

News story: New free schools to open across England

Today 53 new free schools and one University Technical College will open their doors, creating up to 40,000 new school places across the country.

The new openers have been set up by multi-academy trusts, charities and community groups and often provide specialist education for pupils.

Among those opening this week are the Saracens High School, which will be supported by Saracens Rugby Club – a partnership between local schools and Middlesex University to boost pupils' education through sport. Free schools are among the highest performing state-funded schools in the country and many are in disadvantaged areas, helping to improve education for every child, such as Tauheedul Islam Boys High School, Blackburn, The Reach Academy Feltham and Dixons Trinity Academy which all received top GCSE grades in 2017.

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.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

I want to create new, great schools where they are needed most and give parents greater choice when looking at the schools that are right for their children. For years, innovative free schools have been leading the way on this – from the specialist maths schools run by some of our top universities to the special free schools creating places for children who have additional learning needs.

The new schools opening their doors this term will build on this record, bringing in the likes of Saracens Rugby Club and Sky to provide pupils with excellent sports activities and classes on cutting edge media technology. Thanks to reforms like this and the hard work of our teachers, we have 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010 – I look forward to seeing these new schools flourish too.

Schools opening this week will range from primary schools to sixth form colleges, with some tailored specifically to provide technical education. The new openers include:

- Saracens High School in Barnet – a mainstream secondary school which will provide 1,130 places, including a 230 place sixth-form. This will be the first school opened by a The Saracens Multi-Academy Trust, which

includes Saracens Sport Foundation and Middlesex University.

- Bolder Academy in Hounslow – which is being set up by a group of local headteachers and has teamed up with Sky to deliver in-school and extra-curricular activities in sport, media and technology. It will offer 1,150 places, of which 250 will be sixth-form.
- John Taylor Free School in Staffordshire – will be the first new 11-18 secondary school to open in Staffordshire for a generation. The school will offer 1,440 places and form part of the successful John Taylor Multi-Academy Trust which has consistently had strong results with some of the highest performing schools in the region.
- Red Kite Special Academy in Northamptonshire – a special provision school for 100 pupils with severe learning difficulties and those on the autistic spectrum. The school is part of the Kingsley Learning Foundation Trust between the Kingsley School and the Red Kite Free School.
- North East Futures University Technical College in Newcastle – will specialise in healthcare science and digital technology. The University Technical College is part of the Tyne Coast Academy Trust (TCAT) and has been set up in partnership with the University of Sunderland and businesses including Accenture, Ubisoft and Newcastle-upon-Tyne NHS Trust.

Of those inspected by Ofsted, 85% of free schools are rated good or outstanding, while 31% are rated outstanding. In 2017, two of the top 10 Progress 8 scores for state-funded schools in England were achieved by free schools.

The new openers announced today take the total number of these schools open to 520 since 2010 and means more than 120 in 152 local authorities now have at least one free school, studio school or university technical college in their area. The Department has committed to approving a further 110 new schools by 2020.

The new schools open as 20 local authorities across the country are set to receive a share of a £50 million funding boost to support the creation of new free schools where they are needed most. The Presumption Free School Grant will help pay to build the new free schools and will create around 15,000 places across the country. The Department will work closely with the 20 local authorities selected for the Presumption Free School Grant to support the building of the new schools.

Mark Lehain, Interim Director of New Schools Network, said:

It's fantastic to see another 53 free schools opening their doors for the first time this September. Opening a new school is, rightly, a challenging process and it's thanks to the hard work and dedication of these groups of people that scores of families will benefit.

This cohort of free schools is particularly exciting; it spans the breadth of the country, as well as all phases and types, including four special free schools. It also highlights the strength of the free school policy, which allows schools to provide the education their local community wants – such as Saracens High School, set-up by the rugby club, Middlesex University and the Gold Star Federation, or the Bolder Academy that has teamed up with Sky to provide media and technology teaching.

The free school programme continues to be the most successful and cost effective way of providing much needed new school places. I wish all of those opening this year the very best.

Andrew Griffith, Group Chief Operating Officer for Sky, said:

As Bolder Academy will be literally right on our doorstep, we can see exciting opportunities to be a good neighbour. We have a huge array of skills and expertise here on-site and I hope that we can support the school in many ways, including Sky colleagues volunteering to help out with in-school and after-school activities in areas such as sport, media and technology.

Nigel Wray, Saracens Chairman, said:

What a challenge and a privilege to be able to open a school, to try and make a real difference to young people in a disadvantaged community.

The Saracens High School is, we believe, the first mainstream secondary school ever to be set up by a professional sports club. Our aim, as it is for our players, is to help every young person to be the best that they can possibly be.

Maro Itoje, Saracens Rugby Union player and England International said:

It's exciting as a player to see the Saracens High School's vision and ethos is built on the core values that have helped us as a team to be successful over recent seasons. I'm proud to be at a club that is committed to providing young disadvantaged people in our local community with an education.

Mike Donoghue, Head of Trust at John Taylor Free School, said:

We are delighted to be sponsoring the delivery of John Taylor Free School in Tatenhill, which will be the first new build secondary school in Staffordshire for a generation. As is the case with all schools in our Trust, the school will welcome children of all abilities, faiths, social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and will be a learning hub for the wider community.

John Taylor Free School will equip young people with the knowledge, experiences, skills and attributes to enable success beyond school and will further the innovative heritage of John Taylor High School. John Taylor Free School will share the 'DNA' that has helped make our Trust's schools successful: a focus on quality teaching, the setting of high expectations for all, a belief in collaboration and the added value that it brings to, and an emphasis on the development – academic and personal – of all children and adults who work with us. However, it is a sibling, not a clone – having a character and context that makes it individual, and valued for it.

John Taylor Multi-Academy Trust has worked closely and harmoniously with the DfE, the ESFA, Staffordshire County Council, contractors and other partners to deliver a truly amazing new school which we are convinced, over time, will become a leading presence in the sector across the region and beyond. Today's announcement follows the news earlier this year that an additional £50 million will be spent on creating new school places for children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), and a further £630 million in basic need funding for 2021 to help meet local demand for places.