

# [News story: New free schools to benefit children with additional needs](#)

Pupils with additional and often complex needs are set to benefit from more than 120 new school places, as two special free schools have been given the green light to open.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi has announced (9 January) that the two new specialist schools will be built in Essex and Hounslow, helping to meet the local need for school places for children with some of the most complex social, emotional and mental health needs.

It follows the [publication](#) of a significant package of support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in December, when the Education Secretary Damian Hinds announced an extra £350 million funding to provide them with specialist support and tailored facilities, and boosting the school choice available for parents.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

I know how important it is for parents to feel their child is getting the support and education they deserve. My ambition for children with special educational needs is the same as for any other child – to achieve well in their education, find employment and live a happy, fulfilled life.

Every school is a school for children with special education needs – but parents rightly want choice in their child’s education, which is why our reforms to the system put families at the heart of the process so their views are heard.

The two new special free schools in Essex and Hounslow will help support children with these additional needs to get the skills they need to fulfil their potential.

The two special free schools due to open in September 2020 include:

- one in Hounslow, providing 64 specialist places for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, aged between 11 and 19-years-old. It will be run by Orchard Hill College Academy Trust; and
- one in Chelmsford, Essex, on the site of the former St Peter’s College, to offer 64 places to pupils aged seven to 16 who have severe and complex social, emotional and mental health needs. It will be run by the Beckmead Trust, which is in the process of becoming a Multi-Academy Trust with the Beckmead Family of Schools, a special school in Croydon rated outstanding by Ofsted.

Today’s announcement is part of a government drive to ensure more families

have access to a good school place, which will see the creation of one million places between 2010 and 2020 – the fastest increase for two generations.

It also builds on confirmation from the Education Secretary that he will approve all high quality bids in the current round of special and alternative provision free schools applications. Alongside this, he also confirmed that councils will receive an additional £250 million in their high needs budgets over the next two years – on top of the £6 billion already provided – and an extra £100 million investment to create more specialist places in mainstream schools, colleges and special schools. This could include more state-of-the-art facilities, such as sensory rooms and specialist equipment.

Together, the funding will provide parents with increased choice for their child's education, and give more children and young people access to a good school or college place that meets their individual needs.

Councillor Tom Bruce, Cabinet Member for Education, Children Services and Youth Services, Hounslow Council, said:

We're delighted to be given the opportunity to open a new special school in Hounslow. The number of children diagnosed with having special educational needs and disabilities has been rising in recent years.

This new school will help meet the increased demand for school places and will support many children in our borough, ensuring that they receive the high quality education that they deserve.

Councillor Ray Gooding, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Education, said:

We are delighted that the Beckmead Trust has been appointed by the Department for Education to open a new special school in Chelmsford and pleased to have been able to work in partnership with both organisations to make the site available.

The new school will ensure pupils with a range of complex needs are fully supported within an appropriate environment and help to ensure that every child in the county is given the best chance to thrive. This is fantastic news for Essex and I look forward to the official opening of the new school.