

Proposed New Special Free School in the London Borough of Havering New School Specification



**New special free school for Children and
young people aged 4 – 19**

Section A – Introduction

Overview

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. London Borough of Havering (LBH) has identified the need to establish a new special school in Romford for children and young people aged 4 – 19 who have severe and complex learning difficulties, to open in September 2027.

Havering has historically been, and remains, a highly inclusive borough with over half (51%) of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) attending mainstream settings compared to 40.5% in England in 2022. However, since 2011, the number of children aged under 18 living in Havering has increased by 15.2%. This increase far exceeds the 4.8% and 3.9% increases over the same period in London and England, respectively, and means Havering now has a higher proportion of children aged 0-17 (22.3%) than 80% of local authorities in England. As a consequence of this huge increase in the child population and local changes in-keeping with national trends towards higher numbers of children and young people with special educational needs, Havering’s Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system faces unprecedented pressure. Specifically, the spectrum of special educational provision is unbalanced, with insufficient special school places having a negative impact on all other parts of the SEND system and on the experiences and outcomes for Havering children and young people with SEND.

The purpose of the new special school is to meet long-term demographic demand for special school places, specifically for children and young people with severe and complex learning difficulties the majority of whom will be autistic. The development of the proposed school is part of a suite of proposals being developed by Havering to deliver a step change in the number of places for pupils who have complex special educational needs in local specialist provisions.

Analysis of Local Need and Provision

The 15.2% increase in the number of children aged under 18 living in Havering at a time when the number of EHCPs (or their predecessor, Statements of Special Educational Needs) has risen 52% nationally between 2010 and 2022 has meant a huge increase in the number of Havering children and young people requiring EHCPs. Specifically, having had 1602 children and young people with EHCPs in 2020, as of November 2023 there were 2494 children and young people in Havering with EHCPs. Furthermore, unmitigated forecasts suggest this number will rise by a further 54% to 3864 by 2030.

While increases in the number of children and young people with EHCPs have been seen across each of the four broad categories of need listed in the SEND Code of Practice, it is among children and young people with a primary need in the area of communication and interaction that by far and away the biggest increase has been seen. Not only is this evident in current and recent figures but also in projected figures as outlined in the table below. Here, projected figures indicate that the number of children and young people with EHCPs where the primary category of need is communication and interaction will have more than doubled between 2020-2021 and 2026-2027. Furthermore, across the many forums in which leaders within the local area SEND partnership meet parents, carers and school and setting leaders, it is the lack of local provision for children and young people with the most complex needs, the majority of whom have complex learning, communication and sensory needs, and typically diagnoses of autism, that is causing most concern.

Academic year	Cognition and Learning	Communication and Interaction	SEMH	Physical and/or Sensory	Totals
2020/21	544	905	272	173	1894
2021/22	574	1057	312	195	2138
2022/23	562	1251	385	204	2402
2023/24	592	1354	381	205	2533
2024/25	621	1525	418	215	2779
2025/26	631	1702	438	227	2998
2026/27	645	1891	452	246	3234
2027/28	655	2082	451	264	3452
2028/29	673	2269	448	280	3670
2029/30	691	2433	448	292	3864

Among this group of children and young people with communication and interaction needs we know a significant proportion will require a place in a special school. We have carried out extensive reviews of the potential development of our existing special school sites. We have worked with architects and planning officers to explore proposals for building extensions to our current special schools. This work has led us to conclude that due to the location, site layout, and planning restrictions, it is impossible to expand these schools any further. Consequently, while we currently have three good or outstanding special schools in the borough offering 359 places, and have recently expanded the number of places available in SEND Units or Resource Provisions (specialist provisions attached to mainstream schools) to 171, these 530 places are far from sufficient to meet the needs of the significant proportion of our current 2494 children and young people with EHCPs for whom a specialist setting is required, before even considering the projected increases in EHCP numbers.

The impact of this unprecedented increase in the number of children and young people in Havering with EHCPs has been seen across a range of performance indicators. Specifically:

- Havering's High Needs Budget expenditure has risen 20% in the past three years with a cumulative deficit of £8.3m at the end of the financial year 2022-2023. This figure is forecast to double each year without additional local special school capacity.
- The number of appeals by Havering families to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST), while still comparatively low, has doubled year-on-year since 2019-2020. Many of these appeals relate to special school places..
- Annual increases in the region of 10% in both the number of Havering children and young people having to be educated outside the borough, and consequently, in expenditure on home to school transport for children and young people with EHCPs.
- Increasing numbers of children and young people with EHCPs whose families have opted for them to be electively home educated, or who are being Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS).

