



Free school bid form

For local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools

Published: July 2018

Contents

[The bid form explained](#)

[Overview](#)

[Confirmation](#)

[A1 - who is putting this bid forward](#)

[A2 - evidence of commissions](#)

[Table A2 continued](#)

[B - type of school](#)

[C1 - current context](#)

[Table C1i - for special schools](#)

[Table C1ii - for AP schools](#)

[C2 - strategy for high needs](#)

[C3 - why you want a new school](#)

[C4 - expected outcomes](#)

[D - site](#)

The bid form explained

This free school bid form is for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision (AP) free schools.

Local authorities (either as a lead or sole bidder) can submit a bid for one special and one AP school in total in their area. Given the limited number of new schools we will create in this wave, it is highly unlikely that we will approve more than one school in any one local authority area. In the most exceptional of circumstances where you plan to make the case for two new schools in your area, you will need to complete a separate bid form for each school, although you should cross-reference where appropriate.

The overview section on the second tab asks for information about the number of bids you are submitting (i.e. one or two), the priority of each bid (if you are submitting two), what (if any) other bids you are supporting, and your expected future need for new special and AP schools (and when they are needed). If you are submitting two bids, you only need to complete the overview page on one form.

If your bid is successful, the opportunity will be advertised nationally, and if a strong proposal comes forward, the new school will be delivered and funded as part of the department's central free schools programme.

Before completing your bid, please ensure that you have read the ['guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools'](#) carefully, as this sets out the criteria by which your bid will be judged. Please provide all the information required.

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

This bid form consists of 14 tabs in total (including this one). Please ensure you read all tabs carefully. You must complete the following tabs in full: overview, confirmation, A1, A2, B, C1, C2, C3, C4 and D. You will also need to complete tab 'A2 continued' if applicable and either tab 'Table C1i' or tab 'Table C1ii' depending on whether your bid is for a special or an AP free school.

Completed bid forms, specifications, and any supporting documentation (e.g. site plans, letters from commissioners)

should be submitted by midday on 15 October 2018. Submit your bid by email to:

APspecial.freeschool@education.gov.uk. Please title your email as follows: **Special/AP free school bid – [insert name of local authority (or lead local authority if joint bid)]**. Your email should not exceed 9 megabytes in size; anything larger will not be delivered. **If the bid is larger than 9 megabytes**, please split the documents and send two (or more)

emails clearly indicating that the emails are connected (e.g. email 1 of 3).

Free school bid forms should:

- maintain the pre-set printing format;
- not include any comments; and
- not include photographs, images or logos.

This opportunity **does not replace the [presumption](#) process and does not replace a local authority's sufficiency**

[Next tab](#)



Free school bid form [1 of 1]

1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one bid, you only need to complete this section once (on the form of your preferred bid).
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Overview

While local authorities (either as a lead or sole bidder) can submit a bid for one special and one AP school in total in their area, it is highly unlikely that we will approve more than one school in any one local authority area in this wave. However, we would like you to inform of us of expected future need for new schools.

Overview table	
Name of your local authority	
List the bid(s) you are submitting this wave, as either the lead or the sole local authority (including type of school e.g. special or AP) – please list these in priority order so that the first is your preferred bid	1. Special Free School 2. Not applicable
List the bid(s), if any, that another local authority is leading on and that you are supporting (including the name of the lead local authority)	Not applicable
Optional: brief description of your expected future need for new special and AP schools, and when they are needed	Solihull Academy, an Alternative Provision Academy, opened in Solihull in April 2018. The opportunity to add a Special Free School to our range of schools, along with the changes we are making through our commissioning and inclusion strategies should enable us to meet our increasing demand for specialist school places.

[Previous tab](#)

[Next tab](#)



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Confirmation

This confirmation must be signed by the relevant Director(s) of Children's Services at the local authority(ies) putting forward this bid.

I am the Director of Children's services at **Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council** and I have seen this expression of interest and support it.


I confirm that the information provided in this bid form is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I further confirm that the local authority(ies) and, if applicable, other commissioners (e.g. local schools commissioning AP places) named in section A of this bid have developed this proposal in partnership and, if the bid is successful, will commit to commissioning the number of places at the school as specified in this bid, and to paying the relevant top-up funding (indicative funding specified in this bid, to be confirmed by the local authority(ies) if the bid is successful).

I also confirm that I am aware of the financial consequences of the commissioning on our high needs budget(s).

In addition, I intend to commission places beyond the first two years, as per the proposed school growth profile (pupil/capacity build up).

NB: an electronic signature is acceptable. If multiple local authorities are submitting this bid, complete a signature

Signed:	
Position:	Director of Children's Services at Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Print name:	Mrs Sally Hodges
Date:	12th October 2018

Signed:
Position: Director of Children's Services at
Print name:
Date:

Signed:
Position: Director of Children's Services at **[INSERT LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME]**
Print name:
Date:

Signed:
Position: Director of Children's Services at **[INSERT LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME]**
Print name:
Date:

Signed:
Position: Director of Children's Services at **[INSERT LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME]**
Print name:
Date:

[Previous tab](#)

[Next tab](#)



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section A1 – local authority(ies) putting forward this bid

Please complete table A1. If this is a joint bid, information must be provided for each local authority involved and the lead local authority must be stated. **Please note that including a local authority on this list means they have committed to commissioning places.**

If you are the sole local authority submitting a bid (i.e. it is not a joint bid), then you must provide the reason why in box A1.

Table A1 - local authority(ies) putting forward this bid		
Name of local authority	Name of person leading	Contact details
Lead local authority: [select name of lead local authority in cell C30 below. This would be the local authority in which the school would be located] Solihull	Mr Steve Fenton - Head of Access and Development	Telephone: [REDACTED] Mobile: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED] Address: Solihull MBC, Manor Square, Solihull
[If applicable, select name of second local authority in cell C36 below]		Telephone: Mobile: Email: Address:
[If applicable, select name of third local authority in cell C42 below]		Telephone: Mobile: Email: Address:
[If applicable, select name of fourth local authority in cell C48 below]		Telephone: Mobile: Email: Address:
[If applicable, select name of fifth local authority in cell C54 below]		Telephone: Mobile: Email: Address:

Box A1 - if you are submitting a solo bid, please explain why

Solihull Council is putting forward a solo bid for a Special Free School specialising in Autism and high level Social Emotional Mental Health Needs. We enjoy excellent and co-operative relationships with our neighbouring authorities and have held preliminary discussions with them in relation to our hopes and expectations for a specialist autism free school. 15% of special school places in Solihull are occupied by pupils from outside of Solihull. However in light of our exceptional levels of demonstrable need for the provision Solihull Council has taken the decision that this bid should be developed as a solo bid to manage immediate need in the local area, with the option of surrounding areas having access to the school, as is already the case. We would be happy to discuss this approach further if required.

[Previous tab](#)

[Next tab](#)



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section A2 – evidence that the new school will be fully commissioned

You must complete table A2 on this tab, showing how many places you would use at the school for the first two years of the school's operation. If there are multiple commissioners, you also need to complete the larger table on tab 'Table A2 continued'.

In addition, if you are submitting a bid for a new AP free school, you must also:

- Attach commitments in writing from any commissioners other than local authorities (e.g. local schools) indicating their firm intention to commission a specific number of places in the first two years, including the top-up funding they will pay for the children occupying the places;
- Attach evidence that the commissioners have made an informed decision, for example, confirmation that commissioners have seen your bid, and are aware of the characteristics of the new school and the outcomes you want to achieve; and,
- Provide information in box A2 about the commissioning and funding model used in your area(s). To note, we will ask for further details

Box A2 - for AP schools only, please use this space to describe the commissioning and funding model(s)

Not applicable

Table A2 - evidence that the new school will be fully commissioned (to be completed for both special and AP schools)

Commissioner	Year of operation	Number of EY places	Number of KS1 places	Number of KS2 places	Number of KS3 places	Number of KS4 places	Number of 16-19 places
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						



1. *This table must be completed if there are multiple commissioners .*
2. *If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.*
3. *Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.*

Table A2 continued

You must complete table A2 on the previous tab, showing how many places you would use at the school for the first two years of the school's operation. If there are multiple commissioners, you also need to complete the table on this tab.

