

# 11 ways to fund **now>press>play** in your school this year

The PE and Sport Premium is changing - but eleven funding routes can pay for immersive, inclusive learning in your school in 2026/27. Most schools don't know all eleven exist. This guide maps each one: the budget size, who holds it, the now>press>play angle, and the official government source.

<b>£1.6bn</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>31 Dec</b>	<b>500+</b>
IMF over 3 years	Funding routes	Inclusion strategy deadline	Schools already using now>press>play



## What's changing

The PE and Sport Premium, worth £320 million last year, is being replaced by a centrally commissioned PE and School Sport Partnerships Network, which will be fully operational from Spring 2027. Money will no longer flow directly to schools. School-level discretion ends.

A one-off £100 million transitional payment supports primary schools during 2026/27. After that, the route is closed.

**But the funding landscape for the kind of provision now>press>play delivers has never been stronger. Here are the eleven routes that matter.**

## The 11 funding routes

Routes 01 - 03 are the strongest for most schools right now. Read those first.

<p><b>01</b> <b>ACT NOW</b></p>	<p><b>Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF)</b> <b>BUDGET</b> ~£14,000/yr for an average primary <b>BUDGET HOLDER</b> Headteacher / SENCO</p> <p>NPP directly evidences three of the seven DfE inclusion themes: sensory and physical needs (Theme 3), social, emotional and mental health (Theme 4), and belonging and school culture (Theme 5). Every mainstream school must publish a statutory inclusion strategy by 31 December 2026 - NPP gives you something concrete to point to.</p> <p>The White Paper also explicitly names language development and early communication programmes as examples of eligible IMF spend. NPP's audio-led format develops spoken language, listening and communication in exactly the same way - schools can reference this DfE precedent directly in their inclusion strategy.</p> <p><i>Note: No application required. Maintained schools receive payment via their local authority end of June 2026. Academy trusts receive payment directly from DfE in early July 2026.</i></p> <p>Official source: <a href="#">IMF guidance — gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>02</b> <b>ONGOING</b></p>	<p><b>Pupil Premium</b> <b>BUDGET</b> £1,550 per qualifying primary pupil <b>BUDGET HOLDER</b> Headteacher / PP Lead</p> <p>NPP has documented outcomes for communication, language and engagement for disadvantaged pupils across 500+ schools. Pupil Premium requires evidenced impact - our annual impact report gives you that evidence ready-made.</p> <p><i>Note: Pool expanding from September 2026 as the FSM earned income threshold is removed - more qualifying pupils, bigger allocations.</i></p> <p>Official source: <a href="#">Pupil Premium guidance — gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>03</b> <b>ONGOING</b></p>	<p><b>SEND / Notional SEN Budget</b> <b>BUDGET</b> Varies - within core budget allocation <b>BUDGET HOLDER</b> SENCO</p> <p>NPP's screen-free, audio-led format is particularly effective for pupils with autism, anxiety and communication needs - but it works as universal provision, so no EHCP is required to access it. The DfE explicitly allows IMF and notional SEN budget to be stacked.</p> <p><i>Note: The SENCO should be actively involved in deciding how the notional SEN budget is spent. This is a SENCO conversation, not just a headteacher one.</i></p> <p>Official source: <a href="#">Notional SEN Budget guidance — gov.uk</a></p>

