



Department
for Education

Completing the mainstream and 16 to 19 free school 2017 to 2018 financial template

This template covers all phases of mainstream free schools, including institutions which provide for post-16 pupils only.

The financial template is a tool to help you to demonstrate that your education plan and staffing structure will be affordable within the funding available from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). It is important that it is consistent with the rest of your plans, that you use it to demonstrate how your plans will be made a reality and that your assumptions clearly show what strategic financial decisions you have made. You will need to update your financial plans on this template as your plans develop throughout the pre-opening phase.

We would encourage you to use the **Checklist at the front of the template** (shown at the back of this document for information) before submitting financial plans to the department. The checklist highlights areas we commonly see incorrectly completed or overlooked resulting in delays in clearing plans.

It is important that you read the guidance in tab G1 before starting to populate the spreadsheet as it contains key information and advice.

You may also find it useful to read the [guide to new mainstream free school revenue funding](#) or [guide to new 16 to 19 free school revenue funding](#) to further your understanding of how your funding is calculated.

The government is currently preparing to introduce a national funding formula (NFF) for 5 to 16 provision, which will mean a change in how 5 to 16 provision is funded (including for free schools). A consultation on the detail of the NFF closed on 22 March 2017 and the government expects to announce its decisions later this year. This version of the template does not include the NFF. The template will be updated again once decisions on the NFF have been taken.

Budget

Forecasts should be prepared on an academic year (September to August) basis. The financial template automatically calculates indicative levels of funding based on the information you enter. The actual funding that a school will receive in a given academic year will not be established until closer to opening.

You should refer to the [academies financial handbook](#) in planning your budget. For example, forecasts should be prepared on the 'accruals' basis of accounting, which means that you should recognise expenditure in the accounting period in which it is incurred, which may be earlier than when the invoice is actually paid.

Budget assumptions must be listed throughout this sheet at column Q and be consistent with the rest of your plans. You should include references to show the sources of evidence and benchmarking information used.

For example, assumptions made could include the following:

- Pupil recruitment is assumed to grow at a steady rate until steady state is reached.
- Proposed teaching and non-teaching staff salaries are each benchmarked against other local schools.
- Employer National Insurance and pension contributions are each calculated with regard to HMRC and relevant pension providers' guidance..
- Expenditure on heating based on information provided by current occupant

These are just some examples of the kind of assumptions that you will want to consider including. For each line of income and expenditure you will want to think about whether additional commentary is needed to help the department understand how you have derived numbers or to highlight where approximations have been used.

The template

Cover sheet

You will need to start by completing the cover sheet on tab G2 as the information you provide (pupil numbers, local authority, age range of school and opening date) is the data needed for your funding calculations. The template will not work correctly if all relevant fields are not completed.

Depending upon the age-range selected, you will also see tabs for the **pre-16 and/or post-16 ready-reckoners**. The data you have entered on the cover sheet, G2, and pupil numbers entered on the budget sheet, G3, will transfer to one or both of the pre-16 and post-16 ready-reckoners, which will calculate your funding using your local authority's pre-16 funding rates or the national 16 to 19 funding formula. The resulting amounts will transfer back to the budget sheet.

Proposition stage

If you are submitting your application to open a free school, please select 'Applicant'. Once you have received approval to proceed to the next stage, you will need to refresh your plans at key points, and should select 'Approved to pre-opening'

Local authority

It is important that you select the correct local authority to ensure your financial plans are based on the correct funding rates.

Independent schools

Independent schools converting to become free schools will not usually receive post-opening grant funding. If your school is an existing independent, you should select 'yes' in the relevant drop-down box to ensure your funding is calculated correctly.

Risk protection arrangement

Free schools are able to opt into a voluntary risk protection arrangement (RPA) offered by the government at the current rate of £20 per pupil. There is an allowance of £20 per pupil for insurance included in the general annual grant (GAG). If you intend to opt into the arrangement, you should select 'yes' in the drop-down box on the cover sheet. The template will calculate the amount that will be deducted from your GAG to cover RPA: this will automatically be reflected on the budget sheet in row 129.

You are able, if you prefer, to arrange your own insurance: you should note, however, that there will be no extra funding available if it costs more than the equivalent of £20 per pupil. Any costs above this amount should therefore be included as expenditure in your financial plan in row 129.

Details of the new [risk protection arrangements](#) are available on GOV.UK.

Budget sheet section 1 - Pupil numbers

The **age range you have selected on the cover sheet** will dictate your funding, and the template will automatically bring up the age-relevant rows into which you need to enter your pupil numbers. Please enter the total number of pupils that will be enrolled in your school, per year. These numbers should include both new intakes as well as pupils already attending the school. Please note that the total of KS3 and KS4 pupils (rows 13 and 14) should equal the total of Year 7 and Year 8 to 11 pupils (rows 15 and 16).

The information will transfer to the relevant pre- or post-16 ready-reckoner, which will calculate your funding, and display it on the budget sheet. The ready-reckoners will display full details of how your funding is made up, according to your local authority's local funding rates. Funding for primary and 11 to 16 pupils is also affected by the characteristics of a school's intake. The ready-reckoner will pre-populate your expected percentage uptake for the various formula factors, such as free school meals (FSM) and looked-after children, based on local authority averages. Where the characteristics of your intake are likely to be different from the LA average, you have the opportunity to override the pre-populated figures for each of the LA formula factors on the pre-16 ready-reckoner in the green cells. This should **only be completed by exception** where there is clear evidence that the characteristics of the pupil intake will differ from the LA average, which will be unlikely before you open. If you do not hold the required data, leave the cells blank and the averages for the LA will automatically be multiplied by the pupil numbers you entered on the budget sheet. Note: it is especially unlikely that free schools will be able to provide estimates with any accuracy for IDACI or prior attainment at the application stage.

Please note: if you plan to have only reception pupils in any given year, you will not receive funding based upon the prior attainment factor.

Budget sheet section 2 – Income

Funding protection for local formula funding (pre -16)

The minimum funding guarantee (MFG) ensures that schools' funding is not reduced unexpectedly by a large amount as a result of any changes made to the local formula between years. This restricts schools to a maximum loss of 1.5% per pupil on most of their budget. The lump sum and sparsity factor are outside this calculation.

New free schools receive a similar level of protection against the per-pupil funding amount they would have attracted had they been open the previous year. The template automatically calculates the amount of protected funding, if any is due.

Nursery income

Free schools do not receive funding under the free school programme for nursery places. To receive funding for nursery places, free schools should register with their local authority, who may provide funding for three and four year olds (universal funded hours for all three and four year olds, funded hours for the most disadvantaged two year olds and, from September 2017, additional funded hours for the children of working parents).

Free schools may also, subject to their funding agreement, charge for nursery provision over and above these funded hours. Please show any resulting income as Other income, and include a line in the Other expenditure section to represent all expenditure related to your nursery. This will then ensure that the nursery is cost neutral for the purposes of your free school budget.

Business rates

Free schools receive a grant from ESFA to cover the full cost of business rates at the discounted charity rate. You should claim for this via the [online form](#) on GOV.UK. Row 40 (in the income section) will be populated once you have entered details of the rates in row 102 (in the expenditure section).

Universal infant free school meals

All infant pupils in years Reception to Y2 are entitled to a free school meal. Extra funding is available for the provision of meals to those pupils who would not otherwise be eligible for benefits related free school meals. Pupils who meet the existing criteria for free school meals still attract deprivation funding, and this will be taken into account in the methodology for calculating the funding.

It is, however, intended to be cost-neutral and should not impact upon your planning, so you do not need to include this in your financial plans.

