

# Proposal to establish a new primary school

To serve the new housing development  
in Garendon Park, Loughborough

## Information for academy proposers



Leicestershire County Council is inviting expressions of interest from Academy Proposers interested in sponsoring a new 420 place Primary School from September 2027 to serve the Garendon Park development. This document provides the background and specifications for the new school, how it will be funded, the expected timescales for its development, information regarding how you can express an interest in its operation and how we will assess the strength of your application.

**The closing date for expressions of interest  
is 12 noon on Friday 31 July 2026**

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# Introduction

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In Leicestershire, we believe that learners come first. We want our children and young people to enjoy learning, make good progress, and achieve high standards. To do this, we need to ensure that Leicestershire schools offer first-class facilities and have sufficient places available, so as to offer real choice, good access and the best environment in which to learn. This is in keeping with our statutory duty and strategic priorities to develop additional school places in Leicestershire. Put simply we want to ensure that our schools are amongst the best available and offer the right number of places at the time they are needed.

As part of our strategic vision, we have identified a need for additional primary school places to serve the new Garendon Park housing development in the west of Loughborough. As part of phase 1 of the Garendon Park Housing development, a new 420 place primary school will be required to provide primary school places for the additional housing growth and providing excellent choice for families living in this area.

It is expected that the new school will open for September 2027. Details of the arrangements for pupil admission will be agreed with the successful Academy Proposer and will be undertaken in such a way as to not have a detrimental impact on other primary schools in the area.

Leicestershire county council will shortly commence construction of the school which will be leased to the successful Academy Trust upon completion. The county council will agree an allocation for start-up and post opening revenue costs for the new school with the successful Academy Proposer in accordance with our policy on school growth, further details of which may be found herein.

This document sets out in further detail for Academy Proposers and other interested parties; why we believe a new school will provide the best solution to improve choice, diversity and standards for our children and young people in Loughborough, where it will be located, how this will be funded, how we expect this to be run, and the process and timeline that we intend to follow.

Please take time to read this information carefully and make contact using the details provided should you require any further information or guidance.

Thank You.

**“The county council believes that building a new 420 place primary school in the west of Loughborough will provide additional primary school places required for the Garendon Park housing development and provide excellent choice for families living in this area.”**



**Sharon Cooke**  
**Director of Children and Family Services**  
**Leicestershire County Council**



**Tim Browne**  
**Assistant Director,**  
**Education, Inclusion and Additional Needs**

# Background

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## Why the additional primary places are necessary

The Education Act 2006 places a statutory duty on the county council to ensure that there is a strong supply of good school places available to meet demand.

The establishment of the new primary school will help deliver the county council's strategic plans for the provision of school places and ensure there is access to good quality schools within the Loughborough area, and in particular to meet the demand arising from new housing.

The demand for additional places arises as a result of the development of up to 3,200 new homes currently being built west of Loughborough in Garendon Park, situated on the historic 18th century country estate.

## Current arrangements

There are a further 5 primary age schools located within Loughborough north planning area. Although pupil forecasts indicate that there will potentially be spaces available at other local schools in the next 5 years, the Garendon Park housing development will require additional primary school places to accommodate the occupation of up to 3,200 houses.

Providing a new primary academy will help meet the demand for places whilst providing greater local choice for parents and pupils. A new school would also offer the opportunity to improve education generally by strengthening local partnerships and collaborative working, and bringing new expertise and knowledge to the area.

## About the development

The development is on an area of agricultural land positioned off the A6 Derby Road between Dishley and Hathern.

On completion the development site will comprise of up to 3,200 dwellings, employment land and community playing pitches.

