



Department
for Education

Free school application form

For local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools

Published: June 2022

Contents

[The application form explained](#)

[Overview](#)

[Confirmation](#)

[A1 - who is putting this application forward](#)

[A2 - evidence of commissions](#)

[Table A2 continued](#)

[B - type of school](#)

[C1 - current context](#)

[Table C1i - for special schools](#)

[C2 - rationale](#)

[C3 - expected outcomes](#)

[D - site](#)

The application form explained

This free school application form is for local authorities seeking to establish a new special free school.

Local authorities (either as a lead or sole applicant) can submit an application for one special and one AP school in total in their area. Given the limited number of new schools we will create in this wave, it is highly unlikely that we will approve more than one special free school in any one local authority area. In the most exceptional of circumstances where you plan to make the case for two new schools in your area, you will need to complete a separate application form for each school, although you should cross-reference where appropriate.

The overview section on the second tab asks for information about the number of applications you are submitting (i.e. one or two), the priority of each application (if you are submitting two), what (if any) other applications you are supporting, and your expected future need for new special schools (and when they are needed). If you are submitting two applications, you only need to complete the overview page on one form.

If your application is successful, the opportunity will be advertised nationally, and if a strong proposal comes forward, the new school will be delivered and funded as part of the department's central free schools programme.

Before completing your application, please ensure that you have read the ['guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools'](#) carefully, as this sets out the criteria by which your application will be judged. Please provide all the information required.

The form should be completed by a local authority representative (or representatives, if it is a joint application) with the approval of the Director(s) of Children's Services (DCS).

This application form consists of 12 tabs in total (including this one). Please ensure you read all tabs carefully. You must complete the following tabs in full: overview, confirmation, A1, A2, B, C1, C1i, C2, C3, and D. You will also need to complete tab 'A2 continued' if applicable.

Completed application forms, specifications, and any supporting documentation (e.g. site plans, letters from commissioners) **should be submitted by midday on 21 October 2022. Submit your bid by email to: FS.applications@education.gov.uk.** Please title your email as follows: **Special free school application – [insert name of local authority (or lead local authority if joint application)]**. Your email should not exceed 9 megabytes in size; anything larger will not be delivered. **If the application is larger than 9 megabytes**, please split the documents and send two (or more) emails clearly indicating that the emails are connected (e.g. email 1 of 3).

Free school application forms should:

- maintain the pre-set printing format;
- not include any comments; and
- not include photographs, images or logos.

This opportunity **does not replace the [presumption](#) process and does not replace a local authority's sufficiency duties.**

Annex A of the [guidance](#) sets out how the information you provide will be used.

[Next tab](#)



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one application, you only need to complete this section once (on the form of your preferred application).
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Overview

This application is for local authorities wishing to apply to open a new special free school in their area. A separate wave for AP free schools also launched on 10 June 2022. Local authorities can apply for both a special and AP free school in these waves.

Overview table	
Name of your local authority	Worcestershire County Council
List the application(s) you are submitting this wave, as either the lead or the sole local authority (including type of school e.g. special) – please list these in priority order so that the first is your preferred application	1. Sole Local Authority - Special
List the application(s), if any, that another local authority is leading on and that you are supporting (including the name of the lead local authority)	N/A
Optional: brief description of your expected future need for new special schools, and when they are needed	<p>Worcestershire currently have 83 children with EHCPs and primary ASD accessing their education in independent specialist, non-maintained specialist in and out of county. A new ASD Special Free School will ensure this number does not increase and over time will reduce significantly.</p> <p>A new special school will be required if the South Worcestershire Development Plan delivers the 39,400 homes planned in Worcester City, Malvern Hills and Wychavon up to 2041. One of the strategic sites includes 5,000 new homes at Worcester Parkway up to 2040 and an additional 5,000 homes after 2041. A Special School will be required to meet the demand from the new settlement.</p>

[Previous tab](#)

[Next tab](#)



Confirmation

1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one application, you must complete this section for each application.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Confirmation

This confirmation must be signed by the relevant Director(s) of Children's Services at the local authority(ies) putting forward this bid.

I am/we are the Director(s) of Children's services at **[INSERT LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME(s)]** and I/we have seen this application and support it.


I/we confirm that the information provided in this application form is correct to the best of my/our knowledge.

I/we further confirm that the local authority(ies) and, if applicable, other commissioners named in section A of this application have developed this proposal in partnership and, if the application is successful, will commit to commissioning the number of places at the school as specified in this application, and to paying the relevant top-up funding (indicative funding specified in this application, to be confirmed by the local authority(ies) if the application is successful).

I/we also confirm that I am/we are aware of the financial consequences of the commissioning on our high needs budget(s).

In addition, I/we intend to commission places beyond the first two years, as per the proposed school growth profile (pupil/capacity build up).

An electronic signature is acceptable. If multiple local authorities are submitting this bid, complete a signature box for each local authority.

