



Department
for Education

Stoke-on-Trent LA Free School

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

Stoke-on-Trent

March 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 Stoke-on-Trent LA 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.
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3. Contact details and further information

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

Name: Jen Lomas
Job title: Assistant Director Learning Services
Email: jen.lomas@stoke.gov.uk
Tel: 01782 233439/ 236892

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

Name: Phil Cresswell
Job title: Director - Place, Growth and Prosperity
Email: Phil.Cresswell@stoke.gov.uk
Tel: 01782 236426

Please find below the contact details of the Regional Schools Commissioner:
[Include RSC details for that region]

RSC: Andrew Warren

RSC's office: West Midlands

Email: Andrew.Warren@education.gov.uk

4. Stoke-on-Trent 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

Who will go to the school?

The new Free School would provide for 70 children aged 11-16 with an Educational and Health Care Plan for Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. The needs of this cohort may present through challenging behaviours, social skill gaps, difficulties in building and sustaining relationships and in some cases social isolation. Many of these children will have attachment issues, experienced trauma and many will have additional needs such as ASD and SLCN.

All places will be commissioned by Stoke-on-Trent LA. All children will have an EHCP with SEMH as their primary need. There may be rare occasions whereby children are undergoing assessment and take up a place at the new school to inform the assessment, these cases will be very small in number. Leaders at the new free school will work with LA SEND officers on placement. A planned approach will be taken to implement a phased approach to take the school to capacity. The plan will be undertaken in partnership with the school and trust and will put the needs of learners first.

Why is the school needed?

Much work has been undertaken and continues to maximise the capacity of the local SEMH continuum. With this important ground work in place the expansion of specialist provision through a new Free School will complete the local SEMH offer. Currently 261 children travel out of the city to access specialist SEMH provision, these children;

- Endure lengthy daily journeys to school
- Do not achieve as well as their peers in local SEMH provision
- Would prefer to attend a local school
- Are unable to engage in local social activities or build relationships locally after school due to travel constraints
- Cannot access local services
- If looked after 'move' out of city and access care placements away from their home town

- Find transition back into their communities and EET at 16 extremely challenging a significant proportion of SEMH learners with EHCPs are NEET at 16.

What difference will the school make?

Opening the new Free School within the city would ensure that children with SEMH EHCPs;

- Have their needs met, make good progress and realise their potential
- Attend a 'good or better' school
- Have shorter travel times into school
- Attend a local school and access local after school and out of school activities
- Who are looked after access high quality local authority small group homes
- Access local services under local commissioning arrangements operating under local agreements and protocols
- Are supported into high quality local provision and placements at colleges and through initiatives such as Supported Internships

Whilst quality improves for children so will value. 70 local SEMH places will secure savings of £19,000 per placement on average compared to maintained/independent placements. Keeping children local will secure an average transport cost of £ 1,782 per vehicle, saving £9180 per vehicle on average out of city transport costs.

How will the school fit?

We expect our new special free school to form an integral part of our SEMH continuum and forge strong relationships with all setting and partners. We expect the school to be outward looking and build relationships and capacity through;

- SEMH outreach offer to all settings
- SEMH research and development hub developing and demonstrating successful techniques and pedagogy with SEMH learners
- Multidisciplinary assessment and therapy hub
- Deliver high quality transition and reintegration support

The new school will form part of our family of schools benefitting from;

- City Headteacher and Leader Networks
- Core commissioned offer from agency partners
- Core offer from Virtual School
- Access to citywide initiatives including Better Together and CAMHS Strategy

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)	SEMH- Social emotional and mental health needs
Which local authorities are committed to commissioning places?	Stoke-on-Trent
How many places have been commissioned and by which local authority?	70 places all commissioned by Stoke on Trent
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)	£10,000 per place (base funding) plus top up funding between Band 5 £9000, Band 6 14000 to Band 7 £19000. The expected proportion would be 30/70 places at Band 5, 20/70 places at Band 6 and 20/70 places at band 7. Application of the matrix and bandings are applied by a multi-agency assessment team.
Age range	11-16 years
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)	70
Type of placements offered (e.g. full time, short term, part time)	Full time (There will be a focus on assessment and re-integration as appropriate which will support gradual induction and supported transition therefore part time placements for short periods.)
Number of nursery places, if applicable	None
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)	The school will develop its outreach function aligned to the LA strategy- outreach capacity should be built into the staffing structure. Re-integration/ transition from and back into mainstream will form part of the schools offer.
	http://localoffer.stoke.gov.uk/kb5/stoke/directory/service.page?id=r4xlqw8EfpY&localofferchannel=0

