



## **Removal of the sixth form at Colne Community School and College.**

Dear Stakeholder

### **Re: Consultation on the proposal to remove sixth form provision at Colne Community School**

#### **Proposal**

The Trustees of the Sigma Trust are seeking your views on the future of post-16 provision at the Colne Community School and College. The proposal is not to recruit new sixth form students from September 2023 and that the provision, which has not had any enrollments for the last two academic years, should be formally closed. This will not impact upon any current students or staff members. The final decision will be made by the Regional DfE Director on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE) following the submission of a Significant Change Application by the Trust. If this proposal is accepted we will also be changing the schools nomination to The Colne Community School.

#### **History and Context**

The sixth form at the Colne was once relatively healthy with a broad offer and over 150 students enrolled. For a range of reasons, mainly associated with changes to the national post-16 funding model, the number of courses on offer was reduced to secure financial viability.

Over the last few years the curriculum offer had narrowed to virtually a singular offer, 'The Colne Sports College'. Whilst this was successful in its own right, we were not operating a sixth form with a broad, ambitious curriculum offer. Additionally, due to the geography of Brightlingsea, it was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit sufficient athletes of the required calibre to the college. Consequently, the decision was made to relocate the sports college to Sigma Sixth Colchester, as part of their much wider curriculum offer. We then worked with our students to try and reinstate the sixth form here at the Colne with a broad offer in partnership with Sigma Sixth Tendring. Despite our best endeavours we were unable to recruit the required numbers to ensure viability and for the last two years have had no post-16 enrollments at the Colne.

#### **Financial viability**

Post-16 funding is determined nationally as part of the DfE core funding. Funding is allocated on the basis of student numbers enrolled, the number of guided learning hours undertaken and in-year retention. Funding for post-16 is not included within any protections and as such, for many years, funding for sixth form provisions have been considerably reduced, requiring schools to maximise student numbers and ensure larger class sizes to maximise financial viability.

Locally, Sigma Sixth in Tendring and Sigma Sixth in Colchester, deliver post-16 provision to over 250 and 200 students respectively, and Colchester Sixth form and Colchester Institute both provide educational places for above 3000 students. As a result, economies of scale apply which means it is more expensive per student for a school based sixth form to provide post-16 provision than a sixth form college.

The DfE guidance for academies wishing to open a new school sixth form recommends that they should have at least 200 pupils enrolled and offer a minimum of 15 courses. This size ensures a balance between financial viability and a suitably broad curriculum offer. If a sixth form has fewer than 200 enrollments it is inevitable that there will be some very small class sizes that require other funding streams, such as that for 11 to 16 year olds to subsidise the sixth form.

As can be seen in the following table, historical enrollments have not been close to the ‘break even’ 200 suggested by the DfE. In addition, the number of courses that were delivered is far lower than the 15 recommended by the DfE for a viable sixth form.

Academic Year	Year 12 - Admission Numbers	Courses delivered
2022-23	0	0
2021-22	0	0
2020-21	19	2
2019-20	40	2
2018-19	43	2
2017-18	59	4

NB As the cohorts of post-16 students move into year 13, there is a further drop of students, averaging around a further 10 to 15 percent off the above numbers.

### Other Barriers

Students at the Colne have been asked about their decisions regarding post-16 destinations, the sort of responses were as follows:

- Students are seeking the breadth of curriculum that the school is not able to provide and also a wider range of facilities.
- Students want their own dedicated teaching and social spaces rather than sharing spaces with other year groups.
- They also seek the social aspect that is provided by larger establishments e.g. Colchester Sixth Form College, The Colchester Institute and Sigma Sixth.
- As most of the students in Years 7-11 attending the Colne (typically around 70% in every year group) travel into school via bus, they are used to having to take public transport to school,

consequently travelling to a college environment is not viewed as a significant barrier by our students. Given that there is no post-16 travel funding many students have made the decision to pursue their post-16 education or training elsewhere as it makes no impact to existing travel costs.

### Post-16 place availability and destinations

Of the other schools with sixth forms in the Tendring and Colchester district there are currently almost 300 unfilled spaces in Year 12 which includes our two partner colleges; Sigma Sixth Tendring and Sigma Sixth Colchester. As can be seen in the table below the lack of enrollments into our sixth form has not affected the ability of our students to access suitable post-16 destinations with post-16 activity higher than the Tendring district and Essex averages.

Activity Survey Year 11 leavers 2021	Essex	Tendring	Colne Community School and College					
	2021	2021	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Remaining in full time education	91.5%	87.8%	92.2%	94.7%	90.9%	91.9%	90.7%	93.7%
Training	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>
Full time employment (inc Apprenticeships)	3.1%	2.9%	4.3%	1.6%	5.2%	3.4%	5.3%	3.8%
Full time employment no structured training	1.3%	1.6%	1.7%	0.8%	1.3%	1.3%	0.4%	0.8%
Working not for reward & part-time activities	0.3%	0.7%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%
NEET -active in the labour market	1.7%	3.4%	1.7%	0.8%	0.9%	1.7%	1.8%	0.4%
NEET not available to the labour market	0.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%
<b>NEET Total</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>
Custodial institution (juvenile offender)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total Unknown	0.6%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.9%	0.4%

Colne Community School and College Activity Survey 2016 to 2021 - Year 11 Leavers

### How to make your views known

It is important to stress that no decisions have been made. The Trustees of the Sigma Trust wish to consult widely, particularly with parents and the school. All views expressed during this consultation will be reported to and considered by the Trustees after the consultation period has ended.

As part of the consultation process, there will be consultation meetings with staff, governors and parents from school as appropriate.

### Timeline

Consultation period	<b>8 March 2023 - 19 April 2023</b>
Report on consultation to Trustees for approval	<b>24 May 2023</b>

Following the outcome of the consultation, and should the Trustees determine it wishes to continue with the application to remove the sixth form provision at Colne Community School, formal application will be submitted to the Regional DfE Director for consideration.

All representations must be made in writing via [consultation@colne.school](mailto:consultation@colne.school) during the consultation period. Your contributions will help inform our decisions and will reflect within any subsequent application to the DfE.

Any representations received following 12 midnight on 19 April 2023 will be outside of the consultation period and therefore will not be considered.

The final decision on the closure of the sixth form provision at the Colne will be made by the Regional DfE Director on behalf of the DfE following the submission of a Significant Change Application by the Trust.

Should this proposal be agreed the school's nomination will also be changed to The Colne Community School.

This consultation document is sent electronically to all parents/carers, trustees, local governors, teachers and support staff who are part of the Colne Community School and College community. Electronic copies will also be sent to headteachers of the neighbouring schools in the planning area, ward councillors, MPs, unions and relevant officers of Essex County Council and Tendring District Council.

Thank you for your attention and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely



Neil Gallagher  
Executive Headteacher

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