



Funding Outdoor and Playground Projects in Schools

Providing practical guidance to help schools fund and deliver high-quality projects

How this pack can help you

Schools regularly approach us to explore opportunities to enhance provision for their pupils. In many cases, the educational need and ambition are clear, but funding is not yet fully confirmed.

This pack has been created to help schools, trusts and supporting stakeholders understand:

- how similar projects are typically funded
- what funding options may be available
- how projects can be planned, approved and delivered realistically
- where expert support is available if needed

Many schools successfully combine grant funding, community support and phased delivery to make projects happen. This resource is designed to make that process clearer, more manageable, and easier to navigate.

Importantly, schools do not need all funding in place to begin planning or progressing conversations. Having a clear project outline, realistic costs and credible funding routes is often enough to support internal discussions and decision-making.

Also, the funding principles outlined in this pack apply across many areas of school improvement.

We have partnered with **FundEd**, the leading provider of fundraising support in the education sector, to help support the schools we work with.

If you would like specific advice or have questions about your particular funding or fundraising needs, the team at FundEd would be happy to help. Please email info@funded.org.uk, including as much detail as you can.

What successful funding applications usually demonstrate

While every funder is different, successful applications for projects like this usually explain:

- **Need** – why this is needed, now
- **Beneficiaries** – which pupils will benefit most
- **Outcomes** – what will improve as a result
- **Value for money** – why this solution is appropriate
- **Delivery** – confidence the project can be delivered well

Schools do not need to write in technical language. Clear explanations, context and real examples are often far more effective than jargon or statistics alone.

Winning Grants: What Strong Applications Have



✓ A relatable, pupil-centred story

✓ A clear need backed by evidence (photos, data, staff observations)

✓ A strong case for impact — the 'so what?' answered

✓ School context: % Pupil Premium, location, SEND profile

✓ A detailed budget with quotes and cost breakdown

✓ A sustainability plan — what happens after the grant?

✓ Your contribution — match funding signals commitment

✗ Jargon, generic statements or vague 'enrichment' claims

✗ 'We need money' — without explaining what changes for pupils

 *Tip: Try to speak to the grant giver before applying.*
Tip: Ask someone unfamiliar with the project to read your draft.

How projects like this are commonly funded

Projects are rarely funded through a single source and are particularly well suited to a mixed funding approach. Schools typically use a funding mix, combining different approaches depending on their context, capacity and timescales.

Importantly, schools do not need to secure all funding at once. Many successful projects are planned with multiple funding routes in mind and delivered in stages as funding becomes available.

Typical funding routes include:

Income Source	Best For	Strengths	Considerations
Grants	Capital projects, specialist equipment, inclusion, environment, wellbeing	High value	Time-consuming; criteria specific

Crowdfunding & online fundraising	Quick wins, urgent needs, community projects, building regular income	Great publicity, easier to set up and manage	Benefits from a strong story & demonstrable benefits
Events & general fundraising	Community building, unrestricted income	Fun & visible	Requires volunteers
Business support	Sponsorship, match funding, donations in-kind	Builds long-term partners	Requires outreach

As a rough guide, grant decisions typically take 8–16 weeks from submission, crowdfunding campaigns run over 4–8 weeks, and community fundraising events usually need 1–3 months to organise.

Turning funding options into a workable plan

While every school's situation is different, projects like this are often progressed using a simple, practical framework.

Step 1 – Define the project clearly At the outset, schools focus on clarifying: • what is being delivered • who will benefit • what outcomes the project will create This helps support internal discussions and later funding conversations.	Step 2 – Confirm realistic costs Schools then confirm indicative costs, which may include: • equipment or services • installation or delivery • training or ongoing support, where relevant Costs do not need to be fixed immediately, but realistic estimates help shape funding decisions.
Step 3 – Choose the right funding mix Schools often consider: • grant funding where appropriate • community or PTA support if helpful • phased delivery where funding is secured over time This approach allows projects to move forward without relying on a single funding decision.	Step 4 – Deliver and demonstrate impact Once delivery begins, schools typically: • capture outcomes and benefits • share progress with stakeholders • build evidence to support future funding Demonstrating impact not only supports accountability but also makes future funding easier.

