

Difference between community schools and voluntary aided schools

There are some key differences between community schools and voluntary aided schools. The differences are over:

- Who employs the staff
- Who owns the land and buildings
- Who is responsible for maintenance of the school premises; and
- Who controls the admissions arrangements

Community schools, also known as Local Authority (LA) maintained schools are those that are funded and controlled by the local education authority. The LA owns the land and buildings, funds the school, employs the staff, and determines the admissions arrangements.

The LA is the responsible body for community schools.

Voluntary aided (VA) schools are often, but not always, church or faith schools. The land and buildings are usually owned by the religious organisation but the governing body runs the school, employs the staff and controls admissions.

The Diocese is the responsible body for VA schools.

Capital Funding for schools

Responsibility for work to VA school premises is shared between the school's governing body and the LA. The LA has responsibility for the playing fields and the governing body of VA schools are liable for all other capital expenditure.

Funding for capital works in VA schools is grant aided, generally up to 90%, by the Department for Education, either directly to the school or via the Diocesan Board of Education. The governing body usually contributes 10% to of the costs of capital work undertaken.

Condition funding is the money Department for Education (DfE) allocate each year to improve and maintain the condition of the school estate (buildings and grounds).

Condition funding includes School Condition Allocations and Devolved Formula Capital for:

- local authorities and local-authority-maintained schools, and
- voluntary-aided bodies.

Devolved formula capital (DFC)

This grant is capital funding calculated on a formulaic basis for each educational establishment. It gives schools direct funding for the priority capital needs of its buildings and grounds and for investment in capital equipment including ICT.

VA schools receive their DFC direct from the DfE and each school gets a fixed sum and a variable amount based on pupil numbers (pre-determined by DfE formula) with each governing body having full discretion as to the use of those funds. Recipients of grant are expected to comply with any requests from the DfE requesting spend information for the grant.

School Condition Allocation (SCA)

For VA schools, SCAs are paid directly to the local Archdiocese, as the responsible body, through a formulaic allocation. Directly-paid SCA is for responsible bodies to prioritise on condition need across their institutions. The terms and conditions issued to responsible bodies give the detail on the types of project allocations can be used for.

This funding was formerly known as Locally Coordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP) - an independent capital funding stream held centrally by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) but which was locally co-ordinated by LAs. This enabled governing bodies to carry out improvement schemes in voluntary aided schools and priorities determined in consultation with the diocesan authorities.

Condition Improvement Fund (CIF)

The CIF is an annual bidding round for eligible* VA schools to apply for capital funding. The priority for the fund is to address significant condition need, keeping the buildings safe and in good working order. This includes funding projects to address health and safety issues, building compliance and poor building condition.

* VA schools not part of larger VA bodies eligible for SCA.