

# **Proposal to establish a new specialist school for children with Autism (ASD) and/or Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), with behaviours that challenge**



## Information for Academy Proposers

Warwickshire County Council is seeking proposals from Academy Proposers interested in sponsoring a new 80 place specialist school for children with Autism (ASD) and/or Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), with behaviours that challenge.

Deadline for Applications: 12 noon on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020

*This document references and should be read in conjunction with 'The free school presumption: Departmental advice for local authorities and new school proposers (May 2018)'*

## Introduction

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.

Warwickshire County Council has identified the need to establish a new special free school in Nuneaton & Bedworth, Warwickshire, to open in September 2021.

The authority is therefore seeking proposals from appropriate sponsors to open this new school. This school would be deemed a free school. Proposers should complete the Free School Presumption application form ([link it](#)) and return it using the details provided in the application form by 12 noon on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020

**As part of considering the most appropriate proposal for delivering additional special school places Warwickshire County Council has also invited the maintained special school that adjoins the site of the proposed new school to submit an application in parallel to this presumption competition. Warwickshire County Council will then assess the proposal to expand this existing provision alongside the proposals to establish a new special free school using the assessment criteria outlined in Section C - [Annex C](#) of the free school presumption guidance.**

## Background/Context

Warwickshire lies to the south and east of the West Midlands conurbation and has established links with Coventry, Birmingham and Solihull in the West Midlands region, but also with the South East. Despite the focus of population within the main towns of the county, a significant part of Warwickshire is rural in nature. Warwickshire is a two-tier local authority and comprises five district/borough areas.

Warwickshire is entering a period of significant growth, with large scale housing development proposed across the county over the next 15 years and beyond. It is estimated that this will require education provision for over 30,000 additional Warwickshire children. As development progresses across the county there will be the need for the delivery of new provision during the next 5 years and effective planning for further new provision beyond that period.

There are 249 state-funded schools in Warwickshire, of which 35 are mainstream secondary schools, 196 are mainstream primary schools, one is an all-through school, 11 are special schools and six are nursery schools. The current picture indicates that 90% of schools in Warwickshire are rated by Ofsted as good or better. This compares favourably to the national average of 86%.

11% of Warwickshire pupils are eligible for free school meals, compared to 14% nationally, with the highest proportion of eligibility among pupils attending schools in Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough at 16%.

Across all of the headline Key Stage measures, Warwickshire's pupils have performed above the national average. However, the gaps between education outcomes for disadvantaged cohorts and their peers in Warwickshire are larger than national, and outcomes are lower than national for these groups.

### **Growing Demand for SEND Provision in Warwickshire**

The last five years has been characterised by a rapid rise in the demand for services for children with SEND. Between 2015 and 2019 the number of children and young people with an education and health care plan (EHCP) or statement of SEN increased by 38% in Warwickshire, compared to an increase nationally of 47%.

In January 2019 there were 13,362 children with special education needs attending a school in Warwickshire, making up 15% of the school population. Of these, 2,847 had an EHCP and 10,515 were receiving lower level SEN support in school.

Over the past five years, Warwickshire's special school growth has outstripped mainstream school population growth by around three times the rate. There has been significant growth in both generic and specialist special schools. The main growth and investment has been in specialist provision for pupils with communication and interaction needs and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties.

Demand for specialist educational provision is rising in the county, with 261 pupils currently in specialist provision and forecasts showing that a further 259 places will be needed by 2023. Given the needs of this cohort, the school will be unlike any of the generic special schools in the region.

The demand for specialist educational provision is expected to continue to rise, driven particularly by the significant level of housing development across the county, with 259 additional places required by 2023. However, there are marked differences in the level of demand for places between areas of the county ranging from a 6% increase in places in North Warwickshire to 31% in East Warwickshire. In Nuneaton & Bedworth, the demand for special school places is expected to increase by 17% by 2023.

