

Bury Primary Special Free School

Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

Seeking proposals to establish a Special Free School

Bury Council

May 2024

SECTION ONE: OVERVIEW

1. **Summary**

The Department for Education (DfE) is working collaboratively with selected Local Authorities (LA’s) to establish new schools that fit within the local authorities’ strategies for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This opportunity is intended to identify and meet untapped demand for special and 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 project development grants subject to value for money assessments.

This document sets out the key information regarding the school that Bury 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.

1. **Key dates**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Action** |
| **13 May 2024** | **Expression of interest period opens.**  DfE has published proposer guidance on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-free-school-applications/how-to-apply-to-open-a-special-free-school) with a link to the school specification, which is also published on the local authority’s website. |
| **31 May 2024** | **Expression of interest period closes at 23:59** |
| **10 June 2024** | **Application window opens.** Applications should be sent via email to [FS.Applications@education.gov.uk](mailto:FS.Applications@education.gov.uk). Completed applications will be accepted at any point throughout the application window. |
| **19 July 2024** | **Application window closes at 23:59** |

Following the closure of the application window, DfE will assess applications and interview the strongest applicants. Applicants who are invited to interview will be contacted and given a minimum of 2 weeks’ notice.

It is likely that interviews will take place in the Autumn**.**

1. **Contact details and further information**

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

**Name: Paul Cooke**

**Job title: Strategic Lead (Education)**

**Email:** [**p.cooke@bury.gov.uk**](mailto:p.cooke@bury.gov.uk)

**Tel: 0161 253 5674**

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

**Name: Roger Frith**

**Job title: Head of Land & Property**

**Email:** [**r.frith@bury.gov.uk**](mailto:r.frith@bury.gov.uk)

**Tel: 0161 253 5995**

Please find below the contact details of the Regional Director (RD):

**RD: Vicky Beer**

**RD’s office: North West**

**Email:** [**RG.NW@education.gov.uk**](mailto:RG.NW@education.gov.uk)

1. **Engagement event**

It is proposed to host an engagement event for potential sponsors on Microsoft Teams on Friday 21 June 2024, 2 – 3pm.

1. **Bury Council - Context and Planning**

Section Three sets out the local context in detail. In summary, Bury Council is facing shifting demographic pressures, whilst continuing to see growth in demand for specialist provision across all age ranges. The number of children and young people assessed as having special educational needs, and in receipt of an EHC plan, has been growing for a number of years, and has seen significant growth as we emerge from the pandemic.

In addition, planned and potential housing development will potentially increase the demand for specialist provision still further.

Historically, Bury has had limited Special School capacity in the form of one primary special school and one secondary special school, both of which are judged Outstanding. Alongside this, there are a small number of Resourced Provision units within mainstream school settings. Bury’s one primary special school has only 160 places compared to 330 places in secondary special school. There will be a further 80 secondary special school places from September 2024 once the new secondary Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) free school reaches capacity. This further emphasises the imbalance between primary and secondary specialist provision.

This limited capacity, together with the higher than average proportion of children and young people with an EHC plan has placed significant pressures on the local provision, and has resulted in an increasing number of those children and young people being placed in Independent and Non Maintained Special Schools which are predominantly located outside the local area.

Working with the DfE as an initial participator in its Project Safety Valve programme, the Council has developed ambitious plans to transform its arrangements in respect of SEND. This programme considers all aspects of the Council’s approach to SEND, which includes a comprehensive approach to understanding the sufficiency requirements across the local area, and an extensive programme to deliver increased capacity of high quality, local provision.

Through plans already in place, the local area will benefit from increased capacity:

* A new Special Free School, admitting its first cohort of students in 2023/24. This provision, sponsored by the Shaw Trust will cater for KS3/4 ASC, with a focus on the higher performing children and young people.
* The Council has recently invited expressions of interest from sponsors to establish a further Special Free School. Scheduled for opening in 2025, that school will cater for KS3/4 SEMH.
* Alongside this, the Council is working with a number of mainstream schools to establish further Resourced Provision units and is working with all schools on a graduated model, designed to enable mainstream schools to meet the needs of an increasing proportion of children and young people with SEND.

Taken together, these actions are designed to meet the increasing demand, whilst ensuring access to high quality local provision, and reducing the demand for placements in out of borough independent provision.

