PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Proposed closure of Bradfield School Sixth Form

23 January 2019
1. Introduction
This proposal and the associated consultation have been sanctioned by the Bradfield School Board of Governors and the Bradfield School Headteacher.

This is a consultation on the proposal to close Bradfield School Sixth Form. This is a drastic and regrettable proposition, but one that we believe is necessary to preserve the future viability of the school.

The school is deeply in financial deficit. Ever since becoming an Academy, it has been spending more each year on the education of our students than it receives in recurrent funding. By September 2017, reserves had been exhausted. The school ended the 17/18 academic year with an in-year deficit of £400k. By the end of the current academic year, the school is forecast to have a cumulative deficit of over £800k. We are overspending at the rate of just over £2 per pupil per school day.

2. Background
Many of you will know that the school is very badly funded on a per pupil basis; we are in the bottom 50 out of 3080 secondary schools in England. It was expected that the introduction of a National Funding Formula (NFF) would address some of the historic unfairness in school funding around the country. This would have improved Bradfield School’s income by around £600k per year. However, in July 2018 the government pushed the timetable for introducing the NFF further into the future. If and when it is introduced will be too late to enable the budget to be recovered, and instead we must make savings from our expenditure.

Schools cannot lawfully go into debt, and the only way that we stayed afloat last year was through a large loan from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA – a part of the Department for Education). We will require a further, even larger, loan this year. Understandably, ESFA is only likely to release that loan if the Governing Body can present a credible plan to balance the budget next year (from September 2019).

The overspend this year and last has helped secure an immediate stabilisation and recovery in the educational outcomes of our students after the low point of 2017 exam results and the Ofsted inspection. However, our longer-term future to provide the best possible education for current and future students lies in joining a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). We will not be able to join any MAT until we have stabilised our budget and have an agreement with ESFA on how our accumulated deficit will be managed.

The ESFA has closely examined our spending and proposed three areas where we can and must make major savings. These are:
   1) To close the school’s sixth form to new entrants from 2019.
   2) To reduce the size of the school’s leadership team.
   3) Make savings in our teaching workforce.

We propose acting in all three areas to make savings, but with the bulk of the saving coming from the first two. It is important that as much of the school budget as possible is safeguarded for front line teaching of students. More than anything, great teaching and learning is what delivers the best outcomes for students.
We know that, this year, operating the sixth form is costing us £292k more than we receive in funding (or £1600 per sixth form student). With the current post-16 funding level, we cannot operate a sixth form based on low admission and broad A-level subject choice in a financially sustainable way at Bradfield. There is neither the demand nor the physical space to realistically ever be able to make it pay for itself. If we kept the sixth form and found other ways to balance the books, we would be doing so by taking out funding that was intended for students’ education pre-16. We don’t believe that would be fair or proper.

What matters most is delivering the best education to all young people in the community. We believe the right future for Bradfield is one where we make it an exceptional school for students to gain the highest outcomes at GCSE, but where we secure the best education for our students post-16 by gaining direct access for them to places in high quality local partner institutions.

3. The proposal to close Bradfield School Sixth Form

The governors of Bradfield School are proposing to close the Bradfield School Sixth Form from September 2019. The proposal is that no new pupils would be admitted to our sixth form in September 2019. Those pupils already in the sixth form would complete their courses. The sixth form would fully close in July 2020 when the current pupils in Year 12 complete their courses. This proposal would therefore change the age range of the Academy from 11-18, to 11-16. As part of the transition process, every current Year 11 student would be supported in securing the most appropriate post-16 learning pathway for September 2019. For our current year 11 students, we have secured an arrangement with Tapton School Academy Trust to guarantee every Y11 Bradfield Student, who achieves the entry requirements in the summer 2019 GCSE exams, a place of their choice at either Tapton School Sixth Form or Forge Valley School Sixth Form. In addition, all current Year 11 students are entitled, as they always have been through UCAS Progress, to apply for a place at another sixth form provision of their choice.

3.1. Insufficient sixth form enrolment

A school or college sixth form has to be large enough to be viable and sustainable in order to be able to provide a wide enough range of high-quality courses. Educational experts advise that sixth forms with fewer than 300 students struggle to be viable, particularly in the light of the more recent changes that have squeezed funding. Subsequently, over recent years some providers have been forced to reduce the courses they offer, whilst others have been forced to close.

The Bradfield School Sixth Form operates within a highly competitive market across Sheffield, pitching against exceptional and specialist providers. Many of these providers boast a large, specialist curriculum offer and student facilities against which any small sixth form would find it difficult to compete. Many of our own students, and those from other non-sixth form schools who could choose to attend Bradfield, instead choose to attend other sixth forms with larger capacity and dedicated student facilities, such as dining spaces and common rooms. The result has been an inability to recruit sufficient numbers to our sixth form roll to ensure financial viability. The average number of students on roll in Bradfield School Sixth Form, since September 2014, has been 147.

