



Department
for Education

Local authority commissioned Special free schools

**A template for local authorities to use
when seeking proposals to establish a
Special free school**

May 2017

Overview

Local authorities play a key role in placing pupils with statements or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, so it is important that they help 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. The Department for Education (DfE) has recently provided 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 seek proposals for the new school they want. This opportunity is intended to identify and meet untapped demand for special free schools as a supplement to LA's existing resources. If a strong proposal is received that both the local authority and the Secretary of State wish to take forward the (DfE) will provide capital funding and start-up grants subject to value for money assessments.

Information for proposer groups

Proposed timeline

The competition will launch on **/**/**** and will run for 4 months, closing on **/**/****.

Contact details and further information

If you would like any further information or would like to discuss your application, please contact:

Interim Director Children's Wellbeing
cbaird@herefordshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01432 260264

Please provide the name and contact details for the main local authority contact about the site.

Interim Director Children's Wellbeing
Email: cbaird@herefordshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01432 260264

RSC's office: West Midlands
Email: christine.quinn@education.gov.uk

Events

Event: Proposer Briefing
Date: TBC
Time: 09:30: overview and context of Herefordshire
10:00: outline of specification general questions and answers
11:00 – 13:00: prearranged individual briefings
14:00: Site visit and tour

Location: Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford

Section 1 - THE SCHOOL

This section lists key details of the school proposed. Your application must be for a school that has these key characteristics.

Which local authorities are committed to commissioning places?	Herefordshire Council
How many places have been commissioned and by which local authority?	50 Herefordshire
Type of SEN	Severe and complex learning difficulties and disabilities including autism.
Per-place funding you expected to be paid	£10k per place plus average top up tariffs of D (£9170) per student
Age range	16-19 year olds
Boys/Girls/Co-educational	Co educational
Total number of places.	50
Early years provision?	No
16-19 provision?	Yes, 50
Community use/shared facilities	Yes – space within the provision
Number of residential places	0

Herefordshire needs to commission a special free school for 50 young people aged 16-19 who have severe and complex learning disabilities including autism, on a site adjacent to the existing outstanding sixth form college and other local colleges serving the region. Current provision is already overcrowded, unsuitable and in poor condition and there are no further opportunities for expansion other than a new school. In line with other local authorities Herefordshire has seen an increase in numbers of young people with the most severe and complex learning disabilities and the forecasting suggests that this will increase by a further 30 places over the next 10 years. The new special school would absorb some of those who are currently placed where there is all through provision and capacity to organise and deliver suitable curriculum and learning opportunity for the age group is limited. Combining the places in the unsuitable and overcrowded provision with the expected growth (i.e. 20 + 30) will enhance the efficiency of the delivery arrangements for this age group.

The free special school would be a focal point supporting inclusion of young people into the adjacent colleges through time out facilities, advice and support for staff and multi-agency facilities.

The table below details the number of places that the local authority proposes for each year group at the point of opening until the school is full.

	No. of students in first year of opening	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Nursery provision								
Reception								
Year 1								
Year 2								
Year 3								
Year 4								
Year 5								
Year 6								
Year 7								
Year 8								
Year 9								
Year 10								
Year 11								
Year 12		15	20	25	25	25	25	25
Year 13			15	20	25	25	25	25
Totals			35	45	50	50	50	50

Section 2 - THE PROPOSED LOCATION AND SITE

This section describes the provisional site.

A suitable site adjacent to the existing 3 colleges in Hereford has been identified.

- This was previously Broadlands Primary School site, Hereford – Broadlands Primary School, Prospect Walk, Hereford, HR1 1NZ
- The total site area is 21,798m², or 5.4 acres but not all of it will be required for this provision and the amount to be used will be agreed with Herefordshire Council and subject to Herefordshire Council governance.
- The site available is owned by Herefordshire Council. It was previously used to provide primary school accommodation and therefore has education use as a planning designation. The primary school buildings were very poor quality and expensive to repair, maintain and run. The primary school was therefore relocated to a remodelled school building on a neighbouring high school site in September 2015. The original and now redundant primary site is currently 'mothballed'.
- Work towards project implementation on the identified site could be started with immediate effect.
- The site tenure would be made available on the basis of a 125 year academy lease from Herefordshire Council.

Section 3 – RATIONALE AND CONTEXT FOR THE SCHOOL

Herefordshire has been recognised for knowing its provision well and having ambition and a clear sense of purpose for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in the recent joint area inspection (October 2016).

Regular monitoring and examination of the profiles of needs currently requiring provision across the SEND spectrum and the known demand in the future are such that a new 16 -19 provision of 50 places for young people with the most severe and complex difficulties needs to be created.

There is an effective system of tracking and identifying the needs of children and young people with complex needs who will move into adult services. However, in terms of meeting the needs of 16-19 learners, we recognise there are still areas to develop. The current provision lacks cohesion (three settings and additional out of county placements), and does not fully exploit the potential for links to mainstream 16-19 provision. In the recent joint local area SEND inspection some parents felt that information about transition and post 16 providers and services and opportunities post 19 including housing employment for SEND learners could be improved.

The new commissioned SEND free school would accommodate some current places (20) and enhance opportunities, thus maximising the use of funding. Also it would provide capacity to accommodate the expected increase in places (30) needed over the next 5-10 years.

The proposed site is within very close proximity to a campus of three good and outstanding FE colleges, in the City of Hereford, which is centrally placed for rail and bus travel, and would support current mainstream SEN learners as well as those placed in the new free school.

