

The Department for Education is inviting applications from proposer groups to open a new special free school (SEMH/ASC) in Birmingham.

Applicant groups can access the key school specification information, along with the full 'How to Apply' guidance, on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). You should read these documents carefully before completing mandatory pre-registration.

The school specification document sets out the key factual details about the proposed school, including the proposed size, SEND d.32 [sed size, SEgq0

In May 2021 following a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) revisit by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the Department for Education (DfE) appointed a commissioner to hold Birmingham City Council to account in its required SEND improvements. Birmingham prepared an Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) to demonstrate how the local area will resolve the 12 out of 13 areas of significant weakness where the revisit had found sufficient progress had not been made from the original inspection (2018).

Working closely with parents and carers, the SEND Improvement Programme is shaping the vision for more localised support and provision for Birmingham's children and young people. We believe that school learners should be educated with others their age in a local school which is properly equipped and fit for purpose.

Birmingham's SEND Strategy vision is going to deliver:

- the right climate through clear policy, resource deployment and culture to ensure staff have the confidence, expertise to identify, assess and meet the needs of children with SEND, with access to specialist support to enable them to achieve high quality outcomes.
- have a Quality Assurance Framework to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people.
- maximise the use of resources and provision so that those with SEND receive the right support at the right place at the right time.
- develop strong partnerships within local areas.
- facilitate in house provision with local organisations, stakeholders, and partners.

We have refreshed our SEND forecast and are in the process of co-producing each phase of dev

- **DEVELOPING LOCAL PROVISION** - The DLP programme is supporting schools and settings to feel confident and competent to identify, assess and meet the needs of CYP with SEND. This initiative will enable more children to achieve excellent outcomes in mainstream settings as part of the graduated approach.

The sufficiency of appropriate school places is an essential component of the SEND Strategy. BCC has recently commissioned its SEND forecasting which indicates an increasing and sustained demand for SEND places (pupils with EHCP) between now and 2030/31 across different setting types. As part of the SEND Sufficiency work, we will need to create additional special school places as well as build capacity in resource base and mainstream.

Although there are 27 special schools in Birmingham, additional special schools will go towards meeting future forecast need, based on current trends.

Key data points:

- Birmingham currently maintains around 10,700 children's Education and Health Care Plans. The number of new EHCPs finalised per year in Birmingham has continued to grow over the last 6 years by over 600 from 775 in 2018 to 1404 in 2022.
- The 2023 secondary transfer cohort is 20% larger than two years ago. 253 additional secondary special school places were provided for Sept 2022 mainly for ASC needs. We have an additional priority for growth with SEMH to meet our forecast. Appendix A provides a list of the 3 SEMH special schools currently in Birmingham.
- In comparison with the national picture, 17.5% of Birmingham pupils have special educational needs or disabilities, which is higher than the England average of 16.3% (DfE dataset).
- 3.5% of 2-19 year olds in Birmingham have an EHCP compared to a national average of 4%. Currently around 9,500 children and young people with EHCPs are aged 2-19. Of these:
 - 4,887 pupils attend provision in special schools.
 - 651 pupils attend Resource base provision attached to mainstream schools.
 - 2,720 are taught within mainstream schools.
 - Birmingham is a net importer of pupils; 158 Birmingham pupils attending special schools in other local authorities (OLA); 264 2 Tile108 243.56 Tm0 g0 G(Bi)4(rm)-3(in)3

- reduce number of pupils in out of borough provision and the reliance on more expensive independent provision.
- reduction in exclusions, children without a school place and NEET population.
- better use of specialist provision that meets local needs.
- clear pathways for children and young people with a wide-ranging learning, development and training offer embedded within the offer.
- increased parental confidence with quality of inclusive support within mainstream schools and settings.

The new free school will play a fundamental part in improving the educational opportunities and experience for children with SEMH across the whole education system, through the proposed outreach and assessment function and multi-agency engagement. It will reduce commitments on the high needs block as well as reducing the expenditure on transport to out of borough or independent settings. We look forward to welcoming the proposers to consider this exciting opportunity.

Our SEND forecasting data has identified SEMH with ASC as one of our key areas for additional places over the next 10 years, particularly at Key Stage 4 and 5.

Birmingham has one secondary special school and two primary SEMH special schools. All three schools support the diverse needs of SEMH including the offer of provision for children with Autism on their roll. The schools also recognise that SEMH presentations can also reflect associated unidentified and unmet social communication and interaction difficulties where Autism good practice is also relevant. Ongoing review of provision will supporting further expertise in the complex interface of ASC and SEMH and contribute to appropriate pathways of provision in the sector.

The new free school will provide 120 SEMH/ASC places, which will meet our need for additional SEMH places and go towards meeting our significant need for additional ASC places with over 1200 special school places needed over the next decade.

Following the closure of one of our secondary SEMH schools, there is a gap in KS4 and KS5 provision. We changed the age range of one of the primary SEMH schools to include KS3 but due to site, educational outcome and leadership challenges, there is no scope to add KS4. The new special school would support the transition to Key stage 4 and 5 and prevent costly independent placements. Its central location will also provide better accessibility and will bridge a gap for pupils with SEMH by creating bespoke transition pathways, preventing pupils becoming disengaged or NEET.

During 2020/21 we carried out capacity surveys of our 27 special schools. Findings:

- The majority of our current special school buildings pre-date the 1960s and many have condition challenges.
- In the last 12 months alone, we have expanded 11 special schools costing nearly £7 million, creating capacity for 253 special school places. Places are filled as soon as they are built; often through tribunal cases. This makes it difficult to create capacity for future years.
- 24 out of our 27 special schools are now considered overpopulated in accordance with BB104 guidance.
- The new free school will provide new places thus ease pressure on existing provisions in the long term.

Birmingham schools face significant pressures with:

- Continued rise in EHC plans finalised in year (1404 between Jan 2022 and December 2022).

- better transitions and improved progression pathways that support more chil-