

Free Schools - Proposal Form

The Proposal Form asks you for details on the educational 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)


Chair of Birstall, Birkenshaw and Gomersal Parents Alliance (BBGPA)


Name of your organisation

BBGPA in partnership with Serco


Address (of organisation or individual)


Birkenshaw
Bradford 

Email Contact



Telephone Number



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

No

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

Not applicable.

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

Parent Group in alliance with an Educational Business.

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.

No, as a partnership we are not incorporated. We have a contractual Memorandum of Understanding. The establishment of the school will ipso facto bind us together as a charitable entity.

Company Registration Number:

Company Address:

Details of Directors and Secretary:

Approximate date by which it will be incorporated:

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)

(North) Kirklees, very close to the boundary with Bradford, and also close to Leeds.

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

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

Yes. Kirklees LA is well aware of our intention to establish a new school, as they have been for the best part of two years.

Recent history is highly relevant. Working in partnership with Serco, we applied to the previous Secretary of State for Consent to publish proposals. We applied in December 2009, the Secretary of State commissioned a detailed study of our case, and in the event rejected our application just before the May General Election.

Kirklees Council opposed our proposal, arguing that it would upset their wider BSF-funded reorganisation plan, and create surplus places. We contest strongly both these points.

We have several times sought to engage the Local Authority in discussion - in our view our proposal essentially complements theirs and, with modest modifications, the combination of the two would best meet the needs of local parents. Kirklees Council has not hitherto been willing to engage with us.

In recent weeks, however, their position has changed and the Council Leader has now expressed himself willing to have a meeting. It will be important to have substantive discussion with both the Council and E-ACT, the approved sponsor for the new 1350-place Academy at nearby Howden Clough.

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, the Secretary of State 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. The Secretary of State would generally expect to 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:	
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>	No
<p>Is disqualified from registration under Part 10A of the Children Act 1989(7) for child minding or providing day care?</p>	No
<p>Is disqualified from registration under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006(8)?</p>	No
<p>Is a member, or has been a member in the past, of a proscribed organisation?</p>	No
<p>If the answer to any of these questions is "Yes" please give details below: Not applicable.</p>	

EDUCATIONAL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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

Briefly outline your reasons for wanting a Free School (200 words max)

Through the recent BSF programme, the local LA is planning to reorganise the education system in North Kirklees. Their plan will leave the areas of East Bierley, Birkenshaw & Gomersal without a local school, and having to attend 2 separate oversized Secondary Schools, splitting our community in half.

Our Free School will be situated in the centre of the community, allowing the majority of its pupils to be able to walk to school. It will put education at the heart of our community and will enable us to continue to care for and educate our young people to a high standard, and instil in them a commitment to the wider community - as we have done for the past 50 years.

The school will serve the needs and wishes of the local community, embracing the extended school vision to benefit young and old alike.

Our proposal is for a smaller school of 900 capacity which will offer a combination of high quality teaching in an ordered environment and outstanding pastoral care, enabling our young people confidently to take their place in the 21st Century workforce and society.

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.

The BBG Ethos – Excellence for All

The ethos that will underpin BBG Academy combines high expectations and standards with strong discipline and pastoral care, and a responsibility to community as well as self.

BBG Academy will be a school where:

- the culture is one of mutual respect
- the highest standards in all that we do individually and collectively will be achieved
- each individual child matters and is known, nurtured and developed

- confident skilled young people become valuable members of their school and the wider community
- each student not only achieves his or her potential but enjoys learning
- there is a distinct and clear sense of belonging and 'esprit de corps'

We will be a local school that serves its community, achieving the highest educational standards for all pupils. We will provide high quality education for all young people in our diverse community, aiming to ensure that each individual achieves not only his/her academic and personal potential, but also develop their talents and realise their potential in sport, the arts and as good and active citizens.

In striving for excellence our school will achieve the highest standards – our target is to achieve significantly above the CVA national and local averages at KS3 & 4 within the first two years, and join the top 25% nationally within 3 years. In absolute terms we will exceed the national averages from the start – at 5 A*-C GCSE including English and Maths, the national average was 50.7% in 2009 (up 2.5% from 2008).

Our targets will be much more ambitious, not least reflecting the high standards presently achieved by the Birkenhead Middle School (BMS), whose pupils we will “inherit”. BMS is rated a “Good” school by Ofsted, with the new KS3 curriculum judged “Outstanding”; and its KS2 results are just below 90%, with 83% of pupils achieving L4 in both English and Maths. That is an excellent foundation on which we will build.

