



Department
for Education

Suffolk Free School Presumption Competition

**Proposers are sought for a new Special
School for Children with Communication
and Interaction Needs in Bungay, Suffolk.**

Section A - Introduction

Under section 6A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the 'free school presumption') where a local authority identifies the need to establish a new school it must, in the first instance, seek proposals to establish an academy.

Suffolk County Council has identified the need to establish a new special school for children and young people with Communication and Interaction needs in the Lowestoft and north east Suffolk area to open in September 2021. The Communication and Interaction description applies to provision for children who have a need for specialist support that enables them to develop their skills and confidence in communicating and interacting effectively. Children are likely to have difficulties with social interaction and the understanding and use of social rules of communication. They may experience difficulties with language and communication which will impact on how they relate to others. Children could have this need because of mental health challenges, autism or other special needs that require a nurturing and therapeutic environment.

In January 2019 Suffolk County Council agreed a new framework for the development of its specialist provision. This framework describes a pathway of specialist provision for each of the four main profiles of need identified within the SEND Code of Practice 2014. This new school will fit within the Communication and Interaction Pathway of specialism. Within this pathway there will be a continuum of provision to reflect a graduated response starting with mainstream placements supported by our specialist outreach service CISS. The pathway includes new specialist units in mainstream schools for children with more complex communication and interaction needs, from which it is expected that most children will reintegrate back into mainstream when appropriate, and for the pupils with the most complex needs, ensures a local special school offer.

Currently there is no specialist provision to meet the need for Communication and Interaction support within the Lowestoft and north Suffolk area. This school will meet that need. Current estimates of need indicate that 80 places will be required by 2021 with demand increasing as the population grows.

Suffolk has one school specialising in providing for students with communication and interaction needs located in Haverhill and another which is expected to be open in Ipswich in 2021/22. A new free school for pupils in the north east of Suffolk will enable local students to be taught in specialist provision appropriate to their needs close to their home.

The authority is therefore seeking proposals from appropriate sponsors to open this new school. This school would be deemed a free school. Proposers should complete the Free School Presumption application form (Appendix A) and return it to schools@suffolk.gov.uk.

The timetable for invitation and receipt of proposals and final decision-making is set out below:

Stage 1 – Invitation for Proposals	
20 January 2020	Launch of process: National and local announcements using DfE and SCC websites
2 March 2020	Deadline for receipt of proposals
Stage 2 – Assessment	
w/c 9 March 2020	Assessment of proposals and selection of preferred proposers
w/c 23 March 2020 or 30 March 2020	Assessment Panel Interviews
19 May 2020	Recommendation to SCC Cabinet and confirmation of preferred sponsor.
25 May 2020	Proposals are sent to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for the East of England and North East London for consideration and decision NB. The Secretary of State will only consider entering into a funding agreement with an approved sponsor/s. (The DfE's approved sponsor list can be accessed from the education.gov.uk website).
Stage 3 - Decision by Regional Schools Commissioner (for the Secretary of State)	The RSC will consider the LA assessments and recommendations and decide which proposer is in the best position to take forward the new school. The RSC will inform the LA and the successful proposer of the decision and the LA will inform unsuccessful proposers. There is no specified timescale for this part of the process.

The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for the East of England & North East London on behalf of the Secretary of State, will consider the local authority assessments and recommendations before deciding which proposer is in the best position to take forward the new school. The RSC will inform the local authority and the successful proposer of its decision, and the local authority will inform any unsuccessful proposers.

If you would like further information or wish to discuss your application, please contact Joy Stodart, Head of Schools Infrastructure, on 01473 265331/07515190911 or by emailing joy.stodart@suffolk.gov.uk.

