

Free Schools - Proposal Form

The Proposal Form asks you for details on the educational rationale, aims and objectives, parental demand and premises of the proposed Free School. It also asks questions about the suitability of the provider(s) involved. All new Free Schools will be opened with the same legal status as Academies, in a binding agreement with the Secretary of State.

Please note, all information provided in this form will be published on the Department for Education website.

INITIAL DETAILS

Name (Please specify if you are the nominated representative of an organisation that wishes to set up a Free School)

██████████

Name of your organisation

Sandbach School

Address (of organisation or individual)

██████████, Sandbach, Cheshire, ██████████

Email Contact

██████████

Telephone Number

██████████

Are you an existing independent school wanting to convert to a Free School?

Yes

If yes, please provide your 6-digit school unique reference number (URN)

111476

If no, please confirm the nature of your organisation (educational group / charity / business / parent group etc)

Please confirm whether your organisation is incorporated i.e. set up as a Company which is registered at Companies House. If so, please provide the Company Registration Number, Company Address and details of the Directors and Secretary. If not, please indicate the approximate date by which it will be incorporated.

Yes, our organisation is incorporated

Company Registration Number: 06486255

Company Address: [REDACTED], Sandbach, Cheshire, [REDACTED]

Details of Directors and Secretary: Directors -

[REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Company Secretary

No, our organisation is not yet incorporated

Approximate date by which it will be incorporated:

What is the proposed age range of the Free School? Please include details of planned pupil numbers in each year group.

11-18 boys school
210 pupils in each cohort from Year 7 - 11
215 pupils in Year 12 & 13

When do you hope the Free School will start operating (for your first set of pupils)?

Already operating so would be in a position to operate as a free school from January-April 2011 but believe the earliest possible date is September 2011

In which Local Authority area will the school be based? If you are near to a LA boundary, please include name of neighbouring LA(s)

Local Authority Cheshire East

Neighbouring LAs Cheshire West & Staffordshire

Is your Local Authority aware of your intention to set up a Free School?

Yes

(If Y please give details of your discussions with them so far)

Cheshire East have been informed that we have expressed an interest in becoming a free school and that we are actively exploring the benefits of doing so.

Have you discussed your proposal form with the New Schools Network?

Yes

(If Y please give details of your discussions with them so far)

We have sought advice from the New School Network. We are seeking answers to the following questions :

1. As an independent (though non fee paying) school for boys, a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee, 98% of our funding is calculated by the LA in exactly the same (formulaic) way as for any of their own maintained schools. One significant difference between us and the maintained schools however is that we are an individual member of the Local Government Pension Scheme for our support staff. Clearly the LA schools (including the Foundation Schools) are all covered within the umbrella membership of the LA. We currently have a deficit on our pension scheme which is expected to be around £700k when the results of the triennial valuation come out in the Autumn. Given the profile of our support staff I suspect this level of deficit is no different from any other school. One the recent advice of the Pensions Administrators we were just about to go to the LA and ask if they would be prepared to 'stand behind' our pension scheme. This would take two forms :

- In the likely event that ongoing employer contributions will rise as result of the formal valuation, would they provide the additional funding required to meet the additional cost (as they are almost certain to do for their own schools, and have done for us in the past) ?
- Would they effectively act as guarantor for the scheme in the extremely unlikely event that the school closed down ?
- If the school goes down the free school route we are hoping for these or similar reassurances from the DfE. Do you think this would present a problem ?

2. We currently have a Business Finance Loan from the LA (£235,000 outstanding) . What might the implications be on the loan if we become a free school ?

3. We also have commercial loans (£390,000 outstanding) taken out along with the Business Finance Loan (above) to part-finance a £1.4m capital programme 2 years ago - would that have any impact on proceedings ?

4. We incorporated 2 years as a company limited by guarantee and went through a TUPE exercise with staff transferring them over from the old charity. Whilst I appreciate we would have to alter the memorandum/articles would we be able to retain the exiting trust/company as the legal vehicle for the free school ?

SUITABILITY OF PROVIDER

The Secretary of State will consider each proposal on its merits, and take into account all matters relevant to that proposal. Generally, he would expect that all proposals will comply with all aspects of the rigorous suitability and vetting tests throughout the application process, including due diligence and CRB checks and will reject any proposers who advocate violence, intolerance, hatred or whose ideology runs counter to the UK's democratic values.

