

Pre-Publication Proposal Document

Name of School: Hunters Hill College

*Proposal to Close a
Community Special
School*

Introduction

Hunters Hill College is one of Birmingham's 27 special schools. The school is located outside Birmingham, in the neighbouring area of Bromsgrove district, and is maintained by Birmingham City Council.

Hunters Hill College can offer up to 135 places for boys with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH). There are currently 111 pupils on roll at the school. Admissions to the school are managed via the Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review Service (SENAR).

The school has boarding provision on the Spirehouse Lane site. Recent proposals have been approved to close the boarding provision with effect from 1st July 2020.

School Information

Type:	Special School (Local Authority Maintained)		
Name:	Hunters Hill College	DFE:	330/7037
Address:	Spirehouse Lane, Worcestershire B60 1QD		
Ward:	Linthurst	District:	Bromsgrove
Age Range:	11 -16 years	Sixth Form:	None
Gender	Boys	Capacity:	135
Last Ofsted:	18th/19th September 2019 Both the college and the residential facility were inspected.	Ofsted Rating	Overall Effectiveness: 4. (inadequate - special measures)

Background

- An Ofsted Inspection on 18-19th September 2019 judged the School "inadequate". The report can be found via the following link: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/25/103609>. Since that time, the School has been taking steps to try and address the concerns that Ofsted identified.
- Following the Ofsted inspection report, a Directive Academy Order (DAO) was issued by the Secretary of State on 22nd October 2019. (A DAO is a measure introduced by the Government whereby schools judged by Ofsted to be failing are automatically ordered to convert to an Academy which allows underperformance to be tackled swiftly.)

- To date an Academy Trust has not been identified to sponsor Hunters Hill College which would allow the school to become an academy.¹
- An Interim Executive Board (IEB) was established at the school on 21st February 2020. This is a small body appointed for a temporary period, by a Local Authority with the consent of the Secretary of State for Education, which replaces the governing body to lead a school that is judged to be in urgent need of improvement.
- Several buildings on the site are beyond economical repair and no longer fit for purpose. It is estimated that significant and continued investment would be required to provide suitable buildings to meet the ongoing needs of the pupils. The level of investment required is unsustainable.
- The budget plan for the financial year 2019/2020 predicted a significant deficit and at the end of year the deficit was £494,000. This deficit is predicted to increase to a cumulative total in excess of £1 million by the end of 2020/2021 the financial year. The cumulative deficit is predicted to grow further and be over £2 million by the end of the 2021/22 financial year. This is primarily the result of a substantial reduction in actual pupil numbers and commissioned places. Even with concerted efforts to reduce expenditure, the budget of the school cannot be balanced.
- Birmingham City Council is liaising with the Regional Schools Commissioner about the Directive Academy Order and the proposal to close the school.²
- A Birmingham City Council working group has been established with representatives from different service areas to address the concerns at Hunters Hill College. Ultimately, a full options appraisal has been carried out and the options explored were to:
 1. Do nothing
 2. Address immediate concerns only
 3. Relocate the school
 4. Close the school

Due to the financial unviability of the school and no forthcoming sponsor, Birmingham City Council is proposing **Option 4**, closure of the school.

¹ *The Secretary of State issues a DAO via the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to the Local Authority (LA) and the governing body of a community school instructing them to take all necessary steps to convert the school to academy status. The RSC and the Department for Education (DFE) will communicate to the LA and school the name of the trust that will sponsor the school and the date by which the school must convert.*

² *The Secretary of State has the power to revoke an Academy Order in exceptional circumstances, where following due diligence a school is judged to be financially unviable. Where this is the case, the expectation is that the LA will take steps to close the school.*

What changes are proposed?

Birmingham City Council (the Local Authority) is consulting with stakeholders on a proposal to close Hunters Hill College.³

Why do we want to do this?

Hunters Hill College has insufficient resources to improve the quality of education as it is not financially viable based on prospective pupil numbers and depleted building stock.

When will these changes happen?

If the proposal is approved by the decision maker (following full consultation) it is intended that the proposal to close Hunters Hill College will be implemented on **31st August 2021**.

