



Department
for Education

Local authority commissioned special free schools

**An expression of interest form for local
authorities interested in commissioning a
special free school**

October 2016

Overview

Since local authorities play a key role in placing pupils with statements or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, it is important that they shape the range of provision in their area. Previously, proposals to establish special free schools have only been taken forward in consultation with local authorities. **We are now providing a further opportunity for local authorities themselves to identify where a new special free school would benefit their area**, inform their Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), and potentially seek proposals for the new school they want, with the Department for Education (DfE) providing capital funding and start-up grants. This is in addition to the central route for special free schools, which continues to operate.

This **expression of interest (EOI) form is for local authorities that would like a new special school**. It allows them to make a case that a special school would be beneficial in their area, including a case that it would help meet demographic growth, changing patterns of need, and cost pressures, without reducing inclusion. It provides RSCs with the initial information they need to understand what is wanted and why. If the EOI is successful, the opportunity will be advertised nationally, and if a strong proposal comes forward that both the local authority/authorities and the Secretary of State wish to take forward, the DfE will provide capital and start-up grant funding, subject to value for money assessments covering both the affordability of the site solution and the limitations on overall capital availability. Please see the accompanying guidance for further detail.

The form should be completed by a local authority representative (or representatives, if it is a joint bid) with the approval of the Director of Children's Services (DCS).

This opportunity is intended to identify and meet untapped demand for special free schools as a supplement to LA's existing resources. It **does not replace the 'presumption' process nor does it replace a local authority's duties to ensure appropriate placements for all children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)**.

You should use this form to provide all the necessary information and evidence for your proposal. Please:

- email your RSC during October to say whether you are interested and give any headline facts available (email addresses are in the guidance)
- return this EOI, completed, to freeschool.special@education.gov.uk copying in your RSC, **by midday on 11 November**.

More detailed information about this process can be found in the [local authority-commissioned special free schools guidance](#).

Section A – Key facts about the school and the local authorities that want to commission it

A1: Who is putting forward this expression of interest?

If this is a joint EOI, please fill in the table below for each LA involved and state the lead LA below. The Regional Schools Commissioner’s team may need to contact these people to understand more about the EOI. **Please note that including a LA on this list means that they have committed to commissioning places.**

Name of LA	Name of person leading	Contact details
<p><i>Lead LA: [name] (The LA in which the school would be located)</i></p> <p>Bedford Borough Council</p>	<p>██████████</p> <p>██████████████████</p> <p>██████████████████████</p> <p>██████████████████</p>	<p>██████████████████</p> <p>██████████████████████</p> <p>██████████████████████</p> <p>██████████████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████████████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████████████████</p>
<p><i>[if applicable – name of 2nd LA. Please add rows for additional LAs who have committed to commissioning places.]</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>	

A2: What type of school is wanted?

Please provide key information about the school you would like to commission:

Category of SEN provision (if more than one type, with different top-up rates, please explain)	Cohort profile would include: PMLD / SLD / SEMH / MLD / ASC. There would be different top-ups according to the provision and need.
Per-pupil revenue funding you would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain)	████ per place plus a top-up which already exists in Bedford Borough linked to Banding and Provision. This ranges from Band 1 to 5. Band 5 children placed by the local authority will require a package of multi-agency support to meet their severe and complex needs. All cases where Band 5 educational support is being proposed are subject to discussion at a multi-agency panel to agree the child's education, health and social care support requirements.
Age range	0 – 19 years
Gender (boys/girls/co-educational)	Mixed
Total number of proposed places	160
Early years provision? If so, how many places?	We seek to include the option of 30 plus Early Years places. This will include assessment places to inform EHCP and appropriate future pathway. In addition we would consider outreach and likely satellite provision which will aid inclusion rates which are low in Bedford.
16-19 provision? If so, how many places?	25 plus places
Community use/shared facilities	Vocational facilities / meeting rooms/ Music Therapy and family support parenting activities.

