



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](#).

Section A – Key facts about the school and the local authorities that want to commission it

A1: Who is putting forward this expression of interest?

If this is a joint EOI, please fill in the table below for each LA involved and state the lead LA below. The Regional Schools Commissioner’s team may need to contact these people to understand more about the EOI. **Please note that including a LA on this list means that they have committed to commissioning places.**

<p><i>Lead LA: Sheffield City Council (The LA in which the school would be located)</i></p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p><i>[if applicable – name of 2nd LA. Please add rows for additional LAs who have committed to commissioning places.]</i></p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

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)	ASD / SEMH
Per-pupil revenue funding you would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain)	████████████████████
Age range	7 – 16 (key stage 2 to 4)
Gender (boys/girls/co-educational)	Co – educational
Total number of proposed places	40 to 60 places (up to 20 of which would be reserved for short term placement)
Early years provision? If so, how many places?	No
16-19 provision? If so, how many places?	No
Community use/shared facilities	<p>The aim is to maximise the accommodation for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multi Agency Support Team services to operate from.• At the site we have identified the local community forum manages community facilities in neighbouring buildings and we would work closely with them to support their vision to expand the services and facilities available to the community.

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

This new school would:

- Improve the diversity and quality of our local offer and meet a gap in our current provision. 30+ Sheffield children aged 7-25 with ASD/SEMH needs attend high cost independent placements¹ as no direct alternatives exist. We expect this new school to reduce demand for these placements.
- Give parents more choice and give young people opportunities to pursue qualifications in line with their academic potential.
- Support our inclusion strategy through its model of full time and part time placements (see below) and supports a curriculum to enable independent skills

Our five year strategy to transform the lives and futures of vulnerable children and young people will increase confidence in the education, health and care system and ensure children and young people achieve good outcomes and are prepared effectively for adulthood. Based on four key principles of participation, integration, early intervention and personalisation we will:


- *Target our investments in favour of inclusion – no reduction in funding*
- *Change the way we work - more local control and influence over resources particularly for geographical clusters of schools.*
- *Establish an integrated locality model, emphasising early identification and support and whole family working and with a strong focus on a school led system.*
- *Reduce reliance on specialist placements to free up capacity for those who need those places most by enabling our special schools to provide specialist support and expertise to mainstream schools.*
- *Integrate support for the most vulnerable children and their families.*
- *Redesign and re-commission provision and services to provide a more differentiated offer of places and support that reflects local needs.*

¹ Average ISP cost is █████. The Average cost for ASD/SEMH provision is █████ with many placements attracting an additional █████ p.a for additional support. Special School places are funded at █████ fixed top up) with additional complex needs funding available for the most complex children.

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	<p>Doncaster: Sheffield and Doncaster mutually support each other’s EOIs for a Special Free School. We recognise there is a growing need in South Yorkshire for provision focused on ASD/SEMH and that more than one Special Free School is required to meet rising demand. We need provision that alleviates pressure on our other special school places; provides a broader range of options to help address the increasing costs of placing these children and young people in the independent sector; and delivers much better outcomes. Doncaster and Sheffield would not envisage sending children and young people to each other’s Special Free Schools – each area has high enough numbers (including those from LAs that share our borders – e.g. Rotherham) to fill all the places being planned for in our respective proposals. We do not share a border so travel time and costs would be high and the target cohort of children and young people will not cope well with prolonged travel time.</p> <p>Rotherham: We are keen to discuss our proposals with Rotherham but have not yet been able to do so. Rotherham shares a border with Sheffield and we would be happy to consider how our proposal can play a strategic role in helping meet the needs of ASD/SEMH cohort. We understand Doncaster are approaching Rotherham on the same basis. Sheffield and Doncaster’s strategic approach would give Rotherham good access to new provision on either side of their area.</p>
Optional: Your Parent / Carer Forum, or other representatives of parents and young people	We have discussed our proposals with Sheffield Parent Carer Forum (SPCF). They are supportive of our approach and recognise that there is a growing cohort of ASD/SEMH children and young people that need access to smaller, more targeted provision than is currently available even within our good/outstanding special school sector. If we are successful, we are fully committed to developing our proposals in close collaboration with SPCF.
Optional: Any other partners, Schools forum, existing FE colleges etc (please specify)	<p>The Inclusion Strategy that this bid supports has been discussed and agreed by the Sheffield Schools Forum. We have discussed the bid with the Schools Forum Chair, who supports it. We intend detailed conversations to follow if the bid is successful</p> <p>NHS Sheffield CCG has been consulted see attached letter of support.</p>

Who?	Conversation summary (3 points max)
	 <p>20161110_SCCG_LA Commissioned Special</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.

