

Blackdown Education Partnership and The Oak Partnership Trust Public Consultation Document

Proposal to Transfer of ‘The Cove’ Provision from Selworthy School to Court Fields School

1. Introduction

This document is a statutory consultation issued in accordance with the Department for Education guidance “Making Significant Changes to An Academy Guidance” (February 2026).

Blackdown Education Partnership (BEP), and The Oak Partnership Trust in cooperation with Somerset Council, is consulting on a proposal to make a significant organisational change to existing SEND provision within the Wellington locality.

Consultation responses are invited from pupils, parents/carers, staff, professionals, local residents, and any other interested parties.

2. What is being proposed?

BEP proposes to transfer The Cove, currently operated by Selworthy School, so that it becomes an integrated SEND Unit hosted at Court Fields School.

This change would formally embed The Cove into Court Fields’ governance and operational structures, while continuing to support pupils whose primary area of need is cognition and learning, all of whom have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

This proposal would:

- Move all pupils on roll at The Cove to the Court Fields School roll.
- Maintain the same placement criteria, staffing ratios, and support model currently used.
- Allow extension of The Cove’s support to Key Stage 4 students.
- Bring staffing, safeguarding, inclusion, curriculum access and pastoral systems fully under Court Fields’ leadership.

This proposal does not involve:

- Changes to the curriculum entitlement for any student
- Removal of provision
- A change to the needs of pupils eligible for placement
- Any closure of provision
- Any reduction of staffing

3. Background

About Selworthy School

Selworthy Special School is a Cognition and Learning designated Special School, located in Taunton, Somerset and is part of The Oak Partnership Trust. The school is all-through and based across two main campuses – Oakhill (Primary) and Hazelbrook (Secondary and Post-16).

About Court Fields School

Court Fields School is a mainstream secondary school located in Wellington, Somerset and is part of the Blackdown Education Partnership. The school has 884 students currently on roll between 11



and 16 years old. The school supports students with a wide range of Special Educational Needs, including those with Education Health Care Plans and those with SEN Support.

About The Cove

- The Cove is currently operated by Selworthy School but located on the site of Court Fields School under a Service Level Agreement (SLA).
- It provides specialist teaching, small group instruction, and integrated mainstream access for pupils with EHCPs with significant cognition and learning needs.
- Pupils already participate in blended timetables alongside Court Fields pupils.

4. Why is the change being proposed?

The existing partnership between Selworthy School and Court Fields School has proved strong and effective. The proposed change will:

- Enable The Cove to formally extend to Key Stage 4.
- Strengthen day -to -day inclusion, curriculum access, and pastoral systems.
- Improve consistency and reduce administrative barriers for pupils who already split their learning between The Cove and Court Fields School.
- Allow Court Fields to better coordinate outreach work and inclusion support across the local area.
- Support Somerset Council's vision for localised, inclusive SEND provision, reducing reliance on out-of-area placements.
- Fit with the Government White Paper proposals regarding inclusive mainstream education.

5. What is a SEND Unit?

A SEND Unit is a dedicated, specialist part of a mainstream school providing teaching for a defined group of pupils whose needs cannot be fully met in a mainstream classroom.

This includes:

- Separate teaching spaces and facilities
- Specialist staffing
- Individualised programmes with opportunities for supported mainstream inclusion

In this proposal:

The Cove would continue to operate as a specialist environment within Court Fields, retaining a small, structured learning base.

6. Who will the provision be for?

The transferred SEND Unit caters for pupils who:

- Have an EHCP
- Have significant cognition and learning needs
- Require a blend of specialist teaching and mainstream inclusion
- Are allocated a place by Somerset's Statutory SEND Service

Placement criteria will remain unchanged.

7. Capacity and Admission Arrangements

Proposed capacity:

15 pupils



Admissions process:

Somerset Council's Statutory SEND Service will allocate places to pupils with an EHCP in consultation with Court Fields' School staff. Pupils' primary area of need will remain Cognition & Learning.

8. Will transport be provided?

Transport will be provided in accordance with Somerset Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy, available at:

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

Transport entitlements **will not** change as a result of this proposal.

9. Funding and Capital Works

This is an organisational change only. No capital development or new build is required.

10. Impact on Other Local Schools

It is not expected that other schools will be adversely affected.

This proposal aims to strengthen local SEND provision, reduce travel distances for families, and reduce reliance on placements outside the Wellington locality.

- Greater stability and continuity for pupils with EHCPs educated at The Cove, including at Key Stage 4.
- Improved mainstream access, peer links, and transition opportunities.
- Enhanced specialist support for Court Fields staff, improving inclusion across the school.

11. Potential Concerns and Mitigations

- Minor organisational and staffing changes to formal reporting lines.
- Some adjustments to routines during the transition period while roles and responsibilities align.

No impacts on site operations, community access, or traffic patterns is expected.

12. How to Respond to This Consultation

Please use the following form to give your response:

[BEP & Oak Partnership Trust Public Consultation Response Form](#)

You can also send any questions or responses to:

✉ consultation@bep.ac

13. Consultation Period

Consultation opens:

2nd April 2026

Consultation closes:

24th April 2026

Late responses may not be considered.

14. Decision-Making Process

After the consultation closes:

- **Who takes the decision to proceed?**



The decision to proceed or not will be taken by Mr Ian Robinson, in his capacity as CEO of the Oak Partnership Trust and Mrs Lorraine Heath, CEO of Blackdown Education Partnership. They will then submit an application to the Department for Education Regions Group in the Southwest.

- **How will the Chief Executive Officers come to a decision?**

All responses will be collated and presented to both CEOs. They will not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view. They will need to give the greatest weight to responses from those stakeholders likely to be most affected by the proposal.

The decision-maker will consider:

- Educational needs
- Stakeholder feedback
- Equality implications
- Statutory responsibilities

- **Who will make the final decision?**

If the Trusts decide to proceed, the proposal will be taken to the Secretary of State for Education who will make the final decision about whether Blackdown Education Partnership's "significant change" request to add a designated SEND unit to Court Fields School is approved.

Possible outcomes:

- Reject the proposal
- Approve the proposal
- Approve with modifications
- Approve subject to conditions

15. Decision Publication

A summary of responses and the final decision will be published on the websites of both Trusts at: www.bep.ac / <https://www.oak.education/>

16. Equalities Impact

This consultation recognises the Public Sector Equality Duty, which places an obligation on The Oak Partnership Trust and Blackdown Education Partnership to contribute to making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity to all.

The Trusts have considered the impact this could have on a range of equality groups including age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage or civil partnership. These groups are described as 'protected characteristics' in the Equality Act 2010.

The findings to date are that, if the proposal were to go ahead, the impact on the protected groups would be positive in terms of 'age' and 'disability'.

17. Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal. Your feedback is valued and will help shape the future of inclusive specialist provision in the Wellington community.