NB: the local authority led free school presumption is a different route to the DfE's free school programme. Further information about how to establish a new school via the DfE's free school programme route can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/opening-a-free-school>

Section B - The School

As a specialist school, the pupils admitted would come from a wide range of feeder schools across north east Suffolk, however we would expect the school to have particularly close working relationships with the mainstream schools hosting specialist communication and interaction units. Along with the other specialist providers for communication and interaction, we would expect this school to provide a pool of professional expertise to support their mainstream colleagues in developing their skills and expertise within this field, especially in managing transition back to mainstream settings.

While Local Authority family services' teams will support pupils and families to secure the provision set out within their Education Health and Care Plan, it is expected that the new school will work closely with the pupil's current education setting to plan and implement a smooth transition into the new setting and, where appropriate, out of the new school into a mainstream setting.

Given the needs of the pupils that will attend this new school, close working relationships with community paediatric services and social care will be essential. The Local Authority will support the successful Trust to establish these through our SEND Strategic Partnership and our family services team. Our specialist provider development team will also offer support to enable the new school to establish the appropriate links needed within the local area to deliver a high quality, integrated learning offer.

Date of Opening

The new school is expected to open in September 2021 in co-located accommodation in the first instance. Pupil admissions will be phased over 2 years.

Site Location

The address of the new school is Hillside Road East, Bungay, Suffolk, NR35 1JS (see map attached). The site is in the ownership of Suffolk County Council. The facility currently houses a pupil referral unit (PRU) in part of the building but this unit is expected to relocate to Lowestoft within the next 2-3 years. Until that time, the special school will co-locate with

the PRU. The PRU is currently in accommodation which is self-contained with no access to the rest of the building and only controlled access to the extensive grounds.

The timescale for developing the buildings is as follows:

- Initial Design January 2020
- Appointment of Contractor April 2020
- Mobilisation on Site July 2020
- Handover and occupation Summer 2021

Refurbishment work has already been commissioned which will limit the scope of the successful provider to influence the works. However, providers should note that the school will be refurbished in accordance with current DfE Building Bulletin 104 requirements for special schools.

Capacity and PAN

The school's initial capacity will be planned at 80 places with the ability to expand to 120 places when the entire site becomes free.

	No. of students in first year of opening 2021	No of pupils in second year of opening 2022	Total
Year 5	12 across upper key stage 2	12	24
Year 6	<i>See above</i>		
Year 7	16 across key stage 3	16	32
Year 8	<i>See above</i>		
Year 9	<i>See above</i>		
Year 10	12 across KS4	12	24
Year 11	<i>See above</i>		
Totals	40	40	80

Age range and Phase of Education

The age range of the school will be 9 -16. The school will provide places for boys and girls (mixed).

Proposed admission arrangements

Referrals for the school will be through normal routes in Suffolk for determining a specialist placement. As part of the EHC needs assessment or plan review, the need for specialist provision will be considered and, parental preference will be taken into account. Formal consultation processes with the school as set out in the Code of Practice will underpin this process. Therefore, placements will be determined through the Local Authority panel process, following a formal consultation process with the school.

Places at the school will be commissioned by the Local Authority.

Revenue Funding and commissioning

Places for pupils in the Specialist Units will be funded in accordance with the Suffolk High Needs Funding Policy which is universal across all settings i.e.

- ▶ Specialist Place Funding - £10,000 per place
- ▶ Individual top up funding – based on individual pupils needs determined through the High Needs Funding Bands A to I. Follow link for band descriptors.

<https://www.suffolklearning.co.uk/3-11-learning-teaching/special-education/sen-high-tariff-funding>

Service Level Agreement

The successful sponsor will be expected to sign the standard Suffolk Specialist Provision Service Level Agreement.

Transport arrangements

The council's transport policy is available at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/school-meals-transport-and-travel/school-transport/>

Sponsors will be expected to produce a School Travel Plan. The new school will be expected to encourage safe and sustainable travel to school. Sponsors will be expected to work with the PRU and neighbouring schools when agreeing the timing of the school day and professional development dates to enable efficient use of school transport.