Table A2 continued - evidence that the new school will be fully commissioned (to be completed for both special and AP schools)							
Commissioner	Year of operation	Number of EY places	Number of KS1 places	Number of KS2 places	Number of KS3 places	Number of KS4 places	Number of 16-19 places
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						

[Previous tab](#)

[Next tab](#)



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section B – what type of school is wanted

There are no assessment criteria for section B. Please provide key information about the school you would like to commission in table Bi. Additionally, please set out the expected pupil build up (how the school would fill year-on-year once it opens) in table Bii.

Table Bi - what type of school is wanted	
Type of school	Special Free School
Category of provision/needs (if more than one type, with different top-up rates, please explain)	Autism with associated high level Social Emotional Mental Health Needs
Age range	7 to 16
Per-pupil revenue funding you would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain)	████████ per place (base funding) plus ██████████ per pupil top-up funding. Solihull has a mechanism for an enhanced top up rate for a small number of pupils where the profile of the pupils is significantly more complex than the expected pupil profile for this school.
Gender (co-educational/boys/girls)	Co-educational
Total number of proposed full time equivalent places (once school is at full capacity - including 16-19 places, but not including nursery places)	100
Type of places offered (e.g. full time, short term, part time)	Full time plus short term assessment places
Number of nursery places, if applicable	0
Number of 16-19 places, if applicable	0
Describe any planned outreach, training and/or reintegration support (including details of funding that will be made available to support the school with this)	As part of the Free School offer there will be an assessment centre for children on the roll of mainstream schools which will offer intensive support, whilst an assessment and intervention plan is developed to provide supported reintegration back into their educational provision, or move into specialist provision if required. The school will operate several entry and exit points to ensure that children with Autism are given the best support and opportunities to access mainstream when they are able.

Table Bii - pupil build up							
	Year of opening	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6
Nursery							
Reception							
Key stage 1 (Y1-2)							
Key stage 2 (Y3-6)							
Key stage 3 (Y7-9)							
Key stage 4 (Y10-11)							
16-19: commissioner referred							
Totals							

[Previous tab](#)

[Next tab](#)



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section C1 – the current context in your area

We are looking for bids in areas where a new school will most support local authorities to manage current and/or anticipated pressures on special school places or on the overall high needs budget, so that the needs of children can be better met. We will not be inclined to approve bids that have the side effect of decreasing the inclusion in mainstream schools of children with SEN, or who are at risk of permanent or fixed term exclusions, or of creating excess spare capacity in existing special or AP school. Bids will score more highly if they can demonstrate that a new school will be filled by students who would otherwise be going to more expensive or poor performing provision.

Please use box C1 to provide information about existing provision in your area, future expected growth and use of your high needs budget. You should also use this box to provide commentary around the information sources listed in Annex B of the [guidance](#) that we will use to support our assessment of this section.

Box C1 - the current context in your area

(we expect your response to this section to be no more than around 500 words, excluding your entries on table C1i/C1ii)

Solihull has 1,444 pupils with an EHCP (2018 SEN2), which is an increase of 180 since January 2016 (2016 SEN2). The increase in EHCPs has resulted in greater demand for specialist provision from families living in Solihull. Demand is greater than the supply of places, resulting in a significant number of pupils with EHCPs being placed in high cost independent and out of borough provisions.

By January 2023 the number of pupils with an EHCP is forecast to rise to 2,081 - an increase of 46%. In particular, forecasts indicate increases in demand for places in maintained and high cost independent special schools.

The most significant change in the pattern of need directly relates to children with autism. At Jan 2018, 558 (38.6%) of Solihull pupils with an EHCP have autism as their primary need, this is forecast to rise by 296 (53%) by 2023. SFR37/2018 data shows that schools in Solihull have a significantly higher percentage of pupils with autism than either national or regional norms.

