

**Consultation on a reduction in the number of registered places at Pathfield Special School arising through an anomaly in its given designation, by closure of the discrete Pathways Unit.**

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**Proposal**

The Governing Body of Pathfield Special School is proposing a phased closure of the provision at the Pathways Unit. This proposal has the following characteristics:-

- This proposal will not affect learners on the roll of Pathfield School with Severe Learning Difficulties or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties who attend the main school site.
- This will not affect current Pathways learners as they will remain with us until their secondary education is complete. The proposal on the closing of the unit is a phased implementation with students leaving at the end of year 11.
- Staff will be deployed across the school as numbers of Pathways students reduce.
- No new students will be placed in the Pathways group as Local Authority preference and new consultations will be considered against the school's core designation of SLD and PMLD.
- Pathfield School is committed to providing the best possible education for all its students and this will continue for those students currently on roll at Pathways.
- The Discovery Centre building which houses the Pathways unit will cease to be part of Pathfield school estate from September 2025. This means that alternative accommodation will be provided for the remaining students for their time on roll.

**Context**

Pathfield School is a specialist Foundation school, part of the Devon wide SENTient Co-operative Trust. The Pathways Unit is part of Pathfield School, but the provision is delivered off-site at the Discovery Centre building, a unit on a small industrial estate a short distance from the main school site. This additional teaching base was acquired as the main site does not have space to permanently accommodate these learners. Pathways is an educational provision for secondary aged children and young people with needs centred around social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and currently provides places for 23 learners.

Pathfield School has a registered capacity of 186 places which includes the 23 places at Pathways. The statutory proposal being consulted on is a reduction in the number

of registered places from 186 to 168 from September 2025, as a result of the closure of the Pathways Unit.

### **Reason for this proposal**

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) designation – Pathfield School is a specialist school for pupils with SLD and PMLD. The Pathways group have sat outside of this as the students' needs are focused around SEMH profile. This provision was started, and has grown, in partnership with the Local Authority over the past 6 years but the Governing body now seeks to address a registration anomaly.

Meeting the needs of an increasingly wide and diverse cohort has presented the school with many challenges, and this proposal will enable Pathfield School to prioritise the development of an outstanding curriculum for students with SLD and PMLD.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to secure suitable permanent premises through Devon County Council. The private leasing and maintenance of the Discovery Centre building is unsustainable financially in the long term, as the school has not received any additional financial support to run this provision. This is projected to lead to financial challenges for the whole school in the future.

### **What are the proposed alternative arrangements?**

Pathfield School will work closely with the SEND Statutory team, Devon County Council, and other local agencies to secure the best possible outcomes for all Pathways students. Students will continue to be placed by the SEND statutory team through the consultation process.

### **Impact on staff in the Pathways Unit**

The staff currently working in the Pathways unit are an integral part of the Pathfield staff and subject to the same terms and conditions as staff throughout the school. It is recognised that they possess a wealth of experience and expertise that will benefit all students in the coming years. As student numbers decrease through the phased implementation of the plan, staff will be deployed to teach / support across the school.

### **Implementation**

- The number of students on roll will gradually decrease as students leave from July 2024. This means that numbers will gradually reduce in the group to 18 students in 24/25, 11 in 25/26, 6 in 26/27. Students may also leave during this time through the usual statutory processes.
- There will be no admissions to the Pathways unit from January 2024
- Notice will be given on the Discovery Centre lease to end Aug 2025
- Alternative accommodation will be provided for the remaining class of approximately 11 students for Sept 2025. This will be a temporary repurposing of the school library space.

- Other opportunities for accommodation will be explored with local education providers.
- Staff will be deployed to meet the changing numbers and needs across the whole school

### **Statutory Process**

A statutory process must take place, including consultation, before the proposal can be decided upon by Devon County Council.

### **Indicative timescale**

Assuming agreement to each stage, the timescale is likely to be:

Informal consultation: 19 January to 23 February 2024

Governing Body meeting to consider responses: 26 February 2024

Formal representation period: 29 February to 28 March 2024

Decision: Devon County Council May/June 2024

Implementation: September 2025

### **Have Your Say**

The Governing Body would like to hear your views on this proposal by 23 February 2024. Once these have been received, the responses will be considered by Governors and a decision will be made as to whether to proceed to the next stage of the statutory process which is a four week formal representation period on the proposal.

A drop-in information session will be held for parents and carers on 23 January 2024 from 10:30am. This will be held on the main site in the hall.

Following completion of the statutory process, Devon County Council's Cabinet Member or Cabinet will decide whether to approve or reject the proposal, taking into account all responses received. Any comments or objections received will therefore be shared with Devon County Council, as the decision-maker.

### **Responding to the consultation**

You can respond to the consultation by emailing the school:  
[admin@pathfield.devon.sch.uk](mailto:admin@pathfield.devon.sch.uk) Please title your email 'Consultation on Pathways'.

Or by writing to:

Chair of Governors  
Pathfield School  
Abbey Road

Barnstaple  
Devon  
EX31 1JU

By the closing date of 23 February 2024.

The school website will be kept updated as matters progress and the County Council will also keep you informed throughout the process at: [www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay)

Please note that all responses will be properly considered by the Governing Body and Devon County Council, but we will not send individual responses to any specific points raised.

Privacy Notice for representations made to School Organisation statutory consultations: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/privacy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-representations-to-school-organisation-statutory-consultations/>