

School-Based Nursery Capital Grant – Phase 3 (2027–2030) - Supporting Guidance for Completing the Application Form

Purpose of These Guidance Notes

These guidance notes support applicants to complete the Essex School-Based Nursery (SBN) Capital Grant Phase 3 Application Form. They should be read in full alongside the application form and supporting documents.

Submission of an application does not guarantee funding or inclusion in Essex County Council's final bid to the Department for Education (DfE).

About the Programme

The School-Based Nursery Capital Grant is a Department for Education initiative delivered locally by Essex County Council. It aims to increase access to high-quality early years provision between 2027 and 2030, with particular focus on areas of identified childcare sufficiency pressure and disadvantage.

Further guidance and support to help you prepare and submit your application is available from the following sources:

■ Department for Education – Official SBN Phase 3 Guidance

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). It has been produced to help schools, governing bodies and childcare providers establish nursery provision on school sites, in collaboration with local authorities and responsible bodies: [Establishing school-based nursery provision](#)

■ Essex -Specific Support and Local Guidance

- **Essex Early Years & Childcare: School -Based Nursery Provision Guidance** – requirements, considerations, and resources specific to Essex settings.: [Essex – School-Based Nursery Provision](#)
- **Essex Childcare Sufficiency Assessment** – Our assessment looks at local demographics, demand and the quality of childcare available across Essex. [Essex EYCC Childcare-sufficiency-assessment](#)

Resources:

- [Business plan template \(word, 146KB\)](#)
- [EY Bid1 project concept \(Word, 43KB\)](#)
- [Checklist for early years building projects \(Word, 1.7 MB\)](#)
- [Freeholder consent form guidance \(PDF, 150KB\)](#)
- [Freeholder consent form \(Word 43KB\)](#)
- [LLC1 Project concept \(Word, 46KB\)](#)
- [Three-year cash flow template \(Excel, 82KB\)](#)
- [HSP 10.3 Passive fire safety policy \(Word, 43KB\)](#)
- [SBN3 Scoring Matrix](#)

Please note the above documents are not accessible. If you require in an accessible format, contact ey.capitalgrants@essex.gov.uk

Before You Apply – Important Information

- All sections of the application form must be completed in full.
- Word limits must be adhered to.
- All required supporting documents must be provided.
- Applications missing required documentation will not proceed to assessment.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools must not be used to complete the application.
- Supporting documents must be submitted in Word or Excel format only (no scanned documents or zipped files).
- All files must be clearly named using the setting name and document purpose.

Application Timeline:

Launch	16 th April 2026
Last date for BMC/CCDL support	03 rd July 2026
Application closing date	5pm 17 th July 2026
ECC Internal moderation and clarifications	17 th July 2026 – 10 th August 2026
ECC Moderation Panel	17 th August 2026
Full ECC Submission to DfE	25 th September 2026
Local authorities notified of outcome from DfE	Spring 2027

How your application is assessed

Applications will be assessed by Essex County Council (ECC) against published criteria to determine which proposals will be supported and submitted to the Department for Education (DfE).

Assessment will consider:

- Clear evidence of local childcare need, supported by appropriate data and local information
- Written confirmation from ECC Early Years and Childcare that the project is supported and that a sufficiency need exists
- Quality, deliverability and value for money, assessed using the published scoring matrix

Where more applications are received in an area than local need or available funding allows, assessment scores will be used to prioritise which applications are submitted to the DfE.

Submission of an application does not guarantee funding or inclusion in ECC's final bid.

Section 1 – School / Setting Details

Provide accurate details for the school, maintained nursery school or Best Start Family Hub site. Schools and maintained nursery schools must provide an Ofsted URN. Best Start Family Hub sites must provide a Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN). Where delivery involves a third-party provider, the school or setting remains the applicant.

Section 2 – Current Nursery Provision and Capacity

This section reflects the existing nursery provision and capacity that is being delivered from the site. Capacity must reflect the maximum number of children present at any one time and should not double-count sessional places.

Section 3 – Delivery of New or Extended Provision

Applicants must demonstrate that the proposal creates new childcare places beyond the current offer. The number of new places must be broken down by age group reflecting new places that will be delivered.

New or extended nursery capacity and opening times

Applicants must state the maximum number of children they intend to care for at any one time.

- The number must match the places currently available, based on room size and staff in place.
- Do not include any places that could be offered in the future.
- Only enter the number of places you plan to offer at one time

Section 4 – Evidence of Local Need

Applicants must demonstrate local childcare sufficiency pressure using evidence such as ECC Childcare Sufficiency Assessment data, waiting lists, parental demand and housing growth.

Strong applications typically reference:

- ECC Childcare Sufficiency Assessment data
- Waiting lists and parental demand
- Local changes to housing growth and demographic change
- Existing gaps in funded entitlement delivery

Written confirmation from ECC Early Years and Childcare that a local sufficiency need exists must be included. Please email ccd1@essex.gov.uk for further support with this.

