

Where has all the money gone?

School and Academy
Budgets and Spending
in England



Where has all the money gone?

Pressures on school funding are likely to remain a perennial issue throughout this Parliament, as is the concern about the sufficiency of funding levels for schools. NASUWT makes no secret of the extent to which school funding is inadequate and that the Government has failed children and young people, together with teachers, for this reason.

A Treasury spokesperson said: "The chancellor has asked all departments to deliver savings and efficiencies of 5% of their current budget as part of the first zero-based spending review in seventeen years and every pound of government spending is being interrogated, to root out waste and get the best value for taxpayers."¹

However, in a context of extended freedoms and flexibilities at school level, NASUWT is also concerned about the extent to which schools act responsibly and exercise good stewardship in relation to the management of public money.

Real-terms cuts to education spending are misguided and will be to the long-term detriment of our society and our economy. NASUWT has raised concerns that despite significant increases in the share of national wealth invested in education in the UK over the period of the last three decades, spending on education after 2010 has, in real terms, fallen.

Maintaining high investment in public education, and a demonstrable commitment to increase spending in real terms over time, should be a key priority for the Government.

The Government needs to act not only to increase the quantum available to schools, but also with regard to ensuring there is a funding methodology which enables all schools to secure the educational entitlements of pupils. Additionally, and no less important, is the need to ensure that schools are accountable for the use of public money. The Government must ensure that schools act appropriately, irrespective of funding levels, and that they do not continue to reduce staffing levels and curriculum provision or make unfair and unsustainable demands of parents or carers.

¹ <https://news.sky.com/story/public-services-prepare-for-up-to-11-cuts-as-defence-secretary-says-we-must-rearm-13312077>

Economic and core school funding context, March 2025

In their evidence to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB), the Department for Education (DfE) anticipates that a pay award of 2.8% is likely to be appropriate for teachers, for the year 2025-26, 'as it would balance maintaining or improving pay competitiveness, while also ensuring the award delivers a real terms pay rise, in the context of CPI forecasts for 2.6% in the financial year 2025-26.

'To cover the 2.8% award proposed for teachers, the Department recognises that most schools will need to supplement the new funding they receive in 2025-26 with efficiencies. The balance between cost increases covered by new funding and those covered through efficiencies in existing budgets will vary at an individual school level, depending on a school's circumstances (for example, changes to its pupil numbers) and previous spending decisions (which will determine, for example, the balance between spending on teachers, support staff and non-staff items).'²

NASUWT has made it clear to the Secretary of State for Education, Bridgett Phillipson, that any expectation that schools will make efficiency savings in order to make the pay award for 2025-26 possible is not acceptable.

There are many areas of education spending where the Government should ensure greater control in how that money is used.

The DfE has estimated that the financial headroom of the average school is between 0.625% and 1.875% for the pay award for all staff (including teachers and support staff).³

In response to the Chancellor's Spring Statement, the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) has updated its forecasts for inflation, and the Retail Prices Index (RPI) rate for 2025 has increased from 3.5% (October 2024 forecast) to 4.1% (March 2025 forecast). This will result in greater cost pressures for schools than assumed in the SCTN 2024-26 modelling, thereby reducing the headroom figures further.⁴

NASUWT believes the annual pay award must be fully funded and schools should not be seeking to make efficiency savings to balance their books, following 14 years of real-terms funding cuts.

In the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) annual report 2024-25, they note that in 2023-24, total public spending on education in the UK stood at £116 billion (including the net cost of issuing student loans and in 2024-25 prices). This represents an 11% or nearly £15 billion fall since 2010-11 and represents the level in real terms as in 2006-07. This drop mostly reflects a shift in the cost of higher education from the taxpayer to graduates over time.⁵

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675c4a6198302e574b915383/Government_evidence_to_the_STRB_.pdf

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67d974935bad4b1a7f01ed62/Schools_costs_technical_note_2024_to_2026.pdf

⁴ <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2025/>

⁵ Ibid.

Education spending has also fallen as a share of national income, from about 5.6% of national income in 2010-11 down to about 4.1% in 2023-24. This equals recent historic lows seen in the late 1990s, late 1980s and mid-1960s. There has been no long-run increase in the share of national income devoted to public spending on education spending, despite large rises in education participation over the long run.