Do any of the following apply to the organisation (or any consortium member), or to (any of) its director(s)/partners/proprietor(s) or individual applicants (select Y/N):	
Is in a state of bankruptcy, insolvency, compulsory winding up, receivership, composition with creditors (including any Individual Voluntary Arrangement), or subject to an Administration Order or any legal proceedings concerning their solvency?	No
Has been convicted of a criminal offence?	No
Is involved in any illegal activities?	No
Has not fulfilled obligations related to payment of taxes?	No
Is guilty of serious misrepresentation in supplying information?	No
Is not in possession of relevant licences or membership of an appropriate organisation where required by law?	No
Is barred from certain work with children as a result of being:	
[a] included in the list of those barred from Regulated Activity with children, kept by the Independent Safeguarding Authority? Or	No
[b] included in the list kept under section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1999(4) (list of those considered by the Secretary of State as unsuitable to work with children)? Or	No
[c] subject to a direction of the Secretary of State under section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (5) (or any other disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction)? Or	No

<p>[d] disqualified from working with children under sections 28, 29 or 29A of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000(6)?</p> <p>For further information on [a], [b], [c] and [d], please contact the CRB www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Is disqualified from registration under Part 10A of the Children Act 1989(7) for child minding or providing day care?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Is disqualified from registration under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006(8)?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Is a member, or has been a member in the past, of a proscribed organisation?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>If the answer to any of these questions is “Yes” please give details below:</p>	

EDUCATIONAL RATIONALE, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Briefly outline your reasons for wanting to set up a Free School. Max 200 words.

Sandbach School is an 11-18 independent comprehensive school for boys that serves the community of Sandbach and Haslington. We have a unique 40 year agreement with the LA which sets out our funding arrangements. Our admissions are controlled by the LA and we elect to buy a few of the services available from them (e.g. Broadband services, copyright/license agreements). We have a School Improvement Partner (SIP) allocated to us by the LA.

We are a specialist Arts College and judged Outstanding at our last Ofsted Inspection in Oct 2008. Our intake is truly comprehensive and inclusive. We have an Assistant Head in charge of Inclusion and Intervention who currently oversees the provision for 47 students who have identified Special Educational Need.

Although we are currently funded by the LA and have very good relations with them, we are entirely self-sufficient in terms of accounting, procurement of goods and services and in many other respects. We have a charitable trust, are a company limited by guarantee and therefore already meet all of the legal and accounting requirements as defined in the Companies and Charities Acts.

We do currently enjoy some of the freedoms that the DfE would like many more outstanding schools to experience and as a consequence we are able to nurture the very distinct 'ethos' we believe Sandbach School possesses. Being part of the free school/academy programme would give us further opportunity to develop the school. For example being freed from the National Curriculum, having access to 'Raise Online' data (currently because of our status we are unable to access this), being freed from National Pay and Conditions (currently part of the agreement with the LA) and having access to future educational initiatives (our status prevented us from becoming a Leading Edge school) would all assist us in taking the school on to the next level of achievement.

Please set out the Free School's aims and objectives. You should also describe:

- the teaching methods that will be used and whether the Free School will follow a particular philosophy (eg Montessori);
- the outline of the Free School's proposed curriculum, including any religious ethos;
- how the Free School will improve pupil learning and ensure strong discipline;

Max 2000 words.

Our mission statement is :

“To provide a stimulating, creative and caring environment where all pupils have an equal opportunity to achieve their fullest potential within an Arts College environment and develop into independent learners and responsible members of the local and global community.”

Our aims and objectives are :

- To be inclusive in providing every student with the equality of opportunity, motivation and support, enabling him to achieve more than he thought possible both inside and outside the classroom.
- To emphasise established fundamental cultural and moral values and standards in preparing pupils for adult life in a society that is multi-cultural and changing.
- To develop personal and social skills so that each individual can contribute usefully and confidently to the School and wider community.
- To encourage the development of self-confident independent and creative individuals who respect the right of others, and who will develop into responsible citizens.
- To provide a clean, safe, secure and controlled environment in which learning and teaching can be most effective within the overall ethos of an Arts College specialism.
- To develop aesthetic, cultural and multicultural awareness in curricular and extra curricular opportunities as essential.
- To provide a balanced and stimulating Arts – driven curriculum which is flexible enough to respond to the needs of students at different ages, stages, aptitudes and abilities.
- To encourage participation in sporting, performance and curricular enrichment activities at all scales from within school to international.
- To secure the active involvement of all people concerned with the School’s welfare; staff, pupils, governors, parents and LA, in the continuous reassessment of the aims and objectives of the School as a Specialist Arts College with an international dimension.
- To promote opportunities for life long learning and access to the School’s general and artistic facilities within the wider local area to help promote community cohesion and well-being.
- To provide mutual support and care for all members of the Sandbach School Community as part of a need to build resilience and robustness in emotional well-being.

The school has a very distinctive philosophy that we feel meets the needs in particular of boys; 'active learning' in the classroom enhanced by a plethora of extra-curricular activities. The school's independent heritage is easily distinguished within its extra-curricular offering, its traditional values of discipline and respect and its emphasis on academic excellence, yet as a comprehensive school we make this available to all our boys.

Approximately two thirds of our pupils are drawn from our own catchment of Sandbach/Haslington. Sandbach is a reasonably affluent market town although there are pockets of deprivation. Of the remaining third most come from the Crewe which is an area of high deprivation. Around 6% of our pupils qualify for free school meals. Our admissions code is completely governed by

the LA.

