

Consultation on a proposal to change the age range of Honiton Community College from 11-18 to 11-16 through the phased closure of the Sixth Form

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Proposal and variation to admission arrangements

The Trustees of the Ted Wragg Trust are consulting on a proposal to change the age range of Honiton Community College from 11-18 to 11-16 through the phased closure of the Sixth Form. The proposal being consulted upon is as follows:

- Students currently in Year 13 will remain at Honiton Community College's Sixth Form to complete their studies.
- The Sixth Form would close with effect from 31 August 2025.

There will be no change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the secondary school which will remain at 150.

Background

The decision to undertake a consultation towards a phased closure of the Sixth Form has not been taken lightly. Honiton Community College is a unique and proud school serving the community of Honiton and surrounding areas. We provide a caring and supportive environment in which all our students can achieve their full potential, both academically and socially.

This proposed change will provide the financial stability needed to maintain and enhance our current 11 – 16 provision, allowing us to retain and expand the breadth of our curriculum provision at KS3 and KS4.

It will enable us to keep class sizes at KS3 & KS4 at an optimum number and ensure we are able to deliver great teaching to these students. By doing so our students will achieve well and we will be able to increasingly provide them with the qualifications that will enable them to take their chosen next steps, and take advantage of the wide range of post-16 options that already exist in the local area.

As a school, we have tried to increase recruitment into our Post 16 provision. Over the last academic year, to maintain a broad post-16 offer for our students and support recruitment, we partnered with Sidmouth College for the September 2024 intake. This joint delivery route allowed students to study one or two A-Levels at Honiton Community College and the remainder at Sidmouth College, allowing us to maintain a broader offer. Pastoral care and the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) would remain at Honiton Community College, and free transport provided between the two sites. However, following extensive engagement with the school community, no students chose to begin Year 12 this year.

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Despite our efforts to recruit students into our Post 16 provision, the number of students opting to remain and join Honiton Community College has fallen significantly. Currently we have 38 students in Year 13 and 0 in Year 12; with average class sizes of 7.6 students in Year 13.

Rationale for proposal

Nationally the post-16 landscape has changed significantly in recent years with the growth of T Levels and vocational courses, and is continuing to evolve. It has become increasingly difficult for provisions like ours to offer the broad curriculum that is available at other larger local schools or colleges, and the range of specialist options that students are looking to study. As outlined in the table below, numbers have been reducing over time as our Post 16 provision looks to compete with other larger local College provision.

For context HCC's numbers in post 16 are shared below:

Year	Year 12 starters
2013	74
2014	61
2015	37
2016	41
2017	52
2018	29
2019	23
2020	45
2021	27
2022	22
2023	40
2024	0

Sadly, retaining a post-16 provision at Honiton Community College is not financially viable. There are insufficient students enrolling and there is no evidence base to suggest this will improve in future despite a significant recruitment effort in the past 12 months and engagement with the school community.

Reducing student numbers and the need to offer a broad curriculum, allowing students to pursue their preferred subject combinations, further exacerbates this issue and has resulted in non-viable class sizes.

In the 2023/24 academic year, we ran four courses; Art, Photography, Chemistry and Applied Science with only one student, and this year within the Year 13 curriculum offer a number of subjects have been running with only 2 or 3 students. As outlined this not only has significant financial implications but also hinders the student's educational and enrichment experiences, as larger classes allow for a wider range of teaching and learning strategies.

Research conducted by the Isos Partnership on behalf of the Department for Education states that A-level classes need at least 11.7 pupils to make them financially viable. The DfE guidance states the following:

“The proposed sixth form is strongly expected to meet the following criteria:

- provide places for a minimum of 200 students
- either directly or through partnership, offer a minimum of 15 A level (or equivalent) subjects and
- have an average class size of at least 15, unless there is a clear educational argument to run smaller classes – for example to build the initial credibility of courses with a view to increasing class size in future.

We currently have 38 students on roll in Post 16 with an average class size of 7.6 students. Historically, the College has heavily subsidized the Sixth Form using funds from the 11-16 provision. However, due to the current challenging financial climate in education, this is no longer sustainable. Continuing to do so would significantly and negatively impact the educational offerings for our younger students.

Honiton Sixth Form costs last year were approximately £600k against an income of £297k. Honiton’s overall budget excluding Sixth Form costs this year is already significantly in deficit, due to a decrease in real terms funding from Devon County Council and the budgetary pressures of managing a relatively small school.

Local context

Before taking the difficult decision to consult on closure of its post 16, Honiton Community College have sought to increase uptake in their post 16 provision and to consider what a longer-term sustainable model could look like. In order to keep a broad curriculum offer and a breadth of enrichment activities, the College partnered with Sidmouth College during the 23/24 academic year to offer students the potential of a joint delivery route which gave students a broader offer than could be accommodated at Honiton Community College alone, however only 3 students selected this as their first-choice option.

In the Summer term 23/24, the School held information sessions, spoke to current students and sent a survey to all Year 9 and Year 10 students to help gauge interest in future years to plan for 2025 entry and beyond to help inform our next steps.

Following a family information evening and student assemblies held in early July, Honiton Community College shared a survey with year 10 (2025) and year 9 (2026) students and their families in a letter home to all families.

All attending students completed the survey to ensure the school was aware of the intentions of the entire cohort, and the outcomes were as follows:

- 22 year 10 students indicated they would want to attend the single site model. When looking at their preferred options and when mapping the subjects into options

blocks to accommodate the student preferences, it indicates a class size for 2025 of 5.4.

