

**Independent Non-
Maintained
Specialist Schools
New Business
Information and
Guidance**

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide information for businesses who are interested in becoming a provider on Nottinghamshire's framework for Independent Non-Maintained Specialist Schools (INMSS).

What is the INMSS framework?

Most pupils within Nottinghamshire who experience a range of complex special educational needs are receiving their education provision within maintained schools and academies in the county. There remains a small proportion of the schools' population whose needs cannot be met by this provision.

Nottinghamshire County Council has recently established a framework for Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS). This framework enables the Council to commission INMSS placements to meet the needs of Nottinghamshire children and young people. The framework is intended to be dynamic and expand over time. As such, the Council is keen to develop and maintain strong, collaborative relationships with high quality providers of education who can support groups of pupils with complex needs across the full spectrum of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The INMSS framework includes providers who will offer specialist education to children and young people who are not attending mainstream or maintained special schools. Provision will be available for children and young people with an ECHP across all key stages including provision for Post 16 students. Children and young people accessing specialist education will be those who are the statutory responsibility of Nottinghamshire County Council and will therefore be resident in the county (or the responsibility of Nottinghamshire County Council as a Looked After child).

The overall aim of the INMSS framework is to secure a provision pathway for pupils who have a range of complex educational cognitive; social, emotional, and mental health; and physical needs. A range of provision will be commissioned across the county that is robust; resilient; flexible and creative and which matches the range of needs of this vulnerable cohort of pupils.

Providers are expected to be able to deliver services that meet the academic, vocational, social, emotional, physical, and psychological health needs of pupils identified by Nottinghamshire County Council.

INMSS market position statement

This is a key business intelligence document, which includes current supply and demand, and the Council's commissioning intentions around alternative education:

Read our market position statement below:

Tender Information

East Midlands Tenders Portal

Providers wishing to offer provision as an independent non-maintained special school will need to apply for the specialist education tender. You can access the tender through the East Midlands Tender Portal <https://www.eastmidstenders.org/>

The framework will operate in two lots – Lot 1 will be for a block contract arrangement that will cover placements in all areas of Nottinghamshire and will commence from the beginning of the academic school in September 2025 or as soon as possible from the start of the academic year if new buildings are to be put in place or if existing buildings are to be expanded or refurbished.

Lot 2 will be to create a framework of approved providers for placements located within the County and outside of Nottinghamshire. Education placements will be commissioned on an individual basis and will be required where the child or young person is not a suitable match to settings commissioned through Lot 1 and/or where there is insufficient capacity within Lot 1. The new framework will be effective from 01st January 2025.

Read our supplier guide, which provides instructions on registering an interest and completing a tender response:

[simplified-supplier-system-user-guide.pdf \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](#)

If you have any queries about using the East Midlands tenders portal, you can contact the Council's Procurement Team by emailing:

corporate.procurement@nottsc.gov.uk

IMPORTANT UPDATE NOTICE MAY 2026: The tender is currently closed, and subsequent rounds will be re-opened dependent on need.

If you wish to discuss this or require further information, please email the Commissioning and Contracts Management Team at

childrens.qualityassessment@nottsc.gov.uk

Information on the tender application and process

You will need to complete a questionnaire, which has a set of standard questions, including financial, that are scored as pass/fail to ensure compliance with procurement regulations. You will also need to complete the schools form, which requires details including your current OFSTED rating, the primary needs of children and young people that you offer placements for, and the type of placement you offer.

When completing your tender application there are a set of project specific questions to assess your technical and professional ability. Providers will need to score 60% or higher to pass. These questions include the description of your provision, qualifications offered, achievement and progression.

PLEASE NOTE: Council staff are unable to offer specific guidance and advice on answering the tender questions. Please refer to the tips below on completing your application.

Top tips and advice when answering project specific questions:

- **DO** read each question carefully and answer them accurately and precisely – there may be additional prompts to outline specific information that is required from your answers
- **DO** relate your answers to the service specification. The spec outlines exactly what the service requirements are, and your answers should demonstrate you have read and have a clear understanding of it. The service you propose should mirror the requirements of the specification.
- **DO** keep your answers concise and focused on the question as there will be a limited word count
- **DO** use examples where possible to support your answers
- **DO** double-check your answers before submitting for spelling errors, omissions/areas of confusion and clarity etc
- **DO NOT** cut and paste answers from another tender application
- **DO NOT** make any assumptions about what the Council may or may not know about you or your company. Each tender is scored on its own merits, and the Council can only evaluate what you have submitted. The Council cannot refer to any previous knowledge or experience it has had with a supplier when scoring a tender application.
- **DO NOT** use a preface in your answers to put things into context as this is not necessary and will only use up your word count

All tender applications will only be scored once the round has closed and you will be notified of the outcome of your application by the Procurement Team.

