

## Boris Johnson's Â£1 billion for school renovation is ...

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The [Guardian](#) reports this morning that:

*Schools in England are being promised a £1bn rebuilding programme as [Boris Johnson](#) commits to giving children a “world-class education” after months out of the classroom, and pledges help for the economy to bounce back from the coronavirus crisis.*

The 10-year investment plan for upgrades and refurbishments comes ahead of the prime minister’s key speech on Tuesday in the Midlands, where he will set out how he thinks major infrastructure projects — including hospital and house building — will form part of his plan for the country’s economic revival.

There are [currently 32,770 schools](#) in the UK. I suspect some share sites. Call it 30,000 then.

As the Guardian also noted:

*The NAO estimated that England’s schools needed £6.7bn to meet the backlog of repairs and rebuilding needed to bring them up to satisfactory or better condition, and a further £7.1bn to bring all school buildings from satisfactory to good condition.*

So a spend of at least £13.8 billion is required. And that's before upgrading the buildings to be thermally efficient.

And they are going to get £1 billion.

That is a bit over £3,000 a year of rebuilding a year. Or the cost of painting a few classrooms each summer, if you are lucky.

This is not a rebuilding programme. And this is not investment. This looks like a programme of cuts to me. As the Guardian notes:

*The 10-year project promised by Johnson looks likely to replace the government’s*

*existing Priority School Building Programme, which runs out next year. That programme spent around £4.4bn on 537 repair and rebuild projects, some of which were privately financed, since 2011.*

I should add that I have some experience in this area. I was a school governor, usually as chair of a finance committee or as chair of governors, or both, for thirteen years. I know what anxiety repairs backlogs in old school buildings cause. Johnson is doing nothing meaningful to help.