How will we achieve our vision?

The BBG Academy will have a relentless focus on high quality and engaging teaching, taking on a specialism – we incline to Science, or possibly Maths, and will decide after consultation with interested parties, including Kirklees Council and the other local Academies. We will embrace the best practice that supports student motivation and achievement; and we will invest in the potential of our workforce, teachers and support staff, at all levels.

The new school will encourage a wide range of cultural, spiritual, sporting, enterprising and artistic experiences for all our students. We will ensure that all our students are given every opportunity to enjoy and achieve, and have the ambition not only to succeed in financial terms, but also to contribute to the local and regional community – socially, economically, and in the arts and sport.

Our school will be distinctive not only for its academic excellence but also for our students being actively involved positively and productively in their local community.

What will be our 'Measures of Success'?

The most obvious measure will be educational attainment – we aim to exceed both local and national averages at Key Stage 3 and 4 within 3 years, and also by then place ourselves in the top national quartile for schools in a similar context (i.e., with a CVA of 1100 or higher).

Other quantitative measures will include:

- sporting and cultural events and success
- staff recruitment and retention

- satisfaction – of staff, students, governors and the local community.

Other measures will include:

- good teaching practice openly and universally shared, exchanged and promoted not only within our school but across a wider ‘family’ of schools
- all students learning in a high quality 21st century environment with access to a range of independent learning opportunities and a stimulating curriculum that engages and stretches them
- the school utilising and extending new e-opportunities to extend learning, CPD provision, and the sharing of good practice
- parents having the opportunity to be actively engaged with their children’s learning
- enhancing the development of students’ cultural, spiritual, social and moral values is enhanced and thereby serving the common good

How will we achieve this?

We will have a relentless focus on high standards, ambition and expectation in all that we do:

- **appointing and managing teachers of the highest quality**, ensuring the quality of teaching and learning is closely monitored and never less than 85% good or better
- ensuring **all students’ learning and progress is closely monitored, reported on**, and used to inform future learning through a high quality system of assessment and monitoring
- ensuring that **leadership and management is focussed on empowering high quality teaching, learning and achievement** at a nationally recognised high level
- developing **teaching and learning approaches which promote independent learning** and personal development, such as:
 - promoting state of the art ICT and learning collaborations
 - expecting students to contribute positively to their peer culture
 - preparing students individually and collectively for work and life in society
 - expecting learners and their parents/carers to share responsibility for their social, environmental and cultural awareness.
- developing a **BBG School Entitlement**, delivered to each of our students, that makes available a ‘learning gateway’ for all students and parents / carers which includes a wide range of e-learning opportunities, including support for students’ health and well being as well as their direct learning. The Entitlement will support young people at risk by working together with other schools, providers and Local Authorities to provide for these students’ particular additional needs
- The **Entitlement** will extend to all our staff, developing a comprehensive CPD strategy for all staff, teaching and other, and also volunteers, that will ensure the highest quality teaching and learning, and will also focus on identifying and developing leadership capacity at all levels in the school.

Above all, we will make BBG Academy a place of “demanding, exciting learning”, where students attend enthusiastically, work hard, work together, and enjoy doing so.

The BBG Curriculum

The BBG Academy curriculum will have a focus on the ‘Key Skills’ of literacy and numeracy, and the key subjects of English, Maths and Science - these underpin learning across all subjects.

The subjects in our curriculum will be the traditional and recognisable, the straight forward building blocks of a broad, balanced and relevant body of knowledge and skills that becomes as specialised as the individual student needs as he/she move from KS3 to KS4 and prepares for KS5.

We do not believe that a crowded or very broad curriculum is necessarily desirable. A simpler broad based curriculum that is focussed on transferable skills and deeper understanding is more relevant. The BBG students will learn not only body knowledge but also the essential skills of learning, research, analysis and synthesis.

At the heart of our students’ learning will be high quality teaching delivery, other learning opportunities, and attention to each individual student’s personal learning needs. Our staff will work in a culture focussed on the quality of teaching and learning, and the relationships and spirit in each class, year group and across the school. Staff will work with an appropriately inclusive approach to SEN.

