Somerset Council
County Hall, Taunton
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Somerset Council

Ofsted Outstanding Provider

" Pupils love coming to this school. It is a place where they thrive and blossom "

Fiveways School

Specialists in Communication and Interaction

Formal Consultation on a Change of Age Range at Fiveways Special School in Yeovil

Somerset Council is proposing to change the age range of Fiveways Special School from 4-**19** years to 4-**18** years.

This document explains the proposal, the reasons why it is being considered, the feedback received during the informal consultation and how you can have your say before a decision is made.

No decision has yet been made on whether to implement the proposal.

This proposal is being published in accordance with the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and the Department for Education's statutory guidance, *Making Significant Changes ("Prescribed Alterations") to Maintained Schools* issued in October 2026.

What Is Being Proposed?

Fiveways School is a community special school located at Victoria Road in Yeovil providing an education for children and young people aged 4 to 19 with often complex special educational needs and disabilities.

Although young people are required to participate in education or training until age 18, schools may have different registered age ranges. Fiveways School is currently registered to provide education for young people up to age 19.

Somerset Council and the school's governing body are proposing a change of age range at the school. The proposal would reduce the school's registered age range from 4-**19** years to 4-**18** years.

This document explains the proposal, summarises the outcome of an earlier informal consultation and sets out how interested parties can provide comments, objections or expressions of support during the statutory consultation period.

Who would be affected by the proposal?

Should the proposal be approved, the change would take effect from the start of the 2027/28 academic year on 1st September 2027 and would affect future cohorts of young people attending the school.

This would mean that:

- The school would no longer operate a Year 14 cohort
- Transition arrangements would be put in place for affected young people and their families.
- Any necessary changes to EHC Plans would be managed through the annual review process.

Young people who are currently in Year 14 will not be affected by the proposal, as they will have completed their education at Fiveways School before the proposed implementation date.

For pupils in other year groups, the proposal would mean completing their education at Fiveways Special School at the end of Year 13 rather than Year 14.

The first young people affected would be those who are currently in Year 13 and would otherwise have progressed to Year 14 in September 2027.

No decision has yet been made on whether to implement the proposal.

Why Is This Being Proposed?

Somerset Council and Fiveways School have reviewed how young people move from school into adult life and the increasing demand for specialist school places across Somerset.

One reason for considering this change is that transition at age 18 aligns more closely with the point at which young people legally become adults. It may enable adult education, social care, health and community services to become involved at an earlier stage and support a more coordinated transition into adulthood.

The proposal could also allow young people to move earlier into education and training environments specifically designed to support preparation for adulthood.

Somerset Council continues to experience increasing demand for specialist school places, particularly for children and young people of statutory school age.

Although the school's sixth-form provision is located in separate accommodation, it remains part of Fiveways School's overall capacity.

The school's capacity is 100 pupils and there are currently 106 pupils on roll. The sixth-form accommodation cannot accommodate unlimited growth alongside the increasingly complex needs of the young people attending the provision.

The proposal is therefore intended to support effective preparation for adulthood whilst helping to ensure that accommodation and resources remain appropriate and sustainable in responding to demand for specialist places.

Any young person affected by the proposal would continue to receive transition support to help them move on to appropriate post-18 education, training and adult services.

The Council recognises that some parents and carers consider the additional Year 14 to be beneficial for certain young people. This proposal seeks to balance those considerations against the potential benefits identified above.

Before publishing this proposal, Somerset Council considered retaining the school's current age range of 4-19 years. It concluded that it was appropriate to publish the proposal and invite representations before reaching a final decision.

Informal Consultation

Prior to this statutory consultation, Somerset Council undertook an informal consultation with parents, carers and members of staff to seek their views on the proposal.

A total of six responses were received.

All six responses were submitted by parents or carers of pupils attending Fiveways Special School. Somerset Council is grateful to the six people who took the time to respond and share their views.

None of the six respondents supported the proposal.

Four of the six respondents provided written comments which have been considered. A summary of the main themes raised is set out below.

What issues were raised in the informal consultation?

Respondents expressed concern that some young people may lose a familiar and trusted educational environment before suitable adult provision is in place.

The responses received raised a number of common themes which included:

- Concerns that reducing the age range may increase pressure on families and carers
- Concerns about the availability of appropriate post-18 provision
- Concerns regarding transition into adult services
- The importance of Year 14 in providing continuity, routine and preparation for adulthood
- Concerns that some young people with complex needs would benefit from remaining at school until age 19
- Suggestions that decisions should be made on an individual basis rather than through a change to the school's age range.

The Council's Response to the Issues Raised

Somerset Council understands that parents and carers want young people to move on from school at the right time, with appropriate support and suitable opportunities in place for adulthood.

It also recognises that many families value the support, routine and relationships developed during a young person's time at Fiveways School. Concerns about leaving a familiar school environment and moving into new services were reflected in a number of responses received during the informal consultation.

Preparation for Adulthood

A number of respondents expressed concerns regarding transition into adulthood and the availability of suitable post-18 pathways.

The Council recognises these concerns and, before making a decision, will consider whether appropriate post-18 education, training and support arrangements are available for affected young people.

This may include further education, specialist college provision, adult social care provision and other individually planned education and support arrangements.

Respondents also highlighted the value of Year 14 in providing stability, routine and preparation for adulthood. These views will be considered alongside the educational rationale for the proposal.

Individual Needs

Some respondents felt that decisions about when a young person leaves school should be made on an individual basis.

Decisions about individual support and future placements would continue to be considered through annual reviews and each young person's EHC Plan.

The Council recognises the challenges faced by families caring for young people with significant additional needs. Transition planning is intended to involve education, health and social care professionals working alongside young people and their families to identify appropriate support and future pathways.

Wider Learning

The feedback received through the informal consultation has reinforced the importance of post-18 pathways for young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

The Council will use the feedback received to inform its ongoing review of specialist provision and preparation for adulthood pathways for young people with the most complex needs.

Statutory Consultation

Why is Somerset Council undertaking a statutory consultation if the feedback already received did not support the proposal?

Following consideration of the responses received during the informal consultation, Somerset Council decided to proceed with the publication of this statutory proposal so that all interested parties have an opportunity to comment before a decision is made.

How to Have Your Say

Somerset Council welcomes comments, objections and expressions of support regarding the proposal.

Responses can be submitted using the consultation response form available at https://www.somerset.gov.uk/fiveways-special-school/

Representation Period

The statutory representation period will run from Monday 2 November 2026 to Monday 30 November 2026. The deadline for submitting comments, objections or expressions of support is 11.59pm on **Monday 30 November 2026**.

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

What if I require additional information before providing my feedback?

If you require any additional information before submitting your feedback, please contact the school in the first instance.

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

Lewis Andrews
SEND Sufficiency Manager
Email: Lewis.Andrews@somerset.gov.uk

Will you respond to my feedback?

Individual queries received during the consultation period will be acknowledged, although it will not normally be possible to provide individual responses to consultation submissions.

Decision-Making Process

At the end of the representation period, Somerset Council will consider all comments, objections and expressions of support received.

A decision will then be taken on whether to implement the proposal.

The decision-maker will consider:

- the published proposal;
- the views expressed during the informal consultation;
- all feedback received during the representation period; and
- any relevant supporting information.

The decision will be taken by the Lead Member for Children, Families and Education.

The decision is expected to be taken in January 2027.

What Happens Next?

The outcome of the consultation and the decision will be communicated to stakeholders following the decision.

The Head Teacher at Fiveways School will keep parents, carers and members of staff informed of progress and next steps.

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