- 39 year 9 students wish to attend the single site model. Honiton Community College completed the same mapping activity for option blocks. 32 students would all get their first choices, with a further 7 who would need to seek an alternative choice. Based on the current choices the average class size would be 6.4. When the additional alternative 7 students (if they agree to pick a different choice) are included that would bring that figure up to 8.4.

We are aware that given the age of the 2026 cohort, it is likely that there would be some natural drop out as students get older and have an opportunity to visit other local Post 16 offerings.

Locally others have been in a similar position, Axe Valley Sixth Form closed in 2017 and [Clyst Vale consulted](#) to close their Sixth Form in the Summer term 23/24.

Impact on Students

Under this proposal, the College will remain fully committed to delivering a high-quality Post 16 provision for our current Year 13 students until they have completed their courses, ensuring the very best outcomes and destinations for these students.

If the closure was implemented, we would strive to improve educational standards and outcomes for the majority of students at the College by targeting our resources more effectively towards Years 7-11

Students who are currently in Year 11 and therefore looking for Post 16 options starting in Sept 2025 will have a choice across a wide range of other local Post 16 providers who offer the same or a greater breadth of provision currently on offer at Honiton Community College.

Other Post 16 providers include:

- Sidmouth College – Ofsted rated ‘Good’
- The King’s School – Ofsted rated ‘Outstanding’
- Colyton Grammar School – Ofsted rated ‘Outstanding’
- Exmouth Community College – Ofsted rated ‘Good’
- The Woodroffe School – Ofsted rated ‘Good’
- Exeter College - Ofsted rated ‘Outstanding’
- Bickton College – Ofsted rated ‘Good’
- Richard Huish College – Ofsted rated ‘Outstanding’

We will provide our students with the best guidance on their post-16 options, ensuring they are supported in making informed decisions about the most suitable pathways and providers.

By offering impartial information, advice, and guidance, we help students navigate their choices effectively. As part of their career education, students are directed to various open days and events hosted by different FE providers and participate in several careers events.

Impact on staff

Our staff teams are so important to us and our Post 16 team are a valued part of our HCC community. We are committed to retaining the great staff working at our college. The proposal to close the 6th form provision would lead to a reduction in curriculum demand across a range of subjects. However we are confident that we can reduce the need to make staffing cuts through continuous review of our resources, this includes careful consideration of whether to re-advertise vacancies following resignations. We will work closely with our family of schools across our Trust and this will also provide wider opportunities for us to retain our valued colleagues.

If this is not possible and the loss of post-16 funding in addition to the reduction in curriculum demand leads to redundancies then the Head Teacher would work in close partnership with our Trust HR and Trade Unions to manage this risk, should it arise. The closure of the Post 16 provision will inevitably create uncertainty regarding job security and potentially impact staff morale.

Additionally, as the Post 16 provision has been an integral part of the College and the wider community, all staff will likely feel a sense of loss, which could affect the overall sense of community and belonging. To mitigate these impacts, we will maintain open and transparent communication, ensuring staff understand the reasons for the closure, the timeline, and the support available. Furthermore, staff will be actively involved in the transition process, giving them a sense of agency and control over the changes.

Consultation and decision-making

The consultation will run from 24th September 2024. The Trust will be consulting widely, including with:

- Honiton Community College parents and carers
- Local Devon County Council Members including the Lead Member for children
- Local MPs
- Relevant Trade Unions
- Devon County Council
- All primary and secondary schools within 10 miles
- Schools includes those within 3 miles of the border into Somerset.
- Other Councils: town, parish, district and Somerset.

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- Early years settings within 10 miles
- CofE and RC Diocese as there may be an impact on schools with a religious character
- Local FE Colleges

The Trustees of the Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust will meet following the end of the consultation period to consider all responses made to the consultation. A decision will then be made as to whether to apply to the Department for Education's Regions Group for this 'significant change'. The Regions Group will make the final decision on the proposal. Consultation responses received will form part of the submission to the DfE Regions Group.

Consultation drop-in session

We will be hosting a community consultation drop-in session on Monday 7th October between 4pm – 6pm at Honiton Community College where colleagues from the school and Trust will be available to answer any questions. We would ask that you confirm your attendance in advance by contacting info@tedwraggtrust.co.uk

Indicative timescale

Subject to agreement at each stage, below is an indicative timeline.

When?	What
24 th September to 15 th October	Launch Consultation
w/c 21 st October	The Trustees will consider all the consultation responses received and make a decision as to whether to proceed with the proposal.
To be confirmed	Submission of significant change application to the Department for Education
To be confirmed	Decision made by DfE Regions Group South West
Closure of Sixth Form, if approved. 31 st August 2025	Implementation, if proposal approved.

How to respond

We are an **ambitious** and **inclusive** Trust of schools **strengthening communities** through **excellent education**.

Your views are very important to the Trust. Please respond to the consultation by the closing date of midnight on the 15th October 2024. You can respond either by:

- Emailing: honitonconsultation@tedwraggtrust.co.uk
- Please mark your email 'Consultation on Honiton Sixth Form' Or by post to;
- Clerk to Governors, Consultation on Honiton Sixth Form, Ted Wragg Multi-Academy Trust, Cranbrook Education Campus, Tillhouse Road, Cranbrook, EX5 7EE. All responses to the consultation will be shared with the DfE's Regions Group South West to inform their decision-making.

We will not send individual responses to any specific points made.