



Department  
for Education

# **Essex County Council Special Free School Bid**

**Proposal to establish a Special Free  
School**

**Essex County Council**

**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 Essex County Council 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. Contact details and further information

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

**Name: Ralph Holloway**  
**Job title: Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation**  
**Email: [ralph.holloway@essex.gov.uk](mailto:ralph.holloway@essex.gov.uk)**  
**Tel: 03330 322691/07768536742**

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

**Name: Martin Brown**  
**Job title: Infrastructure Projects Team Manager**  
**Email: [martin.brown2@essex.gov.uk](mailto:martin.brown2@essex.gov.uk)**  
**Tel: 03330131864**

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

**RSC: Sue Baldwin**

**RSC's office: [rsc.eastnelondon@education.gov.uk](mailto:rsc.eastnelondon@education.gov.uk)  
Email: [Sue.Baldwin@education.gov.uk](mailto:Sue.Baldwin@education.gov.uk)**

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## **Essex County Council Context and Planning**

In 2015 Essex undertook a review of special needs provision in response to pressure on special needs places and an increasing reliance on independent special schools. The review projected a shortfall of 344 special needs places by 2020. ECC put in place a strategy to increase the number of special needs places in consultation with Schools Forum and the Essex Special Schools Education Trust. The Council approved capital funding to support the programme and the Schools Forum agreed an “Invest to Save” scheme, borrowing capital from the Council to be repaid over time. The projected savings generated by reduced use of expensive and poor quality independent placements would help to support the increasing number of children presenting with special needs. The strategy included the creation of special resourced provisions for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs, the expansion of special schools and the creation of boarding accommodation in addition to strategic support for free school applications. There are four new resourced provisions opening in West Essex over the course of 2019 (Cooks Spinney Primary School, Lambourne Primary School, Magna Carta Primary School and White Bridge Primary School). Although most pupils in these provisions will be expected to transition back to their original school we would also expect some to move to the new school either at key stage 2 or at the start of key stage 3. There would also be natural transition for some pupils currently at Wells Park School in Chigwell and Aspire AP School in Harlow to the new school. We would want to see some pupils successfully transition from the new school back to local mainstream primary and secondary schools. Other key partners will include the Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health Service, Children’s Social Care and ECC’s SEND services.

At present a significant number of pupils across the County and in West Essex require independent special school places to meet their SEMH needs. There are large numbers of pupils in West Essex who travel on a daily basis to attend maintained special schools in other local authorities due to the lack of local provision. Some pupils have to be placed in out-county residential provision as there is no appropriate SEMH school within a reasonable travelling time. The Essex SEND capital programme is focused on providing an Essex school place for every pupil and, wherever possible, reducing travel to school times and supporting young people and their families in their local communities.

There has been a year on year increase in the number of children and young people in Essex with an EHCP:  
January 2018 – 8286 January 2015 – 7322

## 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. <b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>Area of SEN provided for</b>	SEMH
<b>Which local authorities are committed to commissioning places?</b>	Essex County Council requires all of the 60 places to meet current and projected demand.
<b>How many places have been commissioned and by which local authority?</b>	Essex County Council intends to commission all 60 places
<b>Per-pupil revenue funding the local authority would expect to pay</b>	Places will be paid for in accordance with the Council's banding arrangements. We anticipate that children attending the school will fall in bands 7 to 9. Band 7 is £20k top up and band 9 is £30k top up. We cannot give an exact split between bands but would expect an average top up of £25k. There will be an additional £25k top up for boarding provision
<b>Age range</b>	7-16
<b>Gender (Boys/Girls/Co educational)</b>	Co-Educational
<b>Total number of proposed full time equivalent places (once school is at full capacity – this should include 16-19 places but not nursery)</b>	60 places including 15 boarding places

<b>Type of placements offered (e.g. full time, short term, part time)</b>	60 full time places including 15 x 38week Monday to Thursday boarding places. The boarding provision will be delivered by the trust operating the school.
<b>Number of nursery places, if applicable</b>	None
<b>Number of 16-19 places, if applicable</b>	None
<b>Any planned outreach, training and/or reintegration support (including details of funding that will be made available to support the school with this)</b>	The school will undertake outreach work and be a centre of excellence in the region for SEMH. ECC is currently working on a traded outreach model with Essex special schools. Some of this is likely to be centrally commissioned and some commissioned locally by individual schools and clusters of schools.

