

New special school in Rochford

**Specification for a new 190 place special school,
across two sites - 150 places at Wolsey Park in
Rayleigh and 40 places at Chetwood, South
Woodham Ferrers**

For more information go to
www.essex.gov.uk



Contents

Page

Section A – Introduction

2

Reasons for opening a new school

2

Pupil profile of the area

2

Indicative timelines for the project

3

The process ECC will follow when assessing proposals for the new school

4

How to apply

5

Section B – The School

7

Key Information

7

Proposed Admission Arrangements

8

SEND Provision

8

Other Factors

8

Site, Location and Buildings

8

Section C – Vision

10

Section D – Education Plan

11

Section E – Capacity and Capability

11

Section F – Funding and Costs

12

Section G – Impact and Equalities Assessments

13



Section A – 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. Essex County Council (ECC) has identified the need to establish a new 190 place special school across two sites in South Essex, to open in September 2026.

Reasons for opening a new special school

Like many places across Essex, the Rochford district is growing as a result of house building activity underway in the local area. Projected pupil numbers, as set out within Essex County Council’s latest forecast for children and young people with special educational needs show a continued rise over the next few years and, as such, these children and young people should ideally be accommodated within local schools. The latest forecasts of pupil numbers indicate that there will be a sustained need for additional special school places in the Rochford district as a result of new housing, inward migration, and a current deficit of specialist provision across South Essex.

Pupil profile of the area

The following table shows the recent history and short-term forecast increase in the number of children and young people with an EHCP resident to Rochford up to 2027. These figures are drawn from the school census and ECC forecasting and so reflect a point in time rather than live data:



Rochford Resident EHCPs by Provision

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Enhanced Provision	12	9	11	16	13	11	12	13
Independent	19	15	17	18	19	29	33	34
Mainstream	235	264	283	311	324	321	330	355
Other	4	9	13	13	7	18	17	18
Post 16	58	98	108	98	100	102	98	78
PRU	7	3	8	5	6	7	7	8
Special	162	168	182	181	191	200	204	218
Total	497	566	622	642	660	688	701	724

Indicative timelines for the project *Timelines may be affected by the General Election.*

Event Date	Date
Publication of specification and invitation to sponsor a new special school	3 June 2024
Closing date for any potential sponsors to submit their application form	28 June 2024
ECC to evaluate submitted applications	1 July 2024
ECC meetings with shortlisted sponsors	10/11 July 2024
ECC to submit applications along with its evaluation to DfE	12 July 2024
DfE confirms the sponsor and funding allocations for new special school	Summer 2024
New school opens	September 2026

In parallel with this timeline ECC is planning the buildings for the new school. The indicative timeline for the building project is as follows:

Event Date	Date
Planning application submitted	Winter 2024/25
Start on site (subject to planning permission)	Spring 2025
Completion/handover to successful sponsor	July 2026
New special school opens	September 2026



Given the presumption competition timeline and the build project timeline it is obvious that the major decisions about the school buildings will have been taken by the time the sponsor is appointed. However, it is the intention that the successful sponsor will be involved in the later stages of the design and build process alongside ECC.

The process ECC will follow when assessing proposals for the new school

In line with DfE guidance, applications will need to demonstrate:

- The capacity and quality of the proposer;
- The extent to which proposals demonstrate the proposer's capability to promote high standards, and to innovate to drive system change.

In addition, ECC will also be evaluating proposals against the following criteria:

- The capacity to establish a new school on the basis of high expectations and high performance to continue to drive up standards and excellence within the special school system;
- Evidence of how the new school will address the local need for additional specialist provision for children with an Education Health Care Plan and will add diversity to the current local offer;
- Evidence of capability and initial plans to operate an inclusive school;
- A strong desire and vision to work closely with other education providers in the locality to promote partnership working and community cohesion;
- Evidence from existing sponsors of a proven track record of school improvement or sustained high standards and how the proposed governance model will drive and support high standards.

ECC will evaluate all proposals received and shortlist sponsors on the basis of the above criteria. We will invite those shortlisted to a meeting to discuss their proposals with a panel that may include the Cabinet Member for Educational Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability and senior ECC officers.

