



Frequently Asked Questions regarding the future of the Pathways provision and Discovery Centre building.

Document Change History

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Questions and Answers

1. Why is Pathfield School no longer taking students for the Pathways group and closing the Discovery Centre building?

- 1.1. The decision to reduce the numbers of children at Pathfield has not been taken lightly by both Governors and Senior Leadership. We have given much thought to the effect that this action will have on both children and their families and have opted for an extended “wind down” period to allow the children to process this action and to prepare them for their next steps. Pathfield School has committed to supporting the current students until the end of year 11.
- 1.2. Pathfield School define their core offering as: “SLD - Severe Learning Difficulty and PMLD - Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty” many of these children also have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis.
- 1.3. Previous school leadership agreed with Devon County Council (DCC) to offer a niche pathway for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) profile, which is outside of the core offering.
- 1.4. It has become apparent to the Pathfield Governing Board that the continued provision of Pathways is not viable because:
 - 1.4.1. DCC ensure that the necessary buildings are available to meet the core offering on the main Abbey Road site. As the Pathways group sit outside of this, additional building capacity at the Discovery centre has been funded through the Pathfield budget.
 - 1.4.2. Pathfield School is funded to meet its core offer and does not attract any different funding to meet the needs of students outside of this.
 - 1.4.3. There is not a sustainable and viable business or educational model in place to provide a satellite provision.
 - 1.4.4. The Pathways Unit is not legally recognised as a satellite provision to Pathfield School, as a statutory process has not taken place to expand onto an additional or satellite site.
- 1.5. The Pathfield Governing Board has explored the following possible options for Pathways:
 - 1.5.1. That Pathways provision was made viable for Pathfield School - meaning:

1.5.1.1. That DCC sourced a building as a replacement for the Discovery Centre and that the funding model was reviewed. This would also have required a viable and sustainable business/educational model agreed. This could likely have included the scaling up of student numbers, staff and resources.

1.5.2. That another educational provider with the necessary expertise and specialism took over the running of the Pathways provision.

1.5.3. New admissions to Pathways are stopped and it is gradually wound down.

1.6. Pathfield leadership explored options under 1.5.1/2 with DCC and the Sentient Trust before starting consultation on the reduction of pupil numbers at Pathfield.

1.7. Following these discussions, DCC have agreed to our request that they do not consult to place any further students (1.5.3) at Pathfield School, who they do not consider to meet the core offer. This decision was agreed by the Governors in the Autumn term 2023.

2. Why do previous OFSTED inspections, Get information About School (DFE) and Devon schools special school brochure all mention the Pathways group?

2.1. OFSTED recognised in their last inspection that this group of students sat outside of the core offer of the school and gave a separate paragraph to this group within the whole school inspection. It is likely that this will be the same in the next inspection.

2.2. The Get Information About School and School brochure are there to give all interested parties clear information about the context of school. These have begun to be updated to reflect the direction of school and will continue to be as the process continues.

3. My child already attends Pathfield School in the Pathways group. How are you going to support them through the process?

Change of premises

3.1. Our intention is that all pupils currently in the Pathways group will continue to be educated at the Discovery Centre until July 2025.

3.2. The students in current Year 11 will be unaffected by this action

3.3. The students in Year 10 will have little impact, other than to revert back to a 2 class system, as it was when Pathways moved to the Discovery Centre.

3.4. The pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 will move to a new setting, mirroring the move that was made when the Discovery Centre opened.

3.5. From September 2025 the remaining students will have been fully prepared for the move out of the Discovery centre and we are exploring a number of options to find the best premises for the estimated 11 students.

Staffing and Curriculum

3.6 We are constantly mindful of the impact staff changes can have on our students and we will do our utmost to provide the most suitable and stable staffing team.

3.7 We are committed to ensuring that all pupils currently attending Pathways will continue to have a high quality curriculum including therapeutic interventions throughout the wind down process

3.8 We value all the pupils at Pathfield School and have always invested our resources to meet the needs of children in Pathways.

Although we do not have all the answers at this moment in time we plan to consult with students, parents and staff throughout the process.

4. Additional Questions –

4.1. Why has the decision been made to not support SEMH and when was the decision made?

The Pathfield Governors agreed to request Devon County Council not to take any new admissions outside of Pathfield core offering on Oct 2023. See Q.1 for further context.

4.2. What alternative accommodation has been looked at?

Options have included:

- other school sites
- college sites
- temporary classroom
- main site adaptation

All the needs of the students will be taken into account when selecting a suitable future classroom and all options are still under consideration. Any offsite provision would be subject to the necessary statutory consultation outside of this current process.

4.3. Why does it seem that SEMH is less important than SLD and PLMD?

All students are important to Pathfield. See Q.1 for further context on why we have requested that DCC do not place any new students who do not meet the Pathfield core offer.

4.4. What would be the consequences to our children and parents if we say no to alternative educational settings?

It is hoped that by working in partnership we can select the best possible future classroom base. However, the final decision will rest with the school. Your statutory rights as parents are not affected.

4.5. Many of us have looked at other settings and they don't meet our child's need. Where do you truly believe will?

There is no need to look elsewhere as Pathfield School has committed to supporting the current students until the end of year 11.

4.6. They need somewhere small, separate and staff that meet their needs, as we have at Pathways. We believe Chittlehampton was looked at previously, why has this not been pursued?

See answer Q.4.2

4.7. Can anyone oppose this or can it only be current parents?

There are 2 conjoined but different issues which have led to this consultation.

- The statutory consultation relates to the reduction of places offered by Pathfield School in total, which includes children attending both main site and Pathways. This is a statutory process and open for consultation with all interested parties.
- The second issue relates to the students affected directly by the wind down of the Pathways provision and the closure of the Discovery Centre. This is a discussion with parents and carers, staff and students to find the best possible classroom environment.

4.8. Can we object to our local MP?

Yes, all local councillors and MP's have been informed through the statutory consultation process.

4.9. Some of us have heard various information that doesn't make sense. For example that there is enough funding to continue the Discovery Centre.

See Q.1 for further context on the viability of the discovery centre.

4.10. Have any negotiations taken place over the Discovery Centre lease?

No negotiations or discussions around the lease have taken place as it is not viable (See Q1)

4.11. I have another question, which is not covered in this document how can I ask it?

All questions can be sent through to Pathfield School,
addressed to Admin@pathfield.devon.sch.uk