c121-122WS](#)

²⁴ Department for Education, [BT, Mossbourne Academy and the Harris Federation named among sponsors of new academies](#), 12 December 2013

²⁵ Department for Education, [Schools capital expenditure and funding](#) collection [accessed 22 September 2015]

2. Priority School Building Programme

2.1 Development of the PSBP

The Priority School Building Programme (PSBP) was launched by the Coalition Government in July 2011. It replaced the Building Schools for the Future Programme established by the previous Labour Government, which was ended by the Coalition Government soon after it took office. The announcement of the closure included the announcement of a review of capital funding.²⁶

Sebastian James' [review of capital funding](#) was subsequently published in April 2011.²⁷

In a [statement to the House in July 2011](#), the then Education Secretary Michael Gove said that the design of the Building Schools for the Future Programme “was not as efficient as it could have been. Specifically, it did not prioritise schools in the worst condition and it did not procure new buildings as cheaply as possible.”

In its place, he announced the PSBP, which would be available to “all schools—academies, community schools and voluntary-aided schools—and local authorities that are responsible for the maintenance of a number of schools” and focused on schools with the “greatest need”:

I am also aware that many of our existing school buildings across the country are in desperate need of repair. I am grateful to hon. Members from all parties who have shown me and my colleagues schools in their constituencies that desperately need investment. The energy and skill with which so many colleagues have lobbied underlines how effectively so many hon. Members across the House represent the most needy in their constituencies.

We have already made £1.4 billion available this year to deal with maintenance problems. Overall, we are spending more on school buildings in every year of this Parliament cumulatively than the previous Government spent in every year of their first two Parliaments. But I want to do more, which is why today I am launching a new privately financed school building programme to address the schools in the worst condition, wherever they are in the country. The programme will be open to local authorities and schools that had been due funding via BSF but, critically, it will also be open to those which, despite real problems, had never been promised BSF funding. I believe strongly that those in genuine need should receive the funding they deserve and that no part of the country should be favoured over any other. Individual schools and local authorities will all be able to apply, and I am launching the application process today. The scheme will be rigorously policed to ensure that we do not incur the excessive costs incurred by previous privately financed schemes. The programme should cover between 100 and 300 schools, with the

²⁶ See a Written Ministerial Statement by the then Education Secretary, Michael Gove, beginning at [HC Deb 5 July 2010 c47](#), and the following debate

²⁷ Department for Education, [Review of Education capital](#), 5 April 2011

first of these open in September 2014, and is expected to be worth about £2 billion in up-front construction costs.²⁸

In a subsequent [letter to local authorities](#), the then Secretary of State added:

The programme will be available to all publicly funded schools. I am determined that criticisms of the previous model for private financing must be addressed and I will only agree to projects when a series of rigorous value for money tests have been passed.

Local authorities, schools, and organisations with responsibility for schools will be able to submit applications for the programme.²⁹

[General information](#) about PSBP is available on the gov.uk website.³⁰

There have been two phases of PSBP. The first was [announced](#) in May 2012,³¹ the [second](#) in May 2014.³²

The successful schools in this second wave were announced on 9 February 2015. The announcement stated that under this second phase:

[...] around £2 billion will be invested in rebuilding or refurbishing buildings at 277 schools across England, under the second phase of the government's flagship Priority School Building Programme. 260 schools are already benefiting under the first phase of the programme, bringing the total number to receive a revamp to 537.³³

2.2 Education Committee evidence session

In March 2015, the Education Select Committee in the Commons held a [one off evidence session](#) on the PSBP, as well as taking [written evidence](#).

In oral evidence, the then Schools Minister David Laws was asked what message he would send to schools that had applied for the two phases of PSBP but not been successful:

Q149 Chair: What message would you send to those schools that applied for PSBP 1 and 2 but failed? What confidence can they have that they will be funded in future?