As well as meeting the forecast demand, Warwickshire needs to build on the local offer and place more pupils in state-funded provision rather than independent specialist provision (ISP). Currently, 78% of those pupils attending independent specialist provision (ISP) are placements for a primary need of ASD/SEMH. As well as the expansion of existing special provision and the establishment of new special provision, there will be the continued development of resourced provision across the county whereby pupils with communication and interaction needs but who are cognitively able to access the curriculum benefit from being located on site alongside a mainstream school environment.

The new school should help ease the growing demand on places for vulnerable young people and enable them to attend a school in the county rather than travel out of Warwickshire, minimising disruption for the pupils and keeping health and social care integrated with their education.

## Warwickshire Vision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

In Warwickshire, all children and young people have the right to lead a fulfilling life and be part of their community.

Every child and young person have a right to have their health, social care and education needs met within their local community.

Every child has the right to attend a good local school that is appropriate for their level of need or disability, usually a mainstream school.

The views and wishes of children and young people with SEND, as well as their parents, will be heard and we will work with them to ensure they have confidence in local providers to meet their children's needs.

Every early years setting, state-funded school, further educational college and training provider will;

- Make good provision (as determined by Ofsted) for children and young people with SEND;
- ensure all pupils make good progress in their education and development;
- ensure that they transition smoothly into the next stage of their education and;
- as appropriate, they are helped to secure independent living and opportunities for employment.

The [Warwickshire SEND and Inclusion Strategy](#) sets out the vision for provision for SEND locally, across education, health and social care. The strategy has inclusion at its heart and sets out how Warwickshire plans to address imbalances and effect change across the SEND system.

The strategy identifies six priorities:

- Promoting inclusion
- Getting it Right for Pupils with High Needs (school age)
- Improving Health and Social Care for SEND pupils
- Preparation for adulthood
- Transport
- Workforce development

This strategy also supports the overarching priorities of the [Warwickshire Education Strategy](#).

Specialist provision is recognised as an essential and valued component of our county's education system. Warwickshire County Council works in partnership with our specialist

education providers to ensure they provide excellent services for pupils attending specialist provision.

## **The School**

The school building, constructed between 2008 and 2012, is split over two floors. On the ground floor there 10 sizeable classrooms. The school is of sufficient size that it could be divided into zones or villages for different class groups. On the first floor there is significant office space for the school staff, and may also provide an opportunity for co-location of Warwickshire County Council's Schools and Education teams.

## **The Provision**

This is a non-residential special school for boys and girls with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs aged 9 -19 years. The school will provide long-term special education provision to meet the needs of children with significant, complex and pervasive SEMH including:

- Emotional dysregulation, for example, phobias, anxiety and depression;
- Conduct disorders, for example stealing, defiance, fire-setting, aggression, violence to themselves, peers and adults and anti-social behaviour;
- Hyperkinetic disorders, for example disturbance of activity and attention;
- Attachment needs, for example children who are markedly distressed or socially impaired as a result of an abnormal pattern of attachment to parents or major care givers;
- Those living with trauma arising from traumatic experiences, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) or persistent periods of abuse and neglect, and;
- Other mental health needs including habit disorders, somatic disorders, psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia and manic-depressive disorder.

Significant numbers of the cohort may have social care support, for example, under Early Help, S17 or S47 of the Children's Act or may be looked after or adopted or have experienced a previous Tier 4 admission.

The pupils may be at risk of child criminal and/or sexual exploitation and/or be potential or actual young offenders; they may present with harmful sexual behaviour. Pupils will have significant barriers to learning, are likely to have failed in other specialist provision, will be at risk of disengagement from school and be at high risk of entering the NEET (not in education, employment or training) group post-16.

The pupils will generally have the ability to access a mainstream taught curriculum. However, the pupils may have experienced disruption to their educational history and are therefore likely to have gaps in their learning. Additionally, some children may have additional co-occurring SEND across all categories which the school will be expected to meet. In all cases, however, the children's primary need will be identified through assessment as SEMH. However, it is important that the school can meet additional needs

which may include autism spectrum condition, speech language and communication needs and specific learning difficulties.