Section 5 – Project Timeline

Applicants must provide realistic start, completion and operational dates. All projects must be operational by September 2030. Applicants should indicate if the project is flexible to start in an alternative financial year.

You will be asked to identify:

- Your preferred start date (on-site works begin)
- Completion date
- Date new places will become operational

Section 6 – Project and Additional Funding Costs

Applicants must provide accurate cost information, including floor area, outdoor works, funding profile by financial year and justification for contingency above 10%. All figures must align with Section 15 cost tables.

Section 7 – Site Feasibility and Deliverability

Applicants must demonstrate that the project is deliverable within programme timescales and meets EYFS, safeguarding, accessibility and health and safety requirements.

Include:

- Where the provision will be located
- Works required
- Planning considerations and risks
- Confirmation of site ownership

- Projects requiring Section 77 consent or landlord approval should be clearly identified.

Section 8 – Planning, Registration and Consents

Applicants must confirm planning permissions, registration changes and significant change requirements. Where significant change approval is required, a consultation summary (maximum 500 words) must be uploaded. Projects on school land may require Section 77 consent.

Confirm whether:

- Planning permission or Listed Building Consent is required
- Ofsted registration changes are required
- The project constitutes a significant change (academies)

Supporting documentation must be provided where required.

Section 9 – Landlord Consent

Where Essex County Council is the landlord, applicants must confirm completion of the LLC1 form. Projects without appropriate landlord or freeholder consent cannot proceed. See: [Essex County Council Landlord Consent](#) for further details

Section 10 – Project Overview

Applicants must clearly describe the proposed works and provide justification for costs, including abnormal or site-specific constraints. An EYBid1 form must be completed and attached.

Section 11 – Outcomes

Applicants must demonstrate how they will deliver a high-quality, inclusive and sustainable early years provision, aligned to the published scoring criteria. Refer to each section's bullet points for areas of discussion.

Section 12 – Delivery of the Funded Early Education Entitlement (FEEE)

Applicants must demonstrate fair and transparent delivery of FEEE. Required attachments include a FEEE policy, parent information, sample invoice and admissions policy.

Section 13 – Safeguarding

Applicants must demonstrate robust safeguarding arrangements, safer recruitment practices, staff training and compliance with Essex safeguarding procedures. Please refer to the bullet points in this section and ensure that all points have been responded to

Section 14 –, Business Planning and Cashflow

Applicants must submit a three-year business plan and cashflow forecast demonstrating financial viability beyond the capital funding period. Templates area available at:

[Business Templates](#)

Include:

- Business plans and cashflow forecasts (3 years)
- Projected occupancy levels
- Explanation of how the provision will remain financially sustainable

Section 15 – Financial Information

This section shows that the proposal offers value for money and that costs are clear and accurate. Applicants must:

- Explain why the project is cost-effective, sustainable, and a good use of public funds (15.1).
- Fully complete Table 15.6, providing:
- Enter costs directly into the table — references such as “*see attached quotes*” will not be accepted.
- Explain how any funding shortfall will be met if total costs exceed the grant requested.
- Applications cannot be accepted if Table 15.6 is incomplete.

Section 16 – Sustainability and Long-Term Viability

Applicants must provide estimated occupancy levels for Years 1 to 3 and explain how the provision will remain financially sustainable.

Section 17 – Governance, Policies and Compliance

Applicants must confirm governing body approval, EYFS compliance and that required policies are in place.

Confirm:

- Governing body approval (or pending)
- EYFS compliance
- Required policies are in place

Section 18 – Supporting Documents Checklist

All required documents listed in the application must be submitted. Applications missing required documentation will not proceed to assessment.

Ensure:

- All required documents are included

- Documents are named clearly
- Files are provided in Word or Excel format only

Section 19 – Declaration

The declaration is a formal confirmation that the information provided is true and accurate, that the organisation has authority to apply, and that all funding conditions will be met. The declaration must be signed and dated by the named main contact in Section 1. Applications without a completed declaration will not be accepted.

Applicant Final Submission Checklist

- All application sections completed
- ECC local childcare sufficiency confirmation included (where available)
- EYBid1 form attached
- LLC1 form completed (where ECC is landlord)
- Three detailed quotes attached
- Business plan and three-year cashflow forecast attached
- FEEE policy, parent information and sample invoice attached
- Safeguarding policy attached
- All documents named correctly and in Word or Excel format
- Declaration signed and dated by main contact

Support, Enquiries and ECC Contacts

For further guidance or clarification, contact:

Early Years and Childcare – Capital and Sufficiency
Team ey.capitalgrants@essex.gov.uk

Business Management Consultants (BMCs) email: BMC@essex.gov.uk

Children's Community Development Leads (CCDLs) email: CCDL@essex.gov.uk