

500 free schools by 2020

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Overview – what is a free school?

- ‘Free school’ is now the Government’s term for any new academy, however it is established.
- So ‘free school’ really just means, ‘new school’.
- These schools can provide **mainstream** primary and secondary provision, be exclusively for **16 to 19** year olds, providing **special** places, or **alternative provision**.
- Fee-paying schools, wanting to transfer to the state sector are also established as free schools.



Overview – why 500 new schools?

- The need to create additional school places is continuing in many parts of the country.
- Expected ‘basic need’ for up to half a million new places by 2021/22.
- Government wants good and outstanding schools to be able to expand when that is the right thing to do, but many have already done so, and there are natural limits to expansion.
- New schools support greater local choice and increase competition to help drive up standards.
- Opportunity to expand the capacity of more specialist provision too: eg special schools and alternative provision.



500 new schools: how?

As in the last Parliament....

- Government is inviting bids to establish new schools through a centrally assessed, approved and funded free school programme.
- Regional Schools Commissioners make recommendations to ministers about which schools to approve.
- We carefully examine the case for a new school: in vast majority of cases we will only approve if we think:
 - there is or will be a basic need for new school places in an area;
 - the quality of provision in other local schools is poor, and that the new school will offer a better quality alternative; or
 - the new provision innovative in its approach and responds to what parents want.

500 new schools: how?

As in the last Parliament....

- The capital costs of construction are met by the DfE (although we do ask LAs to provide sites if there is one).
- Majority of sites delivered directly by the Education Funding Agency's capital arm.
- The revenue start up costs of new schools approved through this route are also met.
- Support for applicants still available through the New Schools Network.

500 new schools: how?

....but with some differences....

- RSCs are working much more closely with LAs to make sure that applications are coming through in more areas that need new schools.
- RSC role is as much about encouraging applications from strong providers, as it is about assessing the applications that come forward.
- Many of the LAs that I have been working with are now actively working with strong educational providers on their patch:
 - asking them whether they want to replicate their provision by establishing a new school;
 - helping them identify where a new school is most needed; and
 - recognising that free schools can be a way of expanding the capacity of their special schools or alternative provision – which don't attract basic need funding.
- Some are even delivering the buildings for the new school, on behalf of the EFA , where both parties are happy with this arrangement.

500 new schools: how?

...and presumption schools now count too.

- New schools established by a local authority through the 'presumption process' are also considered to be free schools.
- This is the process by which LAs initiate a competition to run a new school, when they have identified the need for one.
- Through this route, it is the LA that draw up a specification for the new provision, sets out a timetable and invites sponsors to bid to establish the new school.
- The LA then puts forward their preference of provider to the RSC, who will then decide who should run the new school.
- These schools are not funded centrally; LAs need to fund the construction from within the funding they receive to provide sufficient school places.

500 new schools: how?

Centrally delivered free schools	Presumption free schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demand led – approval of a school in areas of need is dependent on an application being received in that area.• Type of school (size, faith, ideal location, etc) is determined by applicant.• LA is consulted, but each application is undertaken on own merits.• Construction costs met centrally by DfE – although additional capacity created by centrally funded free school will be factored in to future basic need allocations• Revenue start up costs met by DfE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need led – a new school provider will always be approved by RSC,• Type of school is determined by the LA through the specification.• LA assess applications and puts preferred option to RSC for approval (or not).• LA chooses location for new school.• Construction costs met by LA from within basic need funding allocated.• As buildings are usually LA delivered, more certainty for LA about whether school will open on time.• Revenue start up costs met by LA

500 new schools: how?

More than just changes to ways of working with LAs

- Still have robust assessment process for applicants to the programme.
- But recognise that many strong providers might be delayed in applying if expected to complete c50 page application, when all they want to do is replicate their exiting provision in an area of basic need.
- So for providers with a strong track record that want to replicate what they do already we:
 - don't expect them to re-provide data or information the department or RSCs already hold.
 - only expect them to indicate how the curriculum or vision for the new school will differ from existing provision
 - will look at performance data from their existing school(s).
 - will endeavour to agree with the trust what capacity they have to expand *before* they submit any application to avoid nugatory work.



Single and multiple applications

Applicants can submit one application covering all schools if all the proposed schools:

- are of the same phase and type;
- will follow the same or similar curriculum plan;
- will be staffed in the same or similar way.

Applicants can submit one application per school if each of the proposed schools:

- is of a different phase or type, or
- will follow a different educational model.



500 new schools: progress and change

There are some encouraging signs that this new approach is bearing fruit.

In May 2015, there were:

- 383 free schools open nationally (inc. AP & Special),
- 59 free schools open in the East of England and North East London region

Applications in the 2015 application rounds (waves 9 & 10) were down in comparison to previous years – even after the General Election.

But application numbers have rebounded significantly in 2016. Wave 11 brought:

- 205 applications nationally
- 50 applications for the East of England and North East London region

500 new schools: progress and change

The programme today looks different to the programme in 2010

In terms of who

- Most applications now come from multi-academy trusts rather than parent and community groups.
- But we are still keen for applications from these groups, or from teachers and leaders spreading great practice.

In terms of what

- Applications to establish special and alternative provision make up a significant proportion of the most recent wave.
- Special free schools are an opportunity for local authorities to act strategically to create more special schools closely matched to need.

500 new schools: progress and change

The programme today looks different to the programme in 2010

In terms of when

- No longer ask trusts to state a firm date when they want to open. This is set later, and takes in to account construction timetables.
- This allows better medium-long term planning and avoids late deferrals.

Meeting need everywhere

But delivering 500 new schools won't meet need everywhere

- We do recognise that new schools are not always the right answer to meeting the need for new places, especially when:
 - small in scale;
 - short-term; or
 - a very urgent response to unforeseeable circumstances.
- Want to support LAs to continue to expand good and outstanding schools.
- Some LAs will have to adapt to a more 'brokered' approach to place-planning as more schools become academies – but the best LAs have strong relationships with local schools, irrespective of legal status.
- Expect to allocate c£7 billion of capital to local authorities to provide new places between 2015 and 2021. £4.8 billion already allocated for 2015 to 2019.



Meeting need everywhere

But delivering 500 new schools won't meet need everywhere...

- Allocations to local authorities continue to be based on the gap between the existing capacity in their schools, and the forecast number of pupils.
- In most recent set of allocations we:
 - Increased the rate per place we provided in line with construction inflation;
 - Updated the location factors we use to reflect the differing cost of construction across the country. Now using 2015 factors rather than 2011 ones.
 - Adjusted the 'secondary weighting' to 1.3 from 1.25 – as the evidence we had suggested the relative cost of delivering secondary places had increased slightly.
 - Factored some pipeline free schools in to allocations for the first time.



Meeting need everywhere

...and we need to reflect the growing pressure on special places too.

- Recognise that basic need allocations do not reflect any local pressure on special places as a result of demographic growth.
- Population growth and increased complexity of pupils needs has led to some special schools being crowded and/or unsuited to the needs they meet.
- Want start to tackle this issue, and help LAs reduce per-pupil revenue costs where they have no other option but to pay for costly and distant provision
- Spending Review announced at least £200 million of capital investment in special places.
- Informally consulting LAs (and EBD OG!) on how best to allocate this funding. Will set out plans later in 2016.

