



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)	A school for children with social communication needs and/or Autism and associated challenging behaviour and/or sensory needs.
Per-pupil revenue funding you would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain)	█████ per place plus £[x] (tbc) - subject to clarification about revenue funding, as requested in the Expression of Interest dated 28/10/16
Age range	The age range includes Key stages 2, 3 and 4 and post-16 provision.
Gender (boys/girls/co-educational)	Co-educational
Total number of proposed places	Size of school: 32 places, plus 8 places for post-16
Early years provision? If so, how many places?	N/A
16-19 provision? If so, how many places?	8 places for post-16 provision are included.
Community use/shared facilities	<p>The school can be located on the current ██████████ site which is of sufficient size to allow for the occupation of another stand-alone school of the size proposed. ██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████ has confirmed the school's interest in locating the free school on the site. The size of the site would mean that there would need to be further discussion and/or formalised arrangements about the sharing of outdoor space between the two schools.</p>

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

In Portsmouth there are currently a number of children who have social communication difficulties and/or autism plus associated challenging behaviour and sensory needs. These children need more specialist educational provision than is usually available within a mainstream school. We need to expand the range of special school provision that is available in Portsmouth, to ensure that we can meet these needs within the city, wherever possible.

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>Hampshire County Council (HCC) has confirmed that, if we were to develop the type of provision described herein and it was located in the North of the City close to the boundary with Hampshire, HCC would also wish to place children in this school as HCC is experiencing a similar need. HCC has confirmed they are likely to commission c10-15 places.</p> <p>Southampton City Council is reviewing their SEND provision and was not able to make a commitment. Similarly, West Sussex Council is reviewing their SEND provision and was not able to make a commitment.</p>
Optional: Your Parent / Carer Forum, or other representatives of parents and young people	<p>The Portsmouth Parent Carer Forum supports this bid and they have commented that a specialist and inclusive provision is greatly needed in the city. To deliver this, the free school will have the right environment staffed by highly skilled professionals providing effective strategies and resources. This will enable children and young people to access the appropriate education, achieving the right outcomes: to be part of the community, have a job and be independent.</p>
Optional: Any other partners, Schools forum, existing FE colleges etc. (please specify)	<p>Discussion with the [REDACTED], who is also a Trustee of [REDACTED]. The school is due to transfer to the [REDACTED] on 1st February 2017 when the land would transfer from the LA to the Trust on the basis of a 125 year lease. The school is interested in a free school being co-located alongside their SEN provision, and the potential for collaboration. It is likely that SAT will express an interest in being the proposer for the free school.</p> <p>There are other MATs which also operate in Portsmouth and who may be interested, but this assumption has not been tested.</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:** The total site area of [REDACTED] is 2.49 Ha; the proposed site for the new free school is 2566sqm, as shown by the dotted line in Appendix 1.
- **Current and previous uses including planning designation:** The proposal is to build on an area of the existing [REDACTED] site that is designated as Local Authority publically funded land currently used for the purposes of education.
- **Estimated timescale for formal ratification that the LA will release the site for the school (if agreed):** [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2017, The proposal is to exclude from the transfer the area of land shown in Appendix 1, for use as the new Special School provision. The Council has a formal Academy Transfer Project Board who ratifies the release of sites for the purpose of Academy transfers. At the meeting of this Board in January 2017, the excluded site area as shown in Appendix 1 will be ratified.
- **Estimated date the site would be available for works to commence:** The site is currently in the ownership of the Local Authority and would be available immediately.

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]

.....
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 **Portsmouth City Council** has seen this expression of interest and supports it.

Please tick to confirm

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.]

- ***How it would help meet pressures on special educational provision***

Rationale: Our specialist educational provision is full. Most nearby provision in neighbouring Hampshire is also full. From an analysis of pupils we have had to place out of city, we identified a cohort of 10-15 children in Key Stages 2 to 4 for whom the specialist provision we currently commission doesn't readily meet their needs. This is a group of children with social communication needs, many of whom have a diagnosis of autism, with associated challenging behaviour and/or sensory difficulties, but who do not necessarily have significant learning needs.

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

Hampshire County Council is experiencing similar demand and need 10-15 places for children with social communication needs in the south of Hampshire.

The context of Portsmouth is:

Mainstream school provision

Portsmouth has 58 mainstream schools (including academies). Of these, 9 have an Inclusion Centre (additional resourced provision), with places commissioned by the LA for pupils with statements of SEN/education health and care plans (EHCPs).

- 2 for sensory impairment (1 primary, 1 secondary) - total of 16 places.
- 2 for communication and interaction difficulties (focusing on speech language and communication needs) - total of 31 places.
- 2 for communication and interaction difficulties (focusing on children and young people with autism, 1 primary and 1 secondary) - total of 20 places.
- 2 for development and assessment (these will be transformed to Inclusion Centres for children with communication and interaction difficulties) - total of 18 places from September 2017.
- 1 for children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties - 12 places plus 2 for 6th day provision for pupils in key stage 2 who have been permanently excluded.

