

Fundraising Review

School Name	[REDACTED]	Address	[REDACTED]
Contact name			
Position			

School plans and situation

[REDACTED] is a one-form entry primary school serving 176 pupils in Essex. The school operates within a context of significant disadvantage, with approximately 38% of pupils eligible for free school meals, around 40% Pupil Premium, and a very high proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs. The school has no active PTA and limited additional capacity to deliver large-scale fundraising projects.

The school is seeking to raise approximately £21,000 to transform its playground environment through the introduction of alternative play and regulation resources. Proposed items include sandpits, mud kitchens, scooters, a Zen garden, benches or picnic tables and other calming outdoor equipment designed to reduce conflict and support positive behavior at break and lunchtime.

Due to identified behavioural and sensory needs, the school has removed football and other ball games. While this has reduced some issues, it has also resulted in increased aggression caused by a lack of alternative structured activities. The project aims to introduce purposeful, inclusive play options that occupy pupils positively and help regulate behaviour.

The overall objective is to create a calmer, more engaging playground that supports pupils' social development, wellbeing and behaviour while enabling safer, more inclusive play across the school day.

Getting Started

Fundraising, as opposed to general school funding, is typically used to purchase products and services that enrich education. It is most effective when tied to a specific purpose: outdoor learning, wellbeing resources, creative arts, digital access, literacy, or extracurricular enrichment. These needs carry weight in poor urban settings where children often face multiple barriers to opportunity.

Even a small history of successful grants can dramatically improve confidence and attract new supporters. Fundraising is about telling a story that will resonate with your supporters and highlight the impact that their support can have on the children in your school.

Your fundraising environment presents both challenges and strengths. Higher levels of disadvantage often mean limited parental capacity for traditional event fundraising, making typical PTA-style activities less reliable as core revenue generators. However, the strong case for supporting children in high-need contexts means grant funders, philanthropic supporters, CSR

programmes, and charitable foundations are significantly more receptive to your applications than they are for more affluent schools.

Your fundraising strategy should therefore prioritise grant funding, business partnerships, philanthropic donors, and supporter networks beyond immediate parents. While you can run community events or small fundraisers, these are best treated as engagement opportunities rather than major income sources.

Teamwork and participation

Fundraising can benefit the whole school community. To increase success:

- Involve as many staff as possible in planning
- Work collaboratively with your PTA or Friends group, if you have one
- Be clear about where you need support
- Make use of volunteers' skills and available time

Working together builds momentum, increases morale, and strengthens community engagement.

To build momentum:

- Bring staff together around a shared goal
- Work collaboratively with any existing PTA or parent community
- Communicate clearly where help is needed
- Look back at past wins (even small ones) and repeat what worked
- Track which funders respond well and build a pipeline over time

Learning from experience

Successful fundraising can raise the profile of the school and build confidence.

Looking back at previous campaigns helps you identify what worked well and what didn't, which funders responded positively and whether past successful campaigns could be repeated or scaled.

If you have PTA, this is a real positive for the school. Perhaps they could help contact local businesses or research potential grants and even help fill in applications. If you don't it might limit your ability to run some effective events and it is worth seeing if you can find a volunteer to support, you or even recruit a part time fundraiser – perhaps just a few hours a week.

Case Studies

We think of our playground as an extra classroom: A school transforms its playground into a multi-use learning and sensory environment supporting pupils with diverse needs.

<https://www.funded.org.uk/fundraising-success/grants/we-think-of-our-playground-as-an-extra-classroom>

Focus on local grants: We raised £21,845 to improve our playground: A PTA delivered phased playground improvements through local and national grant funding routes.

<https://funded.org.uk/fundraising-success/grants/focus-on-local-grants/>

Grants

In your situation grants should be a focus.

You are seeking funding for a wide range of different improvements to your school's play and learning provision with a focus on calming spaces to help support children's regulation, and need to raise £21,000 to complete your project. As there are a number of elements to your proposal, it lends itself well to seeking support from a number of different grant givers. You can ask each for funding for a specific part of the proposed work/a specific piece of equipment so you can start to see the benefit of your fundraising sooner than having to wait to fund the whole project. Check each funders' guidelines carefully, and adjust your request accordingly, as some may want to part-fund a larger project while others may prefer to see their award spent on a particular thing.

Providing funding that will enable children to develop physically and socially and spend time in the outdoor environment is an attractive prospect for many funders, especially since Covid. Supporting young people who are disadvantaged in some way, be it socio-economically or because they have SEN, for example, will also add strength to your application(s). Make sure you set out a strong case for why you need the funding you are requesting, who your project will benefit and the positive outcomes it will provide.

