

Apprenticeships & Funding: Frequently Asked Questions

Key information on the Growth and Skills (formerly known as the Apprenticeship) Levy, funding access, qualification entry requirements, and financial support for Hackney schools.

How is the Growth and Skills Levy calculated?

The Growth and Skills Levy funds apprenticeships and short training module “Units” for employers. It applies to organisations with an annual pay bill exceeding £3 million at a rate of 0.5%.

- **Levy Allowance:** Each employer receives an annual £15,000 allowance to offset payments.
- **Calculation Formula:** $(0.5\% \times \text{total pay bill}) - £15,000$ allowance.
- **Example:** A £5 million pay bill results in an annual levy of £10,000 $((0.5\% \times £5M) - £15k)$, collected monthly via payroll.

What are the Funding Pathways by School Type?

- **Community Schools:** Funds are pooled into Hackney Council’s levy, providing 100% funding access as needed.
- **Academies & Levy-Paying Schools:** Funded up to 0.5% of your pay bill. Levy transfers are available if spending limits are reached via the Hackney Apprenticeship Network if needed.
- **Non-Levy Paying Schools:** Apprentices under 25 are 100% government-funded. For apprentices aged 25+, Hackney Council transfers funds to cover 100% of training costs.

School Category	Access & Funding Pathway
Community Schools	Pooled into Council levy; 100% funding accessed directly as needed.
Academies, VCS & Other Schools	Register via Government Gateway PAYE. Receive 100% funding as a levy transfer
Agency Staff	Levy funds apply to direct PAYE staff only. Agency apprentices must use their agency’s levy, but can still benefit from a levy transfer from Hackney Council.

Apprenticeship Requirements & Qualifications

What are the typical entry requirements?

Entry requirements vary depending on the level of the qualification selected:

- **Level 2:** No formal qualifications required; focus is on aptitude and potential.
- **Level 3:** Ranging from no formal qualifications to 3–5 GCSEs at grade 4/C or above (or equivalent Level 2 qualification).
- **Level 4 & 5:** Level 3 qualifications (A-Levels, BTEC, etc.) plus GCSE English and Maths at grade 4/C normally required.
- **Level 6 (Degree):** Level 3 qualifications normally required. GCSE English and Maths (grade 4/C) are mandatory; GCSE Science (grade 4/C) is also required for primary teaching roles.

Notes: Training providers can offer Functional Skills training alongside the apprenticeship for candidates lacking required GCSE English or Maths qualifications.

For Teaching apprenticeships, GCSE qualifications in Maths and English will be required before a teacher can gain fully qualified status.

What qualifications should schools consider?

Schools can choose from a range of standard qualifications, foundation apprenticeships for new entrants aged 16-21 and short modules. This list provides the most commonly requested training. The full list of available levy funded qualifications can be found on the [Skills England website](#):

Qualification Standard	Level	Duration	Total Funding / Cost
Facilities Services Operative	Level 2 ▾	12 months ▾	£3,000
Property Maintenance Operative	Level 2 ▾	18 months ▾	£9,000
Business & Administration	Level 3 ▾	12–18 months ▾	£5,000
Teaching Assistant	Level 3 ▾	18 months ▾	£5,000
Early Years Educator	Level 3 ▾	12–18 months ▾	£6,000

Qualification Standard	Level	Duration	Total Funding / Cost
Facilities Management Supervisor	Level 3 ▾	18 months ▾	£4,000
School Business Professional	Level 4 ▾	18 months ▾	£6,000
Facilities Manager	Level 4 ▾	24 months ▾	£6,000
Early Years Lead Practitioner	Level 5 ▾	24 months ▾	£8,000
Teacher Degree Apprenticeship	Level 6 ▾	18 months ▾	£9,000
Early Years Teacher (EYTS)	Level 6 ▾	36 months ▾	£27,000
Undergraduate Teacher (QTS)	Level 6 ▾	48 months ▾	£27,000

Payment Structure

Apprenticeship funding is capped and distributed according to a standardised schedule:

- **Monthly Installments:** 80% of the total cost is split equally across the duration of the programme.
- **Completion Payment:** The final 20% is withheld and released upon successful completion of the End-Point Assessment (EPA).
- **Example:** For an £18-month School Business Professional course costing £6,000, monthly payments are £266.67 (80% / 18 months), with the remaining £1,200 paid upon EPA completion.

