Create Schools
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Vision Guide

SEND Applicants (Wave 3)

Private & Confidential

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1. Introduction

This document is designed to be used as a guide to support applicants with writing Section C of their application to the Department for Education (DfE) to set up a special free school.

Section C covers the vision of your proposed school, with a limited word count it is essential to cover all the criteria outlined in the application guidance. This guide will explore the variety of content which should be included when outlining your vision to the DfE.

At Create: Schools we are on hand to support you throughout the application process, including services such as draft reviews free of charge. Please contact your advisor, or hello@createschools.co.uk for tailored advice on defining your school's vision.

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2. Aligning your vision with the LA

For your application, you will be required to outline your vision for the proposed school. Section C of your application is essential to provide the DfE with vital information and present a vision that can be seen as a consistent theme throughout the rest of your application.

It is important to ensure that as you outline both your overall trust vision, and your vision for the new school, that you emphasise where your vision aligns with the local authority's SEND vision. Reference to the alignment of your vision will further evidence your trust's willingness to work with the local authority to provide students with SEND with the highest quality provision.

Each local authority will have, or will be in the process of producing a SEND strategy, you should identify key elements where there is a crossover, in order to reference how the new school will collaborate with and support the delivery of the existing strategy in the area.

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3. Section C Criteria

Through the 'How to Apply Guide' published by the DfE to support applicants, there is a range of criteria identified as essential to address to strengthen this section. Listed below are key points from the DfE criteria which are key to a successful application for a free school.

- Your own vision for the proposed school, including how it will meet the key features of the LA specification
- How your vision will contribute to the delivery of the LA's SEND strategy
- How your vision for the school will be reflected through the curriculum approach
- Outline how outreach and collaboration will work with other SEND provision, mainstream and other education settings, as well as any other local partners
- How your proposed school will prepare students for adulthood – including independent living and employment
- How your vision is evidence-based and consistent with the rest of the application

It is also important to note, that if your trust's existing schools are in a different local authority, that you outline how you will ensure the new school is still well supported.

Additionally, you will be required to outline your trust's strategy for growth, if you would like to read more about this, we have created a source focused on this in more detail, which can be found here.

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4. Writing Your Vision

4.1 Guidance

In Section C, you will only have 1000 words to express your vision for your proposed school. It is vital to make the most of this limited word count by being as concise as possible to ensure that each of the elements mentioned in the criteria are met, whilst referring to the LA specification.

Your vision should outline what your proposed school aims to achieve for its pupils and the local community - including how the school will have an impact on the wider education community through outreach with other education settings. There should be an emphasis on making outcomes and progress more attainable to students, whilst attending to the school and beyond.

In order to strengthen your vision, it is essential to ensure continuity throughout your application. Each section of your application should clearly link back to the vision section, contributing to your overall goals and values for the school.

It will further strengthen this section of your application if you include community engagement when discussing your vision. The voice of the community you are proposing to educate should be at the core of your vision, evidencing a familiarity with SEND strategy and provision in the area will further support this.

4.2 Common errors to avoid

It is essential to be explicit and avoid vagueness, due to the limited word count. As a priority, you should ensure you are meeting the criteria provided which should be addressed as concisely as possible, to ensure that your vision is explained in a well-rounded manner. Introductions are not necessary for this section, given the limited word count it would be beneficial to begin with outlining your trust's overall vision and your proposed vision for the school.

Additionally, you should ensure that throughout this section, you are evidencing the rationale behind your vision for the school. This will present a vision that is well-thought out. By evidencing engagement with the local community and prospective parents and students the vision appears to be far more logical, and strengthens your case for running the new provision.

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It is also vital to include your growth strategy in this section. Your growth strategy should include:

- The number of schools you plan to have in total
- Your planned geographical spread and timescales
- A summary of any discussions you have had with the relevant regional directors' teams

These points will encompass your growth strategy, showing how the proposed school fits into your long-term plans as a trust. Remember to continuously link back to how you will achieve the different aspects of your vision.

The vision section should also not be treated as separate to the rest of your application. Continuity of the vision as a theme throughout the application will allow the DfE to understand how your proposed vision will run through the school.

4.3 Create: Schools support

If you would like further support regarding writing your vision section, please get in touch with one of our advisors at Create: Schools. The advisory team are available to answer any questions regarding the application, alongside our free support service, including conducting application draft reviews.

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