



Department
for Education

Wiltshire Local Authority Special Free School

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

Wiltshire Local Authority

February 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 Wiltshire Local Authority 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. 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.
11 March 2019	Announcement of successful LA bids.
March – Sept 2019	Potential proposer group application stage/engagement
30 September 2019 (midday)	Potential proposer group application window closes
Sept – Dec 2019	Assessment of potential proposer group applications
Winter 2019	Secretary of State's decision on successful proposer groups;
Early 2020	Announcement of successful proposer groups.

3. Contact details and further information

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

Name: Judith Westcott

Job title: Acting Head of Children's Commissioning

Email: Judith.westcott@wiltshire.gov.uk

Tel: 0786 7141051

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

Name: Anthony Dixon or John Price

Job title: Build Programme – Senior Project manager

Email: <mailto:Anthony.Dixon@wiltshire.gov.uk> or john.price@wiltshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01225 716561

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

RSC: Sam MacDonald

RSC's office: South West

Email: Samuel.MACDONALD@education.gov.uk

4. 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.

The free special school proposal is based on extensive prior consultation. The table below shows who was asked and a summary of their feedback.

Who	How you have engaged (e.g. surveys, meetings)	Summary of engagement (e.g. summary of survey findings and/or conversations)
Wiltshire's neighbouring local authorities	By Email all neighbouring local authorities	Neighbouring local authorities have indicated that the travel times to the new school in Salisbury would make commissioning places unlikely for them
Commissioning bodies	An extensive consultation ended in July 2018 with Wiltshire Children's Operational Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognition of overcrowding of Special Schools in the North particularly at St Nicholas and Larkrise (Complex / PMLD)• Interest in community links with implications for inclusion in the community and in adulthood
Local mainstream schools	An extensive consultation ended in July 2018; All mainstream schools were consulted as well as being on the strategic policy group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concern over current long journeys – more for time than distance
School representative bodies e.g. school's forum –	An extensive consultation ended in July 2018: Schools Forum.	The existing schools are running in-year deficits of £1m overall and growing in the next three years. The existing pattern of placements in independent special schools creates overspending in the High Needs budget
Representatives of parents and carers and young people e.g. parent/carer forum – please specify	An extensive consultation ended in July 2018: Wiltshire Parent Carer Council with 2,500 members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Desire to ensure that children and young people with SEND in Wiltshire receive the best possible education• That schools should be part of communities and have good facilities and resources

Any other partners e.g. community groups, FE colleges – please specify	An extensive consultation ended in July 2018: Pupil Voice; Wiltshire College	Students were happy at school and college. Relationships with friends and teachers were most important, and a 'family atmosphere'. Links with the community offered life-skill opportunities, as well as a sense of 'belonging'.
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The bid is partly to provide sufficient special school places for serving soldiers' families that are being moved to Salisbury Plain from Germany as part of Army Basing. Wiltshire is a mainly rural county. The proposed site for the school is Salisbury, a small city located to the south of Salisbury Plain, which is a very large uninhabited parcel of land used by the MOD for military training purposes. DEFRA statistics ranks Wiltshire 2nd (Cornwall 1st) most rural in the Rural-Urban Classification of Local Authorities (2011 National Census). All neighbouring local authorities (LAs) have been asked if it is practical for them to commission places at the proposed school. Where possible there is joint commissioning, for example 30 places are commissioned from BANES council for ASD pupils living in north Wiltshire. However, in this case after extensive consultation with neighbouring LAs joint commissioning of places in the South has not proved practical. All neighbouring LAs support the need for the school. On this basis, Wiltshire is making a solo bid as it is not feasible for the school to serve more than one local authority due to travel times.

Wiltshire's vision for high needs provision supporting children and young people with SEND is to:

- Improve outcomes
- Ensure good safeguarding practice
- Reduce, prevent and mitigate the effects of child poverty
- Enable resilient individuals, families and communities.

The specific objective for SEND provision is - the right educational provision, in the right places, for the right pupils, at the right time, and that the right support is offered to enable schools to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

Wiltshire received good feedback from the recent OFSTED SEND area review. However, there are significant cost pressures for both the local authority and for other providers of SEND services. Whilst numbers of pupils with identified SEND are relatively stable, planned housing developments and the movement of troops into the county in 2019 will see the number of children with SEND in Wiltshire rise.