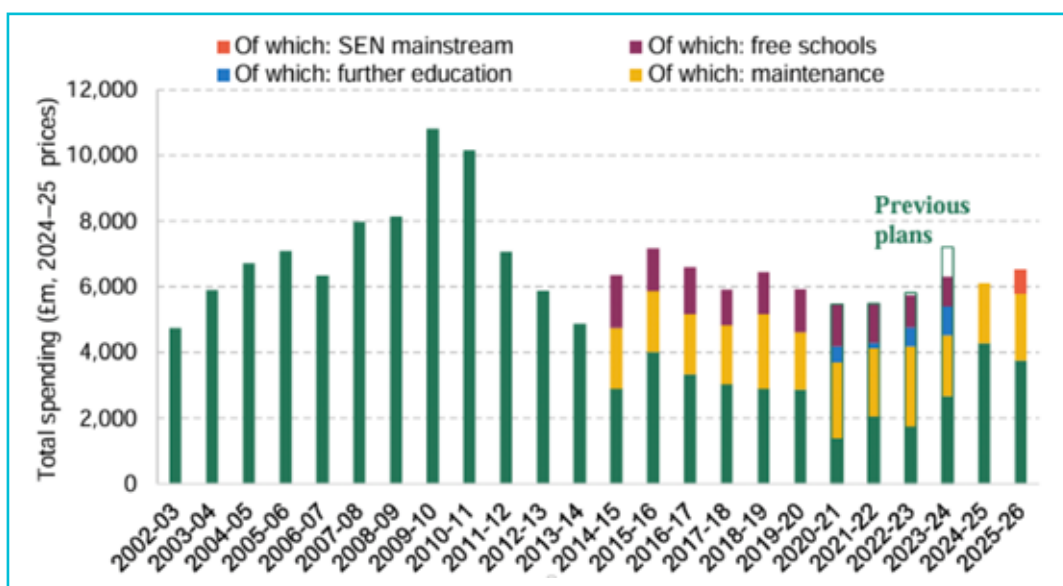
There has been a rapid increase in the costs of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision. About half of the total increase in school funding has been focused on high needs funding.⁶

Capital spending

School capital spending is due to rise from £6.3 million in 2023-24 to £6.5 billion in 2025-26. This leaves spending within the same range as it has been for the last decade and about the same level as the mid-2000s. From within this spending total, the Government needs to cover the cost of the delayed school rebuilding programme, the costs of addressing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in schools and other overdue school repair costs.⁷

Total capital spending across departments is only expected to rise by 3% in real terms in 2026-27 and is due to be frozen in real terms in 2027-28. This suggests little scope for further significant increases in school maintenance spending over the next two-year spending review period.

Education capital spending in England over time, actual and plans in 2024-25 prices.⁸



⁶ <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/annual-report-education-spending-england-2024-25>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Special education needs spending

The number of school pupils with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) has risen by 180,000 or 71% between 2018 and 2024. As a result, nearly 5% of pupils now have EHCPs.

Central government funding for high needs currently totals nearly £11 billion and has increased substantially, with a 59% or £4 billion real-terms rise between 2015-16 and 2024-25. This growth can account for about half of the total real-terms rise in school funding over the same period. However, even with this substantial rise, funding has not kept pace with the increase in pupils with EHCPs. As a result, per-EHCP funding has fallen by around a third in real terms over this period.⁹

After 14 years of previous government cuts to education spending and the wider cuts to local government, and the consequential negative impact that has had on support to schools, how schools spend every pound is of the utmost importance.

The funding for supporting children with SEND in mainstream schools is much more difficult – effectively, a child needs an EHCP to get funding.¹⁰

There are financial incentives for schools to seek EHCPs. Mainstream schools can only access local authority 'top-up' funding if the additional cost of SEND support is over £6,000 (the first £6,000 must be covered from core school budgets). This can only really be achieved with an EHCP. This £6,000 threshold has not been updated with inflation for over ten years, eroding its value in real terms, and therefore bringing more pupils into the group who require top-up funding and, by extension, EHCPs.

Where is all the money going?

Independent special schools

£2.4 billion of the £11 billion of the spending on SEND is spent on independent SEND education. Figures show that SEND spending on independent education has risen overall from £1.5 billion in 2020-21 to £2.4 billion in 2023-24. Pupil numbers with SEND showed that from 2015-16 to 2023-24, the number of pupils in independent special schools has increased from 12,477 to 27,354.

Luke Sibieta, research fellow at the IFS, said they almost entirely reflect greater use of independent special schools, where places are 'very high cost at £61,500 on average per year compared with the state-funded sector of £23,900'. The largest increase at local authority level was in Calderdale, where spending rose a massive 477% in four years, from £699,409 in 2020-21 to £4,035,607 in 2023-24.¹¹

⁹ <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/spending-special-educational-needs-england-something-has-change>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/specialist-sector/send-plans-will-fail-stop-private-school-costs-soaring>

Indefensible profiteering

We need to refocus on education spending to support frontline delivery. There is a significant amount of public money that is being used by state-funded schools to procure services from providers who are working on a for-profit basis.

There has been a large increase in the number of companies backed by private equity investors, including a Middle East sovereign wealth fund running private SEND schools that have made millions in profits amid a state capacity crisis. There were 712 independent schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools (NMSS) in 2022-23, up from 547 in 2018-19.

One analysis estimates some companies are making tens of millions of pounds in profit, with one director paid £1.1 million last year. Some of these companies are also registered in tax havens.

Councils spent an average of £52,000 per pupil on independent special school places for 2015-16,¹² almost double the £10,000 to £30,000 per pupil annual cost of a SEND pupil attending a state-funded school place.

There are countless examples to choose from, but one is Bury Council, which, in January 2024, said its specialist provisions 'are full', meaning 'we have been forced to place significant numbers' in the independent sector. Bury Council's spending has increased from £5.3 million in 2018-19 to £10.6 million in 2022-23.

Who are the firms making millions?

Anne Longfield, former Children's Commissioner, said these 'eye-watering levels of profit' are 'indefensible, in my view. It's taking money out of our statutory services at an alarming rate.'

Brand	Turnover as at August 2021	Turnover as at August 2022	% increase	Operating profit in 2022
Outcome First Group	£420.8m	£443.6m	5.4%	£14.1m
Aspris	N/A	£179.2m	N/A	£23.1m
Witherslack Group	£113.1m	£134.7m	19.1%	£27.8m
Horizon	£54.9m	£53.8m	-2.1%	£4.1m
Cavendish Education	£45.7m	£57.6m	25.9%	£4.8m
CareTech	£489.1m	£510.7m	4.4%	£25.5m

Source: Companies House accounts

Note: All run children's social care services excluding Cavendish Education

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¹² <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/how-investors-are-making-millions-from-the-bankrupt-send-system/>

Exam board/Awarding bodies

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is by far and away the biggest awarding body in England – it is a registered charity. As a consequence of being a registered charity and having a sole function of being an awarding body for the provision of qualifications, much more detailed information is available for AQA than the three other exam bodies.

Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) is run by Cambridge University Press and Assessment, which reported revenues of over £1bn in 23/24, with an operating profit of over £200m. While this body has other revenue-generating activities (the Cambridge Dictionary, Cambridge International Assessments and so on), some of this revenue and surplus does derive from its awarding body operations in the UK. It is, however, difficult to disaggregate precise levels of revenue from awarding body functions from their published accounts.

While AQA, OCR and Eduqas (three of the big four general qualifications providers in England) invest their surpluses into the education system in line with their charitable objects, NASUWT is clear that public money does not need to be filtered through a non-state body in order to support the provision of public education.

The fourth awarding body is Pearson, which is absolutely an up-front profit-seeking corporation. It made operating profits of £493m in 2023, up 53% on the previous year. It has lots of different elements to its business, but its assessment and qualifications division is its largest. It grew by 8% in 2023. Not all of this assessment and qualifications revenue comes from state-funded schools and colleges in England. Pearson also claims to pursue worthwhile educational initiatives, but it used a large proportion of its profits to pay a 22p dividend on shares in 2023.

NASUWT's longstanding position on awarding bodies is that the provision of qualifications is a core function of the state and, as such, it should be undertaken by a public sector body. This is the position in Scotland with the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) and in Northern Ireland with Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA).

The overwhelming number of candidates for the qualifications taught by our members come from state-funded schools. The revenues they generate are of interest to us and the public.

A more detailed look at the AQA charity accounts and at the number of people on top salaries shows that charity begins at home.¹³

AQA have substantial long-term investments and reserves detailed in Table 1 below.

	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Total income	£260,800,000	£218,420,000	£148,020,000	£135,850,000	£190,960,000
Total expenditure	£253,390,000	£250,510,000	£129,920,000	£132,970,000	£170,710,000
In year surplus/deficit	£7,410,000	-£32,090,000	£18,100,000	£2,880,000	£20,250,000
Long term investments	£53,360,000	£48,690,000	£49,680,000	£42,760,000	£35,420,000

Table 1

¹³ <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/3951890/accounts-and-annual-returns>

The number of employees at AQA earning £60,000 or more has more than doubled between 2022 (98) and 2023 (200). Using the midpoint of each salary range shows that the wage bill has also more than doubled to over £16 million (Table 2).

