



Consultation Report: Poltair School Specialist Hub

Executive Summary

Poltair School is an inclusive secondary school serving 880 learners aged 11 to 16 and their families in St Austell. Part of Cornwall Education Learning Trust (CELT), the school is committed to the goal of providing an exceptional educational experience for every child.

Rated 'Good' overall by Ofsted in 2024, with three of four categories judged 'Outstanding', Poltair School has the capacity to expand its provision, and the proposed plan aims to meet increasing need in the local community by creating Specialist Hub (SH) on its site for 20 learners with Complex Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and/or autism – 4 places in each of its 5 year groups.

CELT already offers an additional resource base at Bodmin College, and works closely with the Special Partnership Trust (SPT) to deliver ARBs on the sites of two of its other schools: Mount Charles Primary School and Brannel School. This partnership also supports the development of staff in serving the needs to pupils with a range of special educational needs in all its schools.

Cornwall Council has sought applications for the expansion of SEN spaces across the county due to a shortfall in in the region. CELT approached the local authority to offer its support in meeting an increase in the need for SEN spaces in mid-Cornwall. The Specialist Hub (SH) at Poltair School forms part of that response.

In addition, CELT is also consulting on the creation of other new provisions at Newquay Primary Academy, Newquay Tretherras Academy, Penrice Academy and Pondhu Primary School.

Together, these represent an extensive expansion of specialist spaces in the region and the creation of new all-through pathways for our communities.

The creation of the SH at Poltair School does not affect its PAN. It will provide:



- September 2026: 10 places in Years 7 to 9 to meet immediate local need
- September 2027: A further 5 places for a total 15 places across Year 7 to 10
- September 2028: A further 5 places for a total of 20 places across Years 7 to 11

This targeted investment is based on detailed analysis of local need. As part of the Mid-Cornwall sufficiency pilot, this development will also support clearer pathways between different types of provision, including smoother transition from primary to secondary school and opportunities for learners to transition into mainstream settings where appropriate.

Existing space in the school has been identified that could be used for this SH. Some remodeling and repurposing of existing buildings will be required.



Statutory Consultation

Engagement work

As part of the Significant Change Process, the Academy undertook a public consultation which ran from 21 April to 13 May 2026. The aim of all our activities was to drive engagement in an online survey.

To support stakeholders to express their views, we provided:

- A consultation pack about the proposal, including site location and aims, with details of the public event and embedded survey
- A website page with same
- An email invitation to local councillors and MPs
- An email invitation to the local authority
- Emails to all parents of pupils at the School
- An online survey
- Social media posts on the school's and the trust's accounts
- A prominent post in the school's newsletter about the public event and the online survey

The aim of this consultation was to allow all members of the community and stakeholders to share their thoughts and feelings on the proposal.

The local community response was muted during this period. It was therefore extended until 15 May, and a new wave of engagement activity increased the number of responses considerably.

This consultation report is based on all the responses we received to the online survey.

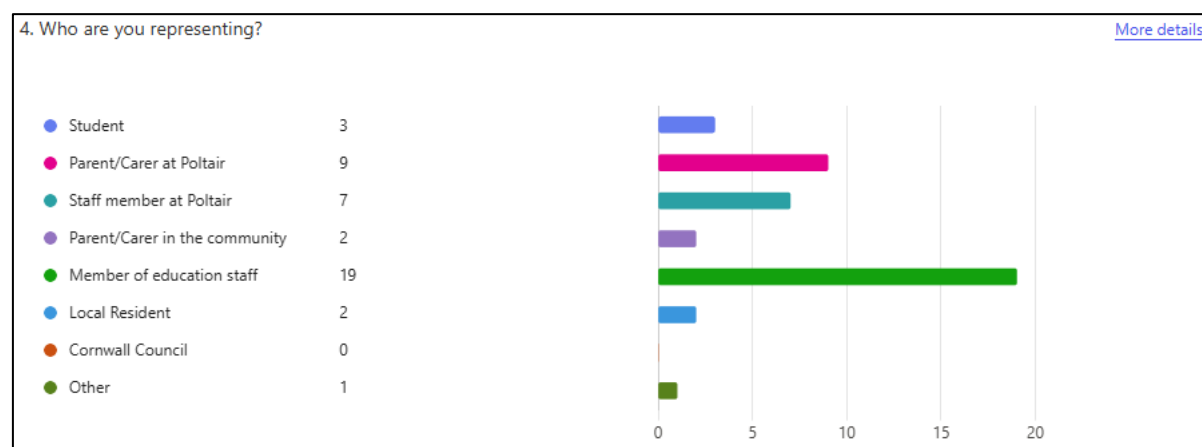


Responses

Big picture

The consultation evening was not attended. The online survey, which we communicated to all as the only way to officially record their thoughts and feelings about the plans, eventually received 43 responses.

Of the 43 respondents, 3 were students, 9 were parents or carers of children at the school, 2 were parents or carers in the wider community, 7 were members of the school's education staff, 19 were members of education staff more broadly, and two were local residents in the wider community. One registered as 'Other'.



The response was overwhelmingly positive. Forty-one of the 43 expressed support for the new provision, one was unsure, and one opposed the proposal.