If you are successful with your tender application, an essential checklist process will be undertaken to check that you have the relevant policies, procedures, and documentation in place before you will be accepted on the framework and can receive referrals.

Requirements

Insurances

£5 million public liability & £10 million employer's liability is required for all businesses as a minimum.

Regulations

It will be a condition of acceptance on the framework that providers are registered with Ofsted or Care and Training Inspectorate for Wales and are able to supply evidence of successful relevant inspections (i.e., established providers will need to provide evidence of an OFSTED inspection that must be at least of the "Expected standard", in accordance with OFSTED inspection framework requirements. New providers will need to demonstrate acceptance from OFSTED that they are eligible to operate as an INM School or AP free school: - Providers must confirm the DfE school registration number upon application).

Legislation

Organisations must comply with all relevant legislation relating to the service, which includes any updates and amendments. It is the providers responsibility to keep up to date with any such developments.

A list of some of the key pieces of legislation with which Providers must be compliant are detailed below. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

- The Children and Families Act 2014: [Children and Families Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education: [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- Prevent Duty 2015: [Revised Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- The Care Act 2014: [Care Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk) / [Care Act factsheets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004: [Children Act 1989 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk) / [Children Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002: [Adoption and Children Act 2002 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)
- Health and Social Care Act 2001, 2008, 2012 and 2022 / [Health and Social Care Act 2001 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk) / [Health and Social Care Act 2008 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk) / [Health and Social Care Act 2012 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk) / [Health and Care Act 2022 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)
- Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006: [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)
- Mental Health Act 1983 and 2007: [Mental Health Act 1983 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk) / [Mental Health Act 2007 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)
- Mental Capacity Act 2005: [Mental Capacity Act 2005 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

- Housing Act 1996: [Housing Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/42)
- The Equality Act 2010: [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15)
- National Health Service Act 2006: [National Health Service Act 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/42)
- Sex Offenders Act 1997 as amended by part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003: [Sexual Offences Act 2003 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42)
- Police and Justice Act 2006: [Police and Justice Act 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/42)
- The Data Protection Act 1998 and 2018: [Data Protection Act 1998 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29) / [Data Protection Act 2018 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12)
- The Chronically sick and Disabled Act 1970: [Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1970/42)
- Education Act 1996, 2002 and 2011: [Education Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/42)
- [Education Act 2002 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/42) / [Education Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/42)

Statutory guidance

Providers must ensure that their provision is compliant with the following statutory guidance:

- [Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-and-previously-looked-after-children)
- [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25-years)
- [Education and Skills Funding Agency - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-skills-funding-agency)
- [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/keeping-children-safe-in-education)

Policies and procedures

The organisation will need to have robust written policies, procedures, and codes of practice, which should include adequate instruction, guidance, and support for staff in the function and delivery of the service outlined within the service specification.

The policies and procedures documents should reflect DfE guidance to include:

- Safeguarding: [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/keeping-children-safe-in-education)
- Child on Child Sexual Violence and Sexually Harassment (KCSiE part 5)
- Safer Recruitment (KCSiE Part 3)
- Behaviour Management (including the use of reasonable force / exclusion and suspension / searching screening and confiscation) [Behaviour in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/behaviour-in-schools)
- [School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions) [Use of reasonable force in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools)
- [Searching, screening and confiscation at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/searching-screening-and-confiscation-at-school)
- Anti bullying: [Preventing bullying - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/preventing-bullying)
- Online Safety and Behaviour: [Keeping children safe online | NSPCC](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe-online/)

- [Understanding and reporting online harms on your online platform - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/understanding-and-reporting-online-harms-on-your-online-platform)
- Acceptable Use Policy: [Using technology in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/using-technology-in-education)
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education (with parental right to withdraw from sex education) [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education)
- Whistleblowing: [Whistleblowing procedure for maintained schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/whistleblowing-procedure-for-maintained-schools)
- Equalities and Diversity Standards: [Homepage | NES | National Equality Standard](#)
- Prejudice Based Incidents and Hate Crime Policy and Guidelines: [New national hate crime guidance published | College of Policing](#)
- Staff Induction, supervision, appraisal, training and development
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Grievance
- Health and Safety (including frequency and recording of routine building checks as required) [Good estate management for schools - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools) scroll down to Health and Safety & Tools and checklists.
- Business Continuity Plan, to include: risk assessment and contingency in relation to interruption /closure of service i.e. power cut, inclement weather, unforeseen staff absence, outbreak of contagious diseases etc. [Good estate management for schools - Planning and organising your estate resources - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools)
- Management & Risk Assessment [Maintenance risk based tool.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)
- Confidentiality and Data Protection [Data protection: toolkit for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/data-protection-toolkit-for-schools)
- Complaints; for all stakeholders i.e. pupils/students, families, carers and staff [School complaints procedures: guidance for maintained schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/school-complaints-procedures)
- CYP, their families and carers must be given written information about the Provider's complaints procedure. The complaints and representations procedure should reflect DfE guidance for maintained schools and be compatible with the requirements of the Children Act 1989 and 2004. [School complaints procedures: guidance for maintained schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/school-complaints-procedures)

