



Department
for Education

Hertfordshire Local Authority Special Free School

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

Hertfordshire Local Authority

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 Hertfordshire 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.

3. Contact details and further information

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

Name: Jennie Newman

Job title: Interim Head of Integrated Services for Learning

Email: jennie.newman@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01438 845074

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

Name: Pauline Davis

Job title: Head of School Planning

Email: Pauline.davis@hertfordshire.gov.uk

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Please find below the contact details of the Regional Schools Commissioner:

RSC: Martin Post

RSC's office: North West London and South Central

Email: RSC.SCNWLON@education.gov.uk

4. Hertfordshire Local Authority 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.

We have seen a continuing rise in pupils being identified with a primary need of SEMH and ASC in the primary sector (all SEND), and a steady rise in pupils being identified with ASC as a primary need in the secondary sector, and a more significant rise in those identified with a primary need of SEMH since 2015. Across the special sector we have seen a rise in the number and percentage of pupils identified with ASC as a primary need. While it had declined, we have seen a steady rise in the number of requests for out of area specialist placements in the last 2 years, either due to lack of space in our own special schools, lack of the right provision locally, or lack of parental confidence in local provision. In 2017, over half of the pupils accessing out of area placements with an EHCP had a primary need of ASC or SEMH, which demonstrates a gap in the local provision for these types of need. Deeper analysis demonstrates a gap in provision for those pupils with ASC or a social communication difficulty, higher academic ability, but significant anxiety, mental health issues, and gaps in their education and associated underachievement. Some of the pupils we envisage will access the proposed school will have had significant gaps in their education, often due to the impact of their disability and their health / medical needs. The proposed school will meet the needs of these pupils, and contribute to the strengthening of local provision in other schools as part of this graduated approach.

Evidence shows that a school with a designation for complex needs that focuses on the areas of need identified above is required as these pupils do not fit well within an SEMH provision due to the nature of their needs. The impact of combining typical SEMH pupils and this group is that pupils' anxiety increases, which impacts on their school attendance and progress. This has led to parents seeking out of area placements in recent years. This group is often over represented in low attendance and exclusion figures, as well as in NEET figures. This school is required to ensure that the pupils access a full time suitable education that meets their needs and enables them to make good progress and have positive outcomes both in school and in their future lives.

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The proposed school will bridge the gap between mainstream provision, including specialist provision in mainstream schools, and out of authority provision. It will provide for the needs of pupils who are not best placed in other special schools in Hertfordshire, and add to and complement the quality provision made through Roman Fields in the West of Hertfordshire.

Transition will be managed from previous school to the proposed school through the Education, Health and Care Plan process, with staff supporting the transition where needed. If the pupil is transitioning from a Tier 4 health facility the transition will be managed in partnership with the facility and the family. If the pupil needs to start the placement on a part time basis due to their assessed needs, this will be supported. If a pupil is ready to transition back into a mainstream placement, the proposed school will work with the new placement to support that transition.

Multi agency support will be provided to the pupils, their families and the school where assessed need determines that is needed, and the school will be required to work in partnership with early help, social care and health agencies.