The creation 300 additional places at a new special school within the borough will result in fewer pupils being placed at more costly provision outside the borough than would otherwise be the case. We project that in 2029, there will be 88% fewer pupils placed in independent/non-maintained special schools outside the borough if a new special school is opened. The average cost of placing a child at an independent/non-maintained special school outside the LA is currently £52,000 a year higher than the average cost of placing a child at a special school inside the LA. The total cost of specialist provision for children with EHCPs is projected to be £1.8m lower with a new school, than without one.

Application Process

Date	Action
March 2024	Launch of competition for a Trust/Proposer Group to run the proposed school. The school specification will be published on the local authority's website .
April/May 2024	Sponsor engagement events We will be holding two engagement events for Trusts and Academies via Virtual Meetings on Microsoft Teams. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 April 2024 10:00-11:30am • 17 May 2024 2:00-3:30pm

	Please email schoolsorganisation@havering.gov.uk for us to send you the meeting link prior to the meeting.
May 2024	Proposer groups will submit their applications. The local authority will assess all proposer group applications, with input from the department.
June 2024	Interviews start for groups with the strongest applications. Groups will be interviewed by a panel of local authority and DfE representatives.
July 2024	The local authority will make recommendations to DfE, who will make a final decision on which application to approve.
Summer 2024	The successful applicant will be announced and the project will enter the pre-opening stage.

The application window to operate the new special school will run for a ten week period, opening on Monday 18 March 2024 and closing Tuesday 28 May 2024.

If you would like to apply, please complete an application form and return to schoolsorganisation@havering.gov.uk before **5pm on Tuesday 28 May 2024**. The application form can be found [here](#).

Once the application period has closed, Havering and the DfE will use the model criteria from the [Free School Presumption Guidance](#) when assessing proposals in line with the published school specification.

The Regional Director (RD) for 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 Regional Director 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 Pooneeta Mahadeo, School Organisation Manager, schoolsorganisation@havering.gov.uk, 01708 431092

Please return your completed form to schoolsorganisation@havering.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>

During 2023, the Council consulted on and finalised its [Children and Young People Education Place Planning Plan 2023 -2027](#) (CYPEPPP). This is a four year rolling plan that is updated annually. It sets out how Havering Council seeks to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet demand for early years, primary, secondary, post-16, special school places and alternative provision places across the borough. Consultation on the CYPEPPP took place over an eight-week period between March-May 2023. In total 427 responses were received. One of the questions in the consultation asked respondents “Do you think we need a new special school in the borough?” In response, the majority of parents and stakeholders (64%) agreed that we need a new special school in Havering. This demonstrates the clear support for a new special school to meet the growing demand from SEND pupils in Havering.

Section B – The School

Type of school	Special School																																						
Area of SEN provided for	Children and young people aged 4 – 19 with ASD, SEMH and SLD SEND needs.																																						
Opening date	September 2027																																						
Planned initial PANs, on opening and expected rate of growth	Planned initial PANs as per the table below: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year of operation</th><th>Number of EY places</th><th>Number of KS1 places</th><th>Number of KS2 places</th><th>Number of KS3 places</th><th>Number of KS4 places</th><th>Number of 16-19 places</th><th>Total</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>First year of opening</td><td>0</td><td>24</td><td>32</td><td>40</td><td>0</td><td>10</td><td>106</td></tr> <tr> <td>Second year of opening</td><td>8</td><td>40</td><td>48</td><td>64</td><td>24</td><td>20</td><td>204</td></tr> <tr> <td>Third year of opening</td><td>24 Up to 3 classes</td><td>40 Up to 5 classes</td><td>62 Up to 8 classes</td><td>72 Up to 9 classes</td><td>72 Up to 3 classes</td><td>30 Up to 3 classes</td><td>300</td></tr> </tbody> </table>							Year of operation	Number of EY places	Number of KS1 places	Number of KS2 places	Number of KS3 places	Number of KS4 places	Number of 16-19 places	Total	First year of opening	0	24	32	40	0	10	106	Second year of opening	8	40	48	64	24	20	204	Third year of opening	24 Up to 3 classes	40 Up to 5 classes	62 Up to 8 classes	72 Up to 9 classes	72 Up to 3 classes	30 Up to 3 classes	300
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Proposed admission arrangements, including catchment area if applicable	Children with an EHCP and the relevant need type will be offered the school via the local authority’s special educational need service.																																						

