



Formal Proposal to close the Kidderminster additional base of The Beacon Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

**Representation Stage runs from
Wednesday 14 June 2023 to noon Wednesday 12 July 2023**

Introduction

Worcestershire County Council, as the Local Authority (LA) responsible for education provision, has a statutory responsibility to make sure that there are sufficient places for all of the children in Worcestershire who wish to attend a taxpayer funded school to do so. Taxpayer funded schools are those which are maintained by the Local Authority or receive funding direct from the Government, such as Academies and Free Schools.

Worcestershire County Council is proposing to make a significant change to The Beacon Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) Kidderminster Base. Permitted prescribed alterations are detailed in the Statutory Guidance Making Significant Changes to Maintained Schools January 2023. These include closing an additional (satellite) site at a local authority-maintained school. The Guidance does not include closure of a maintained additional PRU site such as the Kidderminster site of the Beacon PRU meaning that changes to these schools can be made outside the statutory process. Nevertheless, the Local Authority is minded to follow best practice for this proposal and it has therefore adopted the statutory process for Prescribed Alterations when closing a maintained additional site as per the Statutory Guidance so as to ensure a fair and transparent process is followed.

Alternative Provision (AP) is used by Local Authorities to fulfil their specific duty to make arrangements for children who by reason of permanent exclusion, illness or other circumstances would not receive a suitable education. Schools may also use Alternative Provision to make suitable arrangements for children who have received a fixed-term exclusion or to exercise their powers to direct to off-site provision for the purposes of improving behaviour.

The Council's vision, set out in the Education Strategy 2019-24, strives to minimise Permanent Exclusion to ensure schools are inclusive and implement effectively the Graduated Response to assessing and meeting the needs of their children.

In March 2019 Worcestershire County Council was informed by the Department for Education (DfE) that it had been successful in its bid for a new Alternative Provision Free School in Kidderminster. In early 2020 The Rivers Church of England Academy Trust was selected by the Secretary of State as the provider for the new AP Free School which would become known as the Unity Academy.

School Details

Address:	The Beacon PRU, 87 Lea St, Kidderminster DY10 1SN
Status:	Community

Description of Proposed Alteration

The Local Authority are proposing to close the Beacon Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Kidderminster.

There are currently 10 children attending the Kidderminster base of The Beacon PRU and it is being planned that these children will either transition to the new Alternative Provision (AP) Free school (Unity Academy) with a transition plan involving the child, the family, the new school and Beacon school as normal phase transfer or according to the assessment of need, return to mainstream school before the end of this academic year, according to the child level plan for appropriate education (not dependent on any changes). The Rivers Church of England Academy Trust will be commissioned to provide 10 permanent exclusion (PX) places at

Unity Academy across the Wyre Forest area effective from 1 September 2023. The Beacon PRU Kidderminster site which is currently commissioned to provide these places is proposed to close. The Lea Street building where the Beacon PRU Kidderminster is situated is no longer required for alternative provision as the new Free School will be able to accommodate primary provision and would require significant financial investment for any further educational use.

The Beacon School's main site at Redditch, rated Good by Ofsted in 2022, will remain open and continue to provide education for children who are permanently excluded from Bromsgrove and Redditch areas and work with mainstream schools in the Bromsgrove and Redditch District to provide support, capacity and skills development to prevent children from being excluded.

Pre-publication consultation has been completed with all stakeholders ahead of the publication of the full proposals / public notice / start of this representation stage. The findings from this consultation can be found on the Local Authority [website](#).

Objectives

The objective of this proposal is for The Beacon PRU Kidderminster site which is currently commissioned to provide permanent exclusion places to close. The Lea Street building where the Beacon PRU Kidderminster is situated is no longer required for alternative provision as the new Free School will be able to accommodate primary provision and would require significant financial investment for any further educational use.

Educational Standards and Diversity of Provision

The Beacon PRU is rated 'Good' by [Ofsted](#).

The Beacon PRU Kidderminster Base is in the Wyre Forest District. Pupils travel to the school from locations outside of Kidderminster but mainly within 5 – 10 miles of the school. The majority of The Beacon Kidderminster pupils live within Wyre Forest and the neighbouring districts.

It is proposed that the staff that are currently employed at the Beacon PRU Kidderminster Site to support children that have been allocated places will be transferred to The Rivers Church of England Academy Trust effective 1 September 2023. A consultation process in accordance with TUPE legislation has been followed which has involved staff and trade unions. No staff members are being made redundant as a result of this proposal.

An Equality and Diversity Screening has been completed in respect of these proposals. The screening did not identify any potential Equality considerations requiring further consideration during implementation. [Screening Tool](#).

Evidence of Demand

The reason for the proposal to close the additional site is because the Secretary of State was satisfied to proceed with the Opening of the New AP school (Unity Academy) from September 2023 and provide education for children who are permanently excluded and provide an outreach and preventative provision to minimise exclusion.

Proposed Admission Arrangements

No other changes are proposed in respect of the admission criteria as The Beacon Redditch will continue to provide education alongside the new Free School (Unity Academy) in Kidderminster.

Community Cohesion

Pupils attending The Beacon Kidderminster travel mainly from the local area primarily between 5 and 10 miles from the school. The largest majority of pupils reside in the district but pupils also travel from other districts of Worcestershire.

Travel and Accessibility

Children that are eligible and currently accessing school transport will continue to do so.

Project Costs and Capital Funding

The Kidderminster base of the Beacon PRU is situated in Lea Street. The Lea Street building will continue to be maintained and managed by Worcestershire County Council. Some of the Lea Street site accommodation will continue to be used for educational purposes until any further decisions are made about the long-term use of the building. Therefore, there are no specific financial implications or additional financial commitments relevant to the proposal.

Implementation

If approved, this proposal will be implemented by the County Council working in partnership with the Governing Body. The change will be effective from 1st September 2023.

Procedure for responses

Anyone wishing to make a response to this proposal must write to:

The Beacon Kidderminster proposal
The Education Sufficiency and Place Planning Team
Worcestershire Children First
County Hall
Spetchley Road
Worcester
WR5 2NP

Or e-mail to SPP@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Responses must be received by noon Wednesday 12 July 2023

Decision

Any comments on the proposal will be taken into account by the decision maker. If there are objections to the proposal then these will be considered on behalf of the County Council by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education before a final decision is made on whether to proceed with the proposal. If there are no objections to this proposal, the final decision will be made by the Director of Children's Services.

The final decision must be made within a period of two months. However, the aim is for a decision to be made at the earliest opportunity at the end of the representation stage.