



Department  
for Education

# **Northumberland County Council Special Free School application**

**Proposal to establish a Special Free  
School**

**Northumberland County Council  
October 2018**

## 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 Northumberland 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. Key dates

<b>24 July 2018</b>	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.
<b>Early 2019</b>	
<b>Spring 2019</b>	
<b>Spring 2019</b>	
<b>Spring 2019</b>	
<b>Summer 2019</b>	

### **3. Contact details and further information**

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

**Name: Dean Jackson**

**Job title: Director, Education & Skills**

**Email: dean.jackson@northumberland.gov.uk**

**Tel: 01670 622764**

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

**Name: Sue Aviston**

**Job title: Head of School Organisation and Resources**

**Email: sue.aviston@northumberland.gov.uk**

**Tel: 01670 622281**

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

**RSC: Janet Renou**

**RSC's office: North of England**

**Email: rsc.north@education.gov.uk.**

#### 4. Northumberland County Council Context and Planning

Since the introduction of SEND reforms in 2014, Northumberland County Council has seen both a rise in the number of children with statutory EHC Plans and an increase in demand for specialist provision in order to meet the needs of these children and young people. The Local Authority (LA) has increased capacity in current special schools by increasing class sizes and with some small scale school adaptations. However, it has been acknowledged that this action alone will not address the current position. The LA is aware that there is a greater demand and agreed need for places than can be accommodated from the current school provision. Special school numbers have risen year on year over the past five years, with an overall increase of 57%. At the same time as an increasing demand for places, the DfE 2019/20 High Needs Block Allocations published in July 2017 show only an £8,000 or 0.025% increase to £32,005,134 from £31,997,134 for 2018/19. This was the lowest percentage increase of any LA in the country. This is on top of no increase in the High Needs Block allocation in 2017/18.

One of the main feeder schools for the proposed new provision would be the Dales School which is a primary aged special school. The Local Authority, as of January 2019, has extended the capacity of the Dales by an additional 50 places up to 139 by opening up a satellite of the school.

To cope with this sharp rise in demand, the LA has become increasingly reliant on out-of-county provision. With current charges ranging from £16,000-£35,000 per pupil, this is an unsustainable solution given the lack of appropriate places available within Northumberland. Over £5 million was spent on out-of-county provision in 2017 and this figure does not include the increasing cost of transport for these young people. Two of the out-of-county SEMH providers used by Northumberland have been rated as Requires Improvement by Ofsted; we are therefore in the unacceptable position of sending our vulnerable young residents out of the area to a poorer standard of education than they would receive within our own schools. The Northumberland schools that would currently meet the needs of these pupils are Cramlington Hillcrest and Atkinson House and they both have been rated Good by Ofsted. We see this new establishment both building capacity and complimenting the existing provision for pupils in Northumberland.

The aim of the new school will be to address the growth in the number of young people in Northumberland being diagnosed with ASD and SEMH. We will do this through the creation of an 80 place special school in the south east of the county, where the increasing growth in ASD and SEMH diagnosis has been most prevalent. Given the proximity of south east Northumberland to the Tyneside conurbation, both North Tyneside and Newcastle local authorities, our North of Tyne devolution partners, have indicated that they would consider placements, with further discussions taking place around specific numbers. Should Northumberland's bid be unsuccessful, the Council will be forced to continue to use out of county provision to meet demand in the short term with a view to sourcing alternative funding streams in the future.

The main objective for establishing the proposed provision for 80 of the North of Tyne's young people is for them to achieve better outcomes and improve their life chances. Furthermore, the table in Section C1i also demonstrates that there will be potential annual savings of £1.4 million arising through reductions in the use of independent and non-maintained school fees and associated travel costs by

educating these young people within Northumberland and closer to their home communities.

