

School Resource Management

Thought Leadership – Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning

Should the curriculum drive the budget, or the budget drive the curriculum?

For headteachers and governors there is a fine balance between balancing the budget and being able to sustain an enriched and fit for purpose curriculum to allow the best outcomes for the pupils.

The curriculum is strongly linked to pupil factors and current staffing levels, which is the most expensive part of the budget, but is the core business. Staffing totals are 70% to 80% of your allocated budget costs.

Governors and Senior leadership teams need to ensure that the curriculum is staffed as efficiently as possible and future proofed for the next few cohorts coming through the school.

Teaching the pupils is the most important element of a school and having the curriculum to match the pupils' needs is the highest priority. Schools should start with building the curriculum they want and then tweaking it, if it is not affordable or sustainable.

With schools facing tighter budgets due to increased staffing costs, it is important for the person setting the timetable and Business Manager to work closely together once the curriculum is built to ensure that it is financially viable. There are some key ratios that need to be calculated in relation to curriculum efficiency, this will help to make the best fit for the school.

Some key ratios for checking financial viability of your school:

- Teaching staff as proportion of budget
- Pupil v Staff ratio
- Contact ratio
- The cost per lesson/period

Just by carrying out these ratios will give an indication of how efficiently built your curriculum is.

Governors need to scrutinise the ratios and benchmark against other similar schools to ensure the school is efficiently staffed with both teaching and non- teaching staff. If there are differentials against similar schools, these would need to be investigated to understand what the differences are and how your school can benefit from working more efficiently.

Other costs need to be reviewed at least annually to ensure best value so that money is spent where it should be, on the pupils' curriculum needs.

If your curriculum is unachievable financially, some difficult decisions will need to be made, ensuring that the pupils get the best possible outcomes. By using the DFE toolkit, you can support the decision making in the school by asking the probing questions to ensure viability and a sustainable curriculum for years to come.

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