



Education  
Funding  
Agency

Education Funding Agency  
53-55 Butts Road  
Earlsdon Park  
Coventry  
CV1 3BN

Tel: 0370 000 2288  
Email enquiry form:  
[www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

Ms Arnold  
City Hall  
Queen's Walk  
London  
SE1 2AA

19 March 2014

PL/Mar/14/

Dear Ms Arnold,

### **Education Panel – 13 February 2014**

Thank you for your letter of 10 March.

I am pleased to hear that the Education Panel takes the matter of free schools and academies seriously and you will be aware that the Education Funding Agency (EFA) is keen to utilise the Mayor's estate where possible.

Sites are one of the biggest challenges to success in the free schools programme. As such colleagues within the agency work closely with free school proposers and, to an extent, local councils to identify and begin to secure on and off market suitable sites at the earliest possible point. We have a specialist professional team that provides support on sites and premises from the pre-application stage when groups are simply thinking of applying to open a free school right through until actual approval of their free school application. The team guides potential free school trusts on the required size of premises for their proposed free school, review options that are suggested by the groups, liaise with the local authority where appropriate and also propose known site options across the private and public sector estates working with groups to confirm suitability for their proposal.

The agency also works proactively to secure sites for future free schools, for example, in areas where demand for school places is high and suitable stock is difficult to secure. In this case we may advertise for groups to come forward to utilise the site via the DfE website or seek expressions of interest in other ways.

Additionally, through the "find me some government space" website (<https://www.epims.org.gov.uk/fmsgspublic/home.aspx>), free school trusts are able to see what sites have been declared surplus by government departments and browse surplus space in government offices for example.

I hope this answers your question. If you require further clarification, can I suggest you contact Lara Newman at the EFA - [lara.newman@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:lara.newman@education.gsi.gov.uk) who will be able to assist with any detailed questions on how we work with free school groups and find sites generally.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Lauener', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

**Peter Lauener**

Chief Executive

Tel: 02476 660 320

E-mail: [peter.lauener@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:peter.lauener@education.gsi.gov.uk)