



Department
for Education

Windsor and Maidenhead Special Free School

**Contextual information for applicant
groups applying to open a new
Special Free School**

**The Royal Borough of Windsor and
Maidenhead Council**

May 2023

OVERVIEW

- 1.1 The Department for Education is inviting applications from proposer groups to open a new special free school in The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
- 1.2 Applicant groups can access the key school specification information, along with the full 'How to Apply' guidance, on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). You should read these documents carefully before completing mandatory pre-registration.
- 1.3 The school specification document sets out the key factual details about the proposed school, including the proposed size, SEND designation, age range, suggested top-up funding, and proposed site.
- 1.4 **This document** provides applicant groups with additional contextual information provided by The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council, which includes:
 - the rationale, context and need for the school,
 - details on the commissioning of places, including the involvement of any other LAs commissioning places,
 - a brief description of the existing provision in the area,
 - future expected growth in pupil numbers; and
 - how the LA expects places within the school to be filled.

RATIONALE, CONTEXT AND NEED FOR THE SCHOOL, INCLUDING PROPOSED COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS

Summary

- 1.5 The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has carried out high level projections of future EHCP numbers. This is based on analysis of changing demand between 2012, 2018 and 2022, applied to both ONS resident population projections and the borough's own school place planning projections for 2025 and 2029. This work suggests that the number of EHCPs that the borough is responsible for will rise by 209 to 1,280 by 2029 (+19%). SEMH EHCPs are expected to rise by 118 to 297 (+66%) in the same period.
- 1.6 This growth in SEMH EHCP numbers, together with the lack of any specialist SEMH provision currently, is the driver for this bid.

RBWM's SEND Strategy 2022-2027

- 1.7 The Royal Borough's five year SEND Strategy (Appendix B - also at <https://tinyurl.com/RBWM-SEND-Strategy> - published September 2022), contains six priorities for improving the lives of children and young people with SEND. This bid supports Priority 5, which states that:
 - 1.8 "Development of the right range of specialist provision with RBWM to ensure that as many children and young people as possible can be educated in a local educational setting is a priority. There needs to be a range of provision to support parental choice, and this needs to include more SEMH provision and a five-day week offer for post-16 young people."

The new school

- 1.9 The proposal for a new special school is part of a shared long-term vision across young people, parents/carers, schools, and the local authority to have a range of provision for children and young people with a SEMH need. This will provide provision that is universal, targeted and specialist.
- 1.10 The proposed new special school would address the specialist needs of pupils with SEMH EHCPs, providing the support required for the most complex and vulnerable pupils, and adding to the capacity and breadth of provision in the borough.
- 1.11 The school will offer mainly full-time placements. Short term and part-time placements may be offered in limited circumstances.

EXISTING PROVISION, EXPECTED FUTURE GROWTH IN PUPIL NUMBERS, AND HOW PLACES IN THE NEW SCHOOL WILL BE FILLED

- 1.12 The existing SEND provision in the Royal Borough includes two special schools and six Resourced Provisions. Although the borough has a good range of provision, spread geographically, there is no specific facility for SEMH needs.
- 1.13 The number of children and young people with SEND continues to increase. The borough is now responsible for 1,071 children with EHCPs (July 2022), compared to 697 in 2012 (+54%). EHCPs as a proportion of school NOR has risen from 3.4% to 4.3% in the same period.
- 1.14 The borough currently has 176 school age children with EHCPs for SEMH as the prime need, compared to 75 in 2012 (+135%). This is a much higher proportional increase for SEMH, which now accounts for 16.7% of EHCPs, compared to 10.9% in 2012.
- 1.15 Taking into account population change, we project 1,280 EHCPs by 2029, a rise of 209 (+19.5%), and 297 SEMH EHCPs, a rise of 118 (+66%).
- 1.16 We are confident, therefore, that there will continue to be underlying growth in SEMH EHCPs. Although many children and young people would be educated in the mainstream sector, many will continue to need specialist provision. With a new SEMH special school, we would expect around 100 pupils to attend by 2029 (the point at which the new school would be full), who would otherwise be in out-borough special schools, the independent sector and in Education Other Than At School/Elective Home Education/Alternative Provision.
- 1.17 It is not proposed that the new school should be residential as, in general, this is only necessary for SEMH pupils where the placement provided is too far away for manageable home to school transport travel times.
- 1.18 The current expectation is that the school would fill up slowly from 2025 and be full by September 2029.