

Funding for Music in Schools

A practical guide for teachers and school leaders in Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire

Last updated: February 2026

Before you apply

This guide only includes funders where schools in Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire are confirmed as eligible to apply. Every funder has been verified as active in February 2026. Where a funder has been excluded because schools cannot apply, or because their geographic focus does not include our area, we have noted this so you don't waste time on ineligible applications. Always check the funder's own website for current deadlines and criteria before starting an application.

1. Funders specifically for music in schools

These funders exist specifically to support music education and schools in our area are directly eligible to apply.

Funder	Amount	Who can apply	Deadline	Website
Universal Music UK Sound Foundation (UMUKSF) – School Award	Up to £1,000	Schools teaching the national curriculum (UK and Ireland)	Two rounds per year (typically March and October). Current round: 27 Feb 2026 1pm	umuksoundfoundation@umusic.com
UMUKSF – Teacher Award	Up to £1,000	Music teachers delivering the national curriculum	Same rounds as School Award	umuksoundfoundation@umusic.com
Music for All	Up to £6,000	Schools, community groups, charities in deprived or marginalised areas	Rounds throughout the year – check website. Next deadline 7 May 2026 12pm	musicforall.org.uk
Ed Sheeran Foundation	Varies	State school music	No open application	edsheeranfoundation.com

		departments and grassroots music organisations	– foundation approaches partners directly	
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Key things to know

- **UMUKSF:** Application form online. It is recommended you gather all the required information as the application can't be saved and returned to once you begin. Cannot fund tuition fees or peripatetic lessons. Previous recipients must wait two years before reapplying. The Teacher Award specifically supports CPD courses and training for music teachers delivering the national curriculum.
- **Music for All:** Open to schools, individuals and organisations. Focused on enabling access to music-making through instrument grants. Particularly relevant for schools in areas of deprivation.
- **Ed Sheeran Foundation:** Does not have an open application process. The foundation identifies and approaches schools and organisations directly. Worth being aware of but you cannot apply speculatively.

2. General funders where schools can apply for music projects

These are not music-specific but schools in our area are eligible and music projects fall within their funding criteria.

Funder	Amount	Who can apply	Deadline	Website
National Lottery Awards for All	£300 to £20,000	Schools (projects must benefit the wider community), charities, community groups	Rolling – apply any time (allow 16 weeks)	tnlcommunityfund.org.uk
Arts Council England – National Lottery Project Grants	£1,000 to £100,000	Schools, arts organisations, individuals, community groups	Rolling – apply any time	artscouncil.org.uk/projectgrants
Garfield Weston Foundation	Varies (£1,000+)	UK registered charities, CIOs, and schools	Rolling – no deadlines	garfieldweston.org
The Wolfson Foundation	£15,000 to £100,000	State-funded secondary schools and sixth form colleges	Annual round – next round expected	wolfson.org.uk

		(Ofsted Good or above)	spring 2026	
Ford Britain Trust	Up to £3,000	Schools, PTAs, registered charities, non-profit organisations	Multiple rounds per year. Small grants (£250): 1 Apr-30 Jun, 1 Aug-31 Oct and 1 Dec-28 Feb. Large grants (£3,000): 1 Mar-31 Jul and 1 Sep-31 Jan	ford.co.uk/experience-ford/news/ford-britain-trust

Key things to know

- **Awards for All:** Strong first option for schools new to grant applications. Your project must benefit the community beyond the school – for example, after-school music clubs open to the wider community, or concerts for local residents. Straightforward application with good success rates.
- **ACE Project Grants:** Can fund a wide range of music activity but the application is more involved. Schools need to demonstrate artistic quality and public benefit. Good for larger, more ambitious projects.
- **Garfield Weston:** One of the UK’s largest grant-makers (£100m+ annually). Schools can apply directly. Very flexible on what they fund. No deadlines.
- **Wolfson Foundation:** Capital and equipment grants for state-funded secondary schools and sixth form colleges with Ofsted Good or above. Funds specialist spaces and equipment for music and performing arts. If your school is in a MAT, the MAT submits the application. Not available for primary schools.
- **Ford Britain Trust:** Small but accessible. Capital items only (instruments, equipment). Available nationwide but priority given to areas near Ford operations. Our area is not a priority zone, so chances are lower, but still worth applying with a strong case.

3. Funders you can access through a partnership

A number of significant music funders require a partnership approach. Some will only accept applications from a registered charity or constituted organisation, but **that organisation can apply for a project that is delivered in or benefits your school**. Others, like the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Teacher Development Fund, allow a school to lead the application

provided the partnership is in place. Either way, this is a well-established route and worth exploring.

If you are interested in exploring this approach, contact the GSW Music Hub's funding adviser, Deborah Potts, at deborah@dpconsulting.co.uk to discuss which funders might be a good fit and how a partnership application could work.

