Guidance

Apprenticeships for the school workforce

Updated 7 June 2021

1. An introduction to apprenticeships in schools

Apprenticeships are a great way for schools to improve the skills of their employees.

You can use apprenticeships to recruit new employees, and you can also use apprenticeships to retain or upskill existing staff at all ages and levels of experience, in a wide variety of roles.

You can use apprenticeships to provide training that is tailored to the needs and priorities of your school. They can be through workplace learning and formal training.

Apprenticeships can be used as part of your strategic workforce planning, to promote a diverse and inclusive workforce and support recruitment and retention.

2. Understanding apprenticeships

An apprentice is an employee who works alongside experienced staff to gain the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to fully competent in their chosen occupation.

Apprenticeship combines work with practical training and study, both on the job and off the job.

Apprentices are assessed at the end of their apprenticeship to establish if they are occupationally competent in their role. This is called an end-point assessment.

Apprenticeships cover a number of roles and educational levels, from level 2 (equivalent to GCSE) pass to level 7 (equivalent to a PhD or PGCE) for teachers. You can see the range of apprenticeships available on Find apprenticeship training.

Examples of apprenticeships that could be suitable for a school setting include:

- teacher
- school business professional
- business administrator
- data analyst
- sports coach

Apprenticeships are for everyone, not just for young people and new recruits. All apprentices can benefit from government funding to support their apprenticeship as long as they are:

- 19 years and above
- in England
- training for at least 12 months
- spending at least 20% their time off the job training (for example, being mentored or coached or completing formal training or qualifications)
- not currently employed or employed minimum wage for apprenticeships (though most will be paid more)

Apprentices can be full-time or part-time employees. Find out more about employees as apprentices.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) provides information about apprenticeship occupational maps and new apprenticeships in development.

3. Apprenticeship funding

3.1 Incentives and additional payments

There are incentive payments available for hiring a new apprentice.

Employers can receive £3,000 for new apprentices of any age who hiry an employment start date of April 2020 to 30 September 2021. They must have an apprenticeship start date of April 2020 to 30 September 2021.

You can only apply for new apprentices who joined your organisation from 1 April 2020 onwards. Apprentices who joined your organisation before 1 April 2020 (or organisation before 1 April 2021, even if they started an apprenticeship after 1 April 2020) are not eligible.

The incentive payment available is in addition to the £1,000 employers receive for hiring an apprentice:

- aged 16 to 24 years old
- under 25 with an education, health and care plan or who has been in the care of their local authority

3.2 The apprenticeship levy

Employers in the UK with an annual pay bill over £3 million are required to pay the apprenticeship levy.

The levy is charged at a rate of 0.5% of an employer's annual pay bill.

Find out how the apprenticeship levy applies to schools.

Eligible employers report and pay the levy to HMRC through the PAYE process.

Schools will receive funding back from the apprenticeship levy in the form of vouchers. Schools can use these vouchers to pay for apprenticeship training.

The amount of funding entered into your account each month is calculated by:

- the levy you declare to HMRC through the PAYE process
- the proportion of the amount of your pay bill used to pay apprentice wile live in England
- plus a 10% government top-up on this amount

You can use the funds in your apprenticeship service account to pay for the cost of approved apprenticeship training and assessment. You cannot use the funding for wider training costs, such as for travel or accommodation. Find out more about the levy.

If you have unused the funds in your account, you can gift 25% of your apprenticeship training paid for the government up to the funding band maximum set for each apprenticeship. This is called co-investment or you may need to pay.

3.3 Expiry of apprenticeship levy funds

Levy funds will enter your apprenticeship service account each month, and payment for training is also made on a monthly basis.

If you do not use your levy funds within 24 months of them entering your account, they will expire. This is called expiry funds.

For example, if funds entered your account in May 2020 and are not used, these funds will expire in May 2022.

Any payments from your apprenticeship service account to a training provider will use the oldest levy funds first, to minimise the amount of expired funds.

3.4 How funding works if you do not pay the apprenticeship levy

Schools that do not pay the levy pay tuition co-apprentices and only 5% towards the cost of training and assessment. The government will pay the rest up to the funding band maximum for each apprenticeship. This is called co-investment.

From 1 April 2020, to access government funding to spend on apprenticeship training, the year workforce, also known as the apprenticeship service account.

You could save on the 5% co-investment costs by accepting a transfer of levy funds from another organisation that pays the apprenticeship levy.

3.5 Reserving funding

If you don't pay the apprenticeship levy you need to reserve funding in your apprenticeship service account to get 95% funding from the government.

From 1 April 2021, you can:

- make up to 10 vacancies for the financial year 2021 to 2022
- reserve funding for up to 3 months before the apprenticeship is planned to start

The apprenticeship service will continue to monitor the number of apprentices used by employers and pay pause funding reservations to ensure that the programme remains affordable.

3.6 Transfers of apprenticeship levy funds

Organisations that pay the apprenticeship levy are not always in a position to spend all their levy funds on their own apprentices. They can use their apprenticeship service account to transfer up to 25% of their annual levy funds to another employer to help them to develop their workforce.