However, the additional special school capacity which is being established is KS3/4 and does not respond to the significant increases in demand that we are now seeing at KS1/2. There has been an 103% increase in Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) applications for under 5s in 2021 and an increase of 22% in Key Stages 1 and 2.

The overall lack of special school provision at Primary means that our existing special school caters for pupils with a broad range of needs, including those who present with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). This puts significant pressure on the existing special school places and, as the existing primary special school is full, increases the reliance on Independent Non-Maintained Out of Borough provision. As at September 2022, there had been an increase of 29 placements in the I/NMSS sector over the previous year, and this number is still rising.

The new school, the subject of this specification, is designed to address this shortfall in provision and contribute significantly to the local authority’s continuum of provision.

**SECTION TWO: THE SCHOOL**

This provision will be a co-educational Special Free School for autistic children aged 4 – 11 with additionality, including Speech, Language and Communication Needs, learning needs and complex medical needs, whose needs cannot be met in mainstream schools or a resourced provision.

The plan is for the school to open to its first cohort no later than September 2026, ultimately catering for 80 pupils.

The new school will have two main purposes:

1. To provide specialist facilities for children for whom a mainstream placement would not be appropriate.

2. Act as a centre of excellence and support for the local communities and schools providing:

* Staff training and development by ASC/SLCN specialists to help children and young people remain in mainstream education.
* A base for multi-disciplinary outreach services supporting schools, colleges, parents and other schools to improve children’s outcomes.

The school will be designed and staffed to accommodate the age profile through a flexible range of interventions. Staff will be multi-skilled able to work in both classroom and outreach situations.

The new school would fit into the continuum of provision which supports:

* Meeting the needs of pupils with ASC/SLCN within local school settings,
* Transition into specialist provision where needs cannot be met in mainstream schools.

The Free School would ensure that the local offer included access to high quality specialist provision within the borough, reducing the need for placement in independent specialist provision.

| **Type of school** | Special |
| --- | --- |
| **Area of SEN provided for (please detail designation alongside additional information known about the cohort’s needs and abilities)** | Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) |
| **Which local authorities are committed to commissioning places?** | Bury Council |
| **How many places have been commissioned and by which local authority?** | 80 – Bury Council |
| **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)** | The funding applied would be in accordance with Bury’s banded Special School funding model. The bandings recognise the severity of SEND for individuals at each category of need, and ensure that sufficient resources are allocated, with additional support to eligible pupils provided where required. On top of the statutory place funding of £10,000, the bandings allocate top-up funding depending on the moderated assessment of individual pupil needs, with the higher top-ups reflecting where additional specialist support may be required for any individual child.   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Band | A | B | C | D | | Place Funding | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 | | Top up Funding | £9,000 | £11,300 | £13,500 | £18,000 | | **Funding per Pupil** | **£19,000** | **£21,300** | **£23,500** | **£28,000** |   For the purposes of calculating costs for an 80 place KS1/2 ASC/SLCN provision we will assume 50% will be at band B and 50% at band C |
| **Age range** | 4-11 |
| **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)** | 80 |
| **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** | 0 |
| **Any planned outreach, training and/or reintegration support (including details of funding that will be made available to support the school with this)** | The new school would have two main purposes:  1. To provide specialist educational facilities for children for those whom a mainstream placement would not be appropriate.  2. Act as a centre of excellence and support for the local communities and schools and possibly the wider sub region providing:  a. Staff training and development by ASC/SLCN specialists to help children and young people remain in mainstream education;  b. A base for multi-disciplinary outreach services (e.g. speech and language therapy, occupational therapy to improve children’s social and communications skills and outcomes.)  The school would be expected to provide Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for the other schools in the borough in consultation with the Inclusion Partnerships.  Specialist skills and experience within the Free School would also be required to provide support across mainstream settings.  Funding to support the provision of Outreach by special schools is included within their annual delegated funding allocation. |

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 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Reception |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Key stage 1 (Y1-2) | 24 | 48 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Key stage 2 (Y3-6) | 16 | 32 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Totals | 40 | 80 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**What we would expect of potential sponsors**

The proposal must demonstrate clear evidence of how the school will improve the lives of children and young people with ASC/SLCN, and how pupils will achieve their full potential, be independent, live healthy and fulfilling lives, and where their contributions to their local communities are welcomed, supported and valued.

There must be a strong educational vision, demonstrating how this informs your education plan, based on high standards of attainment for pupils following differing educational pathways.

