



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.**

Name of LA	Name of person leading	Contact details
Lead LA: Suffolk	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
<i>[if applicable – name of 2nd LA. Please add rows for additional LAs who have committed to commissioning places.]</i>		

A2: What type of school is wanted?

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

<p>Category of SEN provision (if more than one type, with different top-up rates, please explain)</p>	<p><i>This specialist provision would cater for pupils with social and emotional needs with associated behaviours and mental health issues (SEMH). The school would also cater for pupils with underlying communication and social difficulties i.e. pupils referred who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum condition (ASC).</i></p> <p><i>Pupil behaviour will be challenging and will have prevented them from learning within a mainstream school. The pupils referred will have already accessed and exhausted tiers 1 to 3 of the local offer which will usually include a short term intensive intervention either through specialist outreach services or a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).</i></p>
<p>Per-pupil revenue funding you would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain)</p>	<p>████████████████████</p>
<p>Age range</p>	<p><i>8 to 16 years of age.</i></p>
<p>Gender (boys/girls/co-educational)</p>	<p><i>Co-educational</i></p>
<p>Total number of proposed places</p>	<p><i>60</i></p>
<p>Early years provision? If so, how many places?</p>	<p><i>No</i></p>
<p>16-19 provision? If so, how many places?</p>	<p><i>No</i></p>
<p>Community use/shared facilities</p>	<p><i>The school would be able to have shared use of adjacent sports' facilities – indoor and external playing fields</i></p>

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	<i>We have discussed this proposal with Essex County Council. However, Essex is currently expanding its provision in the south and west of the county and has confirmed that it does not need places in the north east of the county i.e. within travelling distance of Ipswich. For Suffolk, new provision in Chelmsford or Harlow in Essex is too far for pupils to travel daily.</i>
Optional: Your Parent / Carer Forum, or other representatives of parents and young people	<i>A well-established parent forum, Suffolk Parent Carer Network (SPCN), is highly supportive of this proposal and is keen to work with a sponsor of a new ASC school.</i>
Optional: Any other partners, Schools forum, existing FE colleges etc (please specify)	<p><i>Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Academy Trust (SENDAT) has confirmed its support for the proposal. The Trust has a high level of expertise in this area and the school would sit well with its continuum of provision. SENDAT has expressed an interest in bidding to become the sponsor.</i></p> <p><i>Suffolk's Schools' Forum has recently agreed to provide additional funding for SEN across the county in recognition of the pressures Suffolk faces in supporting pupils locally.</i></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:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] site is 1.038 hectares. A plan is attached.

Adjacent to the site is a 40 place PRU for pupils aged 11 – 16 (KS3/4). To the north of the site are playing fields and a sports' dome both of which are potentially available for use by a school via a shared lease agreement.

The LA is able to release the site immediately which means that, subject to planning, works could commence at the earliest date agreed. The site could be transferred on a leasehold basis (125 years) at a peppercorn rent.

Key contact for site details: **[REDACTED]**

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.**

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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 **[REDACTED]**
[REDACTED] has seen this expression of interest and supports it.

Please tick to confirm. **Yes**

Section C – Rationale for School

How the school will fit into the broader spectrum of SEN provision in the region (including neighbouring LAs if appropriate)

Suffolk has insufficient places for SEMH/ASC pupils to meet current and future demand. Although the county's SENDAT Strategy (2015-18) states that "...every Suffolk child and young person really does matter and all should have their needs met, as far as possible, in their local community, in local early years settings, local schools and further education settings...and offered high quality provision which ensures good health and care and good educational progress, attainment and achievement", we are actually unable to meet this target because of our lack of local and quality provision.

Local community provision

A new SEMH/ASC school would address the need for additional capacity in the area covering the Ipswich district, Martlesham and Kesgrave, Felixstowe, Woodbridge, Holbrook, East Bergholt and Hadleigh.

Presently, pupils with this profile of need are either being held in PRUs for extended periods of time or are being educated in out of county settings away from their homes, families and communities, making it difficult for them to establish supportive relationships that will sustain them as they make their transition through to Post 16 education, employment or training.

