

Parkside Community College

Sixth Form Consultation Document

Circulation	Parkside Community College Students Parents and Carers of Parkside Community College Students September 2024 Sixth Form Applicants Parkside Community College staff Cambridgeshire Local Authority Local MP Local Councillors Cambridgeshire Secondary Schools Local Colleges and Sixth Forms Trades Unions
Start Date	13 February 2024
Deadline for responses	11 March 2024
Contact	Dee Wallace – Principal, Parkside Community College Charles Brasted – Chair of Governors Parkside Community College Address: Parkside, Cambridge, CB1 1EH Email: consultation@parksidecc.org.uk Tel: 01223 712600
Consultation event	We would like to hear what you think about the proposal to close the Sixth Form at Parkside Community College to new entrants from September 2025. We are holding an initial meeting for all interested parties at the school on 05 March 2024 at 17:00. A further meeting will be scheduled if required. Written feedback can be shared by contacting us at consultation@parksidecc.org.uk

Introduction

United Learning and Parkside Community College are opening a period of formal consultation on the future of the Sixth Form provision at the school.

The Proposal

The proposal is that there will be no new admissions to Parkside Sixth from September 2025. This is due to the small size of the Sixth Form and the fact this makes it financially unsustainable moving forwards. Further information on the rationale is set out from page 2.

The proposal will not impact students who wish to join the Sixth Form this September (current Year 11). They will be able to enter Year 12 in September 2024 and see their studies through with us to the end of Year 13. Similarly, there will be no impact on the students currently in Year 12 who will continue to have full access to their studies as they move into Year 13.

However, the current Year 11 students would be the last cohort to go through the Sixth Form at the school. Students in Year 10 would need to find alternative pathways to continue their education post-16.

Options

We have considered the following options:

- A. Do nothing and divert some 11-16 funding to significantly subsidise the Sixth Form. This creates the risk of not being able to provide such a rich and varied curriculum for 11-16 students whilst also offering post-16 provision that does not fully meet the needs of our students.
- B. Close the Sixth Form for new admissions at Parkside with effect from September 2025 on the basis that it is not financially viable. Support can then be provided to students to find alternative solutions for post-16 education.

Under Option B, there would be changes to the admissions policy in that entry at Year 12 would be removed from September 2025. No other changes to admissions would be made for 11-16.

The Consultation

The consultation period will run for four weeks from 13 February 2024 until 11 March 2024.

An initial consultation event will be held at Parkside Community College on 05 March 2024 at 17:00 in the main hall. Further events will be arranged if required.

Views are welcome on the above proposal by the deadline date of 11 March 2024. A consultation response form has been included at the end of this document for your convenience and can be submitted via the email address consultation@parksidecc.org.uk, by post or handed to school reception.

Background and Rationale

For Years 7-11, Parkside Community College is a very popular, heavily oversubscribed school that has excellent outcomes and an Outstanding Ofsted rating. We have every intention of ensuring this continues to be the case.

Parkside Sixth opened in September 2011 and offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. Other qualifications have been offered previously but have ceased due to low numbers. The number of students taking the IB Diploma has ranged from 16-45, and these numbers have been decreasing since 2019. For September 2024, only 23 students have named Parkside Sixth as their first-choice destination, with only 13 of these being current Parkside students.

Due to the low numbers, our class sizes are also very small, with 2-3 students in a number of subjects and over the past few years the majority of classes have had less than 12 students.

In order to be financially viable, the Department for Education recommends Sixth Forms have approximately 200 students in them. 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 open academy' January 2022).

Sadly, we are a long way short of this goal and there is no indication in local demographics that this is likely to increase over the coming years. The school has tried a range of different recruitment drives to bolster numbers, but these have not been successful. Facing a national reduction in Sixth Form funding, and these low student numbers choosing to stay on at the school, risks diverting 11-16 funding to significantly subsidise the Sixth Form.

This creates pressure on the main school budget and, despite the investment that has been made so far, very low numbers entering the Sixth Form have made it increasingly challenging for us to sustain provision going forward. We believe the needs of our students will be better served going forward by other local providers.

Local Sixth Form Competition

With well-established, good / outstanding local competition, and with students generally looking to take up A Levels as opposed to the IB Diploma, Parkside's Year 11 students are frequently looking to other local providers to continue their chosen studies.