A good place to start when seeking grants is local funders. These organisations will be more invested in your local community and improving the wellbeing of its residents than larger, national funders.

With a bit of online research, you should be able to find funders in your local area. Try searching for the name of your district or local area and 'grant', 'funding' or 'philanthropy' and you are likely to see some results. They won't all be relevant for schools, but there may be some that support education, the outdoors or young people. If not offering grants directly to educational establishments, funders may well support a PTA, if you have one, especially if they are a registered charity. As well as a general internet search, here are some other good places to start:

- Rotary or Lions Clubs - may offer funding or initiatives with prizes for schools
- Voluntary action organisations or your local Council for Voluntary Services - often offer grant alerts or newsletters
- Local Councils - may offer their own funding or provide details of other local funds
- Philanthropic trusts specific to your local area
- Local retailers or businesses that have an established presence in your area
- Housebuilders that have development sites locally to your school
- As you are a Church of England school, your local parish or diocese.

The [Active Essex Foundation](#) has a page of potential grant funding leads.

Widen the Net

There are lots of funders who will favour organisations in a specific geographical area, be it a county, region, or area, based on a radius around their location.

- Police force – some forces offer Police Property Act Fund grants from the sale of found or confiscated property
- Wind or solar farms
- Landfill sites
- Airports

The last three all tend to have charitable foundations or spending pots to benefit communities within or impacted by their areas of operation. A lot of the windfarm and landfill grants can be

accessed via the [Grantscape](#) or [Entrust](#) online portals. However, be wary, as not all grants are available for schools and some require a 'contributing third party' (CTP) donation to release the funds and/or public access to the facilities they provide funds for.

Throughout the UK, there is a network of [Community Foundations](#), bringing together people and organisations that want to improve their communities. These foundations administer grants from funders that benefit causes within specific geographical areas. The [Essex Community Foundation](#) website has a number of potential leads for grants for community organisations in your area.

[ActionFunder](#) is an online platform that matches not-for-profit organisations' projects with grant givers who may be able to fund them. It is free to sign up.

We also have local grants on our PTA+ website <https://pta.co.uk/local-ptas/>

Further Leads

Here are some further suggestions for funders you could approach for a grant:

[Grassroots](#) is an independent grant-giving charity with an area of benefit covering Colchester and north Essex. Grants of up to £1,000 are offered. There are five deadlines per year, with the next deadline being 30 June 2026. If you don't have a PTA, you will need to check if they will accept an application from a school.

The Essex Association of Local Councils has a [Community Initiative Fund](#) which may be a suitable funding source for your project, although it looks like your parish council may need to apply on your behalf. Unfortunately, the deadline is annual and has passed for 2026. However, if you are still fundraising next spring, it would be worth getting in touch to discuss your project with them as they offer up to £10,000.

The [Ford Britain Trust](#) favours applications from schools and community organisations in the areas in which Ford operates, which includes Essex. The application window for large grants of up to £3,000 will next be open from 1 May to 30 June.

If you can demonstrate that your outside/garden area and/or equipment will provide a benefit to your wider local community in any way, for example if it is available out of school hours for local children or for wraparound care or holiday clubs, you could apply to [National Lottery Awards for All England](#) for up to £20,000.

Nisa convenience shops also have funding available, via their [Making a Difference Locally](#) and Heart of the Community initiatives. You need to enquire in your local shop to see if/how they can help – it looks like there are a couple of branches in Clacton.

You would need to act quickly, as the annual funding window is open now and closes on 13 May, but the [Spar Community Cashback](#) scheme could provide up to £10,000 towards your project.

If any of your school community have a Co-op Charity or Community bank account, they could apply to the [Customer Donation Fund](#) for up to £1,000. The next deadline isn't until 30 September, but the online application process is quick and easy.

It's only a small contribution, but the [Jazz Apple Foundation](#) offers grants of up to £500 for projects with a focus on healthy eating, sport or physical exercise (so they would possibly fund the scooters you need). The application process is simple and grants are awarded monthly.

[Eastern Counties Educational Trust Limited](#) offers grants averaging around £9,000 to support the education of young people with special educational needs, emotional or behavioural difficulties, so may favour an application. The next deadline is 31 October.

Once you find a grant

Ideally you would find someone internally to take responsibility for looking after the bid application. Once you have identified the likely grants, call them up and discuss your needs with them. It is worth asking for a volunteer, you may find a member of staff or a parent with experience of grant applications.

