

Schools in England using Airbnb-style strategy to raise funds

Level 3: Advanced

1 Warmer

a. Answer the questions.

1. Have you ever done or attended any fundraising or crowdfunding? What was it for? How successful was it?
2. Do you think schools receive enough money? Why (not)?
3. What are some ways schools can bring in extra money?

2 Key words

a. Write the correct words from the wordpool to match the definitions below. Then, find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

anonymous	barebones	blur	boilerplate	commercial
cope	facilitate	innovative	niche	online platform
photo shoot	revenue	slash	tactic	undercut

1. the method(s) you use to achieve or accomplish something tactic
2. someone whose name is not known or not made public anonymous
3. introducing or using new ideas or ways of doing something innovative
4. when a photographer takes professional photos of people or places to be used in books, magazines or online photo shoot
5. the income that a government or company receives regularly revenue
6. a digital service connecting customers with products and services in a particular market or a place for people to communicate and share ideas online platform
7. related to making money through buying and selling goods and services commercial
8. describes an amount of money that is just enough, or too little, for a particular purpose barebones
9. text used as a model for writing parts of a business document, legal agreement, etc., which can be copied into other documents with few to no changes boilerplate
10. reduce something, such as money or jobs, by a lot slash

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11. make the difference between two things less clear or make it difficult to see the exact truth about something blur
12. a small section of the market for a particular kind of product or service niche
13. make something possible or easier facilitate
14. sell goods or services at a lower price than the competition undercut
15. deal with something difficult or troubling cope

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.

1. Although the tactics he used were effective, they were often questionable.
2. They said it was a boilerplate contract, but we found some very specific clauses.
3. After Christmas, many shops slash their prices to sell things more quickly.
4. The project manager's job is to facilitate the project work so that it is successful.
5. The new discount shop undercut the other shops' prices by 15 per cent.
6. The young model was excited about her first photo shoot.
7. The donors who didn't leave their names are on the anonymous list.
8. That new sci-fi film really blurs the lines between fiction and reality.
9. Do you have any advice for coping with stress?
10. The CFO reviewed the revenue from the last quarter in the finance meeting.

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Cash-strapped schools are turning to renting out their spaces commercially using online platforms

Amelia Hill

8 November, 2023

- 1 Schools are turning to Airbnb-type tactics to raise much-needed funds, renting out every available space from classrooms to canteens, holding puppy training in their car parks and wrestling competitions in their gyms.
- 2 One state school, which asked to remain anonymous, said it raised over £700,000 in letting fees last year. But many others are also raising substantial sums by becoming increasingly innovative in the spaces they rent out.
- 3 Wyvil Primary School in Vauxhall, south-west London, rents out its “light-filled white corridor” for photo shoots. New Rickstones Academy in Witham, Essex, is offering its beauty room to anyone who wants “a high-quality hair and beauty salon”. Stroud Green School in east London is offering a “well-lit” hall for “music, dance or theatre rehearsals, or film/photoshoots.”
- 4 “All schools are looking for unique ways to raise additional revenue and we thought our bus could be an unusual, characterful and fun way to potentially do that, while also getting our school more known in the local community,” said Tahira Khan, the school’s business manager.
- 5 Schools typically advertise through a range of dedicated online platforms. One primary school in Brent that uses the Sharesy platform has generated £21,800 so far this year and expects to exceed £25,000 by the end of 2023.
- 6 “Schools aren’t naturally commercial but they’re having to think of additional revenue streams and are becoming increasingly innovative – even though the obvious options of the playing fields and main halls remain the main money-spinners,” said Felix Atkin, founder and CEO of Sharesy.
- 7 “We have special-needs schools that have sensory rooms and soft-play areas: these are particularly popular to rent out for children’s parties and can generate up to £300 a party,” he said. “We also have schools that rent out their car parks at the weekends for puppy training and food markets.”
- 8 Headteachers have said that education is in danger of being reduced to a barebones, boilerplate model. In October, in England, budgets were slashed even further after a government blunder cut £370 million from money they had been promised in July.
- 9 In a small study this year, Sharesy found that 87 per cent of 50 schools not listed on their platform rent out their venues to cover staffing costs. Concerns have been raised, however, that the line between education and commercialism could become too blurred: some communities have protested after their local schools mooted selling advertising space inside and on the sides of their buildings.
- 10 Brandon Bennett from School Space said schools were hosting an increasingly wide range of after-hours activities. “School Space and our partner, Tutti Space, target creators – people doing music videos, interviews, film and photo shoots, recordings, performances – to help them find niche spaces,” he said. “The film and TV industry particularly are always looking for interesting spaces that match the script they’re working on. We’ve had requests for science labs, specific-looking corridors – that could double as a hospital, perhaps – and other niche requests. We’ve facilitated weekend markets to wrestling events.”
- 11 Average yearly incomes for schools on School Space’s platform is £88,800, with their biggest school earner making £228,199 in lettings booked this year. “We see an average increase in income of 170 per cent in the first six months of handling lettings for schools,” he said.
- 12 Some of the biggest secondary schools are making both a saving and an income by installing solar panels on their roofs.

