

Operational Statement for Proposed Specialist School

The applicant proposes the establishment of a new specialist school designed to meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), with a particular focus upon pupils whose primary area of need is identified as Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). Such pupils often present with complex needs arising from trauma, adverse life experiences, or disrupted educational histories, and require provision that mainstream settings are not always able to provide.

This proposal is consistent with the **statutory duties set out in the Children and Families Act 2014**, in particular the requirement to secure appropriate educational provision for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). It also aligns with the principles of the **SEND Code of Practice (2015)**, which emphasises that pupils should have access to education that is personalised, inclusive, and designed to prepare them for positive adult outcomes.

The school will operate as a therapeutic and educational environment where academic progress is balanced with personal development, safeguarding, and emotional wellbeing. The delivery model will be informed by best practice as identified in **Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (EIF)**, ensuring a curriculum that is broad, balanced, and ambitious for all pupils, whilst also recognising the importance of personal development, behaviour, and attitudes.

Capacity and Staffing

The proposed school will accommodate approximately **160 pupils**, which has been identified as an appropriate scale to allow for a strong sense of community whilst also enabling the breadth of curriculum and support services required. The school population will be structured across Key Stages to ensure continuity of provision and progression routes.

To meet this level of need, the school will employ around **45 staff members**. This will include qualified teachers with specialist SEN expertise, teaching assistants trained in SEMH/EBD support, pastoral and therapeutic staff (including counselling and behaviour specialists), and a senior leadership team with safeguarding and SEND leadership responsibilities. This staffing structure has been designed to ensure compliance with Ofsted's expectations around staff capacity, safeguarding arrangements, and the delivery of high-quality education for pupils with complex needs.

Catchment Area

The school will primarily serve children and young people referred by **local authorities within the immediate and surrounding areas**. Given the regional shortage of SEMH/EBD placements, it is anticipated that the school will work closely with commissioning teams to provide much-needed additional capacity.

However, in line with the principles of equity and inclusion set out in both the **SEND Code of Practice** and **Equality Act 2010**, the school will not impose arbitrary geographical restrictions on admissions. Where travel arrangements can be reasonably managed, applications from further afield will be considered, allowing the provision to act as a regional resource to help meet national shortfalls in SEMH/EBD placements.

Applicant Background

The applicant organisation has been operating within the children's care and education sector since **2021**. During this time, it has successfully established and continues to operate:

- **Two residential children's homes:** one in **Oldham** and one in **Withington**, providing safe, nurturing environments for children with complex needs. Both homes operate within the statutory framework of the **Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015** and are regulated by Ofsted.
- A **special educational needs primary school in Royton**, opened in **2024**, which has already demonstrated the organisation's ability to deliver tailored educational provision for pupils with SEND in accordance with national frameworks.

The organisation's **Director** is a qualified **Social Worker**, holding a degree in Social Work, and has extensive frontline experience working directly with children and young people in a range of care and education settings. This ensures that leadership is grounded in professional expertise, statutory compliance, and a child-centred ethos.

Strategic Fit and Contribution

This proposal builds upon the applicant's proven track record and is fully aligned with the priorities set out in local authority **SEND sufficiency strategies**, which identify SEMH as one of the most significant areas of pressure on specialist placements. By expanding capacity in this field, the school will help reduce reliance on out-of-area placements, thereby supporting local authorities in meeting their sufficiency duties under the Children and Families Act 2014.

The proposed provision will also contribute to the government's wider ambition, as set out in the **SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan (2023)**, to ensure timely access to specialist placements, improve outcomes for children with complex needs, and strengthen the quality and accountability of provision.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this operational statement demonstrates that the proposed school is underpinned by a clear educational rationale, appropriate capacity planning, and a robust staffing model. It reflects compliance with statutory duties, consistency with Ofsted's inspection framework, and alignment with both local and national SEND strategies.

The applicant brings demonstrable expertise through its operation of residential children's homes and a SEN primary school, and benefits from leadership rooted in social work, safeguarding, and specialist child development. The school will therefore provide a much-needed, high-quality, and sustainable addition to the specialist education landscape, delivering improved outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the region.