Signed:	
Position:	Director of Children's Services at Worcestershire County Council
Print name:	Tina Russell
Date:	20.10.2022

Signed:	
Position:	Director of Children's Services at [INSERT LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME]
Print name:	
Date:	

Signed:	
Position:	Director of Children's Services at [INSERT LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME]
Print name:	
Date:	

Signed:	
Position:	Director of Children's Services at [INSERT LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME]
Print name:	
Date:	



A1 - who is putting the application forward

1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one application, you must complete this section on each application form.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Table A1 - local authority(ies) putting forward this application

Name of local authority	Name of person leading	Contact details
Lead local authority: [select name of lead local authority in cell C21 below. This would be the local authority in which the school would be located] <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>	Sarah Wilkins - Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Education Place Planning	Telephone: 01905 846082 Mobile: Email: swilkins@worscschilrenfirst.org.uk Address: County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester, WR5 2NR
Worcestershire		
[If applicable, select name of second local authority in cell C27 below] <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>		Telephone: Mobile: Email: Address:
[If applicable, select name of third local authority in cell C33 below] <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>		Telephone: Mobile: Email: Address:
[If applicable, select name of fourth local authority in cell C39 below] <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>		Telephone: Mobile: Email: Address:
Drop down		
[If applicable, select name of fifth local authority in cell C45 below] <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>		Telephone: Mobile: Email: Address:
Drop down		

Box A1 - if this application is from a single local authority, please explain why

Worcestershire is a large geographically diverse county, with a range of types of education provision.

Worcestershire have existing demand and projected future demand to sustain a 120 place ASD Special Free School with Worcestershire children and young people. We do not believe a school larger than 120 - 162 places would be a suitable learning environment for these pupils.

We have contacted our border Authorities of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and West Midlands with the proposal. Herefordshire and Gloucestershire responded informally and were supportive of the proposal but did not commit to commissioning places at the school.

Since 2017 birth rates have been stable with a small decrease in 2019, between 1 Sep 2019 and 31 Aug 2020 (2024 reception cohort) birth rates fell by 480 across Worcestershire. This has not resulted in a reduction of pupil forecasts as in some areas this has coincided with substantial house building which has increased local pre-school cohorts from birth to school age.

Worcestershire is expected to experience substantial new housing growth over the next 10 to 20 years. The South Worcestershire Development Plan sets out Worcester City, Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils vision up to 2041. 28,400 new homes are already planned up to 2030 with an extra 11,000 being considered. In total we expect these new homes to yeild an additional 21,590 school age pupils in Worcestershire. On average in Worcestershire 3% of all school age pupils have an EHCP, therefore we project an increased need for Specialist provision places.

[Previous tab](#)

[Next tab](#)



A2 - evidence of commissions

1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one application, you must complete this section on each application form.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section A2 – evidence that the new school will be fully commissioned

You must complete table A2 on this tab, showing how many places you would use at the school for the first two years of the school's operation. If there are multiple commissioners, you also need to complete the larger table on tab 'Table A2 continued'.

Table A2 - evidence that the new school will be fully commissioned							
Commissioner	Year of operation	Number of EY places	Number of KS1 places	Number of KS2 places	Number of KS3 places	Number of KS4 places	Number of 16-19 places
Worcestershire County Council	First year of opening	6	12	24	24	12	18
	Second year of opening	6	12	24	30	12	18

[Previous tab](#)

[Next tab](#)



1. This table must be completed if there are multiple commissioners.
2. If you are submitting more than one application, you must complete this section on each application form.
3. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Table A2 continued

You must complete table A2 on the previous tab, showing how many places you would use at the school for the first two years of the school's operation. If there are multiple commissioners, you also need to complete the table on this tab.

Table A2 continued - evidence that the new school will be fully commissioned							
Commissioner	Year of operation	Number of EY places	Number of KS1 places	Number of KS2 places	Number of KS3 places	Number of KS4 places	Number of 16-19 places
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						
[NAME OF COMMISSIONER. COMPLETE A LINE FOR EACH COMMISSIONER]	First year of opening						
	Second year of opening						



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one application, you must complete this section on each application form.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section B – what type of school is wanted

There are no assessment criteria for section B. Please provide key information about the school you would like to commission in table Bi. Additionally, please set out the expected pupil build up (how the school would fill year-on-year once it opens) in table Bii.

