How School Leaders Can Build Safer, Smarter Estates in 2025/26

23 June 2025

This year, facilities leadership isn't optional—it's mission-critical.

With billions in capital funding, new safety risks in focus, and climate resilience climbing the agenda, the 2025/26 academic year marks a generational shift in how we manage our schools.

Across England, leaders are asking:

What do we fix first? What's fundable now? Who can deliver it right?

This guide is here to help.

WHY 2025/26 IS DIFFERENT

We're operating in a new environment:

- £3 billion/year is being allocated to fix and future-proof schools.
- Over 1.5 million pupils are learning in buildings flagged for serious repair.
- Energy costs and climate extremes are pushing estates to the edge.
- RAAC, asbestos, and fire risks have put compliance back in the spotlight.

But here's the opportunity: the funding is real, the solutions exist, and leaders who plan ahead can do more than patch problems—they can build long-term resilience.

THE THREE FOCUS AREAS EVERY SCHOOL SHOULD PRIORITISE

1. **Know Your Risks**

Every estate has hidden risks. This year, DfE, local authorities, and the National Audit Office are zeroing in on:

- RAAC concrete (mostly pre-1990 buildings)
- Asbestos exposure (especially in 1950s–80s blocks)
- Overheating, poor insulation, and ventilation issues

Action Point: Commission a whole-site condition survey. FM providers can turn this around in under 4 weeks—and it unlocks funding.

2. **Unlock the Right Funding**

If you're not sure what's available—here's a quick breakdown:

Funding Stream	What It Covers	Who Can Apply
Condition Improvement Fund (CIF)	Urgent health & safety, condition repairs	Eligible academies and sixth forms
School Condition Allocations (SCA)	Planned capital works	Multi-academy trusts
Devolved Formula Capital (DFC)	Minor refurbishments, energy upgrades	All schools
Retrofit & Solar Schemes	Energy efficiency, clean energy	Schools with EPC data or net-zero plans

Action Point: Check your funding status now. If you don't know, ask us—we'll walk you through it.

3. **Find the Right Delivery Partner**

The biggest difference between schools that succeed and those that stall?
The partner they choose.

Top-performing schools are:

- Working with FM teams that understand education settings
- Securing funding-ready surveys, not just quotes

- Getting works done during half-terms, not overrun summers

Action Point: Look for FM providers who offer:

- Bid support for CIF or public funding
- Verified structural and energy surveys
- Fixed-price delivery aligned with school calendars

WHAT SCHOOLS ARE DOING NOW

These real-world moves are already reshaping estates:

- One South Yorkshire MAT is rolling out trust-wide solar panels with a 5-year ROI.
- A Devon primary used its DFC to fix roof leaks and improve insulation—cutting heating costs by 20%.
- A Midlands school identified RAAC in a 1960s hall, worked with an FM partner, and submitted a CIF bid within 10 days.

This is what good looks like: fast, focused, funded action.

PLANNING TOOLKIT FOR LEADERS

Use this checklist to drive your next SLT or governor conversation:

- Do we have a recent condition survey?
- Have we checked for RAAC, asbestos, EPC rating?
- Are we eligible for CIF, SCA, or retrofit support?
- Are our FM providers capital-funding fluent?
- Do we have a 1–3–5 year estates plan?

If the answer is “no” to any—this is your leadership moment.

WHAT FM PROVIDERS SHOULD KNOW

This is a golden moment for FM suppliers to:

- Build long-term school partnerships—not just projects
- Develop toolkits that speak to school compliance needs
- Offer training, data dashboards, and capital-readiness support
- Align services with DfE standards and term-time constraints

The best providers aren’t chasing tenders—they’re co-owning solutions.

FINAL THOUGHT: THE MOMENT IS NOW

Facilities leadership in 2025/26 is no longer about fixing broken boilers or leaky roofs.
It’s about building learning environments that are:

- Safe — free from structural risk
- Efficient — powered by clean, affordable energy
- Resilient — ready for climate and curriculum demands

And yes—it’s absolutely achievable with the right funding, data, and partnerships.

Let’s not wait for the next crisis. Let’s build better—starting now.

Image by freepik