Once a grant application has been successful remember to report back to the grant provider once those funds have been used and the outcomes are being experienced by the children.

I have attached our **Project Funding support document** to help you develop your bid-writing skills and maximise your chances of your application being successful.

Also, more information and case studies can be found:

- <https://funded.org.uk/fundraising-success/grants/>
- <https://funded.org.uk/advice-hub/bid-writing/>

Leasing as a Funding Alternative

Leasing can complement your grant strategy by removing upfront costs for essential equipment and facilities. This is especially useful where budgets are tight and capital is limited.

Leasing offers:

- Predictable budgeting
- Immediate access to equipment
- Upgrade options
- Reduced financial pressure

It works particularly well for ICT, playgrounds, minibuses, sports surfaces, and refurbishments. Specialist education leasing partners can support planning and implementation.

Leasing can be a practical solution for schools looking to access essential equipment or facilities without the need for large upfront costs. It works well as a standalone option or alongside grants, sponsorship, and fundraising activities.

Benefits of Leasing:

- Preserves Cash Flow: Spread costs over time rather than paying in full upfront.
- Immediate Access: Implement projects quickly without waiting for full funding.
- Predictable Budgeting: Fixed payments make financial planning easier.
- Upgrade Options: Many agreements allow upgrades at the end of the term.
- Tax & Compliance Advantages: Leasing can offer VAT and accounting benefits.

When to Consider Leasing:

- Large capital projects (e.g., sports pitches, playgrounds, IT equipment)
- When grant funding is uncertain or only partially covers costs
- To complement fundraising campaigns by reducing immediate financial burden

Funding 4 Education helps schools lease essential equipment without using up capital budgets. They offer flexible payment plans, cover a wide range of items from IT suites to refurbishments, and provide fixed-cost agreements for easy budgeting. Their education-focused approach ensures schools can upgrade equipment and adapt as needs grow.

<https://funding4education.co.uk/schools/>

contact: Jack Johnson jack@funding4education.co.uk

Regular giving / Online fundraising

We recommend all schools set up with a fundraising page – this provides the flexibility to look at both regular giving and crowdfunding as well as sponsorship pages to support individuals who want to set up specific activities or challenges to support the school.

While traditional online crowdfunding could be challenging for you due to lower parental capacity, digital fundraising still has an important role—particularly with local businesses, alumni, and wider supporters.

Your most effective online route is a **Regular Giving Page** listing a Wishlist of items with real impact (£10 = a sensory kit, £30 = wellbeing resources, etc.). Businesses often prefer this structured, purpose-driven approach.

Funding Wall is an all-in-one fundraising hub that allows you to set up regular giving, run campaigns, sell tickets for events, host prize draws that work well in small communities, and maintain a thank-you page for local businesses—including supporters who no longer live locally.



Some example walls:

- <https://www.fundingwall.org.uk/wall/friends-of-ivy-lane-school-sn151he>
- <https://www.fundingwall.org.uk/wall/friends-of-merrylands-ss156qs>

We can arrange for you to have an account set up for your school – email info@funded.org.uk and we will send you a set up form

Inspiration

<https://funded.org.uk/fundraising-success/crowdfunding/>

<https://funded.org.uk/fundraising-success/regular-giving/>

Alumni or Philanthropic Support

Urban disadvantaged schools can attract strong philanthropic backing, as funders and individuals are often motivated by the chance to create meaningful change for children who face multiple barriers.

You do not need a formal alumni database—your existing networks often include former pupils, local professionals, business owners, and individuals who care deeply about education, inclusion, sport, the arts, or social mobility.

Potential supporters include:

- former pupils now in skilled or professional careers
- local philanthropists or families with community ties
- business owners and directors
- individuals active in community groups or charities
- people passionate about improving children's life chances

Philanthropic support can include one-off or regular donations, sponsorship of specific resources, match-funding, support for disadvantaged pupils, or professional expertise and mentoring. This support often comes from people motivated by long-term impact rather than traditional PTA-style fundraising.

Effective first steps:

- share impact stories on social media
- publish a clear "Support Our School" message
- ask governors and staff for warm introductions
- present costed projects with strong outcomes
- frame the ask around pupil impact, not cost

If you are a feeder school, consider connecting with the secondary school's alumni network—many former pupils will have attended your school.

Sponsorship and business support

You may already have businesses you work with and hopefully there will be others you can approach. Many businesses would like to work with schools but are unsure of what support schools need or who to approach.