Getting Started — Your Fundraising Checklist

01 Define the project What specifically? Who benefits? What changes for pupils?	02 Set a clear target Total cost inc. VAT and fees. What's already pledged?
03 Write your outcomes story In plain language — what will be different for your pupils?	04 Choose your funding mix Grants + crowdfunding + events + business + resilience
05 Build your team Staff, governors, PTA, parents — one person can't do it alone	06 Plan and launch Start small, create early wins, maintain momentum

A balanced approach works best

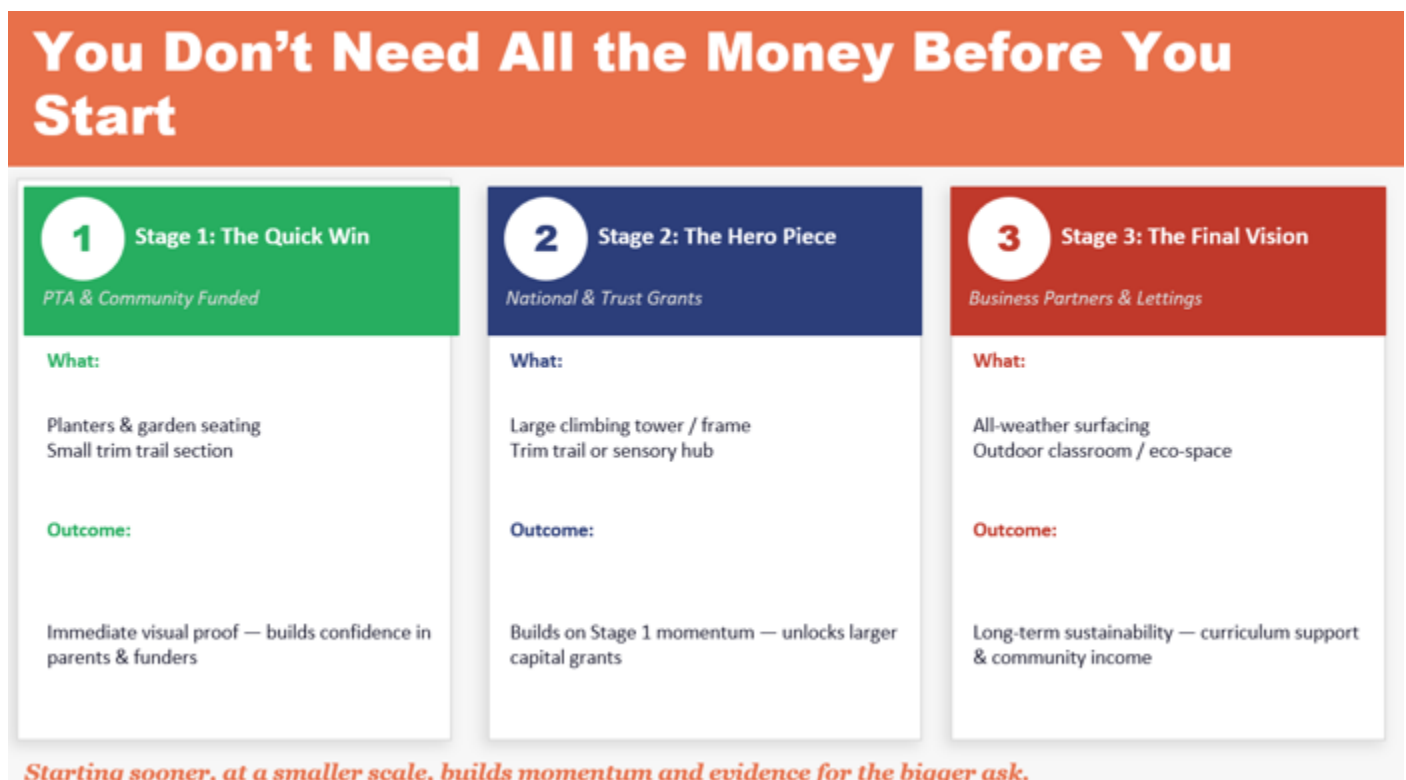
A strategy that uses a mix of funding activities helps maintain momentum and provides alternatives if one approach takes longer than expected.

