

# Full Proposal Document

**Name of School: Hunters Hill College**

*Proposal to Close a  
Community Special  
School*

## Introduction

### Introduction

The informal consultation on the closure of Hunters Hill College closed on 16th October 2020;

Birmingham City Council would like to thank all those parents, staff and other stakeholders, who sent us their views and comments.

We received 153 responses to the pre-publication consultation, of which;

54 were in favour

89 were opposed

and 10 didn't know or didn't state a preference.

Birmingham City Council, as the Local Authority, in collaboration with the Interim Executive Board (IEB) of the School, has considered all comments received and is moving to the next stage, which is the formal statutory consultation (also known as the representation period).

This full proposal document is an updated version of the pre-publication proposal document.

We are now inviting you to make your comments and views known on this full proposal. Any views you submit during this formal consultation will be included in the final report and forwarded to the decision makers, who for this proposal is the Full Cabinet of Birmingham City Council.

**Please Note:** Comments from the informal consultation stage were for consideration by the Local Authority and will not be included in the final report. However key comments made will be addressed in the FAQ document which is available on the BeHeard website.

If you wish to make your views known to the decision makers in this next formal consultation stage, it is important that you submit these again in writing.

Please see the section entitled "How can I make my views known?"

Birmingham City Council as the Local Authority for Birmingham is now entering into the statutory representation stage of the School Organisation process and is consulting on the proposal to:

- Close Hunters Hill College with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021

## 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)

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 86 pupils on roll at the school. Admissions to the school are managed via the Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review Service (SENAR).

Boarding provision was removed from the school and the residential facilities were closed effective 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020.

## 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 to 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.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *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*

An Interim Executive Board (IEB) was established at the school on 21st February 2020. This is a 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.

Following a Condition Survey carried out by the Local Authority's Technical Advisors (ACIVICO), it has been advised that 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 was predicted to increase to a cumulative total in excess of £1 million by the end of 2020/2021 financial year. As at September 2020, the cumulative forecast deficit for 2020/21 was £1.1 million, indicating that the initial forecast trajectory remained accurate. The cumulative deficit is predicted to grow further and amount to between £1.7 and £2.0 million by the end of the 2021/22 financial year. This is primarily the result of a substantial reduction in actual pupil numbers which is, in part, driven by parental preference. The current total budget for the school is only £2.9 million. This indicates that, even with concerted efforts to reduce expenditure, the budget of the school cannot be balanced.

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

### **What changes are proposed?**

Birmingham City Council (the Local Authority) is consulting with stakeholders on a proposal to close Hunters Hill College.<sup>2</sup>

### **Why do we want to do this?**

Hunters Hill College is not financially viable based on prospective pupil numbers and depleted building stock.

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*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.*

<sup>2</sup> *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.*

<sup>2</sup> *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.*

### **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 has capacity to provide for 135 places for boys with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH). Pupil numbers have been steadily dropping since 2018.

There are currently 86 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
Former 2019/20	9	19	30	26	27	111
Current 2020/21*	0	9	21	29	27	86

(\*data as at November 2020.)

Until a decision is made, parents of children and young people with EHCPs will continue to have the right to request that Hunters Hill College is named in the EHCP in accordance with the Children and Families Act 2014 legislation (and associated Regulations) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice. Parents of any prospective pupils will be notified of the current proposal and consultation process, as potential stakeholders.

The Local Authority and Hunters Hill College will work together to ensure that the needs of existing pupils will continue to be met in accordance with their EHCP until a decision is reached in respect of this proposal. If the proposal to close the school is approved, the Local Authority will work closely with pupils and their families to agree appropriate alternative placements and to make suitable transition arrangements.

### **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 throughout the consultation process. For as long as there are pupils on roll the school will continue to receive practical support from Birmingham City Council so that pupil's needs continue to be met as set out in their EHCP.

#### **Displaced Pupils:**

If the proposal to close the school is approved, Birmingham City Council's SENAR service, together with relevant professionals, will work closely with pupils and their families to agree appropriate alternative placements for existing pupils in Years 8-10. Current Year 11 pupils will be able to complete their education at the school by July 2021. As pupils that live in Birmingham are the responsibility of Birmingham City

Council, SENAR will liaise with appropriate schools and providers to ensure a suitable alternative placement is available for each pupil at Hunters Hill College. This placement may be at another special school or an alternative provider and will be based on the needs of the pupils as set out in their EHCPs.

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 the transition. This is particularly critical for pupils studying for their GCSEs.

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 as set out in their EHCPs.

**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 quality of alternative settings will be evaluated carefully to ensure that pupils receive an improved standard of education that meets their needs as detailed in their EHCP. Council officers are currently carrying out the quality assurance work on the range of educational provision available for children and young people with SEMH.

