

Department for Education press release

BATLEY GRAMMAR AMONG THE FREE SCHOOL 2011 'PIONEERS'

The Government is giving parents the opportunity to send their child to a great, new local school by announcing the opening of the first 24 Free Schools. They are part of the Government's drive to raise school standards across the country and tackle educational disadvantage

Batley Grammar in Kirklees will be one of the first ever Free Schools to open in England. It joins 23 other primary, secondary and all-age schools. They have been set up by education organisations, teachers, parents community groups, faith groups, charities, existing schools, and Academy sponsors.

Free Schools are funded by the Government, but have greater freedoms than local authority run schools. They are run by teachers – not local councils or Westminster politicians – and have freedom over things like the length of the school day, the curriculum, and how they spend their money. They are not permitted to make a profit, and all funds raised must go back into improving education for pupils.

These schools are opening because of real, local demand from parents for a new or different type of education to benefit local children and their families. Even where there are places at other local schools, they are not necessarily the type of school places parents are happy with. Free Schools offer a genuine alternative. They will meet parents' simple desire for good, local, state-funded schools that have strong discipline and – in many cases – small class sizes.

Education Secretary, Michael Gove, said:

"The most important thing for any parent is to be able to send their child to a good local school, with high standards and strong discipline. That is why we are opening Free Schools across the country. I am delighted to announce that the first 24 will open this year.

"Too many children are being failed by fundamental flaws in our education system. The weakest schools are concentrated in our poorest towns and cities, and we are plummeting down the international education league tables.

"By freeing up teachers and trusting local communities to decide what is best, our reforms will help to raise standards for children in all schools."

Schools Minister Lord Hill said:

"Batley Grammar has long achieved excellent results for its pupils, so I am delighted that this quality of education will now be free to young people in Kirklees. I am pleased that the school will expand so it can better serve the community in which it is based.

"Free Schools will improve choice for parents and allow more children to have a first class school that's close to home.

"I wish Batley Grammar every success."

Groups that were successful in applying to open a Free School went through a robust process to make sure they were suitable and capable to run a school. They had to:

- provide evidence of demand for a new local school;
- set out in detail the curriculum the school would offer, the type of teachers it would recruit, and how the school would run its pupil admissions to make sure they are fair;
- develop robust plans for how the school planned to run its finances (which then were scrutinised to make sure the school was financially viable);
- secure an appropriate site for the school that provided value for money for the taxpayer; and
- be CRB checked and undergo in-depth vetting by the Department's Preventing Extremism unit.

Like other state-funded schools, Free Schools are inspected by Ofsted, will have their exam and test results published and will have to teach a broad curriculum. Action will be taken if results slip or if teaching isn't up to scratch. Free Schools also have to abide by the same rules for pupil admissions as other schools – making sure that these are fair and inclusive of children from different backgrounds.

The freedoms that Free Schools and Academies have allow teachers to make decisions that are right for local children. International evidence shows that giving teachers and heads more freedom in the classroom helps to raise standards of education.

The first Free Schools will open in record time. They will open just 10 to 15 months after submitting their initial plans to the Department for Education. In the past, it normally took between three and five years to set up a maintained school, with the few that were able to be set up by parents taking far longer.

In total, the Free Schools opening in September this year will provide around 9,000 new school places across the country when they are at full capacity. Many of the schools are in areas where there is a real need – or projected need – for additional places because of population growth.

Notes to editors

1. A case study of this Free School accompanies this press release.
2. Of the Free Schools opening this month:
 - 17 are primary schools, five are secondary schools and two are all-age schools.
 - Of these, six are faith schools or have a faith ethos.
 - The schools are spread throughout the country, but are primarily concentrated in areas of deprivation, with half of the 24 schools located in the most deprived 30 per cent of communities.
 - Five are set up by teachers, five are set up by a faith/community group, five are set up by education providers, three by parent or community groups and one by an Academy. Five existing schools will also become Free Schools.
 - At capacity, the first Free Schools will create around 9,000 state school places.

- In total, the first 24 Free Schools are expected to cost between £110m and £130m in capital, to build or renovate. We will publish costs for individual schools when they are finalised.

3. The schools opening in September 2011 are:

ALDBOROUGH E-ACT FREE SCHOOL Redbridge
ALL SAINTS JUNIOR SCHOOL Reading
ARK CONWAY PRIMARY ACADEMY Hammersmith & Fulham
ARK ATWOOD PRIMARY ACADEMY Westminster
BATLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL Kirklees
BRADFORD SCIENCE ACADEMY Bradford
BRISTOL FREE SCHOOL Bristol
CANARY WHARF COLLEGE Tower Hamlets
DISCOVERY NEW SCHOOL West Sussex
EDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL Haringey
ETZ CHAIM PRIMARY SCHOOL Barnet
THE FREE SCHOOL, NORWICH Norfolk
KRISHNA-AVANTI PRIMARY SCHOOL Leicester City
LANGLEY HALL PRIMARY ACADEMY Slough
MAHARISHI SCHOOL Lancashire
MOORLANDS SCHOOL Luton
NISHKAM FREE SCHOOL Birmingham
PRIORS FREE SCHOOL Warwickshire
RAINBOW PRIMARY SCHOOL Bradford
SANDBACH SCHOOL Cheshire East
ST LUKE'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL Camden
STOUR VALLEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL Suffolk
WEST LONDON FREE SCHOOL Hammersmith & Fulham
WOODPECKER HALL PRIMARY ACADEMY Enfield

4. For more information about the Free Schools policy, contact the Department for Education press office on 020 7925 6789, or contact the school directly.