Given freedom from the National Curriculum we would undertake a review of the existing curriculum offer (led by subject leaders), reviewing Schemes of Work to ascertain what the best options are to meet the academic and vocational needs of our pupils. We have pioneered ways of working with boys (mostly middle class and white) to raise their aspirations and optimise outcomes for them (for example the use of creativity in the classroom). Our success has been reflected in examination results and confirmed by OFSTED. Without the constraints of the National Curriculum we firmly believe we can continue to innovate and lead the school to an even higher level of achievement.

What are your organisation's core areas of work / aims? Max 500 words.

The object of the Charitable Company as laid out in the Memorandum of Association is to advance education by:

- (i) the provision and conduct in or near Sandbach of a day school for boys or boys and girls; and
- (ii) the provision of education through day and evening classes for persons over compulsory school age; including in each case academic, vocational, social, physical and recreational training and associated organised leisure time activities.

What capacity and capability do you have (or have access to) in order to deliver the educational vision set out above? Please indicate the resources, experience and expertise (educational and legal) that you have or have access to. Max 500 words.

We have been rated by OFSTED in 2008 as being an 'outstanding' school in every element of the inspection and therefore an outstanding school overall. As an established school we have a full compliment of teaching staff (headcount 76.8, FTE 73.6), and support staff (headcount 59, FTE 41.9). The governing body are well established and drawn from parents, LA councilors, former pupils, higher education and a number are co-opted to bring particular skills/experience. Having recently gone through a governance review the committee structure and membership has been refreshed and all terms of reference for committees have been updated to reflect best practices.

Do you have plans to work with a 3rd party organisation? If so, please include their details below and set out the intended nature of that relationship (for example, a contract, co-sponsorship arrangement, informal partnership).

We have been approached by the new Headteacher of another local secondary school in a more deprived area (rated satisfactory by OFSTED) to ask if we would be prepared to work with them in sharing good practices and helping them to raise standards. We would be very eager and willing to do this. In addition we are a very active participant in the local Education Improvement Partnership working closely with our feeder primary schools to enhance the educational experience of all young people in the area. We have also developed a Sixth Form partnership with our near neighbours (Sandbach High School for girls) who are also an outstanding school and are in the first tranche of schools applying for academy status (see below).

Please name the key individuals / trustees involved in setting up the Free School (if available). Please also indicate whether trustees have been chosen and their roles confirmed. Please provide details of employment of

these individuals and any conflicts of interest you believe might arise.

All of our current governors are trustees of the charity (and directors of the company limited by guarantee). They all give significant commitment currently not only to scheduled meetings/events but also for unscheduled activities (e.g. pupil disciplinary meetings, meetings with Curriculum Leaders and attending some of the the rich variety of extra curricular activities).

EVIDENCE OF DEMAND

What evidence of local parental demand do you have? For example, a petition or a declaration from interested parents or pupil number projections for the area. Max 200 words.

Parents have been informed of the school's interest in considering academy status and have been given the opportunity to feedback their thoughts and comments.

What is the proposed capacity (number of pupils)? Max 200 words.

The capacity of the school (excluding the 6th form is 1050). It is anticipated that on September 1st 2010 there will be 1015 on roll . We do believe that we will reach capacity - we continue to be oversubscribed for year 7 places.

The sixth form is anticipated to be at 215 on 1st September and is anticipated to grow to 265 by 2013. This growth will come partly from 'organic' growth and partly through the developing partnership with Sandbach High School for girls. This partnership is aimed at widening choice for pupils at both schools. If each school were part of the academy programme we would be well positioned to consider alternative curriculum options (International Baccalaureate, Pre U), and promote the Sandbach Partnership as a major sixth form provider in South Cheshire .

PREMISES

What steps have you taken to identify a potential site? Please include details of the geographical area the school seeks to serve; a list of any sites you have considered; and any discussions you have had to identify a suitable site. If known, please include the proposed location, premises and postcode of the Free School.

The school occupies a 30 acre site owns all of its own land, buildings and all other assets. We have excellent facilities which include a recently completed state-of-the-art Performance Studios, an All Weather football/hockey pitch and our own swimming pool. We currently throw our doors open to the community to use our facilities in the evenings and at weekends, and we also run the largest evening adult education programme in the area.

Further information

Please note, all information provided on this form will be published on the Department for Education website. Information that you supply on this form may be shared with (a) the New Schools Network and (b) the Local Authority in which you wish to set up the Free School. Information about the New Schools Network can be found at <http://www.newschoolsnetwork.org>.

Submission of this form will be treated as consent, from both you and anyone else whose personal data is contained on this form, to the sharing of this information as set out above.

In addition, information that you provide on this form, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

Next Steps

Please email completed Proposal Form to freeschools.registration@education.gsi.gov.uk

You will hear back from a named official at the Department for Education within two weeks, who will offer you advice on how best to progress your application. The Secretary of State will make a judgement on the potential of the project based on criteria relating to educational aims and objectives, evidence of demand, potential premises, suitability of provider and any other relevant considerations to decide whether the proposed Free School project should move into stage 3, namely that of drawing up a business case and plan.