The key strategic issues requiring immediate attention in Wiltshire are:

- Pupil numbers: an additional 220 special school places are needed by 2026 (123 in the north and 97 in the south)
- Lack of provision in the south requires 71 ASD & SEMH special school pupils to travel from south to north (growth referred to above will sustain the viability of the schools in the north)
- Poor physical condition and overcrowding by 50% of two Special Schools in the north. This limits the schools' ability to meet the profound and complex needs of the pupils
- Financial pressures on some special schools and on the high needs block as a whole
- The imminent move to the Salisbury Plain Training Area of soldiers and their families from Germany as part of Army Basing
- Outcomes in all settings.

Considering the MOD's policy not to deploy soldiers with children with high level of SEND overseas and Wiltshire's position as the largest military centre in the UK, there is increased probability army families with a high level of SEND will locate to Wiltshire. It is anticipated that Army Basing when fully deployed will generate additional need for 10 – 15 ASD/SEMH special school places near Salisbury. Evidence for this already exists at Exeter House (for profound and Complex needs), the only special school in the south, which currently has 20% military families compared with an average of 7% in the Special Schools in the north.

The Trust operating the new free special school will need to work with a number of services supporting children in Wiltshire including health and social care.

- Support and Safeguarding Service
- Specialist SEN Services and Inclusion Support
- Virgin Care providing community care services (e.g. Speech and Language, OT and Physiotherapy)
- Educational Psychology
- Behaviour Support
- Youth Offending and Prevention
- Education Welfare Service
- Virtual School and Placement Services
- CAHMS (Oxford Health)
- Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Community providers e.g. Barnardos operating the short breaks scheme
- Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC)
- Mainstream and special schools in Wiltshire
- Childminders and Early years settings (including specialist SEND providers)

This school is part of a wider programme of work and actions taken to address the above issues, including:

- This bid is to create a new ASD/SEMH school in the south, providing an additional 150 places over time, to meet future demand and reduce geographic inequity of provision between north and south
- Address overcrowding of Severe Learning Difficulties / Complex schools in the north. Enable an increase of capacity to a total 350 to meet projected demand by 2026.
- Outreach & inclusion in centres of excellence providing a network of support.

Wiltshire has a strong track record of working with mainstream schools to prevent transfer of pupils with ASD/SEMH to special school and also to achieve reintegration of pupils into mainstream from special schools. To build 'safe independent lives', it is acknowledged that these lives will be lived predominantly in a child's own community. Hence it is fundamental to supporting the child and their family that every opportunity is sought and identified to start their journey back to mainstream. Our SEN 2 data (2018) demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach to inclusion and managing transition back to mainstream schools. England's average uptake of special school places is 35.8%, the South West average is 30.4% the Wiltshire average is 23.4%. This is the 19th lowest percentage in England LAs. The high level of integration in mainstream schools will continue with the new special free school in Salisbury. Support for mainstream school from Rowdeford, Downland and Springfield special school is already in place. Our SEND support services and special school teams build expertise in mainstream schools for children with ASD/SEMH. All Wiltshire schools would be informed of the new free school, its focus and the ethos of transition and fluidity of movement between schooling systems to support the child. Transition criteria would be shared and all schools alerted to the new provision as a centre of support and SEND excellence. If a child in mainstream provision was at risk of disaffection/ exclusion, the new free school would support on a spectrum from advice to observation to direct support within the school. All transitions involve effective partnerships with parents/ carers. Our special schools employ full time parent support and work in partnership with Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC).

Our shared underlying principles in Wiltshire:

- Delivering high standards of education for all pupils that counter vulnerability and disadvantage
- Providing pathways that are relevant to the needs of our young people and the wider community
- Basing our approach on verifiable research evidence
- Championing young people rather than institutions
- Schools collaborating rather than competing where it delivers positive impacts on learning

Wiltshire Council's strength is based on the ability to build positive relationships. We will fully utilise this strength with pupils, parents/ carers and all other stakeholders to ensure success for the new school. Our

vision for the new free school is to create a future, built around 'safe independent lives' for pupils with ASD/SEMH in the south of Wiltshire. The new free school will:

- Allow pupils to access to their local community
- Reduce pressures of transport and provide a saving to the High Needs Budget.
- Free up places at special schools in the north

Create a financially sustainable provision with a clear set values and principles that maximise outcomes for pupils.

