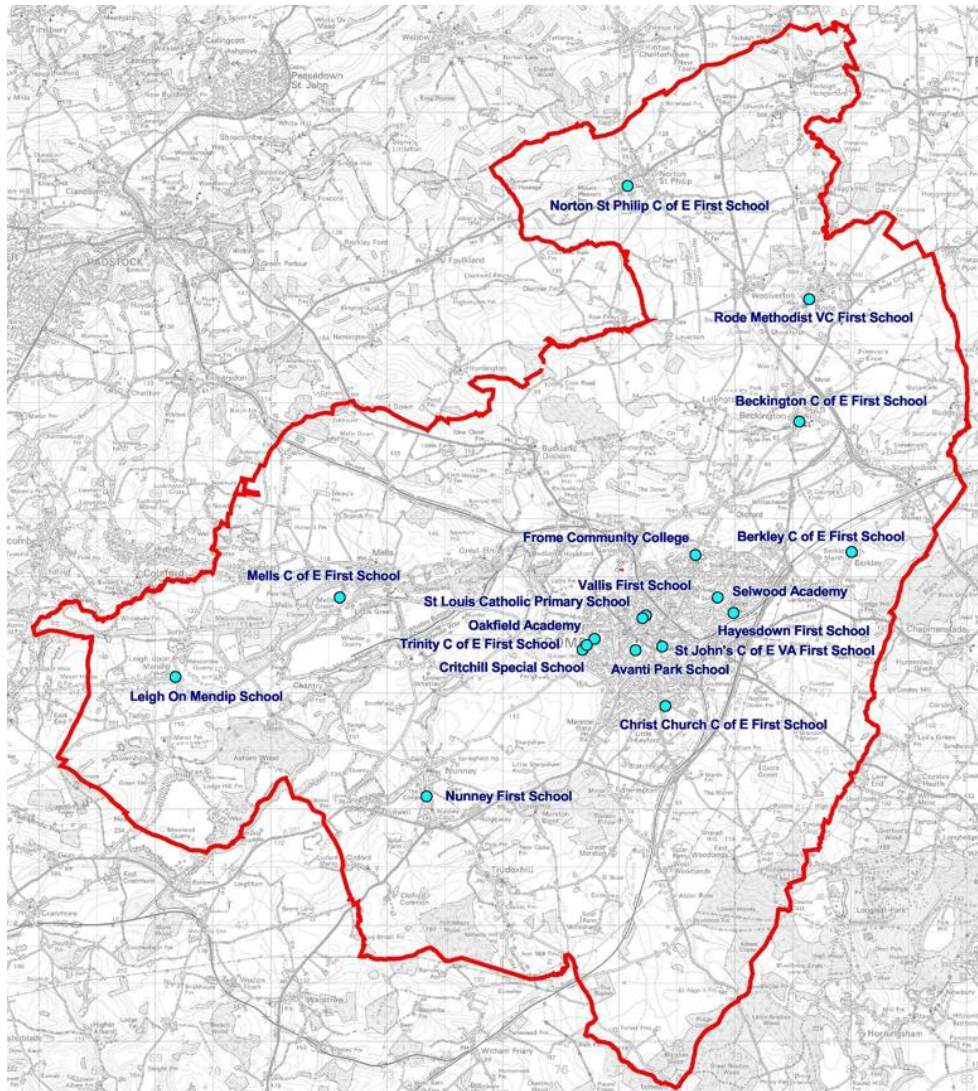


Formal Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Education Structures in Frome

This document outlines key local education stakeholders' joint proposed changes to the Education Structures in Frome

State-Maintained Schools in Frome



Background

Over the last 2 years, all key educational stakeholders have been exploring the possibility of moving to a two-tier education system in Frome.

These discussions have been thoughtful, collaborative and rooted in our commitment to providing the very best opportunities for all children in Frome.

As part of these discussions, we have been looking closely at the potential benefits of a two-tier system, which may include:

- Improved continuity in learning, with fewer transitions, reducing disruption at ages where children are developing socially, emotionally, and academically.
- Stronger curriculum progression, enabling schools to plan more consistently from early years through to GCSEs and A levels.
- Enhanced pastoral support, as children spend longer within the same school community, allowing for deeper relationships and more personalised guidance.
- More efficient use of resources, helping schools to align staffing, facilities, and specialist provision more effectively.
- A more cohesive education system for the whole town, with clearer pathways and stronger collaboration between schools.
- An improved overall educational experience for pupils, with greater stability, access to broader opportunities, and more consistent support.
- A likely reduction in the number of pupils leaving Frome to be educated elsewhere, as a strengthened local system meets the needs of more families.
- Greater educational choice for pupils and families across the full age range.
- The possibility of additional specialist and Alternative Provision (AP) – in current buildings, as capacity is unlocked.

