



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
<i>Lead LA: [name] (The LA in which the school would be located)</i>		
<i>[if applicable – name of 2nd LA. Please add rows for additional LAs who have committed to commissioning places.]</i>		

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)	Specialist provision for complex needs under Communication and Interaction (C and I) (primarily high functioning autism spectrum disorder -ASD and Asperger's) with related Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH). Some children may also have specific learning difficulties (SPLD) as an additional need but will not have significant learning difficulties.
Per-pupil revenue funding you would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain)	██████████ top up depending on complexity and severity of needs
Age range	5 to 19 Years
Gender (boys/girls/co-educational)	Co-educational
Total number of proposed places	100
Early years' provision? If so, how many places?	No Early Years' Provision
16-19 provision? If so, how many places?	10 (within the 100)
Community use/shared facilities	<p>Local Offer Short Breaks/ holiday programmes to be developed and potential for joint use of playing fields.</p> <p>Multi-disciplinary co-located team across education, health and social care with dedicated space for parents/ carers to engage with practitioners.</p>

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

Doncaster's SEN Panel, schools, parents, elected Members and Members of Parliament have expressed concern at a lack of appropriate local provision for a specific and increasing cohort of children. These children are cognitively able to access a mainstream curriculum and peer group but would benefit significantly from delivery within a more specialist environment. They require longer term, full time specialist provision incorporating educational psychologists, speech and language and occupational therapists, and mental health workers to address significant barriers to learning and positive participation associated with complex social communication and interaction needs. Low self-esteem, limited social interaction, reduced independence, underachievement and failure to reach their potential are major concerns. The impact on other children and on staff when a child's anxieties result regularly in crisis meltdown, cannot be underestimated.

A lack of appropriate provision can lead to reduced confidence amongst parents and school staff that needs can and will be met effectively. It leads to less appropriate placements in a) maintained special schools designated for children with a significant learning difficulty, b) alternative provision, or c) an out of area placement. Families are often managing complex situations and protracted discussions around appropriate placements can add to this level of anxiety.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotherham MBC have expressed support for bid and a strong interest in commissioning places under this category of need • Sheffield City Council have expressed support and acknowledged the need and shortage of such provision in the sub-region. The Doncaster proposal and the Sheffield proposal can both be filled from existing demand and complement each other due to the lack of a shared border and the significant journey time and travel costs that would be involved in moving pupils between the 2 authorities. • Increasing area of need and lack of provision discussed at Regional SEND HOS Networks • Limitations of current independent/ non-maintained offer within a reasonable travelling distance for children and young people with communication and interaction needs who are capable of working within mainstream levels of academic ability and have the potential to attain GCSEs.
Optional: Your Parent / Carer Forum, or other representatives of parents and young people	<p>Doncaster Parents Voice –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the 0-25 multi agency SEND Strategic Partnership Board, Community Paediatrics Autism Steering Group and therapy service redesign activity: discussions on what works and what improved local solutions are needed for Doncaster's children • Feedback confirms increase in demand for enhanced provision particularly at primary transfer and secondary phase due to the environment, pace of curriculum and

Who?	Conversation summary (3 points max)
	extend of social interactions and sensory overload <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern raised around meeting parent choice, increase in parental requests for elective home education, education time lost due to anxiety and disengagement and placements in alternative provision.
Optional: Any other partners, Schools forum, existing FE colleges etc. (please specify)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special heads group: significant capacity issues across all 5 schools and parental preference for placements for children with ASD who are much more able than their existing cohorts; pressure on special school outreach capacity to meet demand from mainstream settings particularly around ASD Community Paediatrics and Autism Steering Group: partnership impact of lack of suitable provision (e.g. mental health, social care, Early Help, Short Breaks) High Needs sub group of Schools Forum: trends and implications of High Needs Block expenditure

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:

- *Address and postcode:* [REDACTED]
- *Size of site:* **10,800 square metres**
- *Current and previous uses including planning designation (if known):* **Site held for educational purposes, previously as a special school and social education centre for Adults.**
- *Estimated timescale for formal ratification that the LA will release the site for the school (if agreed):* **March 2017**
- *Estimated date the site would be available for works to commence:* **September 2017**
- *Tenure upon which the site will be made available (if agreed):* **125 year lease**
- *If applicable, whether the site is co-located with another school etc .***No**
- *If you do not have a site please provide information on where this school would need to be located as this will ensure the Education Funding Agency (EFA) can look at property in the area should your EOI progress.*

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]

[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 Doncaster MBC 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

We are seeking an incremental shift towards a more localised, fit for purpose provision. The values and principles underpinning this strategy are strongly aligned to sustained partnership working across all stakeholders and age range 0-25.