Table Bi - what type of school is wanted	
Type of school	All-Through (Primary, Secondary and Post 16)
Category of provision/needs (if more than one type, with different top-up rates, please explain)	An ASD Designated School
Age range	5 - 19 years (NCY R - 14)
Per-pupil revenue funding you would expect to pay (if a range of rates, please explain)	<p>We have given three possible models, with the lowest level having an addition £5,600 (E2), middle level would be £10,300 (E3) and the highest level would be £21,400 (E4).</p> <p>1) a 50% split on E2 & E3 would provide the school with top-up funding of £954 000; 2) E2 (30%), E3 (70%) would provide the school with top-up funding of £1 066 800; or 3) E2 (30%), E3 (60%) and E4 (10%) would provide the school with top-up funding of £1 200 000. 4) E2 (30%), E3 (40%) and E4 (30%) would provide the school with top-up funding of £2 666 400</p> <p>With all of these models they would also receive £1 200 000 for the commissioned place funding (£10k per place - base funding).</p> <p>The proposal has included potential top up funding up to £22k per pupil plus an additional £3k per pupil for the pay and pension on-costs. The higher level is expected as the average per pupil.</p>
Gender (co-educational/boys/girls)	Co-educational
Total number of proposed full time equivalent places (once school is at full capacity - including 16-19 places, but not including nursery places)	120
Type of places offered (e.g. full time, short term, part time)	Full-time
Number of nursery places, if applicable	None
Number of 16-19 places, if applicable	18

<p>Describe any planned outreach, training and/or reintegration support (including details of funding that will be made available to support the school with this)</p>	<p>The new ASD school will provide an outreach service which works with WCF, complementing their vision of school improvement across the county. The new school will have a remit to provide outreach, which will focus on practical, specific strategies and resources to improve Quality First Teaching across Worcestershire settings. It will not be an assessment service, as it will be tasked with providing practical support on specific strategies (e.g., Task Management boards, etc.) that compliment and support the embedding of advice from service that provide assessment (e.g. WCF Autism and CCN team, WCF EPS)</p>
	<p>The new ASD outreach service will be staffed by Teaching Assistants who will be skilled in strategies and interventions and supporting staff in their use. The Teaching Assistants will be supervised by a teacher; it is expected that this teacher will be a Specialist Teacher from the WCF Autism/CCN team.</p>
	<p>The new ASD school Teaching Assistants will be practitioners skilled in using, modelling and training with evidence-based interventions.</p>
	<p>Referrals to the new ASD school outreach service will come via professionals (e.g.: Autism/CCN Specialist Teachers, EPs, Worcestershire Autism Champions) and will be triaged via an agreed process to ensure that the referral is appropriate and prioritised; referrals that do not meet criteria will be signposted to appropriate services.</p>
	<p>Referrals will focus on practical support from the new ASD school to model and train in specific techniques and support with implementing the advice given by other agencies.</p>
	<p>Work with WCF in a multiagency manner to prioritise strategies and resources to promote inclusion; it is expected that the new ASD school and WCF will agree focus strategies and resources to best need the needs of Worcestershire schools as identified by gap analysis. Modelling and training in agreed areas (in collaboration with and supported by WCF Autism/CCN team) to be offered in-person and virtually.</p>
	<p>It is expected that the new ASD school outreach team will have a training offer developed in collaboration with WCF Autism/CCN team that seeks to: Focus on developing QFT in schools and embed the Graduated Response; Focus on agreed specific strategies as agreed collaboratively with WCF Autism/CCN team to meet the overall needs of Worcestershire schools, as identified from a strategic level; Model and train in agreed areas (in collaboration with and supported by WCF Autism/CCN team) to be offered in-person and virtually.</p>
	<p>All pupils coming to the new ASD school will require transition/integration support. Some pupils to the new ASD school will have a history of ESBA or similar presentation and will need significantly enhanced support. It is therefore expected that the new ASD school will have an approach to transition/integration which is thoughtful, individualised and well-planned.</p>
	<p>A core expectation of the new ASD school will be targeted and creative support around supporting students in the transition to and from mainstream schools to the new provision. It is expected that an understanding of the factors around a successful transition for ASD pupils (such as working with families, staff and peer relationships, motivators, pre-warning etc) would inform an approach which is individualised for each child with particular support given to children who have experienced school attendance difficulties.</p>
	<p>School staff, including a Family support Worker would be expected to engage in a multiagency approach with WCF and other relevant agencies.</p> <p>Where appropriate, and usually agreed via the Annual Review process, children at the new ASD school would be expected to reintegrate into mainstream school, either on a part time or full-time basis. The new ASD school will have a policy/procedures on defining and then monitoring children in the new school against a set "exit criteria" which would indicate that a mainstream reintegration would be an appropriate consideration. This reintegration would be based on child need and would be a fully consultative process, involving the parent/carer. In order to make the chances of reintegration as successful as possible, it is expected that the new ASD school will seek to: Have a creative approach to timetabling and delivery, particularly around access to mainstream learning opportunities; Ensure that, where appropriate, supported integration/ re-integration into a mainstream setting (full or part time) is well-planned and staffed; outreach Teaching Assistants would be used to "pave the way" for children by training mainstream staff in understanding individual need and in particular techniques; would support the receiving school through focused and purposeful transition meetings and information about the child; Use the expertise of the ASD school outreach staff to support students in mainstream settings for an agreed amount of time, as per the transition needs of the individual child; Where supporting the student in mainstream, targeted support and training centred around the individual student is expected; Support WCF and the WCF Autism team in improving Quality First Teaching in mainstream schools by understanding Graduated Response expectations and supporting mainstream schools with this when integrating named students into mainstream; Establish good working relationships with WCF and, in particular, the WCF Autism team to identify and develop mainstream settings to meet the needs of the majority of autistic learners; and work in a multiagency way (with school staff and Family Support Workers) with professionals and parents to create a bespoke and purposeful transition reintegration package</p>