Many projects are not delivered all at once but have a phased approach

Schools often choose to:

- secure initial funding for part of a project
- combine multiple funding sources over time
- deliver in phases aligned to funding availability

A phased approach allows schools to begin sooner, reduce risk and adapt projects as funding becomes available. This delivery can be particularly effective where, grant deadlines differ, community fundraising takes time and is unpredictable and where projects can be expanded later.



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
- 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.

Learning from past 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.

Where FundEd can help

FundEd works with schools across the UK to help them plan, structure and secure funding for enrichment, inclusion and improvement projects.

Support is designed to be **practical and proportionate**, helping schools move projects forward without adding unnecessary complexity or pressure.

Schools often contact FundEd once they have a basic project outline and indicative costs, even before funding is confirmed. At this stage, FundEd typically helps identify suitable grant opportunities, sense-check project outcomes and suggest a realistic funding structure.

Depending on a school's needs, this may include:

- identifying suitable grant and funding opportunities
- helping shape project descriptions and outcomes
- supporting or reviewing grant applications
- advising on realistic funding structures
- providing access to practical fundraising tools
- Setting up an online [donation page](#)

Schools can access support at a level that suits them. Some schools simply need light touch guidance, while others choose more structured support for specific projects.

There is no expectation to commit to a particular route at the outset. FundEd's role is to help schools make informed, confident decisions at each stage.

What happens next

This pack is intended to support discussion, planning and decision-making at whatever stage a school is currently at.

Schools do not need everything in place before progressing conversations about delivery.

A typical next step might include:

- sharing this pack with senior leaders, governors or trustees
- clarifying the scope and priorities of the project
- confirming indicative costs and delivery options
- exploring suitable funding routes

Some schools choose to seek funding advice at this stage, while others continue planning independently and access support later. Both approaches are valid.

If funding support would be helpful at any point, schools are welcome to contact FundEd for an initial discussion.

Support available

If funding advice or support would be helpful at any stage, schools are welcome to contact FundEd for guidance on funding routes, project planning or next steps.

info@funded.org.uk

SECTION TWO

FundEd
SCHOOL FUNDRAISING SUPPORT

Funding Outdoor Play & Learning



The following section provides specific guidance on funding outdoor and playground projects in schools.

Outdoor and playground projects are frequently supported through grants and community funding because they align closely with many funders' priorities.

These can include:

- Improving pupil physical activity, health and wellbeing
- Creating inclusive outdoor spaces accessible to all pupils, including those with SEND
- Supporting mental health through outdoor play and nature-based learning
- Enhancing the curriculum through outdoor learning environments
- Reducing inequality by providing safe, stimulating outdoor spaces for all pupils

Well-defined outdoor projects can demonstrate clear outcomes for pupils while also showing longer-term educational and community value, which is often attractive to funders.

Typical outdoor and playground projects that school fund successfully

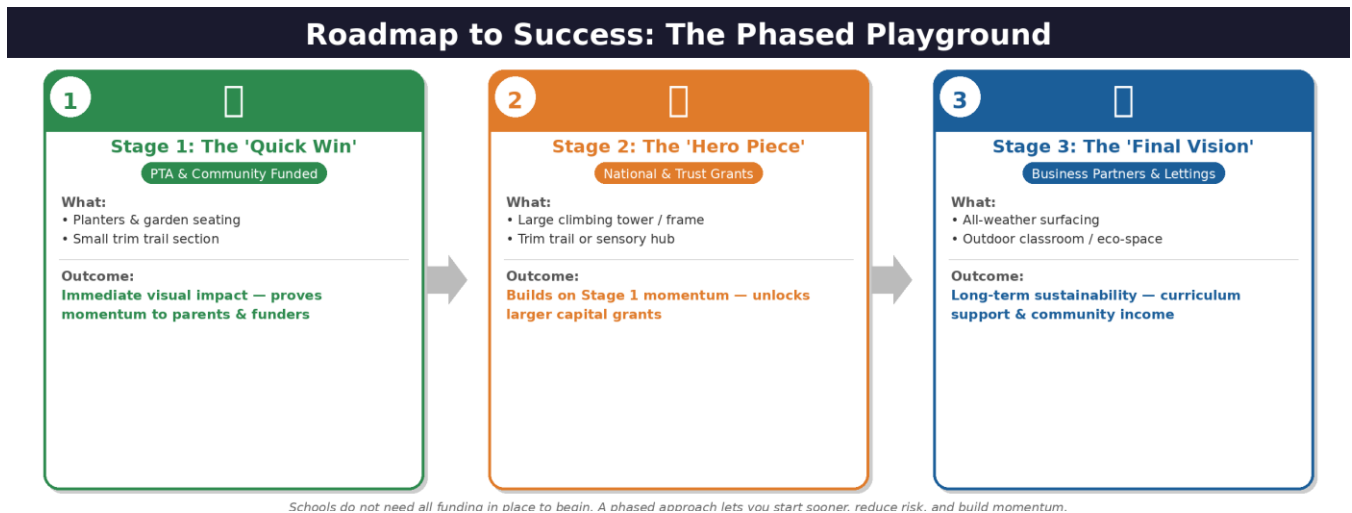
Schools regularly secure funding for outdoor initiatives such as:

- playground equipment - trim trails, climbing frames, play structures
- sensory gardens and nature areas
- outdoor classrooms and covered learning spaces
- all-weather surfacing and safety improvements
- growing areas, planting beds and eco spaces
- outdoor performance and social spaces
- seating, shade structures and storage

Projects may focus on a specific year group - such as EYFS - or be designed to benefit the wider school over time.

The "Phased Playground"

A phased delivery strategy allows you to begin your playground transformation immediately. By breaking the project into manageable stages, you can align delivery with funding availability, reduce financial risk, and start seeing the benefits for your pupils sooner.



What funders often look for in outdoor project applications

When applying for funding, schools often find it helpful to explain outdoor projects in terms of pupil impact, rather than equipment alone.

Funders commonly want to understand:

- how the project will improve physical activity, wellbeing or learning
- how pupils will access and use the space regularly
- how the project benefits pupils with limited access to safe outdoor play
- what improvements in confidence, behaviour or engagement are expected
- why the proposed solution represents good value

Evidence schools often use successfully

Schools do not need complex data to demonstrate need. Useful evidence can include:

- number of pupils who will benefit and how regularly they will use the space
- current condition of outdoor areas - photos are particularly effective
- links to school improvement or wellbeing priorities
- staff observations on pupil behaviour, physical activity or outdoor learning
- any safety concerns or inspection reports relating to current provision
- how the project supports inclusion, SEND or disadvantaged pupils
- reducing lunchtime behavioural incidents
- providing a quiet sensory space for SEND pupils who find the main playground overwhelming.

Delivering and demonstrating impact

Once an outdoor project is underway, schools typically:

- photograph the space at each stage of delivery
- capture evidence of pupil engagement and how the space is used
- gather pupil and staff feedback once the project is complete

- share progress with stakeholders, governors and funders
- use outcomes to support future funding applications for further improvements

This approach not only supports accountability but helps build a stronger case for future outdoor initiatives.

Community and PTA-led funding

Many outdoor and playground projects are supported through PTA-led activity and parent involvement, particularly where projects benefit the whole school community.

PTA or volunteer-led fundraising often plays a valuable role in supporting outdoor projects. PTA.co.uk regularly features examples of outdoor and playground campaigns that successfully combine school improvement, community engagement and fundraising.

Examples of successful PTA-supported outdoor funding include:

- crowdfunding campaigns for specific pieces of equipment
- sponsored events - sponsored walks, runs or obstacle courses
- employer match funding linked to fundraising challenges
- community donation drives for garden or eco projects

PTA-led activity is often most effective when it forms part of a broader funding plan, combining community support with grant funding

Case Studies and features

We Think of Our Playground as an Extra Classroom

A SEND-inclusive playground transformation funded by a major children's charity, showing how outdoor play spaces can be designed to support sensory needs, wellbeing and curriculum-linked learning.

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

Our PTA Helped Turn Empty Fields into a Playground

A case study demonstrating how grants, fundraising events and community support funded a trim trail and climbing frame, highlighting the role of PTAs in playground delivery.

