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Briarwood School Expansion Consultation

Briarwood School Expansion Consultation

This document is a consultation into the proposal to increase the number of approved places at Briarwood School from 168 to 234, including the establishment of Throgmorton House as a satellite site to be known as Briarwood South. The new site will be at;

Throgmorton House,
10a Throgmorton Road,
Knowle West
Bristol
BS4 1HR

Bristol is the Local Authority responsible for commissioning this increase.

Consultation period: *16th February – 27th March*

Responses to be through a form: Available at <https://forms.gle/2zu2r2YTSJ5K98rS7> or through email to Briarwood@bristol-schools.uk

Briarwood School is a maintained special school providing high-quality education for children and young people aged 4–19 with complex learning difficulties, autism, sensory needs, and associated conditions. The school currently operates in 5 buildings across three sites with a published capacity of 168 pupils.

Bristol City Council has invited Briarwood School to expand its provision to meet urgent citywide SEND place shortages. The proposal is to increase capacity to 234 pupils, supported through the development of a fourth site at Throgmorton House (Knowle West), to be known as Briarwood South as a fully integrated satellite site of Briarwood School.

This consultation seeks the views of parents, carers, staff, the community, other schools, local authorities who commission places, and any other interested parties.

In line with the DfE's statutory guidance on prescribed alterations to maintained schools, Briarwood School and Bristol City Council propose to increase the number of approved places at Briarwood School by more than 10% and more than 20 pupils, rising from 168 to 234 places – an addition of 66 pupils, all spaces will be at the new satellite site.

Phased opening

- Easter 2026: Approx. 20 pupils (dependent on refurbishment)
- September 2026: Expansion to full capacity of 52–66 pupils (it may take a year to reach full 66 places, dependent on need and age ranges of pupils offered a space).

Integration with Briarwood School

Briarwood South will fully share:

- Leadership and governance
- The Briarwood Curriculum and other key features of Outstanding practice, including “The Briarwood Standard”
- Policies and procedures
- Safeguarding, values, and ethos

This proposal constitutes a prescribed alteration, requiring statutory consultation.

Rationale and Evidence of Need

The Local Authority has identified a significant shortage of specialist places across Bristol.

Briarwood School is well placed to support this need because:

- The school is rated Outstanding by Ofsted and has a proven track record of high-quality specialist provision.
- It already operates successfully across multiple sites and has the infrastructure to support this.
- Demand for specialist placements continues to rise, with significant oversubscription every year.
- The LA has confirmed the suitability of Throgmorton House and committed to refurbishments.

Expanding Briarwood ensures that pupils with complex needs can access high-quality provision within Bristol, preventing costly out-of-area placements.

Educational Benefits of the Proposal

The expansion will:

- Provide modern, sensory-responsive, therapeutic learning environments.
- Allow for reduced travel distances for pupils in the south of the city.
- Increase curriculum access, personalised learning, and independence skill development.
- Improve sustainability of all Briarwood sites through economies of scale.
- Support better transitions across age phases due to additional space and flexibility.

Briarwood South will follow all curriculums and educational approaches that are currently employed at Briarwood school, which have been rated outstanding by Ofsted and many of which we support other schools with through our Outreach and School Improvement services.

Impact on Briarwood current pupils and staff

The proposed expansion of Briarwood School to 234 places, including the opening of Throgmorton House as a fourth site, will bring a range of direct benefits to pupils currently attending Briarwood, as well as ensuring the long-term sustainability and quality of their education.

To ensure high-quality provision across all sites, Briarwood will strengthen its leadership structure, introducing:

- A Head of School for Briarwood South
- Additional senior leadership capacity
- Distributed leadership roles that allow senior staff to be present and available on each site daily

This expanded leadership capacity ensures that:

- Safeguarding oversight is strengthened
- Staff receive more consistent support, coaching, and supervision
- Curriculum quality and expectations remain aligned
- Day-to-day issues are resolved promptly, improving the experience for all pupils

The Local Authority has confirmed that Briarwood's multi-site nature will be financially stabilised through revised site-specific funding, ensuring that all existing sites benefit from improved financial security. By increasing staffing capacity through phased recruitment, Briarwood can:

- Provide consistently high staffing ratios
- Reduce pressure on existing teams
- Enhance CPD and internal progression opportunities
- Retain skilled staff through a clear leadership pipeline

Phased recruitment and a phased opening will allow Briarwood to maintain current levels of staffing, not impacting current ratios.

All sites will benefit from enhanced staffing models and training aligned with Briarwood's trauma-informed, sensory-responsive approach.

Currently staff members have contracts for 'Briarwood school' with a clause in their contracts stating they can work at any Briarwood site. Given the distance to the new school, no current members of staff will be expected to work at the new site unless they want to. Current staff will be given the opportunity to move if they wish. New staff contracts will state their primary place of work.

Impact on Other Educational Institutions

The proposal is designed to meet existing unmet demand, not to draw pupils away from other schools. The Local Authority confirms that Bristol's current SEND provision is insufficient, with no nearby special schools able to absorb the projected growth. As such, no negative impact is anticipated on other local institutions.

How to Respond

We welcome views from all stakeholders.

Please send comments, questions, or objections by 27th March to:

Online web form: <https://forms.gle/2zu2r2YTSJ5K98rS7>

Email: briarwood@bristol-schools.uk

Post: Briarwood School, Briar Way, Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 4EA

Alternative formats: Available on request.

All responses will be considered and summarised for the Local Authority as decision-maker.