

FAO Headteachers, Chair of Governors and School Finance

12 March 2025

School Budget Setting Guidance 2025/26

Dear Colleagues

School budget plans must be submitted to the Local Authority (LA) by 1 May 2025, following approval by your governing body or a committee authorised to approve the budget. To assist with the budget setting process a checklist has been provided below. This is a guide to the areas that should be reviewed; this is not an exhaustive list and consideration should also be given to any other factors that are likely to have an impact on your school's financial position. Please bear in mind that inflation remains high and whilst we have provided a guide to inflation factors based on current predictions, these may change and any increase will need to be covered by the school budget.

It is important to follow the guidance and supply all the requested information. Once everything is complete the spreadsheet checks on the Original Budget tab will show as green.

If you have an in-year deficit for 2025/26 (even if you have an overall surplus balance), please provide an explanation of why this has occurred on the workings and notes page of the budget plan spreadsheet, as this will assist us in our checks and will avoid the need to contact you later. If the reason for this is ongoing expenditure such as pay costs rather than one off spend, please also include a summary of the actions you are taking to mitigate this position.

Schools are not permitted to plan for a deficit budget in normal circumstances so if you are having difficulty setting a balanced budget for 2025/26 please contact schoolsfinance@milton-keynes.gov.uk as soon as possible. A reminder on the rules for deficit balances is outlined in the [Scheme for Financing Schools](#). All deficit submissions must be accompanied by a recovery plan showing how and when the budget will be brought back to a surplus.

Need to contact us?

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Yours faithfully

Katie Burgess
Education Finance Manager

School Budget Setting Checklist

Issues to consider	Complete
General	
The level of balances anticipated at 31 March 2025 and the level of balances the school needs at 31 March 2026.	
Actual income and expenditure for the 2024/25 financial year compared to the budget set for 2025/26, including the movement of balances.	
Brought forward balances should only be used for one off spend. If these are being used to fund additional staff, you should clearly state how these costs will be sustained in the future when the balances have diminished.	
Inflation changes in respect of utilities and other goods/services.	
Has all expenditure for items on your contract list been budgeted for, including any changes from the previous financial year?	
Have costs for statutory health and safety checks and any associated work resulting from the checks been included?	
Do you have a rolling asset management plan and has expenditure relating to this programme of work been included?	
If your budget share is protected by the minimum funding guarantee, you should plan in anticipation of possible reductions of funding in subsequent years.	
Staffing	
Have you considered changes in pupil numbers and the level of staff resources required? A salary calculator tool has been included as part of the budget template which once completed should reconcile back to the amounts you have included in your budget on lines E01 to E07 (this tool is optional for 2025/26).	
Does the staffing budget reflect your curriculum plan and your staffing structure? Have leavers, starters and vacancies all been accounted for, including adjustments for maternity leave, long term sickness and supply cover?	
Have the implications of Job Evaluation been included in respect of any protected salaries?	
Have all inflation and increment increases (subject to performance appraisals) been included and profiled in the relevant months?	
The employer contribution rate of the Teacher's Pension Scheme (TPS) is increasing to 28.68%, the government has committed to covering the cost of this 5% increase which should be included in I01 as the teachers pension grant.	
The Local Government Pension Scheme changed to 20.1% from 1 April 2023, this was part of a triennial actuarial valuation, as such this rate will remain for 2025/26.	
Income	
Have you included any income likely to be received in respect of top up funding for high needs pupils both from Milton Keynes and other local authorities? Remember to adjust for starters and leavers where this is known.	
The Primary PE and Sports Premium grant is allocated per academic year with the current funding being agreed until August 2024. Further announcements on this	

grant funding are expected in the Spring. More information can be found here but schools should continue to budget for the next academic year using the same rates.	
Universal Infant Free School Meals - please estimate income using the UIFSM calculator on the LMS website. The new rate per meal per day is £2.58.	
The Devolved Formula Capital methodology and calculation is estimated to be the same for 2025/26 although the final allocation won't be published by the ESFA until after the Spring 2025 census. It will continue to be paid in one instalment in July.	
Pupil premium will continue in the 2025/26 financial year and will use the October 2024 census date, further information on rates and eligibility can be found here .	
Expenditure	
In 2025/26 primary schools should include all income and costs associated with the de-delegated budget. Amounts and journal entries are included on a tab on the budget template.	
From 2022/23 schools no longer need to pay their own NNDR, as this will be paid to the billing authority directly from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on the schools behalf. The expected cost of NNDR for maintained schools has been deducted from the school budget share allocations, as per the funding notification published in February 2025. Schools will still receive a rates bill from the billing authority, but this is for information only and should NOT be paid. However notional NNDR entries will need to be included in the school's expenditure and income based on the values on the rates bill.	