Incentives & Support

Schools can access financial incentives and support grants depending on apprentice age and school type:

- **£1,000 Young Apprentice Payment:** Available for all schools hiring apprentices aged 16–18, or 19–24 with an EHCP or Care Leaver status.
- **£2,000 Non-Levy Hiring Grant:** Available to non-levy paying schools across all age categories (effective October 2026).
- **£2,000 Foundation Apprenticeship Payment:** Available for specific age brackets in both levy and non-levy schools.
- **Class 1 NICs Waiver:** Exemption on employers National Insurance contributions for apprentices aged under 25 earning under £50,270 per annum.
- **£3,000 Care Leaver Bursary:** One-off grant paid directly to eligible care-leaver apprentices up to age 24.

- **Levy Transfers:** Hackney Council provides levy transfers to cover 100% of training costs for eligible apprentices in Hackney schools.

What about procuring a training provider?

What should you look for when selecting a training provider?

Evaluating apprenticeship providers requires filtering marketing claims through independent data and testing their delivery framework during initial discussions. The Council's apprenticeship team can support with providing contacts at reliable, known training providers with a good local track record of delivery and successful outcomes, or support with your own independent selection processes.

1. Independent Data & Hard Evidence

Check these metrics before speaking with sales representatives:

- **Qualification Achievement Rates (QAR):** Do not rely on overall provider averages. Request QAR data specifically for your target apprenticeship standard (e.g., Level 3 Teaching Assistant). Compare their retention and completion rates against the national benchmark.
- **Ofsted Reports:** Look beyond the overall grade. Read the sub-sections on *Quality of Education* and *Apprenticeships*. Note any comments regarding tutor turnover, off-the-job training compliance, or poor employer communication.
- **End-Point Assessment (EPA) Pass & Distinction Rates:** High pass rates indicate strong teaching; high distinction rates indicate stretch and challenge. Ask what percentage of learners pass on their first attempt versus requiring resits.
- **Employer and Learner Satisfaction:** View independent ratings on the government's **Find Apprenticeship Training** portal rather than testimonials on the provider's website.

2. Differentiating Sales Pitches from Excellent Delivery

Area	Sales Pitch / Red Flags	Quality Delivery / Green Flags
Initial Assessment (RPL)	Skips or rushes Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to secure maximum funding and quick onboarding.	Conducts rigorous skill diagnostics to tailor the curriculum and reduce funding/duration if prior knowledge exists.

Off-the-Job Training	Claims "we handle everything" or relies entirely on generic, unmonitored e-learning modules.	Integrates structured, role-relevant training into work schedules and aligns assignments with operational needs.
Tutor Staffing	Uses high-volume, generic assessors managing unrealistic caseloads (e.g., 60+ learners per tutor).	Assigns dedicated sector specialists with manageable caseloads (typically 25–35 learners).
Employer Involvement	Treats the employer as a passive sponsor and sends automated monthly updates.	Enforces mandatory 3-way progress reviews (Tutor, Apprentice, Line Manager) every 8 to 12 weeks.
Programme Duration	Promises shortcut timelines that barely meet the 12-month statutory minimum.	Sets realistic durations designed around workplace rhythms (e.g., school terms).

