



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](mailto: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
<i>Lead LA:</i> Croydon	<div>[REDACTED]</div> <div>[REDACTED]</div>	<div>[REDACTED]</div> <div>[REDACTED]</div> <div>[REDACTED]</div>

## A2: What type of school is wanted?

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

<b>Category of SEN provision (if more than one type, with different top-up rates, please explain)</b>	ASD
<b>Per-pupil revenue funding you would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain)</b>	██████ per place plus £[x]
<b>Age range</b>	2-19
<b>Gender (boys/girls/co-educational)</b>	Co-Educational
<b>Total number of proposed places</b>	120-150
<b>Early years provision? If so, how many places?</b>	Yes – 8-12
<b>16-19 provision? If so, how many places?</b>	Yes – 15-20 (in partnership with local FE)
<b>Community use/shared facilities</b>	<p>Croydon has an ambitious plan for re-generation. The proposed special school location will provide facilities for third sector employability organisation(s) with opportunity for developing a social enterprise on site.</p> <p>Croydon is committed to developing sustainable pathways into employment for young people with autism. The expertise of the school and third sector employability organisations will enable the development of a centre of excellence for preparation for employment and independence. The special free school provier will have the opportunity of partnering with Croydon FE to provide a range of supported post 16 pathways.</p>

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

Croydon has aspirations to work closely with the CCG to make most efficient use of resources that are, currently under considerable financial pressure. The commitment is to maximise coherence of young people and parents experience – currently parents say that communication and pathways are not as straight-forward as they could be. LB Croydon is keen to improve coherence of pathways while maximising the efficient use of resources. Co-location of specialist assessments and interventions will be an important consideration in planning with parents, young people and the CCG.

### 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>We have had specific conversations with key neighbours as well as wider conversations with colleagues across London.</p> <p>However, the conclusion of these conversations is that there is limited opportunity at this stage to deliver joint provision. Demand for places in Croydon is such that a new school within our borders is justified to meet our specific demand for places.</p> <p>In terms of accessing significant numbers of places outside Croydon, we are committed to ensuring that home to school journeys are not beyond 1 hour and that limited budgets are spent on quality provision rather than transport where possible, therefore at this stage we are not able to recommend a joint proposal. We will of course continue our conversations.</p> <p><b>Surrey</b> – Surrey has three free schools bids submitted for Wave 12. Two are proposed some distance from our border, meeting local demand in areas of Surrey away from Croydon. The third has a site yet to be determined however it would need to be closely located to our border for us to be able to consider commissioning places, otherwise transport costs would be significant. Even then, we have significant demand for special school places from those living in the North of the borough so provision in Surrey is unlikely to ease that demand as transport would be costly and transport times prohibitive.</p> <p><b>Sutton</b> – The Oakhill Academy trust will be providing an additional 67 ASD places from key stage 1 to post 16. There is local demand for these places. Sherwood Park provides places</p>

Who?	Conversation summary (3 points max)
	<p>for children with a range of special educational needs, including ASD. The school is going through expansion to provide an additional 72 places, again these places would not meet our demand for an additional school. The Greenshaw Learning Trust will be opening a base for an additional 56 secondary ASD places. It has just been agreed this will open on the Rosehill site, again some distance from our border.</p> <p><b>Lewisham</b> (not direct neighbour) – Lewisham are planning to submit a bid for ASD provision but again this would be too far away to help to meet our demand.</p> <p><b>Southwark</b> (not direct neighbour) – are planning to submit a bid for a school in Camberwell which again would be too far away for our residents.</p> <p>Additionally - we have shared our intention to bid specifically with Bromley, Lambeth and Merton and provided the opportunity to understand whether this would have any implications for the current or planned provision. No concerns have been raised.</p> <p>We are part of the PAN London School Places Group and within the last week have had the opportunity to hear plans from our colleagues across the Capital, which again helps to provide the assurance that our proposed provision would meet the demand for additional places without negatively impacting others.</p>
<p>Optional: Your Parent / Carer Forum, or other representatives of parents and young people</p>	<p>Parents in Partnership – the local parent group have been consulted about the local specialist education provision and are included in all discussions about the development of the local offer for children and young people with SEND. This group are funded by the Council to support current and future consultations in regard to the new free school and SEN developments in general.</p> <p>The London Borough of Croydon has actively engaged young people in sharing their views, with extensive use of Wikis to support young people in having a voice. Consistently young people tell us that they wish to have opportunities to develop friendships and work locally.</p>
<p>Optional: Any other partners, Schools forum, existing FE colleges etc (please specify)</p>	<p>We have been liaising with representatives from the Beckmead family of schools. They have significant experience in delivering quality ASD provision in the borough and they have expressed an interest in working with us to deliver the proposed ASD all through school in the borough. They are planned to become a Multi Academy Trust on 1 September 2017.</p> <p>We are in discussion with the local Croydon FE College and Orchard Hill College with regards to the development of a post 16 pathway into supported employment. These partnerships and wider work with local third sector organisations is intended to strengthen the free school offer.</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*
- *Size of site*
- *Current and previous uses including planning designation (if known)*
- *Estimated timescale for formal ratification that the LA will release the site for the school (if agreed)*
- *Estimated date the site would be available for works to commence*
- *Tenure upon which the site will be made available (if agreed)*
- *If applicable, whether the site is co-located with another school etc.*
- *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.*

