



Department
for Education

Suffolk County Council

**Free school presumption:
Specification for proposers wanting to
establish a new school for the
Brightwell Lakes Development, Suffolk.**

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Section A - Introduction

Suffolk County Council (SCC), referred to as The Council, has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child living in the County who is of school age and whose parents want their child educated in the state funded sector. To ensure the Council meets its statutory duty, the officers monitor the pupil forecasts and planned new housing developments to ensure that it can identify when there is the need to provide additional school places and to respond in a timely manner. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also requires local authorities to adopt a strategic role, with a duty to promote choice, diversity, and fair access to school provision. The 2011 Education Act changed the arrangements for establishing new schools. As a result, whenever a Local Authority (LA) identifies the need to establish a new school it must, in the first instance, seek proposals to establish an academy.

The Council also has a statutory duty under the Childcare Acts 2006 and 2016 and the Education Act 2011 to secure sufficient childcare to enable parents to work or to undertake education or training which could lead to employment (section 6). In addition, the Council must ensure that there is sufficient free Early Years (EY) provision for all 3 and 4 year olds and those two-year-olds who meet the eligibility criteria. The EY offer has recently been extended as the government has announced that:

- From April 2024, all eligible working parents of two-year-olds will be able to access funding for 15 hours per week of education and care for 38 weeks of the year.
- From September 2024, all eligible working parents of children aged nine months up to three-years-old will be able to access funding for 15 hours per week of education and care for 38 weeks of the year.
- From September 2025, all eligible working parents of children aged nine months up to three years old will be able to access funding for 30 hours per week of education and care for 38 weeks of the year.

New School

Following the progress of the development, known as Brightwell Lakes, the Council has identified an increased need in primary school places due to the new development and seeks to establish a new 2 form entry (FE) 420 place, mainstream, 4 to 11 mixed primary school, with a 60 place EY setting on site.

The new school will be located on the development know as Brightwell Lakes, Suffolk which sits on the border of Martlesham and Brightwell. The school will primarily serve the families

on that new development. It is planned, based on current forecasting, that the school will open to Reception and key stage 1 aged children in September 2027.

The school will be built as a 2 form of entry (FE) 420 place primary school, to meet the forecast demand for places as a result of the new housing, however the published admission number (PAN) will be limited on opening and will increase in line with housing growth and increased pupil numbers. The dedicated early years (EY) provision on the site will be able to accommodate up to 60 children. Both the school and the EY will have the capacity to grow, with the primary school able to accommodate up to 420 primary aged children, and the possibility to expand further if needed. The new school and pre-school are currently in design; therefore, the successful academy trust will not have the opportunity to influence the design of the new school.

The Council welcomes proposals from all potential academy trusts including for voluntary aided schools and academies with a faith designation.

