



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
<p><i>Lead LA: [BRISTOL 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>[2nd LA – South Gloucestershire Council]</i> <i>Please add rows for additional LAs who have committed to commissioning places.]</i></p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>

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>* HI = Hearing Impairment PMLD = Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties PD = Physical Difficulties MSI = Multi Sensory Impairment VI = Visual Impairment SSS = Sensory Support Service CAMHS = Child and Adolescent Mental Health</p>	<p>A new 'Regional Sensory Support Centre' (RSSC) comprising a set of complementary, co-located settings, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Primary aged and secondary children who have Hearing Impairment (HI) or multi sensory impairment (MSI) ; 2) A co-located setting for primary aged children who have profound and multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) or Physical Difficulties (PD) as primary need along with associated complex health conditions. 3) A co-located setting for the regional Sensory Support Service of peripatetic HI/VI teaching staff. 4) North Bristol CAMHS Team, which partly supports the families of children placed in these settings, along with the wider community.
<p>Per-pupil revenue funding you would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain)</p>	<p>█████ per place plus ██████ Children with HI are likely to have additional funding of at least ██████ but may also require support with ASC, or a PD. The range of additional payment may extend to ██████. Children placed in the PMLD setting have high levels of need, and potential secondary needs. Additional payments for these children may range from ██████ sometimes more.</p>
<p>Age range</p>	<p>HI as primary need – age 2-19. In the RSSC, these children would benefit from very close proximity to a mainstream primary school and excellent secondary schools and sixth forms</p> <p>PMLD as primary need – age 2 -11. These children would benefit from very close proximity to a mainstream primary school.</p> <p>The Sensory Support Service provide early learning opportunities for very young children and pre-school children, and for parents who have young children with HI or VI. The Service is currently commissioned across 4 regional LA's to support pupils in mainstream settings.</p> <p>The CAMHS service support children and families linked to the HI settings, in particular.</p>
<p>Gender (boys/girls/co-educational)</p>	<p>Co-educational for both the HI and PMLD settings.</p>
<p>Total number of proposed places</p>	<p>HI setting – 40 places. Typically 25% would provide places for the local region (= S Glos & BANES current typical placements) and 20% used by wider regional LA's.</p> <p>PMLD Setting – 50 places; typically 20% from S Gloucestershire and 5% other LA's.</p> <p>S Glos. has a building programme for 30,000 houses to be built in the North fringe of Bristol, and Bristol has a plan for 1000 houses and so additional need in that area is expected(see section D2 - footnote)</p>
<p>Early years provision? If so, how many places?</p>	<p>For educational settings, EY is included in the above numbers. For SSS setting – informal groups offering support for parents and EY children will be better integrated into service provision.</p>
<p>16-19 provision? If so, how many places?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Community use/shared facilities</p>	<p>The facilities are highly specialised and are not intended for wider community use unless given by the settings as part of their offer. The HI Setting provides a Family Support Service.</p>

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

Children will benefit from new buildings designed to enable recent technological advances which support learning. Children travelling from the wider region will have reduced travel times as the site is nearer to the motorway network. The required growth in provision will be met through this new model of delivery where children who have low incidence, high levels of need will benefit from shared specialist facilities and the benefit of specialist staff, along with a regional Sensory Support Service and a CAMHS service which is particularly beneficial to children with HI.

The RSSC would be co-located with a current mainstream primary setting (not included in this EOI). We would like to consider the possibility of making use of the hydro-pool / infrastructure (required for a PMLD setting) and play facilities to provide for the mainstream and public use in this area of relative deprivation in the city.

CAMHS will provide support for children and their parents in co-located facilities as part of their wider remit. Other NHS staff will provide physiotherapy, SLT and medical care for children as required in any of the settings, but will be based in the PMLD setting.

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. South Gloucestershire Bath & NE Somerset	S Glos: Would continue to commission places in these specialist settings given demographic growth of 30,000 extra houses in S Glos to be built. Additionally, it will both improve the travel experience for S Glos children, and the cost of travel to the LA.
Optional: Your Parent / Carer Forum, or other representatives of parents and young people.	Yes, As part of commissioning review in Jan 2016
Optional: Any other partners, Schools forum, existing FE colleges etc (please specify)	

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:

- Proposed site: The site is owned by BCC and forms part of Education held land (was a Junior School site). It is adjacent to [REDACTED] which will aid inclusion opportunities. NOTE: A fully specified Options Appraisal is available for this proposal.
- Site size: The proposed site size is 16,754 sq. metres.
- Current and previous uses including planning designation (if known). The site is currently not in use. It was previously a junior school playing field and so any planning issues should not be difficult to resolve.
- Estimated timescale for formal ratification that the LA will release the site for the school (if agreed). 1 month from request.
- Estimated date the site would be available for works to commence: The site is available now.
- Tenure upon which the site will be made available (if agreed): 125 year lease, standard long term EFA agreement.
- If applicable, whether the site is co-located with another school etc: The proposed co-located, regional centre of co-located mutually supportive settings would also benefit from being sited next to a current, mainstream primary setting. If you do not have a site please provide information on where this school would need to be located as this will ensure the Education Funding Agency (EFA) can look at property in the area should your EOI progress. 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.**

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 **Bristol 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.]

Bristol's population has increased significantly since 2005, and projections indicate further growth of 23.3%. Specialist educational settings for children with HI; MSI and for PMLD provide placements for the local region and more widely. Teaching accommodation in all cases is not fit for purpose, and cannot be expanded to provide for the expected population growth.

Bristol City Council commissioned a report of educational provision for children with sensory impairments from renowned specialists, through NATSIP (National Association for Sensory Impairment – reported Jan 2016). The report indicated that there needs to be a better integration of wider advice and support services across health, social care and education, which could address wider needs of the families and children with sensory support needs.

Further, the NATSIP report's key recommendation was to meet requirements of the new Code of Practice through co-location of HI educational settings with the regional Sensory Support Service. This recommended model would provide a new, very innovative nationally unique provision by providing a multi-agency, wraparound specialist resource which would be comprehensive, and coherent for children with HI, VI and MSI. It would provide aligned processes and provision across the four local authorities. Sub-regional sensory centres could then be identified and created with an appropriate geographical spread to act as the support, training, mentoring and monitoring arms of the Sensory Support Service.

We propose to co-locate a PMLD educational setting to form part of this centre, given the current regional representation of placements. These children would, as such, also benefit from a multi-agency, wraparound specialist resource, co-locating with health professionals (Physiotherapists, OT's, nursing staff) and specialist services (CAMHS) the proposed regional centre would bring.

Parents have indicated their concern around educational settings for their children which do not compare favourably with new mainstream settings and which do not offer the benefits of technological advances because of the age of the estate. Adequate, suitable accommodation would provide optimal technological improvements to provision, including increased support for computerised aids and appropriate thermal control for non-ambulant pupils, low acoustic noise and safer circulation around the premises for individuals with HI.

Each educational specialist provision will provide outreach services to other, smaller, specialist settings in the region in a hub and spoke model, and to settings which provide for alternative need types.

The newly commissioned sensory support service would be able to provide improved inclusion opportunities for children in mainstream settings and along with the special schools, will offer a coherent skill set and support plan to other settings, as well as individual children. The planned Regional Sensory Support Centre will vastly increase the sum knowledge and experience of the staff employed, thus facilitating development of beacons of good practice.

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)*

Bristol data is the 8th largest city and the 10th largest local authority in England. With a population growth of 10.8% since 2005 (8% average), the ONS projects an increase of 23.3% between 2014 and 2029 (16.5% average). Bristol has a relatively young age profile. Between 2005 and 2015 the number of children living in Bristol increased by 11,700 (16%), much higher than the England and Wales increase of just 6%. Given the concomitant increase in pupil numbers requiring specialist educational settings, it is proving difficult to meet demand and simultaneously to maintain suitable, fit for purpose accommodation. Accompanying material for this EOI indicated a requirement for a 'regional benefit'. As such we have not offered other planned requirements for special schools in this EOI, although as a result of demographic growth the need is significant, particularly for SEMH and ASC.

Regional neighbours also have large demographic growth¹, and so the planned location for a proposed Regional Sensory Support Centre is on the border of our largest neighbour, South Gloucestershire.

Increasing the stock of specialist places for PMLD and HI/MSI need types has not been a priority in the past, given the wider population growth. Consequently the suitability of these schools' buildings is now critical. Any resultant freed land would be allocated for new specialist SEMH provision, required through projected population growth. The co-located pair of special school settings along with a peripatetic service and CAMHS will offer a coherent skill set and support plan to other settings, as well as individual children, and so the outreach work to support mainstream schools would improve opportunities for inclusion.

The schools will continue to be financially viable, as they are now, with an increase in numbers owing to population growth. The schools will deliver better value for money as life-cycle and maintenance costs of the buildings will be vastly improved. There will be a greater pool of staff to draw upon in within the centre (on campus), and this will offer optimal staff deployment to manage children's needs. Transport costs will be reduced as children from the wider region will be better served by a site which is easily accessible from the motorway network.

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.**

¹ S Glos. has a building programme for 30,000 houses to be built in the North fringe of Bristol, and Bristol has a plan for 1000 houses in the same area. At census in 2015, 0.12% BCC school age population had PMLD, 9 with MSI. If there were one child per house in this expansion, and 0.12% had PMLD, we could assume the need for PMLD specialist places would increase 37 places across primary and secondary above those planned here. The same calculation for specialist need for HI provision would require an additional 14 places.

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL ²	No. of Settings in 2016 (added)	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 ³
Resourced provision and units inside LA	13	134	178	206
Resourced provision and units outside LA	3	Included above ⁴	6	7
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA	11	718	777	897
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside LA	15	Included above	27	31
Independent / non-maintained special schools inside LA	5	53	50	58
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside LA	17	Included above	39	45
Mainstream schools inside LA	107	865 (maintained + academies)	604	698
Mainstream schools outside LA	40	Included above	79	91
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside LA	2	N/k	166	192
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside LA	5	N/k	77	89
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside LA	0	N/k	0	0
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside LA	5	N/k	9	10

² This bid is proposing primary settings, but may consider secondary in future at S Glos request. Hence all primary and secondary settings are included in these figures.

³ Available data does not identify 'inside LA' and 'Outside LA'.

⁴ Based on ONS population projections for Bristol City, rolling incremental increase.

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

The presence of Bristol 's renowned Children's Hospital brings children with very high need to live in the area. In addition, population projections included in section D, along with trends in increasing numbers of children with PMLD and MSI, resulting from live premature births, has brought about a need for more placements requiring significantly improved 'high tech' provision.

Projections are modelled on ONS population growth projections for Bristol. Apart from the SEN2 data, we have also used an internal, significantly more lucid model based on payments made by need type.

In February 2016, Bristol City Council's Corporate Property Board will consider proposals to borrow significant funds in order to make the specialist provision needed to meet expanding population requirements along with the new requirement to provide post 16 and post 19 education and training opportunities for young people with special needs. The proposal will include expansions of current schools as follows:

1) two new 6th form expansions along with training for living independently (one SEMH provision and one ASC); 2) a new, highly specialised provision for children with PDA (ASC) and significant SEMH difficulties (likely to be a regional facility) 3) an ASC all through school. This bid is unaffected by these plans.

There is a wave 12 bid for an SEMH provision in the east/centre of the city, owing to increased demand through population growth.

Confirmation

I confirm that the Director of Children's Services at [REDACTED] has seen this expression of interest and supports it.

Please tick to confirm

Date (08/11/2016)	
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