A person-centred development strategy that underpins the educational vision and nurtures the abilities of all autistic pupils to promote identity, emotional understanding, and overall well-being. This is to ensure that all pupils at the special school are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged within a positive school climate.

Excellent support facilities to meet the needs of all pupils and their families, including:

* + - Looked after children
    - Care leavers
    - Children and young people living in poverty
    - Excluded pupils and those at risk of exclusion
    - Pupils with attendance or persistent absence issues
    - Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller pupils
    - Asylum seekers, refugees, and new migrants

If you have more than one school in your Trust, the overarching vision for your chain of schools and your planned expansion strategy (including how many schools you have in total, geographical, spread and timescales).

In addition, applicants are encouraged to provide the following detail:

* a brief explanation of their autism specialism, particular ethos, distinctive pedagogy, or educational philosophy. This needs to detail specific differing approaches to educating autistic girls and boys and how this will be managed within a co-educational offer.
* how your school will bring innovation to the local wider schools’ system and collaborate effectively with existing mainstream and special schools across Bury.
* how you will manage and develop your workforce to create local expertise and a sustainable work-life balance for all staff.
* if your proposed school is in a different area from your existing school(s), how you will ensure that the new school will be well supported.
* you should also explain how your proposed school would achieve the expectation set out in paragraph 1.37 of the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, 2015](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf) and meet pupils’ identified special educational needs.
* Plans for appropriate engagement with the local community, local schools, parents, and autism-specific voluntary and charitable organisations during the pre-opening period.
* a summary of how you plan to engage with those commissioning places at your proposed school, local partners and providers across Education, Health and Care, local parent carer forums and the Bury school community.

**SECTION THREE: RATIONALE AND CONTEXT FOR THE SCHOOL**

**The current local provision within which the school would operate includes:**

* + Primary Special School
  + Early Years Nursery School Resourced Provision
  + Primary Resourced provision for ASC
  + Primary Resourced Provision for SLCN
  + Secondary Special School
  + Free Special School (Secondary) ASC – opening 2023
  + Secondary Resourced Provision for ASC
  + Free Special School (Secondary) SEMH – target opening date 2025

There is limited resourced provision for primary ASC/SLCN in the borough linked to mainstream primary provision, with further Resourced Provision to be developed. However, it is not sufficient and there remains an unmet need for ASC/SLCN places 4-11.

The LA sufficiency strategy sets out an ambition to establish a further six primary age Resourced Provision units, and two further secondary age Resourced Provision units catering for ASC or Social Emotional and Mental Health in response to the two primary needs for which there is a gap in capacity.

However, even with this development, there remains a gap in ASC/SLCN provision for primary pupils. Specifically, as the analysis of SEND demand in Bury below clearly identifies, there is insufficient specialist provision in the borough, for which the Free School would meet the identified need.

It is intended this new free special school will be established as part of a broader continuum of provision, including the development of the additional Resourced Provision and new free special school provision.

This continuum will comprise:

* Inclusive mainstream schools, working to a graduated model, ensuring that the majority of children and young people can be supported in their local mainstream school.
* Mainstream schools with Resourced Provision, where those children and young people whose needs can be met in a mainstream setting, but with additional support, have access to local provision.
* Special schools, building additional capacity to enable a local solution to be available to the majority of children and young people who require a special school place.
* Thereafter, there will remain a small number of children and young people whose needs can only be met through specialist provision that needs to be commissioned independently.
* Alongside this, high quality Alternative Provision will be commissioned, to sit alongside the Pupil Referral Unit, to provide support for those pupils that might otherwise find themselves being placed in specialist provision.

**Details of need**

1. **National SEND Demand**

There is clear evidence nationally that the Covid pandemic has considerably increased the level of special educational needs in children and young people for the following reasons:

* The disruption to schooling has significantly widened the attainment gap
* The pandemic has adversely affected the mental health of children and young people
* The lack of opportunities for socialisation has adversely affected the development of many children
* All services dealing with children with SEND have had difficulty identifying such vulnerable children when they are not accessing education and other services, resulting in delays in identification of SEND, the implications of which are now feeding through the system.

This has been identified nationally. Most local authorities have reported very significant increases in requests for assessment and the proportion of children identified with SEND is likely to rise significantly. The DfE’s survey of SEND in January 2022 reported that the percentage of children with an EHCP had increased to 4% from 3.7% in 2021 and that the number of EHCPs had increased by 9.2%.

