

Consultation on a proposal to change the age range of Clyst Vale 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 Clyst Vale Academy Trust are consulting on a proposal to change the age range of Clyst Vale 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 12 and Year 13 will remain at Clyst Vale's Sixth Form to complete their studies.
- The last year group to be admitted into the Sixth Form would be in September 2024. Students admitted into the Sixth Form in September 2024 will complete their studies in the Sixth Form.
- The Sixth Form would close with effect from 31 August 2026.

There will be no change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the school which will remain at 180.

Background

The decision to undertake a consultation towards a phased closure of the Sixth Form has not been taken lightly. Clyst Vale Community College is a unique school; it is an accredited Gold Award Rights Respecting School and retains a strong focus on its place within the local community. We are committed to delivering both academic and pastoral excellence and recognise the importance of creating a balanced learning environment where students can thrive in all aspects of their lives. Our ethos is driven through our values of 'respect, participate and learn' and in doing so we develop a sense of belonging for our students who take pride in their College.

This proposal 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 make excellent progress, providing them with the qualifications that will enable them to take full advantage of the wide range of post-16 provision that already exists in the local area.

Our Sixth Form students have an excellent 16 – 18 experience, taught by experienced teachers with excellent subject knowledge in an environment that provides outstanding pastoral care and guidance. However, in recent years, with the expansion of Exeter College offering a broader range of qualifications, the number of students opting to attend Clyst Vale Sixth Form has fallen significantly. Currently we have 26 students in Year 12 and 34 in Year 13; with average class sizes of 5 students.

There are currently 16 A Level or Level 3 qualifications running in Year 12. In Year 13 there are 20 A level or Level 3 qualifications plus the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)

Rationale for proposal

The post-16 landscape is changing at a national level. It has become increasingly difficult to offer either the broad or specialist curriculum that is available at other local schools or colleges. Over recent years this has been compounded by the introduction of T Levels and apprenticeships which provide attractive alternatives for students seeking a more vocational route to traditional A Levels. Clyst Vale does not have the infrastructure or resources to offer these types of vocational courses. Consequently, faced with increasing competition from other larger local colleges the number of students attending the Sixth Form has fallen. The consistently low numbers of students is putting Clyst Vale's ability to deliver a sustainable post -16 offer under significant strain. As can be seen in the table below, the number of students opting to complete their post-16 studies at Clyst Vale has been in decline for some years.

Year	Number of Year 12 starters
Sept 2013	106
Sept 2014	107
Sept 2015	76
Sept 2016	40
Sept 2017	44
Sept 2018	35
Sept 2019	46
Sept 2020	29
Sept 2021	46
Sept 2022	35
Sept 2023	28

There are currently 69 live applications for Post 16 places starting in September 2024. As some of these are dual applications, we are currently projecting 35 students will take up places in Sept 2024. This figure is based on historic benchmarking and interviews with students. Of these, 29 are internal applicants and 6 are external. With 26 students continuing into Year 13, the total projected enrolment for the 2024/25 academic year is 61 students.

Retaining a post-16 provision at Clyst Vale Community College is not financially viable. There are insufficient students enrolling and there is no evidence base to suggest this will improve in future. A declining student population and the necessity to offer a broad curriculum, allowing students to pursue their preferred subject combinations, further exacerbate this issue and has resulted in non-viable class sizes. In the 2023/24 academic year, we ran two courses—Design Technology and Environmental Science—with only one student each. This situation not only has significant financial implications but also hinders the student's educational experience, as larger classes allow for a wider range of teaching and learning strategies.

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance states that any new Sixth Form should provide at least 200 places and there should be sufficient demand for those places. It also states that the average class size for sixth form teaching groups should be at least 15 (*Department for Education 'Making significant changes to an academy' April 2024*). In both overall size and average class size, the current Sixth Form provision is significantly smaller than these DfE values, this will place a considerable burden on resources. We currently have 60 students on roll in Post 16, there are no subjects with a

class size of 15 students in either year 12 or year 13 and we have an average class size in both year groups of 5 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 Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students.

In the current academic year 2023/ 2024, the lack of students on roll in the Sixth Form, compared to what was initially projected led to a significant financial shortfall of 177k. With a slight increase in anticipated numbers for 2024/25 this shortfall is projected to be 157k.

Local context

Most students who choose to attend Clyst Vale Community College are those who have completed their secondary education at CVCC with only a minority being external applicants. Exit interviews with students demonstrate that a significant number of students choose to go to Exeter College or other specialist Post-16 providers such as Bicton College.

The following reasons are often cited for why students decide to pursue their Post-16 education elsewhere:

- Greater breadth of curriculum offer that allows them to take combinations of subjects not available at Clyst Vale
- A greater range of facilities and enrichment opportunities offered at other larger colleges
- Transport issues
- Students are 'ready to leave' and want to experience a change of environment
- Students enjoy the location and freedoms offered by other colleges.

As part of undertaking due diligence the Trust has considered whether a partnership agreement with another school sixth form could have been a viable option. Practical considerations such as the geographical distance, which would pose logistical challenges such as timetabling, transport and staffing, meant this was not a viable option.

Over recent years various strategies have been deployed to improve viability of the Sixth Form. These have included:

- Improving efficiency in curriculum design to facilitate the simultaneous delivery of a course to Year 12 & 13.
- Broadening curriculum offer and running small classes to build the initial credibility of courses with a view to increasing class size in future.
- Strengthening community engagement to raise the profile of Post-16 and encourage more external applications.
- Developing the Post-16 offer to enhance its appeal, including more opportunities for enrichment, a strong pastoral programme & career guidance. Despite these efforts numbers have not increased.

Impact on Students

We understand that many of our current students and families will be disappointed with this proposal and recognise that students who may previously have accessed this provision may now incur transport costs to attend another provider.

Under this proposal, there will be no change for our current Year 11 or Year 12 students. A phased closure will mean that students on roll in the Sixth Form as of September 2024 will continue to have access to the courses they have started, completing these qualifications in summer 2026. The College will remain fully committed to delivering a high quality Sixth Form provision until students have completed their courses, ensuring the very best outcomes and destinations for these students.

The closure, if implemented would, enable us to target our resources more effectively towards Years 7 – 11, thus enabling us to improve educational standards and outcomes for the majority of students at the College.

For the students who will be looking for post-16 options starting in Sept 2025 (current Year 10), we are satisfied that there is choice and sufficient places among other local Post-16 providers who offer the same or a greater breadth of provision currently on offer at Clyst Vale Community College. Students who previously may have selected Clyst Vale will be able to select from any of the following:

- The King's School – Ofsted rated 'Outstanding'
- Colyton Grammar School – Ofsted rated 'Outstanding'
- Sidmouth College – Ofsted rated 'Good'
- Exeter College - Ofsted rated 'Outstanding'
- Bicton College – Ofsted rated 'Good'

We 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. These include:

- Apprenticeship days / Apprenticeship Fayres
- Careers Talks
- Exeter College Open Day
- Bicton College

Impact on staff

The closure, if implemented, would lead to a reduction in curriculum demand across many subjects. Through phasing the closure over two years the intention would be to minimise any staffing cuts that may be required through careful consideration of whether to readvertise vacancies following resignations. 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 Principal would work in close partnership with the 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, 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 9.00am on 21st June to midnight on 12th July 2024.

The Trust will be consulting widely, including with:

- Parents/Carers/Students of Clyst Vale College
- Feeder Primary Schools to Clyst Vale College
- Staff at CVCC
- All Schools in the area
- Further Education Colleges in the area
- Devon County Council
- MP
- County and District Councillors

The Trustees of the Academy Trust will meet following the close 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

A drop-in session, open to all those interested in the proposal, will be held on 27th June 2024 at Clyst Vale Community College. You are welcome to drop in anytime from 5-7pm. Trustees will be available to answer questions. We would ask that you inform us of your intention to attend this meeting by contacting Chris Faulkner either via email faulknerc@clystvale.org or telephone 01392 463930.

Indicative timescale

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

Consultation	21 st June to 12 July 2024	
Trustees of Clyst Vale Academy Trust meeting	22 nd July 2024	The Trustees will consider all the consultation responses received and make a decision as to whether to proceed with the proposal.
Submission of significant change application to the Department for Education	To be confirmed	
Decision	To be confirmed	Decision made by DfE Regions Group South West
Implementation, if proposal approved	Last intake into Sixth Form September 2024	Closure of Sixth Form 31 August 2026

How to respond

Your views are very important to the Trust. Please respond to the consultation by the closing date of midnight on the **12th July 2024**.

You can respond either by:

- Emailing: clerktogovernors@clystvale.org
- Please mark your email ‘Consultation on Sixth Form’

Or by post to;

- Clerk to Governors, Consultation on Sixth Form, Clyst Vale Community College, Station Road, Broadclyst, Exeter, Devon EX5 3AJ.

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.

Other information

All documents relating to this consultation have been published via the school's website: and Devon County Council's Have Your Say consultation website via:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/categories/education-and-schools/>

A draft Impact Assessment has also been published on the school's website and on DCC's Have Your Say consultation website. The Impact Assessment will be updated as the proposal proceeds to take account of responses received during the consultation.

To learn more about how we handle your personal information, please refer to www.clystvale.org