**SEND Free schools**

**Pre-application consultation**

08 September 2022

**Introduction**

As set out in the recent *special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) green paper*[[1]](#footnote-1), the government has set out plans to build 60 new centrally-delivered special and AP free schools across the country.

At this stage of the application and assessment process, the Department for Education (DfE) is inviting local authorities to apply for new special free schools.

Birmingham City Council (the Council) has submitted initial pre-applications (expressions of interest) for three (3) SEND Free Schools:

* Two (2) Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) designated 3-19 schools of 400 places each. One located in the north of Birmingham, the other in the south of Birmingham.
* One (1) Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH)/ASC designated 14-19 school with 120 places, located as near to the city centre as possible.

We are looking to gather your views before submitting applications, with this

initial consultation running from **8 September** to **5 October 2022**. There will be further consultation if our applications are successful.

**Why do we want to do this?**

The number of pupils with SEND in Birmingham is growing. In 2021/22 there were over 500 more pupils aged 4 to 19 with Education and Health Care Plans than in 2018/19. A further net increase of over 1,000 is now forecast by 2031/32.

Whilst plans are underway to expand our current special schools, this will not be enough. To meet the demand for more SEND school places we will need to create new schools. Following a recent review of SEND forecasts for Birmingham, the Council have asked for special dispensation to bid for 3 schools given the demand we are experiencing and expecting to continue.

**Evidence of Demand:**

There is a significant need for more school places in Birmingham for children with EHCPs, both in special schools and in mainstream schools. In the last four years the Council has increased the total number of special school places available to pupils with EHCPs by 10%. There has been an increase in the number of pupils with EHCPs in Birmingham, by over 800 in the last two years. There is also an increase in requests for statutory assessments which may lead to EHCPs; these requests are currently averaging 150 each month.

If we continue to commission places in the same way as now, by 2031/32 we will need to accommodate an additional 17% in special schools. In reality, we will need to create more places than the figures above suggest.

Most of the forecast SEND growth is in the secondary and post-16 phase and in particular, Communication and Interaction Needs (mainly ASC). However, there is some growth at primary also. A number of existing special schools within Birmingham manage successful all-through schools to support the transition of pupils between primary, secondary, and post-16 phases. We recognise that there is a need for additional capacity across the city for ASC provision.

There is indication of some growth in the SEMH secondary and post-16 ages, combined with existing issues and significant reliance on independent providers. With SEMH provision currently in the south and east of the city, there is a gap in provision in the central area of the city.

**Special Note**: We are unable to provide many details on the proposed sites at this stage, however we will endeavour to keep stakeholders informed as plans progress. A SEND sufficiency document is earmarked for release this autumn once all signoffs have been achieved.

**Proposed Free Schools Information:**

Information on the proposed free schools can be found overleaf on page 3.

The proposals are based on the forecast data.

**Will there be any impact on other schools, academies, or education providers?**

There is a high and ongoing demand for SEND places. We are carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment on these proposals during the consultation period to ensure that all factors have been considered.

**How will this proposal increase educational standards and parental choice?**

The Council is keen to ensure that future places are provided in the areas that they are needed, helping children and young people to attend a good school nearer to home and as part of their local community. The proposals will also reduce the dependence on more expensive independent provision.

**How will this proposal impact Travel and Transport?**

It is anticipated that these proposals will lead to a reduction in the average cost and time spent on transport compared to taking no action. Each school would have a travel plan and the Council’s transport arrangements for children with SEND will apply. Birmingham City Council’s Children and Young Person’s Travel Service will be fully engaged in the development of these proposals.

**What are the project costs for this proposal and how is it funded?**

The details of the costs are not currently available. It is expected that approved free schools are funded by DfE however land will be provided by the Council.

**Proposed SEND Free School information:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **SCHOOL 1** | |
| **Name of proposed school** | TBC |
| **Phase of School** | All through (primary, secondary & post-16) |
| **Age range** | 3 to 19 |
| **Proposed primary numbers** | 120 |
| **Proposed secondary numbers** | 200 |
| **Proposed post-16 numbers** | 80 |
| **Co-educational or single sex** | Co-educational (boys and girls) |
| **Type of SEND** | Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) |
| **Proposed site area** | North – B44 |
|  | |
| **SCHOOL 2** | |
| **Name of proposed school** | TBC |
| **Phase of School** | All-through (primary, secondary & post-16) |
| **Age range** | 3 to 19 |
| **Proposed primary numbers** | 120 |
| **Proposed secondary numbers** | 200 |
| **Proposed post-16 numbers** | 80 |
| **Co-educational or single sex** | Co-educational (boys and girls) |
| **Type of SEND** | Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) |
| **Proposed site area** | South - B31 |
|  | |
| **SCHOOL 3** | |
| **Name of proposed school** | TBC |
| **Phase of School** | Secondary and post-16 |
| **Age range** | 14 to 19 |
| **Proposed primary numbers** | 0 |
| **Proposed secondary numbers** | 72 |
| **Proposed post-16 numbers** | 48 |
| **Co-educational or single sex** | Co-educational (boys and girls) |
| **Type of SEND** | Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) and ASC |
| **Proposed site area** | Central – B12 |

**What happens next?**

Please submit your comments online via the BeHeard webpage by **5 October 2022**.

All responses from this initial consultation will be considered by Birmingham City Council and your views will go towards the final applications.

When a decision on any of the applications is received, we will publish them on this webpage. Should we be successful, we will consult further with stakeholders. Please also be assured that relevant planning consultations would also be required should plans progress.

Key dates

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Date** |
| Pre-application consultation ends | 5 October 2022 |
| Application window closes for LA to submit proposals | 21 October 2022 |
| Initial decision expected from DfE | Late 2022 to early 2023 |

**Groups consulted**:

Academy Trust

Birmingham Childrens Trust

Birmingham City Council employee

Birmingham Councillor

Diocese

Governing body

Member of Parliament

Neighbouring local authority

NHS Staff

Parent/Carer

Pupils

School Staff

Trade Unions

Thank you for taking the time to read and comment on our proposals.

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| --- |
| **Consultation Response Form** |

If you are unable to access the online survey, please consider completing the below form and emailing it back to us at: ediplaceplanning@birmingham.gov.uk

Alternatively, please post it to:

Birmingham City Council,  
Pupil Place Planning,  
PO Box 15843,  
Birmingham,

B2 2RT

Please help us to analyse your response by completing the following:

Your name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your contact details (optional):   
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Are you in favour of the proposals (please select one answer)?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Yes** | **No** | **Neither/Don’t know** |

What type of stakeholder are you (please select one answer)?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pupil |  |
| Parent/Carer of pupil |  |
| School Governor |  |
| School Staff |  |
| Local Resident |  |
| Local Councillor |  |
| Member of Parliament |  |
| Other (please describe) |  |

|  |
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|  |

Please provide your comments on the proposals.

(Continue on additional page, as required.)

Thank you for taking the time to send us your thoughts on these proposals.

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/send-review-right-support-right-place-right-time> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)