Which local authorities are committed to commissioning places?	Havering
Pupil capacity	300
Age range	4 to 19
Gender (Boys/Girls/Co-educational)	Co-educational
Community use / shared facilities	We currently investigating an option to make the school library available to the public out of school hours, thereby allowing the wider community to benefit from the library at this school.
Transport arrangements	We envisage that the majority of pupils will arrive using our Passenger Transport Service as other pupils attending our Special Schools do now. A small proportion will be transported by their parents. Staff will arrive via the excellent public transport links available close to the school or by car.
Total number of proposed full time equivalent places (once school is at full capacity – including 16-19 places but not nursery)	300
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
Any planned outreach, training and/or reintegration support (including details of funding that will be made available to support the school with this)	We would expect the new Special Free School to contribute to the strong partnership working already in existence in Havering. For example, existing Special Schools already make training and resources available to staff in local Mainstream Schools and Additionally Resourced Provisions. They also offer advice and support to schools regarding strategies to adopt, and work very closely with the Local Authority Education Support Service. They also work very closely with schools when children are transitioning from Mainstream Schools or SEND units to Special Schools.

Character / Ethos

The proposed new school should be aligned with the [Children and Young People Education Place Planning Plan 2023 -2027](#). This is a four year rolling plan that is updated annually. It sets out how Havering Council seeks to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet demand for early years, primary, secondary, post-16, special school places and alternative provision places across the borough. Furthermore, the ethos of the new school should be shaped by Havering's Draft SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy (final version to be published, March 2024) which emphasises the local authority's vision to:

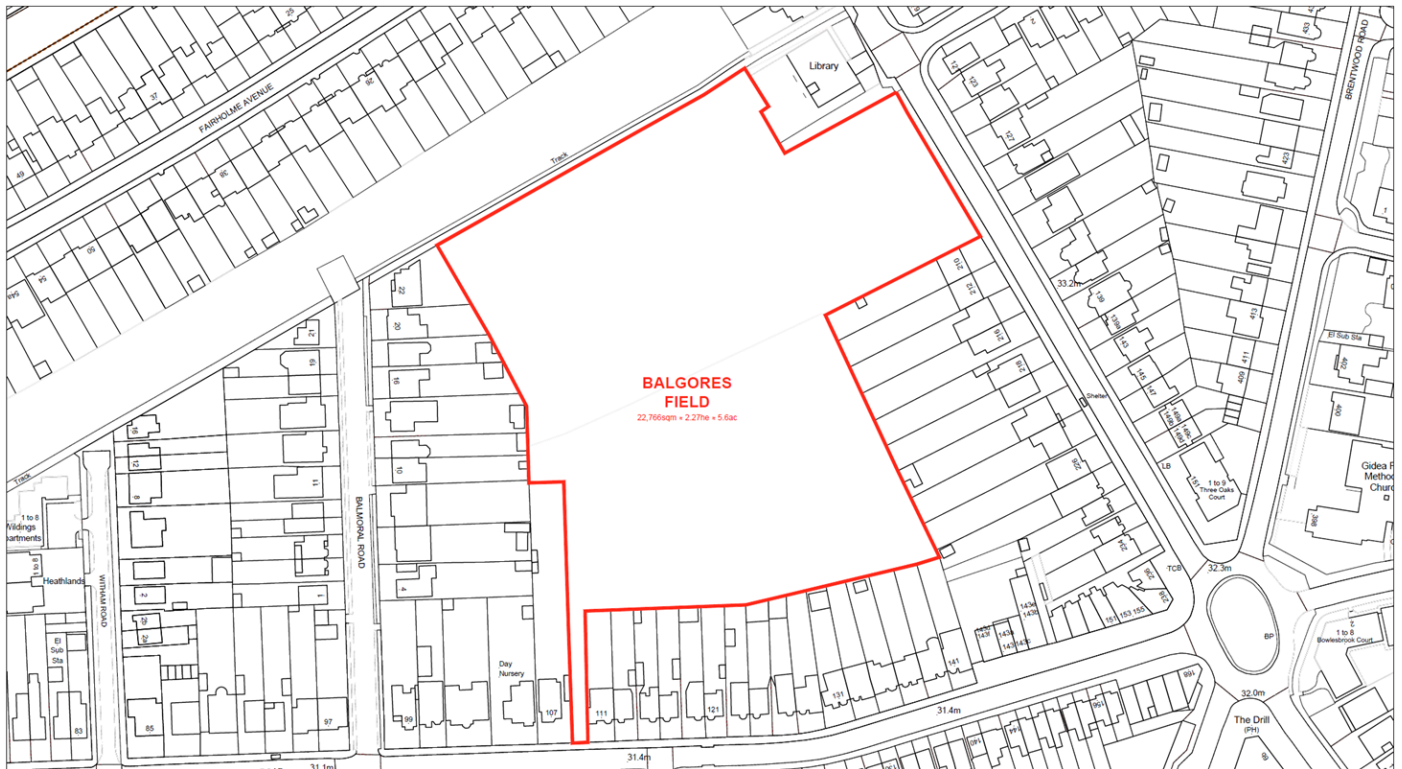
- Build parent and carer confidence in the local SEND and Alternative Provision system, through systematic co-production at all levels from EHCPs to service development.
- Work in partnership across education, health and care to deliver the right services at the right time, to prevent problems escalating through early intervention and early help.
- Ensure that when new provision and support is created, that Health, Education, and the Local Authority share responsibility to ensure that high quality support is in place for children, young people, and families when and where they need it. This will be enhanced by our emphasis on quality assurance through Delivering Better Value, including our strength based peer review model.