The meetings with shortlisted sponsors will be held at the beginning of July and each



sponsor will be invited to attend for approximately one hour. Timeslots will be notified to shortlisted sponsors once known.

At the end of the process all applications received, along with ECC's recommendation on its preferred provider, will be passed to the Secretary of State in July 2024, with a view to the successful applicant being determined by the Secretary of State by August 2024.

Please note that once proposals are submitted to the Department for Education the information provided, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

How to apply: new special school

Organisations interested in sponsoring the new school provision should notify ECC by e-mailing ralph.holloway@essex.gov.uk as soon as possible. This alerts the council to your interest in sponsoring the new provision.

Potential sponsors should complete the application form which can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/school-organisation-and-place-planning/new-school-opportunities>

The completed application form, together with any supporting documents, should be sent to ECC at the following address by 5pm on 28th June to ralph.holloway@essex.gov.uk

The Regional Director (RD) for East of England, 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 RD 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 Ralph Holloway (ralph.holloway@essex.gov.uk).



Section B – The Special School

Key Information

Opening Date:	September 2026
Pupil Capacity:	190
Phase:	Primary and Secondary (150) at Wolsey Park and Secondary and Post-16 (40) at Chetwood, South Woodham Ferrars
Gender:	Mixed

Proposed School Admission Arrangements

All admissions to the school are the responsibility of the Local Authority. Following a statutory assessment and issuing of an Education Health Care Plan, the Local Authority will make a judgement as to where the needs of a child with special educational needs can best be met. The school will consider the consultation information to ensure it is an appropriate referral and that they can meet the needs within their defined provision.

SEND Provision

The new school will be a co-educational school for children and young people aged from 3 to 19 with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties; all children and young people attending the school will have an Education Health Care Plan.

Other Factors

Transport Arrangements

Transport arrangements will be in line with ECC's home to school transport policies.

Character/ Ethos of the School



We would expect the successful MAT to work collaboratively with ECC, other local schools and special schools across the county to support the delivery of Essex Local Area's SEND Strategy 2022-2027: My life, my rights <https://send.essex.gov.uk/send-strategies/essex-local-area-send-strategy-2022-2027-my-life-my-rights> . ECC is currently developing its sufficiency plan for SEND which is based on ensuring an inclusive mainstream sector which is supported by strong specialist provision. The new school will be a vital component of ensuring that children and young people with the highest needs are educated in an appropriate provision local to their home address. This by necessity will involve the new school working positively with local mainstream schools where children and young people with SEND who may be appropriate for the new provision may be struggling.

Site, Location and Buildings

Wolsey Park is a development at the western edge of Rayleigh. As part of the development, it was required that site would be provided to the Council for use as a primary school site. However, we can meet mainstream need at the existing primary school nearby and no longer need a new mainstream primary school. The best use of this site is now considered to be a new SEN school.

ECC owns a vacant school site – the site of the former Chetwood School - in South Woodham Ferrers which is six miles from Wolsey Park. A viability study undertaken for the vacant building has shown that there is capacity for a 40-place specialist provision to be delivered.

