

Press release: Thousands of new school places in underperforming areas

Thousands more pupils will have the opportunity to study in new free schools, as the Education Secretary approves applications across the country.

Damian Hinds will today confirm that 22 applications to create a new free school have been successful – creating an extra 19,000 places in the areas that need them most and taking the government a step closer to delivering on its pledge to create one million new school places by 2020, the fastest growth for two generations.

There are more than 440 free schools nationwide, with 285 more set to open in the coming years. Of those inspected by Ofsted, 84% have been rated good or outstanding, with 30% rated outstanding – and in 2018, four of the top 10 Progress 8 scores for state-funded schools in England were achieved by free schools.

The latest approvals are targeted in areas of the country most in need – with 18 of the new schools set to open in local authorities identified by the Department for Education as having the lowest educational performance and insufficient capacity to improve – and areas that have not yet benefitted from the free schools programme.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Free Schools have revolutionised education in this country – through their innovation and a different way of thinking about teaching and learning they are a fantastic addition to our education system.

Many parts of the country have already taken advantage of the Free School Programme and have reaped the benefits. A great education is the key to unlocking every child's potential so today we are announcing 22 new free schools so more young people – often in the most disadvantaged areas of the country – can benefit from a great free school opening in their area.

I look forward to seeing the schools as they are built, and how the young people studying there flourish and go on to succeed.

Luke Tryl, Director of New Schools Network said:

Today's announcement is great news for families across the country. These approvals mean that some of the areas most desperately in need of greater educational opportunity will soon have innovative and successful new schools opening their doors to the community.

The range of different schools approved today demonstrates that the free schools policy continues to lead the way in driving innovation across education in England. We congratulate all the approved schools and look forward to helping them through the pre-opening process.

Successful applications include:

- BOA Stage and Screen Production – an exciting new 16-19 specialist college in central Birmingham, set up by the Birmingham Ormiston Academy, offering a range of vocational and high level technical qualifications for students wishing to enter TV, Film or Theatre professions.
- Callerton Academy – a 11-16 mixed secondary school in Newcastle- Upon- Tyne, led by Gosforth Federated Academies trust, which since 2010 has run the popular and over-subscribed Gosforth Academy, rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted. Callerton Academy will bring the benefits of this existing offer to the Callerton area of the city.
- The Shireland CBSO Music School – a new specialist music school, serving the Black Country and West Midlands – the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust are working in collaboration with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra to provide young people from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to achieve musically at an elite level.
- Michaela Community School Stevenage- a mixed, non-faith secondary providing 1260 school places for 11-18 year old pupils and will be part of a newly formed multi-academy trust, including Michaela Community School in Brent, judged Outstanding by Ofsted in 2017.

Today’s announcement includes confirmation that two new maths schools will proceed to the next stage of development to tap into the expertise of the country’s top universities to increase the number of young people studying maths, giving them opportunities to secure good jobs and helping to boost the UK economy.

Ofsted has found that maths schools excel in recruiting students from disadvantaged or under-represented background to fulfil their potential – the new schools will try to emulate the successes of maths schools in Exeter and London in putting talented mathematicians on the path to a course at top universities and supporting them towards advanced mathematics studies. They are:

- A partnership between Lancaster University and Cardinal Newman College.
- A partnership between Guildford Education Partnership and the University of Surrey.

Alongside this the Education Secretary has approved, in principle, a bid for funding to open Hampton Waters Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided School in Peterborough to meet demand from parents in the city – the department is working with proposers to identify suitable sites for a further two bids.

Leora Cruddas, Confederation of School Trusts Chief Executive said:

The Free Schools programme has provided thousands of much-needed school places across England. Free schools have driven innovation in the system and many have embraced cutting-edge quality informed by the best research, almost unheard of 20 years ago.

Hamid Patel, Chief Executive of Star Academies said:

Free schools are in the unique position of shaping their own destinies through innovation, giving school leaders the opportunities to unite pupils, families and staff in the pursuit of goals that go beyond first-class examination results.

A clear focus on character-building in Star Academies gives pupils the confidence and resilience to compete on an international stage with young people from more advantaged backgrounds and free schools relish the challenge of improving pupils' life chances by equipping them with the social and cultural capital to make a positive difference.

Today's news follows a reception to celebrate the free schools programme hosted by the Prime Minister and Education Secretary at Downing Street on 30 May – with both paying tribute to the programme's successes in empowering high-performing institutions to take a more innovative approach to teaching to create a diverse range of schools and more choice for parents.

It also follows the announcement in March of 37 new special free schools, and two alternative provision free schools, creating 3,500 extra school places for pupils facing challenges in their education.

Applicants will be able to register their interest for the next round of free schools shortly, and will again target areas with low standards and demographic need for the new school places.