- Ensure children and young people with SEND can access the help and support they need to thrive and achieve within their local communities. They can go to local education provision that meets their needs, access services and play an active role in the community close to where they live.
- Give families easy access to information which helps them understand how best to support their child or young person's needs and access the help that is offered. This will include co-producing an improved website and local offer to diversify usage.
- Ensure children, young people, and families have access to the same level of high-quality support and education, wherever they live in Havering.

The London Borough of Havering has carried out an Equalities Impact Assessment, which is available [here](#).

Full address and full postcode	Playing Field off Balgores Lane, to the rear of Gidea Park Library RM2 6BS
Site ownership	The site is owned by the London Borough of Havering
Size of site	The site size requirements for a Special School for 300 pupils is as follows: 24,100sqm (Special School with team games). The building size requirements are as follows: 5,400sqm (All age special school for predominantly ambulant pupils).
Further details on site (for example, current use/your reasons for choosing it/further developments (e.g. housing) planned for area	The position of the site, with particular consideration to the transport arrangements both in terms of public transport (TPAL=3) and vehicular access and egress, is good. Its dimensions are suitable to the requirements of the proposed Special School. Its location near the Town centre is suitable. The restrictive covenant that applies warrants the development of a Special School (it restricts the use of the site for educational purposes). The LBH Tech Services - Architects Group have carried out a RIBA1 feasibility study on this site which has identified the site as suitable for development of a Special School.

Site / location



Section C – Vision

This is your opportunity to tell us in your own words about the overarching vision for the new special school in Havering and how it informs your education plan. You will need to demonstrate in later sections that the vision is both deliverable and affordable within the available funding. Your vision should be coherent and consistent with the other sections of your application.

Applications should evidence of all the relevant criteria in [Annex C](#) of the free school presumption guidance.

As a minimum, please ensure you include the following:

- A strong educational vision and a curriculum delivery plan based on high standards of attainment for each key stage
- Plans for appropriate engagement with the local community and parents during the pre-opening period and any on-going engagement
- Excellent support facilities to meet the needs of all children, including looked after children, those with Special Educational Needs, etc
- A commitment to excellent outcomes and high quality of teaching and learning

Please also include the following:

- To give pupils access to a highly individualised curriculum as is required for pupils with such complex learning profiles, while being suitably varied and wide. The curriculum will meet stated outcomes in a timely manner. The impact would be that the majority of pupils with the most complex needs achieve outcomes in the timescale stated in their EHC plans and will do so within their own local community. The curriculum would be expected to encompass early learning goals and progress through to acquisition of appropriate literacy and numeracy skills, life skills leading to maximum independence for the learners. Access to the taught curriculum would utilise suitable visuals support and the use of technology such as eye gaze, communication apps, interactive boards and other available technology. The development of independence skills and promotion of the principles of Preparing for Adulthood would be embedded in the approach of the school at each key stage.
- To be ambitious for all pupils. The impact would be to provide accredited courses for all pupils, particularly at KS4 and KS5. Key Stage 4 and 5 pupils will access a range of accredited courses carefully matched to their needs and abilities. Specialist provision at KS5 is limited in Havering and this school will meet this area of need avoiding the necessity of out of borough specialist college provision. The offer will include employment pathways including work placements and supported internships, learners would participate in these placements within their own community. Alongside this each learner in Key Stage 4 and 5 would be assessed for suitability for travel training and development of independent living skills and placed on an appropriate learning pathway to achieve these skills in line with their capacity to do so.
- To monitor, record and report upon the progress and attainment of pupils by the use of the Havering pupil progress tracker developed by an existing special school in Havering but also to utilise the recording systems as required by the DfE so that pupil outcomes are monitored and reported on regularly and accurately.
- To reduce numbers of pupils being placed out of borough – the impact would be seen on Havering’s high needs budget, and transport budget, plus the positive benefit of pupils remaining in their local community. This reflects the aims of the High Needs Strategy for Havering.
- The school will provide for a larger number of children on one site allowing for efficiencies in terms of the delivery of therapies by SALT / OT. Therapists will be able to support many children who have therapy written into their EHCPs on site at the school, which is so much more efficient than seeing children across a wide range of settings including those out of the borough. This would lead to greater capacity to