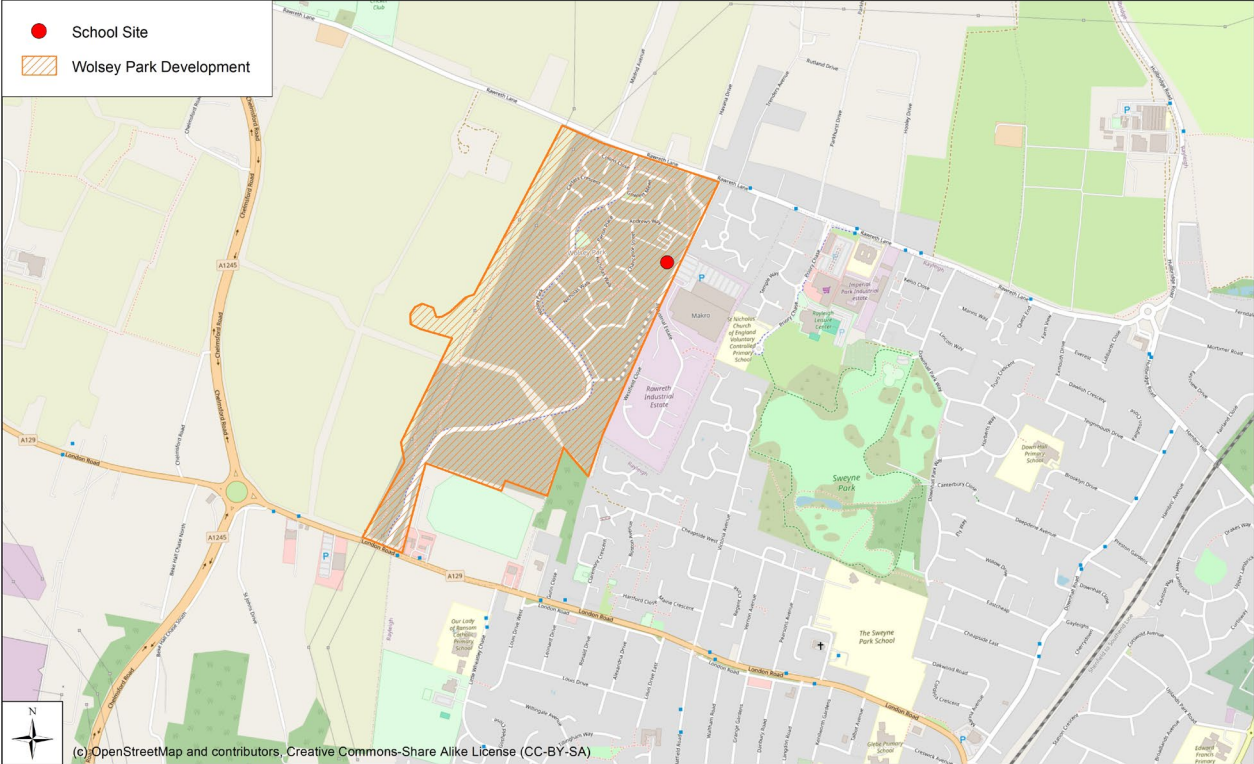
The proposal is therefore to establish a two-site special school with 150 places at Wolsey Park, Rayleigh (primary and secondary) with a 40-place provision at Chetwood, South Woodham Ferrars (secondary and post-16).

The school will be built by ECC. It is intended that the building project will be completed by July 2026. The school locations are shown on the plan below.