Table Bii - pupil build up

	Year of opening	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6
Nursery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reception	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Key stage 1 (Y1-2)	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Key stage 2 (Y3-6)	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
Key stage 3 (Y7-9)	24	30	36	36	36	36	36
Key stage 4 (Y10-11)	12	12	12	18	24	24	24
16-19: commissioner referred	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Totals	96	102	108	114	120	120	120

[Previous tab](#)

[Next tab](#)



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one application, you must complete this section on each application form.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section C – current context and strategy for SEND provision in your area

We are looking for applications in areas where a new school will support local authorities to manage current and/or anticipated pressures on special school places or on the overall high needs budget, so that the needs of children can be better met. We are also looking for applications which can demonstrate that any new school will be a strong strategic fit with the local SEND strategy. We will not be inclined to approve applications that have the side effect of decreasing the inclusion in mainstream schools of children with SEND, where a mainstream school is able to meet their needs, or of creating excess spare capacity in existing special schools.

Applications will score more highly if they can demonstrate that a new school will be filled by pupils who would otherwise be going to more expensive or poor performing provision.

Please use box C1 to provide information about existing provision in your area, future expected growth, use of your high needs budget.

In addition, please use table C1i - found on the next tab - to describe the recent, current, and projected trends in pupils living in your area with an EHC plan ,

Box C1 - the current context in your area

(your response to this section should be no more than 2000 words, excluding your entries on table C1i)

In Worcestershire we want all children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities to be truly seen and respected as individuals and to be the best they can be. The Local Area Partnership SEND Strategy (2022 – 25) priorities include: Priority 2: There is sufficient and effective SEND provision; and Priority 5: Children and Young People with autism achieve positive outcomes & the support required to enable this to be in place. The Worcestershire multi-agency Autism Partnership Board provides critical oversight and challenge to the All-Age Autism Strategy work. The Director of All Age Disability (0-25) is leading on the priority 'improving autistic children and young people's access to education and support positive transitions into adulthood'. The proposal for a 120 ASD Special Free School for 5 – 19-year-olds (Reception to Year 14) will better meet the needs of a cohort of children and young people who have the potential to be high achievers and currently receive their education at high cost independent or non-maintained special schools in or out of county. The new ASD Special Free School would provide an education for children and young people that:

- may experience high anxiety and / or demand avoidance as a result of Autistic presentation;
- are unable to access mainstream education provision with support;
- have the cognitive ability to access a mainstream curriculum;
- need smaller class sizes (e.g., 6 - 8 group sizes); and
- need a whole school and staff dedicated to a holistic Autistic approach.