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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)	5	10	10	10	10	10	10
Key stage 3 (Y7-9)	10	20	30	30	30	30	30
Key stage 4 (Y10-11)	5	10	20	20	20	20	20

16-19: commissioner referred	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	20	40	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.

Essex has 19 special schools with 2,957 places; currently 2910 of these places are full. There are three SEMH special schools in Essex with 214 places; there are currently seven empty places and all three schools will be over-capacity by the end of the Autumn Term 2018. Seven mainstream primary schools host provision for children with social, emotional and mental health needs across the County with four due to open in West Essex in 2019. The number of places for SEMH is inadequate to meet current and future demand. Comparison with our statistical neighbours demonstrates that Essex is under provided with special needs places.

Many children with severe SEMH difficulties, often combined with other difficulties, are currently educated in the private sector, sometimes outside Essex, at a high cost to the High Needs Block budget, the DSG and the local authority. There are currently 115 Essex pupils with SEMH placed in independent special school provision.

19 of these pupils live in West Essex. A further 55 pupils from West Essex with SEMH attend maintained special schools in other LAs with considerable journey times and transport costs. There are 288 pupils in West Essex with an EHCP with SEMH as the main category of need.

A new strategy for SEND is currently being developed by the Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation in partnership with Essex schools (mainstream and special) and the Essex Family Forum (our Parent Carer Forum). Our vision for SEND is to support all educational providers in Essex to deliver high quality education for children and young people with SEND, maximising value from the funding available. Wherever possible we will seek to commission good and outstanding provision for all children and young people within or as close to their community as possible. We see the new school as a partner in reducing dependence upon the independent sector and enabling children to be taught as close to home as possible. The development of a school led model of SEND delivery and expertise will reduce escalation to statutory services and enable mainstream schools, with special school leadership, to

increase their capacity.

Referrals to the new school will be developed by the Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation with the new Essex quadrant SEND teams. We would envisage using an admissions panel to prioritise referrals and to work across the various SEMH provisions in West Essex in a co-ordinated approach.

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ECC has no secondary SEMH provision in the West Essex for children and young people with severe social emotional and mental health needs. Children and young people are therefore either travelling a long distance to school every day or are placed in expensive independent placements both inside and outside the county. The distance is stressful for families and education outside of their communities does not enable children to establish relationships with local services or put down social roots. This makes it more difficult for them to cope in adult life. The quality of independent placements is variable. Standards are difficult to monitor and the cost is unsustainable to the public purse. Some of our children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties attend inappropriate placements in existing special schools. Staff meet their needs as best they can but where the school is designed to meet a different type of need children with SEMH needs are sometimes not well supported. These inappropriate placements also impact on the education of other children in these schools.

A new special Free School for children and young people with SEMH need in Harlow would provide much needed specialist provision for some of our most vulnerable children. It would reduce stress on overcrowded existing special schools, improve outcomes in adulthood and reduce the cost of education provision by reducing reliance on the independent sector. The intention is that the school will operate as a regional centre of excellence in SEMH. We want the school to offer outreach support to mainstream schools in the area and provide supervision and support to the SEMH SRP in the West region of Essex. The development of a school led model for SEND in Essex will see special schools work in partnership with mainstream partners to raise levels of expertise and build capacity.

Reducing spend on independent school placements will enable investment in our mainstream and special schools to raise standards and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The new school will be expected to deliver improved outcomes for pupils including: improved attendance; reduced rates of fixed term exclusion; greater engagement in learning; appropriate levels of progression and qualifications.

## SECTION FOUR: THE PROPOSED LOCATION AND SITE

This section describes the provisional site.

<p><b>Full address and full postcode</b></p>	<p><b>The site of the former Passmore School Tendring Road, Harlow, CM18 6RW</b></p>
<p><b>Size of site</b></p>	<p><b>10,500m<sup>2</sup></b></p>
<p><b>Further details on site (for example, current use/your reasons for choosing it/further developments (e.g. housing) planned for area</b></p>	<p><b>The land is education land adjacent to a new planned free school to be constructed by the DfE. The land is about to be cleared by the DFE (using funding made available by ECC) so the site will be ready for development by the summer of 2019</b></p>