The local area

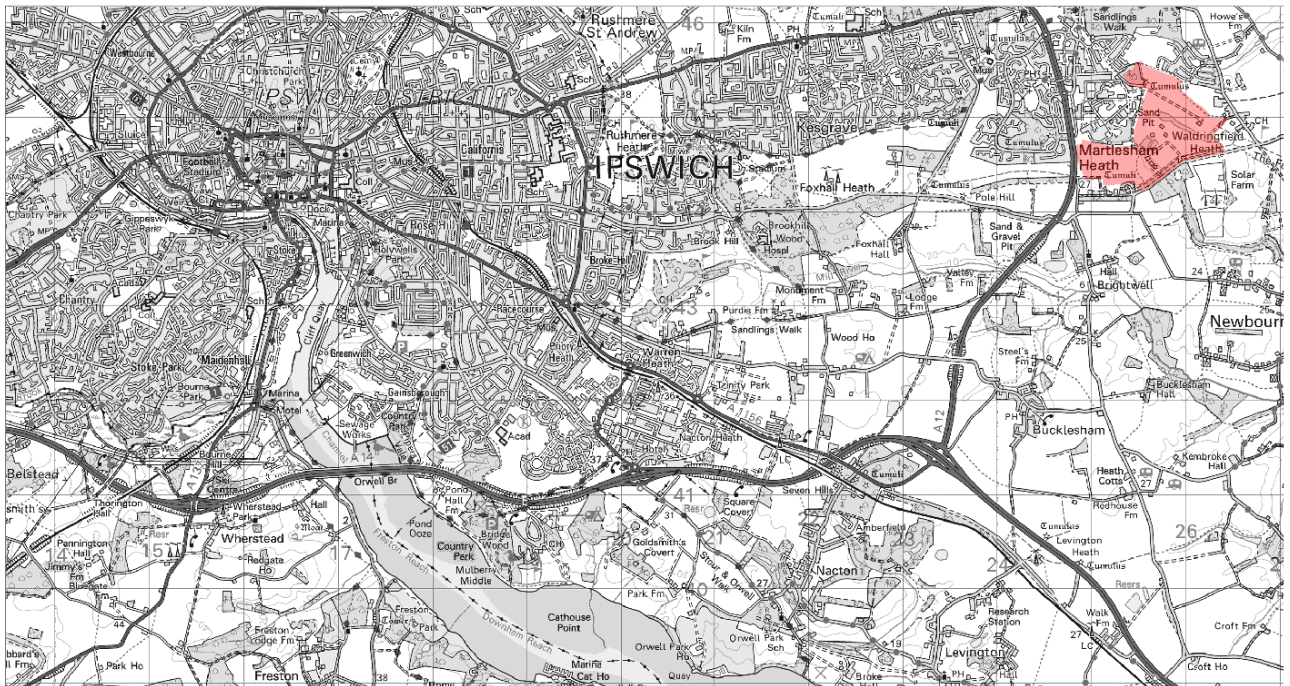
Brightwell Lakes sits next to Adastral Park business centre on the outskirts of Ipswich, a large town in Suffolk, a county in eastern England, and is part of Brightwell village and Martlesham village both in the East Suffolk district. It is located 7 miles east of Ipswich and 4 miles southwest of Woodbridge. It is close to the coast and by the River Orwell. Brightwell has no recorded population details. It neighbours the villages of Waldringfield, Bucklesham and Foxhall who all have populations of less than 600. Martlesham recorded a population of 5,457 in 2021.

Ipswich is known as the largest urban centre in Suffolk and is described in the Ipswich Borough Council's local Plan as *'An engine of growth for the East of England, Ipswich has a thriving commercial sector, ICT sector linked to Adastral Park, business and financial services sector and a significant port. It is a centre for education, including University of Suffolk on the Waterfront, which offers a programme of teaching and research in key sectors. Ipswich also provides a wide range of cultural, sporting and retail provision, which serves the needs of the sub-region. The town has a diverse and multicultural population and is one of the fastest growing urban centres in the UK.'*

Planning has been granted by East Suffolk Council for a housing development covering Martlesham and Brightwell and this will increase the number of primary aged children.

The land adjacent to Adastral Park, part of Martlesham and Brightwell, has been identified for development with a proposal of 2,000 homes creating a new community in the coming years. The location of the development can be seen in Figure 1 below.

The site consists of 113ha of land, which is being developed with excellent transport links. due to being situated beside the A12. To the south, the A12 joins the A14, providing easy access to a direct route to London.



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Figure 1 - The Brightwell Lakes Development is highlighted in red on the above map of the wider area, Ipswich/Kesgrave/Martlesham

In addition to housing, the wider Brightwell Lakes development will provide public open spaces, a sports pavilion, allotments, community building and local centre.

The new primary school will serve the Brightwell Lakes development and is centrally located on the development with space to grow and expand, in order to ensure sufficient capacity for pupils coming from this new community.

Suffolk County Council is therefore seeking proposals from academy trusts to open the school, academy trusts may also express an interest in running the EY setting. (The inclusion of the EY setting in the application is optional). This school would be deemed a free school.

Existing education provision in the area

Details of existing school provision in the area can be found in Appendices B and C. These provide data for FSM, SEN, EAL and Key Stage 2 outcomes as well as a map showing the IDACI Index.