Funder	Amount	Who can apply	Deadline	Website
Paul Hamlyn Foundation – Teacher Development Fund	Up to £165,000 per partnership	Partnerships between an arts/cultural organisation and 5–10 primary schools. Either the school or the arts organisation can lead.	Annual – typically September–November	phf.org.uk/funding/teacher-development-fund
Paul Hamlyn Foundation – Arts-Based Learning Fund	£30,000 to £300,000	Arts organisations working in partnership with schools. The arts organisation applies.	Operates on a rolling basis. This means organisations can apply at any time as there are no deadlines.	phf.org.uk
Youth Music – Trailblazer Fund	£2,000 to £30,000	Constituted organisations (NOT schools). A registered charity partner could apply for a project delivered in your school.	Round 12 opens 13 Mar 2026, deadline 10 Apr 2026	youthmusic.org.uk/funding
Youth Music – Catalyser Fund	£30,001 to £300,000	Established organisations (NOT schools). Expressions of interest: 20 Feb – 20 Mar 2026.	EOI deadline 20 Mar 2026	youthmusic.org.uk/funding
BRIT Trust	Up to £30,000	Registered charities only. A charity partner could apply for work that includes your school.	Annual – applications open until 30 Apr 2026	brittrust.co.uk/brit-trust-grants
The Radcliffe Trust	£2,500 to £5,000	Charities and not-for-profits	Applications open on 1st	theradcliffetrust.org

		only. Excludes individual mainstream schools. Classical music focus.	May and close on 31st July. (for December)	
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Key things to know

- **Paul Hamlyn Foundation Teacher Development Fund:** The single most significant dedicated funder for arts-based teacher development. Requires a partnership between an arts organisation and 5–10 primary schools, but either the school or the arts organisation can lead the application. Two-year programmes. Highly competitive. Could a group of primary schools in your cluster work with a local arts organisation or the GSW Music Hub to put a partnership together?
- **Paul Hamlyn Foundation Arts-Based Learning Fund:** Broader fund for arts-based approaches to learning. Currently being reviewed – check the PHF website. The arts organisation applies, not the school.
- **Youth Music Trailblazer Fund:** Significant funder (£2k–£30k grants) but schools and academies are explicitly ineligible. However, a registered charity could apply for a project delivered in your school. Youth Music prioritises work with young people facing barriers to music-making. Three rounds per year.
- **Youth Music Catalyser Fund:** Larger grants (£30k–£300k) for established organisations. Same eligibility rules – schools cannot apply but can be a delivery partner. One round per year.
- **BRIT Trust:** Registered charities only. Funds projects that improve lives through the power of music and creative arts. A charity working in music education could include your school in their application.
- **The Radcliffe Trust:** Explicitly excludes mainstream primary and secondary schools. Funds charities and not-for-profits for classical music projects including music education, youth orchestras, and music therapy. A charity partner with a classical music education project could apply.

4. Your Music Hub and government funding

These are not grant applications in the traditional sense, but they represent significant sources of funded support that every school in our area should be aware of and accessing.

The GSW Music Hub – your local Music Hub

The **Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire (GSW) Music Hub** is your local Music Education Hub. It is one of 43 Music Hubs across England, funded by Arts Council England with £79 million of government investment nationally each year. Its role is to support and develop music education for all children and young people across the three local authority areas. If you are a school in Gloucestershire, Swindon or Wiltshire and you are not already connected with the GSW Music Hub, that should be your first step.

How the Hub can help with your funding applications

The GSW Music Hub can support your school's funding applications in several ways. It can advise you on which funders are a good fit for your project, help you shape your application, and – importantly – act as a lead partner or connect you with a charity partner for funders that do not accept applications from schools directly (see Section 3). Many funders now favour partnership bids, and the Hub has relationships across the area that can strengthen your application.

Contact: gloucestershire.gov.uk/gsw-music-hub

Government funding distributed through Music Hubs

DfE Capital Grant for Musical Instruments (£25 million)

Government investment of £25 million in musical instruments, equipment and technology, distributed through Music Hub Lead Organisations. Schools do not apply directly – contact the GSW Music Hub to discuss what instruments, equipment and technology may be available for your school. The grant has been extended to April 2027.

Assisted Instrument Purchase Scheme (AIPS)

Pupils having music lessons at LEA-maintained schools can purchase musical instruments without paying VAT through this scheme. Ask the GSW Music Hub or your local authority for details.

National Centre for Arts and Music Education (from September 2026)

A new government initiative that will take over oversight of Music Hubs from Arts Council England. Expected to include an online CPD offer for primary and secondary teachers and support for school-arts organisation partnerships. This may create new funding streams – the GSW Music Hub will communicate any new opportunities as they emerge.

