

# Mainstream Guidance

*Evidencing need for mainstream and 16-19  
free schools*

Winter/spring 2019

**New  
Schools  
Network**

## Introduction

The Wave 14 application criteria are explicit in their desire to target specific areas of the country that have been identified as having the lowest educational standards and capacity to improve. As a result, all approvable applications must meet the criteria of need for section B set out in the How to Apply Guide.

Demonstrating evidence of need for your free school is the first major test of your application. The DfE have stated that proposals which do not clearly meet the need criteria in section B will not progress and the rest of your application will not be read.

This guidance explains the DfE criteria you will need to meet, and suggests how you can gather the required information.

### Evidence of need for a new school in the area

Wave 14 will be focussed on opening free schools in the places most in need of good new schools. As a result, to be successful your application must show your school will:

- Be in an area of low standards where there is a very strong case for a free school, which can be demonstrated by one or more of the examples set out in section B2

And;

- Have demonstrable basic need for high proportion of the school places that the free school will create.

These criteria are divided into two parts within Section B:

Section B1 – Evidence of basic need

Section B2 – Need for good school places

Your application **must meet both** of these criteria, or it will not be considered further.

### B1 – Evidence of basic need

The DfE want to avoid free schools creating and contributing to an oversupply of places in an area, therefore it is important that your application can demonstrate that there is a projected shortage of school places in the local area in the short to medium term. You must seek to show that a high proportion of the places your school will create will be needed to meet a projected shortfall.

When considering the forecast need for places, it is recommended that primary applicants look ahead to 2021/22 and secondary applicants look ahead to 2023/24.

### Gathering evidence

To show that there is sufficient need for additional places to warrant the opening of a new school in your area you must:

- Show your understanding of the current basic need in the area, including any changes since the most recent data collection;
- Describe the number of places currently available;
- Outline the forecast need in the area – primary applicants should look ahead to 2022/23 and secondary applicants should look ahead to 2024/25;
- Show consideration of any existing plans that will increase local capacity, such as expansions of existing schools or pipeline free school projects.

When gathering evidence to demonstrate the above, you should consult a range of sources. The DfE have published maps which identify the targeted local authority districts and overlay basic need for school places, based upon the latest SCAP data and internal DfE metrics. You can find these [here](#).

As this information is based on the school capacity survey (SCAP), which takes a snapshot of capacity and pupil forecasts once a year, it is important that you check for any updates to this data. In particular, it is important that you engage with your local authority and the office of the appropriate Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to develop your understanding of need in the local area and plans for addressing it. You should confirm whether any plans for increasing local capacity have been made more recently. If you are able to secure pupil forecast data from the local authority, you should include this in your application.

Some of the sources that you may wish to consult include:

- [DfE Need Tables and Map](#);
- [The latest SCAP data](#);
- [The full list of pipeline free school projects](#).

#### **If you are applying for a school with a nursery:**

It is presumed that all primary and all-through school applications will include nurseries – if you have a strong reason for believing the inclusion of a nursery is inappropriate, you can make this argument in Section C.

In Section B1 you should show your understanding of the current picture of nursery provision in the local area. Whilst basic need does not cover the nursery age range, you should attempt to analyse the need for nursery places in the area. In order to do this you should contact the local authority to enquire about any assessments it has made of childcare sufficiency. You should also take into account the quality of existing local provisions.

#### **If you are proposing new 16-19 provision (including if you are proposing a secondary school with a sixth form):**

The Further Education Area Reviews has led to restructuring of post-16 provision and the DfE will be assessing applications in the context of these changes. It is extremely unlikely that any new 16-19 free school provision, including proposals for a sixth form as part of secondary school will be approved in Wave 14.

Due to the difficulty in securing the financial viability of this phase, applicants will have to provide strong evidence of the need for new provision.

Basic need does not apply to post-16, therefore to show the need for places you must:

- Show the number of students eligible for post-16 education in the area, and the number of students currently in post-16 provision in the area;
- Show forecasts of the future need for 16-19 places in the local area, based on the current 11-16 population.
- Provide assumptions about participations rates in this type of provision in the future

## How much you should write

For applicants not proposing a 16-19 or nursery section B1 should be no more than 5 pages.

For applicants that are proposing a 16-19 or nursery section B1 should be no more than 8 pages.

## B2 – Need for good school places

In addition to providing additional places where they are needed, Wave 14 is focused on adding places where they will have the greatest impact on improving outcomes. Within this section you are required to demonstrate that your school is needed in this area because of low standards and low capacity to improve in existing local schools.

The DfE are unlikely to approve an application in an area where educational standards are only slightly below the national average. Ways to demonstrate that you are in an area of low standards could include being in an area:

- Identified by the DfE as a category 5 or 6 Achieving Excellence Area.
- Identified by the [Social Mobility Commission as a 'cold spot'](#);
- Where a large proportion of schools within a reasonable travel distance (5km for secondary age students, 2km for primary age students) are judged as Requires Improvement or Inadequate according to Ofsted, or have results below the floor standard. Information about the floor standard for can be found here for [primary](#) and [secondary schools](#);
- Where a large proportion of disadvantaged students attend schools that are judged as Requires Improvement or Inadequate by Ofsted, or have results below the floor standard.

This list is not exhaustive and is intended as a guideline. You should also keep in mind that the DfE is looking to open free schools in areas that have not previously benefited from it.

You may wish to enhance your case that your proposal is in an area of low standards and that there is a very strong case for a new free school using the following:

- The percentage of local schools that are currently judged to be Requires Improvement or Inadequate according to Ofsted, or have results below the floor standards;
- The distance to the nearest school currently judged to be Good or Outstanding by Ofsted;
- The percentage of disadvantaged students reaching expected levels of attainment (i.e. Expected Standards for primary pupils or Attainment 8 for secondary pupils);
- The average progress scores for disadvantaged students (i.e. progress in Reading, Writing and Maths for primary pupils, or Progress 8 for secondary pupils);
- The local absence and persistent absence rate;
- The teacher vacancy rate.

It is important to be clear and specific in the evidence you provide. You might find the following sources of information a helpful starting point:

- [Find and compare schools in England;](#)
- [Get information about schools;](#)
- [Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics.](#)

### How much you should write

The DfE usually expect Section B2 to be no more than 10 pages long.

The evidence you provide in this section will be considered alongside other evidence and contextual information available to the DfE, such as information provided by local authorities or Regional Schools Commissioners.

### How much you should write

Section B2 should be no longer than 10 pages.

### **NB: Engagement with parents and the local community**

The criteria for section B are tightly focussed on basic need and targeting areas of low standards. While you will need to demonstrate that your proposed school has support from the local community in a later part of the application (Section D), demand from parents or the community does not constitute evidence of need under the Wave 14 criteria. We recommend that you ensure your proposal meets the requirements of Section B before you progress to other sections of the application.