Transferring funds can only be in relation to apprenticeship training and assessment and must cover the full cost and duration of an apprentice's training.

Any organisation can receive a transfer of funds, including large employers, provided they are paying employer current and receive transfers at the same time.

If your school pays the apprenticeship levy and you don't have sufficient levy funds to pay for all of your apprenticeship training needs, you could arrange to receive a transfer of funds from an organisation who is interested in supporting your apprenticeship programme.

4. How the apprenticeship levy applies to schools

The way in which the levy applies to schools depends on the type of school and the overall employer.

4.1 Voluntary-aided and foundation schools

For voluntary-aided and foundation schools, the governing body is the employer. If the governing body's pay bill is more than £3 million then it will need to pay the levy.

4.2 Community and voluntary-controlled schools

For community and voluntary-controlled schools, the local authority is the employer and so is responsible for payment of the apprenticeship levy for schools under their control. Each local authority will pay a bill over £3 million will pay the levy.

The local authority will advise its schools on whether they need to take account of the apprenticeship levy in their annual budgets.

Schools should contact their local authority to find out how they can access local apprenticeship funds.

The Local Government Association is working with the Department for Education and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Local Government, to support the process and share best practice.

4.3 Academies, including free schools and academies in multi-academy trusts

The academy trust is the employer for academies in multi-academy trusts (MATs). The academy trust is responsible for all academies' staff. If the trust's pay bill is more than £3 million then it will need to pay the levy.

If a school becomes a voluntary aided school, foundation school, free school or community school, the governing body of the school will become the employer and responsible for the apprenticeship levy from this point.

Further guidance on how the allowance will work in the future can be found in the HMRC Apprenticeship Levy Manual.

4.4 Pooling of PAYEs

Some school employers, particularly local authorities and MATs, may use a pooled PAYE scheme. This is where multiple employers use a single PAYE scheme to report PAYE information to HMRC.

Where this is the case, schools should refer to the HMRC guidance on pooled PAYE schemes and also contact their local authority.

4.5 Accessing apprenticeships if the levy is paid indirectly through a larger employer

If your school is part of a larger group that pays the apprenticeship levy, for example a multi-academy trust, you can access apprenticeships that have been made available to spend on apprenticeships.

They have responsibility for making the necessary arrangements to provide schools with access to the relevant funds.

It is in the best interests of both employers and schools that this process is set out clearly, so that apprenticeship training is managed as effectively as possible.

5. How can levy funds be used?

Employers are able to use their levy funds to cover the cost of an apprentice's training and assessment.

There is a maximum funding band (pdf) assigned to each different apprenticeship. For example, the maximum funding band for a teaching assistant is £3,000 and for a teacher it is £9,000. Employers can choose which apprenticeship on Find apprenticeship training.

Levy funds must not be used to cover the salary costs of an apprentice. Employers must cover the cost of an apprentice's wages themselves.

Levy funds cannot be used for:

- salaries
- statutory bonuses to practice
- travel and accommodation costs
- bursaries
- work placement programmes

Full details can be found in the apprenticeship funding rules.

6. What does off-the-job training mean in a school context?

In England, all apprentices must spend at least 20% of their time in off-the-job training. This means time that is spent learning and learning their ordinary working hours that is separate from their work duties.

The minimum requirement for 20% off-the-job training is designed to ensure high quality apprenticeships that develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to become a competent professional.

Schools which are part of the academy trust will need to discuss how they will provide off-the-job training. This means that training providers and employers cannot claim planning, delivering and assessment (PDA) time as part of the management training, as off-the-job training.

Read more about off-the-job training.

7. Apprenticeship options for schools

Schools employ staff in a wide range of roles which could suit an apprenticeship. They can be used to upskill or retrain current employees or to recruit new employees.

When considering how to use apprenticeships in your school, you might want to think about:

- are other schools in your area already using apprenticeships, and if so what can you learn from them?
- what skills do your employees need now and in the future, and can apprenticeships help with this?
- how do the roles in your school fit with apprenticeship training that is currently available?

A range of apprenticeships relevant to schools are available:

Teacher apprenticeship (level 6) (post-graduate route)

The teacher apprenticeship replaces the same high standard of entry and completion as those already required of all initial teacher training (ITT) programmes.

As the teacher apprenticeship, the training provider will decide the order in which they arrange theory is a good balance between teaching and learning.

The key difference between teaching apprenticeship and other ITT training routes such as PGCE is that the teacher apprenticeship will be delivered through a school-based ITT training. This means time that is spent learning and learning during their ordinary working hours, separate from their work duties.

This could include activities such as time spent with a mentor, time spent participating in extra teaching or staff training.

How the minimum 20% requirement is managed is up to the employer working with their training provider.

Depending on their training, a teacher apprentice will be assessed to see if they demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours contained within the Teachers standards, as part of their apprenticeship end-point assessment.