High Quality Provision /Quality assurance and challenge

Suffolk is concerned that some of the outcomes for our pupils in out of county schools are poor; pupils are not making expected progress and not being adequately prepared to return to Suffolk once their placement ends.

The new school would bring specialist expertise both to support pupils in their home community and to provide broader support to educational professionals engaged in supporting children and young people in universal and targeted settings. Transition, particularly, will be able to be managed locally amongst providers who understand and work within the local continuum of support (see Fig. 2 over).

A local school would allow the LA to monitor, assure and challenge the providers to ensure high quality provision for some of our most vulnerable young people.

How it would help meet pressures on special educational provision

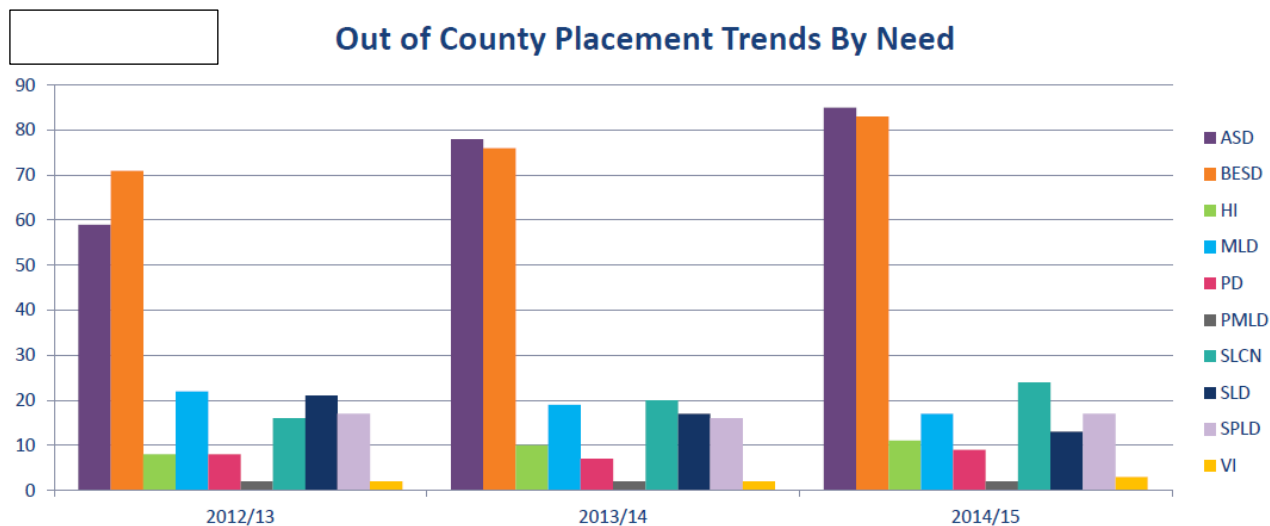
The number of school aged children and young people is growing as the county sees spikes in localised population growth, net increases in immigration and a large number of new housing developments.

Our pupil forecasts show the total school population in Suffolk will increase by over 7,500 (8%) in the next 5 years (primary age increasing to over 5%; secondary age increasing over 12% in this period and then continuing to increase further). Suffolk has a duty to respond to this growth in demand for mainstream and non-mainstream places.

There are currently 91 pupils in out of county SEMH/ASC provision and 11 awaiting referral because their needs cannot be met by provision in Suffolk. Of these, 47 are pupils who live in the Ipswich/South Suffolk area. These needs make up the largest proportion of placements with out of county SEN providers. Because Suffolk's existing local providers are full to capacity, we are having

to send pupils further away from their homes. This creates a need for residential provision as well as an educational offer. Recent trends in OoC placements confirm that the highest level of need is for SEMH/ASC provision (see Fig 1 below)

The cost of providing an OoC placement for a pupil which this profile of need is between [redacted] and [redacted]. Set against the average cost of an internal in-county placement of [redacted], this is not the best use of SEN funding. Ideally, we would bring pupils back into Suffolk and use the savings to expand and improve the provision we offer.