School site location

Proposed Special School on Wolsey Park Development

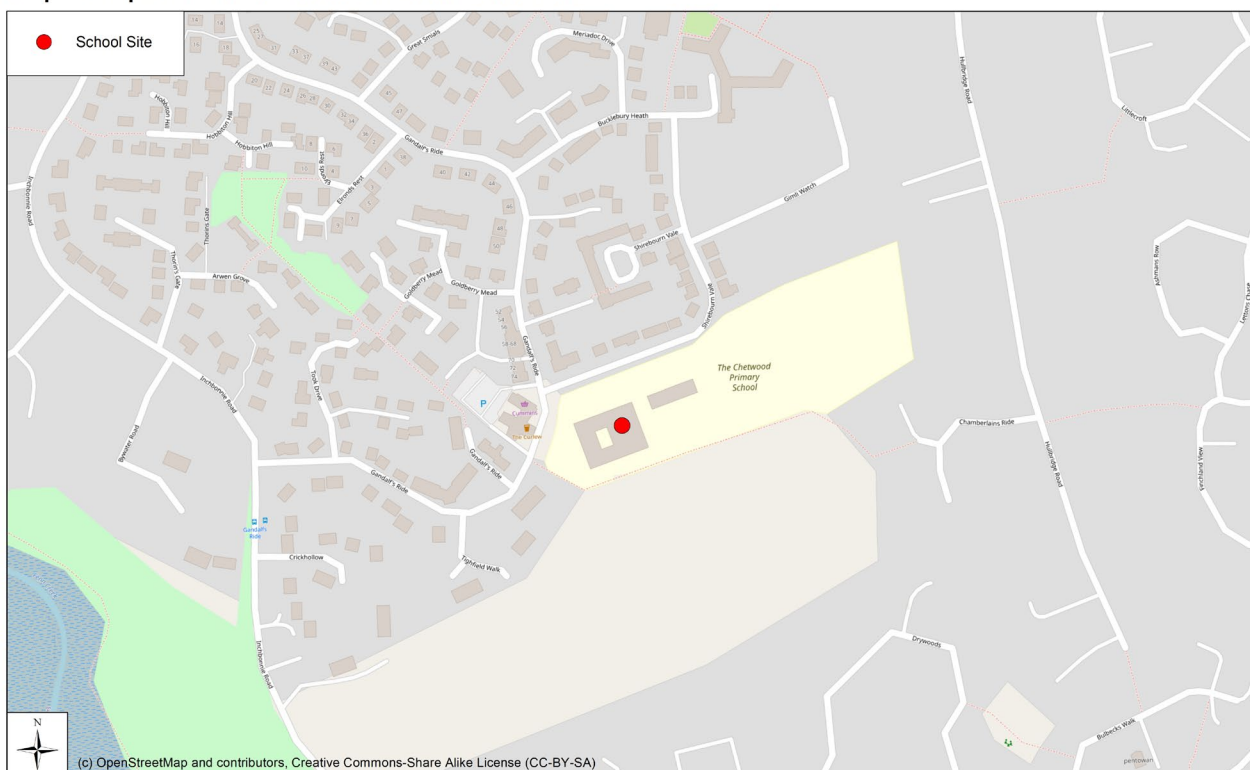


0 0.125 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles Scale: 1:8,000 @ A3

Essex County Council, February 2024



Proposed Special School - South Woodham Ferrers Site



Essex County Council, May 2024



Section C - Vision

Applicants wishing to respond to the proposal for the new school should take account of the relevant criteria in Annex C of the Free School Presumption guidance.

As a minimum, please ensure you include the following:

- A strong educational vision and a curriculum delivery based on meeting the needs of children and young people with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties;
- 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;
- A commitment to excellent outcomes and high quality of teaching and learning.



Essex County Council

Section D - Education Plan

Applicants should take account of the relevant criteria in 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;
- A plan to ensure a strong and sustainable leadership model;
- The needs of all children are fully provided for and how the school will be fully inclusive of the needs of children and young people with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties;
- 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).

Section E - Capacity and Capability

Applicants should take account of the relevant criteria in Annex C of the Free School Presumption guidance.

As a minimum please ensure you include the following:

- The resources you would draw on and/or deploy to support the development of the new free school by the opening date;



- Clear evidence that you have the range of skills and abilities necessary to set up and then run a school effectively, including: managing school finances; leadership; project management; marketing; human resources; safeguarding; and health and safety;
- How the school would be organised and what the governance arrangements would look like, including a diagram of the proposed structures.

Section F - Funding and Costs

There will be a start-up allowance of £150,000 for the new school for costs associated with employing a headteacher, a business manager and other staff before the school opens. This allowance is also intended for use on advertising, travel expenses, training costs, resources/materials and all other costs associated with opening the school. The successful sponsor is able to spend the funding as they see fit for the purposes of preparing to open the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) will provide a one-off payment of £25,000 to the successful sponsor for the essential non-capital pre-opening revenue costs associated with establishing a free school.

A furniture, fittings and equipment (FF&E) budget will also be allocated to the new sponsor, to cover all loose furniture and equipment, including ICT. Subject to a final decision, this budget will be £363,090 (£259,000 for Wolsey and £104,090 for Chetwood) phased over two years.

ECC will require proof of expenditure on FF&E for the new school.

Upon opening, the school will be funded by the ESFA on the same basis as other academies and free schools in the Local Authority area.

Pupil led funding will be set at £10k per place (place funding) plus £7.5 to £25k place funding. The range is across bands 4-8 of the current Essex banding matrix with typical pupils likely to fall into band 6 (£15k).

Please ensure that you develop your budget for the new school based on the information provided.



Section G - Impact and Equalities Assessments

The local authority has assessed the potential impact of the new school on existing educational provision in the area. The local authority has also considered whether the new school would impact on any groups with protected characteristics. The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic. The assessment is attached below.



ECIA597771027 -
Completed ECIA - Wo



Essex County Council