

Resourced Provisions and SEN Units

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**New
Schools
Network**

Introduction

This guidance seeks to help applicant groups proposing a mainstream free school with resourced provision and/or a special educational needs (SEN) unit.

The guidance aims to provide you with information about

- what resourced provisions and SEN units are;
- funding for resourced provisions and SEN units in free schools;
- the information you should include in your application;
- case studies of open free schools with a resourced provision and/or a SEN unit.

We refer to resourced provision and/or SEN unit(s) as 'specialised provision(s)' in this guidance.

What are they?

Special educational needs (SEN) units and resourced provisions offer specialist facilities for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. Both provisions cater for one or more specific type of SEN such as pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs; hearing or visual impairment; and autism. Usually, pupils attending these have education, health and care plans (EHCPs) and sometimes (although rarely) include pupils without an EHCP. Typically, these provisions will cater for fewer than 30 pupils. Pupils in both settings will be on the roll of a mainstream school.

In **resourced provision**, the vast majority of pupils' time will still be spent in mainstream classes (typically well over 50%). The resourced provision will enable pupils with SEN to access additional therapeutic support, medical support, access to specialist equipment and other facilities as needed.

Pupils accessing **SEN units** will spend more time in the unit, only attending a handful of mainstream classes.

Opening a SEN unit or resourced provision is a great way to foster an inclusive ethos in your school and local community. Pupils attending these provisions should be able to feel engaged with other elements of the school, accessing the main school curriculum where appropriate while receiving focussed and tailored support to meet their SEN needs.

SEN units and resourced based provisions are typically opened in agreement with a commissioning local authority (LA). The LA will have recognised a need for this sort of provision and is willing to commission places to the provision, providing the top-up funding to meet support. Top-up funding is explained in the next section.

How are they funded?

Revenue funding

Pupils in SEN units or resourced provisions will attract core funding from the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) and top-up funding from the commissioning local authority.

Core funding

The core funding for places in SEN units or in resourced provisions is based on the National Funding Formula. All pupils recorded on the school census in these places will attract £6,000 per place.

The Department for Education (DfE)'s [high needs funding guide](#) outlines that these places may be funded at £10,000 per place where:

- the place is or will be occupied by a pupil enrolled in another school;
- a place is not occupied at the time of the school census count, but is likely to be filled, and requires funding;
- spare capacity is required for another reason.

Top-up funding

The LA provides schools with additional funding for the purpose of the provision, and meeting the additional costs that enable the school to meet a pupil's SEN needs. The funding required via the top-up has to be agreed upon with the commissioning local authority and as a result can vary depending on the needs of a pupil.

Capital funding

Subject to approval, capital funding for a SEN unit or a resourced provision, proposed as part of a free school proposal, will be provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for the free schools budget.

Opening a mainstream free school with a SEN unit/ resourced provision

This guidance is based on the Department for Education’s most recent mainstream free school wave – wave 14. The deadline for wave 14 applications was on the 11th November 2019.

The criteria for free school applicants are subject to change with each free school wave and local authority led presumption competitions. As a result, applicants using this guidance should be aware of potential changes in criteria for the application route they are applying to. New Schools Network will endeavour to update our guidance to reflect the latest Department for Education’s criteria.

Open free schools and academies can add a SEN unit or resourced provision to their existing school by making a full business case as part of the [making significant changes to an academy](#) process.

If you want to apply for a mainstream free school with a SEN unit and/or with resourced provision, you should provide some information of this element of your proposal in your free school application. At this stage, do you not need to provide detail of how the specialist provision will operate however it is valuable to reflect on how it will impact your school proposal.

New School Network’s guidance on including a SEN unit or resourced provision in a free school application is based on our experience of supporting free school proposals for more than ten years. You should always refer to the most recent [DfE How to apply guidance](#) to ensure your application meets the criteria in full.

| Relevant section of the application | Information to include in your application |
|---|---|
| <p>Evidence of need for a new school in the area</p> | <p>Your application must provide evidence of that there is a limited availability of places for pupils with the SEN type you are proposing to cater for in the local area.</p> <p>Your LA should formally express their support for a SEN unit/resourced provision to assure the specialised provision(s) will be viable. This may be in the form of a letter of support.</p> |