deliver more face to face interventions and improve outcomes for children and young people. This in turn will upskill staff on site as they will be able to see therapists modelling interventions and receive training, both individual pupil based and generic.

- To ensure high quality teaching and support for all pupils and ensure all staff have access to high quality CPD by ensuring these sessions are led by experts in the areas being developed through the CPD topic – impact is that all staff are appropriately trained in interventions / have a good understanding of SEND leading to improved outcomes for all pupils.
- To provide support for the wider school community (i.e., beyond the new school itself) – impact to provide outreach and training for the Havering school community raising awareness and improving practice. This would be a hybrid model of outreach and advice to in borough schools via referral and also a rolling programme of Inset days to raise awareness of SEND, particularly complex aspects of this area, to provide knowledge and strategies to teachers and TAs in borough schools. This could be virtual or on-site training. To develop a specialist SEND library/ community facility which can be used and enjoyed by both the pupils of the school and members of the wider community.
- To work closely with the parent/carers and members of the potential pupil cohort of the new school to capture their hopes and aspirations for their children/young people and those of the children/young people themselves and embed these into the development of the curriculum and wider life of the school as it develops. This will be done in conjunction with Havering's Parent/Carer Forum, listening forums held across the borough and via parent/ carer/pupil survey. To explore with these groups the priorities for the curriculum, additional activities and environment required to give the children/young people a school which will meet their educational, social and emotional needs in the most suitable and impactful manner.
- To engage with the local community to gather their views on how they would wish to be involved in the development of the school, to discover what amenities and activities would benefit them and explore the development of meaningful connections between the school and the local community so that school and community grow together. This will be done by engaging with ward councillors, having local meetings to inform and discuss development of the school, consultation with those most likely to be impacted by the development, formally and informally via listening forums. In time it would be hoped that members of the local community would wish to become involved with the school in some capacity; volunteering, mentoring, providing work experience opportunities or in any other capacity.

Section D – Education Plan

Applicants should take account of the relevant criteria in [Annex C](#) of the free school presumption guidance.

This is the heart of your application. Your education plan must explain how your school will achieve its education vision. There are 4 elements within this criterion:

1. - the curriculum
2. - measuring pupil performance
3. - the staffing structure
4. - ensuring inclusivity

As a minimum please ensure you include the following:

- An ambitious, broad and balanced, deliverable curriculum plan which is consistent with the vision and pupil intake. This could include a curriculum table and pupil build up chart from the first cohort of 150 and growth over 2 years.
- 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. This could also include an organogram and staff build up chart.
- 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 pupils with ASD co-occurring conditions, including mental health conditions and neurodevelopmental conditions, such as moderate to severe learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties or epilepsy.
- Details 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 school's approach to: PHSE; the Prevent Duty; safeguarding and welfare; and promoting fundamental British values (democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs)

- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) that enables all pupils to develop the skills to make safe and sensible life choices, and to form positive beliefs, values and attitudes to the choices made by others. This needs to include how the school will develop of a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships.

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

- a list of subjects and qualifications you will offer
- the number of hours spent per week on the subject - you do not need to provide sample timetables
- the curriculum that you are proposing to teach in your school, explaining how it meets the needs of the expected intake of pupils and their special educational needs
- the length of the school day, including any enrichment time, making a distinction between compulsory and voluntary activities
- how you will use resources from an existing school or other organisations to help deliver the curriculum/a subject or improve teaching capability
- how you intend to develop literacy, numeracy, and science skills
- an understanding of the expected pupil intake and their needs, e.g., levels of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) and free school meals (FSM)
- the types of special educational need that the school will cater for and include a strategy to assess and meet the needs of all pupils including:
 - looked after children
 - those requiring literacy recovery/intervention (including EAL)
 - those with differing degrees of Special Educational Needs and/ or Disability
 - pupils who attract the pupil premium
- describe how you will establish a baseline of pupils' current level of attainment (including external validation of this).
- describe how you will assess and monitor pupil performance and progress, ensuring this relates to the outcomes in an individual's EHC plan. This also needs to include Preparation for Adulthood outcomes for pupils in NCY9 and beyond.