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							
Reception							
Key stage 1 (Y1-2)							
Key stage 2 (Y3-6)							
Key stage 3 (Y7-9)	18	24	30	34	34	34	34
Key stage 4 (Y10-11)	12	18	24	36	36	36	36
16-19: commissioner referred							
Totals	30	42	54	70	70	70	70

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.*

Delivery of the SEND Strategy

The new school is integral to our SEND strategy. We have been building our SEMH continuum of provision for several years through re-designation of Portland in 2012, relocation of MERIT and REACH PRUs in 2012. These settings have had time to embed practice and all have secured 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted judgements. Each of these settings are now expanding place numbers and broadening their offer to ensure the needs of SEMH learners can be met through assessment, outreach or placement.

The new SEMH free school will slot into the continuum and provide 70 specialist placements and a complementary outreach offer. The new school will ensure that there are sufficient local places for children with SEMH, that places are of good quality and value for money and that children can live at home or access care in their 'home city'. The new school will contribute to building capacity within our local system across to identify and respond to need.

Stoke-on-Trent has a range of specialist settings; 4 maintained special schools, two AP settings (1 maintained and 1 Academy) and 2 resource bases. 4 Good/Outstanding mainstreams schools lead Nurture Groups to promote inclusive practice. All maintained special schools and PRUS are 'Good' or better.

SEMH provision is being enhanced through delivery of the SEND Strategy to secure;

- 40 additional places at Portland SEMH School
- Academisation and expansion of REACH PRU adding 80 places
- Expansion of MERIT PRU adding 10 places and step-down provision from Tier 4 settings.
- 180 additional nurture places
- 20 additional places at Inspire
- 70 places at proposed SEMH free school

Currently 39% of children with SEMH EHCPs attend local settings;

- 20% in mainstream
- 0.2% in Alternative Provision
- 19% in maintained special schools

61% of children with SEMH needs travel beyond the city to go to school. The

majority of these attend one of ten non-maintained independent providers. The quality and cost of this is a key driver to develop provision locally. Two of the ten schools are not 'Good' (one is inadequate). Six alternative providers work with the LA and special schools to make provision for learners on a part time basis. Four providers are registered and have a 'Good' Ofsted judgement.

Currently 62% LAC with SEMH EHCPs attend schools outside Stoke-on-Trent. Placements out of city often require care placements as travel distances are not conducive to daily transit. Within the city, we have high quality LA small group homes providing local care for children. Plans and funding have been approved to expand this network from 8 homes to 12 ensuring that more LAC with SEMH needs can attend school and live locally.

The number of children with SEMH EHCPs placed with independent and non-maintained providers increased from 144 in 2016/17 to 162 in 2017/18, spend increased from £5,130,000 to £5,365,910. Independent placements are the most expensive per pupil and do not provide good value. 2017-18 budget for spend in the independent sector was almost twice the National Average and five times that of our five closest statistical neighbours. Placement costs for the 162 children accessing independent providers outside of the city ranged from £27,000 to £62,000. The average cost of placements is £33,122 plus transport. The associated transport costs and time impact negatively on the quality of delivery and value for money. Transport costs for the 162 placements in 2017/18 was £804,000, the average cost per vehicle travelling out of city is £10,980. Transporting children within the city on average costs £1,782 per vehicle and provides.

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 proposed free school is central to our SEND Strategy. To deliver the school successfully and secure our vision for high needs we need to implement the core elements of our strategy;

- 1. Building capacity locally to meet need**
- 2. Ensuring sufficiency, efficiency and effectiveness**
- 3. Co-producing plans with stakeholders**

Monitoring and reporting systems ensure we have an accurate view of performance across each element. We are setting aspirational goals for the free school and wider continuum based on a robust current performance.

1. Building capacity locally to meet need

To improve outcomes for SEMH learners we have to spread best practice and drive standards up where performance is not yet good.