The engagement of a range of stakeholders, including one with a number with no direct affiliation to the school, is positive.

That pupils, parents and staff at the school and those from its wider community took the time to express their views about the plans is also very welcome.

All 43 respondents made the additional time to comment. This report is based on all of these comments.

An overwhelmingly positive response

The response was overwhelmingly positive. Those positive comments were entirely unqualified in their support. Among them, the most recurrent theme was a desperate need for high-quality, local provision.

Pleasantly, a number voiced trust in Poltair School and Cornwall Education Learning Trust to deliver it.

Here are just a fraction of the comments we received.

*"This is excellent news for the community and much needed provision. **As a parent of a child within Poltair with SALT issues this is welcome.** This is my opinion will only make Poltair **an even better school.** This is so needed with the **severe lack of places** and opportunities for dedicated support within a mainstream school."*

*"**The ARB at Poltair is desperately needed** to provide secondary education places for some of the most vulnerable children moving from primary to secondary school. It will provide a place which can **meet their needs when mainstream is unable to.**"*

*"Within our community it is **essential** that we build a **genuine equitable educational opportunity for all.** This proposal enables us to act upon this ambition and deliver truly exceptional education and skills-building to our most vulnerable children. **Most important, we can give them the sense of belonging that comes with being part of a school.**"*



"The proposal will provide **the right education** for **the right learners** in **the right areas**."

"With a child with additional needs, I am glad to see that there will be **more options for her education** when she is secondary school age."

"I feel this could have a big **positive impact** on the **students of Poltair and St Austell**."

"An **amazing opportunity** for the school to **support some of the most vulnerable students in our community**."

"I am fully in favour of the proposal, as there is a **significant need for additional specialist ARBs in this area**. There are currently a large number of pupils awaiting specialist provision whose needs cannot be adequately met within a mainstream school setting. **Increased specialist capacity would help ensure that children receive the appropriate support and provision** required to meet their needs effectively."

"I feel that **a specialist unit at Poltair is a fantastic opportunity** and will provide **much-needed specialist provision** for those pupils whose needs cannot be met within a mainstream setting."

"I think that this will be **a valued asset to the school** and is something which **our community is greatly in need of**."

"It's **fantastic** that **CELT are enabling more learners** to have the right access to education."

"I think it's a wonderful idea. Having worked in education for over 18 years **I know the struggles, especially in Cornwall**, to be able to find the right education for varied needs across both Primary and Secondary school. **This is a great opportunity [...]**"



Concern about behaviour

The only negative response to the proposal focused on pupil behaviour at the school:

*"I think all **the effort and hard work which has gone into Poltair over the last 4/5 years will be diminished** and the school will **regain a bad reputation** in the community. Currently **behaviour is pretty good** in the school compared to others. I don't want this to impact moving forward with **children with poor behaviour on site**. My daughter is moving into year 11 and my son wants to attend next year 7. **It would affect my decision-making if this was in place.**"*

We are grateful to this respondent for acknowledging the positive results of the journey Poltair School has been on in recent years.

The school and trust teams have invested considerable energy in ensuring the culture is exceptional with high expectations of, and aspirations for its children. This is reflected in its recent Ofsted report.

For the following reasons, we believe concern about behaviour worsening at Poltair School as a result of this SH is misplaced:

Foremost, the school's leadership and staff will not be distracted from their focus on sustaining a culture of safety and calm.

Second, Poltair School already serves children with autism and speech, language and communication needs. These needs are not synonymous with poor behaviour.

Third, the relatively few learners admitted to the SH (10 in 2026 rising to 20 by 2028) may have more complex needs, but will be more than adequately supported should they ever attend shared spaces.

However, the hub will operate independently from the rest of the school in respect of teaching and learning. It will be a highly specialised provision with a bespoke curriculum tailored to each learner's needs.

Finally, we believe our learners value both the culture we have created at the school and the fact that we are an inclusive community.

As a parent respondent of another of our consultations suggested, we will support them to ensure they know **"how best to understand, support, and include the additional cohort of children and their families."**



Conclusion and next steps

We are confident that the proposed Specialist Hub at Poltair School will deliver a number of benefits for the school's community, not least in supporting us to provide an exceptional educational experience for learners with autism and/or speech, language and communication needs.

The proposal is fully supported by Cornwall Council in its efforts to meet growing needs across the county and drive down expensive and difficult out-of-area placements.

Pending funding for the adaptations required to make the Specialist Hub a physical reality, the school and its academy trust have begun drawing up plans.

Across the trust, we have also developed the systems and networks to hire and develop staff with the necessary skills and expertise to deliver an innovative, bespoke curriculum for the learners who will attend it.

In sum, we are confident that, if approved, the SH will be ready to open at the start of the autumn term, and that we have the backing of our pupils, families and the wider community to make this important addition to our provision in St Austell.

We are, of course, mindful of the reasonable concerns of our community. We will continue to communicate our developments in terms of curriculum, staffing and resources, and we will sound community opinion ongoingly to ensure we are alleviating these and rapidly aware of new ones as they arise.

We are grateful to all the stakeholders who took part in this consultation, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with them to ensure the provision meets everyone's needs.