- the strategies you will put in place to support pupils to be successful when they enter and leave your school to transition to their next phase of education or future employment. This needs to include your approach to careers education, information, and advice so that pupils become happy, healthy, empowered, and included adults, who participate in, and contribute towards society.
- set out what success looks like for pupil performance, behaviour, and attendance. This needs to reflect high aspirations for emotional well-being and personal achievement, as well as academic achievement.
- explain how you will use success measures to improve the school's performance, including non-academic targets for students' skills and outcomes in independence, employability, healthy living, and participation in society.
- describe your approach to developing pupils with ASD and/or SLD social learning and understanding, promoting independence as well as mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

Applicants will also be assessed on how they plan to:

- use assessment data to inform teaching and increase progression and attainment for all pupils with EHCPs
- measure the quality of teaching in the classroom
- involve parents/carers and report progress to them against EHCP outcomes
- involve pupils and their families in decisions about their support, ambitions, and progress

Section E – Capacity and Capability

Applicants should take account of the relevant criteria in [Annex C](#) of the free school presumption guidance.

You need to demonstrate that your organisation has the capacity and capability to set up and run the school you are proposing and that you have access to appropriate educational, financial, and other expertise, either within your group or externally.

As a minimum please ensure you include the following:

- The resources you would draw on and/or deploy to support the development of the new free school by the opening date
- Clear evidence that you have the range of skills and abilities necessary to set up and then run a school effectively, including: managing school finances; leadership; project management; marketing; human resources; safeguarding; and health and safety
- How the school would be organised and what the governance arrangements would look like, including a diagram of the proposed structures

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

- Who will be in charge during pre-opening and provide a copy of their CV.
- The resources you would draw on and/or deploy to support the development of the new free school by the opening date
- Clear evidence that you have the range of skills and abilities necessary to set up and then run a school effectively, including managing school finances; leadership; project management; marketing; human resources; safeguarding; and health and safety
- How the school would be organised and what the governance arrangements would look like, including a diagram of the proposed structures
- Details of Trust expansion strategy including any other significant changes planned
- A demonstration of commitment to Havering's High Needs Strategy.
- How you will help set high aspirations and evidence achievement of ambitious outcomes for SEND young people

Section F – Funding and Costs

The DfE will make available a one-off Project Development Grant (PDG) payment of £25,000 to the successful proposer towards meeting the legal costs associated with establishing the new school.

The LA is going to meet the associated capital and pre/post-opening revenue costs. The LA will ensure that reasonable funding resources is earmarked for this project, and build in contingency measures if costs increase between the specification being drafted and the school opening.

In line with previous new school opening, the LA will engage with the Trust to ensure that the appropriate level of revenue funding is made available for the transitional period, where the school is taking a staggered intake, once a suitable sponsor has been found. The LA and successful trust will determine the minimum viable number (MVN) for the school, and advise the Department of the places being sought, in order for the DfE to have the necessary assurance and oversight of the agreed MVN. Within the forecast number of MVN, it will be based on medium to long-term placements, and the associated types of need that the special school will be expected to be met.

The revenue funding for place and top-up rates will be dependent on the year of opening of the new special school. As at 1st April 2023, the per pupil level of funding for a placement and top-up in a Special School are as follows:

Matrix Funding Band	Place funding (£)	Per pupil (£)	Total Placement (£)
Level A+	10,000	Bespoke (minimum £37,860)	Bespoke (minimum £47,860)
Level A	10,000	37,860	47,860
Level B	10,000	23,860	33,860
Level C (i)	10,000	11,860	21,860
Level C (ii)	10,000	8,527	18,527

The funding levels for the per pupil element gets reviewed, as part of the annual budget cycle the LA conducts. The final arrangements and rates for the new financial year gets confirmed in the Spring, prior to the new financial year commencing.

Section G – Impact and Equalities Assessments

As prescribed by section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 and section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the local authority must assess the potential impact of any new school on existing educational provision in the area. The local authority must also consider whether the new school would impact on any groups with protected characteristics.

The EQHIA has been published and is available [here](#).