In Solihull, provision for children with autism is made in a variety of ways. The majority of pupils attend mainstream schools and academies or additionally resourced provision attached to mainstream schools. Children that need more specialist provision are placed in special schools with MLD, SLD or SEMH designations or are placed in provision outside of Solihull. At September 2018, 77 pupils with autism as their primary need, predominantly secondary age, were placed in high cost independent schools at a cost of [REDACTED] (an average of over [REDACTED] per place), plus [REDACTED] transport costs per annum. This is over 50% of all of our independent placements. The impact on the children of extended travelling times and being educated out of their own community should not be underestimated in terms of their well being and sense of belonging.

Solihull has embarked on an ambitious programme to provide an exceptional educational environment which fully understands and caters for the individual needs of children and young people with autism. We have embedded a culture of early identification and diagnosis through the multi-agency Specialist Advisory Service Team; developed a professional partnership between Solihull Council and Health Service professionals; created a specialist Autism Team to undertake direct intervention work with the most vulnerable children with an autism diagnosis; invested in the development of a Community Educational Psychology Service; and completed a programme of Autism Educational Trust (AET) accredited training to all staff in Solihull schools and many staff in Early Years settings. We have established 3 autism additionally resourced provisions located in mainstream schools which have created 28 primary places and 30 secondary places.

These developments provide a pathway for pupils with autism, with a real focus on maintaining pupils in a mainstream setting. However, for those pupils with more complex needs, creating a special free school will meet the current and future demand for places, which can not be managed within existing provision, whilst extending local choice and completing the breadth of provision available for pupils with autism.

Word count: 500

1. This table must be completed if you are submitting a bid for a special free school.
2. If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.
3. Please refer to tab 'C1 - current context' as well as the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Table C1i - trends in your specialist provision for all children with EHC plans													
Type of provision	Number of providers used	Please indicate the number of pupils with an EHC plan living in your local authority who are placed within these settings, and the total cost (including base, top-up and transportation if applicable) of all placements at each setting											
						Projected figures without the new school you want				Projected figures if your bid for a new school is successful			
		2014 (pupils)	2014 (cost)	2018 (pupils)	2018 (cost)	2022 (pupils)	2022 (cost)	2026 (pupils)	2026 (cost)	2022 (pupils)	2022 (cost)	2026 (pupils)	2026 (cost)
Resourced provision and units inside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Resourced provision and units outside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Independent / non-maintained special schools inside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Mainstream schools inside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Mainstream schools outside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside local authority	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█

Section C1 – the current context in your area

Free school bid form [1 of 1]

1. *This table must be completed if you are submitting a bid for an AP free school.*
2. *If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.*
3. *Please refer to tab 'C1 - current context' as well as the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.*
4. *Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.*

Table C1ii - trends in alternative provision													
Type of provision	Number of providers used	Please indicate the no. of pupils living in your local authority who are placed within these settings, and the total cost (including base, top-up and transportation if applicable) of all placements at each setting											
						Projected figures without the new school you want				Projected figures if your bid for a new school is successful			
		2014 (pupils)	2014 (cost)	2018 (pupils)	2018 (cost)	2022 (pupils)	2022 (cost)	2026 (pupils)	2026 (cost)	2022 (pupils)	2022 (cost)	2026 (pupils)	2026 (cost)
Maintained PRUs inside local authority													
Maintained PRUs outside local authority													
Maintained AP free schools or academies inside local authority													
Maintained AP free schools or academies outside local authority													
Independent AP settings (registered) inside local authority													
Independent AP settings (registered) outside local authority													
Independent AP settings (unregistered) inside local authority													
Independent AP settings (unregistered) outside local authority													
AP units located in or attached to mainstream schools inside local authority													
AP units located in or attached to mainstream schools outside local authority													
Places designated for AP commissioned from special schools inside local authority													
Places designated for AP commissioned from special schools outside local authority													
Places designated for AP in further education settings inside local authority													
Places designated for AP in further education settings outside local authority													
Other AP inside local authority – please specify													
Other AP outside local authority – please specify													



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section C2 – your strategy for high needs provision

You must use this section to tell us about your strategy for high needs provision. The purpose of this section is to help us understand your plan for children with SEND or those requiring alternative provision and make a judgement about whether the school you are proposing fits within your strategy.