Sixth Form Colleges:

- **Hills Road Sixth Form College (Ofsted Outstanding):** very popular with a strong reputation. Offers a wide range of A Levels and extra-curricular activities, with more than 2,500 students. (1.3 miles away)
- **Long Road Sixth Form College (Ofsted Good):** offers a wide range of A Levels, Level 3 courses, T levels. They also offer a few GCSE and other courses and have around 2,300 students. (2.6 miles away)
- **Cambridge Regional College (Ofsted Good):** offers a wide range of vocational post-16 courses, adult learning courses, apprenticeships, etc. with a campus in Cambridge and one in Huntingdon, but also online. (Cambridge campus is 3 miles away).

Schools with Sixth Forms:

- **Impington International College (Ofsted Good)** offers the IB. They achieve good results and offer a selection of extra-curricular activities. They have around 300 students. (4.2 miles away)
- **Cambridge Academy for Science and Technology (CAST)** (a UTC) (Ofsted Good) offers A Levels focused on science together with the most popular subjects and also offer T levels. (2.6 miles away)
- Other secondary schools with 6th Forms are **Oakes College** (Ofsted Good; 2.2 miles away) and **Chesterton Sixth Form** (Ofsted Outstanding; 2.2 miles away).

The decision to undertake a consultation towards a phased closure has not been taken lightly but is significant in ensuring that future resources will be available to ensure Parkside Community College continues to be a popular and successful 11-16 school.

Continuing to Support Students

Everyone at Parkside continues to want the very best for our students. Under this proposal we would continue to support the Local Authority's aim to increase the number of students taking an academic pathway to Higher Education as well as continuing to support progression pathways post-16 through close partnership working with other nearby schools and FE/HE colleges.

We already have excellent working relationships with the other local Sixth Form providers, which are of good quality, easily accessible and provide a breadth of subjects and the opportunity to interact with a larger peer group, and where we know our students progress well and have a full and rounded post-16 experience.

We will continue with our existing programme of activities to ensure that future Year 11 students are aware of their options and are able to access education elsewhere. This work already exists and would be further strengthened.

Impact

Under the proposal, there will be no change for our current Year 12 and Year 13 students, who will all be able to continue with their Sixth Form studies at Parkside. Year 12 students will move into Year 13 in September 2024 and complete their programmes of study. Likewise, Year 13s will remain unaffected and will sit their exams with us this summer. Students in Year 11 with us now will be able to join us for Year 12 if they wish and will be fully supported to continue their full programme of study until they leave us at the end of Year 13. As such, we feel that the impact on existing students of the closure is as minimal as possible.

The closure, if implemented, would enable us to target our resources more effectively towards Years 7-11. We are committed to ensuring that all our students receive the best guidance on their post-16 options, and we will ensure that students can access the most appropriate pathways via impartial information, advice and guidance.

It is the intention that staff currently allocated to the Sixth Form would be redeployed into teaching within the rest of the school, however the loss of post-16 funding may lead to redundancies or restructures in specific subject areas. The Principal would work in close partnership with Trades Unions and United Learning to manage this risk, should it arise.

Next Steps

A public meeting led by the Principal and the Chair of Governors will be held at Parkside Community College, Main Hall on 05 March 2024, at 17:00. This will provide an opportunity to discuss the proposal and ask any questions related to the potential closure of the Sixth Form. Alternatively, we welcome comments and feedback in writing, if preferred, from all stakeholders via the form and email address below.

How to Respond

A response form is included at the end of this document for your convenience. Responses can be posted to Dee Wallace, Parkside Community College, Parkside, Cambridge CB1 1EH, or returned by email to consultation@parksidecc.org.uk, or handed in at school reception.

What happens after the consultation period ends?

All the responses to the consultation will be considered carefully. If the school and United Learning decide to proceed with the closure of the Sixth Form, then a formal request will be made to the Department for Education for their approval before anything is actioned.

Sixth Form Proposal – Stakeholder Response Form

Consultation Period: 13 February 2024 to 11 March 2024

Stakeholder Category: Please select the most appropriate.

Parent Staff Member Student Local Education Provider Resident

Other (please specify)

Looking at the information in this document do you support the proposal to close Parkside Community College Sixth Form?

Yes No

Comments:

Please return this form by post or hand to: Dee Wallace, Parkside Community College, Parkside, Cambridge CB1 1EH or by email to: consultation@parksideecc.org.uk no later than 11 March 2024. Thank you.

(The information that you send may need to be passed to colleagues or shared with partners. It may also be published in a summary of responses received to this consultation, but results will not contain your name or anything that could identify you. If you require an acknowledgement to your response, please provide details below.)

Name:

Address:

Signed:

Date: