



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](#).

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)	SLD and PMLD
Per-pupil revenue funding you would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain)	████████████████████
Age range	2-19
Gender (boys/girls/co-educational)	Co-educational
Total number of proposed places	112
Early years provision? If so, how many places?	7 nursery 7 reception
16-19 provision? If so, how many places?	21 places
Community use/shared facilities	Shared site

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

- Within SLD and PMLD this will cater for students with a diagnosis of ASD.
- The school will be providing out-reach support with a number of settings.
- Expertise will be shared between the other 4 special schools in the LA – this will be a centre of excellence with South Gloucestershire. There will also be opportunities under the 'inclusion model' to work with the Local Secondary Academy Trust which will share the site.
- Within the nursery model the expectation will be a 30 hours a week provision term time only i.e. 38 weeks/year.
- Additionally, with the Post 16 provision there will be an opportunity to develop shared courses across the authority and to work alongside both the maintained Post 16 Sector i.e. SGS and Independent Sector.

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 Bristol City Bath and North East Somerset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BANES: discussion is underway with BANES; they have committed to placing a number of pupils in this school. • Bristol support the Free School in Alveston; they have committed to placing a number of pupils in this school.
Optional: Your Parent / Carer Forum, or other representatives of parents and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CEO of South Gloucestershire Parents and Carers fully supports this Free School. • The Free School will help to relieve the burden on class sizes in other schools locally. • The school will ensure that children can remain in a school within South Gloucestershire. The school will help to achieve better outcomes for the children and young people of South Gloucestershire.
Optional: Any other partners, Schools forum, existing FE colleges etc. (please specify)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Gloucestershire Council is working closely with the Schools Forum on the right strategic approach for High Needs Block expenditure and the provision this school would provide fits that strategic direction. • The existing special schools in South Gloucestershire: Culverhill School, Warmley Park, New Siblands and New Horizons are all supportive of this Free School. They recognise the need for this provision and are keen to work with this setting to develop practice across the area.

Who?	Conversation summary (3 points max)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• South Glos and Stroud College are opening Pegasus Free School; they will work with this school to support work around pupils with PMLD/SLD and ASD.<li>• Upland Special School support the Free School, work across the two schools will strengthen provision.

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]
- *Size of site* – The playing field area to the North East of the site is approximately 55,000 sq m. A smaller playing field area to the North West is roughly 6,200 sq m. These areas are included within the Academy Lease to the school.
- *Current and previous uses including planning designation (if known)* Existing school site
- *Estimated timescale for formal ratification that the LA will release the site for the school (if agreed)* March 2017.
- *Tenure upon which the site will be made available (if agreed)* Sub-lease Agreement Jointly located on [REDACTED]
- *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]

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 [REDACTED] 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.]

- How the school will fit into the broader spectrum of SEN provision in the region (including neighbouring LAs if appropriate).** In August 2014 the Strategic Review of SEN identified a major challenge facing South Gloucestershire LA to provide places for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and severe learning difficulties (SLD) over the next ten years. Post-16 was also identified as a priority area needing additional provision, as the current trend to meet this need is to place within the Independent Sector. In November 2015 the Lead Members agreed that one of the main priorities was so ensure sufficient and effective provision for children and young people with SEN and Disability. The High Needs Block of the DSG is currently experiencing significant budget pressures which are anticipated to continue for the foreseeable future. The Council is working with the Schools Forum and all Schools to develop a strategic plan to deliver cost efficiencies in the provision of SEND support and places. On average placing a pupil with SLD/PMLD needs costs in the order of [REDACTED] more per pupil, per annum when placing in private or independent specialist provision compared to placing the pupil in maintained/academy provision. Developing more in-authority provision is therefore a critical element of that strategy and the proposal for a new school set out in this Expression of Interest now forms a critical element of that strategy.
- How it would help meet pressures on special educational provision.** It has been recognised that the young people with PMLD and SLD exceeds the current number of available places. The Local Authority has responded to the need by expanding current special school provision i.e. New Siblands and Warmley Park, however land and accommodation constraints limit any further expansion of these schools. The proposed Free School will provide provision for a nursery class which will allow more specialist interventions and a centre of excellence where shared expertise can be disseminated through other schools/provision across the region. The school would provide cost savings and health benefits for young people due to the reduced need to be transported into other local authorities' provisions.
- 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.** The school would be situated on a site where there is currently a Secondary Mainstream School. The location of the school will allow a two way avenue for Inclusion, encouraging social integration with the mainstream secondary school and vice versa. Opportunities for shared work will be developed. The school will be a centre for excellence and will provide training, guidance and support to mainstream schools.
- Parental demand:** Parental demand for more specialist provision is articulated in the responses to a survey of parents concerning new school provision for children with SLD. Parents were asked:

Do you feel there is a need for a new school for children and young people with SLD in south Gloucestershire?