Please use this space to expand on any of the key information above [max. 200 words]

Within Bedford Borough’s JSNA we predicted a rise in demand due to the Children and Families Act 2014. We are acutely aware that the needs of these pupils are complex and we wish to provide local support and provision without seeking to secure placements out of authority. We would therefore seek to provide a multi-agency package of support and care in a wraparound service to maintain the opportunity for children and students to live at home and access education locally within the Borough.

We are currently not able to place all new students in two of our designated special schools and consequently have to consider provision elsewhere and these options are limited. The proposed school would create a sustainable provision that will help us support our most vulnerable students.

This bid will improve outcomes for children, and given the local position ensures families have access to support at home and in the community. This will guarantee that the spirit of EHCP outcomes are fully met.

A3: Conversations with partners

Local authorities (in particular smaller ones) **must** speak to their neighbouring LAs to check whether they want to commit to commissioning places at the new school at the specified top-up rate. If they do not, LAs may put in a solo EOI. Authorities **may** speak to other partners in order to ensure that their EOI will complement the local landscape and be a close match for what families want. If you have not engaged with your Schools Forum before sending this EOI to your Regional Schools Commissioner, you will need to do so if successful.

Who?	Conversation summary (3 points max)
Your neighbouring LAs – please specify	We are in discussion with Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton Borough Council. We are also willing to work with Northampton and Milton Keynes. There is no firm commitment regarding how many commissioned places but we have a commitment to explore this and all local authorities are supportive of this.
Optional: Your Parent / Carer Forum, or other representatives of parents and young people	We work very closely with the BBPCF, including close liaison in drafting our JSNA. They are fully supportive of this EOI.
Optional: Any other partners, Schools forum, existing FE colleges etc (please specify)	BILTT – Bedford Inclusive Learning and Training Trust – a recently established MAT to ensure expert input and support.

Section B – The proposed location and site (if applicable)

Please describe where the school would be located and whether a site has been made available/identified. Making a site available on a peppercorn lease gives the greatest chance of the school opening successfully, and on time.

Please include as much detail as possible as this will help your EOI:

[REDACTED]

Bedford Borough Council (BBC) have a high quality school building programme with a strong track record for delivering on time and on budget. BBC are currently delivering a free school on behalf of the EFA and if required are willing to be the capital partner for this EOI if successful.

Please provide the name and contact details for the main LA contact about the site. The EFA may contact this person to ask questions about the site. **If you know any of these site details before submitting your EOI, please let DfE know (by emailing FreeSchools.EFACAPITAL@education.gov.uk) so we can start conversations with you.**

[REDACTED]

Please tick the box below to confirm that the relevant Lead Member for Corporate Property has seen this expression of interest and is content with the information provided about site (if provided).

I confirm that the Lead Member of Corporate Property at Bedford Borough Council has seen this expression of interest and supports it.

Please tick to confirm

Section C – Rationale for School

Please provide an explanation of how and why this provision is required and how it would benefit the local area. [500 words max.]

The JSNA that was referenced earlier in this application clearly outlines the growth in demand and the lack of spaces for children and young people with SEND. We have seen a growth from 2014 to now, from 648 plans (EHCPs) to just fewer than 1000 plans. This is as a consequence of the new Code of Practice and the widening in age range from 0-25 years. We anticipate a growth of approximately 100 spaces in special schools by 2025.

This has resulted in considerable pressure on our special schools to allocate places and we consequently have to consult out of authority. Unfortunately this situation of lack of pupil space is likewise occurring in both Luton Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council.

This proposal increases the age range and improves provision in the existing area. Thus, enabling additional and distinctive outcomes. The inclusion of EYFS assessment provision would greatly enhance current provision and ensure improved outcomes.

There is currently very little appropriate provision for post-16 SEND pupils with complex learning needs. The vocational aspect would provide high quality and personalised training with a view to strengthening links with local employers whilst providing real 'work-life' experiences for pupils.

