

Proposal to make changes in provision at: Bidwell Brook School, Dartington, Totnes and Pathfield School, Barnstaple, Devon.

School and LA details

Devon County Council, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD

Bidwell Brook School
Shinner's Bridge
Dartington
Totnes
Devon, TQ9 6JU

Pathfield School
Abbey Road
Barnstaple
Devon
EX31 1JU

Description of alterations

The proposals are as follows:

- to increase places at Bidwell Brook School from 110 to 140 day places for boys and girls, aged 3-19 with Severe Learning Difficulties and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties with effect from September 2021.
- to increase places at Pathfield School from 137 to 186 day places and a change of category to include Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties for boys and girls, aged 3-19, with effect from Mid December 2020.

Evidence of demand

The number of places available needs to be increased to meet demand and is in line with the planning and commissioning of Special Needs provision and Devon's Local Offer.

Objectives:

This provision would fill a gap in provision available, minimising the use of independent special school places, and providing parents with additional choice. The proposals will provide sustainable educational provision, supporting parents and pupils within their local community, without having to travel long distances to access services.

Education standards and curriculum

Bidwell Brook School was inspected by Ofsted in October 2017 and is a Good school. Pupils have access to a wide range of curriculum activities both in school and outside school, including access to a rural curriculum.

Pathfield School was inspected by Ofsted in March 2019 and is a Good school. The curriculum is designed effectively around pupils' needs. Adaptations to learning are made effectively to ensure that pupils make good progress towards their personal goals and aspirations. The curriculum enables pupils to learn across a broad range of subjects using different approaches according to their learning and sensory needs.

All Ofsted reports are available via: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Improvement in standards, quality and range of educational provision

Both schools are committed to raising educational standards for each pupil and ensuring that every child will be the best that they can be. Staff do all they can to understand the challenges that pupils face and to find ways of supporting their preparation for their future lives.

The effect on other Schools, Academies and educational institutions in the area:

The increase in places would not have a negative effect on other schools and would support them by providing specialist provision for children who are not managing or progressing in a mainstream setting.

Project Costs and Planning Consent

The Medium Term Capital Programme includes Capital funding of £2.56m to deliver the expansion of Bidwell Brook and Pathfield Schools.

At Bidwell Brook an extension and remodelling of the existing building to ensure better use of space will provide for an additional 30 pupils. Conditional planning consent was given June 2020 to extend the main school building and provide four additional classrooms.

The proposal at Pathfield School required planning consent, and was given conditional consent July 2020, for the addition of two modular teaching spaces, play area, parking provision and new access.

Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation:

The proposal to increase places at Bidwell Brook School, if approved, will be implemented from September 2021.

The proposal to increase places at Pathfield School, if approved, will be implemented from Mid December 2020.

Effect on existing pupils

In planning and commissioning SEND provision the proposals are in line with Devon's Local Offer to ensure that children and young people with SEND should have the expectation to be part of their local community. Our multi-agency approach has a strong focus on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND as well as involving them and their families in developing provision. The provision takes into account the demand for places at Bidwell Brook School and Pathfield School and will provide access to specialist support for more pupils.

Consultation

The consultation period took place from 6 July 2020 to 18 September 2020.

A response has been received on behalf of the SENTient Trust which is in support of the proposals to increase places at both Bidwell Brook and Pathfield Schools.

A response has been received from Totnes Town Council reporting that at the Full Council meeting of Totnes Town Council, the Council confirmed its support for the proposed increase in day places at Bidwell Brook.

A response has been received to the Bidwell Brook proposal which shared strong concerns regarding traffic and parking in the vicinity of the school with concerns about congestion, parents causing obstructions and blocking pavements including fears over air pollution created through idling engines and the risk to health and safety.

The planning consent provides for some minor re-modelling works to be carried out to the carpark, providing 4 additional parking bays and both schools will be updating their School Travel Plans in response to the increase in places.

A response has also been received to the proposal put forward for Pathfield School with concerns that children would be educated in portacabins amid concerns that children with SEN find such classrooms sensorially challenging and only a short-term option. The respondent also felt that any portacabins would be at capacity very shortly, given the numbers of pupils in the lower school and raised fears about the amount of carparking, storage facilities, toilet facilities and the use of the dining hall as a multi-use space. The respondee felt there should be a long-term plan to expand in a permanent manner.

The classrooms that have been granted conditional planning consent are not portacabins and will be permanent buildings on the school site. The school numbers have been built into the school business plan for future, through to 2024 and beyond. The capacity is acceptable for the size of the school.

The proposal at Pathfield School seeks to provide a one story modular teaching space, adding two classrooms, two stores and a hygiene room/staff toilet; infant toilets and wash hand basins; and a learning resource area. In addition to the above works, the application proposes to carry out some remodelling works to the car park, adding parking bays and providing a through route for vehicles by means of an additional access.

Response to Brief Notice

You can object to or comment on the proposals by:

Emailing: schoolconsultations@devon.gov.uk

Writing to: Strategic Planning - Children's Services, Room 120, Devon County Council, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QD.

by the closing date of 21 October 2020.