Address and postcode [REDACTED]

Size of site: 1180.9m²

Current and previous uses including planning designation (if known): Previously a Primary School. Most recently used for youth and community provision. The area is designated for Housing.

Estimated timescale for formal ratification that the LA will release the site for the school (if agreed): 3 Months

Estimated date the site would be available for works to commence: The site is currently vacant, so would be dependent on an outcome of the bid and the previous answer.

Tenure upon which the site will be made available (if agreed): 125yr Lease

If applicable, whether the site is co-located with another school etc: N/A

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

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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

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

Section C – Rationale for School

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*

Children with multiple and overlapping difficulties present a unique challenge to both education and health services. Their combined difficulties can mean that provision targeting only one area of need is less appropriate or accessible to them. When these children are being accommodated in the mainstream sector, schools need a greater variety of support and intervention options. Sometimes the severity of a combined need can lead to a special placement for children who potentially are capable of good academic attainments but who have social, emotional and communicative needs beyond that which can be accommodated in a mainstream school. Often these involve mental health concerns related to anxiety linked to a diagnosis of Social Communication Difficulties. In these cases, children will be placed in special school but the school's educational emphasis, size and specialist focus may not be wholly appropriate and this is creating a significant pressure on places and support in those settings. Within the region there are specialist ASD and SEMH provision. In Sheffield there is a specialist school for Children and Young People with mental health needs.

Our proposal seeks to relieve pressure on existing special schools by providing highly specialised care and education for a small group of children with overlapping ASD and SEMH difficulties. Transition to the secondary sector can be a particularly difficult time for these children. Multiple teachers, large numbers of children and an increased need for social skills are factors that commonly combine to form a significant barrier to this group's performance, engagement and attendance.

Even in the special school sector, accommodating these children with other children with severe autism and/or behaviour difficulties has obvious consequences for their levels of anxiety and ability to achieve good outcomes. Consequently, the provision for those on roll at the new school will be necessarily small and focused. It would primarily be for children of secondary age, but would also offer placements for children in key stage 2 with severe need or who would benefit from a short term placement that would facilitate their secondary transition.

This new provision would increase choice in the sector by giving parents an option that not only meets a particular set of needs but also gives children opportunity to pursue aspirational qualifications. Alongside providing for children attending the new school, we would be seeking to increase access to specialised expertise. Academisation and local funding changes are shifting SEND support ever increasingly towards a traded services model. The new school would seek to increase the variety of support, intervention and training options available in an area of increasing need. Supporting and equipping mainstream schools in this way helps them to accommodate increased numbers of children with more complex needs. This in turn helps us to promote inclusion by reducing the proportion of children who need special placements.

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

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.]

Please include:

- Where the pupils will come from – what is the balance of demographic growth (eg new housing developments) vs changing patterns of need (eg which are the schools the pupils would attend if this school did not go ahead)?
- The impact on numbers and proportion of students with SEN at mainstream schools
- How the school would be financially sustainable within budgetary constraints in the long term, including (if applicable) how it would help deliver wider value for money (for example in reducing transport costs)

Following the national trend, the number of births in Sheffield increased by 25% from 2002 to 2012 and after a small drop in 2013 has stabilised, in addition, Sheffield has experienced significant inward migration, with many newly arrived having special educational needs. This population growth has been feeding through the primary mainstream sector and is beginning to impact the secondary sector. These wider population changes have been proportionally affecting the Special schools. Over the last four years alone there has been a 27% increase in the number of primary age children with EHCPs / Statements placed in special schools in the city. There are currently just under 900 statutory school age children on roll at Sheffield special schools. At the beginning of this academic year nearly 500 of these children had an EHCP / Statement with ASD or SEMH identified as their primary need. We're forecasting that by 2020 ASD & SEMH needs combined will account for 57% of children needing special school places.