Box C2 - your strategy for high needs provision

(we expect your response to this section to be no more than around 1000 words)

Our school place commissioning strategy (attachment 1) has identified autism as our main priority for investment, as this is the key gap in provision. This was also a key finding of Ofsted (attachment 2). Over 50% of the pupils travelling to high cost independent provision out side of Solihull have autism as their primary need. We have already invested significantly in support services, training of staff in schools and early years setting and additionally resourced provision. The development of Enhanced Provision attached to mainstream schools will provide further support for pupils in a mainstream school setting. However, there remains a gap in provision for those pupils with more complex needs that require a special school place. This bid is aimed at targeting the current and future cohort of pupils with autism which is currently being sent out of the Borough to high cost independent placements. For those pupils already attending schools outside of the area, it will be for the annual review process to determine whether the needs of the pupil can be better met more locally.

This commissioning strategy fits within a wider programme of activity that looks to support and increase mainstream inclusion through the development of an Inclusion Strategy and the development of systems and procedures with a focus around supporting parents when they are considering school preferences. These two elements are key to the success of the commissioning strategy.

On 26 September 2018, the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills approved consultation with parents, schools and the wider education community of the Solihull SEND School Place Commissioning Strategy.

The Strategy sets out the current and future demography for Solihull and the challenges and pressures that the forecast growth is creating on the high needs budget, the principles inline with which any future specialist provision will be commissioned and the priorities for investment. The content of the strategy, in particular the commissioning principles, have been developed in partnership with schools and the Solihull parent/carer forum during the Summer Term 2018.

Over the past 12 months, Solihull has invested significant resources to ensure that our SEND data is accurate which has enabled us to develop a forecasting model for SEND pupils and provision. The forecasting model provides data by need, phase and provision and is being used as the basis for long term strategic planning across the Borough and in future years more widely across the region. Through long term strategic planning we are seeking to reconfigure specialist places to ensure that they can meet need whilst containing spending within the constraints of the high needs budget.

The forecast data has highlighted some key priorities for investment to meet the demographic growth and reduce our reliance on high cost independent provision and the additional travel costs that these placements incur. The strategy is predicated on the basis that the Council will seek to continue to invest in creating high needs provision in Solihull. Funding of the new places will be through a correlating reduction elsewhere in the high needs block. For example, for every 10 newly created ARP places the Council will need to identify two out of borough pupils whose needs can be better met within the new ARP. For special school placements, we expect to provide two places in Solihull for the cost of one place in independent provision. This strategy will develop high quality provision in Solihull for more pupils providing far better value for money.

The newly created Community Educational Psychology Team will be specifically charged with working with families and pupils to identify those that will most benefit from the newly created provision, with all the benefits of reduced travelling time and distance and being educated within their local community. Particular consideration will be given to those pupils reaching the end of a key stage.

Working in partnership with our secondary schools we are developing a model of enhanced provision that will be geographically spread across the Borough. These provisions will be small in nature and located within existing school accommodation, providing specialist teaching and support, particularly at transition to support more secondary age pupils to remain in a mainstream school setting. The first two enhanced provisions are planned for September 2019 and will have a focus around autism.

In September 2018 we have established a pilot project with Solihull College that has relocated the post 16 provision from one of our MLD special schools into the College building. This is successfully providing students with the ethos of a special school setting but with access to the wider college campus, facilities and courses and supports the transition to adulthood.

This model will be rolled out across the Borough from September 2019. In addition to the significant educational benefit that this development will achieve, the space released at the special schools will be used both to admit additional younger pupils and to reinstate the specialist teaching areas within the schools that have been removed to meet the increasing demand for places.

In April 2018, Solihull Academy opened which is offering alternative provision for up to 110 pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 that are at risk of permanent exclusion. This new provision along with the development of the Special Free School will increase the level of provision for vulnerable pupils in Solihull, meeting the increasing level of demand.

