



Department
for Education

Solihull Special Free School

**Seeking proposals to establish a
Special Free School**

Solihull Local Authority

March 2019

SECTION ONE: OVERVIEW

1. Summary

The Department for Education (DfE) is working collaboratively with selected Local Authorities to establish new schools that fit within the local authorities' strategies for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those requiring alternative provision. This opportunity is intended to identify and meet untapped demand for special and alternative provision free schools as a supplement to LAs' existing resources. If a strong proposal is received by a trust that both the Local Authority and the Secretary of State wish to take forward, DfE will provide capital funding and start-up grants subject to value for money assessments.

This document sets out the key information regarding the school that Solihull Council will be establishing alongside DfE. Trusts should use the information within this document, alongside the engagement events, to determine whether they would like to apply to open the school, and to base their application on.

2. Key dates

24 July 2018	Special and AP free schools wave is launched – the guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special or alternative provision free schools is published.
11 March 2019	Announcement of successful LA bids. Competitions in successful areas subsequently open.
Midday - 30th September 2019	Deadline for proposers to submit applications in successful areas.
Autumn 2019	Solihull LA and DfE to evaluate submitted applications and interview trusts
	Approved applications announced.

3. Contact details and further information

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

Name: Mrs A Pearson
Job title: Team Leader – School Place Planning
Email: specialfreeschool@solihull.gov.uk
Tel: 0121 704 6702

If you would like any further information or would like to discuss the site, please contact:

Name: Mr S Fenton
Job title: Head of Access and Development
Email: specialfreeschool@solihull.gov.uk
Tel: 0121 704 6692

Please find below the contact details of the Regional Schools Commissioner:
[Include RSC details for that region]

RSC: Andrew Warren
RSC's office: West Midlands
Email: rsc.wm@education.gov.uk

4. Solihull Council Context and Planning

Please include here details of why the local authority is running this competition and requires this school. Should this be a joint bid, please

Solihull has 1,444 pupils with an EHCP (Jan 2018 SEN2) this is an increase of 180 plans since Jan 2016 (Jan 2016 SEN2). The increase in EHCPs has resulted in greater demand for specialist provision from families living in Solihull. Demand is greater than the supply of places, resulting in a significant number of pupils with EHCPs being placed in high cost independent and out of borough provisions.

By January 2023 the number of pupils with an EHCP is forecast to rise to 2,081 - an increase of 46%. In particular, forecasts indicate increases in demand for places in maintained and high cost independent special schools.

The most significant change in the pattern of need directly relates to children with autism. At Jan 2018, 558 (38.6%) of Solihull pupils with an EHCP have autism as their primary need, this is forecast to rise by 296 (53%) by 2023. SFR37/2018 data shows that schools in Solihull have a significantly higher percentage of pupils with autism than either national or regional norms.

Our school place commissioning strategy has identified autism as our main priority for investment, as this is the key gap in provision. For those pupils with more complex needs creating a new special free school will add additional provision to meet the growing demand for places as well as extend local choice and complete the breadth of provision available for pupils with autism, (as identified by Ofsted October 2017).

The school at the heart of this project will cater for pupils with a diagnosis of Autism and associated high level Social Emotional and Mental Health needs. Pupils may have co-occurring needs but these will be secondary to the Autism in their impact on pupils' development and learning needs.

In addition to those pupils with complex needs that are being sent out of Borough, the Special Free School will make provision for children with autism that have anxiety levels to such an extent that they exhibit emotionally based school avoidant behaviour. Often these children, who do not necessarily have additional learning difficulties, are deemed to be medically unfit for school, and become increasingly withdrawn and isolated, or express their anxieties through challenging behaviour. Research has consistently indicated that children and young people experiencing emotionally based school avoidance are at higher risk of developing complex mental health conditions, which become a huge barrier to their learning.

The Free School would provide provision for pupils with autism currently in short term PRU provision, where their anxiety leads to school refusal or challenging behaviour that may lead to permanent exclusion.

This is a solo bid by Solihull Council.

explain how the local authorities will work together and how other local authorities are involved in commissioning places.

SECTION TWO: THE SCHOOL

The tables below list key details of the school proposed. Your application must be for a school that has these key characteristics. Please note you only need to complete the relevant table depending on the type of school.

Type of school	Special
Area of SEN provided for (please detail designation alongside additional information known about the cohort's needs and abilities)	Autism with associated high level Social Emotional Mental Health Needs
Which local authorities are committed to commissioning places?	Solihull Council
How many places have been commissioned and by which local authority?	Solihull - 100 places
Per-pupil revenue funding the local authority would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain and detail the rates per pupil, including estimates for how many of the cohort will be in each band)	£10,000 per pupil place funding plus £10,000 top up funding per pupil per annum. Solihull has a mechanism for an enhanced top-up rate for a small number of pupils where the profile of the pupils is significantly more complex than the expected pupil profile for this school
Age range	7 to 16 (Year 3 to Year 11)
Gender (Boys/Girls/Co-educational)	Co-educational
Total number of proposed full time equivalent places (once school is at full capacity – this should include 16-19 places but not nursery)	100
Type of placements offered (e.g. full time, short term, part time)	Full time plus short term assessment places
Number of nursery places, if applicable	0
Number of 16-19 places, if applicable	0
Any planned outreach, training and/or reintegration support (including details of funding that will be made available to support the school with this)	As part of the Free School offer there will be an assessment centre for children on the roll of mainstream schools which will offer intensive support, whilst an assessment and intervention plan is developed to provide supported reintegration back into their educational provision, or move into specialist provision if required. The school will operate several entry and exit points to ensure that children with Autism are given the best support and opportunities to access mainstream when they are able.

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.

	Year of opening	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6
Nursery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reception	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Key stage 1 (Y1-2)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Key stage 2 (Y3-6)	15	30	30	30	30	30	30
Key stage 3 (Y7-9)	20	40	40	40	40	40	40
Key stage 4 (Y10-11)	10	30	30	30	30	30	30
16-19: commissioner referred	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	45	100	100	100	100	100	100

SECTION THREE: RATIONALE AND CONTEXT FOR THE SCHOOL

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

3A. Please include a brief description of the existing provision in your area, future expected growth in pupil numbers and how you expect places to be filled.

By Jan 2023 the number of pupils with an EHCP is forecast to rise to 2081 an increase of 46%. In particular forecasts indicate increases in demand for places in maintained and high cost independent special schools.

The most significant change in terms of pattern of need directly relates to children with autism. At Jan 2018, 558 (38.6%) of Solihull pupils with an EHCP have autism as their primary need, this is forecast to rise by 296 (53%) by 2023. SFR37/2018 data shows that schools in Solihull have a significantly higher percentage of pupils with autism than either national or regional norms.

Our school place commissioning strategy has identified autism as our main priority for investment, as this is the key gap in provision. Over 50% of the pupils travelling to high cost independent provision outside of Solihull have autism as their primary need. We have already invested significantly in support services, training of staff in schools and early years setting and additionally resourced provision. The development of Enhanced Provision attached to mainstream schools will provide further support for pupils in a mainstream school setting. However, there remains a gap in provision for those pupils with more complex needs that require a special school place. This bid is aimed at targeting the current and future cohort of pupils with autism which is currently being sent out of the Borough to high cost independent placements. For those pupils already attending schools outside of the area, it will be for the annual review process to determine whether the needs of the pupil can be better met more locally.

In Solihull, provision for children with autism is made in a variety of ways. The majority of pupils attend mainstream schools and academies or additionally resourced provision attached to mainstream schools. Children that need more specialist provision are placed in special schools with MLD, SLD or SEMH designations or are placed in provision outside of Solihull. At September 2018, 77 pupils with autism as their primary need, predominantly secondary age, were placed in high cost independent schools at a cost of £3,604,721 (an average of over £46,000 per place), plus £722,700 in transport costs per annum. This is over 50% of all of our independent placements. The impact on the children of extended travelling times and being educated out of their own community should not be underestimated in terms of their well being and sense of belonging.

