



Department
for Education

Local authority commissioned special free schools

**An expression of interest form for local
authorities interested in commissioning a
special free school**

October 2016

Overview

Since local authorities play a key role in placing pupils with statements or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, it is important that they shape the range of provision in their area. Previously, proposals to establish special free schools have only been taken forward in consultation with local authorities. **We are now providing a further opportunity for local authorities themselves to identify where a new special free school would benefit their area**, inform their Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), and potentially seek proposals for the new school they want, with the Department for Education (DfE) providing capital funding and start-up grants. This is in addition to the central route for special free schools, which continues to operate.

This **expression of interest (EOI) form is for local authorities that would like a new special school**. It allows them to make a case that a special school would be beneficial in their area, including a case that it would help meet demographic growth, changing patterns of need, and cost pressures, without reducing inclusion. It provides RSCs with the initial information they need to understand what is wanted and why. If the EOI is successful, the opportunity will be advertised nationally, and if a strong proposal comes forward that both the local authority/authorities and the Secretary of State wish to take forward, the DfE will provide capital and start-up grant funding, subject to value for money assessments covering both the affordability of the site solution and the limitations on overall capital availability. Please see the accompanying guidance for further detail.

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

This opportunity is intended to identify and meet untapped demand for special free schools as a supplement to LA's existing resources. It **does not replace the 'presumption' process nor does it replace a local authority's duties to ensure appropriate placements for all children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)**.

You should use this form to provide all the necessary information and evidence for your proposal. Please:

- email your RSC during October to say whether you are interested and give any headline facts available (email addresses are in the guidance)
- return this EOI, completed, to freeschool.special@education.gov.uk copying in your RSC, **by midday on 11 November**.

More detailed information about this process can be found in the [local authority-commissioned special free schools guidance](#).

A2: What type of school is wanted?

Please provide key information about the school you would like to commission:

| | |
|---|--|
| Category of SEN provision (if more than one type, with different top-up rates, please explain) | Generic Specialist Support Primary School which would include pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, Severe Learning Difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorders. |
| Per-pupil revenue funding you would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain) | ██ ██ ██ ██ |
| Age range | 3 to 11 |
| Gender (boys/girls/co-educational) | Co -educational |
| Total number of proposed places | 100 |
| Early years provision? If so, how many places? | 10 for children with SEND with the option of additional places for children in the local community. |
| 16-19 provision? If so, how many places? | |
| Community use/shared facilities | The school will provide access to specialist facilities eg sensory rooms, soft play areas to children with SEND who attend local mainstream primary schools and resourced provision on a sessional basis during school hours. The school will provide access to facilities after school, at weekend and school holidays to facilitate groups for parents/carers of children with SEND and also for the provision of short break activities such as play schemes, Saturday clubs etc. |

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

A3: Conversations with partners

Local authorities (in particular smaller ones) **must** speak to their neighbouring LAs to check whether they want to commit to commissioning places at the new school at the specified top-up rate. If they do not, LAs may put in a solo EOI. Authorities **may** speak to other partners in order to ensure that their EOI will complement the local landscape and be a close match for what families want. If you have not engaged with your Schools Forum before sending this EOI to your Regional Schools Commissioner, you will need to do so if successful.

| Who? | Conversation summary (3 points max) |
|---|---|
| Your neighbouring LAs – please specify | Greater Manchester authorities meet together to plan for special school places on a regular basis and are in the process of mapping demand and all specialist provision across the combined authority. All EOI submitted from GM authorities have been discussed and agreed in this forum as being beneficial to the combined authority. |
| Optional: Your Parent / Carer Forum, or other representatives of parents and young people | Strategic planning for SEND is discussed with parents/carers through a range of forums. This EOI has been included in these discussions. |
| Optional: Any other partners, Schools forum, existing FE colleges etc (please specify) | <p>This EOI has been discussed with Manchester’s Special School Partnership which includes all special schools in the city and Manchester’s Primary Headteacher’s Strategy Group.</p> <p>It has been discussed as part of a wider paper on High Needs funding and special school places at Manchester’s Schools’ Forum in October 2016.</p> <p>It has been discussed with the Designated Clinical Officer – SEND in the City Wide Commissioning Team.</p> |

Section B – The proposed location and site (if applicable)

Please describe where the school would be located and whether a site has been made available/identified. Making a site available on a peppercorn lease gives the greatest chance of the school opening successfully, and on time.