In addition to the normal attainment and performance measures, the main drivers for change in terms of key performance indicators will include a reduction in the number of pupils with autism excluded from school, reductions in the levels of absence and persistent absence and in the number of pupils unable to attend school/school refusers. In addition, there will be a reduction in the numbers of pupils who do not attend on a full time basis (Ofsted 2017). Financially, there will be a marked decrease in the number of pupils travelling outside of the Borough to high cost independent provision, creating better value of money within the Council's High Needs Budget.

Word count:

989

[Previous tab](#)

[Next tab](#)



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section C3 – why you want a new school and how it fits with your strategy and the local landscape

We want to open new schools where they are the right solution for the area. We are looking for bids where a new school will help local authorities meet children's needs, fit into the local authority's strategic plan for high needs provision and complement the local education offer.

Please use box C3 to explain the rationale for a new school.

In addition, please use table C3 to provide evidence of engagement with others and attach any supporting evidence of this (e.g. letters) when you submit your bid.

Box C3 - why you want a new school and how it fits with your overall strategy

(we expect your response to this section to be no more than around 500 words)

This proposal is to establish an Autism Centre of Excellence in Solihull, which will adopt an innovative approach to address a wider range of educational, support and research functions, with a new autism free school playing a pivotal role at its heart. In addition, this Centre of Excellence will support the effective inclusion for children with autism in mainstream education.

The school at the heart of this project will cater for pupils with a diagnosis of autism and associated high level Social Emotional and Mental Health needs. Pupils may have co-occurring needs but these will be secondary to the autism in their impact on pupils' development and learning needs.

In addition to those pupils with autism that are being placed out of Borough, the Special Free School will make provision for children with autism that have anxiety levels to such an extent that they exhibit emotionally based school avoidant behaviour. Often these children, who do not necessarily have additional learning difficulties, are deemed to be medically unfit for school, and become increasingly withdrawn and isolated, or express their anxieties through challenging behaviour. Research has consistently indicated that children and young people experiencing emotionally based school avoidance are at higher risk of developing complex mental health conditions, which become a huge barrier to their learning.

The Free School would make provision for pupils with autism currently in short term PRU provision, where their anxiety leads to school refusal or challenging behaviour that may lead to permanent exclusion.

The school will be part of a wider Centre of Excellence which will work with local authority services to deliver the 'All Age Autism Strategy' (attachment 3) to ensure that from diagnosis to education, integration into mainstream or specialist, to employment, to a stable family life and living in the community, that key stakeholders work together in a collaborative approach and cohesive way to support people with autism.

This Special Free School will mean that more young people will have their education closer to home with all of the benefits that brings.

The school will have 100 places across years 3 to 11, age 7 to 16. Post 16 provision for this cohort of pupils will be developed in parallel to the development of the Free School and in partnership with local post-16 providers such as schools, Solihull College and local employers including Arup. Arup is a large employer of over 800 people in the region who adopt an inclusive approach to recruitment. They acknowledge the challenge of autism in society and are very supportive of the Council's initiative. Arup are willing to do what they can to reach out to the proposed centre and offer what they can by way of support.

Conversations have been held with schools and the committed and enthusiastic Solihull Parent Carer Forum. The views of the wider parent body are being sought through the consultation on the Council's SEND School Place Commissioning Strategy. The outcomes of the consultation process will be evaluated later this term.