Even if we had succeeded in attracting 300 student into our sixth form, without the dedicated premises, we do not have the physical space to accommodate them. Our attempts over the years to secure capital funding to build a planned dedicated sixth form block have been unsuccessful.
4. What does this mean for our students?

4.1. What would closure mean for the current Year 13 students?
None of the proposed changes to our sixth form provision would affect Year 13 students. They would be prepared for their final examinations as planned, and we would ensure they are well supported during these final, crucial months. These students would be supported to secure destinations Post-18 as normal, through the school’s Information, Advice and Guidance programme.

4.2. What would closure mean for the current Year 12 students?
Current Year 12 students would continue into Year 13 and complete their studies here. With no new students joining the sixth form in Year 12 from September 2019, there would be smaller cohorts. Mentoring to ensure they secure excellent destinations at the end of their sixth form studies, whether this is University, College, Apprenticeship or the world of work would continue to be offered as expected.

4.3. What would closure mean for the current Year 11 students?
There would be no entry into Bradfield School Sixth Form for current Year 11 students. Instead, we have secured an arrangement with Tapton School Academy Trust to guarantee every Y11 Bradfield student, who achieves the entry requirements in the summer 2019 GCSE exams, a place of their choice at either Tapton School Sixth Form or Forge Valley School Sixth Form. In addition, all Y11 students are entitled, as they always have been through UCAS Progress, to apply for a place at another sixth form provision of their choice. As a result, it is anticipated that all of students who have applied to Bradfield School Sixth Form would secure alternative providers for their Post-16 studies from September 2019. Each affected student would be supported in securing an appropriate pathway for their post-16 studies.

- Information, advice and guidance has already started for all students who have applied to Bradfield School Sixth Form.
- Individualised support and advice would be offered to ensure an appropriate Post-16 destination for every student in current Year 11.
- Staff have been available in school to assist students with their UCAS applications.
4.4. What would closure mean for the current Year 7-10 students?
There would be no entry into Bradfield School Sixth Form for current Year 7-10 students. The closure of the sixth form would allow us to focus our efforts on the delivery of an outstanding education for students in Years 7 to 11. This would be crucial in securing strong examination results to ensure students can move on to their chosen Post-16 destinations. The maintenance of our Sixth Form is subsidised heavily by the funding received for students in Years 7-11 and this is a situation we believe cannot be justified as fair or reasonable in the current educational funding climate.

We are in negotiation to secure a similar arrangement to that described for Y11 pupils for when current and future cohorts of Bradfield students enter into their final GCSE year and make their post-16 education choices.

5. What happens if we keep the sixth form open?
If we were to keep the sixth form and found other ways to balance the books, we would be doing so by taking out funding that was intended for students’ education pre-16. We don’t believe that would be fair or proper.

Other options for trying to reduce the cost of the sixth form, such as reducing the range of subjects offered would reduce the attractiveness of Bradfield School Sixth Form to prospective students. Ultimately, we feel we would arrive at exactly the same point, but having spent more money delaying the inevitable.

6. Outline of consultation

6.1. Consultation process
Any proposal from schools or academies wishing to close a sixth form provision must be approved by the Secretary of State for Education. The Department for Education requires any consultation to close a sixth form to be published at least four months prior to the planned closure, and that the consultation period must last for a period of at least one month.

The Bradfield School Governing Body and Headteacher therefore invite comments from all stakeholders on the proposal set out in this paper. All views expressed during this consultation will be reported to, and considered by, the Governing Body after the consultation period has ended and will, on request, be published to parties who explicitly request this information.

6.2. Get involved
This consultation will run from Thursday 24th January 2019 until Tuesday 26th February 2019, during which time you are invited to respond to this proposal. Interested parties who wish to respond are encouraged to complete the survey at

https://bit.ly/2Mo2qGo

Paper copies are also available from school reception.

Any questions about the consultation process should be directed to the following email address:

6thconsultation@bradfield.sheffield.sch.uk

All consultation responses must be completed and returned by 26th February 2019.
6.3. Consultation List
The list below identifies the extent of the consultation, and therefore those who are invited to respond.

- Students currently on roll at Bradfield School
- Parents and carers of students on roll at Bradfield School
- Staff at Bradfield School
- Sheffield City Council Director of Inclusion and Learning Services
- Local Councillors: Upper Don & Stocksbridge and Stannington
- MPs: Jared O’Mara and Angel Smith
- Feeder Primary schools and Peak Edge MAT

6.4. Timeline for proposed closure of Bradfield School Sixth Form (if approved)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Proposed Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultation period commences*</td>
<td>24 January 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation period closes</td>
<td>26 February 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing Body meeting</td>
<td>March 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation outcome shared with the Education Skills &amp; Funding Agency and the Regional Schools Commissioner</td>
<td>March 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of the Secretary of State</td>
<td>July 2019 (if granted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>September 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Information, advice and guidance would run concurrently to the consultation process to ensure appropriate pathways are secured for all Year 11 students.