



Gildredge  
House

## Sixth Form Consultation

Consultation on the proposed phased closure of  
Gildredge House Sixth Form

### **The proposed phased closure of Gildredge House Sixth Form**

The Trustees and Governors of Gildredge House are seeking your views on a proposal to close the Sixth Form. The proposal is that **no new students would be admitted to the Sixth Form in September 2023**. Those students already in the Sixth Form would complete their courses. The Sixth Form would fully close in July 2024 when the current students in Year 12 complete their courses at the end of Year 13. This proposal would therefore change the age range of the school from 4-18, to 4-16. As part of the transition process, every current Year 11 student will be supported in securing the most appropriate post-16 learning pathway for September 2023.

For clarity, this proposal would not affect students currently in our Sixth Form. Year 12 and 13 students' studies will continue and our absolute commitment to them remains. After the consultation, even if the Sixth Form is closed, all students that are currently in the Sixth Form will continue to be nurtured, challenged, and inspired to do their very best and, as they are currently receiving very focused tuition with small class sizes, we are confident that they will achieve success in their studies.

For our current Year 11 students, our positive relationships with other local providers, in addition to the increasingly diverse range of post-16 providers across East Sussex will provide pathways for each of our students, be they academic, vocational, or directly specialist work related. It is our responsibility to ensure that we secure the right pathway forward for every one of our students entering post-16 education.

### **Why we are proposing the phased closure of the Sixth Form**

Despite consistently low student admission numbers into the Sixth Form over recent years, the Governors have previously maintained a commitment to offering a Sixth Form provision. The school's finances are currently robust. However, moving forward, we predict our post-16 cohort will continue not to meet the numbers initially expected when the Sixth Form first opened. This could jeopardise the school's firm financial position and compromise the educational resources for the rest of our students, particularly given the increased financial pressures on schools and priorities for school improvement.

A school or college Sixth Form must 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 250 students struggle to be viable. Similarly, a Department for Education study in 2017 found that the minimum viable A Level class size was judged, on average, to be 11.7 students. Delivering a large number of classes below a minimum financial threshold will ultimately affect whether the A Level provision in the institution overall is affordable. Where the costs of delivering A Levels exceeded the income, there tended to be cross-subsidisation from other learning areas, which in Gildredge House's case, is the Secondary phase.

Gildredge House has flourished over the last ten years to over 1,200 students. The school now enjoys being oversubscribed at every Year Group up to Year 11 and is a vibrant and happy place to learn, earning a 'Good' Ofsted rating in 2018. The school is due its next Ofsted in the next twelve months. Over the past twelve months, there has been a clear focus on evaluating where we are and where we want to be in the future which included consulting with parents, staff and students and listening to feedback. Moving forward, we need our complete focus to be on improving the quality of education, personal development, behaviour and attitudes of the students in our care from Reception to Year 11. Whilst we are proposing to change our age range, we would still be an 'All-through school', offering a high standard of education for both Primary and Secondary aged students and supporting the transition between these two phases. There is alternative Sixth Form and college provision within Eastbourne and the surrounding area, which will fully cater for the needs of our students post-16 should our Sixth Form close and where the majority of our Year 11 students already join.

If we were to keep the Sixth Form open and found other ways to balance the school's finances, we would be doing so by taking out funding and educational resources that were intended for our Primary and Secondary phase students. We do not believe that would be fair or proper.

Other options to reduce the cost of the Sixth Form, such as further reducing the range of subjects offered, therefore limiting the attractiveness of the Sixth Form to prospective students, have already been attempted and have arrived at the same point.

Governors and Trustees of Gildredge House believe that this is the only way to sustain the current robust finances and drive school improvement to safeguard the future and success of the whole school.

#### **Timeline for proposed closure (if approved)**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Proposed Timeline</b>
Consultation period commences	<b>13<sup>th</sup> December 2022</b>
Consultation period closes	<b>14<sup>th</sup> January 2023</b>
Consultation outcome shared with the Education Skills & Funding Agency and the Regional Schools Commissioner	<b>February 2023</b>
Approval of the Secretary of State	<b>July 2023</b>
Closure	<b>September 2024</b>

#### **Consultation Process**

The Gildredge House Governing Board, Trustees and Head Teacher therefore invite comments from all stakeholders on the proposal set out in this paper. All views expressed during this consultation on the Sixth Form closure and changes to admissions arrangements for Years 12 and 13 will be reported to, and considered by, the Governing Board. We will publish the consultation details to parties who explicitly request this information.

#### **Consultation List**

The list below identifies the extent of the consultation, and therefore those who are invited to respond.

- Parents of children who attend Gildredge House
- Members of staff at Gildredge House
- School Head Teachers or Governors at Primary, Secondary, AP and special schools and Sixth Form and FE colleges in the area
- Parents of children attending a local Primary or Secondary school

#### **Get involved**

This consultation will run from 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022 until 14<sup>th</sup> January 2023, during which time you are invited to respond to this proposal. Please complete the online Consultation Response Form on the school website at:

<https://www.gildredgehouse.org.uk/home/admissions/sixth-form-consultation/>

If you require a hard copy, please collect this from the School Office and return it to the school in an enveloped marked 'Sixth Form Consultation'. It is important that this process is followed if you wish to get involved with the consultation. All responses must be received by 14<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at the very latest.