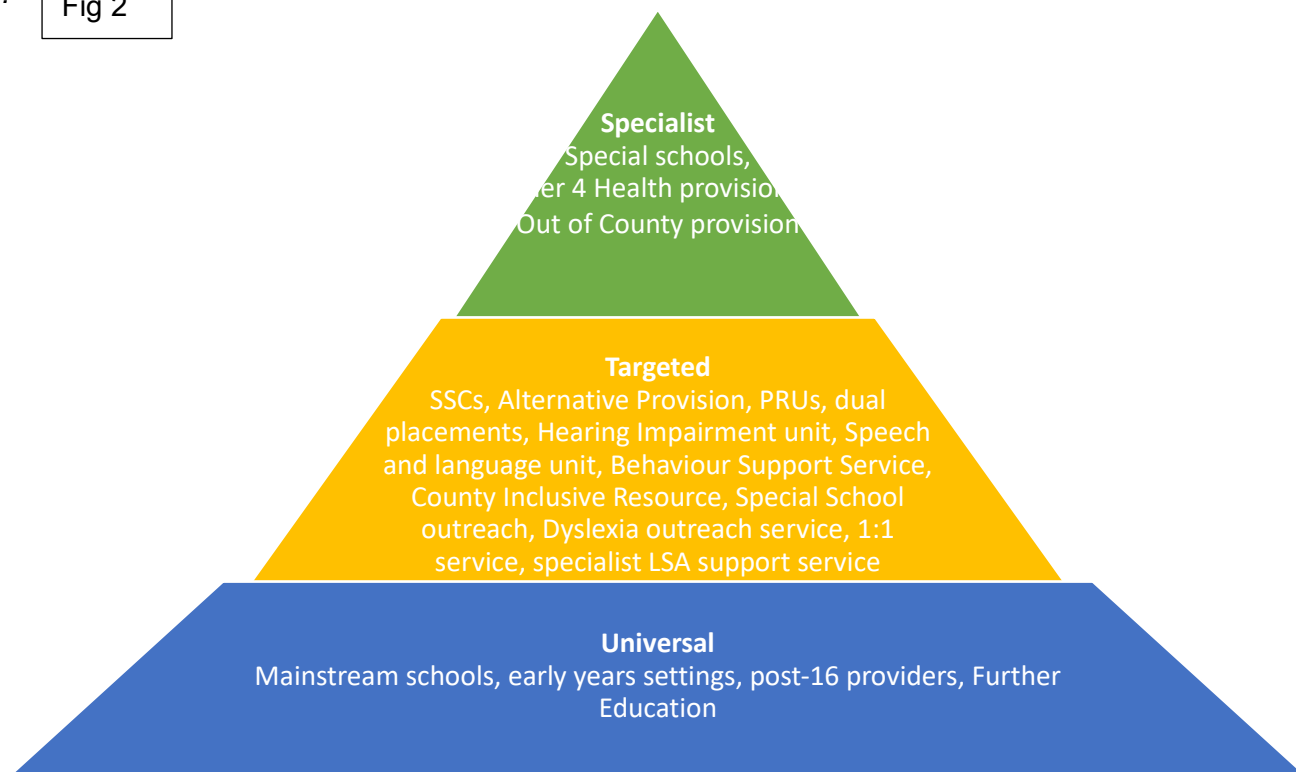


The potential impact on inclusion, including (where applicable) types of expert support you would expect the school to provide to mainstream schools in the area

A new SEMH/ASC school would be part of the continuum of provision (see diagram below) and link with existing providers to support a 'Step up/Step down' approach to inclusion.

The diagram below describes our current continuum of provision.

Fig 2



Evidence of parental demand

Parents of children and young people with ASC have been working with the LA and with the National Autistic Society (NAS) for some time to add provision for ASC pupils to the local (Ipswich and South Suffolk) offer via the free school route. These bids were disappointingly unsuccessful. The Suffolk Parent and Carer Network has since confirmed its support for a new SEMH/ASC school located in the home communities of the pupils who will be attending the provision.