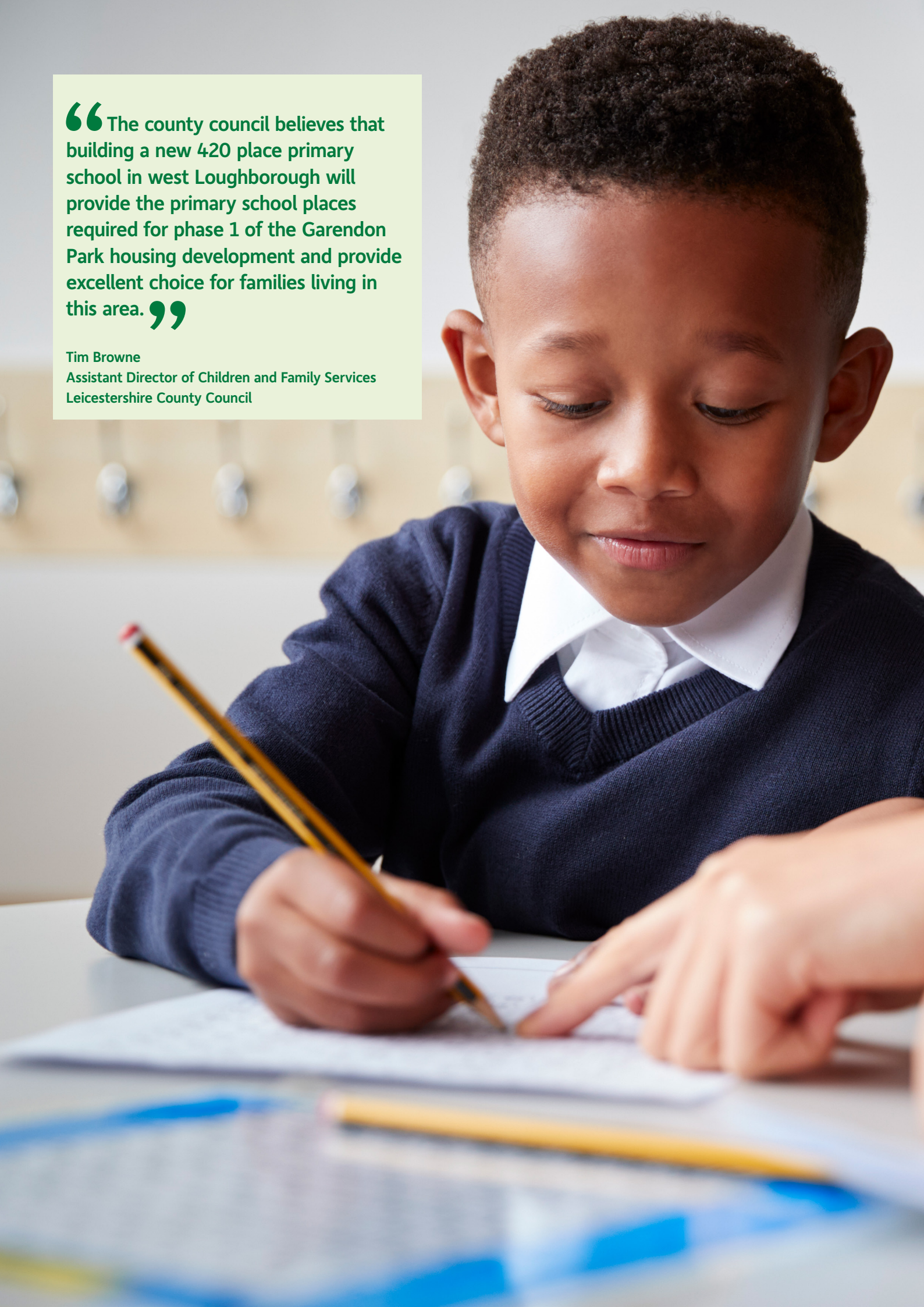
The exact site for the new school is shown on the following pages.

School	Admission number	Net Capacity	Current number on roll	Direct distance from Pear Tree Lane, near new school
Hathern CE Primary School	30	210	183	0.94 miles
Robert Bakewell Primary School	60	420	308	0.77 miles
Stonebow Primary School	30	210	200	0.17 miles
Thorpe Acre Infant School	50	150	123	0.99 miles
Thorpe Acre Junior School	50	200	189	0.99 miles



“The county council believes that building a new 420 place primary school in west Loughborough will provide the primary school places required for phase 1 of the Garendon Park housing development and provide excellent choice for families living in this area.”

Tim Browne  
Assistant Director of Children and Family Services  
Leicestershire County Council



## How the new school will be established

The Education Act 2011 changed the arrangements for establishing new schools and introduced Section 6A, now known as the 'Free School Presumption' to the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The legislation requires that where the county council considers there is a need for a new school in its area; it must seek proposals from suitably qualified organisations to establish the new school as an Academy (Free School).