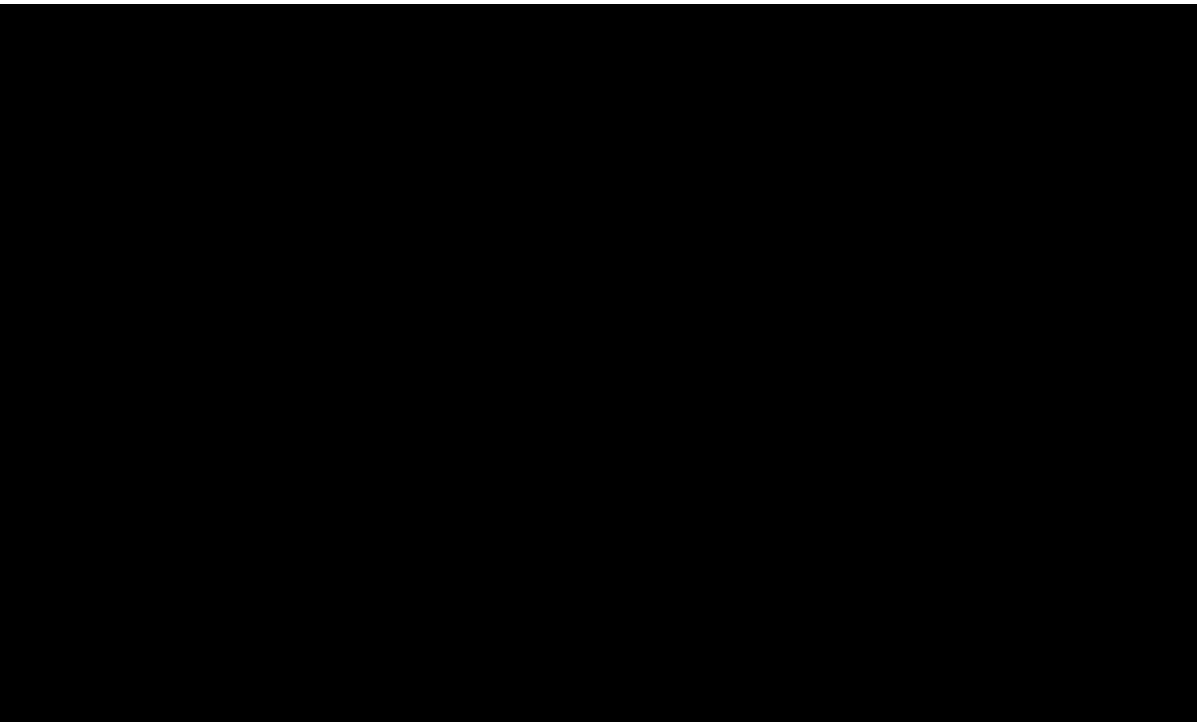
Please provide the name and contact details for the main LA contact about the site. The EFA may contact this person to ask questions about the site. **If you know any of these site details before submitting your EOI, please let DfE know (by emailing [FreeSchools.EFACAPITAL@education.gov.uk](mailto:FreeSchools.EFACAPITAL@education.gov.uk))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

*We have recently become aware of a commercial property which has become available in an area of demand for places in the borough.*

*Please contact [REDACTED] (contact details provided on this form) in the first instance.*

*The site is [REDACTED] – shown on the map below - The site is approximately 1.4 acres. It is not immediately co-located with another school but there are other local mainstream schools nearby.*

*It is currently being offered for rent or purchase for commercial use by CitiDwell.*



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 **Croydon** has seen this expression of interest and supports it.

*The Lead member for Property has not yet seen this but this will be done at the earliest opportunity. We have only very recently become aware of this site. The site is not owned by the Borough.*



## **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.]

The London Borough's specialist education provision has developed pragmatically over time within the limited resources available. The geography is such that travel to out of borough schools incurs significant transport expenditure and the necessity for young people to spend long periods travelling to and from school.

The Council is committed to providing local education and enablement opportunities to support families in planning and sustaining independence. Through on-going review it has become evident that the available Local Offer of state-funded specialist education for children and young people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is not matched to the current numbers of children with ASD and learning difficulties. Croydon has committed to developing a continuum of specialist education. There has been a historic commitment to developing special schools for children with moderate to severe and/or profound and multiple learning difficulties and social emotional mental health needs. As such there are primary and secondary special schools designated to meet these needs.