It is also recognised that change, particularly significant ones such as this, can be disruptive, even if managed carefully.

This has been acknowledged throughout our discussions to date and will be a key consideration if we move forwards, with all stakeholders committed to mitigating, as best we can, the potential impact on children, their families, staff and wider stakeholders.

Between 23rd February and 20th March 2026, the Key Education Stakeholders, listed below, held an informal consultation, asking the community a simple question:

Would you support a significant change to the education structures in Frome, by moving to a two-tier system?

We said the system, in high-level terms, would see two secondary schools fed by up to 15 primary schools, with additional provision for local children with SEND.

We said the new model would be implemented for the 2028/29 academic year (September 2028).

That informal consultation received just under 800 responses, with 70 people attending two drop-in sessions on 11th March.

Of those that responded:

- 71% said they would support a move to a two-tier system,
- 22% said they would not support a move to a two-tier system,
- 7% said they weren't sure

Respondents also told us they supported the Proposal because:

- *“Children staying longer in familiar, nurturing primary environments”*
- *“Alignment with national systems”*
- *“Improved curriculum progression”*
- *“More secondary-school choice”*
- *“Reduced anxiety for SEND pupils”*
- *“More efficient use of resources”*

And those that didn't support the Proposal said:

- *“Existing system works well”*
- *“Children benefit from transitioning at 9 and 13 rather than one ‘big jump’ at 11”*
- *“Middle schools provide specialist teaching”*
- *“No strong evidence that two-tier improves outcomes”*
- *“Concern that proposals are driven by financial priorities, not educational need”*

But that if we proceed, we would need to provide:

- *“Detailed transition plan, especially for those already in the system”*
- *“Transparent capital investment commitments”*
- *“Clear map of the proposed school structure”*
- *“Modelling of catchments and transport”*
- *“Plans for SEND and specialist provision”*

In light of the views expressed during that informal consultation, it is now our intention to formally consult on a detailed Proposal.

The Rationale for Change

While there are a number of expected benefits (listed above) that we would expect a change in Frome's education structures to facilitate, there is an emerging challenge regarding sufficiency.

While discussions about a potential change to Frome's education structures have progressed over the last 2 years, the area's [school-age population](#), particularly at the lower-end of the system, has continued to reduce and is projected to keep doing so in the future, primarily due to a prolonged period of falling birth rates.

The Proposal, set out below, may also mitigate the impact of changing demographics, while ensuring each community in the Frome area, is able to maintain a thriving school, whilst the broader needs of Frome's children can be met in provision suited to their needs, locally.

To do this, we are proposing to:

- Adjust capacity (increase and reduce) in some mainstream schools to ensure places are where they are needed most.
- Repurpose surplus mainstream accommodation to create provision for children with SEND, so their needs can be met locally.
- Utilise capital grant funding and developer contributions to meet all capital investment costs.

The Proposal

The Question

At this formal stage, we are asking the community this question:

Having considered the detailed Proposal that has been provided for review, would you support a significant change to the education structures in Frome, by moving to a two-tier system?

Summary of Proposed Changes

The system, in high-level terms, would see two secondary schools fed by 14 primary schools, with additional provision for local children with SEND.

This new model would be implemented for the 2028/29 academic year (September 2028).

Detailed Changes

The implications of the proposed change to a two-tier education are set out below, school by school:

Secondary Schools

Frome College

Change from Upper to Secondary – September 2028.

Published Admission Number (PAN) reduces to 240 with a notional capacity of 1200 places. This reduction in PAN only affects children joining the school in NCY 7 in September 2028 and beyond.

Post-16 capacity for 400 students.

Rationale: To further enhance transition and ensure pupils have a longer time period to fully settle into secondary school education, leading to improved outcomes at all levels.

Selwood Academy

Change from Middle to Secondary – September 2028.

PAN reduces to 150 with a notional capacity of 750 places.

This reduction in PAN only affects children joining the school in NCY 7 in September 2028 and beyond.

Rationale: Selwood Academy has more secondary-style facilities than Oakfield Academy (all-weather pitch for example) and already has capacity to meet the demand of the number of pupils and a wider curriculum offer.