Resources

Provider must provide a physical environment and resources needed for CYP to achieve their goals. The educational provision necessary to meet the needs of these pupils may include:

- Flexible teaching arrangements
- Appropriate seating, acoustic conditioning and lighting
- Adaptations to the physical environment in the school/residential accommodation
- Specific policies and procedures that safeguard learning.
- Access to alternative and augmentative forms of communication, in particular ICT
- Access to a range of specialist support services
- Provision of tactile and kinaesthetic learning resources
- Access to amplification aids and systems for sound and vision
- Regular, consistent and frequent access to a range of specialist support services, particularly medical services that will include palliative care.
- Access to the curriculum through specialists' aids, equipment and furniture

Partnership working

Providers will need to work closely with the Local Authority and participate in a multi-agency approach to planning, reviewing, and monitoring progress of all pupils. Particular emphasis will be on developing effective working relationships with parents and carers. Providers will work collaboratively with a wide range of organisations and stakeholders to promote the ongoing development of high-quality services and adopt a 'team around the young person' approach to identify needs and provide support.

Quality assurance and contract management

The quality of INMSS provision is measured through three processes:

- Quality assurance framework self-assessments and validation
- Performance indicators
- Contract management reviews

INMSS providers must meet Nottinghamshire County Council's Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) minimum standards for all core objectives. These core objectives include assessment and support planning, health, and safety, safeguarding and protection from abuse, fair access and diversity, client involvement and empowerment and management of provision. The provider will be required to self-assess against the QAF as part of a validation visit.

All providers will be expected to meet the current set of independent schools standards listed under [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk). The quality of all teaching and learning must be at least of the "Expected standard", in accordance with OFSTED inspection framework requirements. The effectiveness of both teaching and learning, as well as the quality of the development plans will be reviewed through the quality assurance processes in place.

Performance Indicator (PI) workbooks are submitted by providers termly to capture student progress in relation to academic attainment, outcome stars and agreed targets. The outcome stars are the SEND outcomes, which were co-produced with young people:

- I need to be listened to and heard
- I need to be the healthiest I can be
- I need to be safe and feel safe
- I need to be accepted and valued by people I trust
- I need to be prepared for my future
- I need to enjoy life and have fun
- How young people feel about their education setting

Contract reviews take place with providers across agreed timeframes to facilitate an on-going dialogue between the provider and Nottinghamshire County Council to support service improvements. Providers are asked to submit a summary report covering areas of success and improvement, stakeholder feedback and student satisfaction and feedback, business continuity plans, service improvement plans, risk register, and evidence of all relevant insurance.

Business support and advice (All businesses)

D2N2 Growth Hub

Offer advice and guidance on starting and growing a business including a free business health check.

<https://www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk/>

Tel: 0333 006 9178

Nottingham Business Ventures

Offer advice and support on starting and growing a business. They also offer free training on starting up and running a business.

<https://nbv.co.uk/>

Tel: 0115 964 8494 or Email: enquiries@nbv.co.uk

East Midlands Chamber

Offer tailored business advice and support.

<https://www.emc-dnl.co.uk/supporting-growth/business-advice-and-support/>

Tel: 0333 320 0333

Voluntary sector organisations

Community Accounting Plus

They help voluntary and community organisations manage themselves well in all areas of accounting and finance. They hold regular finance surgeries for businesses.

<https://www.caplus.org.uk/> or Tel: 0115 947 0839

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

Offer a Consultancy Service, which includes tailored support around governance, strategy, and organisational development.

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/consultancy>

Tel: 020 7520 2552 or email: hello@ncvo.org.uk

Nottinghamshire County Council Communities Team

Offer practical support such as help with writing a constitution, advice on policies, preparing accounts and budgeting. They can also offer financial advice and support.

<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/get-involved/supporting-voluntary-sector>

Tel: 0115 977 2041 or email: communities.team@nottscc.gov.uk

Further information

If you have any questions in relation to the INMSS tender please email the Commissioning and Contracts Management Team at childrens.qualityassessment@nottscc.gov.uk