## 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>Area of SEN provided for (please detail designation alongside additional information known about the cohort's needs and abilities)</b>	SEMH and ASD with moderate learning needs. Not SLD or PMLD.
<b>Which local authorities are committed to commissioning places?</b>	North Tyneside Council Council, Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council have expressed an interest, in writing and in face to face meetings in commissioning places in the proposed new school. All these authorities are making expensive out of authority provision to meet the needs of pupils due to capacity issues.
<b>How many places have been commissioned and by which local authority?</b>	An overall total of 80 places will be commissioned but the exact split between Northumberland and other authorities will be confirmed in the future.
<b>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)</b>	Per pupil funding is estimated £16,750 per pupil based on place funding of £10,000 per pupil, plus an estimated Special Band C rate of £6,750 per pupil in line with the current Banded Funding structure for Special Schools. Band C is the most prevalent rate used for pupils in our special schools with 39% of our students at this assessed level of support. We would also expect some pupils to require Band D funding with a top up £8,250 and some Band E pupils at £10,500. Details on any potential breakdown of bandings would be based on pupil need but a likely split would be Band C 50, Band D 25, Band E 5.
<b>Age range</b>	11-16 (Key Stage 3 and 4)
<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)</b>	80 places

<b>but not nursery)</b>	
<b>Type of placements offered (e.g. full time, short term, part time)</b>	Full time
<b>Number of nursery places, if applicable</b>	N/A
<b>Number of 16-19 places, if applicable</b>	N/A
<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>	<p>Northumberland County Council is currently in the process of recruiting Inclusion Support Workers into the School Admissions and Inclusion Team. If the bid was successful, the new staff will use the school as their contractual work base. The primary focus of these officers will be ensure the educational, social, emotional and health development of children and young people is fully supported by coordinating appropriate and effective interventions plans. They will also have a key outreach role through the promotion of inclusive practice within mainstream environments to ensure exclusions are kept to a minimum. In addition they will be supporting the reintegration of permanently excluded learners from alternative provision back into mainstream school. This service is currently funded through High Needs Funding and we would hope that the provision of this service would complement the work of the free school enabling the sharing of good practice.</p>

Type of school	Alternative Provision
Purpose(s) of placement (e.g. reintegration/long term provision) and needs of children (please include local context and needs of pupils within expected cohort)	
How many places have been commissioned by the local authority(ies) and how many by other commissioning models? (Please provide a full breakdown of places)	
Per-pupil revenue funding the local authority/other commissioners 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)	
Age range	
Gender (Boys/Girls/Co-educational)	
Total number of proposed full time equivalent places (once school is at full capacity this should include 16-19 places but not include nursery)	
Type of placements offered (e.g. full time, short term, part	

time)	
Number of nursery places, if applicable	
Number of 16-19 places, if applicable (please detail should the funding differ for 16-19 places)	
Any planned outreach, training and/or reintegration support (including details of funding that will be made available to support the school with this)	

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	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reception	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Key stage 1 (Y1-2)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Key stage 2 (Y3-6)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Key stage 3 (Y7-9)	24	36	48	48	48	48	48
Key stage 4 (Y10-11)	16	24	32	32	32	32	32
16-19: commissioner referred	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A



Totals	40	60	80	80	80	80	80
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## 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.

Our Special School numbers have risen by 57% since 2013 :

NORTHUMBERLAND CC MAINTAINED SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES SPECIAL SCHOOL NUMBERS						
Special School	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Atkinson House	62	53	56	59	66	73
Barndale House	36	38	40	37	39	40
Cleaswell Hill	126	149	155	163	173	175
Collingwood School	105	129	145	137	137	147
Cramlington Hillcrest	46	56	58	62	74	84
Hexham Priory	61	65	77	78	89	99
The Dales School	68	73	76	76	89	89
The Grove School	36	39	42	43	45	46
NCEA (unit)	n/a	n/a	n/a	94	94	94
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>847</b>

*Source : January School Census statistics*

Since 2016, to date there has been a 43% increase in the number of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans, from 1460 to 2093. This figure does not include the 378 additional pupils without an EHC Plan who are in receipt of top Up funding (May 2018 School census).

If successful, this bid will provide the necessary capital funding to provide an additional school to reverse the trend of increasing out of county placements, releasing an estimated £1.4-£1.5 million annual revenue savings.

The bid for this free school supports the Local Authority strategy to develop sufficient provision to meet the needs of pupils with SEND, to ensure that the provision commissioned is of a high quality, demonstrates efficient use of resources and provides the best possible outcomes. The Local Authority has already increased primary provision for pupils with these needs and secondary provision needs to be increased accordingly.

