

The Free School Process

SEND Wave 3

Create: Schools Support



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About Create: Schools



- Wholly-owned division of PAG
- Established in April 2022
- DfE sole supplier of advice to Free School Proposers
- Access to a range of partners with expertise in key areas such as project management, capital, finance and legal

The Application



- The DfE has approved 33 special free school applications in the first stage of SEND wave 3
- Through Stage 2, trusts and other applicants will be able to apply to run the new special schools
- This a central free school programme; schools will be delivered and funded as such

Application Process



Pre-registration window 9th May – 16th June 2023

Application forms will be sent to you once you have completed the pre-registration.

1

Application window opens 9th May 2023

You must have registered your interest to be sent the application form.

2

Application window closes

31st August 2023

Submit your completed application via email to fs.applications@education.gov.uk by 12pm.

3

4

Autumn 2023

Applications will be assessed and interviews will begin

5

January 2024

Successful applicants will be announced, and the school will enter its preopening phase.



In-depth bid review and feedback at all stages of the application process

Webinars and masterclasses

Access to expert partners

Support we offer

Expert advice & guidance for DfE interviews

Mock interviews and preparation for pre-opening

Resources to support you in all aspects of planning your school and completing your application

Sections A and B



Section A – Tell us who you are

All applicant groups must complete this section in full. There are no assessment criteria for this section. In this section, you must provide basic information about your applicant group and your academy trust.

Section B – Outline of the school

When defining details about the school in this section, you should refer to the specification of the local authority you are applying to, available online at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). It is important to be aware that the DfE will not accept applications which are a 'hybrid' of AP and special, all students attending the new school will be children or young people with an EHCP

Special free schools may have a religious ethos; however, they **cannot** be designated as having a religious character.

The responsibility for identifying a site lies with the local authority, however if you have a suitable site, you should outline this in section B.

Section C: Vision



Applicants must demonstrate a compelling vision for the school that will attract parents and pupils, raise standards and support pupils to prepare for adulthood, independent living and employment. Your vision should be evidence-based and consistent with the rest of your application, such as the curriculum approach.

This should include:

- How your vision for the school will meet the key features of the specification
- How the school will contribute to the delivery of the local authority's SEND strategy
- How your proposed school will collaborate with other SEND provision
- Your trust growth strategy

Section D: Education Plan



Applications must set out the plan to deliver your educational vision. We are looking for an ambitious and deliverable education plan that is consistent with your vision and pupil intake. It must be affordable, sustainable and consistent with financial planning.

Section D will consist of 4 parts:

D1 – Curriculum plan – word count is 2,500

D2 – Measuring pupil performance and setting challenging expectations - word count is 2,300

D3 – Staffing - word count is 1000

D4 – Integration and community cohesion - word count is 1000

Section E: Capacity and Capability



Applications must demonstrate the capacity and capability to deliver a financially viable school that provides a high-quality and inclusive education.

Part E1: This section is to be completed by those who currently run schools. All groups who currently run or lead schools will need to have a strong educational track record to be approved to open a free school.

Part E2: Applicants must display they have necessary experience and credentials to deliver the school. This includes providing information on the pre-opening group, a skills gap analysis and timelines for recruiting a headteacher designate. The word count is 2000.

Part E3: Applicants should demonstrate an effective governance structure here.

Section F: Financial Viability



You must demonstrate that your school will be financially viable and sustainable. You must have robust and credible plans to attract good pupil numbers that take account of our minimum expected sizes for new free schools.

Your trust should implement effective resource planning to ensure every pound is used efficiently to improve children's education standards and have maximum impact on the pupils and the school.

The Pre-Opening Process



In this phase, the academy trust will need to develop detailed plans and turn them into a school ready for opening. The pre-opening process includes:

- Trusts will regularly engage with the department
- Agree on your provisional opening date for the school.
- A project development grant to cover essential non-capital costs up to the point at which the school opens
- For some projects, progressing to the pre-opening phase is subject to precise and stringent conditions, which are set out in the approval letter
- Where a project fails to make sufficient progress in pre-opening, the opening of the school may be delayed or even cancelled

Next Steps



- Submit your application by midday on 31st August 2023 via email to fs.applications@education.gov.uk
- Access support through Create: Schools by emailing hello@createschools.co.uk



Questions?