Please include as much detail as possible as this will help your EOI:

- Address and postcode

[REDACTED]

- Size of site

10,057 m²

- Current and previous uses including planning designation (if known)

Until January 2016, the site was the location of a Primary Special School which was rebuilt through PSB programme in another location in the north of the Manchester.

- Estimated timescale for formal ratification that the LA will release the site for the school (if agreed)

The site is available for redevelopment upon completion of lease arrangements .

- Estimated date the site would be available for works to commence

Works could commence on this site from September 2017.

- Tenure upon which the site will be made available (if agreed)

The site will be made available to the incoming trust by way of a standard academy lease. The Council will retain the freehold.

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

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

I confirm that the Lead Member of Corporate Property at Manchester City Council has seen this expression of interest and supports it.

Please tick to confirm X

Section C – Rationale for School

Please provide an explanation of how and why this provision is required and how it would benefit the local area. [500 words max.]

Please include:

- *How the school will fit into the broader spectrum of SEN provision in the region (including neighbouring LAs if appropriate)*
- *How it would help meet pressures on special educational provision*
- *The potential impact on inclusion, including (where applicable) types of expert support you would expect the school to provide to mainstream schools in the area*
- *Parental demand*

The proposed location of the school is close to the border of Salford and 2 other GM authorities so is well located to meet future demand for special school provision in these authorities and enhance the overall landscape of SEN provision in Greater Manchester. Salford has committed to commission at least 10 places in this school. A generic special school, not linked to a specific category of need, provides flexible provision for the full continuum of need and can respond to changes in patterns of need/demand.

The proposed special school in the north of Manchester Local Authority will provide specialist provision in an area of Greater Manchester which is densely populated and has seen significant demographic growth since 2008. There is currently not a primary special school in this area in the north of the city and currently the majority of children living in the Cheetham Hill area which borders Manchester and Salford require transport to the nearest primary special school. The proposed school would enable more families to take their children to school under the Manchester's Travel Support to access Education policy which is better for children with SEND and will reduce transport time for children living in this area or surrounding area who will continue to require transport. This will enable both commissioning Local Authorities to better manage their cost pressures on home to school transport as well as being a shorter journey for children.

This proposal will reduce reliance on out of city provision, another cost pressure for both authorities, which is being used to meet increasing demand in year for special school provision as a result of overall demographic growth and new arrivals to the city (both with EHCPs and without EHCPs) who cannot access mainstream school because of high levels of need.

Manchester special schools have all expanded in order to meet increasing demand and there is a risk of some of them becoming too large if they expand further and potentially be overwhelming for some children with significant needs. This can also impact on parental choice and mean that in some cases parents look at options within the independent sector because their preference is for a smaller school. The addition of another special school in the north of the city will mean that existing special schools will not have to expand beyond 150 places..

Demographic growth across Manchester has led to a significant number of primary school expansions and 6 new primary schools with more approved – this has put pressure on the outreach services which all Manchester special schools are commissioned to provide. The proposed new school would be commissioned to provide outreach which would mean that the offer to mainstream primary schools could be rebalanced so that all schools receive a higher level of support for developing inclusive practice as well as advice on meeting the needs of individual pupils.

Facilities provided by the new school would also accessed by local mainstream schools for their pupils with SEND and during out of school hours would enhance the short breaks offer for the area and would support local parent/carer forums.

Section D – Pupil data and existing SEN provision

The purpose of this section is to help us to understand the need for a new school in the context of how existing provision is used, and future expected growth in need. We want to approve EOIs that:

- address demographic growth
- help LAs meet what pupils and parents want
- help LAs manage within their budgetary constraints

We do not want to approve EOIs that have the side-effect of decreasing inclusion in mainstream schools, or of creating excess spare capacity in existing special schools. (eg. if several LAs each want a similar school, any one of those might make sense on its own but in aggregate there might not be enough need.) In this section you need to explain how the places in this school would be filled and where the pupils would come from (D1). You also need to explain the general demographic trends and placement trends for *all* pupils with EHC plans (D2).

D1: Pupils who would go to the new special school

Please indicate how you expect the places in this school to be filled, and the impact on inclusion.
[500 words max.]