In January 2022 (Census), there were 83 Worcestershire children and young people with EHCs and a primary need of ASD who fit within the above cohort of pupils. These 83 children and young people who were accessing their education provision in Independent, Non-Maintained Special schools in or out of county, cost on average £58k per place, a total of £4.8m per annum. The new special free school will reduce the average cost of a place to £25k (dependent on level of need) an annual saving of £2.7m. This will support the reduction in spend needed to reduce the current High Needs deficit. The number of children with a primary need of ASD who require a more suitable education placement to meet their needs is 26. We have reduced this number however the provision of this school would enable us to achieve the intention and principle that there is sufficient SEND Provision and support available for children and young people with Autism and that we are improving autistic children and young people's access to education, and supporting positive transitions into adulthood. There are currently 34 children with an EHC who are electively home educated 3 of these children have a primary need of ASD. The number of children and young people receiving their education through alternative provision including home tuition increased last year. We have reduced this number however the provision of this school would enable us to achieve the ambition that no child should need to wait for a school place. The Local Area SEND Re-Visit Inspection in November 2021 found that the concern about lack of suitable specialist provision remained a concern with "too many children being placed in settings outside of Worcestershire and independent settings ... and too many children without a school place". We have developed our plan for specialist provision continuum as part of the Local Offer including the development of provision for autism in mainstream settings. We have 4 workstreams to respond to the Accelerated Progress Plan (DFE). Taking coordinated action to forecast and develop our specialist provision is one workstream of this plan. This free school bid represents a sustainable mid to long term plan for addressing this particular need. This proposal fits with the Worcestershire SEN Strategy to provide sufficient SEND Provision and support children and young people with Autism. We know that the percentage of pupils in independent, non-maintained out of county placements is steadily rising. The highest cohort of those in this provision are those with a Primary need of ASD (January 2022 Census and Feb 2022 SEN2). We do not project this demand will decrease due to the highest percentage of new EHCs in Worcestershire since 2014 falling under Communication and Interaction including ASD. We also know that the percentage of pre-school, school-age and Post 16 children and young people with ASD is increasing year on year, we predict that by 2026/27 at least 12% of the total 5 – 16-year-olds with SEN in Worcestershire will have a primary need of ASD. We know there are 954 children on the Umbrella Pathway awaiting an assessment for ASD. The umbrella pathway is an assessment and diagnostic pathway which assesses children and young people for autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The Umbrella Pathway Team includes Community Paediatricians, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Specialist Autism/CAN Teachers and Clinical Psychologists. The service accepts referrals only for children and young people up to the age of 18. For a referral to be considered there must be evidence of significant difficulties, impacting on the child/young person's daily life, across the 4 areas of their development associated with ASD. There are currently 11 Mainstream Autism Bases across 12 schools covering each of the phases. Provision is predominantly in the north of the county, with Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest having seven bases between them. There is very little capacity within our current specialist provisions to provide the additional places required to meet the needs of pupils with ASD. There are currently no special free schools in Worcestershire and no state funded special schools with an ASD designation. There is no Special School in the district of Malvern in Worcestershire. The new school will help improve the range of provision available in Worcestershire and support financial sustainability through delivering better value for money. Our analysis, as stated above evidences the need we have in Worcestershire. Should this new school not be approved the local area would experience challenges. This would include for some children delays in finding a suitable provision which could result in missed education. We would also continue to be in the position where high-cost placements are having to be used and, in some cases, where children are not receiving an appropriate education where they are given the opportunity reach their potential. Worcestershire County Council is one of the 55 Authorities taking part in the Delivering Better Value in SEND – with a High Needs deficit of forecast to be around £20m at the end of 2023/24. The DBV programme aims are to support local authorities to improve delivery of SEND services for children and young people while ensuring services are financially sustainable. We are pleased to be part of the programme which will identify opportunities and create shared learning and understanding of common themes and trends which will inform best practice. The provision of a new ASD schools in Worcestershire would have significant tangible benefits including reduced travel costs and more cost-effective unit price which would provide better value for money and provide savings to marginally reduce the current deficit and be re-invested to meet increased demand. We have held a stakeholder engagement focus group (slides attached) to share the rationale for the new school proposal along with the evidence base and principles of both DfE and Worcestershire SEND Strategy and specialist provision development needs. We have also held a regular working group that has SEND, Education, Finance and All Age Disability Social care representation including the adult social care commissioner. We are also pleased to have received a letter of support from Harriet Baldwin MP. At the stakeholder focus group we had attendance from the Hereford and Worcestershire SENDIASS – representing parent voice and experiences, mainstream FE provider, special schools and both Hereford and Worcestershire NHS provider and Integrated Care System commissioners. The focus group as a whole were supportive of the proposal based on needs and the prospect of being able to provide education locally in the community and therefore link young people as they prepare for adulthood to the broader community offer of independence, training, supported internships and employment. Special School representatives' feedback that this new school could provide for children that they are not currently able to offer an appropriate environment or curriculum for. Health colleagues are concerned about demands for additional health services and stressed the importance of needing a multi-agency approach to supporting these children around their education. We also circulated a short survey for wider responses. There have been 22 responses to this survey. Respondents included: Families in Partnership and SENDIASS – parent voice; mainstream and special education settings of both primary and secondary and FE type; Health providers and health commissioners including the ICB lead for autism. Most respondents are supportive of the proposal 19/22 with the remaining 3 stating 'maybe'. No-one was 'not supportive' of the proposal. The main reason for this support was in relation to the proposal meeting identified needs. Where respondents answered 'maybe' this was in relation to needing more information about collaboration with health providers and evidence that the proposed school could resolve the issue of children traveling out of the area to access provision for specific needs. A further respondent wanted to have more information before providing a considered response. Most respondents 20/22 agreed the designation of the proposed school stating meets needs as the reason. The 2 respondents that answered 'maybe' to this question referred to wanting more information and meeting the needs of children with complex communication needs who may not be diagnosed with autism. Additional comments included further supportive representations including being in the right place and requests to be further involved and informed. Further to this was the opportunity for a new school to link in with 19-25 offer in the community and through local FE provision.

Word count:

1842

1. This table must be completed if you are submitting an application for a special free school. If you are submitting a joint bid, this table should be completed by the lead local authority.
2. If you are submitting more than one application, you must complete this section on each application form.
3. Please refer to tab 'C1 - current context' as well as the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Table C1i – trends in your specialist provision for all children with EHC plans													
Type of provision	Number of providers used	Please indicate the number of pupils with an EHC plan living in your local authority who are placed within these settings, and the total cost (including base, top-up and transportation if applicable) of all placements at each setting											
		2018		2022		Projected figures without the new school you want				Projected figures if your application for a new school is successful			
		(pupils)	(cost)	(pupils)	(cost)	2025 (pupils)	2025 (cost)	2029 (pupils)	2029 (cost)	2025 (pupils)	2025 (cost)	2029 (pupils)	2029 (cost)
Resourced provision and units inside local authority	2018 - 17 2022 - 14	108	£ 1,999,000	145	£ 1,657,000	173	£1,974,116	210	£2,396,936	173	£1,974,116	210	£2,396,936
Resourced provision and units outside local authority	2018 - 1 2022 - 5	4	£ 81,200	6	£ 121,800	8	£152,250	10	£192,850	8	£152,250	10	£192,850
Special schools (either maintained or academies) inside local authority	2018 - 9 2022 - 9	1628	£ 24,030,642	1910	£ 30,297,695	2122	£35,405,800	2404	£42,760,360	2122	£35,405,800	2404	£42,760,360
Special schools (either maintained or academies) outside local authority	2018 - 22 2022 - 20	64	£ 760,339	78	£ 1,053,776	89	£1,303,799	103	£1,677,089	89	£1,303,799	103	£1,677,089
Independent / non-maintained special schools inside local authority	2018 - 7 2022 - 11	92	£ 2,537,094	198	£ 5,793,431	278	£8,469,780	384	£12,350,377	221	£6,741,030	313	£9,538,041
Independent / non-maintained special schools outside local authority	2018 - 21 2022 - 30	44	£ 1,975,545	64	£ 2,873,519	79	£3,547,001	99	£4,444,975	39.64	£1,779,786	50	£2,244,937
Mainstream schools inside local authority	2018 - 227 2022 - 41	1191	£ 3,020,462	1720	£ 8,190,559	2117	£13,613,589	2646	£22,904,904	2117	£13,613,589	2646	£22,904,904
Mainstream schools outside local authority	2018 - 29 2022 - 3	46	£ 546,494	72	£ 455,540	92	£578,915	118	£743,416	92	£578,915	118	£743,416
General FE colleges (if relevant) inside local authority	2018 - 3 2022 - 3	384	£ 669,457	572	£ 2,064,339	713	£3,570,839	901	£6,193,291	713	£3,570,839	901	£6,193,291
General FE colleges (if relevant) outside local authority	2018 - 6 2022 - 13	54	£ 44,935	54	£ 244,682	54	£394,493	54	£594,240	54	£394,493	54	£594,240
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) inside local authority	2018 - 1 2022 - 1	9	£ 460,217	11	£ 732,230	13	£976,746	15	£1,356,777	13	£976,746	15	£1,356,777
Specialist FE providers (if relevant) outside local authority	2018 - 10 2022 - 11	72	£ 3,681,744	82	£ 6,116,848	90	£8,251,093	100	£11,507,310	90	£8,251,093	100	£11,507,310



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one application, you must complete this section for each application.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section C2 – rationale for the new special free school and how it fits with your strategy and the local education offer

You must use this section to tell us about how your proposed school fits with your local strategy for high needs provision and local education offer. The purpose of this section is to help us understand your plan for children with SEND and make a judgement about whether the school you are proposing fits within your strategy.

Box C2 - rationale for the new special free school and how it fits with your strategy and the local education offer (your response to this section should be no more than 750 words)

Worcestershire has no specific special school that caters for the needs of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Our current state funded provision includes 9 special schools and 14 mainstream schools with resource bases designated as mainstream autism bases (MABs).

The new Special Free school for pupils with ASD would fill a gap in provision. The MABs have limited capacity and are catering for pupils with an increased level of need. All special schools within Worcestershire have a large cohort of pupils with ASD and associated difficulties, however they also have limited capacity to provide support for the increased number of children with ASD and MLD.

In February 2022 there were 472 children and young people in our special schools with a diagnosis of ASD as well as a further 83 in independent special, non-maintained special or out of county provision. There are 149 pupils placed in Mainstream Autism Bases. There is very little capacity within our current specialist provisions to provide the additional places required to meet the needs of pupils with ASD and MLD.

There had been a year-on-year growth since 2014 of pupils requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in schools - an additional 2354 pupils since 2014. In line with the trend experienced in the mainstream sector, we expect this figure to continue to rise with the growth of the general school population. There has also been an increase in children with EHCP's being diagnosed with ASD, with a further 954 children awaiting diagnosis. We know and there is evidence that a growing number of children and young people are being diagnosed with autism. We also know that a growing number of children and young people find school environments overwhelming. Worcestershire continues to take steps to ensure inclusivity in our mainstream schools but also recognise the importance of the right school provision being available and for some this will require a provision specifically for children with autism.

Primarily the places would be filled from the population that would currently be placed in out of county specialist schools, which would enable the Local Authority to reduce the use of out-of-borough placements over time, our special schools and MABs. This would relieve current pressures on special schools as places would become available for children with other complex needs. It would also relieve pressures on schools with MABs as the more complex students with ASD + MLD could be accommodated in special schools.

This proposal will support the local authority to meet its statutory responsibilities with regard to the provision of special school places across Worcestershire. It will positively impact on children and young people up to the age of 19 years with an EHCP with Autism, by providing choice of provision within the local area. It will also release some capacity within the boroughs other specialist settings to meet the different needs of other children and young people with an EHC plan.

