



Department
for Education

Local authority commissioned Special free schools

**Seeking proposals to establish a
Special free school**

Sunderland City Council

June 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 closes at mid-day on 24/11/2017

Contact details and further information

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

Alan Rowan
Retained Education Functions Lead
Civic Centre
Burdon Rd
Sunderland
SR2 7DN
Email: alan.rowan@sunderland.gov.uk
Tel: 0191 5611372

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

Alan Rowan
Retained Education Functions Lead
Email: alan.rowan@sunderland.gov.uk
Tel: 0191 5611372

RSC's office: North
Email: rsc.north@education.gov.uk

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?	Sunderland City Council is committed to fully utilising the new provision. Neighbouring Local Authorities have been consulted but have not yet committed to commissioning places
How many places have been commissioned and by which local authority?	Sunderland City Council – 96 places
Type of SEN	ASC
Per-place funding you expected to be paid	£10,000 per place plus “top up”. Sunderland City Council’s agreed top up banding range is £4,482 - £17,883 with the local average top up currently £6,700.
Age range	5 - 16
Boys/Girls/Co-educational	Co-educational
Total number of places.	96 full time places
Early years provision?	0
16-19 provision?	0
Community use/shared facilities	NA
Number of residential places	0

The average top up has been established based on existing pupils with autism currently placed within the specialist educational sector at one of Barbara Priestman Academy, Columbia Grange Primary School or Sunningdale Primary School.

Sunderland Schools Forum and Sunderland and Washington Parent/ Carers Forum have been consulted regarding the proposals with positive feedback received from both. Additional local consultation with partners and local parents has also been positive with 93.3% of respondents to date supporting the development of the new school

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
Nursery provision	0	0	0	0	0
Reception	1	0	1	2	2
Year 1	2	0	2	5	6
Year 2	3	0	3	8	8
Year 3	3	0	3	9	9
Year 4	3	0	3	9	10
Year 5	1	0	1	5	9
Year 6	3	0	3	7	7
Year 7	3	0	3	9	10
Year 8	2	0	2	7	10
Year 9	3	0	3	8	9
Year 10	2	0	2	7	9
Year 11	4	0	4	10	7
Year 12	0	0	0	0	0
Year 13	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	30	0	30	86	96

Section 2 - THE PROPOSED LOCATION AND SITE

This section describes the provisional site.

The former Bishop Harland CE VA Primary School site in North Sunderland (Edubase ref 108847) has been identified as the site for the new free school. Full location details are;

Bishop Harland CE VA Primary School, Ramillies Rd, Sunderland, SR5 5JA

The site previously accommodated the Bishop Harland CE VA Primary School. It has been vacant since the school closed in 2013. The former school building was a 1 Form Entry Primary School with a 26 FTE place nursery attached. Capacity was for 210 pupils. The site exclusively accommodated the school. No other parties are co-located on site.

The previous school buildings had 8 class bases all with capacity for 30 primary aged pupils. Classroom sizes ranged between 53m² and 67m² with the net area of the former nursery block 74m². The school formally accommodated an ICT suite (61m²) and library (33m²). There was also caretaker's house attached to the main build. The exterior included a courtyard area.

The site has access to outdoor areas which could be adapted to provide playing pitches or be developed for forest school activities.

Build options are under consideration that will maximise the available outdoor area. This includes the potential development of a 2 storey build. It is anticipated that the new free school will have a gross internal floor space of 2200 – 2700m² (as identified as the range for an autism special school in BB104).

The site remains designated as a school site. It has no listed status and is not set within a conservation area. On closure of the school it was identified as potential future housing site. However, given the identified need to establish a new special school, this has now been reviewed and the site has been designated for this purpose. This was agreed by Sunderland Council's cabinet in July 2016. It has been agreed that the site will be leased to the eventual free school sponsor, following the completion of the selection process, with the successful MAT receiving a 125-year academy lease to operate on the site. This was confirmed by Sunderland Council's Cabinet in June 2017.

The site is available for capital works to commence immediately. Sunderland Council will oversee design works, procurement and project manage the building programme. It is anticipated that capital works can be complete by September 2019, although the Council will ensure the procurement process is consistent with the required timescales within the Local Authority Commissioned Special Free School programme

Tenure will be granted on standard academy terms with a 125-year lease for buildings and playing fields to be negotiated with the successful MAT.

Section 3 – RATIONALE AND CONTEXT FOR THE SCHOOL

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

The new school will provide an additional 96 specialist autism school places. It would meet the needs of children aged 5 – 16. This complements the 7 special schools currently operating in Sunderland including the following autism provision

- Columbia Grange Special School – Primary (100 places)
- Barbara Priestman Academy – ASD Secondary + Post 16 (100 places)
- Autism Units attached to Usworth Colliery Primary (15 places), Farrington Secondary Academy (30 places) and Biddick Academy (30 places)

All available places at local special schools are fully commissioned. The lack of local places has led to significant oversubscription at Sunderland's secondary autism school (currently 30 places above capacity). The lack of available primary specialist autism places has led to a delay in placements for children who would benefit from a dedicated provision.

