

School Business Professional Apprenticeship (SBPA)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) (October 2025)

Who is the programme for?

The Level 4 School Business Professional Apprenticeship is aimed at both new and existing school business managers and those in similar business or support roles (e.g., Finance Manager, Office Manager, Senior Administrator, Business Support Officer, Bursar, HR Manager etc) employed in schools and academies.

What topics will I study?

The programme includes units on:

Operational Leadership in Schools or Trusts	The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to lead operations across a school or trust. This includes operational leadership of business functions across a school or trust to ensure effective and sustainable resource allocation and legal compliance in order to maximise outcomes for pupils.
Finance in Schools or Trusts	The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to support the effective management, planning, monitoring and control of finances in a school or trust including adherence to regulatory requirements.
Marketing and Communications in Schools or Trusts	The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills needed to support the planning, management, delivery and review of a range of marketing and communication activities in a school or trust.
Estate Management in Schools or Trusts	The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to safely and securely optimise the use and development of the school or trust estate to deliver the identified strategic plans, while meeting sustainable requirements and delivering an effective teaching and learning environment.
Procurement in Schools or Trusts	The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to support the procurement of goods, services and works to achieve best value from all school or trust resources, and also by using effective contract and supplier management within the context of regulatory frameworks and current legislation.
Supporting Human Resource Management in Schools or Trusts	The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to develop a workplace strategy, to maximise resources through effective talent management that meets regulatory and legal compliance, and to ensure delivery of the school's or trust's strategic priorities and plans.

When will the next programme start?

Please refer to our website for the latest options and start dates at: [Home - Employment, Skills and Training from Serco](#)

What is the cost?

The cost of the apprenticeship is £6,000. If you work for a levy-employer, the apprenticeship can be funded by the levy. As long as your employer has sufficient funds in their Digital Apprenticeship Account (DAS), there is no additional cost for the programme delivery.

If your employer is non-levy, the apprenticeship can be funded by the employer co-investment scheme. Your employer will be invoiced for 5% of the total cost of the programme and must reserve funds on their Digital Apprenticeship Account to cover the remaining 95%.

Regardless of whether your employer is levy or non-levy, they must be registered on the Government's Digital Apprenticeship Service. Please visit the link below for more information: [Funding an apprenticeship \(apprenticeships.gov.uk\)](https://apprenticeships.gov.uk)

Although the DfE funding band for the SBPA is capped at £6,000, the cost of the programme may be reduced slightly depending on previous experience and qualifications. Please note that the cost of the optional ILM accreditation cannot be covered by the apprenticeship levy and is therefore payable at the current rate advised by the Awarding Organisation. If selected, your employer will be invoiced separately).

How will the School Business Professional Apprenticeship benefit me?

Successful apprentices will achieve:

- On-the-job experience
- A professional pathway for future development
- Level 2 in Maths and English (if applicable)
- Specialist expertise in areas including leading support services, finance, marketing, infrastructure management, HR and procurement

You will also receive:

- An Apprenticeship Certificate of Completion from the Institute of Apprenticeship
- The ILM Level 4 Diploma in School Business Management (if you have elected to pay for the optional ILM registration. Please contact apprenticeship.programmes@serco.com for further information)

How long will it take to complete the programme?

The Level 4 School Business Professional Apprenticeship is a 24 month-programme (including end-point assessment). If your average weekly employment hours fall below 30 hours per week, then the apprenticeship will be extended pro rata. However, you may be able to complete the programme in the same time scale as other members of your cohort but only if you are ready to do so.

What is the application process?

The application process comprises several stages:

- After submitting an initial Enquiry form, the learner submits an online application form
- The learner completes a skills scan based around the Standard of the apprenticeship applied for
- The learner completes an English and Maths Initial Diagnostic assessment
- The learner provides proof of ID

- The learner participates in a remote interview
- The Learner and their line manager sign registration documents

Please note:

- Any applications received after the application deadline for a specific cohort will be considered for the following cohort.
- For cohort planning purposes, we have to apply strict onboarding cut-off points. Any learner not returning signed registration documents by a pre-set deadline will be deferred to following intake. This will apply even if the learner has signed the paperwork but their line manager has not.

What is the time commitment needed from participants?

Throughout the programme, apprentices will build a portfolio which will be supported by 360-degree feedback.

Your employer must allow you 6 hours a week of your normal working hours to complete off-the-job training (which includes face-to-face events, relevant meetings, projects, updating your portfolio, etc.). You will need to record your off-the-job hours regularly, at least once per month. You may find it useful to read the 'Day in the Life of a SBPA' which provides examples of activities that count towards the OTJ commitment.

You may find it useful to read the "Day in the Life of a SBP Apprenticeship" which provides examples of activities that count towards the OTJ commitment. Useful guidance has also been issued by the DfE on what does and what does not constitute OTJ training ([Apprenticeships: off-the-job training - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/apprenticeships/off-the-job-training))

How will I be assessed?