This application aligns with a number of strategies in Worcestershire as detailed below:

The new National Autism Strategy 2021-2026, published in July 2022 incorporates both children and adults into the National Strategy ambitions. The following priorities are of relevance to this application:

- Improving autistic children and young people's access into education and support positive transitions into adulthood.
- Building the right support in the community

Ensuring the right support in the community.

At the time of writing Worcestershire are updating their All-Age Autism Strategy which will be in line with national and local priorities. The Worcestershire multi-agency Autism Partnership Board provides critical oversight and challenge to our Autism work and reports jointly to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Care System Learning Disability and Autism Programme Board.

A systems approach is being used to ensure the delivery plan is owned and embedded into future practice and delivery routes.

The Director of All Age Disability in Worcestershire is leading on the priority 'improving autistic children and young people's access into education and support positive transitions into adulthood' and is also the joint.

The Worcestershire Education and Skills Strategy: Ensuring a good education for every child in Worcestershire refers to ensuring that there is 'a curriculum and approach which inspires and helps children and young people develop the skills, knowledge and attributes to become successful citizens'.

Finally, Worcestershire is part of the Delivering Better Value in SEND which will support the transformation on how services are delivered. The focus being on improving outcomes for children, and young people and consequently sustainably improving financial performance. This application will support the planned transformation within Worcestershire.



C3 - expected outcomes

1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one application, you must complete this section for each application.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section C3 – expected outcomes for the new special free school

To be approvable, applications must demonstrate that the new school will:

- Help to achieve better outcomes for children and young people (compared with existing options); and,
- Will support the development and effectiveness of a local inclusion system.

Please use box C3 to describe the impact you expect the school to have, as well as the potential risks and how you would mitigate those.

Box C3 - expected outcomes

(your response to this section should be no more than 500 words, excluding risks and mitigations)

The proposed school aligns with many of the outcomes of the SEND Green Paper including ensuring: that children and young people can access the right support in the right place at the right time; that provision to be made available for different types of needs; that support to children and young people is available when it is required; it will make available excellent provision to support Autistic Children and Young People; and enable parents to make an informed choice for a provision that can meet their child's needs.

A new ASD Special Free School in Worcestershire will provide more good quality education provision for children and young people in Worcestershire (Worcestershire SEND Strategy Priority 2: there is sufficient and effective SEND Provision). The identified cohort of pupils currently have to access their provision in Independent or Non-Maintained Specialist provision in or out of county. Some of the existing Independent / Non-Maintained provision is of not good quality (Ofsted) and therefore we will improve the quality for more pupils with the delivery of the new school. The Local Authority will be able to monitor and support the free special school to ensure better quality. The new school will provide a suitable learning environment in Worcestershire (Worcestershire SEND Strategy Priority 5: CYP with Autism achieve positive outcomes and support required to enable this to be in place) for Autistic children and young people that are unable to access mainstream education provision with support, need smaller class sizes and need a whole school and staff dedicated to a holistic Autistic approach. The new school will reduce travel times to education provision for more Worcestershire children and young people. It will also build social networks in local communities for more children and young people with SEND including holistic support with emotional health and physical health. The new school will also help to reduce the demand for out of county and/or independent specialist education provision on the High Needs budget

The risks and mitigations we have considered as part of this proposal are:

-Will we be able to recruit Academy Sponsor – WCF/WCC will be possible to recruit an Academy Sponsor - recent successful academy sponsor competition in Worcestershire for secondary that received a very high level of good quality application. We have relevant local and wider interest in this proposal for sponsoring academies with the relevant experience/credentials and deliver education linked to community provision that will enable young people to develop independence and transition to adulthood accessing appropriate training, employment.

-Will we have an influx of pupils from other areas not identified (e.g. mainstream pupils who don't fit the criteria) - WCF are clear on the cohort of pupils this school would provide for, this will be made clear in the Designation and offer of the new school

-There has been historical parent carer reluctance for in house provision - we believe this school will provide more choice of provision to meet more children and young people's needs

-It may be difficult to move pupils from existing provision especially with the needs of this cohort - WCF will work with families and providers to identify those that could move, offering transition support. There will be new pupils identified through Provision Panel suitable for this school.



1. This section must be completed.
2. If you are submitting more than one application, you must complete this section for each application.
3. Please refer to the 'guidance and criteria for local authorities seeking to establish new special free schools' for information about what to include in this section.
4. Please complete the form as provided, do not create any new fields. The text boxes can be made bigger by increasing the row height. To insert a new line in a text box, press alt + enter.

Section D – the proposed location and site

Finding a suitable site is an essential part of opening a free school. As part of preparing your application you should investigate potential sites for the school and tell us about them in your bid. In this wave we will undertake a desktop assessment of site and consider the value for money, timescale and delivery risks in securing a site for the proposed school in the proposed area.