Pupil Numbers and Admissions

Hunters Hill College can offer up to 135 places for boys with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH).

There are currently 111 pupils on roll at the school. Admissions to the school are managed through the Local Authority's Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review Service (SENAR). Pupils reside in Birmingham and in surrounding authority areas.

Numbers on Roll	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
Current 2019/20	9	19	30	26	27	111
Potential 2020/21*	7	9	19	30	26	91

(*The actual and projected numbers of pupils on roll at a school are subject to change)

Any parental preferences for places at the school will continue to be considered by SENAR in accordance with legislation and guidance. For those pupils currently at the school, Annual Reviews of their EHCPs will continue to take place as required.

How will this affect pupils at the school?

Curriculum:

The pupils will continue to receive their curriculum entitlement at the school whilst they remain on roll there and will do so throughout the consultation process.

³ Birmingham City Council must do this in accordance with Part 2 and Schedule 2 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 as amended by the Education Act (EA) 2011 and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 and the statutory guidance "Opening and closing maintained schools' Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers November 2019.

Displaced Pupils:

If the proposal to close the school is approved, Birmingham City Council SENAR service will work closely with the pupils and their families to agree appropriate alternative placements. Birmingham City Council will liaise with schools across the city to ensure a suitable alternative placement for all Hunters Hill College pupils that live in Birmingham. This may be at another special school or an alternative provider and will be based on the needs of the pupils and their EHCP. Where required limited capital funding will be invested by Birmingham City Council to expand provision at other Birmingham schools. For pupils that do not live in Birmingham, SENAR will liaise with the Local Authority where the pupils live to identify a placement that meets their needs, either within Birmingham or another Local Authority, where appropriate. This may be at another special school or an alternative provider and will be based on the needs of the pupils and their EHCP.

A transition plan to support pupils and families with any change in placement will be initiated and the new school will be fully engaged prior to pupils starting in a new school.

Statement regarding: SEN Improvement Test:

“Where existing provision that is recognised by the LA as reserved for pupils with special educational needs is being discontinued, a statement as to how the LA or the governing body (as the case may be) believes the proposals are likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and or range of the educational provision for these children.”

Birmingham City Council considers that the circumstances of Hunters Hill College do not allow for the school to make the necessary improvements identified in the Ofsted report. As part of this consultation on the proposed closure, the Council will be gathering information to evaluate the availability and quality of alternative settings and whether this would lead to improving the quality and range of education for pupils of Hunters Hill College.

Transport

Most pupils currently attending Hunters Hill College are Birmingham citizens, however, 12 pupils live outside Birmingham and are the responsibility of other Local Authorities. A large proportion of pupils currently travel long distances using various forms of transport to reach Hunters Hill College.

Travel distance	Under 5 miles	5-10 miles	10-20 miles	20-30 miles	Over 30 Miles	Total	Pupils who use taxis	Grand Total
Number of Pupils	2	19	33	30	1	85	26	111

Travel times (each way)	Shortest	Average	Longest
Number of Pupils	24 mins	80 mins	158 mins

Birmingham City Council transport arrangements for children with special needs will apply where appropriate, known as Travel Assist. Travel Assist will be fully engaged with any changes to travel plans and arrangements where required.

The aim is to provide a high quality school place for each Birmingham child, as local as possible to their home and community. As part of this consultation, the Council will be gathering information and evaluating the potential impact of the closure proposal on pupils' travel time and distance. This may be an opportunity to significantly reduce the travel time for pupils, which could have a positive impact on wellbeing.

Impact on the Local Community

There would be some impact on the local community. Hunters Hill College is a Birmingham City Council maintained school located outside of the City boundary in Worcestershire. The majority of pupils live in Birmingham and are not local to the school. Most pupils travel a significant distance to school by differing forms of transport. The local community can therefore expect to notice reduced transport and traffic around the school.

The future use of Hunters Hill site (The Cropwood Estate) will be determined by the landowner and does not form part of this consultation.

How will this affect staff?

Birmingham City Council and the IEB of Hunters Hill College recognise that change can be unsettling and that there may be challenges along the way. If the proposal to close the school is approved, this will impact staff at the school. All staff reductions or changes to employment terms and conditions would be subject to full consultation with the trade unions and teaching associations. Birmingham City Council will endeavour to keep staff fully informed.

