

# UK schools can't afford chairs or gym class because of cuts

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Budget cuts have meant some schools in Britain are now making children carry their chairs around, holding classes of 64 and selling advertising space on the school yard, a study revealed this week.

According to a survey of 1,200 school staff, three out of four schools across the country have faced reductions to their finances this year. The squeeze is just beginning, with a total of 7 percent - £3 billion (about US\$3.7 billion) - being taken from British schools over the course of this parliament.

The survey, conducted by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), also found that three out of five schools had canceled subjects, with a further 25 percent of secondaries reducing teaching hours for some classes.

*"Teaching hours for A-level subjects such as maths have been cut from five to four hours a week. The pupils do not have sufficient contact time with the teacher,"* one educator from Hertfordshire told the union.

*"I have one 'master class' of 64, with another teacher on cover to support behavior, and the students are doing badly as I cannot help them all,"* a secondary school teacher in northern England added.

Problems were also noticeable in primary schools, as one teacher explained how there was no money for chairs and children had to drag the same one around the school.

*"Bums on seats mean more money and children are having to carry their chairs around the school,"* said the Surrey teacher.

Special needs provisions and English classes for foreign students were some of the most impacted areas. Other

schools resorted to renting out their premises, including car parks. An Essex school was forced to cancel physical education class when its gym hall was hired for a conference.

A sixth of schools were said to have asked parents for money to keep the school afloat.

A plan to move school cash from cities to the countryside starts next year in the form of the national funding formula (NFF). But many believe the moving of money will do little for schools anywhere as even those winning funding will have little awarded to them.

*“Unless the government finds more money for schools and fast, today’s schoolchildren will have severely limited choices at school,”* said ATL’s general secretary, Mary Bousted.

*“Children from poorer families will be even further disadvantaged because parents may struggle to provide the resources schools can no longer afford.”*