

Consultation on the Future of Branscombe Church of England Primary School

Consultation Period: 11 June 2026 – 23 July 2026

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1. Introduction

Link Multi Academy Trust is consulting on the future of Branscombe C of E Primary School including a proposal that the school will close on 31 December 2026. This proposal has arisen following a prolonged period of challenge for the school, including falling pupils numbers and concerns about long-term viability. This proposal has not been brought forward lightly. We recognise the importance of the school to its children, families, and the community, and we fully understand the sense of loss that may be felt in considering its future.

2. Background

Branscombe C of E Primary School is a much-valued small, rural academy school for children aged 2–11 within the Link Academy Trust. Over recent years, pupil numbers have steadily declined, and the school currently has 7 pupils on roll. There are no admission allocations for entry into the Reception class in September 2026. Area Health Authority data also indicates there are very few pre-school aged children living within the catchment area, and demand for places has remained low. In addition, there is little anticipated housing development in the area that is likely to change this picture in the future. There is sufficient capacity in local schools to accommodate future known cohorts of pre-school aged children living in the catchment area.

3. Consultation on the future of Branscombe C of E Primary School

For these reasons, the Trust is sadly consulting on the future of the school. This includes a proposal to close the school from 31 December 2026. As part of the consultation, any other options that come forward will also be considered. The consultation starts on 11 June 2026 and ends on 23 July 2026. We would very much like to hear your views on the proposal – we are here to listen and support pupils, parents, carers, the school and wider community.

4. Rural Schools and the presumption against closure

There is a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean a rural school will never close, but the case for closure should be strong and in the best interests of educational provision in the area. There are a number of factors to be taken into consideration when proposing to close a rural school, including alternatives to closure, which the Trust have considered before bringing forward this consultation.

5. Admissions and transport arrangements

Should Branscombe C of E Primary School close on 31 December 2026, parents and carers would be able to express a preference for a place at an alternative school. Devon County Council will manage this process and try to ensure there are local places for all families. Parents and carers would be asked to complete an in-year admissions application form and to name up to three schools they would prefer their child/ren to attend. Devon County Council would try to meet parent and carers' preferences wherever possible but cannot guarantee to do so as it would depend upon vacancies at that time. Admission Officers from Devon County Council would be available to support families in completing in-year applications. The process would not be on a first-come, first served basis as all parents would have an opportunity to consider their options. Applications would be considered together.

All children are entitled to free home to school transport if they attend the nearest school to their home address and they:

- are of statutory school age
- live more than two miles away by the shortest walking route (for primary)
- live under two miles away but all walking routes are considered unavailable

Children in Devon are also be entitled to free school transport to the school designated to serve their home address - provided it is still further than the statutory walking distance (see above).

If a decision is made to close Branscombe C of E Primary, consideration will be given to new designated school/s for the area and will be consulted on with neighbouring schools and within the Local Learning Community.

6. Staff

There are three members of staff directly affected; a Teacher, a Teaching Assistant and Minibus Driver.

7. Consultation and Decision-Making Process

The decision to consult on the future of the school has not been made lightly but is being brought forward in light of the low demand for school places and the challenges the school faces in delivering the curriculum to such a small number of children.

As Branscombe C of E Primary School is an academy school, the decision to close the school will be made by the Secretary of State through the Department for Education. As the school is a Church of England school, the Diocesan Board of Education and site trustees need to consent to the closure. It is also a requirement that the Local Authority, Devon County Council (DCC), need to agree to the closure as the school is classified as a rural school. The proposal is classed as a key decision for DCC and will be discussed at a meeting of DCC's Cabinet.

Following the end of this consultation period, the Trust will review the consultation responses and also share all responses with the Local Authority so that DCC's Cabinet are informed of the views of stakeholders and the wider community in their decision-making. Consultation responses may also be shared with the Department for Education.

If a decision is made to close the school, then the Trust will also conduct a Listening Period. This is to provide stakeholders and interested parties with information on why the school is closing and how the closure process will operate. It will also give an opportunity for anyone to submit views on how the closure process can best be managed.

8. Proposed timeline

The proposed timetable below, which may be subject to change, sets the draft timeline out. This timeline is only if there is agreement and a proposal to close the school proceeds:

Consultation period: 11 June 2026 to 23 July 2026

Information Session: 9 July 2026 at 4pm– 6pm, Branscombe C of E Primary School, Branscombe, Seaton, Devon, EX12 3DA

This information session, open to all members of the public, will be run in the format of a drop-in session. You are welcome to attend at any time between 4pm – 6pm where officers from Link Multi Academy Trust, Devon County Council and the Diocese will be able to answer any questions and hear your views. Please let us know if you are planning to come by emailing: adminbranscombe@thelink.academy

Devon County Council's Cabinet: September 2026

Department for Education: Secretary of State to terminate the School's Funding Agreement

Trust's Listening Period: September to October 2026

Proposed closure: 31 December 2026

All updates will be available on:

- School website: <https://www.branscombe.thelink.academy/>
- Devon County Council's Consultation website: <https://new.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/>

9. How to share your views

You are invited to attend an information session at Branscombe C of E Primary School on 9 July 2026 from 4pm to 6pm with representatives from the Trust, Devon County Council and the Diocese.

This session is an opportunity for individuals to raise any specific concerns and as it is not run in the format of a public meeting, you are welcome to drop-in at any time between 4pm– 6pm. Please email: adminbranscombe@thelink.academy if you will be attending so that we can confirm numbers attending. Please also confirm if you have any special requirements.

We welcome your views on the proposed closure or any alternative suggestions. Please submit your response by 23 July 2026 via:

- Email: adminbranscombe@thelink.academy
- Post: Consultation on the future of the school, Branscombe C of E Primary School, Branscombe, Seaton, Devon, EX12 3DA

All responses will be shared with senior leaders and trustees of the Link Multi Academy Trust, Devon County Council and the Department for Education. Individual replies will not be issued, but a report of the information session including frequently asked questions will be published online.

Privacy Notices:

[Branscombe C of E Primary School - GDPR](#)

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/privacy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-representations-to-school-organisation-statutory-consultations/>