The new free school responds to the need from unplaced children within the primary sector (currently 15-20 children). It enables sufficient capacity to be created to enable the long term reduction in 11-16 commissioned places within the currently oversubscribed secondary provider base, whilst also creating additional required secondary autism places. It will provide places required to respond to the projected rising school age population in Sunderland over next 5 years.

The new school responds to both pupil place planning pressure and parental demand for autism places. As diagnosis and identified needs rise parents are increasingly seeking special educational places in Sunderland, with some parents moving to the area in specifically to access local provision.

Places at the free school would be allocated subject to Sunderland Council's SEND allocations process. All pupils accessing provision at the school must be in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan naming the school. Places at the free school will be allocated by a Sunderland Council coordinated resource panel.

Per pupil revenue will be subject to each individual pupil's assessed needs. All pupils at the new school will take up a commissioned place and will attract top-up funding. All commissioned places are funded at £10,000 per place.

The cost of "top up" funding will be based on the assessed needs of the individual pupil. Assessed need, in relation to the allocation of top up funding, will then be applied to the existing local banding system. The minimum top-up that will apply therefore will be band 4 for the relevant phase of learning.

Section 4 – VIABILITY OF THE NEW SPECIAL SCHOOL

There are 15 children identified in mainstream primary schools in the city who would immediately benefit from a commissioned place at a specialist setting.

There is a requirement to re-allocate 30 children currently admitted above capacity in Sunderland's secondary autism settings. It is proposed that this occurs over a period of time to minimise budget impact on the existing provider base. A minimum of 10 additional children of secondary age will require a specialist autism place by 2018/19 (with 3 more children a year making a primary to secondary transition than those leaving secondary places).

At present the autistic cohort is growing at a greater rate than the overall pupil cohort. Between 2012/13 – 2015/16 Sunderland's proportion of pupils requiring autism support increased by 35%. School aged children with Statements or EHC plans identifying autism as a primary aim increased by 16% over the same period. This represented 34 and 15 percentage point increases over the rise in the overall local school population in during the same period.

Support requirements will increase in line with pupil growth. By 2020/21, as a consequence of an increased birth-rate, the pupil population in Sunderland will be 3% larger than 2015/16 (1,109 additional pupils aged 5 – 16). If, as a minimum, the rate of demand for places from children with autism remains at 1.8% there will be 20 additional children with autism. Half will have an EHC plan identifying the need for a specialist place.

Sunderland Council has received planning applications for 8,200 new homes (4,823 to be delivered by 2021) which will yield a further estimated 51 school aged children with autism (half having an EHC plan). In addition to immediate requirements for 55 places for 5 – 16 year olds, a further 35 places will be required to meet these increased birth-rate and development requirements.

The number of children with autism whose needs can be met within the mainstream sector is also rising proportionally to the school age population. Creation of additional specialist places will ensure those who are best suited to a specialist provision are more appropriately placed and will free up central resources within the mainstream sector to more effectively meet the needs of the remaining cohort, reducing exclusions and PRU requirements.

Sunderland's specialist schools' provide autism places to children from neighbouring councils. The demand for places doubled from Durham and South Tyneside between 12/13 and 15/16, with the majority of demand within the oversubscribed secondary sector. The new school would enable neighbouring local authorities to commission additional places. Neighbouring LAs have expressed an interest in commissioning of places but the volume of demand has not yet been quantified.

Places will be funded in the first instance through the High Needs Block (HNB). Ongoing demand for places will generate sufficient revenue to enable the new school to remain sustainable. The Council's requirement to seek external day placements, independent places or external residential placements will also be reduced; decreasing pressure on the (HNB). Neighbouring local authorities who commission places at the new school will see the same benefits.

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	14	131	193	208
Resourced provision and units outside LA	1	1	2	2
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside LA	7	563	695	749
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside LA	12	16	22	24
Independent / non-maintained special schools inside LA	3	3	5	5
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside LA	7	19	20	22
Mainstream schools inside LA	110	310	252	271
Mainstream schools outside LA	7	7	4	4
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside LA	1	*	60 **	65
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside LA	5	*	30 **	32
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside LA	1	*	3	3
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside LA	2	*	7	8

Projections included in Section 4 are minimum projections based on 2016 support ratios. This assumes the 1.8% of the school age population receiving additional support for an autism need will not increase. However, the average increase in the proportion of autistic pupils requiring specialist support in Sunderland has grown by 0.2% in each of the previous 4 years (2012/13 – 2015/16. It is therefore realistic to assume growth will continue at a similar level (a moderate estimation is that by 2020 around 2.4% of the school age population will receive SEN support for an autism related aim with half having an EHC plan). Based on birth-rate data (before housing projections are incorporated) this will result in an increase from 649 children to 887 by 2020).When housing is included this increases by 40 to 927 children with approximately 463 in receipt of an EHC plan.

Similarly, Section 4 assumes the 2016 ratios will remain constant. However, when the growth in requirements between 2012 – 16 (32%) is applied to the 2020 cohort this increases projected demand for specialist school places within LA from 749 to 891.

No further expansion of the existing specialist autism school sites in Sunderland is possible. No alternative new free schools are currently proposed.