3. Key Diagnostic Questions to Ask

During training provider selection “pitch” meetings, ask these specific operational questions:

Term-Time & School Calendar Alignment

- ***"How do you adapt your delivery timetable for Term-Time Only (TTO) staff and school holidays?"***
 - *What to look for: The provider should confirm that mandatory live workshops, webinars, or assignment deadlines will not fall during school closure periods or key exam/assessment weeks (e.g., SATs or GCSEs).*
- ***"How do you adjust the Off-the-Job (OTJ) training hour calculations for 39-week contracted staff?"***
 - *What to look for: OTJ calculations must be adjusted based on actual contracted weeks per year rather than a standard 52-week contract, preventing the weekly hour requirement from being artificially inflated.*

2. Delivery Model & Classroom Impact

- **"How much of the training requires releasing staff from the classroom during school hours versus flexible online or self-paced study?"**
 - What to look for: A clear breakdown of live taught sessions versus asynchronous learning, allowing you to plan classroom cover and budget for backfill costs.
- **"How do you help us map routine school activities (e.g., INSET days, parent evenings, SEN reviews, lesson observations) toward OTJ hours?"**
 - What to look for: A provider that provides a pre-mapped grid of standard school duties that count toward OTJ training, reducing admin burden on staff.

3. Track Record & Staffing Quality in Schools

- **"What are your Qualification Achievement Rates (QAR) and first-time pass/distinction rates specifically for schools on this standard?"**
 - What to look for: Sector-specific performance data rather than generic company-wide averages. Look for QARs consistently above national benchmarks (around 60–65%+ depending on the standard).
- **"What has your tutor turnover rate been in this subject area over the past 12 months, and what is the average tutor caseload?"**
 - What to look for: Low turnover and manageable tutor caseloads (typically 25 to 35 learners per tutor). High turnover severely disrupts learner momentum.

4. Mentor Support & Tri-Partite Reviews

- **"How are the 3-way progress reviews conducted, and how much time will be required from our school mentors/line managers?"**
 - What to look for: Scheduled reviews every 8 to 12 weeks with protected, predictable time slots (30–45 minutes) that fit into a teacher's or manager's PPA or non-contact time.
- **"What briefing or training do you provide to our internal school mentors?"**
 - What to look for: Mentors should receive clear toolkits or onboarding briefings so they know how to support the apprentice without taking on extra teaching burdens.

5. Entry Requirements & Functional Skills Support

- **"How do you support existing staff who need to gain Level 2 Functional Skills (English/Maths) alongside their main qualification?"**
 - What to look for: Integrated, specialist functional skills tutors who deliver flexible support that doesn't overwhelm the learner or pull them out of core classroom time.
- **"Can you connect us with a reference contact at a school or Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) currently running this programme with you?"**
 - What to look for: Willingness to connect you directly with a school leader who can verify the provider's responsiveness and quality of delivery.
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6. Monitoring Progress vs. Duration

- **"How do you track learner progress relative to the time spent on the programme, and how do you ensure funding drawdowns are strictly aligned with verified learning delivery?"**
 - *What to look for: The provider must demonstrate a clear mapping of curriculum milestones against the expected programme timeline. They should explain their process for identifying "stalled" or inactive learners immediately. Crucially, they should confirm that if a learner is not making progress, funding drawdowns are paused, ensuring the school is not paying for training that isn't taking place. Look for providers who proactively flag inactivity to the employer rather than continuing to draw down funds, which protects your remaining levy pot.*

7. Contract Management & Issue Resolution

- **"What is your formal process for escalating service issues, resolving complaints, or managing changes to our contract?"**
 - *What to look for: A clear escalation policy with a named point of contact and specific turnaround times for resolving issues. Look for a provider that encourages early, informal resolution but has a transparent path to senior management if problems persist. Good account management is proactive; it involves a dedicated account lead who anticipates your needs, maintains regular, meaningful communication beyond automated updates, and treats your school as a long-term strategic partner.*