More recently there has been a commitment to developing a specialist education pathway that enables children with autism to access ASD expertise and educational opportunities matched to their needs. To date the focus has been on developing provision for those children and young people whose needs are best met through specialist intervention alongside a mainstream school, with the aim of maximising educational attainment and employment outcomes through supported mainstream curriculum access.

The London Borough of Croydon has implemented a programme to establish, Enhanced Learning Provisions in mainstream schools. To date 63 primary places have been established alongside three primary schools. The secondary phase of development is underway with three mainstream secondary schools having a phased development of Enhanced Learning Provision providing 70 places for young people in Years 7-11. Parents are supportive of these developments.

Currently the Council has accepted that there is not sufficient ASD specialist education provision and this has led to a parents looking to schools outside of Croydon. The Council has identified the need for a special school for children with autism and learning difficulties, for whom mainstream curriculum and environment are not suitable. The Council currently spends more than [REDACTED] (just under 25%) of DSG in the ind/non-maintained sector and more than [REDACTED] on transport, principally for children with autism with a lack of clear information about the outcomes for young people. This is not a sustainable pattern of school provision. The new special school will provide a much needed hub of education excellence for children with autism.

## **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.]

Croydon has the largest population of young people in London with 21.9% (81,637) of the population are aged 0 – 15 years.

Croydon currently has approximately 2300 pupils with SEND/EHC Plan. This number is increasing year on year with an overall increase of more than 200 over the last 2 years.

- Approximately 3% of the school population in Croydon has a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education Health and Care Plan, compared to 2.7% in Outer London and 2.8% in England.
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- 11.7% of pupils in Croydon receive SEN Support compared to 10.9% in Outer London and 11.6% in England
- 12.9% of pupils in maintained primary schools have a Statement of SEN, an Education Health and Care Plan or receive SEN Support compared to 13% in Outer London and 13.4% in England
- 13.4% of pupils in maintained secondary schools have a Statement of SEN, an Education Health and Care Plan or receive SEN Support compared to 12.3% in Outer London and 12.7% in England.

*Source for this information: Department for Education January School Census SFR 29-2016 published July 2016.*

The growth in the school population and the increase in the number of EHC Plans has resulted in the increased demand for specialist provision in Croydon. The demand for SEND places is greater than the supply, resulting in a significant (number of pupils with EHC Plan) of Croydon pupils having to take up independent special school placements; and out of borough placement in mainstream schools.

Primary Maintained Schools	Secondary Maintained schools
6.9% have ASD as primary need	9.6% have ASD as primary need
2.2% have a physical disability	3.1 % have a physical disability
1.7% have a hearing impairment	1.8% have a hearing impairment
0.8% have a visual impairment	1% have a visual impairment

35.9% have a speech, language or communication difficulty

13.7% have a speech, language or communication difficulty

Croydon: Number of pupils with a statement or EHC plan, based on where the child attends school (1)(2)(3)

As at January each year: 2007-2016

YEAR	Total Pupils	Pupils with statements	Percentage
2007	58,708	1,319	2.2
2008	58,589	1,314	2.2
2009	58,617	1,319	2.3
2010	59,060	1,325	2.2
2011	59,743	1,386	2.3
2012	61,348	1,488	2.4
2013	62,461	1,536	2.5
2014	63,415	1,679	2.6
2015	64,229	1,792	2.8
2016	65,092	1,839	2.8

Source for this information: Department for Education January School Census SFR 29-2016 published July 2016.

The pressure on the High Needs Block that has resulted as a consequence of increase in numbers and complexity of local children with autism in particular and SEND, in general, and the lack of local state-funded school provision has resulted in transfer of [REDACTED] from the School and Early Years Block to address demand. This increase is unsustainable.

The local free special school will enable High Needs Block resources to be targeted at supporting the local state-funded school sector in including children and young people with autism across a range of provision and through the sharing of expertise. Croydon Council has created an All Age Disability Service to ensure the lifelong inclusion of young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The new free school will form an important part of the local community of providers.

## 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)	2020
Resourced provision and units inside LA	254	NA	254	275
Resourced provision and units outside LA	20		20	10
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA	835		796	990
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside LA				
Independent / non-maintained special schools inside LA	40		40	20
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside LA	131		131	45
Mainstream schools inside LA	1000		1000	1000
Mainstream schools outside LA	200		200	200
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside LA	40		40	65
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside LA	63		63	45
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside LA				
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside LA	89		79	10

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

*We liaise closely with both providers and the Free School team and as such we are not aware of any wave 12 free school special school applications in in Croydon.*

*Croydon's Cabinet has agreed the expansion of St Nicholas Primary School by 1 form of entry. This school provides places for children with a range of needs including moderate learning difficulties, communication difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders.*

*This expansion will not meet all unmet demand for ASD places in the borough.*

## Confirmation

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

Please tick to confirm

<b>Date (10/112016)</b>	
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