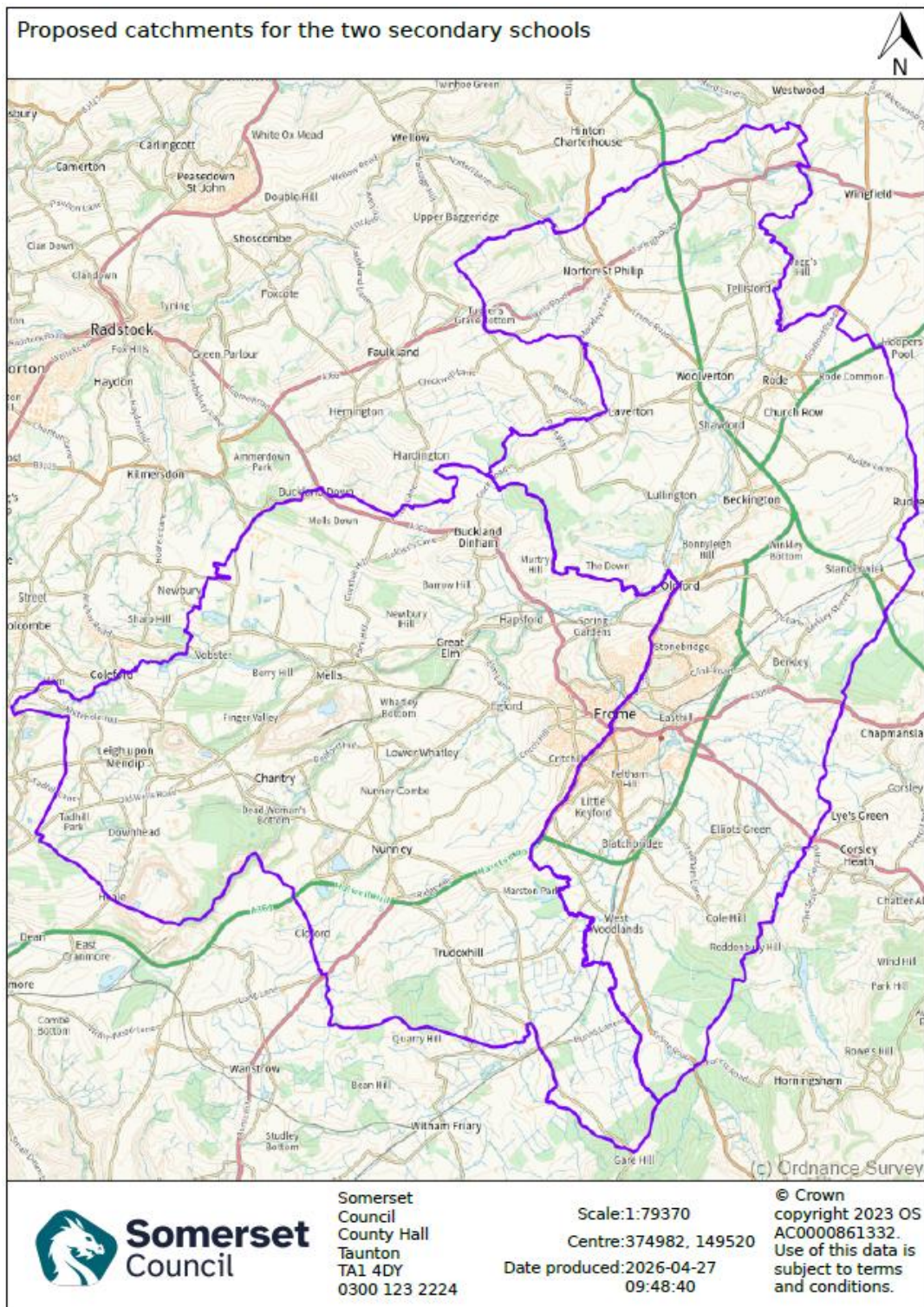
Being located near to Frome College is helpful, as there can be shared curriculum opportunities and potentially new co-located and shared facilities.

Catchment Areas

It is proposed that the two secondary schools use the catchment areas of the existing middle schools.

Frome College would adopt the catchment of the existing Oakfield Academy and predominantly serve the West of the Frome area, while Selwood Academy would retain its existing catchment and serve the East of the Frome area.

It must be noted that there is likely to be space in either school to cater for parental preference and for many children living in the town, both schools will be within statutory walking distance.