Are you happy to support the LA putting forward an expression of interest for a new school?

The responses to a survey to parents are summarised in the attached.

The Parent/Carer Forum support this bid and in a letter of support the CEO has commented: *'It is vital that we find more provision for our Children who need this support and our current schools are full. Parents have told us that this is impacting on the class sizes of our other specialist schools and that parents are worried where their children would go if no places are available.'* Letter attached.

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.]

The Council's bid for a new free school addresses demographic growth experienced as a result of natural population change, net international migration and consequent major new house building. South Gloucestershire has experienced a steep rise in population in the last 30 years and is recognised as one of the fastest growing economic areas in the country. The Council's pupil number projections indicate year on year growth in numbers. The numbers of children with a statement/plan are consistent with this trend and indicate basic need growth of approximately 700 statemented/plan children over the short to medium term. The scale of growth brings a need for more housing and pressure on services and infrastructure. The Council is managing growth of 20,000 new homes over the next 12 years and this is estimated to generate an additional 15,500 children aged 0. Of these, approximately 570 children will require an EHC Plan and approximately half of these will require a specialist placement. The current pattern of provision indicates half of all children with a statement of SEN/ECH Plan attend mainstream provision. Approximately one quarter of all children with a statement of SEN attend a place at a special school and just under one third of these will be children with Severe Learning Difficulties and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. The pupil projections take this pattern of demand into account and assume that mainstream schools will continue to provide a high proportion of children with a statement/plan with access to inclusive education.

The Council has a good proven-track record of delivering new SEND places over recent years through expanding existing provision and developing new provision. The proposed new school has similarly been planned to ensure financial viability. A key aspect of financial viability is ensuring demand for new places is known with a high degree of certainty. The related pupil number projections clearly demonstrate this and the reality is even starker when looked at in detail. Currently the SEND Service has 22 nursery age pupils with SLD/PMLD needs to place in September 2017 with identified provision for only 8 of those pupils. The ability to place the remaining 14 pupils is severely limited at this stage as there is no capacity within the Authority and no identifiable provision even within the private or independent sector within reasonable or allowed travel distances. Even if those places were identifiable within the private or independent sector then the annual additional cost compared to being able to place within authority to the High Needs Block of the DSG would be up to █████. Due to the lack of private and independent places the likelihood is that even more costly support measures will need to be made, for example within existing resource bases to allow them to provide the support needed for these pupils. This is likely to add even greater pressures to the High Needs Block. In a similar vein the cost savings likely to accrue from shorter travel distances for the new School are likely to be in the region of █████ per pupil, resulting in an annual saving of up to █████ to the High Needs Block of the DSG once the School is at full capacity.

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	8	112	129	+12 Lyde Green
Resourced provision and units outside LA	0	1	1	
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA	4	308	372	+80 Pegasus +36 Warmley Park +8 New Siblands
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside LA	0	51	40	40
Independent / non-maintained special schools inside LA		3	14	16
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside LA		51	50	69
Mainstream schools inside LA		446	636	727
Mainstream schools outside LA		23	25	28
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside LA			88	91
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside LA			46	49
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside LA			0	
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside LA			51	55

Please provide a brief explanation of any recent trends and the rationale for future projections [200 words max.]

The projections for children with a statement/EHC Plan are based on the existing pupil numbers on roll for all mainstream schools/provision in South Gloucestershire. The projections are split by age range and mirror the growing trend of increasing numbers of children aged 0-19 over the next 10 years. Numbers across the age range are rolled forward using existing patterns of need recorded in the Council's Capita and SEN2 data sources and are based on current/growing incidence rates which vary across the age range. The principle input to the projections is the Council's *pipeline* data. This data is obtained from close partnership working with healthcare professionals to identify children with severe/complex needs at a very early stage in order to plan appropriate place provision (a pathway) for children as young as 2 years old. The data provides short to medium term projections (these are referred to as basic need) and a separate analysis of the impact of major new house building is undertaken to ensure that the needs of new and developing communities in South Gloucestershire are fully considered in line with current patterns of demand for specialist provision.

The basic need pupil projections indicate an increase of 700 children with statements of SEN/EHC Plan by 2026. The yield of children with a statement of SEN/EHC Plan arising from new housing will generate approximately 570 children. This is a total of 1270 children. Half of these will require a specialist place. Just under 400 children will attend a special school and approximately 29% will have Severe Learning Difficulties. This equates to approximately 105 pupils. Additionally, it is projected that 5-10 children with a primary ASD need will have a secondary SLD need. These will be placed in a school for children with SLD. It is also sensible to provide additional places for children with PMLD. Currently, the Council places 15% of all children with PMLD to out of area specialist placements. The projections indicate a further 5 children will require places in South Gloucestershire within this plan period. These combined figures indicate the need for a new 112 place special school providing for children with SLD/PMLD.

Confirmation

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

√ Please tick to confirm

Date (9/11/2016)	
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