Teaching assistant apprenticeship (level 3)

The teaching assistant apprenticeship, reflects the best available evidence and practice around effective use of teaching assistants, supporting groups of pupils and individuals, and supporting teachers, underpinning how to support a class learning and teaching.

School business professional apprenticeships

Each apprentice is expected to help create a new career structure within school business management. The school business manager apprenticeship (level 4) was developed by the school business professionals (SBP) and is a management qualification specifically for school business directors. The school business administrator apprenticeship (level 3) for school business managers is also available.

Executive / departmental manager (level 5)

A middle leadership apprenticeship for a senior / departmental management can be used to develop a senior leader who is responsible for a department or function, or to deal with an operational or developmental strategy, such as middle leaders within schools.

Other apprenticeships available for schools

Apprenticeships are available in several other fields that may be relevant to your school.

For example, sports coaching, business and administration, catering and hospitality, facilities management, digital production, accounting and finance.

These apprenticeships are available in a variety of sectors and designed to be flexible so that, to an extent, you can tailor the training to the specific needs of your school.

You can see all the apprenticeships available on Find apprenticeship training.

7.1 Apprenticeships for existing staff

Apprenticeships are a great way of supporting the development of staff in schools and are not just for new recruits.

The apprenticeship should offer existing employees the opportunity to:

- acquire substantive new skills
- complete training that is different to any previous qualifications

Individuals can complete an apprenticeship even if they hold a higher level qualification.

For example, a teacher may have a degree qualification in the subject they teach but could complete an apprenticeship or leadership or management if they are taking on a new role in their school.

For example, a member of staff who is part of a multi-academy trust or a school group could do a level 4 school business professional apprenticeship or a level 3 in project administration if they needed those skills for their role.

Before an apprenticeship begins, your training provider will conduct an initial assessment of your employees' knowledge and skills to ensure that they are eligible and that an apprenticeship is an appropriate programme for them.

8. Employing an apprentice

If your school decides to employ an apprentice, you will need to:

1. Choose an apprenticeship to meet the skills needs of a specific role at a suitable level. Find apprenticeship training.
2. Find a training provider for the apprenticeship you have chosen.
3. Write a job description and person specification or role and pay for apprenticeship levy.
4. Set up an apprenticeship agreement.
5. Advertise your apprenticeship or discuss apprenticeship opportunities with your existing staff. You can advertise for apprenticeships on Find apprenticeship training.
6. Select an apprentice and make an apprenticeship agreement and commitment statement with them.

Find out more about employing an apprentice.

9. Apprenticeship training providers

9.1 Selecting an apprenticeship training provider

You'll need to select an approved training provider to deliver training for your apprentices. You can search for approved apprenticeship training courses and training providers on Find apprenticeship training.

Maintained schools should get in touch with their local authority regarding their process for selecting an apprenticeship training provider.

9.2 Registering as an apprenticeship training provider

Schools may wish to register as a training provider to design and deliver apprenticeship training.

Any organisation providing apprenticeship training must be accepted on the Register of apprenticeship training providers.

There are 3 types of apprenticeship training providers:

Employer provider

An employer provider delivers some, or all, of the off-the-job training element of an apprenticeship to its own staff. It will be a training provider and will pay the apprenticeship levy and is only for providing training to your own staff.

Main provider

A main training provider delivers training to other employers' staff, as well as their own staff.

Supporting provider

A supporting provider delivers training as a sub-contractor to a main provider.

Find out more about becoming an apprenticeship training provider.

9.3 Developing new apprenticeships

If your school has training and skills needs that are not covered by the existing apprenticeship standards, you can consider being involved in developing new apprenticeships as part of a trailblazer group.

Find out more information about developing new apprenticeships.

10. How the public sector apprenticeship target applies to schools

The government is committing to increasing the quality and quantity of apprenticeships in the public sector, both to improve capacity and capability, and to ensure that the public sector benefits from the public sector pledge to other employers.

All public sector employers with 250 or more staff, including governing bodies of maintained schools, will be required to ensure that a certain proportion of their workforce is authorised in the public sector apprenticeship target.

The target is for organisations to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their headcount as new apprentices starts for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021.

New apprenticeship starts can include both existing staff that start an apprenticeship and new recruits.

All bodies in scope are required to publish and report to the Department for Education on their progress against the target. The government's ambition is that this will be dependent on the type of school and which organisation employs the school's staff.

Maintained schools, such as foundation and voluntary-aided schools, where the employer of staff is the governing body

Where a local authority employs 250 or more staff in England, the local authority is in scope and will be required to ensure its maintained schools are responsible for reporting on progress towards meeting the target.

These schools are expected to be included within the local authority target and should speak to their local authorities about how to contribute towards the target. Local authorities are permitted to set out proposals in their schools separately in their annual reports.

Schools that are part of an academy trust or multi-academy trust (MAT)

Academy trusts employing 250 or more staff in England will be in scope. The target is to increase the number of apprentices by the end of April 2021.

Read the statutory guidance on the public sector apprenticeship target for more information.

11. Further support and information

Visit the employer help page for apprenticeships.

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