Timetable

The timetable and process for advertising and assessing applications is as follows:

Stage 1 – Invitation for Proposals	
Friday 10 January 2025	Launch of process: National and local announcements using Department for Education (DfE) and SCC websites
Monday 7th April 2025 midday	Deadline for receipt of proposals
Stage 2 – Assessment	
Week commencing Monday 14 April 2025	Assessment of proposals and selection of preferred proposers
Week commencing Monday 19 May 2025	Assessment period begins for DfE
TBC	SCC to invite shortlisted academy trusts to interview.
TBC week commencing Monday 30 June 2025 (2 dates)	Assessment Panel Interviews
September 2025 Cabinet, date to be confirmed	Recommendation to SCC Cabinet and confirmation of preferred academy trust.
September 2025, following Cabinet meeting	Proposals are sent to the Regional DfE Director for the East of England for consideration and decision. (Note: DfE decisions are informed by the High-Quality Trust Framework, information available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-high-quality-trusts)
Stage 3 - Decision by Regional DfE Director (for the Secretary of State)	The regional director on behalf of the secretary of state will consider the LA assessments and recommendations and decide which proposer is in the best position to take forward the new school. The Regional Director as above will inform the LA and the successful proposer of the decision, and the LA will inform unsuccessful proposers. There is no specified timescale for this part of the process.

The application form and appendices can be found on Suffolk County Council's website <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/academies-and-free-schools>. **Completed forms should be returned to schools@suffolk.gov.uk no later than midday, Monday 07 April 2025**, applications received after this time will not be considered.

NB: the local authority led free school presumption is a different route to the DfE's free school programme. Further information about how to establish a new school via the DfE's free school programme route can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/opening-a-free-school>

If you would like further information or wish to discuss your application, please contact Penny Bates, Schools Planning Manager Penny.Bates@suffolk.gov.uk or Pete Mumford, Head of Schools Infrastructure Pete.Mumford@suffolk.gov.uk
Children and Young People's Services, Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 2BX.

Section B - The School

Opening date

The new school is planned to open in September 2027. However, trusts should be aware that demographic forecasts and build out rates are reviewed regularly and may identify the need for the school to open on an alternative date.

Site/Location

A school site is included in a S106 agreement, indicative plans for the new school follow.



Figure 2 - School location identified on the above plan, from Taylor Wimpey's details of the development at <https://www.taylorwimpey.co.uk/new-homes/martlesham/brightwell-lakes>.

The indicative timescale for developing the buildings are as follows:

- Initial design is in progress
- Mobilisation on site: April 2026
- Building works to be completed: July 2027
- Handover to allow school fit out: Early July 2027
- Occupation of the building: Early July 2027

(These dates are subject to change.)

Considerable work has already been undertaken; this means that the successful academy trust will have limited opportunity to influence the design of the school. The school will be built to current DfE Building Bulletin 103 requirements for primary schools.

Capacity and PAN

The school's capacity on opening will be 420 places. The Council will want to work with the academy trust to balance the availability of places against local demand. This will require a flexible approach, based on the pace of house building in the area.

We anticipate that the new school will open initially with **15 places** in Reception, Year 1 and 2. The school will then build up to a capacity of 420 primary places over a number of years. Academy Trusts will need to work with the Council to manage the availability of places, to ensure that the new school does not impact on surrounding schools and ensure that children moving onto the development can access a place. This arrangement will be reviewed with Suffolk County Council prior to the school opening subject to demand for primary school places from the development.

Catchment area

The Council expects the school to serve the community in the area bounded by the new housing on the development. It is intended to establish a catchment area for the new school that reflects this, and SCC seeks the Trust's support in this. The proposed catchment area will be included in the annual consultation in 2025, with the aim of determining the catchment for the school from 2027 onwards.

Age range and Gender

The age range of the school will be 4-11. The school will provide places for boys and girls (mixed).

Pre-School

A 60-place pre-school will be located on site. The number of families taking up the 30-hour offer will influence the actual numbers on role. An EY provider will be expected to open from 8am to 6pm all year round. The government announced, in the March 2023 budget, that funded childcare is to be extended. In 2025 this will include funded childcare for children from age nine months (as set out above), therefore if an academy trust were successful in its application to operate the EY, they would be expected to provide childcare for children aged from 9 months old up to school age.

Academy trusts will be expected to confirm whether they wish to run this provision at the time of application, if they are identified as the Councils preferred trust to run the school, they will then be asked to provide additional information about their EY proposal. The documents can be found on the SCC webpage, <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/academies-and-free-schools>. These do **not** need to be completed or submitted with school application.