SECTION 2: 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, specialising in meeting the needs of pupils with: ASC or social communication difficulties High anxiety and/or mental health needs
Which local authorities are committed to commissioning places?	Hertfordshire
How many places have been commissioned and by which local authority?	60 by Hertfordshire
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)	£10k per place (base funding) plus top-up funding. We are coproducing banding descriptors, which set out the profile of needs of pupils against each area of need and the provision required to meet those needs, and associated costs. This will inform the level of top up. This work is due to be completed this summer. We anticipate that there will be three levels of need at the school, and associated top up, with 20 pupils likely to fit each band once at capacity. This profile may change over time depending on the needs of the pupils requiring this provision. Current top up values for these types of need dependent on the size of the school range between about £14k (Band D), £22.6k (Band E) and £35k (1 school currently designated as PRU). Currently the number of pupils in each band is used to calculate a single averaged top up. As pupils with have an EHCP, and pupils meeting the admissions guidance to the school will be placed there following consultation following the process set out in the SEND Code of Practice.
Age range	11 - 18
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)	60
Type of placements offered (e.g. full time, short term, part time)	Full time
Number of nursery places, if applicable	N/A
Number of 16-19 places, if applicable	10. This will be integrated into the school which will support the complex needs of the pupils, but delivered in partnership with other local post 16 providers so that the students have access to a broad curriculum offer that meets their needs and aspirations.
Any planned outreach, training and/or reintegration support (including details of funding that will be made available to support the school with this)	An SLA will be in place specifying the expectations of the proposed school and be monitored. The SLA will have a cash equivalent linked to the number of sessions commissioned. It will also set out what schools can commission directly from the school. SLAs and associated funding are kept under review through the monitoring process, and we will vary this where evidenced by need. This enables us to be flexible year on year dependent on the issues being identified. The school may be commissioned through this process to provide targeted support to schools identified as causing concern. Where pupils with higher levels of need or who have been out of education require a personalised package of support to integrate them back into this school, this will be provided and may include some home tuition and support as part of this package. Their allocated top up funding will reflect this need. Where a pupil makes accelerated progress and is ready to transition into a mainstream or alternative specialist placement, this will be supported through normal transition arrangements as required by the individual pupil.

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)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Key stage 3 (Y7-9)	10	15	20	25	25	25	25
Key stage 4 (Y10-11)	20	30	30	25	25	25	25
16-19: commissioner referred	5	5	10	10	10	10	10
Totals	35	50	60	60	60	60	60

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.

Hertfordshire currently has 25 special schools, 6 Education Support Centres (ESCs), 1 AP Academy and 1 PRU that operates as a special school and only has pupils with EHCPs on roll. The special schools are designated as follows: 2 for pupils with physical and neurological impairments (PNI), 1 primary (3 – 11) and 1 all age (3 – 18); 9 for pupils with learning disabilities (LD) and Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Speech and Language Needs (SALN), 4 primary (4 – 11), 1 secondary (9 – 16), 3 secondary (11 – 16), 1 all age (4 – 16); 6 for pupils with severe learning disabilities (SLD) and profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), 1 all age (3 – 19), 5 all age (2 – 19); 2 for pupils with hearing impairments, 1 secondary (11 – 18); 1 all age (3 – 16); 6 for pupils with social, emotional and mental health disabilities (SEMH), 2 primary (5 – 11), 4 secondary (11 – 16). The HI schools also provide a regional resource for HI pupils.

Since 2014, Hertfordshire has seen a significant rise in its 0 – 25 population, with the most significant rise being in primary aged children. This is now impacting on secondary demand. There has been a corresponding increased pressure on special school places. We have seen a continuing rise in pupils identified with a primary need of SEMH and ASC in the primary sector (all SEND), and a steady rise in pupils being identified with ASC as a primary need in the secondary sector, and a more significant rise in those identified with a primary need of SEMH since 2015. Across the special sector we have seen a rise in pupils identified with ASC as a primary need, and significant pressure on places across the sector. As our population increases, we expect to see this pressure continue. We are working through our SEND Strategy to address this.

We have seen continued growth in the number of secondary aged pupils with ASC/social communication difficulties and mental health issues over the last two years across all sectors. In line with the national picture we expect this to continue. This need is quite different to the needs previously experienced in Hertfordshire, hence the proposal. This growth in profile of need is evident in out of area placements, pupils absent from school for medical reasons, pupils on reduced timetables, and pupils who become EHE. There is also over representation of these pupils in exclusion and persistent absence figures. 95 young people who are NEET have a primary need of SEMH or ASC, of which a proportion have a profile of high anxiety, mental health challenges, presenting challenging behaviour, gaps in education and underachievement. Since September 2018 a further 20 pupils have been placed in out of area placements, of which 13 have transitioned either from an SEMH special school (4), an Education Support Centre (2), not in education (1) or from a mainstream (5) or LD special school (1). All of these pupils have a primary need identified as SEMH or ASC. 5 of these have gone to an AP provider. The school will increase the local capacity to meet the needs of these pupils within high quality local provision.