**Transport:**

Most pupils currently attending Hunters Hill College are Birmingham citizens, however, 10 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

(data as at June 2020)

Birmingham City Council's 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. The statutory process is in two parts. Birmingham City Council has completed the first part of the two-part statutory School Organisation consultation process. The first part ran for 17 weeks from Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 to Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020. The extended period of consultation was felt necessary due to COVID19 restrictions at the time. We received 153 responses during the pre-publication consultation, please see Annex A of this document for the analysis of the pre-publication consultation.

Birmingham City Council, has considered all comments received during the first part of the process, and has taken the decision to move to the second part of the school organisation process which is the statutory representation stage;

### **Statutory Publication and Representation period**

Length of time: 4 weeks

We are now entering into the second and final part of the consultation. This full proposal document is an updated version of the pre-publication proposal document and it includes the analysis from the pre-publication consultation period (see Annex A).

We again invite comments on the proposal.

This part allows four weeks for anyone to comment on the proposal. All comments received during this part will be forwarded to the decision maker who will consider them to inform their decision.

**Please note:** Comments from the informal consultation stage were for consideration by the Local Authority and will not be included in the final report.

If you wish to make your views known to the decision makers, it is important that you submit these during this formal consultation period in writing.

This part will commence on **Thursday 12th November 2020** and will close on **Thursday 10th 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, Birmingham City Council will work with the Department for Education to consider alternative proposals which address the issues at the school including the 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 4-week statutory representation consultation period between **12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and 10<sup>th</sup> December 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-part2](http://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/people-1/huntershill-part2)

Or in writing to Birmingham City Council's Estates Management Team:

Education Infrastructure

PO Box 15843

Birmingham

B2 2RT

Or by emailing: [eds.enquiries@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:eds.enquiries@birmingham.gov.uk)

Please include Hunters Hill Part 2 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	<b>Ended on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020</b>
Statutory notice to be published	12th November 2020
Beginning of Representation period	12th November 2020
End of 4-week representation period	10 <sup>th</sup> December 2020
Final decision to be made no later than	10 <sup>th</sup> February 2021
Changes implemented	31st 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 2. Statutory 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.

Annex A: Hunters Hill College  
Pre-Publication Consultation Analysis

Summary Table

Total number of responses:	153
Number in favour or against the proposal:	
In favour	54
Against	89
Don't know	10
Not indicated	0

Method of response:	
BeHeard (website)	149
Email	4
Letter	0

Respondent by type:	Total	In favour	Opposed	Neither/ don't' know
Pupil	10	3	7	0
Parent	26	14	11	1
School Governor	3	2	0	1
School Staff Member	23	5	18	0
Local Resident	38	13	21	4
Local Councillor	1	1	0	0
Member of Parliament	0	0	0	0
Other, please specify (extended family/community; other organisations; former staff members, former pupils and their families)	46	16	27	3
Not answered	6	n/a	5	1

Comment themes: 129 responses included comments (counted per mention of total responses that include comments*);	Mentions
Concern – Loss/shortage of specialist/unique provision	48
Opinion – positive experience / education is good	32
Concern – pupil wellbeing / transition	30
Opinion – invest in school / buildings / staff	27
Opinion – negative experience / education is poor	24
Opinion – school leadership is poor (historic and/or current)	20
Opinion – school has improved recently	17
Opinion – understand/acknowledge challenges and issues	16
Concern – future use of the site	15
Opinion - positive experience staff	12

Concern – proposal is financial incentive/motivation	12
Opinion – negative experience/behaviour of staff	10
opinion - BCC intervention poor/ineffective	9
Opinion - school could be good again	9
Opinion - buildings / site poor suitability / condition	8
Opinion - negative experience pupils' behaviour	7
Opinion – school deliberately being “run down”/deteriorate /conspiracy	7
Concern - low pupil numbers	6
Concern - pupils doing GCSEs	5
Opinion – school used to be good.	4
Opinion – school far from pupils' homes / transport concerns	4
Concern - school not fully open following COVID lockdown	4
Concern - lack of academy sponsor	3
Concern – parent wanting/waiting for change of placement	2
Opinion - removing residency negative financial impact	2
Opinion - school not financially viable	2
Opinion - positive experience pupil behaviour	2
Opinion - traffic at site not an issue	2

**Analyst notes:**

\*Comment themes - example:

If a total of 10 responses include comments and 3 of those comments mention traffic concerns; the result is: traffic - 3/10. If the same 3 people that mention traffic also mention parking and 3 other comments mention parking, the result is: Parking - 6/10.

Multiple responses: Some individuals have submitted more than one response or identical responses in more than one format; each response is counted in the figures in this summary.