The delivery of the curriculum has – obviously – yet to be determined in any detail, but illustratively:

- **25 one hour lessons each week, 5 lessons each day (3 mornings, 2 afternoons).** We believe that this pattern of delivery best supports learning by giving sufficient time for each subject and recognising that a long morning and shorter afternoon best suits students’ “time clocks”. It will also allow for more structured ‘after school’ activities in sport, the performing arts, or for extended learning.
- **In support of the ‘formal’ curriculum, there will be a 20-minute ‘Tutor Period’ each day** – planned carefully, structured and supporting students learning and social development. Much of this work will be focussed on mentoring and monitoring individual students’ academic and personal progress, as well as giving some time for the important interpersonal and group activities that contribute to a sense of community and engagement (such as student voice, student parliaments/councils etc)
- **Whilst Tutor groups will be deliberately mixed in terms of academic and social profiles, teaching groups and classes will be ‘set’ by ability in each subject.** It will be possible for the very gifted linguist to be in Set 1 and yet receive the detailed support for rapid progress in their maths or science classes in a lower more appropriate Set 3.
- **SEN support will be carefully planned, monitored closely and well resourced, and largely delivered ‘in classes by subject specialists, supported by learning specialists and mentors.** As a general guide, we do not favour students being ‘withdrawn’ into special groups as this can inhibit learning opportunities and personal social development. There will of course be exceptions to this general guide.
- **Teaching set sizes will reflect student ability, with smaller groups for**

less able learners - for example having (for a 900 student school) 7 sets averaging 26 students in each Year group of 180 (e.g. 4 sets of 30, 2 of 24 and 1 of 12).

- **The staff and subjects will be organised into four main curriculum faculties:** English and Modern Foreign Languages; Maths, Science and Technology; Humanities (Geography, History, PSHE and RE); and Arts and PE.
- **This curriculum will be delivered with around 40 teachers** - plus the Head -, with a teaching contact ratio of 0.84 (equivalent to approx 21/25 periods)

The detail of the curriculum for our school will be finalised after appropriate discussion and consultation with the shadow governing body, headteacher designate, Serco advisers, and of course stakeholder representatives such as parents, teachers and where possible potential students.

Behaviour, pastoral care and strong self-discipline

BBG Academy will have very high standards of behaviour both in and out of class and school. Students will conduct themselves appropriately and with care and respect for their teachers, for each other and for others in the community.

We do not believe that students thrive and succeed in an oppressive or over-bearing atmosphere. Students must be allowed to express themselves appropriately but equally must have clarity about what is appropriate, dignified and 'right'. We believe that being led by example and by having positive role models in terms of conduct and behaviour is very important. Students will not show genuine enthusiasm care and respect if they themselves do not see it and experience it. We expect everyone in our school to set the appropriate example to each other.

We must however also be very clear about the response to poor attitude, behaviour or conduct. In this we will be clear, consistent and fair. **A code of conduct** drawn up with students and parents will form the basis of our understanding of good behaviour and its rewards, and equally clearly set out the range of sanctions for bad behaviour.

We strongly believe that **our 'small' school of 900 students will allow for more positive and mature relationships to develop**, allowing students and teachers a better understanding of and regard for each other. We believe all children should feel valued within their own school and community, and that pastoral care systems should actively support the academic, social and cultural development of our students in a structured and consistent way.

We will seek to ensure that **the school will, from the outset, have a strong sense of community and engagement from all its students**. We believe that clear expectations of attitude, conduct and behaviour that are accepted by all (parents and students) will be the foundation for good discipline and behaviour.

Ensuring that there is a positive 'esprit d'corps' with positive and productive attitudes to learning that build on clear expectations will be achieved by celebrating individual and group success and by giving students responsibility and reward for monitoring and promoting high standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning and achieving.

One way in which we will engender this 'esprit d'corps' will be to have **a school uniform that is distinctive, smart and practical**. We will consult with parents and students on its design and compliance.

The school must also be clear and determined to support students who struggle to meet the high standards expected in all ways possible. This will mean working constructively with parents to address and improve unacceptable attitude and behaviours. However it must be clear that the repeated transgressions of the individual will not be allowed to affect the good learning, education or wellbeing of other students.

The pastoral care structure that will support learning and good behaviour will be year based with seven or eight **'Tutor Groups' in each year**. Each Tutor will mentor each student in his or her group and be responsible for supporting and 'know' each child individually.

Each Year Group will be led by specialist staff and be integrated with three or four 'vertical' House Groups. These house groups will support sporting competitions, arts activities performances and competitions as well as giving students a focus for many other activities. A School Council based on the House system will recognise and value the "Student Voice", giving students a positive and influential role in the life of the school.