The majority of pupils attending this school will live in Manchester Local Authority and reside in the North West of the city where there is currently only 1 other primary special school and 10 will live in Salford. This area has seen significant demographic growth.

The north of the city represents the wards of; Charlestown, Cheetham, Crumpsall, Harpurhey, Higher Blackley and Moston. Situated across these wards are a number of migrant communities which have attracted high numbers of families with school age children drawn by established similarities in faith and culture. The rapid growth in the wards of Cheetham and Harpurhey in particular has presented a considerable challenge when responding to the pressures on places with latest data pointing toward continued growth.

Furthermore, a number of sites in the Crumpsall and Harpurhey areas are starting to see delivery of residential growth further driving demand for school places. The phasing of housing delivery continues to be monitored ensuring any potential child yield is captured in forecasts.

A dot map attached shows where pupils who live in this area currently go to special primary school which illustrates the distance pupils (many of whom have multiple and very complex needs) travel to attend primary special provision. As the only primary special school in the north of the city is full many are travelling further distances to other special school across the city.

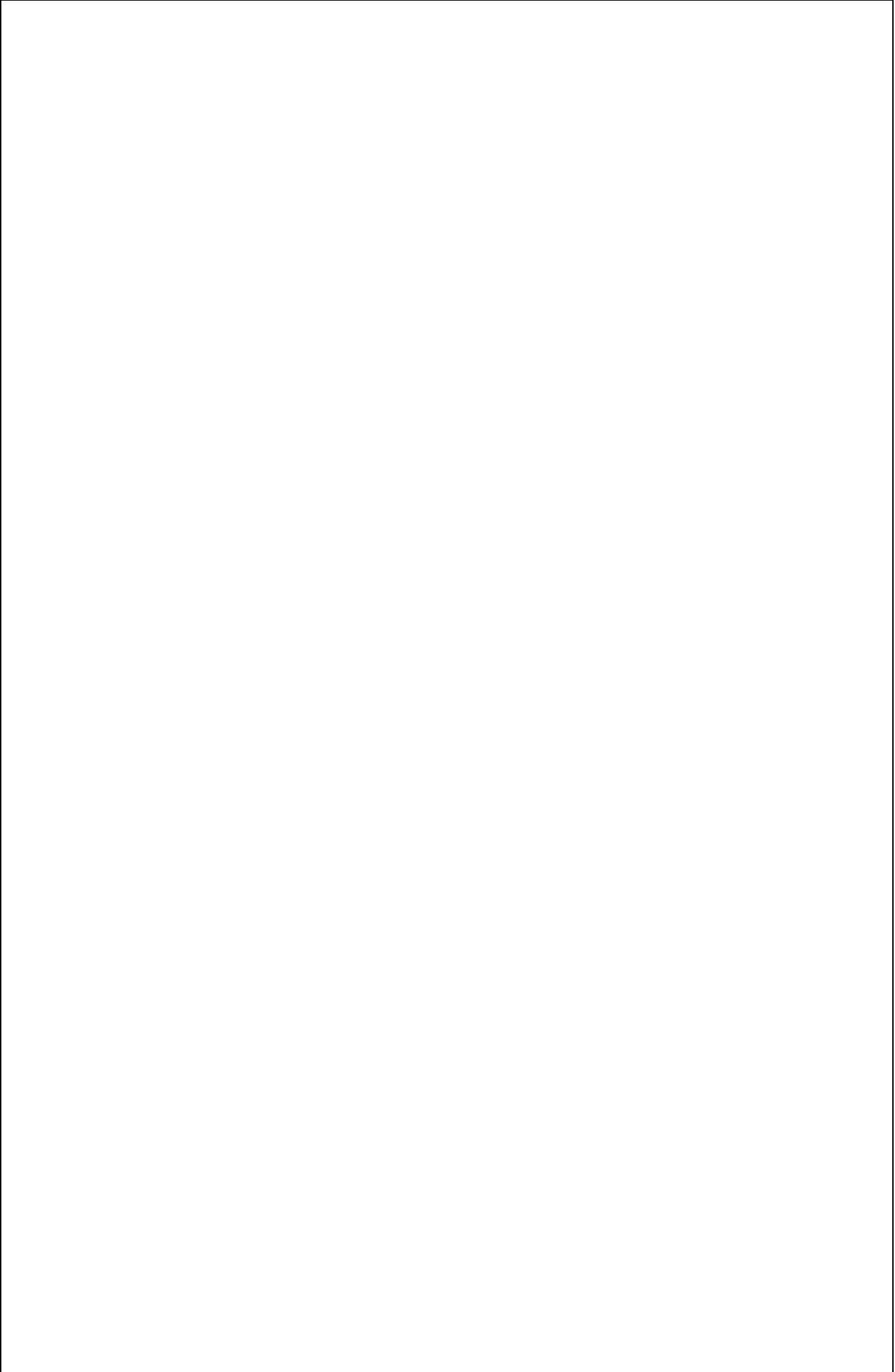
In Manchester, due to demographic growth, the overall number of children with EHCPs in the city has increased and has risen to 2.9% of the school population. Although there has been an increase in the number of children attending special schools and a significant number of additional special school places have already been commissioned the overall proportion of children attending special school in the Manchester school population has remained fairly consistent – see below