Table C3 - engagement with others		
Who	How you have engaged (e.g. surveys, meetings)	Summary of engagement (e.g. summary of survey findings and/or conversations)
Your neighbouring local authorities – please specify	Meetings and conversations with Birmingham City Council and outline of bid shared at regional meetings.	Outline of bid shared with neighbouring Authorities.
Commissioning bodies in your area – please specify	Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group, Solihull Together Partnership Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board	All of these boards have been briefed on the proposal and are fully supportive and have representation on our Autism Project Board. The minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board are attached (attachment 4). Ofsted recognised the long standing arrangements to support joint commissioning as a particular strength in Solihull (attachment 2).
Local mainstream schools – please specify	Consultation underway on the draft Commissioning Strategy using survey monkey to seek views. Proposal to submit a bid shared with Headteachers	All schools in Solihull have been consulted on the draft commissioning strategy which includes the development of a Special Free School for Autism. Consultation process due to run until December 2018.
School representative bodies e.g. schools forum – please specify	Meetings with School Forum, Solihull Schools Strategic Accountability Board and Solihull Education SEND Board.	Support for bid from School Forum 9 July 2018, SEND Board at their meeting held on 12 June 2018 and the Solihull Schools Strategic Accountability Board.
Representatives of parents and carers and young people e.g. parent/carer forum – please specify	Solihull Parent Carer Forum Meetings and information sharing events	Parent engagement event held in April 2018 identified real support for the development of this Autism provision. Update given to Parent Carer Forum on commissioning strategy and Free School bid 19 July 2018. Follow up meeting held on 11 October 2018.
Any other partners e.g. community groups, FE colleges – please specify	Solihull College, University of Warwick and Arup	University of Warwick supporting the research element of the Centre of Excellence (attachment 5). Initial conversations with Solihull College and Arup have indicated commitment to support the development of a post 16 pathway for this cohort of pupils (attachment 6).

[Previous tab](#)

[Next tab](#)



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section C4 – the expected outcomes

To be approvable, bids must demonstrate that the new school will:

- Help to achieve better outcomes for children and young people (compared with existing options); and,
- Support inclusion, including re-integration where appropriate and providing expertise to mainstream schools.

Please use box C4 to describe the impact you expect the school to have, as well as the potential risks and how you would mitigate those.

Box C4 - expected outcomes

(we expect your response to this section to be no more than around 500 words)

This special free school will be integral to a number of strategies being developed as part of the Solihull Inclusion Strategy. It will play a fundamental part in improving the educational opportunities and experience for children with autism across the whole education system, through the proposed outreach and assessment function, proposed multi agency engagement and by providing training and support for mainstream schools.

As part of the Free School offer there will be therapeutic support for those attending the school and support for children on the roll of mainstream schools through an assessment centre function which will offer intensive support, whilst an assessment and intervention plan is developed to provide supported reintegration back into their educational provision, or move into specialist provision if required.

The Free School will operate as the Autism Hub to share excellent practice across the Borough and will seek nationally recognised accreditation. It will provide flexible options to successfully re-integrate pupils who have been medically unfit for school due to their mental health/anxiety through its assessment centre. It will work with local services and parent groups to identify and provide support/training in evidence based interventions, opportunities for staff to observe outstanding practice and provide support groups/training for families in the Borough. The Hub will work closely with University of Warwick to carry out action research, implementing current evidence based interventions, proven to best support children with autism and their families, and to evaluate the impact of provision, to develop and publish action research into effective practice.

The school will operate several entry and exit points to ensure that children with autism are given the best support and opportunities to access mainstream when they are able. Admissions are expected to be managed on a termly basis in order to support transition into and out of the school.

At post-16 it is envisaged that the Free School will work in partnership with schools and Solihull College on a transition pathway based at the College but supported by the Free School, as well as with local employers.

One key risk for the development of this school is that demand exceeds supply of places from families with children who could be catered for in a mainstream environment, but would prefer a small specialist autism environment. The Council will address this in a range of ways, firstly creating a clear system of support for schools from both the Free School and the Specialist Autism Service to support mainstream placements. By having clear admissions criteria for the Free School, monitored through an admission panel system involving all key stakeholders, such as the School, Educational Psychologist and Specialist Autism Team ensuring that a Borough wide approach can be maintained. In addition, the development of enhanced provisions will bridge the gap between mainstream and specialist provision.

Word count:

457



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one bid, you must complete this section for each bid.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section D – the proposed location and site

Finding a suitable site is an essential part of opening a free school. As part of preparing your bid you should investigate potential sites for the school and tell us about them in your bid. In this wave we will undertake a desktop assessment of site and consider the value for money, timescale and delivery risks in securing a site for the proposed school in the proposed area.