<https://www.funded.org.uk/partnerships/pta-and-community/our-pta-helped-turn-empty-fields-into-a-playground/>

Focus on Local Grants – Playground Improvements

Shows how local trusts and community groups funded phased playground improvements, including stages, seating, trim trails and all-weather access.

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

Playground Funding: Grow a Pound Campaign

An example of pupil-led fundraising and crowdfunding that raised significant funds toward a new play structure as part of a phased outdoor play redevelopment.

<https://funded.org.uk/fundraising-success/events-and-activities/playground-funding-our-grow-a-pound-campaign-raised-more-than-6000-towards-a-new-play-castle/>

King Athelstan Primary School – Big Outdoors Project

A large-scale, phased playground and outdoor learning redevelopment supported by a mix of grants, PTA fundraising and community engagement, with strong evidence of pupil impact.

<http://funded.org.uk/fundraising-success/campaigns-/school-fundraising-success-king-athelstan-primary-schools-big-outdoors-project/>

The final page of this pack is a summary of 11 income streams every school should activate. If you would like a printable version to share with your team, please email info@fundEd.org.uk.

FundEd SCHOOL FUNDRAISING SUPPORT		11 INCOME STREAMS EVERY SCHOOL SHOULD ACTIVATE								
£10,000 Average PTA raises per year	£747M UK schools earn from lettings	+25% Gift Aid uplift on every donation	£14M+ Grants available via FundEd	11 Income streams in this guide						
01 Build Your Fundraising Team Appoint a dedicated lead — governor, parent or staff member. Form a committee with community voices. A well-led team keeps momentum going year-round. <i>Tip: Working together builds momentum, increases morale, and strengthens community engagement. One person burning out kills momentum.</i>	02 Unlock Grant Funding Use the FundEd grants database to search for grants by category need, region and Key Stage. <i>Tip: Assign one person to monitor grant deadlines each term.</i>	03 Hire Out Your Assets UK schools earn £747M from lettings nationally. Your hall, sports facilities, car park, kitchen and library are income-generating assets outside school hours. Set a clear lettings policy. <i>Tip: Benchmark your hire rates against local venues to stay competitive.</i>	04 Activate Gift Aid HMRC returns 25p for every £1 donated by UK taxpayers — a 25% uplift at zero cost to donors. Register as a charity and train your team to collect Gift Aid declarations. <i>Tip: Retrospective claims are possible — check your last 4 years of donations.</i>	05 Partner with Local Businesses Local firms want to support their community school. National businesses have CSR budgets. Approach with a menu of options: cash, in-kind, skills, match funding and work-related learning. <i>Tip: A specific ask ('sponsor our reading corner for £500') beats a vague one.</i>	06 Engage the Wider Community Alumni, Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs and local groups are untapped supporters. More alumni exist than current pupils. Ensure GDPR compliance when contacting former families. <i>Tip: Alumni can donate skills and expertise, not just money.</i>	07 Team Up with Other Schools Share equipment, co-run events and split profits with neighbouring schools. A smaller team doesn't mean smaller ambition — collaboration multiplies your capacity and ideas. <i>Tip: A shared summer fair with two schools doubles your visitor numbers.</i>	08 Run Community Events Fill gaps in your local area: quiz night if there's no pub, film night if there's no cinema. Events that serve the community attract visitors who travel — and spend more. Host a circus or pantomime/production and sell tickets outside the school. <i>Tip: Survey your community and use PTA.co.uk for inspiration.</i>	09 Crowdfund a Project A compelling community benefit story, realistic target and clear impact statement are the three ingredients of a successful school crowdfunding campaign. Set up with Fundingwall.org.uk and promote via social media and local press. <i>Tip: Projects that benefit the whole community raise 3x more than school-only appeals.</i>	10 Market Your School Increased visibility brings unexpected support. Use social media, press releases, open days and community partnerships. A marketing plan tailored to your school's context outperforms generic activity. Check out the Advice Hub on FundEd.org.uk <i>Tip: One well-placed local press story can generate more donations, raise the profile of the school and encourage future campaigns.</i>	11 Leverage Match Funding Many employers will match the fundraising contributions of their staff. Encourage every volunteer to check with their employer. Put match-funded volunteers on your most profitable stalls. <i>Tip: Match funding can double your event income with zero extra effort.</i>

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