Equality and Diversity

As a County Council, we are committed to ensuring fair and accessible services for everyone in Suffolk. The weight given to the equalities and inclusion policy area within the

Council specifically complements our organisational priority in respect of supporting vulnerable people. We also have a responsibility to ensure that the companies and organisations that we commission to provide services on our behalf, take the same positive approach to equality. All potential academy sponsors will be required to demonstrate their commitment to promoting equality and diversity and to eliminating unlawful discrimination.

Working in Partnership

A key component of selection would be the sponsor/s willingness to work in collaboration with other providers and local partners to develop services which meet the needs of local children, young people and families in a coordinated way. In particular, sponsors would be expected to work with mainstream schools to plan effective pupil transition.

Sponsors will also be expected to support the strategic responsibilities of the county council to ensure sufficiency of high-quality school places and improved educational outcomes through agreed sharing of data and information

Section C - Vision

Sponsors will also be expected to support the strategic responsibilities of the county council to ensure sufficiency of high-quality school places and improved educational outcomes through agreed sharing of data and information.

The proposal should explain how the applicant group will ensure the following:

- a strong educational vision for curriculum delivery based on high standards of attainment
- the trust and support of parents
- a strong and effective vision for each key stage including effective transition into post 16 educational opportunities
- effective management focused on outstanding teaching and commitment to children (including strategies for effective performance management)
- consistently high-quality teaching throughout the school
- excellent support facilities to meet the needs of all children
- excellent outcomes and consistent quality of teaching and learning

- seeking out and sharing best practice within and beyond the school, promoting innovation and creativity in learning and teaching
- implementation of rigorous processes of self-evaluation and continual improvement
- outstanding and dynamic leadership, management and governance
- robust and effective financial management.

Section D – EDUCATION PLAN

The proposal should cover the following:

- An ambitious and deliverable curriculum plan which is consistent with the vision and pupil intake and allows for educational progression
- Strategies for measuring pupil performance effectively and setting challenging targets
- A staffing structure that will deliver the planned curriculum within the expected income levels
- Details of enrichment and extended services, for example, breakfast clubs, sports clubs, homework clubs and music/art clubs

Section E – CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

The proposal should cover the following:

- A clear evidenced track record of relevant high-quality educational delivery
- The resources the applicant group would deploy to support the development of the new school by the opening date
- Any resources outside the applicant group that you would draw on to help establish the new school
- How the school will be organised and how this will develop
- How the school will work with parents, staff and the community in managing this development and any changes necessary to achieve implementation
- Clear evidence that you have the skills and ability to manage a school budget
- What the governance arrangements would look like

Section F – FUNDING AND COSTS

Capital Funding

The county council will provide the land and buildings for the school.

Lease Arrangements

The site area will be made available to the agreed academy provider on a 125-year lease for a peppercorn rent, with the usual terms pursuant to the 2010 Academies Act.

Other Allowances

The Council will provide a **start-up** allowance of £225,250 to cover the employment of a Headteacher and administrative support in advance of the school opening.

A **setting up** allowance will also be made for each classroom. This is to pay for the desks, chairs and other equipment in each classroom in the school. The calculation is based on average costs. The basic cost for school classrooms is £5,000 per class. Specialist classrooms will attract funding of £7,500 per class. In addition to the funding per class, the council will also make a **block payment** of £37,500 for the school to cover the cost of establishing office and communal space etc.

Pupil related funding

The council will guarantee an initial level of pupil funding to allow for any diseconomies of scale in the opening phases. This will be the difference between the estimated pupil numbers and 75% of commissioned places as they progress through the school for the first 2 years. Applicants should note that in Year 1 only half of the overall places will be commissioned i.e. guaranteed minimum funding will be 75% x 40 pupils.

Section G – IMPACT ASSESSMENT

As prescribed by Section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 and Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the LA impact assessment reviews the potential impact of any new school on existing educational provision in the area. The impact assessment is attached at Appendix B.