

Herefordshire Special 16-19 Free School Competition Questions and answers raised at the promotional event 13th October 2017

**Q. Have you consulted with parents and carers?**

A. Although the time limit for putting in an expression of interest was extremely tight, in order to ensure that the expression of interest was focussed and accurate we consulted with Head teachers and Governors of Special Schools in Herefordshire, SEN officers within the Local Authority, and SENDIAS - Herefordshire Special Educational Needs and/or Disability Information, Advice and Support ( a service to provide an impartial and confidential support service for parents and carers of children, and young people up to the age of 25, with special educational needs and disabilities).

**Q. How can further consultation be undertaken to inform the process?**

A. When the successful trust is identified through the application and interview process, the Children's Wellbeing Directorate will want to work closely with the trust to ensure that correct and timely consultation is undertaken with parents, carers and young people, so that they feel involved in the development of the school. This will of course also include a requirement that on appointment, the successful trust undertakes a section 10 consultation with all appropriate stakeholders to describe their vision, provision to be offered at the school etc.

**Q. Is the current governance model appropriate for this model of free schools?**

A. This round of free school provision marks a change to the way that the Free Schools Division has worked in the past. There is much more of a feeling of collaboration between Local Authorities and the DfE. This means that the arrangements for placing and building the free school, and also the competition process for selecting a trust to run the school are all new, and as such the guidance for how to conduct these processes is emerging stage by stage. Yes governance of all of these processes is new, but Herefordshire has welcomed the opportunity that this has brought to work towards a fantastic new provision for our SEN students' post 16.

**Q. How does the name get chosen?**

A. At the moment the proposed school is being referred to as Herefordshire Special Free School for 16-19, but of course as is usual, the employing body or governance of the appointed trust would have the right to change or adapt the name of the school as they see fit.

**Q. How accurate is the potential table of number of students on roll published in the specification?**

A As you know, originally LAs were asked to forecast potential numbers of students for whom places would be commissioned at the new school, starting in 2018. Clearly this time scale has slipped, partly due to the pause in operations for everyone during the election. The new school is likely to open (according to our free schools lead) in September 2020. We calculated potential numbers of young people for whom places would be needed based upon a percentage of the whole 16-19 population that we forecast for 2016. The percentage used (1.2%) was based upon comparison with statistical neighbouring LAs and the percentages of children and young people educated in special schools. Clearly this only gives an approximation, and already Herefordshire has seen a growth in excess of this predicted trend line, as is apparent nationally. Therefore the numbers in the table are modest, and expected to be exceeded by the time the school opens.

**Q. Has there been a surge in requests for EHCPs?**

A. Yes.

**Q. Who has the say in the tendering process?**

A. There is a very defined and rigorous process for the delivery of the new school buildings. The budget is set by the free schools division and drawn down from the ESFA. The council (Herefordshire) has to make a decision whether to self-deliver the project, or ask the free school division to lead and manage the design and build. Currently senior council officers and cabinet will be going through the process of looking at the risks and benefits of both options, and making a decision in the near future. After the decision has been taken, whichever organisation is the lead will go through their normal governance channels to commission the design and build of the new school.

**Q. Will the scoring/marking schedule to be used in assessing the bids be available to assist in writing the bids?**

A. The DfE have stated in the information that this should not be made available to bidders. The information available to bidders is:

- (i) the specification
- (ii) the special free schools application guide and criteria.

Both documents are available on the DfE website and Herefordshire Council website.