

Bradstow Community Special School and Children's Homes – Consultation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

January 2025

Consultation process

- What happens during the consultation period and how will you ensure it is accessible for all?

The consultation process must follow the statutory guidance. Over the six weeks' pre-publication consultation period we will be consulting with pupils, parents and carers, staff, the governing board, trade unions and the wider local community.

There will be different ways to engage, including online and by post. We will translate all relevant material into languages which are spoken by the school community on request and as required, and will pay attention to those parents and carers with additional needs to ensure their voices are heard through this engagement phase.

Finances

- Is this a financially driven proposal?

Wandsworth Council is committed to supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) locally, keeping them educated and cared for within Wandsworth or as close to their homes as possible.

The council has invested £41m in expanding SEND provision in Wandsworth creating over 271 places since 2021, of which £34m is on a purpose-built expansion of Paddock Secondary and Sixth Form School to improve our local provision for children with complex special educational needs linked to their diagnosis of Autism and severe learning disability. A primary aim for the development of Paddock School is to enable Wandsworth children to remain in their local community to enable them to successfully retain their close links to family and friends [which can be lost if they are placed at a significant distance from home.](#)

Bradstow School is a complex school which operates within a challenging financial landscape and the unwillingness of councils to pay the levels of fees needed to maintain the quality and financial viability of the school has forced Wandsworth council to look at other options.

Educational provision

- Will every child affected by this proposal get a place in a local school?

Wandsworth has undertaken an exercise to match the needs of its 4 children placed at Bradstow children's needs with provision type, in order to progress placement consultations in line with parental preference if requested to do so, or if the need arises further to a decision being made on this proposal.

It has been the recommendation to all other placing local authorities to undertake a similar exercise in order to parallel plan. If the proposal is approved, responsible individuals in placing local authorities will work closely with the school and parents/carers to find and consult with suitable alternative education provision in line with parental preferences and support pupils to integrate smoothly into their new setting.

Options considered

- Bradstow is located in Kent - could the school be transferred to Kent County Council to avoid closure?

As the majority of placements at Bradstow are from Kent County Council, we have been working on a proposal to transfer the schools as a maintained provision to Kent County Council for over 3 years. The transfer included the offer of the freehold of the property. Kent County Council notified us in writing on the 15 October 2024, that they are not interested in pursuing this option. Their reason for this is the financial investment required to make the building fit for purpose alongside the considerable resourcing and risk it would present to operationally sustain the provision. Further to communicating our intention to consult on closure, the leader of Wandsworth Council and lead member for Children wrote to their counterparts at Kent County Council to reopen a conversation to safeguard a future for the school. However, Kent County Council are clear that there are no plans to take over the running of Bradstow School and they are working to find alternative educational provision for the pupils currently attending the provision. Their focus will then concentrate on supporting pupils to integrate smoothly into their new setting.

- Could the school be academised to avoid closure?

Wandsworth local authority have liaised with the Department for Education (DfE) Regions Group to consider academisation. Due to the complexity of Bradstow school, both operationally and financially, it has so far been unable to identify a multi academy trust who would be willing to take on the school given the challenges it faces. However, the decision to approve the recommendation to initiate the proposal to close the school will enable interested academy trusts to come forward with any expression of interest.

- Could Bradstow be transferred to an independent school proprietor to avoid closure?

The DfE have advised that formerly state-funded schools taken over by a new proprietor can seek to register as independent schools. They should allow six months for the registration process to be completed. This means that an application to register should be made by the new proprietor at least six months before the state-funded school is due to close, if the newly registered independent school is to provide continuity of education for current pupils. That said there are challenges to the identification of a new proprietor to run the independent school and securing the assets from the local authority, alongside any transfer of staff, on which the new proprietor would need to obtain independent advice. They would also need to be able to develop and articulate a sustainable business plan. The DfE were unable to provide an example of where this has occurred in recent times.

Impact on the Community

- How will you assess the impact of the school closure on the community?

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and has been shared as part of this consultation. This will be reviewed and updated following responses received to the pre-publication consultation.

Whilst we understand that this proposal will have some impact on the local community, it has been put forward in response to the need to manage risk for our most vulnerable SEND children, as well as the sustainability of the Wandsworth school system for all our children and families.

Staff

- What support will be available to staff affected by this proposal?

We recognise the incredible dedication and expertise that the staff community brings to Bradstow School. We know that staff will be anxious about the implications of any decision, and their wellbeing is important to us. We would like to offer our reassurance that council officers, governors and school leaders are here to support staff as we navigate this process together.

We will be guided by staff in relation to their needs, which includes exploring employment opportunities with relevant job centre contacts and other local education provisions, providing career transition resources, and offering individual support as we move through the consultation and transition phases.

School leaders and Governors will continue to offer support to all staff in collaboration with the Wandsworth Schools and Community Psychology Service that will help staff work through and manage any anxieties and emotions that may be felt both for themselves and those of children, young people and their families.

To supplement the support outlined above, all staff have access to the council's employee assistance programme.

Parents

- What support will be available to parents whose children will be affected by this proposal?

We will work with the school to ensure children and families are supported throughout this process, addressing any issues as they emerge and ensuring change is handled efficiently and sensitively. Through the staff team, we are continually seeking the views, wishes and feelings of pupils to inform the support package that is being provided.

The School and Community Psychology Service (SCPS) will work alongside the school's leadership team and help them to manage the impact of this proposal on staff, pupils and their families. Should this proposal progress, placing local authorities, and the SCPS alongside Kent County Council Educational Psychology Services will work in collaboration with the school leadership to ensure that children's transition to a new school is managed as effectively as possible. These conversations and this work will be carefully planned and managed sensitively in discussion with the head and senior leadership to ensure they best meet the needs of the school community as they emerge and if needed.

We will translate all relevant documents and provide interpreters on request and as required.

- How will children and families be supported around admissions to a new school if the proposal is approved?

In the event proposals are agreed we will work closely with the school community and other Local Authorities in a planned way, and we want to provide parents and carers reassurance that there is no need to act alone or immediately in response to the notification of this consultation.

Wandsworth Council would recommend that parents contact their Local Authority's SEND Team, or case worker, to discuss this proposal and to understand their options for their children in the event of Bradstow's closure.