8. Practical Questions

- ***How will I have access to levy funds?***
 - If you would like to take on a new apprentice, or use levy funds to upskill your existing staff, the cost of training will be funded through the council's digital apprenticeship account, either directly or via levy transfer. This account will include funds linked to your school's PAYE scheme and levy contributions.
 - If you would like to discuss recruiting an apprentice and accessing your funds, please contact the Apprenticeship Team (apprenticeships@hackney.gov.uk)
- ***How will I know how much funding is available?***
 - Hackney Council will be able to advise you on the amount of funding available to schools.
- ***Can I hire someone who has already completed an apprenticeship?***
 - Funding restrictions mean that applicants will not be able to undertake an apprenticeship in a subject and level that they already have.
 - For example, if the applicant already holds a Business and Administration apprenticeship at Level 3 (or an A-Level in Business Studies), they could apply for a Level 4 apprenticeship in Business and Administration, but not at Level 3. However, they would be able to apply for a Level 3 apprenticeship in a different subject area.
 - It is unadvisable, in most cases, to recruit a graduate as an apprentice if their degree is in an area related to their apprenticeship. Using the same example, if they hold a degree in business they would not be eligible for any business apprenticeship up to level 6, but if the degree is in an unrelated subject they could undertake the level 3 business administration.
 - The apprenticeship team is happy to advise if you are unsure.
- ***Are Apprentices subject to probation in the same way as an employee?***
 - For the probation period managers should ensure as a minimum that they follow the review timeline and probation procedure.
 - This should be supplemented by more regular meetings taking place once a week for the first few weeks.
 - Provided everything is going smoothly after this, these could be reduced to once every 2 weeks.
 - An apprenticeship is an extended period of learning and development therefore, as a manager, your expectations should be adjusted in relation to performance at the six month period – i.e. end of probation.
 - The apprentice should have made significant progress in developing the skills and behaviours required for the role, they should be working more independently and be completing more challenging tasks that come with a higher level of responsibility.
 - However, it is not reasonable to expect the apprentice to be fully functional at this point, although you might expect this from another member of staff.
 - The apprentice will have at least six more months of their programme to complete during which they will be gaining additional skills and experience and gradually becoming fully competent and autonomous in their role.
 - We advise managers to continue having regular catch ups and reviews after the probation period.

- These meetings should cover the apprentice's progress with their qualification, their development of new skills and competencies, and their plans and preparation for progression post apprenticeship.
- ***What happens if the apprentice turns out to be a poor appointment?***
 - Supporting a young person 'to be at work' is an integral part of the apprenticeship programme.
 - Your expectations should be adjusted and you must take into account that many apprentices are transitioning from full-time education into the working world.
 - Guiding them in a mature attitude at work is part of your role. You should still apply the same high standards but offer greater support (and latitude) in achieving those standards.
 - Where an apprentice is failing their probationary period (particularly once you are considering dismissal), involve HR. Consider together the reasons and potential solutions. If necessary, a roundtable meeting between apprentice, manager and HR can be held.
 - It is essential that you and your apprentice have regular, well-structured review meetings from the outset.
 - At the start of their apprenticeship, apprentices should have more regular reviews than other recruits.
 - Where there are performance issues with the apprentice, the manager should contact HR, and inform them of the risk to the placement.
- ***Can we terminate an Apprenticeship?***
 - It is important you support your apprentice and terminating an apprenticeship is not advisable.
 - If you have met regularly with your apprentice and if you can demonstrate you have gone above and beyond to provide the necessary support to the apprentice, you could terminate the apprenticeship contract.
 - We advise you to discuss any terminations with the Council's Trades Services HR team or your own HR Business Partner prior to making a final decision.
- ***What do I do if the Apprentice stops coming to work?***
 - If the Apprentice fails to show, it is your responsibility to try to get in touch and ensure they are safe.
 - If you are unable to contact the apprentice, you should immediately inform HR for further advice.
 - The apprenticeship can be paused temporarily whilst the reasons for absence are explored and a solution found.
 - If the apprentice does not engage, then the training can cease and the employment contract can be terminated

Next Steps

1. **Identify Training Needs:** Review your school's development plan to pinpoint roles where apprenticeship training could bridge skill gaps.
2. **Review Eligibility:** Check if your prospective apprentices meet the qualification prerequisites.

3. **Contact the Team:** Reach out to the Hackney Apprenticeship Programme Team to discuss specific standards, funding transfers, recruitment support or any apprenticeship related guidance.

Contact Us

For assistance verifying candidate eligibility, selecting qualifications, or managing recruitment, please email the Hackney Apprenticeship Programme Team at apprenticeships@hackney.gov.uk.