

Proposal for the Closure of College Hall Pupil Referral Unit

1. The Proposal

Bracknell Forest Council currently commissions College Hall Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) for young people who have been permanently excluded from school and provides preventative placements to support children who are at risk of permanent exclusion. College Hall is a coeducational school, offering 56 placements for children and young people in Key Stage 3 and 4. Since 2019/20 there has been one permanent exclusion per year in Bracknell Forest.

After careful consideration, the council has made the difficult decision to consult on a proposal to close College Hall at the end of the 2023/24 academic year.

- Address of school proposed to be closed: College Hall Pupil Referral Unit, West Road, Off Old Wokingham Road, Wokingham, RG40 3BT
- Category of school: Community, sometimes referred to as local authority maintained school.

This statutory proposal document provides information about reasons for the proposed closure, what will happen to children and young people currently attending the school, and timelines for deciding about the future of College Hall.

Before a decision to start a formal consultation about the future of College Hall, those people most likely to be affected by the change have had the opportunity to have their say on the proposal before it was published. The following groups have been consulted:

- Parents and carers of current pupils
- College Hall Management Committee
- College Hall staff
- Headteachers and Chairs of Governors from across Bracknell Forest
- Parent Carer Forum
- Local councillors
- The local MP

2. Reason for closure

The council is proposing the closure of College Hall because the school is no longer considered viable.

Financial position

Funding is currently allocated for 56 places at College Hall. This equates to a cost of approximately £31,000 per place at the school. However, with the current number of pupils at the school being below 30, this equates to approximately £57,000 per place at the school. Benchmarking activity¹ indicates the average cost per pupil attending a PRU for 2023-24 is in the region of £22,800. At £57,000 per place, College Hall is substantially above expected levels and not in a sustainable funding position.

A PRU should not be a permanent move for young people but rather a short-term intervention to help them return to mainstream education or if required, specialist provision. However, many young people have remained at College Hall for long periods of time. College Hall accepts dual registered intervention placements which means the young person remains registered at their mainstream school and at College Hall. In the past, these

¹ Undertaken on 2018 figures and adjusted to account for inflationary pressures and pay awards over a five year period.

placements often became open-ended, and children did not return to their main school. The council and local schools are committed to stopping this practice and as a result, young people should only be educated at College Hall for an intervention period of up to 12 weeks.

To align with the anticipated decrease in demand following the introduction of more robust management of dual-registered placements, a new funding model will be implemented based on actual and expected pupil numbers, rather than a flat amount to accommodate 56 placements. As a result, funding will reduce from 56 placements to 29 placements with effect from 1 April 2024, to reflect the current numbers of children at College Hall. This will then further reduce to 11 placements from 1 September 2024 with associated funding adjustments to align with anticipated demand.

This change in funding approach will shift funding allocated to College Hall from current funding allocated of circa £1.5m, to approximately £0.5m from September 2024. Due to the new funding model, College Hall management committee has determined that College Hall PRU is no longer financially viable, as it will not be able to meet the costs associated with running the school.

Ofsted

In addition to the conclusion reached by the management committee, there are also concerns about the quality of provision at College Hall. The Ofsted inspection conducted in July 2023 rated College Hall PRU as inadequate citing poor outcomes for children and young people. The inspection report highlights serious concerns regarding the quality of provision, indicating a clear need for intervention to address the identified shortcomings.

As a result of the inadequate rating, an academy order was put in place (an order to enable the school to be converted to an academy). However, since it has been determined that College Hall is no longer financially viable, the College Hall management committee has since requested the Department of Education (DfE) revoke the academy order. This decision reflects the acknowledgement that the financial resources allocated to College Hall could be better utilised to enhance education in the local area.

3. Alternative arrangement for current students

There are 27 students currently at College Hall, across years 9, 10 and 11. To reduce the potential impact of the closure of College Hall on the students currently placed there, the council is proactively taking steps to support the pupils through this transition.

There will be no disruption to the current year 11 students at College Hall. They will complete their secondary education at College Hall and the council will work with them to develop personalised plans for post-16 education. For example: vocational training, further education, or employment.

For the young people at College Hall with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), the council is currently talking to the parents and carers regarding their preferences and is consulting with specialist providers and mainstream schools. The expectation is for these students to be accessing appropriate provision by the summer term 2024.

The council will take an individual approach to support the remaining students, to ensure their personal and academic needs are met. This may include reintegration into mainstream school or the commissioning of bespoke education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) packages of education.