An analysis of placements, including out of authority placements, and views expressed by families, mainstream and special schools and services has concluded that there remains a gap in provision for a significant and increasing cohort of children and young people. The range of needs includes:

- Children who are cognitively able: potential to achieve age related qualifications with the right support and experiences;
- Children who experience barriers to thriving or making at least good progress in their current education environment, particularly finding the sensory demands of a large mainstream environment extremely challenging;
- Children who are under assessment or confirmed diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), including high functioning autism and Asperger's syndrome;
- Children who have a co-morbidity of diagnoses;
- Children who do not have a diagnosis of ASD but may have other significant speech language and communication needs (SLCN) and would benefit from approaches and strategies used successfully for children with ASD;
- Children who may also have a high social and emotional vulnerability including trauma, loss and unmet attachment and relationship needs;
- Children who are highly likely to require on-going assessment and intervention from specialist services ranging from autism specialist workers, educational psychology services, speech and language, CAMHS and other therapy services and for some children social care/ early intervention and support;
- Children who are experiencing high levels of anxiety and may have been out of full time mainstream education with their peers for a period of time or are currently educated other than at school for example by parents or the LA's home tuition service and where a gradual, supported reintegration into an appropriate peer group and environment is considered by all to be a positive next step forward; and
- Children who require a modified teaching and learning environment and adults with skills and expertise in meeting this specific area of special educational need / additional educational needs.

The proposed provision would not be exclusive to children who have a diagnosis of ASD as many children are awaiting referral and assessment but may still present with needs that would benefit from the specialist environment and teaching approaches. For the 2015/16 financial year, data from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) reports referrals to the autism pathway were: 113 for under 5s and 191 for the over 5s, a total of 304 averaging 25 per month. Previously the referrals averaged 22 per month. However there has been an increase from 41% to 73% for a positive diagnosis. The waiting list for the initial General Development Assessment (GDA) is 14 months and there are currently 650 children on the waiting list. This is a specialist nurse-led process and the CCG is increasing capacity from 4 to 8 clinics per month to address the backlog. The second stage of the autism assessment pathway has a current performance of 165 days to be seen for the under 5s and 286 days for the over 5s. There are 68 under 5s and 191 over 5s currently at this stage. The CCG is increasing capacity from 1 clinical psychologist to 3, each of whom can assess 10 children per month. The overwhelming majority of these children are in mainstream settings at present. A diagnosis in itself does not translate into the need for specialist provision and the majority of children have their needs met in mainstream settings from within resources normally available as part of

whole school provision, delegated budgets and universal services. However, there are an increasing number of children with complex communication and interaction needs who would benefit from a mainstream curriculum delivered outside or in partnership with a mainstream environment,

Prevalence

From school census reporting in January 2016, Doncaster's primary schools show 8.7% of children with SEN having ASD as a primary need compared to 6.3% nationally. In secondary schools this figure is 13% in Doncaster schools compared to 8.3% nationally. The figure for Doncaster special schools is 31.4% compared to 25.6% nationally.

	Total number of children with ASD	Stage of SEN: SEN support	Statement/EHC plan
2014	518	146	372
2015	574	198	376
2016	670	245	425

	Total number of children with SEMH	Stage of SEN: SEN support	Statement/EHC plan
2015	823	715	108
2016	873	776	97

The majority of children and young people for whom Doncaster la maintains a statement/EHC plan fall into the 11 to 15 year old category, with the second largest population being aged 5 to 10 years old. There is also a substantial proportion of new statements/EHC plans issued to those under the age of 5. From 2010, the percentage increase in the number of children for whom Doncaster LA maintains a statutory plan has increased by 6% to the end of 2015 (2016 SEN 2). Currently, Doncaster is maintaining 1,410 statutory plans which reflects the extension into post 16/ post 19. Of this cohort, 524 have ASD recorded as a primary need (37%) or SEMH 115 (8%).