As of May 2024, DFE guidance, the DFE requires Local authorities to involve the DFE directly in assessment and recommendation changes.

Potential Academy Proposers who are not already known to the Department for Education (DfE) and included on their approved register are advised to contact the DfE at the earliest opportunity, to find out more about the approval process, and certainly before submitting a formal expression of interest to the county council.

## How the new school will be built

The new school is being designed and built by contractors acting directly on behalf of Leicestershire county council, using funding from S106 developer obligations for the adjacent residential development.

Planning permission was granted for the new school on 14th April 2026. The planning documents can be found on the Charnwood Borough Council planning portal below:

<https://planningexplorer.charnwood.gov.uk/Assure/ES/Presentation/Planning/OnlinePlanning/OnlinePlanningOverview?applicationNumber=P%2F25%2F2621%2F2&guid=7e0d520e-f4fc-457f-bbe3-3252f3085a4a>

Subject to Department for Education consent and the necessary planning approvals, it is anticipated that construction on site would commence on June 8th, 2026.

In order to meet the opening date of September 2027, the school design and build process will already be underway by the time the Academy Proposer is selected. Proposers will not, therefore, have the opportunity for involvement in the planning and design of the building.

## Opening arrangements and school growth

The exact opening arrangements for the new primary school are yet to be agreed and will be determined in discussion with the Academy Proposer mindful of the demand for places at the time.

The Academy will be expected to be flexible in how classes are organised to respond to the demand for places, including children who move to the area after the normal age of starting school. The Local Authority will work alongside the successfully appointed academy trust to develop a strategic plan for opening the new primary school.

The Academy Proposer will be expected to demonstrate how they will ensure the need for additional places in the Loughborough area are met without promoting or encouraging a large-scale relocation of existing pupils from other schools in the locality, or nearby communities.

## Age range

The school is intended to serve pupils between the ages of 4 and 11.

## Gender

The school will be for both boys and girls.

## Admission criteria

The county council requires that Academy Proposers will abide by the national and local School Admissions Code including that relating to Admission, Appeals and participate in the county council's co-ordinated scheme for admissions and our Fair Access Protocol.

The county council expects Academy Proposers to adopt the same admission criteria used to determine priority for places as in other local schools as set out in the following link:

[Apply for a school place | Leicestershire County Council](#)

## Catchment area

It is expected that the new primary school will have a discrete catchment area to serve the new development. The new catchment arrangements for the school will be determined with the Academy Proposer in conjunction with the local primary schools.

## Equality and diversity

All potential Academy Proposers are required to demonstrate their commitment to inclusion, to promoting equality and diversity and to eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment.

## Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An initial EIA undertaken by the county council shows that no particular individuals or groups will be disadvantaged by the proposals for the new school.

A copy of the EIA will shortly be available to view via the following link:

[School place planning | Leicestershire County Council](#)

## Special educational needs

The new school will not have any specific specialist resource provision for pupils with special education needs, however the county council would welcome discussions about how this might be achieved. The Academy will nevertheless be expected to serve children with special educational needs in its catchment area for whom mainstream education is considered appropriate and to work with other providers and services in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

## Extended services

The county council expects the Academy sponsor to collaborate and engage with other providers and local partners to develop extended services which meet the needs of local children, young people and families in a coordinated, holistic way which can be accessed through all the partners in the locality.

These services may include access to high quality childcare, out of hours learning activities and clubs, parenting support and community access to appropriate facilities.

Academy Proposers are asked to provide evidence in their application of their commitment towards the development of extended provision at the new school.

## Home to school transport

The Council will expect the Academy Proposer to encourage safe and sustainable travel to the new school, including walking and cycling, and to develop a comprehensive travel plan to support this.

Home to school transport will only be provided, therefore, in line with the Local Authority's Home to School/ College Transport policy i.e. when it is stipulated within a child's Education, Health and Care Plan, or a child has an identified medical need which prevents them from walking or cycling to school and/ or the distance from the child's home to the school is beyond the statutory walking distance of 2 miles to their nearest school and in addition to either their nearest Leicestershire school or their frozen area school.