We anticipate specially trained staff drawn from education, health and social care to work as a collective, collaborative and cohesive team.

The LA will also work very closely with BILTT – Bedford Inclusive Learning and Training Trust – a recently established MAT to ensure expert input and support.

Section D – Pupil data and existing SEN provision

The purpose of this section is to help us to understand the need for a new school in the context of how existing provision is used, and future expected growth in need. We want to approve EOIs that:

- address demographic growth
- help LAs meet what pupils and parents want
- help LAs manage within their budgetary constraints

We do not want to approve EOIs that have the side-effect of decreasing inclusion in mainstream schools, or of creating excess spare capacity in existing special schools. (eg. if several LAs each want a similar school, any one of those might make sense on its own but in aggregate there might not be enough need.) In this section you need to explain how the places in this school would be filled and where the pupils would come from (D1). You also need to explain the general demographic trends and placement trends for *all* pupils with EHC plans (D2).

D1: Pupils who would go to the new special school

Please indicate how you expect the places in this school to be filled, and the impact on inclusion.
[500 words max.]

Some of the key resource implications have been cited below:

1. Early Years

There is a gap between the number of children aged 0 to 4 years that have a Statement of SEN and the number of children aged 0 to 4 years that we could expect to have an EHC plan if the local and national prevalence rate of 2.8% is applied to all children in the 0 to 4 age group. There are currently 28 children aged 0 to 4 with a statement, and we can expect 294 children in this age group to require an EHC plan. This represents a gap of 256 children.

2. Preparing for Adulthood

Young people are now eligible for an EHC plan up to the age of 25. If national and local prevalence data for the expected number of EHC plans is applied to the population of young people aged 20 to 24, we would expect there to be 272 EHC plans required. This represents a gap of 246 young people.

3. Education

Inclusion rates for young people with SEND are significantly lower in Bedford Borough than across the country with the exception of young people with ASD where inclusion rates are higher than the national average. This is particularly prevalent for young people with physical disabilities.

4. Number of special school places

As the school age population grows we estimate that up to 160 additional places will be required by 2022. We need to ensure that adequate plans are in place to accommodate this increase in requirements.

The first statistical comparison data release noted some of the following selected trends in Bedford :

- More students with MLD compared to statistical neighbours
- Low on inclusion - 6% in mainstream
- Increased spend on respite
- 2x national average on EHCPs produced plus 100% to timescale
- Some good trends at 19 in terms of employment / settled accommodation but overall attainment levels below national average.

We are of the view that this new school would manage the trends above to ensure we are comparable with our neighbours.

D2: Trends in your specialist provision for all children with EHC plans

Please use the table below to describe the recent, current and projected trends of specialist provision that caters for **children with EHC plans living in your LA(s), of the age range for which you want the new school** (drawing upon [SEN2 Data](#)). If this is a joint bid, ie. other LAs are committed to commissioning places, either fill in the table once for the LAs together, or copy/paste the table and fill it in for each LA (please say which you have done). **The projected data for 2020 should show the pattern you expect if this EOI is successful.**

	No. of Settings	Please indicate the no. of pupils with an EHC plan living in your LA who are placed within these settings		
		2012	2016 (as at Sep 2016)	2020
Resourced provision and units inside LA	6	43	55	67
Resourced provision and units outside LA	0	0	0	0
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA	3	262	300	338
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside LA	8		21	Information not available
Independent / non-maintained special schools inside LA	0	0	0	0
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside LA	12	22	22	Information not available
Mainstream schools inside LA	64	344	346	348
Mainstream schools outside LA	11		16	Information not available
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside LA	1	Information not available	93	Information not available
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside LA	3		7	Information not available
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside LA	2		15	Information not available

Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside LA	4		7	Information not available
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Confirmation

I confirm that the Director of Children's Services at **Bedford Borough Council** has seen this expression of interest and supports it.

Please tick to confirm

Date	10/11/2016
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