The attached “pen portraits” at appendix 1 illustrate examples of pupils expected to attend the school.

### **The Bungalow and Administration/Assessment Block**

The school shares the site with five bungalows for residential/respite provision and an administration office building. These will be used for social care provision and procured separately.

WCC would like to ensure maximum benefit to children and young people from the use of the whole site. There may be future opportunities for the successful Academy Trust to use the bungalows. These will be either through partnership or a separate agreement.

Keeping young people in Warwickshire is a priority, to reduce council spend on provision, but also to enable children to remain local with all the positive outcomes this brings. The proposal is that the bungalows deliver a flexible social care support offer for children and young people with SEMH with behaviours that challenge.

As of May 2019, 42 children were placed in residential homes, 25 with ASD/SEMH needs. In some of these cases, a short stay assessment or respite stay would have been a suitable alternative, as it would have allowed enough time to sustain the family placement/current local placement or to commission an appropriate community placement. This option is not currently available.

The site also provides an opportunity to commission emergency provision in a central County location.

### **Site/Location**

Wheelwright Lane, Ash Green, Warwickshire, CV7 9RA





Warwickshire County have recently acquired a purpose-built school for children with special education needs and disabilities, located to the south west of Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough in close proximity to the border with Coventry.

### **Lease Arrangements**

On a date to be agreed with the approved Academy Sponsor, prior to the opening of the new school the school building will be transferred by the County Council on a 125-year lease arrangement as prescribed by the DfE.

### **Opening Date**

September 2021

### **Gender**

The school will cater for both boys and girls

### **Age Range**

The school is intended to serve pupils aged between the ages of 9 and 19 (year groups 5 to 14)

### **Proposed Admission Arrangements**

The provision is for an 80-place specialist school for children with ASD/SEMH who are exhibiting behaviours that challenge which will include, but is not limited to, disruptive behaviours. The exact opening arrangements for the new school will be determined in discussion with the Academy Sponsor. However, it is anticipated that the school will grow to capacity on an incremental basis and will need to be flexible in how classes are organised to respond to the demand for places and the age profile of those placed.

Placements at the school would be agreed by Warwickshire County Council's Provision Panel for Specialist Admissions.

## Out of hours and 'wrap around' provision

To provide sufficient support for working parents, out of hours provision is a key priority for Warwickshire County Council. Whilst there will not be dedicated accommodation provided for these facilities, it would be anticipated that there will be the potential for these to be provided within the main school building and we would expect the school to secure opportunities for before-school and after-school provision where practical to do so.

Warwickshire County Council wishes to make best use of all assets. Therefore, it is expected that where possible, and where it is appropriate to do so, use of the site may be available for the benefit of the wider community.

## Transport Arrangements

Transport for pupils placed at the school will be provided in line with Warwickshire County Council's Home to School Transport Policy. Details of the County Council's Home to School Transport Policy are available at [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/schooltransport](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/schooltransport).

## Vision

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

Please ensure you include the following:

- A strong educational vision and a curriculum delivery 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 needs in addition to SEMH (such as children and young people with speech language and communication needs, including autism spectrum conditions) and those with non binary gender identity;
- How the school's work will reflect the intended outcome and aspiration of the re-classification of BESD to SEMH (arising from the 2014 revised SEN Code of Practice) setting out the Trust's understanding of the differences between BESD and SEMH and the different groups of children that fall within that category;
- A commitment to excellent outcomes and high quality of teaching and learning, informed by the soundest pedagogy and which actively plans for over-coming identified barriers to learning and the additional challenges this group of pupils face;
- How children and young people will be supported to include within mainstream settings for part of the week, where this is appropriate, and ultimately returning to mainstream school;
- How children and young people will be supported to make a successful transition to mainstream Post 16 learning;
- How alternatives to exclusion will be developed and how regular school attendance will be promoted;
- How mainstream schools in Warwickshire will benefit from the expertise of staff working at this school;



- How children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and with Autism Spectrum Conditions will be catered for;
- How the school will take a central and coordinating role in effective partnership working amongst the multi disciplinary team supporting the children and young people who attend and their families;
- How the school would personalise the learning programme for children who need it;
- How a sense of belonging and community will promote regular school attendance;
- How the school will work holistically and in partnership with parents though, for example, the provision of a Family Support Worker.