In all cases, the process will involve collaboration with the young people, their parents and carers, and the staff currently working with them at College Hall. This personalised approach aims to address individual needs, ensuring a continuation of education and support tailored to each student's requirements.

Travel

Every child at College Hall is required to be driven to the school due to its rural location. As a result, all children are in receipt of Home to School transport provided by the council. The plans for children currently at College Hall will consider transport.

Future requirements for a Pupil Referral Unit in Bracknell Forest

Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to make suitable arrangements for children of compulsory school age who, because of exclusion, illness, or other reasons, would not receive suitable education without such provision. This duty does not have to be met by a PRU but can be met in a range of ways such as tutoring, whether at home or in a community setting.

The council has agreed funding to build a new local social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) school that will meet the needs of young people who are in receipt of an EHCP. Headteachers have highlighted a need for education provision to support an increasing demand for children with SEMH needs in Bracknell Forest. SEMH schools are specifically equipped to provide tailored support for individuals facing social, emotional, and mental health challenges, creating an environment favourable to their academic and personal development.

The specialist skills and targeted approach of an SEMH school are more likely to result in positive outcomes for children and young people who face challenges. The school will facilitate better integration of students into the local community, breaking down barriers and promoting inclusivity.

Impact on the community

The impact on the local community with the proposed closure of College Hall is minimal. The school is not exclusively attended by local children who live near to the school but by children from across the borough, so is not part of the local community in the same way as a local mainstream secondary school may be.

If it is decided to close College Hall, then the land could be sold, with the capital receipt (money) from the sale potentially being used to contribute towards funding the development of the new SEMH school in the borough. Should the land be sold, any future use will have to undergo necessary planning permission with required consultation with the local community.

Consultation and decision making process

The decision to consult on the future of College Hall has not been made lightly. It is being brought forward in light of the financial sustainability and inadequate Ofsted rating. No decision to close the school has yet been made.

There is a defined statutory process in the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 which must be followed before deciding on the closure of a maintained school. This is supplemented by further guidance on the process published by the Department for Education.

There are five stages to the statutory process:

Stage	Activity	Progress
Stage one: consultation:	The views of interested parties are sought and will be considered by the local authority	Complete: pre-publication consultation with headteachers, chairs of governors, Schools Forum and Parent Carer Forum took place from November 2023 to January 2024. Pre-publication

Stage	Activity	Progress
		consultation with staff and parents and carers of current College Hall students took place from 29 January 2024 to 23 February 2024.
Stage two: Publication	Dependent upon the outcome of the consultation, the local authority will decide whether or not to publish statutory notices regarding the proposed closure	Complete: publication of statutory proposal (this document) took place on 11 March 2024
Stage three: Representation	The representation period starts on the date of publication of the statutory notice and must last for a period of four weeks. During this period, any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to the local authority, to be considered before a final decision is taken	Current stage: representation will take place from 11 March 2024 to 5pm on Wednesday 24 April 2024
Stage four: Decision	Within two months of the end of the representation period the local authority must make a decision on the proposal.	It is planned for the Executive to make the decision and publish the decision in May 2024
Stage five: Implementation	If approved, College Hall will close.	If the proposal is approved, College Hall will close at the end of this academic year

All documents and updates will be provided on the school website and on Bracknell Forest Council's website.

How to take part in the consultation

Please ensure you read the following documents, so you have all the information you need to respond.

- Consultation document
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Frequently asked questions

Please give us your views by completing the online survey.

There are other ways you can submit your views:

- Complete the attached form and email it to: educationconsultation@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
- Hand in your response form to College Hall PRU (West Road, off Old Wokingham Road, Wokingham, RG40 3BT), to be passed on to the council.
- Hand in your response to the main council office (Time Square, Market Street, Bracknell, RG12 1JD)

- Post a completed response form to the main council office (please note, this must be received prior to the closing date of the consultation.)

If you need to request a paper copy, a different language or format, or if you have a disability or long-term condition and require a reasonable adjustment to communicate with us, please let us know. Please call 01344 351720 or email: educationconsultation@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

There will be two public consultation events on Thursday 28 March 2024, at 10am and 5pm. These will be held at the Open Learning Centre, Rectory Lane, Bracknell, RG12 7GR.

You must respond by 5pm on Wednesday 24 April 2024.

What happens next

The Executive will make a decision about whether to close College Hall or not by the end of May 2024. If decided to close, College Hall will close on 31 August 2024.

Further information

[Opening and closing maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Frequently asked questions

Council publishing the proposal

Bracknell Forest Council
Time Square
Market Street
Bracknell
Berkshire
RG12 1JD

School proposed to be closed

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