Other income

If you expect income from sources other than the ESFA (e.g. fundraising) please include them in your budget sheet. You should use the assumptions column (column Q) to provide evidence on why it is realistic and achievable to assume the levels of income you have included. Any additional income would usually be used to enhance, extend, and enrich the school's offer or to save towards capital projects and should not be fundamental to the operation of the school. Schools are expected to be viable on the basis of their ESFA grant income against projected costs.

Post-opening grant

New free schools receive additional funding to reflect the additional costs of establishing new publicly-funded schools. The post-opening grant provides funding in two elements: per-pupil resources; and leadership grant. Please see the [guide to new mainstream free school revenue funding](#) for further information.

The non-staffing resources element will be calculated automatically using your pupil number entries. The per-pupil primary rate is £250; for secondary pupils it is £500. You will receive this grant for any new pupils you take each year until you reach capacity. The template will show the amounts you will receive in rows 54 and 55.

Your leadership grant will be calculated automatically when you enter the number of empty cohorts you will have each year in row 56. An empty cohort is a year group between reception and year 11 – sixth-form year groups are not included in this calculation – which the school intends to have when at full capacity but which in the early years has no pupils in it. Independent schools will not normally be eligible for a leadership grant.

16 to 19 free schools will receive a fixed-rate leadership grant in the first two years, which will automatically be entered in the template in row 58.

Budget sheet section 3 – Expenditure

Please enter your expenditure total under the headings: Other staff, Premises, Educational resources, Professional services and Other expenditure. We have suggested some areas where we would expect to see expenditure listed. Staff costs will be calculated automatically once the 'Staff worksheet is completed.

It is sensible to include costs associated with depreciation of assets, excluding land and buildings. This is where items such as laptops or minibuses (but not day-to-day items) will need to be replaced. As an example, a good financial plan using the budget planning tool might show that there is a need to buy more laptops in the third year, then replace other assets in the fifth year. These assumptions should be reflected in column Q. We would expect contingency to be around 1% of overall income.

The GOV.UK website includes [schools benchmarking](#) information and [academies' spend data](#). These provide details of the non-staff costs typically incurred by maintained schools and academies. The benchmarking information on the schools benchmarking website does not cover the costs of purchasing and providing services that an academy or free school will need which would be provided by a local authority to its maintained schools. You can access information on the schools benchmarking website by using the 'Guest login' link.

Staff sheet

The information you enter here should match your expected staffing model. Please provide details of the position, type of position, salary, allowance, pension rate and National Insurance rate in columns C to G. Columns H to O require you to input a number between 0 and 1 setting out the full time equivalence of that role depending on whether the member of staff is full or part time. Each member of staff needs to be entered in a separate row. An example is given at the top of the sheet.

You can find out who your local government pension scheme manager is on the [the LGPS website](#) website. You should contact the relevant fund manager in the first instance to get a likely estimate of the rate in your area.

National Insurance is not a fixed rate and varies with earnings. For further information visit [the HMRC website](#)

Education support staff are non-teachers who have an active role in supporting the education of pupils. They can include: teaching assistants; high-level teaching assistants; learning support assistants for pupils with high levels of special educational needs (SEN) or who have English as an additional language (EAL); nursery nurses; modern language assistants; instructors; lab technicians; coaches; sports coaches; mentors; family support workers etc. Education support staff are separate from school administration staff.

The GOV.UK website includes [schools benchmarking](#) information and [academies' spend data](#). These provide details of the non-staff costs typically incurred by maintained schools and academies. You should explain in your assumptions how you have taken these benchmarks into account when setting the level of spend on staffing costs for your school. Where a financial plan using the budget planning tool indicates that a significantly greater or lesser proportion of the school budget will be spent on staffing than is typical, we would expect you to set out clearly why this is appropriate for your school.

Summary sheet

This sheet will provide you with a breakdown of your funding allocation, your pupil and staff numbers, staff structure as well as giving you a set of financial ratios on strands of your expenditure against overall costs. Cells will be **red-rated** where your ratios and allocated spending differ from what we might expect to see; this is intended as a guide only, and not a mandatory target. Please provide any notes or reasoning in column Q.

