

# The Free School Process

## 15 New Special Schools Create: Schools Support



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# About Create: Schools



- Established in April 2022 as the DfE's sole provider of applicant support
- Free school expertise spanning ongoing and past waves
- Premier Advisory Group – our parent company
- Our partners



Bid review service with in-depth follow up calls

Mock interview service

Online bank of resources

# Support we offer

Expertise from our advisors

Access to our grading system,  
designed to support and  
monitor progress

Expertise from our range of  
partners, including PAG

# The New Schools



- Having recently announced 30 successful special free school applications, the DfE has now announced an additional 18 provisions through SEND wave 4 to meet need in the sector.
- 18 additional schools mean an investment of £105 million into SEND education.
- This a central free school programme; schools will be delivered and funded as such

# Application Process



# Local Provision

Stoke-on-Trent City Council (SOTCC) currently has:

- 4 Special Schools catering for various needs and 1 SEMH Free School opening in September 2024
- 3 SEN Units – Communication & Interaction Needs (including Autism) – 70 pupils aged 3 to 7 years (KS1)
- A high level of high cost independent sector placements
- 2 Primary Resource Provisions approved for Speech Language and Communication Difficulty Needs catering for 48 pupils (24 places)



# Need For The New Free School

- The new Free School needed for pupils with high levels of ASD need
- 66 pupils: 18 KS2, 18 KS3, 18 KS4 and 12 KS5
- Threshold of entry – high levels of need
- New Local Banding Review for SOTCC – Place Funding plus top up of up to £22,000 per pupil
- Centre of Excellence Model with outreach support and CPD role for other Stoke-on-Trent schools
- Local High Quality Stoke Provision for Stoke pupils



# Site



Although the official site is yet to be confirmed, it is normal at this stage for this to be the case

The lack of a confirmed site should not impact the drafting of an application.

The Local Authority and the DfE are working hard to ensure suitable sites are identified, which can sometimes be a long process, however all parties are committed to delivering the free school within the timeline.

# Sections A, B & C



## Section A

Basic information about the applicant group and academy trust.

## Section B

An outline of the school, ensuring compliance with the relevant LA specification.

## Section C

An outline of the trust vision, how the trust will work with the LA and any other partners to deliver the vision and share expertise. Discussion of the trust's expansion strategy,

# Sections D & E



## Section D

D1 – curriculum plan

D2 – measuring pupil performance effectively and setting challenging expectations

D3 – staffing

D4 – integration and community cohesion

## Section E

E1 – strong educational track record

E2 – the necessary experience and credentials to deliver the school to opening

E3 – an effective governance structure

# 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.

The financial template will be used to show income and planned expenditure, with reference to the assumptions the trust used and how these are realistic and appropriate.

At Create: Schools we have a variety of resources surrounding the financial template and free school funding, so please make sure to check our website for further guidance.

# Writing a strong application



- Given the word counts, condensing information is essential. Be precise with language.
- Familiarise yourself with the HtAG and ensure the DfE criteria informs the structure of the application.
- All sections of your application must be consistent with your trust vision: ensure this is embedded within discussion of education, governance and finance.
- Discussion of the importance of community engagement and outreach further emphasises an awareness of the local context.
- Given the breadth of information covered in the application, allowing plenty of time for reviewing and redrafting is critical.

# Writing a strong application



- Including case studies and specific examples ensures that claims are evidenced.
- It is likely that there will be multiple people who write the application, external review ensures that the application is consistent throughout and avoids repetition.
- Reviews through C:S come with thorough feedback, ensuring that all criteria is addressed within word count.
- Furthermore, the resources and guidance available on our website include further detail on what to include in the application and common mistakes to avoid.

# Resources for bid writing



**Bid reviews:** comprehensive feedback documents, with feedback call to discuss specific concerns

**Online resources:** guidance is available for each section of the application on our website

**Pre-recorded webinars:** previous webinar recordings are available on our website

**Premier Advisory Group:** our parent company are available for more in-depth bid writing support

# Next Steps



- The application window will run from **June 10<sup>th</sup> – July 19<sup>th</sup>**
- Resources for bid writing are available at [www.createschools.co.uk](http://www.createschools.co.uk)
- Please contact Create: Schools to access bid review support or for any general queries.



# Q&A and discussion

## Contact details

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‘Working with Create Schools was very beneficial to us.

Our Advisor was extremely approachable and had expert knowledge about the bid process and criteria.

Responses were very prompt with useful advice and challenge to help us to improve our application.’

*The Mead Educational Trust*

‘I would like to say thank you to yourself as well with the support provided to our Trust, especially the interview phase. That was a great exercise for us and really

supported the formal interview.’

*London South East Academies Trust*

‘Create: Schools provided us with high quality support, guidance and feedback at all stages of our free school application. Their feedback on our application was impactful and the mock interview prepared us well for our interview with the DfE.’

*Ted Wragg Trust*