



Completing the special free school 2017 to 2018 financial template

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 special free school revenue funding](#) to further your understanding of how your funding is calculated.

The government recently consulted on reforms to high needs funding. More information on the consultation is available on [GOV.UK](#).

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 and projects that progress to pre-opening will be asked to complete revised financial plans before the department enters into a funding agreement.

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 P and be consistent with the information provided in the rest of your application. You should include references to show the sources of evidence and benchmarking information used.

For example, assumptions made could include the following:

- employer National Insurance and pension contributions are each calculated with regard to HMRC and relevant pension providers' guidance
- the local authority has confirmed that they would be prepared to pay £XXX per academic year on top of the per-place funding the school will receive for a full-time place for a child who has moderate learning difficulty

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 (place 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.

You will also see a tab for the **post-16 ready-reckoner**. The data you have entered on the cover sheet, G2, and post-16 pupil numbers entered on the budget sheet, G3, will transfer to the post-16 ready-reckoners, which will calculate your funding using the national 16 to 19 funding formula. The resulting amount 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.

Risk protection arrangement

All special free schools are able to opt into a voluntary risk protection arrangement (RPA) offered by the government at the current rate of £20 per place. There is an allowance of £20 per place 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 158.

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 place. Any costs above this amount should therefore be included as expenditure in your financial plan in row 158.

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

Budget sheet section 1 - Places

You will need to provide supporting material showing evidence of your local authorities' willingness to pay your rates for pre-16 (and any post-16) places they commission for this stage of your application.

Places in each cell throughout the spreadsheet should be the full-time equivalent (FTE) averaged over the academic year.

Please enter all FTE primary places in rows 11, 18, 25, 32 and secondary places in rows 12, 19, 26, 33. **Please include the number of places for post-16 pupils who have statements of special educational needs (SEN) or Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC) within your secondary rows.**

All places for **pre-16 and post-16 pupils with statements of SEN or EHC plans** in a special free school attract per-place funding of £10,000 per place. This amount will pre-populate in the template when you enter your place numbers.

You will have negotiated with commissioners to provide top-up funding for each pupil placed in the free school, based on the pupil's assessed needs and the cost of meeting those needs in the school. Top-up funding comes from the local authority that commissions the place.

This top-up funding will be paid in or close to the real-time movement of the pupil, and will flow directly between the local authority and the special free school. Please enter the average rate you have agreed with commissioners for the pre-16 key stages for which you will cater in rows 13 to 14, 20 to 21, 27 to 28 and 34 to 35.

Post-16 pupils without statements or EHC plans will attract an allocation of mainstream funding calculated by the national 16 to 19 funding formula. This figure will automatically be calculated when you enter your total post-16 place numbers in row 39. Please provide your assumptions in column P.

In the first year, post-16 high-needs place numbers will be based on estimates agreed with the local authorities commissioning places. You should enter into row 40 the number of your post-16 places, out of the total number in row 39, which will be high-needs, and therefore attract the additional funding.

You will need to provide supporting material showing evidence of your local authorities' willingness to pay your rates for pre-16 (and any post-16) places they commission.

Budget sheet section 2 - Income

Business rates

Free schools receive a grant from the 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 72 will be populated once you have provided details of the rates in row 131 (in the expenditure section).

Other income

If you expect income from sources other than ESFA please include them in your budget sheet. You should use the assumptions column (column P) 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 grant income against projected costs.

Post-opening grant

New special 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 special free school revenue funding](#) for further information.

The curriculum materials (books and equipment) element will be calculated automatically using your pupil number entries. The per-place primary rate is £250; for secondary places it is £500. You will receive this grant for any new places you create each year until you reach capacity. The template will show the amounts you will receive in rows 85 and 86.

The second element (leadership) is a fixed-rate grant of £170,000 (50% in the first year; 30% in the second; and 20% in the third) which will pre-populate in the template in row 87.

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 P. We would expect contingency to be around 1% of overall income.

The DfE 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](#). 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; learning support assistants for pupils with high levels of SEN or who have English as an additional language (EAL); nursery nurses; 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 P.

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 (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-free-school-financial-template)?		
Have you communicated to the Department whether you require Risk Protection Arrangements or not?		
Has the person in charge of procurement read the Academies Financial Handbook?		
Are you aware that funding beyond 2017 to 18 is only indicative, particularly in light of the introduction of the National Funding Formula (NFF)?		
If the school will be in a Single Academy Trust, does the Principal Designate understand her / his 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>		
Assumptions (column P): 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.		
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?		

'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 P) in the 'G3. Budget' tab?		