We will give preference to those projects where our site assessments shows that we are likely to secure a value for money site in a timely manner with an acceptable level of risk, in particular, those bids that include an available site on a peppercorn basis. Making a site available on a peppercorn lease gives the greatest chance of the school opening successfully, and on time.

Please complete table D to tell us about where the school would be located and the preferred site.

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

Mr Steve Fenton - Head of Access and Development email: [REDACTED]

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

I confirm that the Lead Member of Corporate Property at **Solihull** has seen this expression of interest and supports

Please tick to confirm

Table D - the proposed location and site	
<p>Please describe the location in which you propose to set up your school being as specific as possible. This could include the name of the area in which you would like to put the school, the part of a city, town or suburb. Please also consider how flexible you are - how far from your preferred location are you willing to go? Please include an annotated map as an additional file and send it to APspecial.freeschool@education.gov.uk, if possible. If applicable, please also describe the potential impact of any specialism that you plan for your school to have on the site requirement.</p>	[REDACTED]
<p>Please tell us the postcode of a central location in your preferred area. You need to provide this even if you have already identified a preferred site. It must be a full postcode e.g. SW1P 3BT, not SW1.</p>	[REDACTED]
<p>Your calculated building space using the ESFA formula (see section D in the guidance) and any comments on this.</p>	[REDACTED]
If you have identified a preferred site, please complete the rest of the table:	
<p>Full address and postcode of preferred site. It must be a full postcode e.g. SW1P 3BT, not SW1.</p>	[REDACTED]
<p>In which local authority is your preferred site?</p>	Solihull
<p>Please tell us how you found the site.</p>	[REDACTED]
<p>Please confirm the tenure.</p>	Peppercorn lease
<p>Please include information on purchase or lease price if known.</p>	Lease on a peppercorn basis
<p>Who owns the site?</p>	The local authority submitting the bid
<p>Is the site available/on the market? (Please attach agents' particulars as an additional file and send it to APspecial.freeschool@education.gov.uk if available)</p>	No
<p>Name and contact details of owner and/or the agent or local authority representative</p>	N/A
<p>If the site is local authority owned, which local authority owns it?</p>	Solihull

<p>If the site is local authority owned, please state if the local authority have confirmed that, if successful, the site may be used by the free school. Please include terms (e.g. 125 year peppercorn lease). Please also provide details of any other local authority contribution towards the capital costs of the project (e.g. developer contributions).</p>	<p>The Council's Property Investment Board, which includes Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Managed Growth (also Deputy Leader of the Council) and Resources & Delivering Value has approved that both sites can be included in the Council's bid for a Special Free School and are supported of the split site approach for the school. Both sites would be provided on 125 year peppercorn lease.</p>
<p>What kind of site is it?</p>	<p>Existing building</p>
<p>What is the current use?</p>	<p>School/education building</p>
<p>Why have you chosen this site? What makes it suitable?</p>	<p>These ■■■ sites have been chosen as their geographical location across the Borough would enhance parental preference, reduce travelling times for vulnerable youngsters and provide real flexibility of accommodation both now and in the future. Both sites contain educational buildings, site 1 has been declared surplus to mainstream requirement and site 2 is subject to consultation that would result in its vacancy.</p>
<p>If known, how big is the building and the site? Please attach any site and building plans as an additional file and send it to APspecial.freeschool@education.gov.uk</p>	<p>See attached plans (attachment 7)</p>
<p>Please comment on the condition of the building. Please attach photos if available as an additional file and send it to APspecial.freeschool@education.gov.uk</p>	<p>Based upon the Council's own stock condition surveys the 10 year estimated elemental cash flow for both sites is £1.5m.</p>
<p>If the named site is part of a housing development or the school is attracting Section 106 contributions, please give as much detail as possible, including: the development and developer, timing and programme of build, number of housing units, status of planning application and any links to planning applications/decision notices, extent of funding coming from the developer plus confirmation of the local authority's position in relation to your free school using this site.</p>	<p>The school is not attracting Section 106 contributions.</p>

[Previous tab](#)