Salary bands	Salary mid-point	2023	2023 (mid-point * number in role)	2022	2022 (mid-point * number in role)
£60k - £70k	65,000	97	£6,305,000	51	£3,315,000
£70k - £80k	75,000	45	£3,375,000	18	£1,350,000
£80k - £90k	85,000	16	£1,360,000	8	£680,000
£90k - £100k	95,000	15	£1,425,000	6	£570,000
£100k - £110k	105,000	9	£945,000	4	£420,000
£110k - £120k	115,000	5	£575,000	3	£345,000
£120k - £130k	125,000	1	£125,000	3	£375,000
£130k - £140k	135,000	3	£405,000	1	£135,000
£140k - £150k	145,000	1	£145,000	0	£0
£150k - £160k	155,000	1	£155,000	3	£465,000
£160k - £170k	165,000	1	£165,000	0	£0
£170k - £180k	175,000	2	£350,000	0	£0
£180k - £190k	185,000	2	£370,000	0	£0
£190k - £200k	195,000	0	£0	0	£0
£200k - £210k	205,000	0	£0	0	£0
£210k - £220k	215,000	1	£215,000	0	£0
£220k - £230k	225,000	0	£0	0	£0
£230k - £240k	235,000	0	£0	0	£0
£240k - £250k	245,000	0	£0	0	£0
£250k - £260k	255,000	0	£0	0	£0
£260k - £270k	265,000	0	£0	0	£0
£270k - £280k	275,000	0	£0	0	£0
£280k - £290k	285,000	0	£0	0	£0
£290k - £300k	295,000	0	£0	1	£295,000
£300k - £310k	305,000	1	£305,000	0	£0
Totals		200	£16,220,000	98	£7,950,000

Table 2

It's clear that at AQA, not only have the number of employees paid more than £60,000 a year more than doubled (from 98 to 200), but the average wage bill has also more than doubled (from just less than £8 million to over £16 million).

Consultancy spending in Academy Trusts

Academy Trust spending on consultants has almost doubled in the past five years to £412 million, with spending on non-educational consultants reaching almost £70 million. (Table 3 and Graph 1).

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Educational	£193,000,000	£193,000,000	£209,000,000	£280,000,000	£343,000,000
Non-Educational	£37,000,000	£35,000,000	£43,000,000	£62,000,000	£69,000,000
Total	£230,000,000	£228,000,000	£252,000,000	£342,000,000	£412,000,000

Table 3



Graph 1

Supply agencies and umbrella companies

The DfE-commissioned research published on 27 September 2024 found the average daily cost of supply teachers was £218 for primary schools, £291 for secondary schools and £270 for special schools.

However, the average pay rate reported by the supply teachers surveyed was £136 for primary, £150 for secondary and £144 for special schools.¹⁴

Three-quarters of supply teachers worked through agencies in 2021, rising to 89% in 2022.

A total of 3.2 million teaching days were missed because of sickness in 2022, up by 56% from two million pre-Covid, and more teachers are quitting the profession, leaving schools struggling to staff their classrooms.

Teacher supply agencies are making millions of pounds while supply teachers are stuck on 'stagnating' pay rates and 'treated like second-class citizens'.¹⁵

Crown Commercial Services (CCS), the Government's procurement website, says 'it's important to pay attention to the agency mark-up rate when sourcing temporary staff through agencies as it can impact how much your workers get paid'.

The average mark-up is 38%.

Analysis of the eight leading supply agencies' most recent accounts suggests that the combined turnover was up by 39% on the previous year (£436.6 million).

An analysis of the annual accounts shows the country's seven largest agencies recording £68.4 million in gross profit.

Smile Education is offering a new regional recruitment consultant 'uncapped commission', with 'top billers earning £100k+'. The advert also stated that employees also have a paid-for holiday abroad together once a year.¹⁶

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-supply-teachers-in-schools>

¹⁵ <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/supply-teachers-second-class-citizens-as-pay-stagnates/>

¹⁶ Ibid.

Tradewind Recruitment posted £11.3 million, Teaching Personnel posted a 26% increase in its turnover with a gross profit of £21.9 million, and Protocol Education, which had a £2.6 million loss in November 2020, rose to a £6 million profit in November 2021.

New analysis of government data suggests schools spent £974 million on supply teachers from agencies in 2021-22, up 18% on the £825 million in 2016-17. With 75% of supply teachers working for agencies and considering the CCS average mark-up of 38%, almost £300 million of public money is gross profit for these agencies.

Schools spent more than £1.2 billion on supply teachers in 2022-23, with agencies estimated to have taken over £300 million in fees. With data from the TaxPayers' Alliance showing that nearly 14,000 teachers called in sick daily in 2023-24, the reliance on private firms has soared, as 93% of state school vacancies are now being filled through recruitment agencies.

The investigation highlighted two supply teacher agencies that were alleged to be 'cashing in' on the state schools staffing crisis, including Just Teachers and Zest Education. Both firms were seen rewarding some of their workers with trips to Spain.¹⁷

The Government must intervene and every pound of public money delivers best value.

