



Bid Writing for a New Special Free School

LOCAL AUTHORITY GUIDANCE

Purpose of this Guidance

- For local authorities (LA) in England who are seeking to submit a special free school proposal bid to the Department for Education (DfE).
- The guidance should be used in conjunction to the criteria issued by the DfE for the special free school wave.
- Create: Schools can provide further information and support to successful LAs around engaging and assessing applicants.

How to Write Your Bid

- Informative and data-driven, providing an in-depth understanding of the educational landscape of the LA,
- Assume assessors have limited knowledge of the LA's context
- You should use evidence and data-based analysis to present the case for a new school.
- Consult the guidance issued by the DfE on opening a new school.

Free School Bid

Section A – Applicant details and evidence that the school will be commissioned

Section B – Outline of the school

Section C – Rationale of the school

Section D – Location and Site

Section A1 – Applicant Details

- Basic information about the LA putting forward the application.
- Communicate your neighbouring local authorities
- If the school can serve more than one LA, joint applications are encouraged.
- If it is not feasible, or other local authorities do not wish to commission places, you can submit a solo application and explain why

Section A2 – Evidence of the New

- Demonstrate that the places in each of the school's first two years of operation will be commissioned
- The DfE will look at the data you have provided to judge the level of demand and the extent to which you have engaged with other commissioners.
- You must complete the commissioner table and demand table in the application form showing how many places you (and any other commissioners) would use at the school for the first two years of the school's operation.

Section B – Outline of the School

- There are no assessment criteria for section B.
- Provide key information about the school e.g., age range, type of SEND
- Cannot be designated as having a religious charter
- The type of school should be a special school

Section C1 – Current Context

- Explain the current SEND and high needs context in your area so the DfE can assess the benefit of, and need for, a new special school.
- Strong applications are where the LA can:
 - make a strong strategic case for new provision
 - explain how they will afford to fund this in the future
 - demonstrate that the new school will not add financial pressures
 - show data that suggests there is not an over-supply of places in the area.

Section C1 – Current Context

In this section you must:

- Provide a brief description of all existing provision, including its quality, current use, and why the needs of the specific cohort you want a new school for are not currently being adequately met
- Set out future expected growth, including how many new places are needed
- Explain how the places in the school would be filled
- Demonstrate how you are managing your high needs budget
- Evidence the new school would help you to manage your high needs costs (delivering wider value for money).

Section C2 – Your Strategy

- Describe your high needs/SEND strategy in your area
- Describe what the strategy is trying to achieve in terms of key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Describe how you have developed your strategy in consultation with the local community, local (and neighbouring LA) parent and schools forums and other schools with an interest
- Tell us about any future changes to capacity that you are already expecting e.g. planned expansions/re-configuration/closures of existing schools.

Section C3 – Rationale

- Describe the rationale for the new special school
- How a new special school and the commissioning of places fits into your strategic plan for high needs provision in the area, and how it would help to achieve your strategy
- Demonstrate that a new special school is accounted for in your high needs budget
- Explain how the new special school will fit into and complement the broader provision in the local area and region
- Demonstrate that you have understood the likely impact that a new special school might have on existing providers in the area
- Provide evidence of engagement, including a summary of conversations with

Section C4 – Expected Outcomes

- Demonstrate how the new school will support the development and effectiveness of the local inclusive education system.
- Include how the school will make available its expertise to mainstream schools.
- How the new school will help to achieve better outcomes for children and young people (compared with existing provision).
- Describe the expected outcomes you want the new special school to achieve for pupils that will attend the school.

Section D – Location and Site

- Consider the value for money, timescale and delivery risks in securing a site for the proposed school in the proposed area.
- If you have identified a site, please provide details including site location, address and ownership and any supplementary information
- You can detail more than one site, list them in order of preference
- The DfE can assist you with finding a site
- Preference is given to those projects where our site assessments shows that we are likely to secure a value for money site in a timely manner with an acceptable level of risk.
- Applications which do not have a site may be considered if it is deemed strong.

Who Should Write Your Bid

- Any number of people or specific roles that should input into the bidding process.
- Delegate sections of the application to different team members based on their expertise
- Involve colleagues such as SEND service managers, place planning leads and business manager roles.

Joint Bids

- The SEND free school process allows multiple LAs to submit joint bids e number of places being commissioned,
- If LA X is commissioning 70% of the places, the majority of the contextual information provided in the bid should relate to LA X
- If a very small proportion of the places will be commissioned by a different authority, then you do not need to submit a joint bid

Our Support

- Create: Schools is here to provide expert guidance and support to ensure LAs submit a high-quality bid which meets the published criteria.
- Our Advisors have long-standing experience supporting proposers and free schools in all stages of the new school journey.
- We have a non-exhaustive checklist to ensure the relevant criteria has been met. It should be tailored according to the circumstances of your LA