

What have successful applications looked like?

The strongest applications for 2014 had the following features in common:

- An inspiring, aspirational, clear and succinct vision that clearly articulated the rationale for establishing the school and showed: precisely what its ethos and key features would be; the community it would serve; its core curriculum offer; and how it would add to local provision.
- A convincing education plan that set out a rigorous curriculum with a clear rationale; how the curriculum would deliver ambitious outcomes, well above national norms, for all its pupils; how, precisely, the vision and curriculum would be delivered; the intended approach to teaching and learning; and how success would be measured.
- A level of verifiable evidence of demand from local parents confirming they would select the proposed school, that would render the school considerably oversubscribed.
- The commitment of experienced educational professionals with a successful track record – particularly existing school leaders and Academy sponsors – to lead the project through opening and beyond.
- A breadth of professional experience in the proposed governing body, particularly in the areas of education, financial management, HR and project management.
- Robust financial plans consistent with the plans set out elsewhere in the application, demonstrating that costs and expenditure had been comprehensively considered, and that the school would be financially sustainable in both the short and longer term. The best plans were those that had clearly been closely integrated with the rest of the planning.
- A number of options identified for viable and affordable sites.

[New Schools Network](#) should be your first point of contact for advice and guidance. Groups that sought their advice last year had a significantly higher success rate.

Typically, weaker applications had:

- Been completed at the last moment and contained basic errors.
- Educational visions that lacked focus, were unambitious or were unrealistic (e.g. seeking to offer every conceivable subject), particularly when set against the financial plan.
- Education plans: that were vague; that failed to set out what would be taught and how; that had little or no mention of targets or measures of success for

the school and its pupils.

- Evidence of demand sections that did not demonstrate strong existing parental demand for children of the appropriate age, or did not show specific demand for the school being proposed (i.e. merely referred to a local shortage of spaces).
- No specific commitment from or involvement of experienced educationalists or leaders; or no progress in recruiting a suitably skilled governing body.
- Governance structures that lacked clearly defined roles and responsibilities, or which appeared to present conflicts of interest.

A financial plan showing that the school would either be running at a significant deficit or that unrealistic assumptions had been made about income and costs.