In Doncaster's special schools there are significantly more children falling into the ASD category (31%) compared to the national average (26%). There is a substantially higher proportion of children in Doncaster's special schools with ASD as a primary need compared to primary need in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

ASD is the most prevalent type of need (38.4%) of all the children and young people for whom Doncaster la maintains a statement/EHC plan, with the majority of this population being male. Children with undiagnosed ASD are likely to be registered as speech, language and communication difficulties (SLCN), which is part of the communication and interaction (C and I) overarching type of need (8.1%). Additionally, children with ASD but presenting with significant SEMH may be recorded with this primary need at a point in time (8.8%) with boys a majority.

Table showing the percentage of pupils that Doncaster maintain a statement/EHC plan for by type of need 2016:

Internal collection as at January 2016

Age	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
3	0%	0%
4	27%	3%
5	43%	4%
6	36%	2%
7	52%	3%
8	42%	9%
9	40%	5%
10	38%	6%
11	43%	9%
12	41%	16%
13	36%	13%
14	43%	13%
15	27%	15%
16	44%	10%
17	31%	0%
18	20%	0%
19	10%	0%

Please include:

- *How the school will fit into the broader spectrum of SEN provision in the region (including neighbouring LAs if appropriate) (please see attached map)*

Rotherham's ASD prevalence of the Total SEN population as reported by School Census is: 8.6% primary, 14.9% secondary and 28.1%. Rotherham has both primary and secondary mainstream attached ASD resources, which is likely to inflate their proportions. Neighbouring LAs have a greater range of provision for children with ASC within the mainstream range of ability provision compared to Doncaster. However they too report needing to place OOA due to rising demand for specialist provision.

- *How it would help meet pressures on special educational provision*
- *The potential impact on inclusion, including (where applicable) types of expert support you would expect the school to provide to mainstream schools in the area*
- *Parental demand*

The Council's vision for Learning and Achievement is 'All education Good or better, No one left behind'. The values and principles underpinning this paper are strongly aligned to this vision:

- **a stronger voice for parents and young people in a) the continuous cycle of assess-plan-do-review and b) planning and developing provision for SEN 0-19 (25), at a strategic level;**
- **enabling parents to know what they can reasonably expect their local school, local college, Local Authority and other services to provide without them having to fight for it. It is a Statutory duty for Local Authorities to publish their Local Offer and for partners to co-operate in its development and review;**
- **extending choice for parents/carers and increase the menu of quality provision available locally to meet a wider spectrum of needs;**
- **recognising and building upon each child's unique gifts and talents to achieve their personal outcomes and improve and sustain their attainment and achievement;**
- **earlier identification and intervention with support routinely in place quickly and within an inclusive culture;**
- **having a shared focus on improving holistic Outcomes for the child in the context of their education and home life to maximise their chances of success into adulthood**
- **developing clear pathways and multi-agency, multi-disciplinary support for children and young people with SEND;**
- **sharing responsibility and benefit for both the special school sector and mainstream settings promoting integration and dual placements for children and expert outreach support for children and staff;**
- **building capacity and sustainability through a continuous workforce development and resource base offer to widen knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence; and**
- **providing good value for money from the Local Authority's High Needs Block and continue to reduce the need for out of area independent and non-maintained specialist placements.**

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. (e.g. 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.]

Please include:

- *Where the pupils will come from – what is the balance of demographic growth (e.g. new housing developments) vs changing patterns of need (e.g. which are the schools the pupils would attend if this school did not go ahead)?*
- *The impact on numbers and proportion of students with SEN at mainstream schools*
- *How the school would be financially sustainable within budgetary constraints in the long term, including (if applicable) how it would help deliver wider value for money (for example in reducing transport costs)*

Most children will come from within the borough with other available placements being made to neighbouring authorities. Placements will follow statutory plans and be allocated through our established multi-agency panel.