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Pupils in a Manchester special school | 1075 | 1130 | 1181 | 1262 |
| % of overall school population | 1.51% | 1.51% | 1.53% | 1.56% |

The special school population is also changing in terms of primary need; there is an increase in children with autistic spectrum disorder and a reduction in pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties – a generic special school has the skills and facilities to respond flexibly to changing patterns of need and complex individual needs which also means that children do not have to be categorised to be placed into appropriate provision.

The primary need for children in independent special school day placements is ASD where commissioning of independent placements has been used to meet increased demand for special schools when local provision is at full capacity. Placements for children with autism are the highest cost. In 15/16 Manchester spent ████████ on independent school day placements. Projections to 2020 show that this will increase significantly without the addition of a new special school in addition to other planned developments.

The development of this additional special school would reduce spend on independent day placements for children with autism, enabling children to attend school nearer to their local community and also reduce costs of transporting children to out of city provision.



D2: Trends in your specialist provision for all children with EHC plans

Please use the table below to describe the recent, current and projected trends of specialist provision that caters for **children with EHC plans living in your LA(s), of the age range for which you want the new school** (drawing upon [SEN2 Data](#)). If this is a joint bid, ie. other LAs are committed to commissioning places, either fill in the table once for the LAs together, or copy/paste the table and fill it in for each LA (please say which you have done). **The projected data for 2020 should show the pattern you expect if this EOI is successful.**

| | No. of Settings As at 1.9.16 | Please indicate the no. of pupils with an EHC plan living in your LA who are placed within these settings | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|------|
| | | 2012 | 2016 (as at Sep 2016) | 2020 |
| Resourced provision and units inside LA | 12 | 73 | 102 | 167 |
| Resourced provision and units outside LA | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA | 12 | 964 | 1342 | 1945 |
| Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside LA | 38 | 65 | 37 | 52 |
| Independent / non-maintained special schools inside LA | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Independent / non-maintained special schools outside LA | 16 | 131 | 84 | 122 |
| Mainstream schools inside LA | 162 | 783 | 1086 | 1575 |
| Mainstream schools outside LA | 78 | 156 | 125 | 180 |
| General FE colleges (if relevant) inside LA | | | | |
| General FE colleges (if relevant) outside LA | | | | |
| Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside LA | | | | |
| Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside LA | | | | |

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

Please include:

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

The future projections for special school places are based on the same methodology used for mainstream place planning and SCAP returns and take into account the in year growth seen across cohorts. School place projections show continued growth in the city to 2020 and this will impact on demand for special school provision which needs to remain at least in balance with planned growth in the mainstream sector.

Special school places will need to be increased before 2020 to meet need and there is a plan in place which includes; expansion of an existing special school; commissioning of places from another GM authority new school; planned expansions to existing resourced provisions and a new resourced provision for autism; continued year by year growth of an existing special free school and a primary free school application (wave 12) which includes additional resourced provision for autism. The plan also includes a potential closure of a residential special school for boys with SEMH located out of the city, which will release high needs funding for this additional provision.

There are a number of wave 12 free school applications for mainstream schools but none for special schools.

Confirmation

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

Please tick to confirm X

| | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Date (DD/MM/YYYY) | 11/11/2016 |
|--------------------------|------------|