Additional support for mainstream schools

- An outreach service is commissioned from a partnership of all Portsmouth special schools to support mainstream schools and enable them to effectively meet pupils' special educational needs and enable children to continue to be included within mainstream schools.
- Specialist support for children with a sensory impairment is provided by the Inclusion Service.
- Schools can buy in additional support e.g. from the educational psychology service for pupils on SEN support.

Further education

Students largely attend one of four local Colleges in Portsmouth (Highbury and Portsmouth Colleges) or Havant (South Downs and Havant Colleges). Portsmouth College includes specialist provision for young people with significant cognition and learning needs. Highbury College includes specialist provision for young people with social emotional and mental health needs.

Special school provision

There are 5 special schools: 3 are maintained and 2 have academy status. These include:

- 1 specialist nursery (Willows) - 42 FTE places.
- 1 primary (Cliffdale) and 1 secondary school (Redwood Park) for children with complex needs and autism - 104 and 141 places, respectively.
- 1 all-through school (Mary Rose Academy), including a small nursery for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties - 104 pre-16 places and 28 post-16 places.
- 1 secondary school (The Harbour School) (which also includes a Year 6) for children with social emotional and mental health difficulties (95 places). This school also delivers alternative provision for children from year 6 to year 11 (111 places), and education for children not able to access school for medical reasons. In addition, this school provides individual tuition and Multi-agency Behaviour Support as traded services.

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. (e.g. 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 (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)?***

The Council's School Organisation Plan 2013-2018 'commissioning school places and determining capital investment and school re-organisation priorities' highlights the significant demand on primary and secondary school places across Portsmouth.

Since 2001 there has been an unprecedented rise in the birth rate by 27%. Along with other economic and migration issues this has led to an increase in the school age population of over 30% which has affected primary, secondary and special pupil number capacity within the city.

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

Portsmouth has a growing population and an increasing number of children with SEND. Overall prevalence of special educational needs (SEN) in Portsmouth is higher than the national average (16.5% compared to 15.4%). Portsmouth has a higher percentage of children with statements of SEN/EHCPs than the national average (3.1% compared to 2.8%). The council has also seen a significant increase in requests for statutory assessment this academic year.

In particular, there has been an increase in children with more complex needs, with the continuing increase in the number of babies with complex needs who survive the neonatal period and infancy in particular. Related to this, there has been an increase in the number of out of city placements from 2% in 2015 to 11% in 2016.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties is the most common primary need for those with SEN Support. Speech, Language and Communication Needs is the most common need for those with a statement of SEN/EHCP.

The cohort of children the council has identified as requiring this provision is currently attending out of city provision or is in the city's oversubscribed special schools, but do not have an appropriate peer group as their learning needs are not as significant as their peers'. Placement of these pupils within the city would enable the council to make more effective use of the available funding by making provision within the city, would reduce the travel times for pupils who often find the transitions between home and school difficult to manage due to their autism, and would reduce the pressure on the home to school transport budget. It is likely that HCC and its pupils would also benefit in a similar way.

- ***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)***

The authority has seen both the Out of City and Home to school transport budgets overspend in recent years and whilst we support the creation of additional high needs places within the city, which will help the authority to reduce the overspends, we would seek clarification of the ongoing revenue funding streams to ensure financial viability for both the school and the other special school provision in the city. In particular the place funding and the element 3 Top up funding which if required to be funded from the current High Needs block funding would require financial support from either the Schools Block or the Early Years Block to maintain overall affordability.

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, i.e. 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.**

PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

	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) Data as at Jan16	2020
Resourced provision and units inside LA	7	55	79	90
Resourced provision and units outside LA	0	0	0	0
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA	5	344	449	490
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside LA	13	28	36	30
Independent / non-maintained special schools inside LA	0	0	0	0
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside LA	20	15	31	20
Mainstream schools inside LA	57	360	351	370
Mainstream schools outside LA	24	63	46	30
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside LA	2	NA	0	50
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside LA	5	NA	55	30
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside LA	0	NA	0	0
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside LA	0	NA	0	0

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

	SCN/ASD	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	4	61	45	50
Resourced provision and units outside LA	-	-	-	-
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA	0	136	218	233
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside LA	-	-	-	-
Independent / non-maintained special schools inside LA	-	-	-	-
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside LA	-	-	-	-
Mainstream schools inside LA	498	119	206	216
Mainstream schools outside LA	-	-	-	-
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside LA	N/A	-	-	-
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside LA	N/A	-	-	-
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside LA	N/A	-	-	-
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside LA	N/A	-	-	-

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

Please include:

- ***any changes to capacity you are already expecting (e.g. planned expansions / closures / other new schools and how this school would sit alongside those)***

The council is already investing significantly in Redwood Park and Cliffdale schools, which has not led to an increase in capacity, but has enabled the schools to educate pupils with more complex needs.

If the bid was successful, officers would want to review the suitability of children already placed in out of area provision, in partnership with the child and their parent, through the annual review process. The councils are aware, however, that it may not be in the best interests of the child to move children who are settled and making progress in their current educational placement and so it is likely that placement in the new special free school will increase gradually over the first few years and that the new provision will enable the councils to avoid placing children out of the city or where there is a long travelling distance in the future.

Confirmation

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

Please tick to confirm ✓

Date	11/11/2016
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