As an indication, this is how the proposed primary schools below will be located, by secondary catchment:

Frome College

- Trinity First School
- Leigh on Mendip Primary School
- Mells First School
- Nunney First School
- Avanti Park
- Vallis First School
- St Louis Primary School
- St John's First School

Selwood Academy

- Norton St Philip & Rode First Schools
- Beckington First School
- Berkley First School
- Hayesdown First School
- Christ Church First School

Note: *Where catchments are used in a secondary school's Admissions Arrangements, this is based on home address, not the primary school the child is attending.*

Travel Assistance & Transport

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly. This includes arranging travel to and from school, meeting the costs and accompanying their child as necessary.

In some cases, Somerset Council has a legal obligation to provide suitable free school travel and that travel assistance will be provided in the most cost effective and appropriate way for the child's needs.

Section 508B of The Act places a duty on Local Authorities in England relating to home to school travel arrangements for 'eligible' children which are defined under schedule 35B of The Act 1996 as:

- Children who attend schools beyond the statutory walking distance
- Children whose route to school is deemed to be unsafe
- Children from low-income families
- Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND)

For children who attend schools beyond the statutory walking distance, the Local Authority provides free travel assistance either to the nearest qualifying school with available places, even if the school is within another local authority area or to the catchment school for the child's home address. Statutory walking distance is:

- over 2 miles from the home address for children under 8 years of age
- over 3 miles for children who are 8 years of age or over

Primary Schools

Avanti Park

Change from Primary/Middle to Primary – September 2028.

PAN remains at 60 with a notional capacity of 420 places.

All children expected to be in NCYs 7 & 8 in September 2028 will need to apply for a place at a secondary school.

Beckington First School

Change from First to Primary – September 2028.

PAN remains at 15 with a capacity of 105 places.

Children on roll in August 2028 are expected to remain at the school until the end of NCY 6.

Berkley First School

Change from First to Primary – September 2028.

PAN remains at 15 with a capacity of 105 places.

Children on roll in August 2028 are expected to remain at the school until the end of NCY 6.

Christ Church First School

Change from First to Primary – September 2028.

PAN remains at 15 with a capacity of 105 places.

Children on roll in August 2028 are expected to remain at the school until the end of NCY 6.

Creation of a 32-place, primary-phase specialist satellite provision, for local children with autism and social communication related needs, linked to The Mendip School.

All capital costs related to the creation of the specialist satellite will be met from the Council's High Needs Places Capital Allocation.

Hayesdown First School

Change from First to Primary – September 2028.

PAN remains at 60 and the school's capacity will increase to 420 places.

Children on roll in August 2028 are expected to remain at the school until the end of NCY 6.

The capital cost of expanding the school will be met by using developer contributions, secured for this purpose.

Rationale: There is sufficient catchment demand for places at this school to sustain a PAN of 60 children. The only way to do this is to increase the capacity of the school to 420 places, by adding 4 additional classrooms and supporting facilities.

This will be funded by received and expected developer contributions, which have already been agreed and are intended for this purpose and will be delivered ahead of September 2028.

Leigh on Mendip Primary School

No changes proposed.

Mells First School

Change from First to Primary – September 2028.

PAN remains at 15 with a capacity of 105 places.

Children on roll in August 2028 are expected to remain at the school until the end of NCY 6.

Norton St Philip & Rode First Schools (Federated)

Change from First to a split-site Primary – September 2028.

PAN reduces to 20 (combined) with a capacity of 140 places across the two sites.

Children on roll in August 2028 are expected to remain at the school until the end of NCY 6.

Nunney First School

Change from First to Primary – September 2028.

PAN remains at 15 with a capacity of 105 places.

Children on roll in August 2028 are expected to remain at the school until the end of NCY 6.

St John's First School

Change from First to Primary – September 2028.

PAN reduces to 30 with a capacity of 210 places.

Children on roll in August 2028 are expected to remain at the school until the end of NCY 6.

St Louis Primary School

No changes proposed.

Trinity First School

Change from First to Primary – September 2028

PAN remains at 60 with a capacity of 420 places but will be able to increase to 630 places, if demand requires. Being located next to Oakfield and in the same Trust, the two schools can effectively amalgamate and utilise the buildings on the Oakfield site for expansion.

Children on roll in August 2028 are expected to remain at the school until the end of NCY 6.

Vallis First School

Change from First to Primary – September 2028.

PAN reduces to 30 and a capacity of 210 places.

Children on roll in August 2028 are expected to remain at the school until the end of NCY 6.

Note: Where the first / primary schools listed above have an existing catchment, these will remain in place. Any school that does not have an existing catchment area, will continue to operate without one.