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

Where the pupils will come from – what is the balance of demographic growth (e.g new housing developments) vs changing patterns of need (e.g which are the schools the pupils would attend if this school did not go ahead)?

Our intention would be to bring back pupils will come from expensive OoC provision as soon as possible. These pupils would form the core of a new school. We would also consider referrals for pupils who have had to remain in PRUs for inappropriately long periods or who are receiving 1:1 tuition because suitable provision is not presently available.

In the area covered by the proposed new school, we currently have 87 primary schools and 15 secondary schools. In this area alone we are forecasting over 1900 additional pupils by 2020. Proportionately, we anticipate a 1.5 - 2% rise in demand at least for PRU places (29 – 38 additional places) arising from this growth.

The impact on numbers and proportion of students with SEN at mainstream schools

There are 5 PRUs in the Ipswich area providing for 185 pupils. At present, we have no more capacity for SEMH/ASC pupils in these settings. This means that pupils are being held in PRUs and existing special schools and/or are being supported by the County Inclusive Resource (CIR) or Behaviour Support Service (BSS). There is a waiting list of 39 pupils seeking AP places in this area of Suffolk all of whom are at risk of permanent exclusion.

The County Inclusive Resource (CIR) and Behaviour Support Service (BSS) support pupils in mainstream settings. Last year the CIR supported 1046 pupils in school year; the BSS supporting 775 pupils. This year 120 pupils have already been identified for consideration for referral to the CIR and 290 pupils to the BSS.

The multi-agency in-year fair access panel and the new Local Offer Broker roles in our Inclusive Service have served to promote inclusion in our mainstream settings providing support and challenge schools to maximise the local education offer.

The impact of a new special school would be twofold: a) to provide a specialist setting in the local area where there is none now and b) to provide expertise to other parts of the SEN support service so that pupils can be supported more appropriately and in a more timely manner. This should also have the effect of reducing temporary and permanent exclusions.

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)

Currently we have 47 pupils placed in long term SEMH/ASC settings from this area of Suffolk with a further 23 being referred for consideration. There is demand for a new school to take the full cohort of 60 pupils very quickly as pupils are brought back into the county and moved from existing AP provision which is not able to provide full time specialised support. Pupil forecasts which incorporate demand from new housing support this.

Savings made from moving from OoC to local provision (approx. █████ per place) would be reinvested in local provision which will enable more pupils to be provided with support for their special needs. Transport costs are expected to reduce dramatically.

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	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) Includes EHCP and Statutory Assessment of SEN	2020
Resourced provision and units inside LA	28 (14 PRUs, 7 Specialist Support Centres, 4 Hearing Impaired Units and 3 Speech and Language Units)	Not known	PRUs – 79 (495 places) Units and SSCs – 104 (204 places)	PRUs – 84 (520 places) Units and SSCs – 134 (300 places)
Resourced provision and units outside LA	0	0	0	0
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA	10 (9 Special Schools and 1 special free school)	923 special school places	945 special school 32 special free school	1,275 special school 32 special free school
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside LA	Not sure what this refers to as it appears to duplicate Independent/ non maintained special schools outside LA			
Independent / non-maintained special schools inside LA*	4 Independent special schools	Not known	67 SEMH and AP Free School not yet open	126 (includes SEMH school)
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside LA	26	124	128	133
Mainstream schools inside LA**	310	Not known	2, 002	2,102
Mainstream schools outside LA	0	0	0	0

New provision

***Independent / non-maintained special schools inside LA: plus**

- 50 place SEMH school in Lowestoft opening 2017 and
- 24 place Free Primary AP Wave 11 Lowestoft date of opening not yet known

**** Mainstream schools inside LA**

- Wave 11 free primary school in Ipswich opening 2018/19
- Wave 11 Technical Academy Bury St Edmunds (14-19) opening 2017

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*

Confirmation

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

Please tick to confirm

Date (DD/MM/YYYY)	
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