



Department
for Education

Local authority commissioned Special free schools

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

Sheffield City Council

July 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 Sheffield City 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.
30 September 2019	Deadline for proposers to submit applications in successful areas.
	Sheffield City Council 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:

Joel Hardwick
Head of Commissioning: Inclusion & Schools
Email: Joel.Hardwick@sheffield.gov.uk
Tel: 0114 2735476

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

Tricia Slater
Lead Service Manager - Capital & Business Planning
Email: patricia.slater@sheffield.gov.uk
Tel: 0114 2735779

Please find below the contact details of the Regional Schools Commissioner:
RSC's office: East Midlands & Humber
Email: John.Edwards@education.gov.uk

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

The challenge facing Sheffield, and our regional partners, is to ensure that all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) achieve their full potential at school and go on to make a positive contribution to society and lead a fulfilled adult life. In doing so we face a number of pressures:

- Demand for special schools increasing above underlying population growth
- A reduced proportion of pupils with EHCPs in mainstream schools
- Exclusion rates above national average
- Existing special schools at or beyond capacity
- A resulting reliance on Independent Specialist Provision (ISP) at an average of two and a half times the cost of maintained special schools

While general population growth in the Sheffield school population is 2% per year, the increase in children accessing a special school place has grown by 15.5% on average over the last two years, including the more expensive ISPs. Without strategic intervention, we anticipate an additional 400 special school places will be required by 2025/26. This is not affordable within our high needs funding allocation.

This proposal is for a new 80-place special free school, with 15 places commissioned by

regional partners. The focus is on the most complex needs in two key areas where demand has shown rapid recent growth: autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH).

The new school will support our strategy to reduce the number of children accessing ISPs by providing a high quality, local alternative. The lower cost of maintained provision will enable us to reinvest in a wider range of inclusive provision through mainstream schools – enabling those schools to dedicate resources to the majority of children with SEND who can thrive in a mainstream environment.

The new school would fit into a bigger picture of development, with partners in the school sector, health and elsewhere, towards a genuine continuum of provision from those who can successfully access universal services up to the children with the most complex needs. It also forms one part of the city's response to the issues identified in the Ofsted/CQC Local Area SEND inspection published on 17th January 2019. It particularly relates to the area for development around the current acute demand for specialist provision.

The new school would be a significant part of bridging the gap between the offer in the current Sheffield specialist system and the independent special sector – it is therefore towards the most complex end of the continuum of provision. Other developments toward that continuum include a current consultation around growing and developing integrated resources and special-led hubs – to form a more coherent bridge between mainstream and specialist provision; and at the lower end of the continuum, a growing offer of outreach support to our mainstream schools – to increase and provide additional support to the offer within mainstream schools.

Involvement of partners across South Yorkshire will enhance sustainability, create benefits for neighbouring LA's High Needs budgets and further develop the regional commissioning partnership.

There would not be any formal feeder schools as the school's age range starts in key stage 2. From the new school and its sponsor, we would expect a close working relationship with our existing schools, both mainstream and special, through the partnership approaches that exist. Through the sponsor selection process, we always ask that prospective sponsors express support and commitment to being an active and positive player within the local school system. The partnership itself has been active in the discussions that led to the bid and is supportive of the proposal and where it would fit within the Sheffield landscape of provision.

Formal transitions would be managed through a structured approach at both the phase transfer deadlines of 15th February or through the EHC Placement Panel for those entering the school. Sheffield is currently working with partners on creating a citywide approach to start dates for entry to specialist provision. Sheffield has also developed a process of Vulnerable Learner Reviews with schools, including special schools and therefore the new school. This is a multi-agency approach to identify wider support needs, a key worker offer, and planning at transition points. Regarding transition planning to adult life, Sheffield is developing its Preparation for Adulthood approach with all agencies, including schools and

health services. Planning would begin from Year 9.

An initial cohort of Children and Young People (CYP) would be identified via both ourselves and our regional colleagues in the run up to the new school – a process currently underway for the new Discovery Special School which is due to open in 2020/21.

We expect the school to have access to a broad support offer including speech and language and occupational therapy services commissioned via health. We are working with our CCG colleagues on how this will be delivered as part of their ongoing consultation processes around provision. We would work with other Local Authorities and CCGs of regional colleagues to ensure that this is reflected within their planning and provision or within the overall commission for the school. There would also be family intervention support available via the multi-agency teams and CYP Social care to ensure care plans are coherent.

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)	Complex needs combining Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).
Which local authorities are committed to commissioning places?	Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham
How many places have been commissioned and by which local authority?	15
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)	50 places to be funded at £18,500 (£10k base and £8.5k top-up) 30 places to be funded at £26,000 (£10k base and £16k top up) The range of rates relates to complexity of need and level of support/intervention required.
Age range	7-16
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)	80
Type of placements offered (e.g. full time, short term, part time)	Full time
Number of nursery places, if applicable	Not applicable
Number of 16-19 places, if applicable	None

Any planned outreach, training and/or reintegration support (including details of funding that will be made available to support the school with this)

All special schools, including this proposed school, will have a role developing and supporting Integrated Resources/Special-led Hubs in mainstream schools, and in providing commissioned outreach support to mainstream schools as part of a strategic citywide landscape of support.

We are currently developing a number of approaches in this area and would hope that the new school would add to the collective capacity and expertise within the city. This includes:

- Individual commissioned outreach support from specialist providers to mainstream schools/pupils, part-funded through a central commission and part-funded by schools. This is currently accessed through a school-led, citywide Inclusion Panel. We have systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of individual commissions and the needs of the system, so the overall menu should develop year-on-year as we tune the system towards what is working and what is needed.
- Developing local area-based integrated resources that provide a conduit for city-level expertise – a consultation on this has just started and therefore funding and details on how this could work are part of that formative discussion.
- Training – as part of the city's Inclusion Taskforce there is work underway around training needs, including how we utilise expertise within the city – again, this is under development and we would hope that the new school forms part of that future model.

The table below details the provisional 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				
Reception	0	0	0				
Key stage 1 (Y1-2)	0	0	0				
Key stage 2 (Y3-6)	24	28	32				
Key stage 3 (Y7-9)	18	23	25				
Key stage 4 (Y10-11)	18	25	23				
16-19: commissioner referred	0	0	0				
Totals	60	76	80	0	0	0	0

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.

The new school will ensure that we better meet the needs of those children with the most complex needs locally; offering an increased variety of support and intervention options that the city is currently not able to meet.

Through our consultation with education experts we have identified two distinct groups of children with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) combined with complex SEMH needs – distinguished by inward and outward behaviour. There is a recognised need to develop separate provision for these two groups of children. Our new school will cater for one group and this second bid will focus on the second group, to expand our regional offer.

The purpose of the new school is to:

- Add a provision to meet a specific and growing need that is not currently met in any of the partner authorities
- Reduce the reliance on high cost independent schools in each local authority, by providing a valid, high quality alternative that parents can have confidence in
- Enable high needs funding across all partner LAs to be more effectively channelled into a diverse range of inclusive service options
- Increase access to local provision within Sheffield and provide an accessible location for young people from the wider region
- Broaden and increase capacity and expertise in the city, supporting inclusion in mainstream schools
- Complement and improve the new special free school that is already in development in Sheffield and enable places in that school to become part of the regional commissioning arrangements
- Support the development of a South Yorkshire commissioning partnership to collectively plan how we use high needs funding in the long-term

We have consulted with partners in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham in developing this bid, with each LA committed to developing a commission on a proportion of new places to meet the growing demand for services in their area.

Placements would be managed through the Council's Placement Panel, and the SEND Statutory Assessment and Review Service manage the process around the panel, including liaison between schools, families and other professionals.

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.

Our strategic approach is to develop a more fluid and flexible continuum of provision from inclusive mainstream schools for the majority of children and young people through to special schools for those with the most complex needs.

Alongside all Sheffield special schools the new school would be part of developing and supporting Integrated Resources/Special-led Hubs in mainstream schools, and in providing commissioned outreach support to mainstream schools as part of a strategic citywide landscape of support. The trust for the new school will be a key part of this outreach work by increasing the variety of support, intervention and training options available in an area of increasing need. This will in turn improve the education outcomes for all children with SEND in the city and across the region. Children attending the school will have:

- Access to an environment designed for pupils with high cognitive ability whose complex needs mean they are unable to cope in a mainstream setting.
- Better educational outcomes and attainment as a result of accessing that bespoke setting:
 - Pupils will engage with education and there will be improved attendance of pupils who have previously had exceptionally high rates of absence.
 - Pupils will be prepared for the next stage of their education, employment, self-employment or training.
 - Pupils will value their education, develop a resilience to failure and achieve qualifications in line with their ability
 - Pupils will show an improvement in their emotional and mental well-being and have developed strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe in different settings.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development will equip them to be thoughtful, caring and active citizens in school and in wider society.
- Reduced distance travelled compared to schools located out of the city.
- Reduced exclusions – a high proportion of permanent exclusions are linked to SEMH as an underlying cause.
- Better bespoke packages of education with Occupational Therapy enhancements will support and enable them to meet their expected outcomes.
- Links with Post 16 providers to ensure positive transitions particularly in relation to independent living.

Our long-term strategy to ensure there is sufficient specialist provision for the growth forecast, specifically around ASC and SEMH.

SECTION FOUR: THE PROPOSED LOCATION AND SITE

This section describes the provisional site.

Full address and full postcode	Holywell Road Grimesthorpe S4 8AR
Size of site	Full area for the site is approx. 3.95 hectares (9.77 acres).
Further details on site (for example, current use/your reasons for choosing it/further developments (e.g. housing) planned for area	This is a large site capable of development in a good location for access to motorway network, and access from other local authorities in the region. Surroundings are ideal for children to take advantage of. The location of the building on this site is to be determined.