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- 13 "If a school is big enough, it can make money both by replacing its main electricity and through the profits that come through as additional income," said Ann Flaherty, the director of Solar for Schools. "Schools massively welcome the relief this gives their finances. They tell me they spend the money on stationery and books."
- 14 Renting out school car parks on sites such as YourParkingSpace and JustPark is another popular option: many schools take advantage of their proximity to sporting and entertainment venues to offer space during weekends. Some even undercut local parking charges: one further education college in Oxford charges less than the council and shopping centre for parking at weekends.
- 15 Charlie Gothold from SchoolHire said that schools were able to undercut local businesses because "any extra money they can raise is a plus".
- 16 Gothold said that the only limit is schools' ability to have enough staff to handle the administration and be on site when the bookings take place. "Schools have to have the staff to cope with what is like a business: they need someone doing the admin and someone has to be there to open and close the premises, and make sure the people renting the space are behaving," he said.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What are schools in the UK doing to raise funds?
2. How much did the anonymous state school raise last year?
3. What is the name of the school-dedicated platform mentioned in the article?
4. Which two areas are trendy for children's parties?
5. Why were school budgets cut further in October 2023?
6. How much money was cut?
7. What percentage of schools in Sharesy's study rented space to cover staffing costs?
8. Why are some people concerned about schools renting out their space?
9. What is the average increase in income in the first six months of school lettings?
10. What does Gothold say is the limit on a school's ability to let its space?

4 Key language

a. Read these quotes from the article. Change them into reported speech using *that*. Remember to adjust the verb tenses.

1. "All schools are looking for unique ways to raise additional revenue," said Tahira Khan, the school's business manager.
2. "Schools aren't naturally commercial but they're having to think of additional revenue streams and are becoming increasingly innovative," said Felix Atkin, founder and CEO of Sharesy.
3. "We see an average increase in income of 170 per cent in the first six months of handling lettings for schools," said Brandon Bennett from School Space.
4. "If a school is big enough, it can make money both by replacing its main electricity and through the profits that come through as additional income," said Ann Flaherty, the director of Solar for Schools.
5. Charlie Gothold from SchoolHire said, "Schools have to have the staff to cope with what is like a business."

b. Choose three more quotes from the article. Rewrite them using reported speech with *that*.

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- “Schools must raise revenue however they can.”
- “Renting out school space to the community can be a win-win for the school and the community.”
- “When schools worry about raising revenue, they cannot focus on education and student needs.”

6 In your own words

a. Do some research about strategies schools use to generate revenue.

- What kinds of fundraising are the most popular?
- Which kind generates the most revenue?
- What is driving schools to do this?
- How does this impact the students and their learning?

b. Report your findings to the class and share your opinion. Here are some phrases to help you when you discuss the facts.

According to my research, ...

One example is ...

The drivers of this are ...

The impact(s) of this is / are ...

Another possibility is ...

Here are some phrases to use when stating your opinion.

I want to understand why ...

From my perspective, ...

In my understanding/opinion, ...

I (dis)agree with ...