All staff will have a responsibility for promoting 'Positive Relationships', reflected in:

- an atmosphere of mutual care and respect
- age appropriate and positive behaviour from students and staff
- a clear system of structured sanctions, devised and delivered in consultation with parents
- a wide range of 'extra curricular' opportunities that support students' social, cultural, sporting and artistic development.

Much of this section is necessarily conditional, as not only the shadow governing body but crucially the headteacher and other senior staff must be centrally involved in determining the detail – if they do not "own" it, "it" will not succeed.

That said, the twin towers of expectation and order will form the strongest foundations of a successful BBG Academy in North Kirklees.

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

BBGPA represents the local parent community in the BBG area of North Kirklees. The BBGPA Executive comprises 9 members of that community, several of whom are already school governors. Professionally, this group ranges from an LA-employed Peripatetic Inclusion Monitor, an Adult Education Lecturer, a Chartered Building Surveyor, to home-based Workers and Working Mothers.

Serco Education is one of the leading private sector organisations working within the education and children's services sector. Serco is committed to working in partnership with public and third party organisations to create teaching and learning environments where young people can achieve their

potential.

Serco has a strong public sector ethos, a belief in partnership working, and a commitment to achieving better value for money. Their work is based on 4 key themes:

- change management
- programme management
- service delivery improvement
- training and development.

Serco works with partners across central, regional and local government – providing strategic support, increasing organisational capacity and enhancing strategic capability. Serco works with over 330 schools, and some 135,000 children and their families. Serco has a staff of over 1500 experts in education and other parts of the “Every Child Matters Agenda”, who provide strategic management, service delivery and frontline capacity to a range of very different Local Authorities, all at different stages of development.

Serco shares with the BBGPA a common set of values in the provision of education:

- **raising aspirations**
- **access to good quality teaching**
- **a mutually respectful environment**
- **maximum achievement.**

Serco Education has taken a key strategic decision to focus more on the school frontline, and to support and partner parent and teacher groups who wish to establish (the Government’s new category of) Free Schools. Serco has set up a bespoke project team to support the establishment of Free Schools, the aim being to provide sponsoring groups with professional expertise and back-up resource.

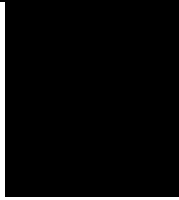
The first of these partnerships is with the BBGPA, with whom Serco has now worked intensively for some 9 months. Together we are confident we will establish and run a successful secondary school, thus meeting the needs and aspirations of our diverse local community.

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.

The BBGPA and Serco combined have a wealth of resource and professional expertise on which to draw. In more detail, the 9-person Executive Group of BBGPA includes:

-
-
-
-

-
-
-
-
-



Five members of the Group are experienced School Governors

More important than their individual professional expertises, the Group itself operates on clear and systematic business committee principles, priding themselves on both its efficiency and effectiveness; and it has been doing so with both extraordinary energy and commitment for almost 18 months.

Crucially, we members of the BBGPA Executive are a united group, who resolve any differences in committee, and then properly and unanimously hold to the agreed “party line”.

Serco successfully operates a number of large national and LA delivery contracts. It is responsible for the performance of (almost) all schools in Bradford and Walsall. Serco has worked with the National College and the Black Country Challenge on a number of leadership and management programmes, including:

- Succession Planning
- Middle Leader Development
- School Manager Development
- Extending Leadership Programme.

Operationally, Serco has worked directly with, and intervened when necessary in, Academies, Trusts and Church Schools, to ensure good governance and leadership. Two strategic examples are:

- Education Walsall, where Serco won the intervention contract and immediately introduced a stronger management structure and a new leadership team
- Stoke, where Serco again won the intervention contract and immediately changed radically the senior management structure, and implemented rigorous performance management processes.

In both Walsall and Stoke, Serco prides itself on the fact that the results speak for themselves – and Walsall has voluntarily re-engaged Serco for a further 10 years.

Serco has particular experience of developing strategies in partnership to target resources at particular underachieving groups – working with LAs (both Members and Officers), Government Offices, School Improvement Partners, and Headteachers and other members of their SMTs.

Serco has worked on every conceivable aspect of the successful operation of a school, including:

- Staffing – recruitment, retention and development

- Governor support
- Behavioural strategies
- Curriculum development and delivery
- Finance
- Legal
- Buildings maintenance

In summary, Serco has almost limitless experience of working with schools, and, in addition to its core staff of business and teaching professionals (the key members of which are typically ex LA Directors of Education and/or Children’s Services, and/or ex Headteachers), has call-on rights to a further estimated 3000 professionals within the wider Serco Group.

