



Department
for Education

Schools Procurement Resource

Buying for your school

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1.0 How will this help my school?

- Highlights areas of spend where your school can achieve value for money.
- Includes organisations that provide contracts, deals and frameworks.
- Has web links to finance, procurement, and school related information.
- Provides ways to help you compare spend against other schools.
- Highlights training opportunities.
- Includes information about buying green, and environmental initiatives.

2.0 Background

Your school must apply the basic rules of procurement whenever it spends public money. These rules aim to ensure that public funds are spent openly and fairly, and make the most of every budget, while protecting you against legal challenges, financial penalties and damage to your school's reputation. This document has been developed to help you with these challenges and your buying needs.

3.0 Department for Education information

The Department has a variety of online procurement information and good practice:

- [Buying goods and services](#) - this includes available contracts and frameworks for a range of goods and services.
- [Procurement guidance](#) – in this section you can download the ‘Procurement essentials’ document which helps with all procurement issues and outlines how procurement can help to deliver your school’s outcomes. You can also download the ‘Procurement decision tree’ which takes you through the basic questions and choices you’ll need to consider when you purchase any goods, works or services for your school.
- [School business manager](#) – provides links to organisations that provide support and training for school business managers.
- [Efficiency and value for money in schools](#) - includes a range of value for money tools and case studies about how individual schools have improved their efficiency. There are links to general support, including the National College’s Leadership Library and school business management area, as well as the National Association of School Business Management resources for everyone involved in school business management.
- [Schools financial management](#) - this section contains guidance for schools on effective financial management, including an introduction to consistent financial reporting and advice on how to use benchmarking data to achieve best results.
- [Leadership and governance](#) - this section contains information on all aspects of school leadership and governance, including issues such as strategic funding, school performance, governance and managing staff, and the management of teaching and learning.
- [Schools Financial Benchmarking](#) - Our financial benchmarking website enables all English maintained schools to prepare charts so that they can compare their income and expenditure profiles with those of similar schools.
- [Schools](#) - provides a range of information about schools.

4.0 Making savings

- All schools are subject to public standards of accountability.
- Although schools spend most of their money on education staff, they collectively spend approximately £9.2bn on other areas including energy, catering and back office.
- The benefits of effective procurement practices include:
 - financial savings that can then be re-invested in your priorities for driving up standards
 - ensuring that the goods or services purchased are fit for purpose
 - ensuring suppliers deliver (and continue to deliver) as agreed
 - ensuring legal and financial obligations are complied with.
- If you've used a price comparison website to buy insurance, you'll know that prices can vary dramatically. Shopping around can help you to save a lot of money.
- So, are you shopping around for your school as well? After all, with budgets being tight, what you buy, and how much you pay for it, matters more now than ever. Comparing - or benchmarking - prices will help you to make the most of every penny of your school's budget. Take a look at our [benchmarking](#) pages for ideas.

4.1 Understanding your spend

- Your school is responsible for its own financial management and the details of your deals and contracts.
- Understanding your finances and deals can help you identify where savings can be made and makes it easier to compare your current deals with those offered by organisations such as the Pro5 and the Government Procurement Service.
- Our [Schools financial management](#) web pages have information to help with your financial management and planning.
- Our [Schools Financial Benchmarking](#) website enables all English maintained schools to prepare charts so that they can compare their income and expenditure profiles with those of similar schools.

4.2 Working with your local authority (LA)

Each local authority sets out procurement regulations that must be followed by every public service body it funds, including all maintained schools. You will need to know and follow your LA's most up-to-date regulations for procurement spend, including the steps you'll need to take for any spending up to specific 'thresholds' set by your LA.

Your LA can also help and support you in getting to grips with procurement, advising you on challenging projects and contracts, and helping you to find best-value deals. Most LAs will have contracts or 'frameworks' for buying a wide range of the most popular goods and services it needs. Your school can also buy through these LA contracts and frameworks, using them to find a range of good-value suppliers and make purchases quickly and easily.

Buying through the contracts and frameworks already set up by your LA can have significant benefits for your school. Prices will be competitive, the suppliers will have been checked to ensure they're reputable and credit-worthy – in short, most of the hard work of procurement and compliance has already been done for you by your LA, reducing your workload and ensuring you're always getting best value from spending public funding. It's also worth benchmarking the prices you source for different traded services to ensure you're getting the best possible deal.