Please note that you will be invited to complete appendix G if you are successful at interview and wish to run the pre-school. Only information pertinent to the primary school application should be included in the primary school application form, do not include information regarding proposed pre-school provision in your application.

The pre-school area will be 'red-lined' out of the academy transfer. A lease-back arrangement will be in place should the trust identified to run the school also be accepted to run the EY setting. Break clauses will be included in the lease to provide for the possibility that the trust wish to relinquish management of the setting in the future.

If the EY proposal from the trust identified to run the school does not meet the requirements of SCC or, should the successful academy trust not wish to run the pre-school, a provider would be sought through an expression of interest process which will be carried out by SCC's EY team.

Support for vulnerable learners and those with special educational needs

The new school must provide an inclusive learning environment in which all pupils, including those with special or additional educational needs and those with disabilities, are supported and enabled to make appropriate progress. The needs of vulnerable children and young people should be met locally wherever possible. The new school should have a strong focus on equalities, early intervention, and supporting the needs of the local community.

Community use

Academy trusts must ensure the school plays a key role within its immediate community and the wider local economy. The school will be expected to provide access for community groups as appropriate and in line with safeguarding and security protocols.

Proposed admission arrangements

Academy trusts must have oversubscription criteria that are reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair and which comply with all relevant legislation.

The successful academy trust will be required to follow the DfE School Admissions Code and the School Admissions Appeal Code. The successful academy trust will also be required to participate in the Council's co-ordinated scheme for the normal admissions rounds although they are not required to do so for admissions in the year of opening. They will also have to follow the Council's In-year Fair Access procedure.

Transport arrangements

The council's transport policy is available at <https://www.suffolkonboard.com/school-travel/policies/>

The successful academy trust will be expected to produce a School Travel Plan, which is likely to be a condition of the planning approval. The new academy will be expected to encourage safe and sustainable travel to school. The successful academy trust will be expected to work with neighbouring schools when agreeing the timing of the school day and professional development dates to enable efficient use of school transport.

Equality and Diversity

As a County Council, we are committed to ensuring fair and accessible services for everyone in Suffolk. The weight given to the equalities and inclusion policy within the Council specifically compliments our organisational priority in respect of supporting vulnerable people. We also have a responsibility to ensure that the companies and organisations that we commission to provide services on our behalf, take the same positive approach to equality. All potential academy trusts will be required to demonstrate their commitment to promoting equality and diversity and to eliminating unlawful discrimination.

Working in Partnership

A key component of selection will be the academy trust's willingness to work in collaboration with other providers and local partners to develop services which meet the needs of local children, young people and families in a coordinated way. In particular, the successful

academy trust will be expected to liaise with all local providers of pre-school education and to work with high schools to plan effective pupil transition.

The successful academy trust will also be expected to support the strategic responsibilities of the Council to ensure sufficiency of high-quality school places and improved educational outcomes through agreed sharing of data and information. The successful academy trust will also be expected to work with the Council to manage the PAN whilst the school grows, which will include limiting the PAN throughout the growth of the school to ensure that places are available to children on the new development. This may mean that a flexible approach to class organisation is required, including mixed year teaching.

Section C - Vision

Applicants should take account of the relevant criteria in Annex C of the free school presumption guidance (www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-pre-opening-guide), also shown as appendix D.

As a minimum, SCC is looking for an academy trust who can deliver:

- A strong educational vision and a curriculum delivery based on high standards of attainment for each key stage.
- A strong educational vision and a curriculum delivery based on high standards of attainment for each key stage
- 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, including looked after children, those with Special Educational Needs, etc
- A commitment to excellent outcomes and high quality of teaching and learning

Section D - Education Plan

Applicants should take account of the relevant criteria in Annex C of the free school presumption guidance (appendix D). You may also wish to refer to appendices B and C which provide information on existing pupil demographics.

As a minimum SCC is looking for an academy trust who can provide;

- An ambitious, broad and balanced, deliverable curriculum plan which is consistent with the vision and pupil intake. This could include a curriculum table, pupil build up

chart, examples of current practice where relevant, and how this will be adapted for a new school.