Will this definitely happen?

No, there is government guidance and a statutory process that Birmingham City Council **must** follow to close a school. Birmingham City Council is consulting in two parts.

Part One: Pre-publication Statutory Consultation

Length of time: 17 weeks (11 term time)

At this stage we are entering consultation during which we want to hear your views on the draft proposal. This part will start on **Monday 22nd June 2020** and will close on **Friday 16th October 2020**.

It is recognised that this initial consultation falls within the current Covid-19 pandemic. The school is currently open for vulnerable pupils and the IEB is committed to ensuring that all governors, staff, pupils and families can be consulted effectively during this unprecedented period. Consultation will be adapted to provide hard copy versions to families, as well as online, and support will be provided to all families to enable responses through their preferred method.

To support full consultation, we have agreed to carry out the consultation over the summer holidays as well as during term time. Comments can be submitted any time during the 17 week consultation period.

All feedback received during the pre-publication consultation period will be considered when deciding whether to proceed to part two.

Part two: Publication and Representation period

Length of time: 4 weeks

This is the second and final part of the consultation. A final proposal document is published incorporating feedback from the pre-publication consultation period. This part allows four weeks for anyone to comment on the proposal.

This part will commence on **Thursday 5th November 2020** and will close on **Thursday 3rd December 2020**.

Decision process:

All comments received during the representation period will be forwarded to the decision maker for final consideration. The decision maker for this proposal is Birmingham City Council's Cabinet. A decision must be made within two months of the end part 2 of the consultation (representation period).

What will happen if this proposal is rejected?

If this proposal is rejected, Hunters Hill College will remain open. Birmingham City Council would need to consider alternative proposals to address the issues at the school and this may require reinstatement of the Directive Academy Order by the Secretary of State.

How can I make my views known?

We welcome comments in writing, by email or via the BeHeard webpage within the 17 week pre- publication consultation period between **22nd June and 16th October 2020**.

Anyone wishing to make comments, support or objections to this proposal may do so through the BeHeard consultation website:

www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/people-1/huntershill-part1

Or in writing to;

Birmingham City Council's School Organisation Team:

Education Infrastructure

PO Box 15843

Birmingham

B2 2RT

Or by emailing: eds.enquiries@birmingham.gov.uk

Please include **Hunters Hill Part 1** in the email subject line for immediate redirection.

A consultation response form can be found at the end of this document and can be used if anyone would like to send their comments in writing by post or by email.

What happens next?

The dates set out below meet the government requirements for us to consult fully with the people affected by the proposal. These dates are subject to change.

Key dates

Action	Date
Statutory Pre-publication consultation	22 nd June 2020 to 16 th October 2020
Statutory notice to be published	5 th November 2020
Beginning of Representation period	5 th November 2020
End of 4-week representation period	3 rd December 2020
Final decision to be made no later than	3 rd February 2021
Changes implemented	31 st August 2021

Consultee List:

- Parents and families of pupils
- Pupils of the school
- Staff at the school
- Members of the Interim Executive Board
- Local Councillors
- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Local Authorities that maintain an EHCP for a pupil of the school
- Teaching Associations and Trade Unions
- Clinical Commissioning Groups (NHS)
- All Birmingham schools
- Parents/families of any pupils at other schools who may be affected by the proposal including those at feeder primary schools.
- Birmingham Parent Carer Forum
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS)
- Birmingham City Council Charities and Trust Committee.

**Hunters Hill College:
Proposal to Close a Community Special School**

Thank you for taking the time to send us your thoughts on these proposals.

Part 1. Consultation Response Form

Please help us to analyse your response by completing the following:

Your name (optional):

Your contact details (optional, if you would like a reply)

Are you in favour of the proposal (please circle)? Yes / No / Don't know

Your interest in the proposal (please indicate one of the below):

Pupil	
Parent	
School Governor	
School Staff	
Local Resident	
Local Councillor	
Member of Parliament	
Other (please specify)	

Please provide your comments to the proposal.