[www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-transport](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-transport)

## Funding arrangements

As this new school will be an Academy, the successful Academy Proposer will need to enter into a revenue funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education, for the operation of the school, to be effective from the date of the school's opening.

As this will be an Academy established to meet basic need, the county council will be responsible for funding an amount to support pre-opening revenue costs and post-opening diseconomies. The new school will be funded on the basis of estimated pupil numbers in accordance with The Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations.

The county council's current policy for funding school growth was approved by the Leicestershire Schools Forum in September 2019 and was updated in April 2024. The growth policy states that for schools agreed to open in September 2024 funding will be in accordance with the previous policy published within the tender documentation of £125,000 and £9,250 for each class opened. This transitional arrangement will only apply to schools opening in September 2024 for schools opening after this date the new payment rates will apply.

The new school will be a recoupment Academy, and the annual revenue budget will replicate the county council's formula for funding schools, subject to protection and additional payments in accordance with the budget policy for academies operated by the Education Skills and Funding Agency.

# Application process

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Academy Proposers wishing to express an interest in the new primary school should do so by completing the application form available online via the following link.

[www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-place-planning](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-place-planning)

You are advised to read carefully the accompanying explanatory notes before completing your application.

Please ensure that you complete the Application Form as fully as possible, providing an electronic copy and posting also a full hard copy and short executive summary (maximum two sides A4) to the address provided for submission.

Your application should be accompanied by the appropriate signed Form of Proposal and declarations detailed on the Application Form.

Please note that the closing date and time for receipt of completed applications is 12 noon on Friday 31 July 2026.

Having invited Expressions of Interest from Academy Proposers, detailed evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with the assessment criteria provided within this document, and the accompanying Application Form.

A three stage process will be followed to determine the county council's preferred Academy sponsor for the new school, comprising of the initial written application, followed by a presentation and interview by shortlisted Proposers, and a visit to an existing similar Academy that they currently operate.

Each stage of the application process will be allocated a score, and for those Academy Proposers shortlisted to the second stage, the total scores for each stage will be aggregated to determine an overall evaluation mark to determine a preferred sponsor.

Further details of the scoring methodology to be used to evaluate are provided within the accompanying Application Form.

This will enable consideration by the county council Cabinet of a preferred provider.

Subject to the Cabinet's consideration, a submission will be made to the Regional DfE Director (RD), who is acting on behalf of Secretary of State for Education, which will include all proposals received, with the Local Authority's assessment of these to assist the RD in their decision.

The RD will carefully consider the county council's submission and assuming their agreement, they will then make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Education who will make the final decision.

Once a decision has been made, the county council will work closely with the chosen provider and the DfE (through the Education Skills and Funding Agency) to conclude the development and operational details of the new school.

# Proposed timeline

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The county council has alerted the Department for Education of the proposal to establish the new school, and they have confirmed the process and timescales to be followed to ensure that this is available from September 2027. We will work closely with the DfE throughout this process to ensure that all expectations are met.

The table below sets out the expected timeline for the assessment, approval and implementation.

<b>Process involved</b>	<b>Proposed timeline</b>
Invitations for expressions of interest published	2 June 2026
Pre-engagement event	17 June 2026 Council Chamber
Consultation period	2 June - 31 July 2026
Deadline for submitting applications	31 July 2026
DfE input to shortlisting – (allow a minimum of four weeks)	7 September 2026
Stage 1: shortlisting of applications / invitations to interview	7 September - 11 September 2026
Stage 2: proposed interview dates (including presentation by and interview of shortlisted proposers)	28 September - 2 October 2026
Visits to academies / due diligence	TBC
Decision taken capital programme board on preferred academy proposer	30 October 2026
Lead member update	TBC
County council's submission of applications to the RSC for a decision	Autumn 2026
Secretary of State approval – approved applications announced	TBC
The county council will advise unsuccessful applicants	TBC
Statutory consultation (required under S10 of the Academies Act 2010)	TBC
Identified academy trust to enter into funding agreement with the Secretary of State	December 2026
Construction and pre-opening phase for new school	TBC
New school opens	September 2027

The above timescales are subject to confirmation and may change as some specific dates are not in the control of the county council.