4.3 Price comparison for goods

Wherever you decide to buy goods and services from, the prices quoted will vary. The table below provides a snap shot of the different prices you could pay. It can be worth getting to know the market, and shopping around for good-value deals, rather than simply going to the first supplier you find.

Product	Supplier 1	Supplier 2	Supplier 3	Supplier 4
Trust/Kensington Value IT Keyboard, Qty 1	£3.95	£10.99	£4.01	£9.04
Toilet Roll – Pack 40	£8.95	£17.00	£14.20	£49.95
Own Brand 40g Glue Stick, 12 pck	£12.50	£4.68	£8.25	£1.95
Paper Value A4, 1 box 5reams	£14.85	£11.55	£9.49	£9.75

Data obtained from a range of publicly available sources.

5.0 Areas for potential savings

- **Energy** – we are working with partners to make sure schools can access energy at fair prices. Visit the [energy pages](#) on the DfE website for updates.
- **Food ingredients, catering supplies and catering equipment** – visit the [Department's food page](#) or the [School Food Trust](#) for more information. Your local authority may also be able to help.
- **Administrative supplies** – ask your local authority what deals they have in place, and visit the DfE's [administrative supplies web page](#) for links to other organisations that you can buy from.
- **Supply teacher insurance** – buy through your local authority if they have a contract in place. Visit the [DfE website](#) for more information.
- **Grounds maintenance improvement** – check with your local authority in the first instance or you can use a public sector buying organisation. Visit the [DfE website](#) for more information.
- **Building maintenance and improvement** – ask your local authority what arrangements they have in place. Alternatively contact the [Government Procurement Service](#) to see what's available.
- **Cleaning and caretaking** – ask your local authority what arrangements they have in place.
- **Telephony** – paying too much for calls? Visit the [Government Procurement Service's telephony](#) pages for framework contracts or use one of the [Pro5](#) who have deals in place.
- **Exam fees** – working with other schools can bring savings. The Association of Colleges has a useful [exam fee download](#) which can provide ideas.
- **Shared services** – see the [shared services pages](#) on the jisc website for ideas where collaborative procurement is creating major savings.

5.1 ICT provision

The Department for Education has a number of [ICT Frameworks](#) in place that have:

- suppliers with knowledge and experience of delivering educational solutions
- suppliers who have been evaluated via an EU compliant competition process
- quality assured suppliers that have been subjected to technical / quality evaluation and testing process
- suppliers who have signed up to a comprehensive set of pre-determined contractual terms and conditions (limiting risk exposure to customers)
- suppliers that are subject to contract and performance management and reporting
- access to specialist advice as well as tender templates and model contracts.

[ICT Services](#) – is a department framework which enables the purchase of most categories of ICT
[Information Management and Learning Services \(IMLS\)](#) – is a Government Procurement Service (GPS) framework placed on behalf of the Department and specifically covers educational management information systems and learning platforms.

[Consultancy Services](#) – is a department framework which enables the specific purchase of high calibre ICT consultancy. This is only available from the Department's website and is free to use.

[Software for Educational Institutions Framework](#) - this framework was arranged by the Government Procurement Service and covers a range of suppliers approved to provide standard desktop and server based software operating systems, security, and office applications software to schools.

5.2 Broadband and internet access

- Aggregated legally procured broadband services for schools are primarily delivered by the [Regional Broadband Consortia \(RBC\)](#) and local authorities (LA). Check with LA / RBC e.g. [The National Education Network](#).

- In the first instance we would recommend that your school discusses with your RBC what broadband services can be provided.
- If your school does decide to go to market, we advise that you take into account ISP standards including things like content filtering, other measures to ensure e-safety, protection against virus attack, and type of connectivity.
- [The Government Procurement Service](#) also has broadband framework contracts in place.

5.3 Photocopiers (multifunctional devices)

It can be easy to be tempted into uneconomical deals on leasing photocopiers, or multifunctional devices, by suppliers who offer 'gestures of goodwill' or sales incentives.

Shocking but real examples

1. Head teacher signed a *blank* contract - value approx £200,000 over five years.
2. Payments equating to £125,000 over five years for *one* copier.
3. New head teacher and bursar uncovered *rollover* (finance) lease agreement agreed by previous head and bursar of £1.2M. The school looked for a settlement figure but the finance company asked for £500,000.
4. A school had to make a teacher redundant to cover the cost of a photocopier.