Chief Executive Officers and Trustees of Academy Trusts

The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) sets out a clear and transparent process for setting headteacher pay, which is determined by a combination of factors, including school size, location, and the headteacher's experience and responsibilities.

The highest paid headteacher salary is for Inner London and was £132,352 in August 2024. Temporary additional payments, up to a maximum of 25%, are possible for additional duties outside of their normal job description; for example, Executive Headship of more than one school.

Since the first academies opened, almost 25 years ago, there has been no comparable pay-setting process for the pay of central team members in Academy Trusts, including CEOs.

In 2018, the Public Accounts Committee found:

'Unjustifiably high salaries use public money that could be better spent on improving children's education and supporting frontline teaching staff.'¹⁸

The Campaign For State Education (CASE) research clearly evidences that higher management pay in the academies sector has been accompanied by lower spending on teaching and learning within classrooms.¹⁹

¹⁷ <https://www.staffingindustry.com/news/global-daily-news/uk-staffing-firms-accused-of-excessive-profits-in-supplying-schools>

¹⁸ House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts: Academy schools' finances: Thirtieth Report of Session 2017-19: <https://tinyurl.com/mryf7m5c>

¹⁹ https://www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk/_files/ugd/3dd219_7806a9356ef849258257ebb0010285ea.pdf

The Campaign found that:

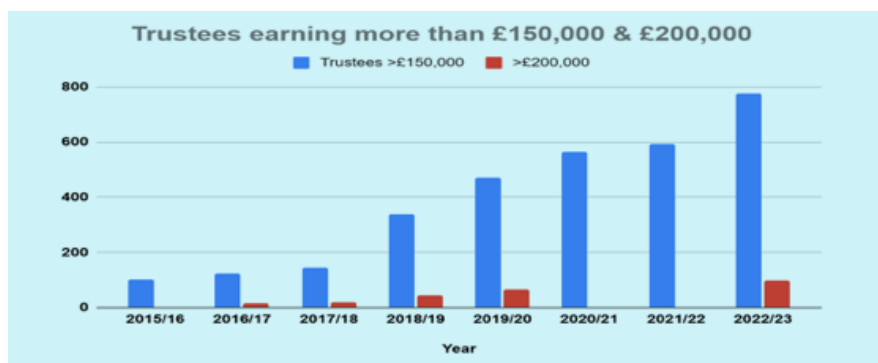
- Spending in the academies sector is lower, at the classroom level, than in local authority maintained schools. Academies are spending less per pupil on teaching and less on education support staff than their local authority maintained counterparts.
- Classroom teachers within the local authority maintained sector are paid more, on average, within both primary and secondary schools than are their counterparts from the academies sector. Within the academies sector, teachers working within 'sponsored academies' – generally more challenging schools – were paid lower than that seen in academies as a whole.
- Teachers in academies, and in sponsored academies in particular, tend to be younger – and therefore less expensive – than their counterparts in the local authority maintained sector.
- The proportion of teachers working in academies, and sponsored academies in particular, without Qualified Teacher Status is considerably higher than it is in local authority maintained schools: the rate within sponsored primary academies is double that of local authority primaries, while it is 55 per cent higher in sponsored secondary academies, compared to local authority secondaries.
- Some of the largest academy trusts have very high teacher turnover rates: one trust saw nearly a third of its teachers leave the school at which they were working during 2021-22, with nearly one in five, at this trust, leaving state-funding teaching in England altogether that year. If the largest trusts, and the academies sector as a whole, had teacher turnover rates at the same level as that seen in the local authority maintained sector, many more teachers would be retained in state-funded schooling in England than is currently the case.
- Taken together, the findings suggest a relatively low level of spending at the classroom level within the academies sector, and within sponsored academies in particular. The latter means that a comparatively sparsely-staffed, less well-paid and young classroom workforce is taking on some of the more challenging roles within education in England.

In 2015-16, 101 Academy Trusts remunerated at least one trustee over £150,000. It is now 775 in 2022-23, almost eight times as many as 2015-16.

In 2016-17, 16 Academy Trusts paid over £200,000. In 2022-23, this had risen to 99, more than six times the 2016-17 figure.

The highest paid leadership salary for 2022-23, as set out in the STPCD (Inner London), was £131,353 (plus up to an extra 25%).