The new additional primary provision is linked to a school in the same area of the proposed Free School site and would act a feeder school. In addition the new free school would enable the Local Authority to lower the age designation of a two special schools.

The process for referrals to the school would be through the processes in place for pupils with SEND. All four Local Authorities manage requests for special school places through an SEND Panel making recommendations to LA designated officer.

*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.*

It is the council's stated intention that each child must be in a service that best meets their individual needs. As a result of more local provision in the South East of the county, parental choice would be increased, young people would be able to attend a setting within their home communities and they would spend less time travelling to and from their specialist provision. While this is beneficial to the wellbeing of families and to the young people attending the school, a special school in the preferred location would also lead to significant savings to the Council's high needs budget and SEND transport costs. We would not envisage the establishment of this school increasing the risk of exclusions from mainstream schools and reducing inclusion. With support from head teachers, we are in the process of reviewing the process of identifying pupils requiring special school provision so that we have a high degree of rigour when agreeing placements and that this is supported by expert support from current head teachers. In addition we are currently in the process of recruiting Inclusion Support Workers into the School Admissions and Inclusion Team. If the bid was successful the new staff could use the school as their contractual work base. The primary focus of these officers would be ensure the educational, social, emotional and health development of children and young people is fully supported by coordinating, appropriate and effective interventions plans. They would also have a key outreach role through the promotion of inclusive practice within mainstream environments to ensure exclusions are kept to a minimum. They would be supporting the reintegration of permanently excluded learners from alternative provision back to mainstream school.

We expect that by having a strong focus on preparing for adulthood and establishing strong links with Alternative Providers we are able to ensure that students make successful transition to Post 16 providers either in mainstream colleges or training providers, with a consequent reduction in the number of young people recorded as NEET.

We would expect that the school promotes strong educational progress and provides good educational outcomes. Through partnership working, and challenge and scrutiny of pupil progress against the agreed outcomes in pupils EHCPs we believe that the outcomes for students in a more local provision will be significantly better than the current OOA arrangements. Northumberland has a history of supporting local special schools to deliver improved outcomes and all LA special schools are good or outstanding. Although this school would be not be maintained by the LA we would offer the same support and challenge as we do to LA schools.

Pupils attending special schools in Northumberland with a primary need of SEMH achieve well above the national average for GCSE outcomes. Whereas nationally only 34.8% were entered for GCSEs and only 33% of those entered achieved passes, in Atkinson House 76.9% were entered and 80% of those achieved a pass. Hillcrest School does not currently offer GCSE or equivalent qualifications due to the needs of the pupils.

## SECTION FOUR: THE PROPOSED LOCATION AND SITE

This section describes the provisional site

<b>Full address and full postcode</b>	Princess Louise Road, Blyth, Northumberland. NE24 2TS
<b>Size of site</b>	4753m2
<b>Further details on site (for example, current use/your reasons for choosing it/further developments (e.g. housing) planned for area</b>	<p>The proposed site is in the south east of Northumberland in one of the most populated areas of the county in the town of Blyth. It is in the heart of the area with the greatest demand for special school places. The site itself has been chosen due to deliverability of the project as the site has been previously used for a 120 place school until its closure in 2008. The location and previous education use make this site ideal for redevelopment for SEND provision. The site is a clear site with all the previous buildings being demolished in 2017.</p> <p>Whilst there would be plenty of space to provide outdoor hardstanding play areas, as well soft landscaping, there will be limited grassed sports pitches. We do not envisage this as an issue, however, as it will be in line with some of our other special schools in Northumberland. The site is also directly opposite the Blyth Leisure centre so there is an opportunity to enhance the sports offer through the use of these facilities.</p> <p>The local authority has confirmed that the site could be used for a free school with a lease for 125 year on a peppercorn rent. The local authority are currently in negotiations with developers to secure Section 106 funding specifically for SEND places. There are currently two applications for developer contributions to SEND in the area with ongoing negotiations with the developers for two separate applications for 72 and 171 houses respectively. The planning application determinations are likely to be complete in the next three months. The local authority is seeking £171k worth of contributions and would contribute the full amount to this scheme if negotiations and planning applications are successful.</p>