Photocopiers – things to consider

We are aware of examples of schools entering into really poor deals that have had a serious and long term impact on schools' finances. If you are looking to enter into any kind of agreement relating to the lease of a photocopier or a multifunctional device, make sure that you are getting an excellent deal by considering the following points:

- Be aware that some agreements will require you to give notice of termination even though an expiry date has been specified. Also check for financial implications of terminating early.
- An operating lease means entering into an agreement to rent equipment. A finance lease is equivalent to committing the school to a loan, which is prohibited under current legislation. See [Tips for successful leasing](#).
- Ensure you include and compare the Government Procurement Service, Pro5 or local authority approved suppliers in your quotation exercise.
- Ensure that any verbal and written quotations are exactly what you have agreed to – do not allow contracts to be completed by the supplier afterwards.
- Your quarterly payment for one photocopier should be **hundreds** not **thousands**.
- Any offers of 'cash back' or 'marketing support' is an indication that you are entering into a finance lease.
- At the end of the agreement term ownership of the equipment should remain with the supplier.
- Please see the [MFDs \(photocopiers\)](#) page on the DfE website for more info.

5.4 Creative Media and Publishing Services

The Department for Education has established two contracts to help schools achieve more cost effective and innovative communications. These contracts are designed to help you:

- save money and be more cost effective
- improve quality in publishing and creative media services
- receive flexible levels of support and guidance
- access the latest innovation and technology.

[Publishing Delivery Service \(PDS\)](#) - For all your publishing needs from hard copy print (e.g. school prospectus) to e-broadcasting/text messaging services (e.g. parent communications).

[CMS Creative Media Services \(CMS\) \(Creative Choice\)](#) - For all your marketing needs including events, design and digital/web services (e.g. designing your website, managing your website).

5.5 Temporary education staff

The Managed Services for Temporary Agency Resources (MSTAR) framework contract offers schools the chance to source a range of temporary education staff.

The benefits of the framework include:

- improved quality of supply, especially in regard to safeguarding children
- reduced costs of supply by regularising and reducing the fees charged by agencies
- reduced administrative effort incurred in procuring temporary workers
- reduced demand for temporary workers by providing management information to aid, for example, workforce planning.

For more information visit the [Pro5 MSTAR page](#).

6.0 Useful Public Sector Buying Organisations (PSBOs)

Who are they?

- [Pro 5](#) – includes the five largest PSBOs; Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation, West Mercia Supplies, Central Buying Consortium, Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation, North Eastern Purchasing Organisation.
- [The Government Procurement Service](#) is the national procurement partner for all UK public services and is part of the Efficiency and Reform Group within the Cabinet Office.

What do they do?

- Pro5 help and support schools to achieve better value for money through combined buying power and procurement expertise for commonly bought goods and services.
- Provide framework contracts that have been procured professionally and are dedicated to the delivery of education.
- The role of the Government Procurement Service is to maximise the value for money obtained by Government departments and other public bodies through the procurement and supply of goods and services. The established procurement arrangements allow public sector organisations to save time and money. These cover a range of areas such as ICT, energy, travel, fleet, office solutions, property solutions and professional services.

6.1 [The Pro5](#)

Who are they?

- [Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation \(ESPO\)](#)
- [Central Buying Consortium \(CBC\)](#)
- [West Mercia Supplies \(WMS\)](#)
- [Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation \(YPO\)](#)
- [North Eastern Purchasing Organisation \(NEPO\)](#)

What do they do?

- Pro5 offers access to national contracts across commonly purchased categories of goods and services in the education sector. Email enquiries@pro5.org.
- Examples of current [Pro5 national frameworks](#) available to schools include:
 - Catering equipment - commercial
 - IT consumables - sustainable recycled materials
 - IT related products and associated services
 - Mail services
 - Playground equipment - outdoor
 - Telephone systems
 - Telecommunication equipment.

6.2 [Crescent Purchasing Consortium \(CPC\)](#)

- Offers access to properly procured contracts across commonly purchased categories of goods and services in the education sector and long established higher education purchasing consortia.
- Membership of CPC is free of charge and open to all schools with a sixth form. Visit the [CPC website](#) to join for free.

7.0 Private supplier examples

Here are some examples of private supplier initiatives where contracts between you and the supplier are required. We do not endorse such resources but understand that they can provide alternative information that may prove useful.