This picture will have progressively worsened since that survey as the full impact of the pandemic works its way through the system.

1. **Demand in Bury**



The overall picture of the number of EHCPs in Bury shows a relatively modest rise of 6.8% between January 2021 and January 2022.



However, this picture is misleading. As part of the Project Safety Valve (PSV) programme, the SEND team devoted considerable effort in ceasing to maintain EHCPs which were no longer required, particularly for the 16-25 age group. Some 250 were removed from the system which has artificially deflated the statistics for the growth in the demand for EHCPs. A more detailed analysis by age group reveals a massive growth in the numbers of EHCPs in the early years and significant increases across the primary and secondary sectors - an increase of 306 across those age groups.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Nov-21 | Aug-22 | Change | % Change |
| Under 5 | 88 | 179 | 91 | 103% |
| Age 5-10 | 568 | 694 | 126 | 22% |
| Age 11-15 | 648 | 737 | 89 | 14% |
| Age 16-25 | 767 | 515 | -252 | -33% |
| **Total** | **2071** | **2125** | **54** | **2.6%** |



This is reflected in the growth in the number of requests for assessment, which averaged 39 per month in the 2021/22 academic year but 50 per month in 2022/23.



It is not only the volume of the increase that is notable. It is also the severity of need that appears to be increasing. The impact of the pandemic on our SEND capacity is therefore severe and significantly beyond the levels of demand that were anticipated in drawing up the dedicated schools grant (DSG) recovery plan.

1. **Analysis by Need and Age Range**

The dominant categories of need, in line with the national picture, are ASC, SLCN and SEMH.In Bury, the medical pathways and diagnosis around ASC are improving and resulting in increases in EHCPs with ASC as the identified need.  Plans without formal diagnosis of ASC are categorised as SLCN, as SLCN is the primary need before ASC diagnosis.



As has already been demonstrated, we have witnessed a considerable spike in the identification of ASC and SLCN in the Early Years and Key Stage 1 which have significantly exceeded previous forecasts.





**Reduction in I/NMSS**

The major issue is the Millwood Primary Special School is full. However, the significant growth in the numbers of reception and Key Stage 1 pupils with severe needs, as noted above, has meant we have been forced to place significant numbers in the I/NMSS sector.

Currently, we place 28 primary age children with ASC/SLCN out of borough or in Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools at a total cost of £1.56m per annum. In addition, there are approximately 10 children awaiting placement. These numbers have, as indicated above, increased substantially in recent years and this trend is likely to continue.

**Schedule of existing provision**

The current and proposed capacity will be as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Provision | Designation | Primary Need | Age Range | Capacity | | | | |
| Current | 2022/23 | 2023/ 24 | 2024/ 25 | 2025/ 26 | |
| Millwood Special School | Special School | PMLD | KS1/2 | 160 | 160 | 160 | 210 | 210 | |
| Elms Bank Special School | Special School | PMLD | KS3/4/5 | 310 | 330 | 330 | 330 | 330 | |
| Free Special School 1 (Shaw Trust) | Free Special School | ASC | KS3/4 |  |  | 40 | 80 | 80 | |
| Free Special School 2 | Free Special School | SEMH | KS3/4 |  |  |  |  | 60 | |
| Free Special School 3 (subject to application) | Free Special School | SLCN | KS1/2 |  |  |  |  | 80 | |
| Satellite Special provision | Special School | ASC | KS1/2 |  |  | 10 | 10 | 30 | |
| Chantlers Primary School | Resourced Provision | SEMH | KS1/2 |  |  | 12 | 12 | 12 | |
| Gorsefield Primary School | Resourced Provision | SEMH | Early Years/KS1/2 |  | 3 | 12 | 12 | 12 | |
| Hoyle Nursery School | Resourced Provision | ASC | Early Years | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | |
| Mersey Drive Primary School | Resourced Provision | ASC | KS1/2 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 14 | |
| Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School (phase 1) | Resourced Provision | ASC | KS2 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | |
| Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School (phase 2) | Resourced Provision | ASC | KS1 |  |  | 10 | 10 | 10 | |
| Summerseat Methodist Primary School | Resourced Provision | Anxiety | KS1/2 |  | 5 | 12 | 12 | 12 | |
| Tottington Primary School | Resourced Provision | Physical but to be redesignated SEMH | KS1/2 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | |
| Unsworth Primary School | Resourced Provision | Communication | KS1/2 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 14 | |
| Vision House (Higher Lane Primary School) | Resourced Provision | SEMH | KS1/2 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | |
| Woodbank Primary School | Resourced Provision | SEMH | KS1/2 |  |  | 12 | 12 | 12 | |
| Hazel Wood High School | Resourced Provision | SEMH | KS3/4 |  | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | |
| The Derby High School | Resourced Provision | Anxiety | KS3/4 |  |  | 12 | 12 | 12 | |
| The Elton High School (TBC) | Resourced Provision | SEMH |  |  |  | TBC | TBC | TBC | |
| Woodhey High School | Resourced Provision | ASC | KS3/4 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | |

**Sufficiency**

**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.**

The council would expect the new school to deliver the following:

* An ambitious, broad and balanced, deliverable curriculum.
* Strategies for measuring pupil performance effectively and setting challenging targets, demonstrating a clear understanding of the expected pupil intake and their needs.
* A staffing structure that will deliver the planned curriculum within the expected income levels; with a focus on outstanding teaching, including strategies for effective performance management and developing pupils’ independence from the outset.
* The recruitment of appropriately trained and qualified staff and a longer-term strategy for maintaining and developing a workforce with appropriate skills and experience
* The needs of all pupils to be fully provided for and, and for the school to be fully inclusive. Approach to developing autistic pupils’ social learning and understanding, promoting independence as well as mental, emotional, and physical well-being.
* The needs of all pupils are fully provided for and how the school will be fully inclusive. Details of how you plan to effectively support autistic pupils with co-occurring conditions, including speech, language and communication needs, mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions, specific learning difficulties and co-occurring medical conditions.
* The offer will include the integration of appropriate Health services, especially therapies, to ensure children achieve the outcomes set out in their EHCP.
* A comprehensive offer of enrichment and extended services, for example, breakfast clubs, sports clubs, homework clubs, after school clubs and music/art clubs, opportunities for community engagement etc.
* The development of an outreach offer to ensure that the Trust forms part of the wider local area workforce offer as we develop skills across the continuum of provision to enable all children with identified ASC to achieve their full potential. The offer will play a fundamental part in improving the educational opportunities and experience for children with autism across the whole education system, through the proposed outreach function, multi-agency engagement and by providing training and support for mainstream schools.
* The Free School will operate as an Autism Hub to share excellent practice across the Borough and will seek nationally recognised accreditation. It will work with local services and parent groups to identify and provide support/training in evidence based interventions, opportunities for staff to observe outstanding practice and provide support groups/training for families in the Borough.

**SECTION FOUR: THE PROPOSED LOCATION AND SITE**

**The Council has identified the following site but is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of all of its property assets, which could potentially release other sites for consideration.**

| **Full address and full postcode** | Milton Road, Radcliffe, Manchester. M26 3GS |
| --- | --- |
| **Size of site** | 1.48 ha |
| **Further details on site (for example, current use/your reasons for choosing it/further developments (e.g. housing) planned for area** | The availability of land across the borough is constrained and therefore options for the development of new provision are limited. The site has been identified by the Council’s Property Services Team as one that has the potential for development.  Map  Description automatically generated |
|  | The site is designated as Protected Recreation in the Urban Area under Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Policy RT1/1.  **Education**  Paragraph 95 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:  a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and  b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.  **Recreation**  Policy RT1/1 seeks to safeguard the provision of recreation land within the urban area and development will not be allowed where it would result in the loss of outdoor public or private recreation facilities including parks and gardens unless it meets specific criteria.  Whilst similar, the approach in Policy RT1/1 has now been superseded by Paragraph 99(b) of the NPPF which states that ‘existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:   * An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or * The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of the quantity and quality in a suitable location; or * The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.’   The Bury Greenspace Audit and Strategy (February 2015) categorises the site as amenity greenspace and concludes that there is a surplus of this type of open space within Radcliffe.  Nevertheless, the proposal would result in the loss of open space and it is considered that this loss could be off-set through an appropriate financial contribution to improve the quality of other types of open space within the Radcliffe area. This may, for example, include improvements to natural and semi-natural greenspace or allotments – both of which are shown to be significantly below the minimum qualitative standard in Radcliffe. |