Through Hertfordshire's SEND Strategy we are strengthening the graduated approach to identifying and meeting needs from universal (mainstream) provision; the further development of specialist resourced provision in mainstream schools for those pupils who with the right structures and specialist support will achieve good outcomes in a mainstream school; to clarifying the core offer in the different designations of special school to match the changing demographic in Hertfordshire. By strengthening the provision in Hertfordshire, we are aiming to reduce out of area placements.

Requests for placements will come through the LA panel in line with other specialist placement requests. If this school is deemed the right school to meet the assessed needs, the school will be consulted with in line with the process set out in the SEND Code of Practice. Parents, young people and other schools will have access to the admissions guidance and core offer for the school along with other special schools so that they can understand how the school fits into the pattern of provision available in Hertfordshire.

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.

The school will provide a full time personalised education for this group of pupils, which would be flexible to meet their profile of needs, and may include support at home and in other settings to achieve this. The Trust will need to have in place a core offer that provides a personalised approach for these pupils.

The school will be able to demonstrate a positive track record of achieving significant improvement in education outcomes, with holistic needs identified and met early. We expect the profile of the school to change over time to a greater balance across Key Stage 3 as the impact of the provision of school to school support is realised, and the school supporting reintegration back into mainstream providers where appropriate to the pupils' needs.

- We will see a significant improvement in school attendance, with individual pupils' attendance figures improving from their attendance at their previous school, contributing to overall improvement in attendance, and contributing towards Hertfordshire's improvement in attendance for pupils with SEND.
- There will be a reduction in days lost to exclusion from the pupils' profile of exclusions at their previous school, which will impact on the school and our overall figures and in particular the representation of SEND pupils in these figures. There will be no permanent exclusions from the school.
- The school will support transition back into mainstream settings where appropriate, and ensure that these moves are successful by providing outreach support to the receiving school where required.
- The school will ensure positive destinations for all pupils leaving at 16 and post 16 into further education, training and employment and will track this. The school will support the Council's strategy for reducing pupils that become NEET, and in particular reduce the over-representation of pupils with SEND in these figures.
- All pupils will leave with accredited qualifications at a level appropriate to them.
- All pupils will make good progress from their starting point, evidenced by tracking systems within the school and outcomes.
- The school will work in close partnership with parents in order to support improved outcomes.

- Pupils will improve their emotional health and wellbeing and resilience evidenced by pupil feedback and appropriate assessment, with the school exemplifying best practice in the delivery of Hertfordshire's Outcome Bees: Be Healthy; Be Safe; Be Ambitious; Be Resilient; Be Independent; and Be Happy.
- The school will support the Council in reducing the number of placements in high-cost independent sector provision, both in and outside of Hertfordshire for this type of need.
- The school will be committed to working effectively within a multi-agency environment.
- The school will support raising capacity in mainstream schools in meeting the needs of the majority of pupils with lower level needs of this kind and provide CPD to schools to achieve this.

SECTION FOUR: THE PROPOSED LOCATION AND SITE

This section describes the provisional site.

Full address and full postcode	The Woodside Centre, The Commons, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL7 4DD
Size of site	13232m2
Further details on site (for example, current use/your reasons for choosing it/further developments (e.g. housing) planned for area	<p>This is a former school site which has been in use as offices by Hertfordshire County Council and some third party organisations.</p> <p>The site has been selected as it is suitable and is within the area considered to be well located to serve the identified needs of the pupils the proposed school is intended to serve. It will provide a balance of provision that complements the provision at Roman Fields which is to the West of the County.</p> <p>All Hertfordshire local authorities are working on plans which include significant housing development.</p>