5. Funders where schools in our area are NOT eligible

To save you time, the following funders often appear in music funding lists but either do not accept applications from schools, or do not operate in Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire.

- **Restore the Music UK:** Currently only funds schools in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Newcastle. Not available in our area.
- **PRS Foundation:** Funds music creators, promoters, venues and talent development organisations. Not designed for schools or education.
- **Help Musicians:** Supports professional musicians, not schools.
- **Future Talent:** Supports gifted individual young musicians from low-income backgrounds, not schools.
- **Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation:** Charities and not-for-profit organisations only.
- **Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation:** UK and Ireland not-for-profits only.

Note: Some of the funders listed above may be accessible through a charity partner (see Section 3). If you think a particular funder could support a project at your school, get in touch to discuss whether a partnership approach could work.

6. Where to search for more funding

The funding landscape changes constantly. These resources will help you stay up to date and find opportunities not listed here.

Resource	Cost	What it does
GSW Music Hub Fundraising Support	Free	Your first port of call. Lists current opportunities, offers free one-to-one funding advice sessions, and can advise on charity partnerships. gloucestershire.gov.uk/gsw-music-hub/fundraising-support
Charity Excellence Framework	Free	Funding Finder searches more grant-makers than any other free directory. 100+ downloadable funding lists including arts and music. AI tool to help write bids. charityexcellence.co.uk
Grants Online	Free (daily news)	UK's most comprehensive grant news service. Updated daily. Categories for Schools & Colleges and Arts, Culture & Heritage. Sign up for email alerts. grantsonline.org.uk
360 Giving (GrantNav)	Free	Open data showing who funds what. Search actual grants awarded – find funders who have funded music in schools near you. grantnav.threesixtygiving.org
Music Mark	Free (some member-only)	UK subject association for music education. Free funding guide and Fundraising Fundamentals training. musicmark.org.uk
GRIN	£60/yr (database) £15/yr (bulletin)	South West based cooperative. Daily grants bulletin and searchable database of 1,800+ UK schemes. Locally relevant. grin.coop
Youth Music – Guide to other funders	Free	Comprehensive list of funders for music projects. Useful research tool even though Youth Music's own funds are not open to schools. youthmusic.org.uk/resources/guide-other-funders
Grants4Schools	Subscription	Specifically for schools. Matches trusts, foundations, government and Lottery funding to your school. Email alerts. grants4schools.info
UKGrantmaking.org	Free	Collaborative platform bringing together UK grant-making data. Uses 360Giving data standard. ukgrantmaking.org

8. Practical tips for applying

Whether you are applying internally to your school or externally to a funder, these principles will strengthen your application.

- **Start with the quick wins.** UМУKSF and Awards for All are straightforward applications with good success rates. Build your confidence with these before tackling larger bids.

- **Read the criteria properly.** The most common reason applications fail is not meeting eligibility criteria. If a funder says “registered charities only”, a school cannot apply directly – but you may be able to apply through a charity partner.
- **Focus on impact, not need.** Don’t just say you need instruments. Explain how many children will benefit, what they’ll learn, and what difference it will make to their education and lives.
- **Know your numbers.** How many pupils? What percentage on free school meals? What’s your current music provision? Funders want evidence.
- **Show community benefit.** Many funders want to see impact beyond the school itself. Think about how your music education reaches the wider community – concerts, after-school clubs, intergenerational projects, partnerships with local organisations.
- **Have a clear plan.** A successful application has clear aims, specific objectives, a realistic timeline, a proper budget, and a way of evaluating impact. Don’t over-promise and under-deliver.
- **Get quotes before you apply.** Even rough ones show you’ve thought it through and know what things cost.
- **Talk to the GSW Music Hub first.** They may already have instruments available to loan, know about funding you haven’t found, or be able to support your application as a partner.
- **Think partnerships.** Many funders now favour partnership applications. Your Music Hub, local arts organisations, community groups and neighbouring schools can all strengthen a bid. Partnerships also open up funders that won’t accept school applications directly.
- **Don’t apply for things you’ve already bought.** Most funders will not fund retrospectively. Apply before you purchase.
- **Quality over quantity.** Five well-researched, carefully written applications to the right funders will get you further than twenty rushed ones.

Disclaimer

This guide was compiled in February 2026 using information from funder websites, Charity Excellence Framework, Grants Online, 360 Giving, Music Mark, GRIN, Youth Music, Grants4Schools, and UKGrantmaking.org. Every effort has been made to verify accuracy but funding programmes change frequently. Always check the funder’s own website for current information before applying. This guide does not constitute professional fundraising advice.

For support with funding applications in Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire, contact the GSW Music Hub or email deborah@dpconsulting.co.uk for a free funding advice session.