<p><b>04</b> <b>ONGOING</b></p>	<p><b>MAT Central Budget</b>  <b>BUDGET</b> Trust discretion - varies by size <b>BUDGET HOLDER</b> MAT CEO / Curriculum Director</p> <p>A MAT can fund NPP centrally for all its schools in a single decision, evidencing a trust-wide inclusion approach against the IMF requirement simultaneously. We work with trusts of 10 - 20 schools at £1,499 per school per year, with tiered volume pricing available.</p> <p><i>Note: For academy trusts, the IMF is paid directly to the trust - not to individual schools. The MAT CEO holds the budget and decides how it is deployed across their schools. This makes a central decision to use NPP across the trust the cleanest possible route: one approval, one inclusion strategy, one payment already in the trust's account.</i></p> <p>Official source: <a href="#">Schools funding framework — gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>05</b> <b>FROM SEPT 2026</b></p>	<p><b>Enrichment Entitlement (targeted schools)</b>  <b>BUDGET</b> £22.5m over 3 years - 400 schools <b>BUDGET HOLDER</b> Headteacher</p> <p>The White Paper requires schools to meet benchmarks across five enrichment areas. Arts and culture is one of them - and NPP sits squarely there. Ofsted inspection toolkits reflect the enrichment benchmarks from September 2026, so there is inspection pressure behind it.</p> <p><i>Note: Ring-fenced funding targeted at the most deprived 400 schools only. If your school qualifies, this is a direct line.</i></p> <p>Official source: <a href="#">Every Child Achieving and Thriving — gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>06</b> <b>BUILDING TO 2028</b></p>	<p><b>Oracy Curriculum Budget</b>  <b>BUDGET</b> School discretion <b>BUDGET HOLDER</b> Headteacher / Curriculum Lead</p> <p>The White Paper embeds oracy throughout the refreshed national curriculum. NPP's audio-led, whole-body format directly builds spoken language, listening and storytelling - making it a strong curriculum investment ahead of the 2028 refresh as well as an inclusion tool today.</p> <p><i>Note: No separate grant - but it creates a strong internal budget justification for curriculum leads. Buy now, get ahead of the curve.</i></p> <p>Official source: <a href="#">White Paper — gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>07</b> <b>ONGOING</b></p>	<p><b>Mental Health / Wellbeing Budget</b>  <b>BUDGET</b> MHST coverage at 60% of schools <b>BUDGET HOLDER</b> SENCO / Pastoral Lead</p> <p>NPP's experiences support sensory regulation, anxiety reduction and belonging - all core to whole-school wellbeing frameworks. Schools working with Mental Health Support Teams are actively looking for provision that evidences whole-school impact.</p> <p><i>Note: Opens a different internal door - SENCO and pastoral leads rather than headteacher. Useful when the headteacher route stalls.</i></p> <p>Official source: <a href="#">Mental Health Support Teams — gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>08</b> <b>ONGOING</b></p>	<p><b>Attendance Improvement Budget</b>  <b>BUDGET</b> School / SLT discretion <b>BUDGET HOLDER</b> Headteacher / SLT</p> <p>The DfE has assigned personalised attendance improvement targets to every school. NPP's engagement and belonging impact - particularly for anxious or reluctant learners - is a legitimate attendance intervention. Reframe the conversation: this isn't a curriculum purchase, it's an attendance strategy.</p> <p><i>Note: Persistent absence is a named DfE priority and an Ofsted focus. The attendance angle opens conversations at SLT level beyond the curriculum budget.</i></p> <p>Official source: <a href="#">School attendance guidance — gov.uk</a></p>

<p><b>09</b> <b>ROLLING OUT</b></p>	<p><b>Breakfast Club Grant</b>  <b>BUDGET</b> £1/child/day + £25/day guaranteed minimum <b>BUDGET HOLDER</b> Headteacher / SBM</p> <p>The national rollout of free breakfast clubs (April 2026, 2,000 schools) creates a funded extended day. NPP can be positioned as an enrichment session within the breakfast club slot - a separate budget line that doesn't touch the curriculum or inclusion budget at all.</p> <p><i>Note: Lower-stakes entry point. Useful for schools that are resistant to curriculum change or whose core budget is locked. The enrichment entitlement categories explicitly include arts and culture.</i></p> <p>Official source: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-breakfast-clubs">Free Breakfast Clubs guidance — gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>10</b> <b>ONGOING</b></p>	<p><b>Mission NE / Mission Coastal</b>  <b>BUDGET</b> Place-based DfE investment <b>BUDGET HOLDER</b> MAT CEO / Regional Director</p> <p>Schools in Mission North East and Mission Coastal areas have access to additional place-based DfE funding launching in September 2026. NPP's inclusion and enrichment positioning aligns directly with the place-based investment priorities.</p> <p><i>Note: Already embedded in NPP's North East roundtable strategy. Funding access should be an explicit part of the pitch to NE MAT CEOs.</i></p> <p>Official source: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/dfe-place-based-programmes">DfE place-based programmes — gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>11</b> <b>LONGER GAME</b></p>	<p><b>Arts Everywhere Fund / Arts Council England</b>  <b>BUDGET</b> £130m awarded to 130 organisations <b>BUDGET HOLDER</b> ACE-funded arts organisations</p> <p>NPP can position itself as a delivery partner for an Arts Council-funded arts organisation, accessing their grant without a direct application. The route is through partnership, not direct funding.</p> <p><i>Note: 6-12-month horizon. Not a direct school route - explore which ACE-funded organisations work in primary education and approach them as a delivery partner.</i></p> <p>Official source: <a href="https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/arts-everywhere-fund">Arts Everywhere Fund — artscouncil.org.uk</a></p>