- 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 to reflect the increased staff team as the school grows. A table is provided in the application form to reflect staffing numbers.
- A school that is fully inclusive, where the needs of all children are fully provided for, not just in terms of SEND but also wider equalities issues.
- 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).
- Evidence of strategies used in place, to work with families to improve attendance.

Section E - Capacity and Capability

Applicants should take account of the relevant criteria in Annex C of the free school presumption guidance (appendix D).

As a minimum SCC is looking for an academy trust who can provide;

- Details of the process you would follow and resources you would draw on and/or deploy to support the opening and development of the new free school by the opening date, link this to past experience if possible.
- 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.
- Details of how the school would be organised, including the governance arrangements, a diagram of the proposed structures should be included.

Section F - Funding and Costs

Applicants should take account of the relevant criteria in Annex C of the free school presumption guidance (appendix D).

Please provide;

- Most recent set of Trust accounts.
- Financial forecast for the next 3 years which would include at a summary level:
 - Pupil number projections (in conjunction with LA info)
 - Income projections GAG funding and other income streams such as other grants and income from services
 - Staff costs
 - Premises costs
 - Education and Learning Resources
 - Supplies and Services

There is no finance template. You may provide your financial plan in any way which you see fit. You may provide a commentary of up to 500 words to accompany this if needed.

Capital Funding

The county council will provide the land and buildings for the school build i.e. 120/420 places plus early years' provision. The cost will be met through a mixture of LA basic need funds and S106 contributions.

Lease Arrangements

The site will be made available to the agreed academy provider on a 125-year lease, with the usual terms pursuant to the 2010 Academies Act. There will be a lease-back arrangement for the pre-school.

Other Allowances

The Council will provide the following funding to set up and establish the new school, (these figures are correct as of October 2024, they may be subject to change).

- A **start-up** allowance of £200,039 - to cover the employment of a Headteacher and administrative support in advance of the school opening.
- A **setting up** allowance will also be made for each classroom. The basic cost for primary school classrooms is £6,600 per class, with £9,900 for specialised classrooms such as Food Technology. This is to pay for the desks, chairs, and other equipment in each classroom in the school. The calculation is based on average costs.
- A **block payment** of £33,000 for a primary school to cover the cost of establishing office and communal space etc.

Pupil related funding for growth.

Although the Council wishes to limit the PAN initially to 15 and increase this in line with expected growth on Brightwell Lakes, we recognise the challenges related to opening a new school including financial pressures. The Council will therefore fund the school initially for 75% of 30 places for the year groups R, Y1 and Y2. This is equivalent to funding for 22.5 pupils per year group or total of funding for 67.5 places guaranteed each year for 3 years unless numbers exceed this. This will be reviewed following the school census, should the census numbers exceed this then payment for the higher pupil numbers would be made instead of the 75%.

The Trust will be expected to organise the class teaching in a manner that is efficient, ensuring that there are sufficient places to accommodate new families moving onto the development, but not in such a manner that is unsustainable for the trust or the pupils. Trusts should consider mixed class teaching where appropriate, taking into consideration statutory requirements such as infant class size legislation. Should more than 3 class bases be required, the usual growth funding process would be followed to apply for additional funding. The guidance for growth funding can be found here,

<https://suffolklearning.com/finance/schools-accountancy/school-funding/growth-policy/>

[An example of growth funding can be found in Appendix F - FAQs, see finance section.](#)

Section G - Impact and Equalities Assessments

As prescribed by section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 and section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the local authority must assess the potential impact of any new school on existing educational provision in the area. The local authority must also consider whether the new school would impact on any groups with protected characteristics.

The current Suffolk County Council EIA for North Felixstowe and Brightwell Lakes is attached at Appendix E.

Appendices

Appendix A – Application form for proposers

Appendix B – FSM, SEN, EAL and Key Stage 2 (KS2) outcomes for existing schools in the area.

Appendix C – Map showing IDACI index

Appendix D – Annex C of the Department for Education (DfE) free school presumption guidance

Appendix E – Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

Appendix F – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Appendix G – Expression of Interest form (EOI) for Early Years Application (**Please do not complete this form as part of your application, for information only**)