In Doncaster some children have been placed in alternative provision due to the high risk of exclusion. 20% of children in our behaviour PRU have a statement or EHCP and of these approximately 40% have ASD.

As at April 2016 there were 284 home education children and young people in Doncaster (Elective Home Education–EHE), this figure has increased year on year. 15 children have a diagnosis of autism spectrum condition (ASC) and 7 further children are under the autism assessment pathway. The age range of the 22 children with a communication and interaction area of need across KS1-4 is as follows: KS1 – 2; KS2- 9; KS3-6 and KS4-5. The identified SEN population was 88 children at different stages of the graduated response. The prevalence of children with autism is 17% of children with a diagnosis and 25% if we include children under investigation. There appears to be a disproportionate number of children leaving education where parents cite the reason as the school not being able to meet the needs of their child who has autism.

11 children who are educated at home have a statutory plan. The majority of children have a primary need recorded as severe learning difficulties (SLD) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); the majority are in KS3 and were previously in a mainstream setting. Of all the EHE children, there is a higher rate of SEN that are home educated than the proportion of SEN children that are in schools, and this is particularly true in secondary school age.

From 2014 to 2015 (2015 and 2016 SEN2), there was a significant increase in the number of children and young people who are placed in independent special schools. The total rose from 26 to 41, a 57.7% increase. There is also a growth trend in the number of pupils placed in maintained and non-maintained special schools.

57 children are currently placed OOA in independent and non-maintained settings and 29 of these have ASD as a primary need at a projected annual cost of ██████████ 9 are KS2; 15 KS3 and 5 KS5 with 14 within the mainstream range of ability who would be offered places at a new provision. Doncaster has placed 22 children since September 2014, 13 children have been placed OOA with a primary need of ASD at a cost of ██████████ ranging from ██████████, the majority around ██████████ per annum. 6 children are in KS2 and 7 in KS3, 6 are within the remit of the proposed provision.

Other children are placed in special schools for children with learning difficulties, where curriculum pace and peer groups are not ideal to meet their needs or their potential to achieve Level 2 qualifications. Expensive out of authority placements in excess of a 25 mile radius will be reduced, reducing transport costs and providing integrated community provision and developing greater resilience and independence into adulthood.

This will result in preventative early intervention rather than crisis management across education, health and social care.

The school will also support the education and training outcomes into Post 16 leading to increased opportunities for local improved destinations.

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, i.e. 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 (includes Statements of SEN)		
		2012 SEN Form 2	2016 (as at Sep 2016) (Doncaster admin responsibility i.e. to be reported on next SEN 2)	2020
Resourced provision and units inside LA	2012- 3 2016- 2 (one a secondary academy) (HI resources)	17	16	16
Resourced provision and units outside LA	2012- 2 2016- 4	2	4	2
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA	5	463	525	630
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside LA	9 (2016)	7	10	8
Independent / non-maintained/ other independent special schools inside LA	4 (2 used in 2012) includes 1 'Other in 2016	9	23	15
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside LA	21 (2012) 18 (2016)	38	40	20
Mainstream schools inside LA	120 current	666	592	600
Mainstream schools outside LA	2012- 12 2016- 15	18	19	20
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside LA	2016 only - 1	n/a	116	110
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside LA	2016 only – 10	n/a	33	34
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside LA	2016 only – 1	n/a	43	40

Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside LA	2016 only -2	n/a	3	1
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Please provide a brief explanation of any recent trends and the rationale for future projections [200 words max.]

Please include:

- anything the RSC should know about why you are expecting the changes you have described from now to 2020
- any changes to capacity you are already expecting (e.g. planned expansions / closures / other new schools and how this school would sit alongside those) - Nil
- details of any wave 12 free school applications – Nil

There is no spare capacity within Doncaster special schools despite an increase in funded places over time. There is no capacity in the sub region.