Year	Trustees >£150,000	>£200,000
2015/16	101	
2016/17	125	16
2017/18	146	18
2018/19	340	43
2019/20	473	66
2020/21	563	
2021/22	594	
2022/23	775	99



Top of the pay pots: the country's best-paid CEOs

CEO	TRUST	ACADEMIES	MINIMUM PAY	DIFFERENCE FROM LAST YEAR	% PAY RISE	PSU/PUPIL
Sir Dan Moylan	Harris Federation	54	£515,000.00	£30,000.00	6%	£12.26
Simon Beamish	Leigh Academies Trust	32	£350,000.00	£45,000.00	15%	£15.07
Dave Okoshi	Brampton Manor Trust	3	£330,000.00	£20,000.00	6%	£66.34
Sir Kevin Satchwell	Thomas Tallent School - MAT	6	£310,000.00	£10,000.00	3%	£45.55
Sir Mufti Harish Patel	Star Academies	33	£295,000.00	£15,000.00	5%	£12.90
Russ Tam	Datta Academies Trust	57	£290,000.00	£25,000.00	9%	£9.92
Sir Jon Collis *	United Learning Trust	90	£290,000.00	£22,754.00	9%	£4.43
Martin Haworth	Flagship Learning Trust	1	£275,000.00	£50,000.00	22%	£153.12
Roger Leighton ***	Partnership Learning	13	£265,000.00	£10,000.00	4%	£24.90
Steve Kenning	Aspirations Academies Trust	16	£260,000.00	£15,000.00	6%	£27.07
Anita Johnson**	Luxford School Trust Limited	7	£260,000.00	£20,000.00	8%	£33.88
Shahid Ahmed ***	New Vision Trust	5	£260,000.00	£60,000.00	30%	£31.37
Adrian Kneeshaw ***	Carton Academy Trust	9	£260,000.00	£55,000.00	27%	£54.36
Dr Karen Roberts ***	The Kennel Academies Trust	45	£255,000.00	£20,000.00	9%	£11.10
Rob Tam	Northern Education Trust	28	£247,822.00	£15,244.00	7%	£14.07
Kelvin Simpson	Advance Learning Partnership	18	£245,382.00	£41,736.00	20%	£29.42
Rebecca Boomer-Clark	UFT Schools	57	£245,000.00	£25,000.00	11%	£7.19
Paul West	The Spencer Academies Trust	26	£245,000.00	£10,000.00	4%	£13.48
Jacqueline Yalin	Southfields Multi Academy Trust	2	£245,000.00	£25,000.00	11%	£172.29
Diana Owen	L.E.A.D. Academy Trust	27	£240,000.00	£10,000.00	4%	£21.46
Esther MacDonald	Hull Collaborative Academy Trust	16	£240,000.00	£30,000.00	14%	£37.34
Dr Carl Ward	City Learning Trust	4	£240,000.00	£15,000.00	7%	£91.67
Alan Williams	Midsummer Norton Schools Partnership	34	£235,000.00	£15,000.00	7%	£17.87
Jr Heard-Jones	The Shaw Education Trust	31	£235,000.00	£15,000.00	7%	£20.12
Alex Russell	Bourne Education Trust	22	£230,000.00	£10,000.00	5%	£18.46
Rob McDonough ***	East Midlands Education Trust	23	£230,000.00	£15,000.00	7%	£17.69
Marc Jordan	Creative Education Trust	17	£230,000.00	£10,000.00	5%	£15.82
Sir John Townsend	The Gorse Academies Trust	15	£230,000.00	£10,000.00	5%	£20.50
Sir Mark Grundy	Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust	11	£230,000.00	£-	0%	£42.55
Sir Andrea Carter	South Farnham Educational Trust	9	£230,000.00	£25,000.00	12%	£19.51
Hugh Greenway	The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust	33	£230,000.00	£10,000.00	4%	£17.51

* Salary is paid by trust sponsor
** Majority of earnings from headteacher role
*** Includes salary in lieu of pension contributions

Notes:
The difference was calculated using the minimum pay figures for both years Academy and pupils numbers from August 2019

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The Prime Minister's salary for 2023-24 was £172,153, almost £60,000 less than the top 31 paid CEOs of Academy Trusts in the table above.

Best paid per pupil					
CEO	TRUST	Schools in the Trust	MINIMUM PAY	PAY/PUPIL	Number of pupils
Amanda Nicholson	Kings Academy Trust *	4	£160,000	£320.44	499
Paul Ketley	Ace Learning	2	£150,000	£186.72	805
Alison Nettleship	Discovery Multi Academy Trust	3	£150,000	£180.72	830
Jacqueline Valin	Southfields Multi Academy Trust	2	£240,000	£168.78	1422
Paul McKeown	The Bishop of Winchester Academy Tru	1	£180,000	£156.79	1148
* Three of the four schools are special or AP Schools Eliminated AP and special only trusts and UTCs, as well as those who held headteacher roles outside their trust. Only considered trusts with CEOs on over £150,000 Academy and pupil number from August 2024					
Lowest paid per pupil					
CEO	TRUST	Schools in the Trust	MINIMUM PAY	PAY/PUPIL	Number of pupils
Sir Jon Coles	United Learning	90	£290,000	£4.43	65455
John Barneby	Oasis Community Learning	53	£180,000	£5.77	31182
Tom Rees	Ormiston Academies Tryst	42	£202,203	£5.83	34704
Sir Martyn Oliver/Lee Wilson *	Outwood Grange Academies Trust	40	£180,000	£5.84	30834
Rebecca Boomer/Clarke	Lift Schools	57	£240,000	£7.04	34076
* Two leaders held the CEO post during the year Academy and pupil number from August 2024					