Current 16-19 SEND provision does not provide a robust link to post 19 provision, to give maximum opportunity for SEND young people to develop independent self-supported lifestyles. A new free school for 16-19 learners in the City, would provide opportunity for efficient and effective transition to post 19 support. Herefordshire is the fourth most sparsely populated LA in England, and as such, the proposed free school would not attract large numbers of learners from neighbouring LAs, however, should the facility grow and develop quality and breadth, it may well be able to provide future attractive opportunities for young people with SEND in Worcestershire, Gloucestershire Powys and Shropshire. Initial discussions with these LAs suggest that all four of these LAs would be interested in commissioning places in principle, particularly Shropshire and Powys. However in the first instance, the new school would improve the current post 16 offer, and strengthen the opportunities to collaborate with mainstream 16-19 organisations, whilst also building more cohesive links into post-19 provision and into independent living. In terms of providing value to the wider SEN community, the LA would anticipate that the successful proposer would offer outreach support for teachers of SEN in mainstream 3-19 schools, and in addition would provide expertise to support SEN CPD in all schools within Herefordshire. The new free school could also become a hub for in-county SEN assessment at all ages, working with health and social care to facilitate early identification and referral where appropriate. The development of consistent high quality therapies at the school could lead to improvements in therapy work across all settings.

The school would work with the three existing special schools accommodating LD learners, to ensure that transition to the new school at 16 was smooth and effective for both young people, and also their parents. There would be a strong focus on cohesive dissemination of information for transition into and out of the 16-19 school, with high

quality IAG to ensure the development of high aspiration and strong pathways for young people with LD.

Herefordshire LA follows the national code of practice in relation to SEN and admissions. We have a central dedicated SEN team. We use parental preference and then consult with settings and professionals to ensure that the settings can meet the pupil's needs as detailed in their education, health and care plan. Proposed admissions from other local authorities would come through the same process, facilitated by the SEN team.

The school's funding would come from the application of the national schools funding formula and the use of the Herefordshire High Needs Block. Individual pupils are also funded via element three of the funding formula, determined via the application of Herefordshire's funding matrix in line with the pupil's education, health and care plan.

This section describes the rationale and the context in which the new school will operate.

Section 4 – VIABILITY OF THE NEW SPECIAL SCHOOL

The school would provide for 50 16-19 year olds of which 30 aged 16-19 students with severe and complex SEND including autism would be filled from expected future growth and 20 from the current overcrowded and unsuitable places on different sites across the county. Greater student/parental satisfaction would be achieved by being able to offer future learners provision in one setting in Hereford City. Students would be part of one school and experience more vibrant social interaction within larger groups. Bringing all of the provision under one roof in a new build close to FE colleges would be attractive to SEN learners 16-19 and have the potential to increase attendance and participation.

The total 16-19 year old student cohort in Herefordshire is predicted modest growth (5550 to 5680 between now and 2021). Using the current percentage of SEN 16-19 accommodated in special settings to predict demand, and known numbers in local special settings, gives a modest increase in places required in five years' time.

Proportions of SEN pupils in mainstream would not reduce as a consequence of the proposed new school. The intention would be to improve quality of transition, outcomes, and destinations for young people currently accommodated in special school settings, improve the coherence and breadth of provision, whilst ensuring that identified future demographic growth, including provision for small numbers of students from neighbouring LAs is fully supported by flexible and appropriate provision.

The funding model used to commission places for SEN children and young people in Herefordshire would remain the same. The high needs funding matrix assesses need based on a matrix of descriptors. Identified needs are scored and an indicative amount of top-up from the tariff applied. However, by bringing all of the appropriate students from the current three settings under one roof over time, economies of scale would be evident. Such economies would be anticipated in revenue spending, and also in maintenance avoidance and more efficient running costs. The wider value anticipated, would be the provision of a central hub for teacher CPD in a central location for the county and easily accessible for county school personnel.

Settings used at the moment present significant problems relating to size, suitability and location. Opportunity to commission a free school to help resolve future pressures and provide a single better and appropriately located setting for 16-19 SEN is exciting, and

would enable Herefordshire Council to move further and more quickly towards achievement of the aims within the schools investment strategy than without the prospect of central government investment

Section 5 – PUPIL DATA - TRENDS IN SPECIALIST PROVISION FOR ALL CHILDREN WITH EHC PLANS

	No. of Settings	Please indicate the no. of pupils with an EHC plan living in your local authority who are placed within these settings		
		2012	2016 (as at Sep 2016)	2020
Resourced provision and units inside LA				
Resourced provision and units outside LA				
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA	2 for LD learners 16-19	21 (16-19)	55 (16-19)	80 (16-19)
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				
Mainstream schools outside LA				
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside LA	3		36	40
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside LA	3		3	3
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside LA	1		4	4
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside LA	1		1	0

The total number of 16-19 year olds in Herefordshire is currently 5550. This is expected to rise to 5680 in 2020 (census plus 7.5% inflation of 396) an increase of 130. While this increase is small the factors associated with the overall increase in numbers in special schools and the raising of the participation age suggest the numbers are expected to increase from 55 – 80.

Taking the trend of % in special school places it is reasonable to forecast placement of 1.2% of the 16- 19 Herefordshire population in special schools. This methodology gives rise to a forecast of approximately 70 places. Give current practice of accommodating young people from across the borders it is anticipated that there will be an additional 10 students seeking places.