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)	ASD and SEMH
Which local authorities are committed to commissioning places?	Wiltshire (Hampshire have also expressed an interest)
How many places have been commissioned and by which local authority?	150 Wiltshire
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)	£10k per place (base funding) plus £8k per pupil (top-up funding) 2019 rates. Forecast £15k top up funding by 2026.
Age range	4 - 19
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)	150
Type of placements offered (e.g. full time, short term, part time)	Full time
Number of nursery places, if applicable	0
Number of 16-19 places, if applicable	30 (based on-site, but with outreach)
Any planned outreach, training and/or reintegration support (including details of funding that will be made available to support the school with this)	An outreach service is already brokered with Special Schools by Wiltshire Council as a traded service to mainstream schools that support children and young people with autism. The new free special school will increase the capacity of this service to meet forecast demand. The service includes a comprehensive autism training package to teachers, support staff and school leaders based on the Autism Education Trust (AET). Individual pupils are also supported through bespoke training packages. Wiltshire Parent & Carer Council plays a key role in advising about how families are supported.

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	5	6	7	8	9	10	10
Key stage 1 (Y1-2)	10	12	14	16	18	20	20
Key stage 2 (Y3-6)	20	24	28	32	36	40	40
Key stage 3 (Y7-9)	15	18	21	24	27	30	30
Key stage 4 (Y10-11)	10	12	14	16	18	20	20
16-19: commissioner referred	10	12	15	18	22	26	30
Totals	70	84	99	114	130	146	150

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.

In Wiltshire, children with SEN can have their education needs met in one of four broad types of provision:

- In a mainstream school
- In a resource base attached to a primary, infant, junior or secondary school, or as part of an Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) at 27 of the 29 Secondary schools in Wiltshire (neither of the two Grammar schools have ELP)
- In a Wiltshire special school
- For pupils with particularly complex needs we work with other Local Authorities and independent providers to commission independent sector specialist provision within and outside of the County

Wiltshire currently has six special schools covering a range of SEND designations, totalling 628 commissioned places in 2018. Four of the schools (Downland, Exeter House Academy, Larkrise & Rowdeford) have good OFSTED reports, one requires improvement (St Nicholas) and one (Springfields Academy) is awaiting an inspection after joining a new trust which is supporting good progress. There is no special school in the south of the county that can support children and young people with ASD and SEMH who do not have complex physical disabilities or learning difficulties. Children and young people with ASD/SEMH without complex needs who live in the south, travel to Springfields Academy (ASD) in Calne (typically 35 miles) or to Downland School (SEMH) in Devizes (typically 26 miles). Currently, approximately 71 pupils make such journeys every day.

A rising number of pupils (currently 145) attend independent special schools. These can be costly placements, but are often the preferred choice of parents where the alternative would involve excessive travel times to our north Wiltshire schools. Some of these children/young people may also have needs that cannot be met in our schools in the north.

In creating a new 4 -19 special free school in Salisbury, Wiltshire Council will reduce the number of new placements made to independent special schools and place all pupils with SEMH or ASD needs who live in the south. Some children may also transfer from independent provisions. By 2026, this is expected to result in a saving of £6.24m per year.

Children/young people will be placed at the school via the Wiltshire SEND panel as required by the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) as per the 2014 Children and Families Act. At referral, it is expected that the Trust will liaise with Wiltshire Council SEND lead workers, early years settings and/or mainstream schools as appropriate as part of the transition to the special school. There will be further liaison with post 16 and post 19 providers as young people are preparing for adulthood.

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.

Without increased maintained special school capacity in the region, places for pupils with ASD/SEMH will be provided by the independent sector. These places will be expensive, estimated in 2026 at £64k compared with a possible average of £25k for the new school. Without the new school, the places are not likely to be in Wiltshire, so pupils will either travel long distances each day or become boarders. By 2026 the cost to the high needs budget of using independent special school places will be £6.24m per year.