Solihull has embarked on an ambitious programme to provide an exceptional educational environment which fully understands and caters for the individual needs of children and young people with Autism. So far we have embedded a culture of early identification and diagnosis through the multi agency Specialist Advisory Service Team; developed a professional partnership between Solihull Council and Health Service professionals; created a specialist Autism Team to undertake direct intervention work with the most vulnerable children with an Autism diagnosis; invested in the development of a Community Educational Psychology Service; and completed a programme of Autism Educational Trust (AET) accredited training to all staff in every Solihull school and to many staff in Early Years settings. In addition, we have established 3 Autism additionally resourced provisions located in mainstream schools which have created 28 primary places and 30 secondary places.

These developments provide a pathway for pupils with autism, with a real focus on maintaining pupils in a mainstream setting. However, for those pupils with more complex needs creating a new special free school will extend local choice and complete the breadth of provision available for pupils with autism, (as identified by Ofsted October 2017).

3B Please also include details as to how these proposed new arrangements are likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of educational provision for children with special educational needs, and the outcomes for pupils, across the local authority and how you expect trusts to support this.

This special free school will be integral to a number of strategies being developed as part of the Solihull Inclusion Strategy. It will play a fundamental part in improving the educational opportunities and experience for children with autism across the whole education system, through the proposed outreach and assessment function, proposed multi agency engagement and by providing training and support for mainstream schools.

As part of the Free School offer, there will be therapeutic support for those attending the school and support for children on the roll of mainstream schools through an assessment centre function which will offer intensive support, whilst an assessment and intervention plan is developed to provide supported reintegration back into their educational provision, or move into specialist provision if required.

The Free School will operate as the Autism Hub to share excellent practice across the Borough and will seek nationally recognised accreditation. It will provide flexible options to successfully re-integrate pupils who have been medically unfit for school due to their mental health/anxiety through its assessment centre. It will work with local services and parent groups to identify and provide support/training in evidence based interventions, opportunities for staff to observe outstanding practice and provide support groups/training for families in the Borough. The Hub will work closely with University of Warwick to carry out action research, implementing current evidence based interventions, proven to best support children with autism and their families, and to evaluate the impact of provision, to develop and publish action research into effective practice.

The school will operate several entry and exit points to ensure that children with autism are given the best support and opportunities to access mainstream when they are able. Admissions are expected to be managed on a termly basis in order to support transition into and out of the school.

At post-16, it is envisaged that the Free School will work in partnership with schools and Solihull College on a transition pathway based at the College but supported by the Free School, as well as with local employers.

In addition to the normal attainment and performance measures, the main drivers for change in terms of key performance indicators will include a reduction in the number of pupils with autism excluded from school, reductions in the levels of absence and persistent absence and in the number of pupils unable to attend school/school refusers. In addition, there will be a reduction in the numbers of pupils who do not attend on a full time basis (Ofsted 2017). Financially, there will be a marked decrease in the number of pupils travelling outside of the Borough to high cost independent provision, creating better value of money within the Council's High Needs Budget.

SECTION FOUR: THE PROPOSED LOCATION AND SITE

This section describes the provisional site.

<p>Full address and full postcode</p>	<p>A split site arrangement is being offered;- Site 1- former Bosworth Wood School site, Auckland Drive, Smith's Wood. B36 0DD. Site 2 Daylesford Infant School Lyndon Road, Solihull B92 7QW</p>
<p>Size of site</p>	<p>Site 1 is the former Bosworth Wood J&I School measuring 31,666sqm. This bid incorporates the Junior Block of this former school and surrounding land. Site 2 is Daylesford Infant School measuring 9,986 sqm.</p>
<p>Further details on site (for example, current use/your reasons for choosing it/further developments (e.g. housing) planned for area</p>	<p>The Council has identified two established sites that can accommodate the Free School on a split site basis. A two site approach will bring real benefits to the proposal, providing a geographical spread of places across the Borough, a flexibility of accommodation for both the school and the additional space that we are seeking to provide for a centre of excellence and an opportunity to future proof this exciting development for increasing demand in future years. The Council's preferred option is for a split site school for all of the educational benefits that this could bring for pupils and families; however, we will consider a single site school on the Bosworth Site.</p> <p>Both sites contain educational buildings, site 1 has been declared surplus to mainstream requirement and site 2 is subject to consultation that would result in its vacancy.</p>