Establishment	Annual Funded Places (2013/14)	Annual Funded Places (2014/15)	Annual Funded Places (2015/16)	Current capacity
Pennine View	110	110	120	-3
Coppice	102	97	101	0
Heatherwood	70	63	63	2
Stone Hill	115	117	120	-3
North Ridge	106	120	125	4
Totals	503	507	529	0

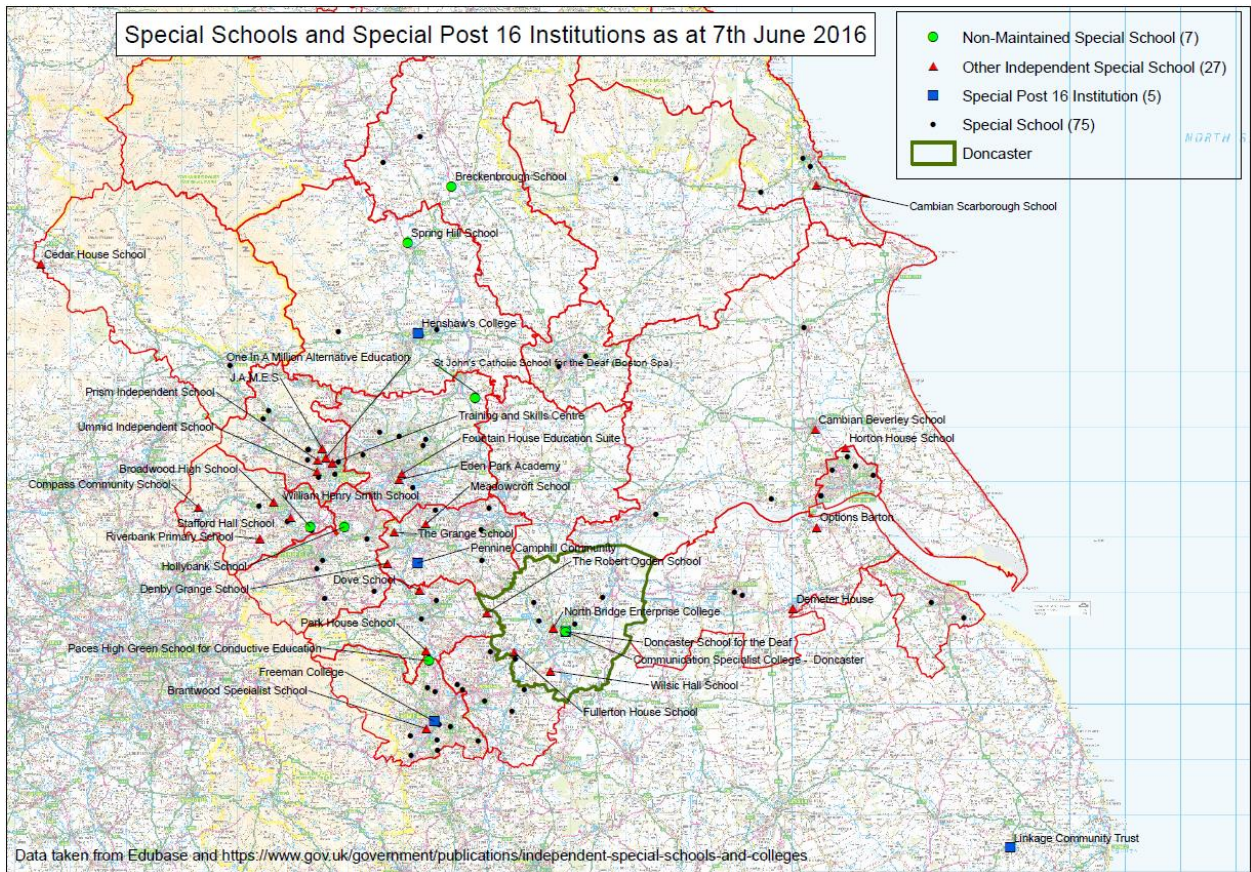
The through school continuity will avoid negative phase transition points and help reduce parental anxieties.

Confirmation

I confirm that the Director of Children's Services at 1 has seen this expression of interest and supports it.

Please tick to confirm

Date	10/11/2016
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