Whoever you approach:

- Outline what you are aiming to do/buy
- Why it's needed and the positive outcomes for the children
- How the company can help achieve these outcomes
- Provide options in terms of support you are looking for, money, resources, raffle prizes, affiliate relationships.
- Demonstrate value for money and benefits to the company

Types of support and options to consider:

- Local retailers and leisure outlets will be interested in reaching the wider school community. Provided they are suitable as a partner, perhaps suggest a regular donation or where appropriate an affiliate payment for in exchange for recommendations. Local retailers will have a marketing budget.
- Professional services companies, solicitors, accountants etc may be more inclined to donate on a regular basis. Talk to us about setting up a Regular Giving page and use our 'Donate to Educate' campaign and branding. These companies will also use any campaign stories within their own newsletters.
- Corporations that are operating in your area, housebuilders, amenity centres, large factory outlets may well have funds that they look to spend on good causes. Also check with your local council as to whether there are any funds available via Section 106 notices. This is money construction companies must deposit with councils to be passed on to local causes.
- Think about developing a sponsor's page or wall on your website – a simple thank you page that will give profile to supporters and encourage other potential sponsors.

A PTA or volunteer may well be able to help reach out to business and audit your parents, some of which may run or manage local businesses who would like to help.

Please see links to case studies and editorial:

<http://funded.org.uk/partnerships/business/link-up-with-business/>

<http://funded.org.uk/partnerships/business/how-to-secure-business-sponsorship/>

<http://funded.org.uk/partnerships/business/whats-in-it-for-me/>

See Appendix – Donation letter

General Fundraising

Event fundraising may produce limited income in poor urban communities, but it still plays a valuable role in building engagement and belonging.

Effective activities include:

- Simple, low-cost events
- Small raffles
- In-school curriculum-linked fundraising (book fairs, readathons, arts projects)
- Passive income streams such as 100 clubs or affiliate fundraising

Use events primarily to **build community and awareness**, with other fundraising routes providing the main revenue.

These can be divided into two areas, event fundraising and non-event or passive income streams, but can include a third area curriculum linked.

Passive income streams are often overlooked but can be useful as once established they can tick over without too much effort. These can include, recycling schemes, 100 clubs, lotteries, and affiliate fundraising.

Curriculum based fundraising can help schools raise funds within the classroom or school environment and can include such things as Christmas card projects, readathons or book fairs. These can be organised by staff within the relevant departments.

Our sister site www.PTA.co.uk is packed with advice and inspiration.

Marketing and PR

Strong storytelling is essential for a poor urban school. You must make your need visible, relatable, and solutions focused.

Focus PR on:

- Children's outcomes
- Measurable impact
- Community pride
- Transformation and opportunity

Social media remains your most powerful, free tool. Short videos, real moments, and clear asks outperform polished designs. Use Facebook and Instagram for reach, and WhatsApp for donations.

The impact and outcomes outlined earlier should be at the heart of PR messaging – spreading the word across the school and wider school community.

Fundraising and partnerships should be included in general marketing and be used to promote the school in general. Also, good marketing and PR will help future campaigns as will highlighting successful campaigns and continue to demonstrate impact.

<https://funded.org.uk/advice-hub/marketing-and-communications/>

Social media is one of the easiest ways for schools and PTAs to reach parents and supporters – quickly, for free, using only a phone.

Appendix - Donation Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

████████████████████ is seeking support to transform its playground environment in order to better support pupils with behavioural, sensory and emotional needs.

Due to the needs of our pupils, traditional playground activities such as football are no longer suitable. In the absence of alternative provision, pupils can become bored and frustrated, which has led to increased incidents of aggression.

We are therefore seeking funding of approximately £21,000 to introduce calming, purposeful outdoor resources including sandpits, mud kitchens, scooters, quiet garden areas and seating. These resources will help occupy pupils positively, reduce conflict and support emotional regulation during breaktimes.

Support could be provided through financial donations, matched-funding programmes or appropriate in-kind contributions. All donors will be kept informed of the impact their support has on pupils' wellbeing and behaviour.

Yours faithfully,

Appendix – Impact Report

Project summary

Creation of a regulation-focused playground environment with inclusive play equipment.

Need

High levels of SEN and behavioural need require alternatives to traditional playground games.

Beneficiaries

All pupils, particularly those with SEND and emotional regulation needs.

Activities & outputs

Installation of sandpits, mud kitchens, quiet areas, scooters and seating.

Outcomes

Reduced behaviour incidents, improved wellbeing, and more positive play experiences.

Impact & evidence

Behaviour logs, staff observation and reduced lunchtime incidents.

Budget & funding

Total fundraising requirement of approximately £21,000.