



Reviewing and refining your bid

Mainstream applicants (Wave 15)

Private & Confidential

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Eastlands Court Business Centre, St Peter's Road, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 3QP
0345 459 7600 | hello@premieradvisory.co.uk | createschools.co.uk
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1. Introduction

Your application will likely go through a number of iterations before you submit the final version to the Department for Education. This resource provides some useful tips, based on PAG's long-standing experience of writing successful free school applications to help your team review and refine your bid.

2. Create: Schools guidance – reviewing and refining your bid

2.1 Find the golden thread

Your assessors should be able to see the key themes of your application reflected throughout all sections. The ethos, pedagogical approach and intended outcomes of your free school should all be laid out in your vision (section C), but they should also be clearly referenced throughout the bid. This will likely be easiest to do in your education plan, but you should also consider how your approach to community engagement as well as governance and financial planning reflect the values of your trust.

2.2 Answer the ‘how’ as well as the ‘what’

When re-reading your bid, you should interrogate each statement you have made about what the school will achieve and ask yourself if you have provided examples of actions you will take to achieve your intended outcome. If you refer to ‘policies’ or ‘processes’, be specific – what will these processes look like, and how will they be implemented?

2.3 Follow the money

Applicants may struggle to align their financial template with the rest of the bid, as often finance lead will work on this section in isolation – this means that key elements of expenditure might be missed. We suggest going through your bid and highlighting every element of your proposal that incurs a cost, and make sure this is reflected in the financial template.

2.4 Less is more

The Department for Education has now set word counts for each section, meaning that you must be economical with your writing. It is likely that during your review you will need to cut down on words; rather than taking out whole paragraphs that likely contain precious content, aim to identify and remove superfluous wording. Each sentence should tell the reader something new.

2.5 Bring in external readers

As with any piece of written work, it can be difficult to effectively review your own work objectively. Your bid should be clear and comprehensible to external assessors, and you should not assume that they are familiar with your trust and ways of working (even if the bid is being assessed by the local

authority). Having an external pair of eyes on your application will help identify any inconsistencies or elements that are unclear.

Speak to Create: Schools today to find out more about how our team of advisors can support your bid, including by providing application reviews and feedback.