# Assessment criteria

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The county council will consider the evidence provided by the proposer to satisfy itself that the proposer has the capacity and intention to meet 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 primary school system, in particular for the most vulnerable children.
- A strong desire and vision to work closely with other education providers in the locality to promote partnership working and community cohesion.
- Evidence of a proven track record of school improvement or sustained high standards and how the proposed governance model will drive and support high standards.
- The financial capacity showcasing the long-term sustainability to enable effective delivery against local need.
- Understanding of and respect of other cultures, faiths and communities and the impact on community cohesion.

The county council will submit all assessment information to the Secretary of State (via the Regional Schools Commissioner) who will in turn appoint a sponsor. The Secretary of State will then enter into a funding agreement with the academy proposers.

The DfE will focus on the following criteria:

- The capacity and quality of the proposer. New sponsors will be assessed on their strategic vision, educational capacity and performance, financial planning and operational capacity and governance. The focus for existing sponsors will be on their track record and credibility, capacity to deliver a new project and their local infrastructure to support their proposal.
- The ability of the proposer to deliver on time, to secure best value for money and maintain financial viability. This will need to be made clear in a comprehensive financial plan based on realistic assumptions.
- The proposer's ability to promote high standards as set out in a clear and coherent education plan, and which demonstrates innovation to drive system change. The proposal should give strong, credible evidence that the new school will raise the overall standard of education available in the local area, adding high quality places to the system.



# Delivering excellence in education

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The county council's vision for Leicestershire is to make this the very best place for children, young people and their families. To achieve this our mission is to ensure that our children and young people are safe, and living in families where they can achieve their potential and have their health, wellbeing and life chances improved within thriving communities.

**We want to appoint an academy proposer who will help drive forward and achieve our vision.**

Proposers must have an ambitious vision for the Academy, setting high expectations for both pupils and staff. There should be a strong culture of working in collaboration with other schools and education providers locally and in other parts of Leicestershire. Academy proposers must also be able to demonstrate their approach to effective engagement with partner agencies and services which contribute to improving children's outcomes in the local area.

Relationships with pupils, parents and carers and other local stakeholders should be open, purposeful and viewed positively by all.

## Leadership and governance

The county council regards strong leadership and governance as a key component to delivering improved outcomes for children and young people in our schools.

**All potential academy proposers will therefore be expected to provide details to show how they will:**

- **Deliver high quality leadership, management and governance.**
- **Implement strong, effective and dynamic governance arrangements.**
- **Achieve robust and effective financial management.**

## Teaching and learning

The county council has an aspiration for all Leicestershire schools to be good or outstanding, and currently almost 88% have achieved this. The new school should expect to be judged by Ofsted to be at least good, with a strong trajectory towards outstanding. The new school should therefore aspire to perform well above national figures against a range of key indicators.

Gaps in achievement and attainment between pupils in vulnerable groups should be as narrow as possible.

Pupils should develop good literacy and numeracy skills and attain well in these areas so that they are ready for secondary education. The county council expects that the curriculum provided should be broad, highly engaging and challenging.

We expect that every child and young person in Leicestershire should be able to access the best teaching, achieve their full potential and, as they become an adult, have opportunities for an independent economic and social life. Through providing the best start in life, whatever their background, all children, but in particular the vulnerable, should be able to thrive at school.

**Academy proposers will be expected to:**

- **Provide a sustainable good or outstanding school with an exciting and inspiring broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils.**
- **Maintain a rigorous focus on educational standards to ensure that every child and young person achieves their potential and goals and national expectations are met or exceeded.**
- **Ensure 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.**
- **Promote good pupil behaviour, and an ethos that fosters their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.**
- **Ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure, and away from harm.**
- **Seek out and share best practice within and beyond the school, promoting innovation and creativity in learning and teaching.**
- **Implement rigorous processes of self-evaluation and continual improvement, including recognising the importance of children and young people's voice in these processes.**
- **Ensuring pupils understand how to improve their learning as a result of frequent, detailed and accurate feedback from teachers following assessment of their learning.**

- **Ensure gaps in achievement for pupils from vulnerable groups are smaller than the national average and continuing to close.**
- **Attract, retain and develop the highest quality teachers and support staff to ensure good or better teaching and learning, and effective and motivated workforces.**
- **Make learning as successful as possible through the appropriate use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in all areas of the curriculum.**

## **Working in partnership**

All Leicestershire schools are encouraged to work in partnership within strong local collaboratives and/or teaching alliances led by national leaders in education. A key component of selection will be the academy proposers' willingness to work in collaboration with other providers and local partners to develop services which clearly demonstrate continual improvement, through the sharing of expertise and collaborative working, and which meet the needs of local children, young people and families in a coordinated way.