Reflecting the above, the BBGPA/Serco Partnership is entirely confident of its professional ability to prepare for and deliver the proposed new Free School. The Partnership will be an enduring one.

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 expect the BBGPA/Serco Partnership to be in 3 stages:

- The first, the present preparatory stage, is supported by a Memorandum of Understanding which has been signed by both parties. The contributions of each party are on a pro bono basis.
- The second stage, assuming approval from the SofS to proceed, will be the preparation of the detailed Business Case and Implementation Plan, again developed jointly by our partnership with Serco. Our two parties are in the process of drawing up a more detailed Partnership Agreement for this second stage. There is also the issue of covering Serco’s costs, which we would like to discuss with the NSN and/or the DFE.
- The third stage is the establishment and running of the school, with its “governing body” entrusted as a charitable entity. **Our present intention is that the core group of Trustees will be drawn from both the BBGPA Executive and Serco. We should like to discuss the propriety of this with the NSN and the DFE, as in due course Serco as a commercial company may wish to compete for service contracts tendered by the Board of Trustees, and there must be no Conflict of Interest.**

Above all, both parties are committed to a lasting relationship, combining parental commitment with professional expertise to ensure that the BBG Academy is an “Outstanding” school from the beginning, and remains so forever after.

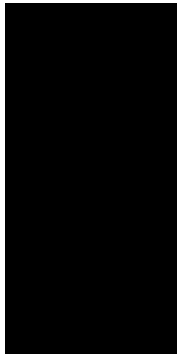
Aside from our core partnership, we have also begun the process of establishing links with local HE institutions and businesses – particularly Huddersfield University and a major international chemicals company. We would like these parties to be represented on the governing body.

Overall, this grouping will bring a powerful combination of community involvement, professional expertise and business enterprise to the running of the school.

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.

As stated above, the core of the Board of Trustees will be drawn from the BBGPA Executive. To repeat, the 9 members are:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

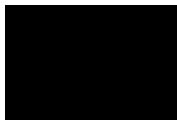


We do not expect there to be any Conflict of Interest to arise with members of this Group, but if they do we will deal with it as follows:

- If any individual Trustee has a business, employment, political or personal connection with any matter, he/she will be excluded from all consideration.

The core members of the Serco team working with BBGPA are:

-
-
-



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.

A campaign spanning three years has clearly shown overwhelming support for a high school in the heart of the BBG community. 85% of respondents to a Parent's Referendum gave "BBG High School" (as we called it then) as first choice for their children after being presented with the LA-preferred alternatives of Howden Clough or Whitcliffe Mount.

The local press and Kirklees Council have received an unprecedented number of letters and emails supporting a community high school. Parents have pledged support through petitions, personal letters, emails and official response forms during three Kirklees Council consultation processes.

Kirklees Council acknowledged the incredible level of local support in its own consultation summary report.

The school will draw mainly from 7 feeder Primary Schools in the local area as follows. Conservatively, we estimate their preferences to be as follows:

- Birkenshaw First School 90% of cohort
- East Bierley 90%
- Birstall Primary 20%
- Fieldhead Primary 20%
- St Peter's 20%
- Gomersal First School 75%
- Gomersal St Mary's 75%

Together these intakes sum to the 180 annual cohort needed to fill our 900-place school to capacity. We believe this to be an accurate, indeed conservative, measure of the local demand for places.

Kirklees LA argues that our school will create surplus capacity. We dispute that strongly, and have produced a detailed analysis in support of the above figures. We have sought to sit down with the LA statisticians to discuss our differences, but for almost 6 months they have been unable to find the time. As part of the Woods/Gyte investigation, commissioned by the previous Secretary of State in April 2010, we produced a detailed quantitative analysis supporting our estimates, and **exceptionally, and at the suggestion of the NSN, we attach that to this application, and would be pleased to discuss it with the Department and Kirklees LA.**

In conclusion, we are confident that our Free School will readily fill to capacity, and will offer places to local families that in large part will not be available under the Kirklees LA's BSF plan.

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

The proposal is to establish an 11-16 school with an annual intake of 6FE – i.e., 5 equal Year groups of 180 each, giving a total capacity of 900 pupils. We judge this number to reflect local demand.

