Somerset Council
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Somerset Council

Bishop Henderson Church Of England Primary School and Puffins Nursery

Consultation on a Proposed Change to Bishop Henderson Church of England Primary School in the Academic Year, 2026/27

This document outlines Somerset Council's proposed change to Bishop Henderson Church of England Primary School at Farley Dell in Coleford, and sets out how people can provide their views on the proposal.

Photo of school here...

This is a statutory consultation by Somerset Council in accordance with the DFE's 'Making Significant Changes ('Prescribed Alterations') To Maintained Schools' guidance issued in March 2025

Background

Bishop Henderson Church of England Primary School is a voluntary-controlled primary school located at Farley Dell in Coleford, catering for around 130 pupils.

In partnership with the governing body of the school, Somerset Council is proposing a significant change to the school that could come into effect from September 2026.

The Proposal

It is proposed to create an onsite Special Educational Needs (SEN) Unit for 16 to 18 local children that have an Education, Health and Care Plan, and whose learning needs cannot be met within a mainstream classroom.

Somerset Council and the governors of Bishop Henderson Church of England Primary School believe that the proposed change will better respond to the needs of children and young people who live in the school's locality.

This paper is designed to set out the proposal in full, and explain how people can provide their feedback, and how and when decisions will be made.

The proposed SEN Unit

What is an SEN unit?

An SEN unit comprises of separate classrooms and facilities within a school setting for children that have special educational needs that cannot be met within mainstream classes.

By educating these children within a small specialist environment that has been designed to meet their needs, it is much more likely that their educational potential will be realised.

Why is an SEN unit needed?

There is currently a shortfall of specialist education places in the county. Most of the existing special schools, autism bases and SEN units are already full to capacity. As a result of this, Somerset Council is currently having to purchase high-cost placements from schools in the independent and non-maintained sector. These schools often require children to travel long distances from home.

Somerset Council's ambition is to open a number of new SEN units around the county on mainstream school sites, enabling children with SEN to attend their local school. The Council will be refurbishing and equipping existing rooms within school sites that are not required for the delivery of mainstream provision.

Who will the new school places cater for?

The SEN unit will cater for children that have Education, Health and Care Plans for their learning needs who may otherwise struggle within a mainstream school setting.

How many children will attend the SEN unit, and how will places be allocated?

There are likely to be sixteen to eighteen children educated in the SEN unit at any one time.

Places will be allocated by Somerset Council's Statutory SEND service in consultation with staff at the school. Children placed at the SEN unit will be local children from the Mendip & East Somerset locality.

Will school transport be provided to children attending the new SEN unit?

Yes, if they qualify under Somerset Council's published school transport policy, a copy of which is available to read or download at:

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/home-to-school-transport/

Who will run the new SEN unit?

Specialist teachers will be employed by the school who, along with necessary support staff, will run the new unit.

How will the new SEN unit be funded?

The Council received capital funding from government to increase the number of 'high needs' places. Further details are available from this website -

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/the-local-offer/education-and-learning-support/somersets-plan-for-high-needs-provision-capital-allocation/

Somerset Council will provide the school with the necessary capital funding to refurbish and equip unused rooms to create the SEN unit.

When the new unit is open, the school will also receive high needs revenue funding for each of the new places which will cover the unit's ongoing operating costs.

Will the arrangement affect other schools in the area?

It is unlikely that other state-funded schools will be affected as there are so few vacancies at special schools in the county.

When will the SEN unit open?

The SEN unit would open in the 2026/27 academic year. Pupils are likely to be admitted to the unit from September 2026.

Stakeholder Consultation

What feedback is being requested in the consultation?

Somerset Council wishes to know whether people would support the proposal, and whether stakeholders have any feedback they would wish to be considered.

Who can respond to this consultation?

Any member of the public is welcome to submit their comments.

Somerset Council would particularly wish to hear from local stakeholders likely to be affected by the proposal, or anyone with an interest in education provision in the area.

Can I object to the proposal?

Yes, you can object or comment on the proposal.

What if I require additional information before providing my feedback?

Please contact the school if you require any additional information before submitting your feedback.

Alternatively, if you have any questions for Somerset Council, please contact the following officer:

Lewis Andrews
SEND Sufficiency Manager
E-mail: Lewis.Andrews@somerset.gov.uk
Tel: (01823) 356924

We will endeavour to respond promptly to any questions received.

How long does the consultation run?

The consultation period is from Monday 23 February to Thursday 02 April 2026 inclusive.

When is the deadline for submitting views?

The deadline is 5.00pm on Thursday 02 April 2026.

Please note that any views received after this time may not be able to be taken into account.

How can I provide my views?

Please submit your views using the following MS Forms questionnaire at the following website:

https://forms.office.com/e/WcEADgA6Zg

Alternatively, if you have a smart device, here is a QR code:



Will you respond to my feedback?

Individual queries received during the consultation period will receive an acknowledgment although will not normally receive a response.

What will happen to my feedback?

All responses to this consultation will be collated and presented to the decision maker at the end of the consultation period for consideration.

What happens after the consultation?

The decision maker will need to consider all feedback, and decide whether or not to implement the proposal.

The timescale will be as follows:

Deadline for feedback	Thursday 02 April 2026
Consideration of feedback	Monday 20 April to Friday 24 April 2026
Final decision is taken	May 2026 (exact date to be confirmed)

Who will take the decision?

The decision will be taken by Cllr Heather Shearer in her capacity as Lead Member for Children, Families and Education.

What will the Lead Member decide?

There are four possible options available to the decision-maker.

The Lead Member can decide to:

- reject the proposal
- approve it without modification
- approve it with some modifications, or
- approve it subject to certain conditions being met.

How will the Lead Member arrive at a decision?

The Lead Member will need to balance the needs of local children and young people with any views received during the consultation process. She will not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view, but will afford the greatest weight to responses from stakeholders likely to be most affected by the proposal.

How will the decision outcome be made available?

A copy of the consultation report will be appended to the eventual key decision paper which will be published online at http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/

Please contact Somerset Council if you require any assistance accessing the decision. The e-mail to use is Lewis.Andrews@somerset.gov.uk

We will also confirm the position on the school's website.

Thank you for considering our proposal, and we look forward to hearing your views.