There will be on-programme assessment carried out during the programme, this will consist of assignment tasks submitted at the end of each unit or element of the SBPA programme. You will also be required to produce a portfolio as part of the programme. Your work will also be assessed by completing presentations, witness testimonies, observations, activities, assessments, etc.

There is a final end-point assessment conducted by an external assessor. This will take place within 12 weeks from the successful completion of your studies. It is arranged during the course of a day, usually at an external centre or remotely.

Can I study the Level 4 School Business Professional Apprenticeship if I already have a Level 4 qualification?

Yes, as long as it is in a different discipline, i.e., not closely related to business management within education.

Can I apply to study the SBP Apprenticeship if I work outside England?

Levy funding is only available to apprentices who live or work in England.

What qualification will I achieve?

Upon completing the apprenticeship, you will gain the Institute for Apprenticeships SBP Apprenticeship Certificate, and, if you have selected ILM accreditation, the ILM Level 4 Diploma in School Business Management.

How do I apply?

You should first discuss with your line manager whether this apprenticeship is appropriate for you based on your role and its demands, the support they can provide and the amount of time you can dedicate to study. Please go to our website to start the application process:

[Level 4 School Business Professional Apprenticeship \(SBPA\) - Employment, Skills and Training from Serco](#)

What is the role of my line manager?

We will only accept applications from individuals who have the support of their line manager. Your line manager will be asked to sign registration documents to confirm their commitment and support your programme and to confirm their agreement to take part in the review process. Your line manager may wish to identify a mentor to support you throughout your programme of study rather than undertake this themselves.

Your line manager, or the mentor identified by your line manager, will be required to:

- Join the first meeting between you and your coach to ensure that all key parties are aware of the requirements of your training plan
- Actively contribute to all the progress reviews held with yourself (they will not be required to attend the full sessions)
- Observe you undertaking certain activities such as giving a presentation and complete a proforma confirmation observation of certain skills and behaviours, which will be included in your portfolio
- Attend and contribute to an annual review progress with you and your coach
- Ensure that you are given time to attend the progress reviews and all face-to-face workshops. This must NOT be deducted from your annual leave allowance. Please note that the workshops, web conferences, progress reviews and assessment sessions are mandatory elements of the apprenticeship that provide essential information and support for you to successfully complete the programme
- Support you in your studies, identifying opportunities for you to develop your skills alongside your learning
- Allow you a minimum of 20% of your working hours / 6 hours per week to complete off-the-job training activities.

What if I leave my employer after I have started the apprenticeship?

Providing you are continuing to work in a suitable role, your new employer may agree to your continuation and fund the remaining costs from their levy.

What if I must suspend studying due to ill-health or other circumstances beyond my control?

You may be able to go on a Break in Learning (BiL) for up to a year, depending upon circumstances.

What if I become pregnant once I have started the programme?

You will be able to defer (known as a Break in Learning) from the programme for up to a year.

How will the training be delivered?

Predominantly online but with a face-to-face workshop at the start of all units (there are 5 x one-day regional face-to-face workshops in total, with Marketing & Estate Management being combined in one workshop). A tutor and coach will help guide your learning. You will have a progress review with your coach every 10 weeks, plus additional phone contact if required. Your coach will discuss your progress and can advise on your portfolio. Please note that, whilst your learning will be guided, with support from your tutor (at the workshops and online) and your coach, you will be expected to work through the learning materials via our online learning platform.

Each unit you study will have a start and end date and you may have one or two milestones during the unit, but aside from these it will be up to you to determine the pace at which you study and the amount of additional reading you do. This may be a different style of learning to your previous experience and it relies on your own motivation to succeed. You will also upload the evidence you gather to an online portfolio, which shows your progress through the apprenticeship.

Where will the training be delivered?

The main workshop location is likely to be our Serco office in Solihull (Birmingham). Progress reviews with your coach will predominantly be remote via MS Teams. However, where necessary, this may also take place at your place of work.

Do I have to attend every training event and assessment?

Yes, 100% attendance is mandatory. It is your responsibility to make arrangements to ensure you have a 100% attendance record.

Will I be given time off work in order to study? (20% off-the-job requirement)

The programme will contain a minimum of 20% off-the-job training. This will include shadowing, reading industry articles/research, attending workshops, completing a project and preparing/building your portfolio, etc.

What if I work part-time?

You are still eligible to join the programme; however, if you work fewer than 30 hours per week then the length of time in which you study will be extended, pro rata, to reflect your normal working hours.

Further information: [Level 4 School Business Professional Apprenticeship \(SBPA\) - Employment, Skills and Training from Serco](#)

Enquiries: learnerrecruitment@serco.com

Please note that apprenticeship funding is managed by the Department for Education (DfE) the Government agency accountable for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults. As an apprenticeship training provider our activities must adhere to DfE guidance and requirements. Many of the required onboarding documents and forms are necessary to meet DfE requirements.