This confluence of population growth and need-specific growth has resulted in an increasing number of children with more specific requirements. The present proposal focuses on diversifying our provision landscape with the aim of meeting the needs of children that have both ASD and SEMH needs. Our secondary need statistics suggest there is significant overlap. When a secondary need is recorded, 25% of children with a primary need of SEMH are identified as having ASD (14% with the primary/secondary need reversed). Given the difficulties these children have with managing their emotions, behaviour and anxiety, they are a group who require provision that is small and specialised if they are to succeed. Currently, those with severe levels of need are being placed in large special schools that cater for a more general variety of needs. Either through lack of suitable provision or tribunals some children with these needs are being placed in expensive¹ independent school placements further highlighting this gap in provision. We envisage that the new school will reduce these high cost placements by providing more choice in the system and provision better suited to the needs of this group.

An important part of the focus of the new school will be to enhance the support that is available to pupils at KS2. In recent years there has been a particularly large increase in the number of Primary age children identified with ASD and/or SEMH needs whose severity of need requires a special school placement (from 2012 to 2016 a 31% and 77% increase respectively²). This kind of early intervention is expected to help more children to access a mainstream placement in secondary – with obvious benefits for their wellbeing, outcomes and the cost effectiveness of our provision. Currently, a proportion of these children whose level of need doesn't qualify them for a special school place find that mainstream school is too much to cope with. In some cases, this can result in attendance issues and/or a permanent exclusion followed by a pupil referral unit placement not well suited to their needs, adding to the pressures in the system.

¹ In Sheffield average ISP cost is █████. The Average cost for ASD/SEMH provision is █████ with many placements attracting an additional █████ p.a for additional support. Special School places are funded at █████ (fixed top up) with additional complex needs funding available for the most complex children.

² This increase doesn't take account of children in a PRU.

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.**

Data drawn from January census and SEN2 data.	No. of Settings <small>(with KS2, 3 or 4 children in 2016)</small>	Please indicate the no. of pupils with an EHC plan living in your LA who are placed within these settings		
		January 2012	January 2016 <small>(Sep 2016 not yet available)</small>	January 2020
Resourced provision and units inside LA	20	224	222	220
Resourced provision and units outside LA	0	0	0	0
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA	11	680	738	752
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside LA	8	8	5	4
Independent / non-maintained special schools inside LA	2	2	10	9
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside LA	4	3	14	7
Mainstream schools inside LA	144	657	511	527
Mainstream schools outside LA	7	18	9	4
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside LA	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside LA	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside LA	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside LA	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

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) – Please note: There are currently no other plans to expand the special sector in Sheffield, but there are a number of projects increasing the number of places in mainstream to keep pace with population growth. This includes the addition of three new secondary schools opening in 2018.
- details of any wave 12 free school applications

The main basis for the 2020 predictions is our forecast of primary need in Sheffield. This combines census figures past and present with ONS population estimates and projections. The upper year groups are calculated by aging on current year groups with a weighted average of historical gains and losses applied. The input projection is based a weighted average of the historical percentage of children with statements or plans in Reception as a proportion of the population. Current placement % splits (mainstream, IR, Special) are then applied to the primary need forecast figures to get an estimate of the number of children in each provision type by 2020.

Estimates of future independent placements are based on current proportions of statemented pupils at ISPs. Using current numbers with ASD / SEMH at independent schools we've made a proportional reduction to these forecasts to show the impact of the new school.

The new provision will provide targeted support for a particular group of children who would otherwise have been placed in other maintained or independent special schools. This diversification of provision is about providing for the specific needs of these learners, whilst at the same time reducing numbers in the other special schools. As such, no extra numbers have been added to the special forecasts for 2020.

Confirmation

I confirm that [REDACTED] has seen this expression of interest and supports it.

Date (10/11/2016)	
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