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Top Academy Trust CEO pay and Executive Directors of Education in local authorities' pay – per-school comparisons

The most comparable role in local authorities to that of an Academy Trust CEO is that of the Executive Director of Education. For the past 17 years, the TaxPayers' Alliance has produced a report, the 'Town Hall Rich List'. The figures used are from the 2025 report.²²

A CEO of an Academy Trust leads a multi-academy trust (MAT), focusing on the education and success of all schools within the Trust, while an Executive Director of Children's Service provides strategic leadership for children's services across a local authority, encompassing various aspects beyond education.

It is clear that regardless of the number of schools in the 31 top paid CEOs, their pay expressed as a ratio of the school in the Trust is many times more than the equivalent figure for LA Executive Directors of Children's Service.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Town Hall Rich List 2025 - TaxPayers' Alliance

Top of the pay pots: the country's best-paid CEOs

CEO	TRUST	Schools in the Trust	MINIMUM PAY	DIFFERENCE FROM LAST YEAR	% PAY RISE	PAY/PUPIL
Sir Dan Moynihan	Harris Federation	54	£515,000	£30,000	6%	£12.26
Simon Beamish	Leigh Academies Trust	32	£350,000	£45,000	15%	£15.57
Dayo Olukoshi	Brampton Manor Trust	2	£330,000	£20,000	6%	£66.34
Sir Kevin Satchwell	Thomas Telford School + MAT	6	£310,000	£10,000	3%	£45.55
Sir Mufti Hamid Patel	Star Academies	33	£295,000	£15,000	5%	£12.90
Paul Tarn	Delta Academies Trust	57	£290,000	£25,000	9%	£9.92
Sir Jon Coles*	United Learning Trust	90	£290,000	£22,754	9%	£4.43
Martin Haworth	Flagship Learning Trust	1	£275,000	£50,000	22%	£153.12
Roger Leighton***	Partnership Learning	13	£265,000	£10,000	4%	£24.90
Steve Kenning	Aspirations Academies Trust	16	£260,000	£15,000	6%	£27.07
Anita Johnson**	Loxford School Trust Limited	7	£260,000	£20,000	8%	£33.88
Shahed Ahmed***	New Vision Trust	5	£260,000	£60,000	30%	£71.37
Adrian Kneeshaw***	Carlton Academy Trust	9	£260,000	£55,000	27%	£54.30
Dr Karen Roberts***	The Kernal Academies Trust	45	£255,000	£20,000	9%	£11.10
Rob Tarn	Northern Education Trust	28	£247,822	£15,246	7%	£14.07
Kelvin Simpson	Advance Learning Partnership	18	£245,382	£41,738	20%	£29.42
Rebecca Boomer-Clarke	Lift Schools	57	£245,000	£25,000	11%	£7.19
Paul West	The Spencers Academies Trust	26	£245,000	£10,000	4%	£13.48
Jacqueline Valin	Southfields Multi Academy Trust	2	£245,000	£25,000	11%	£172.29
Diana Owen	L.E.A.D. Academy Trust	27	£240,000	£10,000	4%	£21.46
Esther MacDonald	Hull Collaborative Academy Trust	16	£240,000	£30,000	14%	£37.34
Dr Carl Ward	City Learning Trust	4	£240,000	£15,000	7%	£91.67
Alun Williams	Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership	34	£235,000	£15,000	7%	£17.87
Jo Heard - Jones	The Shaw Education Trust	31	£235,000	£15,000	7%	£20.12
Alex Russell	Bourne Education Trust	22	£230,000	£10,000	5%	£18.66
Ron McDonough***	East Midlands Education Trust	23	£230,000	£15,000	7%	£17.69
Marc Jordan	Creative Education Trust	17	£230,000	£10,000	5%	£15.82
Sir John Townsley	The Gorse Academies Trust	15	£230,000	£10,000	5%	£20.50
Sir Mark Grundy	Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust	11	£230,000	£0	0%	£42.55
Sir Andrew Carter	South Farnham Educational Trust	9	£230,000	£25,000	12%	£59.51
Hugh Greenway	The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust	33	£230,000	£10,000	4%	£17.51