## Key dates

<b>June 2026</b>	IMF payments to maintained schools via local authorities.
<b>July 2026</b>	IMF payments direct to academy trusts.
<b>September 2026</b>	Pupil Premium pool expands as FSM threshold removed. Ofsted enrichment benchmarks go live.
<b>31 December 2026</b>	Statutory inclusion strategy publication deadline - every school.
<b>Spring 2027</b>	PE and Sport Premium formally replaced by Partnerships Network. School-level discretion ends.
<b>2028</b>	Refreshed national curriculum with embedded oracy requirements.

## Quick reference - all 11 routes

Print this page and share it with your headteacher, SENCO or business manager.

#	FUNDING STREAM	BUDGET	URGENCY	BUDGET HOLDER	OFFICIAL SOURCE
1	<b>Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF)</b>	~£14,000/yr for an average primary	<b>ACT NOW</b>	Headteacher / SENCO	<a href="#">IMF guidance - gov.uk</a>
2	<b>Pupil Premium</b>	£1,550 per qualifying primary pupil	<b>ONGOING</b>	Headteacher / PP Lead	<a href="#">Pupil Premium guidance - gov.uk</a>
3	<b>SEND / Notional SEN Budget</b>	Varies - within core budget allocation	<b>ONGOING</b>	SENCO	<a href="#">Notional SEN Budget guidance - gov.uk</a>
4	<b>MAT Central Budget</b>	Trust discretion - varies by size	<b>ONGOING</b>	MAT CEO / Curriculum Director	<a href="#">Schools funding framework - gov.uk</a>
5	<b>Enrichment Entitlement (targeted schools)</b>	£22.5m over 3 years - 400 schools	<b>FROM SEPT 2026</b>	Headteacher	<a href="#">Every Child Achieving and Thriving - gov.uk</a>
6	<b>Oracy Curriculum Budget</b>	School discretion	<b>BUILDING TO 2028</b>	Headteacher / Curriculum Lead	<a href="#">White Paper - gov.uk</a>
7	<b>Mental Health / Wellbeing Budget</b>	MHST coverage at 60% of schools	<b>ONGOING</b>	SENCO / Pastoral Lead	<a href="#">Mental Health Support Teams - gov.uk</a>
8	<b>Attendance Improvement Budget</b>	School / SLT discretion	<b>ONGOING</b>	Headteacher / SLT	<a href="#">School attendance guidance - gov.uk</a>
9	<b>Breakfast Club Grant</b>	£1/child/day + £25/day guaranteed minimum	<b>ROLLING OUT</b>	Headteacher / Business Manager	<a href="#">Free Breakfast Clubs guidance - gov.uk</a>
10	<b>Mission NE / Mission Coastal</b>	Place-based DfE investment	<b>ONGOING</b>	MAT CEO / Regional Director	<a href="#">DfE place-based programmes - gov.uk</a>
11	<b>Arts Everywhere Fund / Arts Council England</b>	£130m awarded to 130 organisations	<b>LONGER GAME</b>	ACE-funded arts organisations	<a href="#">Arts Everywhere Fund - arts council.org.uk</a>

## Want to talk through the right funding route for your school?

We work with headteachers, SENCOs, business managers and MAT leaders to identify the most straightforward funding route and provide the evidence documentation needed for inclusion strategies.

Get in touch · [nowpressplay.co.uk](https://nowpressplay.co.uk)

## Get in touch:

[hello@nowpressplay.co.uk](mailto:hello@nowpressplay.co.uk)

0203 727 5592

[www.nowpressplay.co.uk](https://www.nowpressplay.co.uk)