We are also confident that a school of 900 pupils is the optimum in terms of the key 3-aspect combination:

- **Effectiveness** – we will have no difficulty in providing a full curriculum offer to our students, and have already sketched one out. It will include an element of collaborative provision with neighbouring schools and/or colleges.
- **Efficiency** – Serco’s experience elsewhere confirms that a school of this size is sufficiently large to benefit from the available economies of scale, which are necessarily dominated by staff costs. Our class sizes will average around 25, and all members of our senior management team will teach, albeit in varying proportions.
- **Compactness** – there can be no doubt that a school community benefits from being of manageable size, and there is plenty of evidence of students feeling lost in large schools. A school of 900, well organised into “Houses” will provide **a clear sense of belonging to all its students** - each student should and will be known to their teachers and to members of the Senior Management Team.

We remain surprised at the “principle” espoused by Kirklees Council, that the optimum size of a secondary school is 1350, as they continue to plan for Howden Clough and Batley Girls and Boys (the latter ironically planned to be a combination of 2 “separate” single sex schools of 675 each). We can find no evidence for their continued assertion, indeed it seems obvious that such large schools are seen as worryingly “impersonal” by students and parents alike.

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

As trailed immediately above, the age range planned for the school is a standard Yrs 7-11, covering ages 11-16. The school will in part replace the existing Birkenshaw Middle School, which serves Yrs 5-8, ages 9-13.

We have chosen not to seek to establish our own sixth form at present, because that would conflict with Kirklees Council's overall plan for 16-19 provision in North Kirklees, and we have no desire to upset that plan. We will establish strong working relationships with the 16-19 providers in the area, to ensure ready and appropriate transition for our students, and will indeed collaborate with these providers to ensure a full and appropriate offer at 14-16 for our students.

We will also establish strong relationships with all the local primary schools – indeed BBGPA already has some such – to ensure a smooth and knowledgeable transition from KS2 to KS3 for our students.

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

As part of the wider Kirklees Council's reorganisation scheme, Birkenshaw Middle School is due to close in July 2013, allowing our Free School to open in **September 2013**. At this point the school would take in 360 students – 2 groups of 90 from the existing middle school cohorts feeding into Yrs 8 and 9, and a fresh full yr 7 cohort of 180.

The growth of the school would then take the following pattern – 450 in Sept 2014, followed by 540 and 720, **reaching full capacity of 900 in September 2017**.

The delay until 2013 is caused solely by the existing Birkenshaw Middle School (BMS) – see under "Premises" - not being scheduled for closure until that summer. Were it possible to vacate the building earlier, we are confident that our school could open in 2012.

Gomersal Middle School is due to close in July 2012 and, if we cannot open before 2013, their pupils will have to be taught in temporary accommodation for a year on a different site. **This disruption would be avoided by our school opening in September 2012**. Technically this could be achieved by both BMS and our Free School operating side by side for 2 years, 12/13 and 13/14, BMS teaching Yrs 5 and 6 and the Free School Yrs 7 and 8. We would like to discuss this further with the DFE and Kirklees LA.

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 will be established on the site of the present Birkenshaw Middle School (BMS), which is a freehold tenure owned by Kirklees LA and due to close in 2013.

Postal address: [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Cleckheaton, [REDACTED]

The present school caters for Yrs 5-8, with a capacity for 380 pupils, and 347 on roll.

The BMS buildings are in fair condition and there are extensive grounds - the total site is 5.85 hectares. A member of our Executive, a quantity surveyor by profession, has studied the site and drawn up initial plans. We are confident that this site will meet the needs of our Free School. **We have already discussed the suitability of the site with PfS officials when they made a site visit in May. They were due to report to Ministers at the beginning of June.**

The BBG catchment will cover the areas of Birkenshaw, East Bierley, Gomersal and parts of Birstall. The site is situated in the centre of the proposed catchment area and provides a safe walking distance for around 80% of children.

The area is socially diverse, mixing some small economically prosperous parts with pockets of deprivation, where the children face the same challenges as those on the better-known Fieldhead Estate. Fieldhead is the most deprived area in North Kirklees and is listed in the top 10% most deprived areas in the UK. Parts of our proposed catchment area are in the top 20-40% - Nova Estate Birstall, Birkenshaw Bottoms, and Shirley and Barrington Estates in Gomersal.

We have sought to engage with Kirklees Council on several occasions and have only just received a positive response to our latest request to meet – we are now likely to do so on July 2. We are very keen to work with the Local Authority and we believe our school essentially complements the wider BSF plan for North Kirklees.

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.