Key outcomes desired from the new free school will build on current practice. In the context of a focus on vulnerability and disadvantage with resulting emphasis on quality first teaching that improves outcomes in parallel with wellbeing, pupils with SEN are more than twice as likely to be eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) as those without SEN (29.1% compared to 13.4%). Children with SEN make up 37% of all the children on FSM in Wiltshire. The data below identifies that Wiltshire's approach to integrated and inclusive support to pupils with ASD is showing improvement in academic outcomes, compared to national averages. Our aim beyond this is to be in the top quartile for pupil outcomes, with expertise from the proposed centre of excellence shared across inclusive schools.

Pupils with ASD - EHCP	2016	2017
KS2 RWM		
Wiltshire	19.6%	29.3%
National	22.0%	27.5%
Attainment 8		
Wiltshire	31.5%	30.0%
National	30.6%	26.8%
Progress 8		
Wiltshire	0.73	0.74
National	0.68	0.72

We will be specifically looking to the Trust to work with us to close the gap for young people on free school meals. We will also be looking for high levels of attendance and low levels of fixed term and permanent exclusions.

We will also expect to see a significant number of children having a short term or dual registered placements with the school. Enabling children and young people to return and thrive in mainstream settings will be a key outcome. Within EHCPs we will be looking to targets being met around building resilience, self led management and coping strategies and social skills which equip children/young people to manage the world around them so that they can thrive and succeed in adult life.

We will work with the Trust and key stakeholders to set key performance indicators around these outcomes.

Wiltshire Council has some of the best outcomes in relation to NEET and will be looking to the Trust to maintain and continue to improve on these outcomes for young people.

The new free school will allow current commitments and achievements to be expanded upon, enabling more children and young people to benefit from the good practice, including:

- A clear appreciation of the differing and shared needs of children and young people with ASD and those with SEMH
- A commitment to key performance indicators which focus on engaging pupils for readiness to return mainstream schooling
- A commitment to zero permanent exclusions and a philosophy which achieves high levels of attendance and limited fixed term exclusions
- A multi-agency approach to support the achievement of EHCP outcomes.
- An appreciation and commitment to pupil voice, such that the new school is shaped and designed with children and young people with SEMH and ASD
- A proactive and tangible partnership particularly with the ASD and SEMH special schools in the north of Wiltshire and with the wider group of special schools across the county.

We will also be looking to the Trust to work proactively with nurseries, childminders, children's centres and mainstream and special schools and schools with Resource Bases in the south of the County. We will be looking for clear activity that offers in-reach and outreach to children and young people and offer significant opportunities for staff to have short and longer-term training and secondments in mainstream and the special school. In particular we will looking for a strong link with Reach South (the MAT delivering Springfields school), Sarum Academy and Exeter Road Trust.

The main purpose the new free school will be to promote independence for the child at a functional level. This must include aspects of social development, integration within the child's community and transition into employment and training. The pupil's curriculum both at school and the home has to be widened to focus on meta-cognitions skills and the functional application of these skills in their community. The focus will be on the application of learning within the pupil's wider world. Outreach support in schools and in the community, linked to parental partnership and collaboration are pivotal in facilitating this promotion of independence.

SECTION FOUR: THE PROPOSED LOCATION AND SITE

This section describes the provisional site.

Full address and full postcode	Devizes Road, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 9LY
Size of site	3,225 sq m. The site is more than adequate to accommodate a building of this size plus the required external space (1.79ha), 2.87ha is available.
Further details on site (for example, current use/your reasons for choosing it/further developments (e.g. housing) planned for area	The site is 1.25 mile north of Salisbury city centre. It is on a main road (A360 Devizes Road) into the city with good access to settlements to the north, and east / west along the A303 including the Salisbury Plain Training Area. The site is adjacent to an existing 420 place primary school - Pembroke Park Academy. The site is close to a large housing estate - Bemerton Heath. The site was selected as the most suitable of the sites available in the south after an extensive options appraisal, including advice from Wiltshire Planning Officers. The appraisal report with a map is attached as an additional file.