We will prioritise applications which include a site which we deem to be viable. We will assess the viability of the site using the information you provide in Section D. We may consider applications which do not have a site if we deem the application to be strong.

Please complete table D to tell us about where the school would be located and the preferred site.

Please also provide the name and contact details for the main local authority lead for sites. FSC may contact this person to ask questions about the site. **If you know any of these site details before submitting your bid, please let DfE know (by emailing FSC.EOI@education.gov.uk) so we can start conversations with you.**

.....
Please tick the box below to confirm that the relevant Lead Member for Corporate Property has seen this bid and is content with the information provided about site (if provided).

I confirm that the Lead Member of Corporate Property at [INSERT LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME] has seen this expression of interest and supports it.

Table D - the proposed location and site

<p>Please describe the location in which you propose to set up your school being as specific as possible. This could include the name of the area in which you would like to put the school, the part of a city, town or suburb. Please also consider how flexible you are - how far from your preferred location are you willing to go? Please include an annotated map as an additional file and send it to FS.applications@educations.gov.uk, if possible. If applicable, please also describe the potential impact of any specialism that you plan for your school to have on the site requirement.</p>	<p>The Poolbrook area of the Malvern district - please see attached maps. An Local Authority owned site is identified and suitable for a 120 place ASD designated school. A feasibility report has been produced to show the size and location of the school on the site. The ASD specialism has been accounted for within the feasibility study provides group rooms for 6 - 8 pupils with float for storage and plant within the overall footprint of the building.</p>
<p>Please tell us the postcode of a central location in your preferred area. You need to provide this even if you have already identified a preferred site. It must be a full postcode e.g. SW1P 3BT, not SW1.</p>	<p>WR14 3SW</p>
<p>Your calculated building space using the ESFA formula (see section D in the guidance) and any comments on this.</p>	<p>The Building Bulletin 104 guidance (calculated from the respective formulas) requires a new school build space of 3,617m²</p>
<p>If you have identified a preferred site, please complete the rest of the table:</p>	

Full address and postcode of preferred site. It must be a full postcode e.g. SW1P 3BT, not SW1.	Poolbrook Centre, Bluebell Close, Malvern, WR14 3SW
In which local authority is your preferred site?	Worcestershire
Please tell us how you found the site.	Owned by the Local Authority
Please confirm the tenure.	The land is owned by Worcestershire County Council, the site will be available on a 125 year lease and peppercorn rent.
Please include information on purchase or lease price if known.	Owned by the Local Authority
Who owns the site?	Worcestershire County Council
Is the site available/on the market? (Please attach agents' particulars as an additional file and send it to FS.applications@education.gov.uk if available)	N/A
Name and contact details of owner and/or the agent or local authority representative	Janette Beckett, Strategic Asset Manager, County Property. Jbecket@worcestershire.gov.uk
If the site is local authority owned, which local authority owns it?	Worcestershire County Council
If the site is local authority owned, please state if the local authority have confirmed that, if successful, the site may be used by the free school. Please include terms (e.g. 125 year peppercorn lease). Please also provide details of any other local authority contribution towards the capital costs of the project (e.g. developer contributions).	The delegated approvals from Corporate Landlord Board (Local Authority) have confirmed that if successful the site may be used as a special free school. This site will be available on a 125 year lease and peppercorn rent.
What kind of site is it?	Open space with an existing building occupied by local community services
What is the current use?	Site is the land of former Malvern Hills primary school. The former school buildings are occupied by a children's centre, social care offices and private nursery. The land is surplus to requirements and is separate from the buildings.
Why have you chosen this site? What makes it suitable?	The site is owned by the Local Authority in an area of the county will no Special School provision. The site was previously a primary school, therefore has adjoining playing fields. There are options to either co-locate or re-locate the provisions / services utilising the existing building on site. The proposal can accommodate the retention of the existing facility during construction phase of the project. There is existing highways access to the site, the site is allocated for educational use. The site provides sufficient viable space for the new school, parking, drop of and collection points.

<p>If known, how big is the building and the site? Please attach any site and building plans as an additional file and send it to FS.applications@education.gov.uk</p>	<p>The total site area is 2hectares, the site area excluding the existing buildings and nursery play area is 1.7 hectare. The total GIA of the buildings on site is approx. 500sqm. The site and existing building plans are included in the Feasibility Study attached.</p>
<p>Please comment on the condition of the building. Please attach photos if available as an additional file and send it to FS.applications@education.gov.uk</p>	<p>The existing site has a former primary school building with adjoining playing fields. The building is divided into accommodation for a children's centre, nursery, and social care offices. Photographs of the existing building and site are included in the Feasibility report.</p>
<p>If the named site is part of a housing development or the school is attracting Section 106 contributions, please give as much detail as possible, including: the development and developer, timing and programme of build, number of housing units, status of planning application and any links to planning applications/decision notices, extent of funding coming from the developer plus confirmation of the local authority's position in relation to your free school using this site.</p>	<p>No existing S106 agreements in place.</p>

[Previous tab](#)