Finance Plan Checklist

Below is a checklist that all proposer groups are encouraged to complete before submitting financial plans to the DfE. The checklist highlights areas we commonly see incorrectly completed or overlooked resulting in delays in clearing plans.

| General check | | |
|--|-----------|----------|
| | Completed | Comments |
| Has the most recent template been used - reflecting the latest release available on the gov.uk website (www.gov.uk/government/collections/opening-a-free-school)? | | |
| Has the person in charge of procurement read the Academies Financial Handbook? | | |
| Are you aware that funding beyond 2017/18 is only indicative, particularly in light of the introduction of the National Funding Formula (NFF)? | | |
| Is the person responsible for the school's budget aware of the clawback arrangements? | | |
| If the school will be in a Single Academy Trust, does the Principal Designate understand their role as Accounting Officer? | | |

| 'G2. Cover sheet' tab | | |
|---|-----------|----------|
| | Completed | Comments |
| Has every field been completed correctly? | | |

| 'G3. Budget' tab | | |
|--|-----------|----------|
| | Completed | Comments |
| Does the financial plan show in-year surpluses for each year? <i>(We expect to see in-year surpluses of between 3% to 6% including any contingency)?</i> | | |
| Is the school reliant on 'other income' in any year e.g. lettings or donations? <i>(Reliance on third part income to be financially viable is not acceptable unless supported by robust evidence e.g. legal agreements)</i> | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Have you inserted the number of year groups in the first year only (Cell E19)? | | |
| Have you included any carry over of PDG (Cell E44)? | | |
| Assumptions (column Q): Are assumptions included for each income/expenditure line? | | |
| Assumptions: Do assumptions explain your costs/income per pupil and what benchmarking data you used? | | |
| Assumptions: Does the assumptions text for 'Educational resources – not ICT' / 'ICT learning resources' specify precisely what resources are included under this heading? | | |
| Have you included income and expenditure relating to school uniforms/school trips/enrichment activities? Even if these are provided at net zero cost, income and expenditure should be included in the financial plan. | | |
| Have you included income and expenditure relating to catering which shows either net zero cost or a net cost? <i>(We do not expect free schools to make a surplus from catering)</i> | | |
| Where a multi-academy trust charges a management fee, have you included in the assumptions what specific services are being provided? | | |
| If you are opting into the department's Risk Protection Arrangements (RPA), does the plan include an RPA expenditure line of £20 per pupil? | | |

| 'Pre-16 ready reckoner' tab | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------|
| | Completed | Comments |
| Has the ready reckoner been left unchanged, to model the financial impact of an average pupil profile intake? If no, has a rationale and supporting evidence been provided? <i>(Changes to the ready reckoner are only acceptable in exceptional circumstances and where supported by compelling evidence)</i> | | |

| 'Post-16 ready reckoner' tab (if applicable) | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------|
| | Completed | Comments |
| Has the ready reckoner been left unchanged, to model the worst case financial scenario? <i>(Schools opening in 2017 should enter the results from their post 16 business case. For schools opening in 2018 and beyond you will be invited to provide a business case justifying changes to the ready reckoner e.g. to reflect a science or engineering-focused curriculum in the January before opening.) Please leave the</i> | | |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <i>sheet unchanged until ESFA have agreed your business case.</i> | | |
|---|--|--|

'G4. Staff' tab

| | Completed | Comments |
|--|------------------|-----------------|
| Are pension % rates correct and differentiated between teaching and other staff? https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/employers/employer-hub.aspx http://www.lgpsregs.org | | |
| Are NI % rates correct and differentiated? https://www.gov.uk/national-insurance-rates-letters/contribution-rates | | |
| Has the staffing structure and schedule of appointments been agreed with the project's DfE education advisor? | | |

'G5. Summary' tab

| | Completed | Comments |
|--|------------------|-----------------|
| Are all differences from averages (highlighted in red) explained in the assumptions column (column Q) in the 'G3. Budget' tab? | | |