By working in partnership with health and social care it is hoped that the provision on offer results in a life plan that takes the CYP beyond their education plans and sets them on a path of lifelong learning

## Education Plan

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

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
- Strategies for measuring pupil performance effectively and setting challenging targets
- 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). This could also include an organogram and staff build up chart
- The needs of all children are fully provided for and how the school will be fully inclusive
- Details of enrichment and extended services, for example, breakfast clubs, sports clubs, homework clubs and music/art clubs
- 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)

## Capacity and Capability

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

As a minimum please ensure you include the following:

## Funding and Costs

The DfE currently provides £25,000 for legal expenses to the successful sponsor. The Local Authority will be responsible for funding an amount to support pre-opening revenue costs and post-opening diseconomies. This revenue contribution to start-up costs will be determined in line with the funding model used to open new free schools via the Central Free School Wave Programme. The diseconomies of scale funding as the school builds out to capacity will be subject to negotiation between WCC and the successful applicant.

In terms of pupil place funding, the school will receive the nationally agreed base £10,000 place funding per pupil with top up funding applied in line with the funding system utilised by Warwickshire County Council.

## 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 purpose of establishing this 80-place specialist school is to meet the need to provide more locally available places for children with ASD and/or SEMH with behaviours that challenge. The addition of this school to the family of Warwickshire schools is unlikely to impact adversely on mainstream schools or other specialist provision in the area. This school will be the only school in Warwickshire catering for this type of need over this age range.

An initial Equality Impact Assessment undertaken by the County Council on the development of this SEND provision in Warwickshire has shown that no particular individuals or groups will be disadvantaged by the proposals for the new school.

## Application Process

Academy proposers wishing to express an interest in the new specialist school should do so by completing the application form available online (insert link). **Only applications received by the published deadline of 12 noon on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020 will be considered for evaluation.**

Proposers must ensure that they are on the DfE's approved sponsor list. Any proposers submitting bids, who are not on the approved list, must contact the DfE before submitting an application. New proposers will need to be assessed by the department through the normal sponsor approval route. See the [department's sponsor approval process](#) for more information.

### Proposed timeline

Process	Timescale
<b>Presumption Competition</b>	Monday 9th March 2020– Friday 15th May 2020 (12 noon)
<b>Sponsor information and engagement event</b>	30th April 2020
<b>Initial assessment of applications and short listing</b>	w/c 15th June 2020
<b>Shortlisted applicants for interview notified</b>	w/c 22nd June 2020
<b>Interview/presentation of shortlisted proposers</b>	w/c 6th July 2020
<b>Submit assessments and recommendation to DfE</b>	w/c Monday 13th July 2020
<b>Notification of successful sponsor received from RSC</b>	Estimated September/October 2020
<b>Warwickshire County Council notify unsuccessful bidders</b>	Estimated September/October 2020

All applications received will be evaluated against the criteria set out in the application form and the key criteria set out by the DfE ([Annex C](#)).

Each criterion will be scored using the following 4-point scale:

0 = The evidence and argument contained in the application is 'inadequate'.

1 = The evidence and argument contained in the application is 'adequate'.

2 = The evidence and argument contained in the application is 'good'.

3 = The evidence and argument contained in the application is 'excellent'

Each section and criterion will be scored equally, no weighting applies.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview, with a panel arranged by Warwickshire County Council.

After the panel interview, Warwickshire County Council will send details of its preferred applicant, along with details of all bids, to the DfE for consideration.

The Regional School Commissioner (RSC), 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 RSC 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 [schoolorganisation@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorganisation@warwickshire.gov.uk)

Please return your completed form to [schoolorganisation@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorganisation@warwickshire.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>