Specialist Provision

Critchill School

No changes proposed.

Oakfield Middle School

Any surplus capacity not used by a newly formed Trinity Primary School, would accommodate a new specialist provision for SEMH pupils in Key Stages 2-4.

The mechanics of this proposed change are being worked through with the Department for Education, but it could be a new school or a satellite provision or expansion of an existing special school.

Change from Middle to Special.

Mainstream provision will cease in August 2028, at the end of the 2027/28 academic year.

Children in NCY 5 in August 2028 will automatically transfer to Trinity Primary School for NCY 6 in September 2028, accessing accommodation on the Oakfield site.

Children in NCY 6 and NCY 7 in August 2028 will automatically be allocated a place at Frome College for NCY 7 and NCY 8 in September 2028, although parents can apply for any other school, should they wish to.

In September 2029, following a period of capital works, the Oakfield site will reopen as a primary-phase (Key Stage 2) and secondary-phase (Key Stages 3 & 4) specialist provision for 60 local children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) related needs. Numbers at the school will build slowly over time.

All capital costs related to the creation of the specialist provision will be met from the Council's High Needs Places Capital Allocation.

Impact on Children & Families

It is recognised that this exercise will be unsettling for some children and their families and the Key Education Stakeholders are committed to supporting those that need it, through the consultation process.

Should there be a positive response to the consultation, which allows the Proposal to be implemented, the Key Education Stakeholders will continue to support children and their families transition to those new arrangements.

Staffing Implications

It is also noted that there are likely to be significant staffing implications across the schools in the Frome system.

All of the Key Education Stakeholders involved in this joint consultation know that staff are our greatest and most valuable resource.

Ultimately, across Frome's education system, there will be the same number of children requiring teaching and support and potentially a new provision for SEND pupils and the Key Education Stakeholders are committed collectively, to maximise the opportunities for redeployment within Frome's education system.

While we would expect most staff to remain in their current schools, there is the possibility of some movement, agreed in negotiation with individual staff members.

All staff would be fully protected and their terms and conditions preserved.

Additionally, we anticipate that there will be a number of new opportunities for colleagues, who wish to explore them.

Should there be a positive response to this detailed Formal Consultation, we will also act to reassure and protect staff in the interim period of change.

Community Consultation

Timeline

The proposed timeline for the Formal Consultation is:

Formal Consultation Commences	01 June 2026
Formal Consultation Closes	10 July 2026
Feedback is considered	13-31 July 2026

Key Education Stakeholders

The following key education stakeholders, jointly consulting on this matter are:

- Avanti Schools Trust
- Bath & Wells Multi Academy Trust
- Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership
- Somerset Council
- The Dunstan Catholic Educational Trust
- The Partnership Trust

In addition, the Anglican, Catholic and Methodist diocesan bodies have been engaged in discussions to date and will be formally consulted with, in line with statutory processes.

What feedback is being requested in the consultation?

All key education stakeholders wish to know whether people would support the Formal Proposal and hear any other relevant feedback they would wish to be considered.

Who can respond to this consultation?

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

Stakeholders would particularly wish to hear from respondents 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 us if you require any additional information before submitting your feedback. The e-mail to use is educationplaces@somerset.gov.uk

We will endeavour to respond promptly to any questions received.

How long does the consultation run? When is the deadline for submitting views?

The consultation period is from Monday 01 June 2026 to Friday 10 July 2026

The deadline is 5.00pm on Friday 10 July 2026.

Any views received after this time may not be able to be taken into account.

There are also six, in-person, one-hour Q&A sessions where the Formal Proposal will be presented by education stakeholders:

- Tuesday 9th June 2026, at 1400, 1600 & 1800 at Frome Town Hall, Christchurch Street West, Frome, BA11 1EB
- Wednesday 17th June 2026, at 1400, 1600 & 1800 at Frome Town Hall, Christchurch Street West, Frome, BA11 1EB

There is no need to book to attend any of the Q&A sessions.

How can I provide my views?

Please complete the questionnaire at the following website:

<https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/frome-education-structures-consultation-part-2/>

Will you respond to my feedback?

Individual queries received during the consultation period will receive an acknowledgment and/or response and will be considered with all other responses.

What will happen to my feedback?

All responses to this consultation will be collated and considered by key education stakeholders at the end of the consultation period.

What happens after the consultation?

Key education stakeholders will consider the findings of this consultation and if they indicate there is community support for a move to a two-tier education system, key education stakeholders will collectively progress governance processes with the relevant bodies.

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