**Academy proposers will be expected to:**

- **Ensure the school plays a key role within its immediate community and the wider local economy.**
- **Engage all parents and carers in supporting their child's achievement, behaviour and safety, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.**
- **Work in partnership with the county council and other educational providers to contribute towards meeting a collective responsibility to secure the best for all Leicestershire children and young people, fostering strong school to school relationships, and co-operating with Fair Access protocols.**
- **Develop strategic alliances, partnerships and networks based on a collective moral purpose to better meet the needs of children, young people and families in the locality.**
- **Fully engage with the new world of system leadership so as to make an active contribution to school-to-school support including peer-to-peer support, network/cluster/partnership working, and the sharing of good practice.**
- **Support the statutory responsibilities of the county council to ensure sufficiency of high quality school places and improved educational outcomes through agreed sharing of data and information.**

- **Building stronger communities**
- **The county council welcomes the involvement of schools in providing community access to appropriate facilities to enhance education and learning.**

## **Building stronger communities**

The county council welcomes the involvement of schools in providing community access to appropriate facilities to enhance education and learning.

**Academy proposers will be expected to:**

- **Provide access to and use of the school's accommodation for activities outside of school hours.**
- **Support the county council in delivering effective early intervention services, ensuring school readiness and supporting our most vulnerable learners and families.**
- **Work in partnership with wider services such as social care services, health and police to keep children safe, support families and build stronger communities.**
- **Provide children and young people with the skills they will need to play an active part in their local community and economy.**

## **Involving parents**

The county council expects that potential academy proposers will be able to demonstrate their plans and arrangements for engaging parents and carers in supporting pupils' achievement, behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **Accountability**

The county council recognises that statutorily Academy sponsors are accountable through the Education Skills and Funding Agency to the Secretary of State. However the Council nevertheless has a statutory role in supporting parents and families through promoting a sufficient supply of places in good schools, so as to offer maximum choice and diversity. This requires that academy proposers

are also accountable for their performance to parents, the local community, and to the local authority in our role as champions of educational excellence and for the safeguarding and support for vulnerable children and families.

As a minimum the county council therefore expects that:

- **Sponsors/Proposers will attend meetings with Local Authority elected members and/or officers upon request to report on progress of the school.**
- **Sponsors/Proposers will provide data as requested by the local authority to enable the performance of the school to be monitored.**
- **The local authority would be able to attend any meeting established by the academy proposer Sponsor to monitor the performance of the school against the issues identified in an Ofsted inspection report.**
- **Sponsors will respond quickly and positively to any safeguarding concern raised by the local authority.**

In the spirit of partnership, it is the county council's expectation that the Proposer/Sponsor would be agreeable to the appointment of a local authority Governor to the Governing Body, if so requested.

## **Compliance and legislation**

The academy proposer will be required to comply with all relevant regulations and legislation, relating to the development of a new school.

This includes, but is not limited to;

- The Children Act 2004
- Education Act 2011
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- Health and Safety at Work Legislation

Academy proposers must have sufficient written policies, procedures and codes of practice in place to enable full compliance at all times with the above, and any other relevant legislation, and to ensure that instruction and guidance for the Academy's staff are available in relation to the functions and activities described in the specification.

The policies, procedures and codes of practice must be accessible at all times by those staff and must be readily available to relevant members of the public/ stakeholders.

**The closing date for expressions of interest is 12 noon on Friday 31 July 2026**

# Contact details and further information

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If you would like any further information or would like to discuss your application, please contact either:

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## **You can view the latest information in a number of ways**

- Visit us online [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-place-planning](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-place-planning)
- Our web pages contain the latest information and developments.
- Send an email to [schoolorgservice@leics.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorgservice@leics.gov.uk) to register for the latest news