Capacity within our special schools and enhanced provision is good and exclusion rates are well below national (2016-17) in these settings. Reintegration from nurture groups is strong, 63% of the cohort have returned to their school or moved into another mainstream placement. The outreach service needs to expand, where it's deployed it works well. In mainstream settings, exclusions from primary are in line with national and below regional, however we'd like to do more.

Delivery of our strategy and proposed SEMH free school will secure;

- Reductions in secondary exclusions to align with national
- Targeted outreach to SEMH learners
- Increased reintegration rates from PRU and special settings
- 100% of SEMH learners in EET at 16

2. Ensuring Sufficiency, Efficiency and Effectiveness

Providing high quality placements in specialist and mainstream settings is a priority.

Sufficiency and efficiency targets are based on projections and expansion plans, which are already underway. Targets for local value placements are;

- Reduce average SEMH specialist placement cost to £14,000(+£10,000base)
- Reduce average travel distances/times to SEMH placements
- Reduce average transport cost per vehicle to £1,782
- Ensure more pupils requiring specialist SEMH placements are educated

within the city.

Quality and effectiveness of placements is all important in securing the best outcomes for pupils, our targets are;

- Sustain good/outstanding judgements across existing SEMH provision
- Secure a good/outstanding Ofsted judgement in proposed SEMH school.
- Close the gap between the progress of SEND and non-SEND learners.
- Ensure 100% SEMH learners make good progress.
- Ensure 100% of SEMH learners are in EET at 16.
- Exceed national rates for attendance.

Minimise FTE rates and maintain 0% permanent exclusion in specialist settings (Further details on spend/savings attached in 'Finance Action Plan')

3. Co-production of plans with stakeholders

Development and delivery of the SEND strategy relies heavily on successful partnership working with all stakeholders. The proposed free school will be an integral part of our network and make a valuable contribution to the city partnership.

Co-production and collaboration have developed all aspects of the SEND Strategy. Not surprisingly the key messages from all stakeholders on barriers and challenges are aligned. Partners in health, social care, our families and children made a plea for;

- Local provision
- Good communication with families and between agencies
- Joined up services
- Integrated assessment

In response to feedback from stakeholders and in response to our SEND inspection in 2016 we have made huge strides forward to deliver on the plea. Developments include;

- The co-located team based at Hazel Trees brings together the child development nursery, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, Early Years Inclusion Team and SENMAS Assessment Team. The hub of partners provides families easy access to services and secures high quality multi-disciplinary planning and as result comprehensive EHCPs.
- The Care Programme Approach (CPA) to assess and provide for mental health needs. CAMHS are working collaboratively with school staff and wider support services to align care plans with EHCPs. Collaboration has facilitated partnership delivery of holistic provision.
- Shifting away from a diagnostic led approach to enable professionals to focus on the needs of the child and school-based assessment. Many

children have benefitted from early intervention and swifter placement therefore avoiding lengthy periods out of school.

There are number of Opportunity Area initiatives targeted at all schools which will assist in the delivery of the SEND strategy and improved outcomes for SEND learners, these include;

- School readiness- Provides speech, language and communication (SLCN) support to schools which has been informed by 'Stoke Speaks Out' and 'Stoke Reads' which both secured notable improvements.
- SEND Supported Internships- This project is focussed on enabling employers to support EHCPs within the workplace. Cornerstone employers will work in partnership with an internship co-ordinator and allocated job coaches to secure successful employment outcomes.

Similarly, we have built upon our strength in parental and young people engagement, which was identified in 2016 inspection. Co-production with parents is routine practice, which in turn continually informs strategic planning.

We expect the proposed free school to sign up to collaborative working and delivery of the plea from all stakeholders.

SECTION FOUR: THE PROPOSED LOCATION AND SITE

This section describes the provisional site.

Full address and full postcode	Previous site of Abbey Hill Special School Greasley Road Bucknall Stoke-on-Trent ST2 8JB
Size of site	Previously used for 190 MLD and C&I pupils.
Further details on site (for example, current use/your reasons for choosing it/further developments (e.g. housing) planned for area	<p>Previously used as a special school with attached school playground areas. In good condition retaining features suitable for special school. The current building would require some renovation but is a large site with sufficient classrooms and nurture spaces to accommodate SEMH pupils.</p> <p>The site is near to the centre of Stoke-on-Trent, close to FE college provision and close to A500 and A50 routes enabling easy access to the site.</p>