



Department
for Education

Free Schools Group
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
LONDON
SW1P 3BT
www.gov.uk/dfe
Tel: 0370 000 2288
FreeSchool.SPECIAL@education.gov.uk

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Letter by email to:

[Redacted]

29 March 2018

Dear [Redacted]

SPECIAL SCHOOL COMPETITIONS: Hampshire [Redacted]
TRUST: Catch22

I am writing on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education to thank you for submitting applications to establish a special free school in competitions in both Hampshire [Redacted] and for the amount of effort, dedication and commitment shown by you and your colleagues in doing so.

In what is a competitive process we are only able to support the strongest application which best aligns with the distinct requirements of each local authority and the aims of the free schools programme.

On that basis, I am pleased to let you know the Secretary of State has decided that your application to establish a special free school in Hampshire should proceed to the next stage of the free schools process – the “pre-opening phase.” This is a significant step towards opening your school.

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Following your feedback, you may also wish to contact New Schools Network at info@newschoolsnetwork.org for advice and support about any future application.

We have now launched the next 'wave' of mainstream free school applications (Wave 13) and also announced that we will invite further applications for special free schools and alternative provision free schools in summer 2018. If you decide to re-apply in future, you should do so in line with the guidance that applies to the wave or competition in which you apply.

Hampshire – Next Steps

In the pre-opening phase, you will need to draw on a wide range of skills within your group – and work closely with the department and the local authority – to ensure that your school opens successfully. The scale and demand of the tasks you will need to undertake over the coming months will be challenging, but ultimately – we hope – rewarding.

The final decision to open any free school depends on the Secretary of State formally entering into a funding agreement with the academy trust proposing to set up the school. Approval into the pre-opening phase does not mean the Secretary of State will automatically sign a funding agreement for your project. The Secretary of State will do so only if he is satisfied that; (a) that the school will be ready to deliver at least a good standard of education, with a viable and sustainable number of pupils from its first day of operation; and (b) we have found a suitable site on which we can construct and open a school on an agreed date and in a way that provides good value for money.

If the current peppercorn site earmarked by Hampshire cannot be delivered for any reason, then the local authority will need to provide an alternative peppercorn site. If an alternative site is not delivered by Hampshire, then the Department reserves the right to cancel the project. Similarly, if during the pre-opening phase Hampshire are unable to commit to the commissioning of all the pupil places as agreed, then the department also reserves the right in these circumstances to cancel the project.

We will actively work with you and the local authority to manage the opening date of the school. In most cases, we will agree the provisional opening date only after a site has been confirmed, and once we have assessed the time needed for obtaining planning permission and completing necessary building works or refurbishment.

We will write to you separately with the formal grant agreement for the project development grant, which will be paid to the trust to cover appropriate pre-opening costs in the run up to the opening of your school. You will need to sign and return the grant agreement to the department. If you have not already done so, you will also need to ensure that the trust sets up a bank account to receive the grant. Without a bank account, we will not be able to pay you this money.

Your project is also subject to some precise and strict conditions, which are set out at Annex A. A condition relates to a specific risk to a project that must be effectively addressed if the project is to proceed through the pre-opening stage and result in the

opening of a successful free school. Failure to meet any of these conditions would make it unlikely that the Secretary of State would be in a position to enter into a funding agreement with the trust in respect of the relevant school. Further conditions may be set during the pre-opening stage.

One of my team, based in the regional unit led by [REDACTED] will normally be responsible for your project on a day-to-day basis. They will work closely with a project director, based in the department's Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), who will lead on site and capital issues, reporting to [REDACTED] as regional head. In addition, you will be allocated an education adviser who will provide expert educational advice on certain issues. You will also have a contact at Hampshire who will be confirmed in due course. We will be in touch soon to confirm arrangements for liaising with the department and local authority during the pre-opening stage, including via an initial kick-off meeting.

I am copying this letter to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and Dominic Herrington RSC for your Hampshire application.

Yours sincerely



MELA WATTS CBE
Director, Free Schools Group

Conditions

- 1) To appoint a Principal Designate who has both Autistic Spectrum Disorder and primary experience/expertise and strongly recommended that the LA is involved in this appointment process.