Mr Laws: If they are academies, I would urge them to apply to the new condition improvement fund. Obviously, through that we fund some quite large bids. We are going through the bids and approving them at the moment. Although some of them are for £40,000 or £50,000, there will be some multimillion pound bids. If they are academies, they can bid for that and potentially get a large amount of money. If they are LA-maintained schools, they should know that we have now made this three-year allocation of maintenance, perhaps for the first time ever, so local authorities

²⁸ [HC Deb 19 July 2011 c793](#)

²⁹ Department for Education, [Michael Gove announcement on education funding](#), 19 July 2011

³⁰ Department for Education, [Priority School Building Programme](#), 7 August 2015

³¹ Department for Education, [Written ministerial statement on the Priority School Building Programme](#), 24 May 2012

³² Department for Education, [Education spending](#), 1 May 2014

³³ Department for Education, [£6 billion investment to rebuild and improve schools across England](#), 9 February 2015

12 School buildings and capital funding (England)

now have a lot of money for this, which is allocated on the basis of need in their area. Schools should be going to the local authority, particularly if the local authority put them forward for one of the Priority School Building Programmes, and saying, "We are disappointed that we didn't get into it, but we know you have some money allocated for condition need. You obviously accept that we have condition need, so can we now sit down and talk about how some of that money can come our way?"³⁴

3. National Audit Office report: Capital funding for schools

In February 2017, the National Audit Office published a report on [Capital funding for schools](#) in England, which assessed the current position of the school estate and the funding required for its maintenance and expansion.

The report's key findings covered a variety of areas:

Providing school places

- The Department for Education and local authorities had created a net increase of 599,000 school places between 2010 and 2015, at a cost of £7.5 billion
- 420,000 additional places are forecast to be needed between 2016 and 2021 with demand highest in London and the South East.
- School places were unevenly available, with pressure in some areas and large amounts of spare capacity elsewhere
- Local authorities faced significant challenges in providing school places on time, particularly in London and the South East
- The DfE had improved how it estimates the need for school places and allocates money more closely according to need
- Where academies do not want to expand or relationships with the local authority are weak, authorities are restricted in their ability to provide sufficient school places – a statutory duty. This was also affected by free schools, whose opening local authorities can initiate but not fully control
- The Government's plan for 500 new free schools by 2020 could eventually provide 270,000 additional places; around half of which are estimated to be available by 2012.
- Around half of places at maintained free schools up to 2021 are expected to contribute towards meeting local demographic need. The remainder will create some spare capacity in schools in their immediate area.
- Free schools that create spare capacity affect pupil numbers and funding for neighbouring schools and, where a significant number of places are not filled, their own financial viability.

The school estate

- It would cost £6.7bn to return all school buildings to a satisfactory or better condition
- The DfE has improved its data on the condition of the school estate but is not yet able to assess reliably how the condition is changing over time; the first results from a new property data survey to assess this are expected in 2017
- There is a significant risk of major costs arising from deterioration of the estate, with the DfE estimating that the cost of returning schools to satisfactory condition will double between 2015-16 and 2020-21
- Funding to repair school buildings is better targeted than previously but still does not fully follow need; 47% of local

authorities said they did not think school condition allocations were allocated appropriately

Delivering capital projects

- The cost of delivering capital projects varies considerably between local authorities and the Department's role in promoting good practice is limited
- The Priority School Building Programme has replaced many schools in poor condition at a lower cost than Building Schools for the Future
- The lack of suitable sites is the biggest risk for delivering buildings for new free schools
- It is not clear that the DfE, local authorities and academy trusts have the skills and resources they need to manage capital programmes effectively.³⁵

The report made a series of recommendations to the Department, including that it should continue to improve its understanding of the condition of the school estate, work more closely with local authorities to understand and meet need and, in assessing applications for new free schools, explicitly assess whether the value gained from increasing choice and competition outweighs the disadvantages of creating spare school places.³⁶

³⁵ National Audit Office, [Capital funding for schools](#), February 2017, p7-12

³⁶ Full list of recommendations available in National Audit Office, [Capital funding for schools](#), p13

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