- [TES BuyWire](#)– this is a free online marketplace that allows you to collect quotes from suppliers for your specific requirement.
- [TES HireWire](#) , [Eteach](#) and [GuardianSchoolsJobs](#) for on line recruitment for educational establishments.
- [Teacher Network \(The Guardian\)](#) – provides thousands of ready made resources for teachers on subjects including maths through to PE aimed at four to 18 year olds.
- Professional educational support services including [The Key](#), [tengovernor](#) and [Innovate My School](#)
- Trade Associations such as [British Educational Suppliers Association \(BESA\)](#) and [Professional Publishers Association](#) who may provide information on suppliers to educational establishments.
- E-marketplaces to assist with price comparison, e.g. [OPEN](#)

8.0 Develop and improve your procurement knowledge and skills

[BuyWays](#)

- BuyWays has been developed by the Department for Education as a basic introduction to procurement. It can be used by anyone working in education in England - bursars and business managers, administrators, governors, teachers and headteachers.
- The guidance and advice in the BuyWays modules can be used as an introduction, and basic up-skilling course, for anyone new to public procurement, or as a handy 'refresher' for more experienced buyers.
- There are six modules in the course, dealing with topics like the Procurement Cycle, EU Legislation, and Contract Management. There are case studies to help you learn about real-life procurement, and short review sections where you can test your knowledge.
- All users can access [BuyWays](#) free of charge.

Other organisations offering training:

- [The National College](#) offers training for school business managers.
- [National Association of School Business Management](#) also has a range of training courses available.
- [Association of School and College Leaders](#) is holding regional school briefings for school business managers.
- [Training and Development Agency](#) offers a number of courses for school business managers.
- [National Governors' Association](#) provides a range of training for governors.

9.0 Buying green – saving the planet

- Undertake a purchasing and waste audit.
- Is waste minimisation included in everyone's job specification?
- Does your curriculum cultivate the knowledge, skills, values and confidence for pupils to minimise waste and consume sustainably?
- Do you have links with external bodies that can champion the cause to being green? For example:
 - [Green Buying](#) provides information about what other businesses are doing to become more sustainable and the tools to act now, plus there's the Eco Shop which sells green office supplies at competitive prices.
 - [Walk to school](#) encourages all children to make walking their journey part of their daily routine.
 - [Big Green Book](#) provides information on new services and information.
 - [Safe PC Disposal](#) offers free recycling of redundant IT equipment and a guaranteed secure data destruction facility.
- Water course surveys are green and can help you save money. One further education college managed to save nearly £80,000.

9.1 Be sustainable

- The Government has pledged to make this the 'greenest government ever', with far-

reaching plans to protect the natural environment, tackle climate change, reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainability – procurement plays a key part in that. We believe schools understand their responsibility on how sustainable development should be reflected in their ethos and day-to-day operations. Our [Top 20 tips for Sustainability in Schools](#) has more.

- The Government is committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions of at least 80 per cent by 2050 – relative to 1990 levels. Further advice can be found on our [My2050 teachers toolkit](#) .
- There are good practice materials on the [Sustainability and Environmental Education website](#) that underpin the national framework for sustainable schools, which includes a series of top tips on how to help schools become more sustainable, including a [Top Tips to reduce energy and water use in schools](#).
- The Government also supported the launch in 2011 of the Sustainable Schools Alliance, which aims to provide a clear and compelling offer of support to all schools, which will help them to put sustainability at the heart of what they do. The Alliance, which brings together over 400 local and voluntary organisations, aims to provide accessible information for schools to continue their sustainability journeys. Visit the [Sustainable Schools Alliance website](#).

10.0 Other useful links

- [Direct Gov](#) - The official UK government website for citizens.
- [Local Government Improvement and Development's procurement page](#) - This procurement management resource has been designed specifically to meet the needs of the local government procurement community. It contains a range of guidance and good practice on all aspects of procurement.
- [Carbon Trust](#) – The Carbon Trust's website provides energy saving ideas.
- [The Schools Network](#)

11.0 Tell us what you think

We would like your feedback on:

- Any gaps in information and support
- Content of this resource
- Additional information you require
- Content of the DfE website
- Anything else you would find useful

Email us at CG.COMMUNICATIONS@education.gsi.gov.uk