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| <p>Vision</p> | <p>Your application should outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the features of the specialist provision; • how many places it will offer; • and the expected SEN needs of pupils accessing the specialist provision. <p>You should have discussed these elements with the local authority when establishing need.</p> |
| <p>Engagement with parents and the local community</p> | <p>Your engagement with parents and the local community should reflect the vision and key features of your proposal. This may include your SEN Unit/resourced provision.</p> <p>You should consider how you could reach out to parents/carers of pupils who will attend your school, such as through local parent groups, local charity groups and SEN charitable organisations.</p> |
| <p>Education plan</p> | <p>You are not expected to provide detailed plans of your SEN Unit or resourced provision. However, it can be useful to consider how this provision could impact other elements of your school. For example, you may wish to provide a brief narrative to explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what the specialist provision will offer to meet pupil needs; • how the specialist provision could impact staffing; • how the specialist provision could support inclusivity and any steps you may take to ensure the school is welcoming to all. |
| <p>Capacity and capability: An effective governance structure</p> | <p>Whether you are an existing trust or applying to become one, you will need to demonstrate your team has sufficient expertise to deliver your free school proposal. You should consider where your team has access to expertise in special education and how this can support the set-up of the specialist provision.</p> |
| <p>Financial viability</p> | <p>At application stage, you do not need to include operational detail for specialist provision, however it can be useful to draft a finance plan that considers the financial viability of the specialist provision.</p> |

Free schools with resourced provisions and/or SEN units

Below you can find a selection of free schools that have successfully opened resourced provisions and/or SEN units:

- The [Pinner High School](#), part of the Harrow Academies Trust, opened a mainstream secondary school for 1,162 pupils in Harrow in 2016. The school has a resourced provision of 12 places for young people on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- [The Kingston Academy](#), part of The Kingston Educational Trust, opened a mainstream secondary school for 1,180 pupils in Kingston upon Thames in 2015. The school has a resourced provision of 15 places. The type of SEN provision at the school includes Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD); Other Difficulty/Disability (OTH); Speech, language and Communication (SLCN); ASD; Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH); Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI); and Physical Disability (PD).
- [Ditton Park Academy](#), part of Sash Education Trust, opened a mainstream secondary school for 1,100 pupils in Slough in 2014. The school has a resourced provision of 20 places. The type of SEN provision at the school includes SpLD; Hearing Impairment (HI); SLCN; ASD; SEMH; Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD); Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD); and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD).
- [Somerdale Educate Together Primary Academy](#), part of Educate Together Academy Trust, opened a mainstream primary school for 210 pupils in Bath and Northeast Somerset in 2017. The school has a resourced provision of 20 places. The type of SEN provision at the school is SpLD; Visual Impairment (VI); HI; SLCN; ASD; SEMH; and MLD.
- [Tooting Primary School](#), part of Graveny Trust, opened a mainstream primary school for 441 pupils in Wandsworth in 2013. The school has a resourced provision of 21 places. The type of SEN provision at the school is ASD.
- [William Perkin Church of England High School](#), part of Twyford Church of England Academies Trust, opened a mainstream secondary school for 1,450 pupils in Ealing in 2013. The school has a resourced provision of 30 places. The type of SEN provision at the school is ASD.

- [Longford Park Primary Academy](#), part of Gloucestershire Learning Alliance, opened a mainstream primary school for 210 pupils in Gloucestershire in 2017. The school has a resourced provision of 35 places. The type of SEN provision at the school is SpLD; VI; Other Difficulty/Disability (OTH); HI; SLCN; ASD; SEMH; PD; and MLD.
- [Woolwich Polytechnic School for Girls](#), part of Polymat, opened a mainstream secondary school for 1,200 pupils in Greenwich in 2019. The school has a resourced provision of 36 places. The type of SEN provision at the school is VI; OTH; HI; SLCN; ASD; SEMH; PD; and MLD.
- [The Swanage School](#), part of Education Swanage Limited, opened a mainstream secondary for 420 pupils in Dorset in 2013. The school has both a resourced provision and a SEN unit. The resourced provision has 15 places whilst the SEN unit has 60. The type of SEN provision at the school is VI; OTH; HI; SLCN; SEMH; PD; and MLD.
- [Set Ixworth School](#), part of Seckford Education Trust, opened a mainstream secondary school for 600 pupils in Suffolk in 2014. The school has a SEN unit with 18 places. The types of SEN provision at the school is SLCN; ASD; and Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI).

Further information

- New Schools Network [resources for free schools](#)
- Department for Education's [How to apply guidance](#) for setting up a free school
- [Schools: guide to the 0 to 25 SEND code of practice](#)
- [Academies: making significant changes or closure by agreement](#)
- [Mainstream free school revenue funding](#)

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