# Rising executive costs amid funding crisis strain England’s secondary schools



A growing funding crisis is impacting secondary schools across England, with many institutions forced to make staff cuts amid tightening budgets. However, the situation is more complex than a simple shortage of cash, as revealed by an analysis of the financial practices within multi-academy trusts (MATs), which now govern around 80% of the country’s state secondary schools.

An examination of the accounts of numerous MATs highlights a marked increase in salaries for chief executives and the creation of additional administrative roles such as chief finance officers, executive headteachers, and trust performance directors. These positions, largely absent a decade ago, have significantly expanded "central services" costs, diverting millions of pounds away from classroom resources. The roles appear to be predominantly occupied by white, middle-class men, according to sources within the sector.

This dynamic is illustrated by the example of York, where the local structure formerly relied on a director of children’s services earning approximately £110,000 and an assistant director of education on about £80,000 to oversee 63 state schools. Presently, York is overseen by six distinct MATs, which together employ six chief executives with salaries ranging from £130,000 to over £160,000, alongside six chief finance officers and multiple executive heads. The combined wage expenditure for key management personnel in these trusts now exceeds £7 million, a figure far surpassing what the previous local education authority spent. Notably, over a third of York’s schools remain under direct local authority control.

Concerns have been raised regarding the impact of these financial priorities on educational outcomes. Attendance rates are reported to be declining, the wellbeing of young people is described as “in the doldrums,” and the special education needs (SEN) system is facing a significant crisis. Critics argue that public funds earmarked for classrooms are instead being absorbed by duplicated administrative roles and inflated salaries. Moreover, the decentralised management of MATs has resulted in reduced local accountability.

Jonny Crawshaw, a Labour councillor on the City of York council, articulated these concerns in a letter to The Guardian. He stated, “With school attendance tanking, young people’s wellbeing in the doldrums and a special education needs system in crisis, public money that should be going into the classroom is instead going on duplicated roles and high individual salaries. This, and the lack of any meaningful local accountability, is the real scandal that needs addressing if we are to resolve the financial perils of an education sector that is no longer fit for purpose.”

The evolving structure and financial management within England’s secondary education sector raise questions about the allocation of resources and governance, amid ongoing challenges faced by schools and students.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/multi-academy-trusts-mat-financial-reports> - This page provides access to financial reports from multi-academy trusts (MATs) in England, which can be used to analyze the allocation of funds within these organizations, including salaries for top executives and administrative roles.
* <https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/> - The UK Data Service provides comprehensive data on education, including financial information that can be used to study the impact of administrative costs on educational outcomes in England's state secondary schools.
* <https://fullfact.org/education/sen-crisis/> - This webpage discusses the challenges faced by the UK's special education needs (SEN) system, which is one of the areas impacted by the financial priorities in multi-academy trusts.
* <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-work/education-schools> - The Local Government Association provides insights into the management and funding of local education authorities, contrasting with the newer multi-academy trust structures in England.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/education-live> - The Guardian's education section often covers issues related to school funding, MAT governance, and educational outcomes in England, which can provide context for the impact of financial decisions within multi-academy trusts.