* Coles is paid by the trust sponsor

Note - The difference was calculated using the minimum pay figures for both Academy years and pupil numbers from August 2024

** Majority of earnings come from headteacher role

*** Includes salary in lieu of pension contributions

Local Council Executive Director of Education Pay per school

Executive Director - Children Services	School in the LA (2023)	Minimum Pay	Pay per school
Kent	559	£197,445	£353.21
Hampshire	493	£196,644	£398.87
Norfolk	400	£199,900	£499.75
Surrey	357	£203,944	£571.27
Devon	353	£117,271	£332.21
North Yorkshire	341	£174,811	£512.64
Leeds	267	£184,476	£690.92
Somerset	253	£176,417	£697.30
Sheffield	163	£151,036	£926.60
Liverpool	151	£127,411	£843.78
Newcastle upon Tyne	89	£167,891	£1,886.42
Newham	89	£185,979	£2,089.65
Barnsley	88	£160,000	£1,818.18
Somerset	253	£176,417	£697.30

Specific example of academy excess

- At Graveney Trust – G Stapleton – £97,500 salary plus £27,500 medical benefits.²³
- Carlton Academy Trust registered the largest increase (£65,000) as Adrian Kneeshaw's pay rose to at least £260,000.²⁴
- At Flagship Learning Trust, the only standalone trust (Wright Robinson College, Manchester) in the top 31 of pay pots, executive headteacher Martin Haworth – who moved into the role last year, having long been its headteacher – earned at least £275,000 plus TPS pension contributions (circa £79,000), making a total pay of £354,000, which is £153.12 per pupil.²⁵
- Simon Beamish, Leigh Academies Trust leader, received a rise of 15%, as his pay jumped to at least £350,000.²⁶
- At the New Vision Trust in London, Chief Executive Shahed Ahmed saw his pay rise by 30% to at least £260,000 and received at least £50,000 of this as 'salary in lieu of pension contributions.'²⁷
- The biggest rise last year was seen at the Danes Educational Trust, near Watford, where CEO Dr Josephine Valentine went from earning between £115,000 and £120,000 to at least £180,000.²⁸

Other examples of Academy Trust's use of public money

The Academy Consolidated accounts for 2022-23 show an employee at an unnamed Trust was handed between £200,000 to £250,000 as part of an 'agreed' exit package. Two others received a sum of between £100,000 and £150,000 following compulsory redundancies.²⁹

Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT) paid £235,823 for the event in February 2025 at the First Direct Arena in Leeds, at which more than 4,000 of its staff and governors attended for a day which the Trust described as both a celebration of its 15 years as an organisation and embracing professional development, though teacher sources were scathing about the benefits.³⁰

Eko Trust (East London) worked with PLMR, the well-known communications company, to devise a plan to 'support a smooth transfer' of the two primaries in Brighton and Hove, with the schools eventually having to claim the money back from the Government. The public relations firm's £180-an-hour charge, to persuade a sceptical public to back the takeover of two local authority primary schools by a prominent MAT, has been revealed through a freedom of information response. The total cost to the taxpayer for just one phase of this work was put at £10,000 plus VAT, though further work may have added to that bill.³¹

²³ <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/07687897/filing-history>

²⁴ <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/11963458/filing-history>

²⁵ <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/11683714/filing-history>

²⁶ <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/02336587/filing-history>

²⁷ <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/11086415/filing-history>

²⁸ <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/07671949/filing-history>

²⁹ Academies consolidated annual report and accounts: 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK

³⁰ <https://educationuncovered.co.uk/news/academy-trust-spends-235000-on-one-day-celebration-event-for-staff-and-governors>

³¹ Education Uncovered |News|Revealed: PR agency's £180-an-hour charge for pro-academy spin

Bright Tribe

The Government was still paying the bill for one of England's highest-profile Academy Trust failures – four years after the last of its schools were transferred to other organisations.

Bright Tribe Trust, which was featured in a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) *Panorama* documentary in 2018, was accused of misusing government funds and lost all its schools in 2018-19. It received £84,644 from the DfE in 2022-23.

Disclosures in DfE documents also reveal extra payments of £3 million over four years in relation to three free schools in England's South West.

Meanwhile, its sister chain, Adventure Learning Academy Trust (ALAT), which lost its schools in 2019, received £34,960 in 2022-23, a recently-released DfE report discloses.

An annexe to the DfE's Academy Schools Sector report for 2022-23 sets out costs of policy failure which also include bills for some closed free schools – as well as a £1.9 million transfer to another Academy Trust which has featured extensively on Education Uncovered, and which took the total extra taxpayer support for three free schools it took over to £3 million over four years.³²

³² Government still footing the bill for failed Bright Tribe chain and sister trust, four years after closure, DfE report reveals

About NASUWT

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