

Education Modelling Frame

13th September 2023



Somerset
Council

Introduction

In January 2023, Somerset Council began a discussion about education structures with schools in the Frome area.

It opened with a survey of school leaders to understand the impact of the current structures and what changes they might make and what benefits any changes would bring.

In March 2023, a report was sent to school leaders outlining the feedback provided through the survey.

This was then followed by a meeting at Selwood Academy which all 18 of Frome's schools attended along with representatives from the Diocese of Bath & Wells and the Regional Director's Office.

At this meeting, schools asked to explore some options that would allow Frome to become a 2-tier education area and to meet individually with officers on their school sites.

Frome

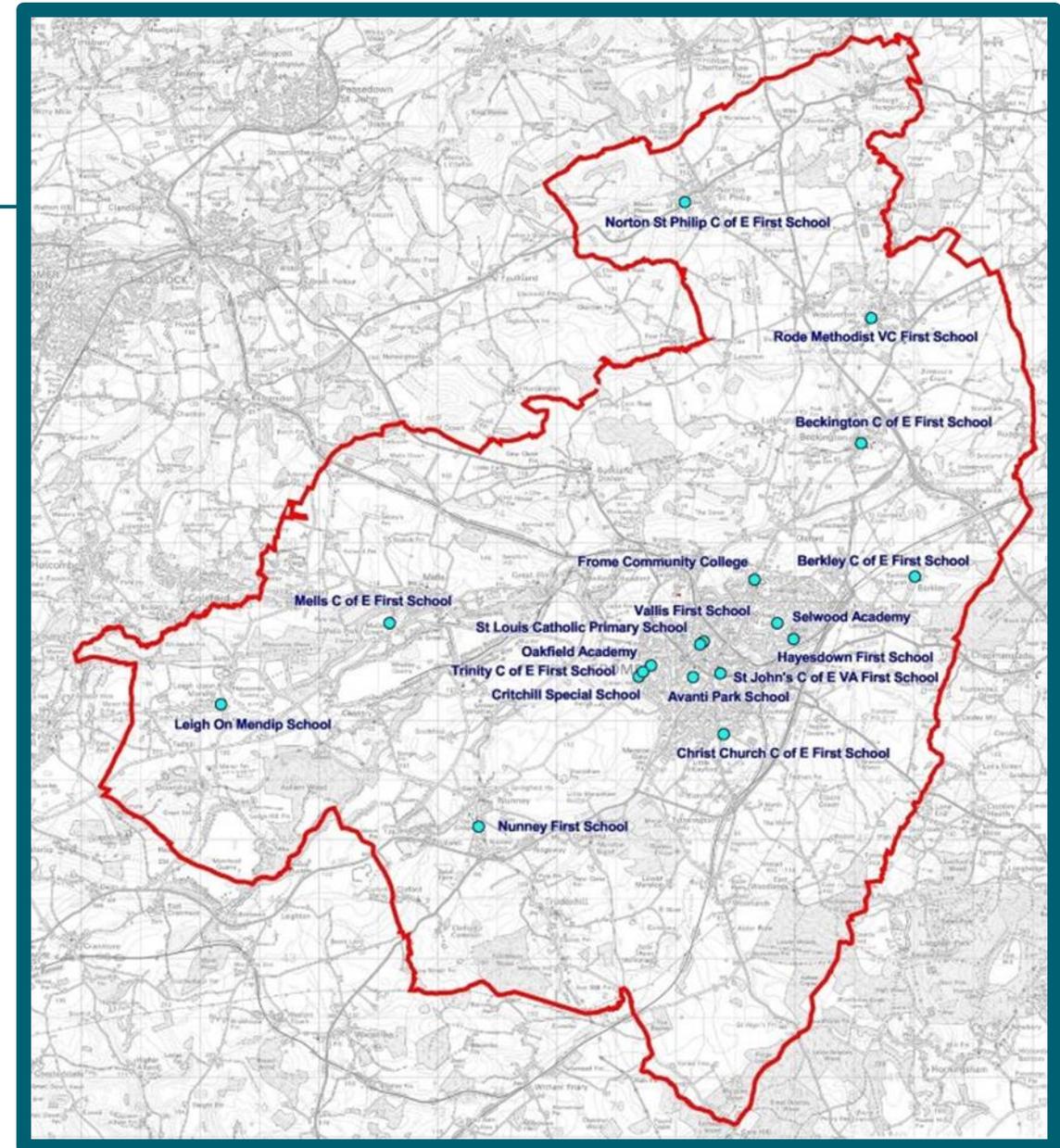
Frome is a complex education area.

There are 18 state-maintained schools in a 3-tier area:

- 1 x Upper School
- 2 x Middle School
- 2 x Primary School
- 1 x Primary / Middle School
- 11 x First Schools
- 1 x All-through Special School

10 are LA maintained while 8 are academies in 6 different Academy Trusts.

10 of the schools have religious articles, mostly Anglican, but also Methodist (2) and Catholic (1).



Modelling & Visits

By May 2023, officers had prepared a number of 2-tier models and visited each of the 18 schools to discuss the modelling and other educational issues in Frome.

At the end of May 2023, another meeting was held at Selwood Academy to discuss the modelling and other areas of interest discussed during our visits to school sites.

While there was not a general consensus to adopt a 2-tier model in Frome, there was an appetite to progress discussions further, over an extended period of time, introduce other elements and invite other stakeholders to engage in the process.

At regular intervals, the 8 councillors representing the Frome were given updates on discussions and the likely direction of future work.

Community Statement

“Over the past few months some school leaders in Frome have questioned whether the school structure in Frome is working for everyone. In response to this, conversations have been taking place between school leaders in Frome and Somerset Council officers regarding the possibility of moving to a two-tier model of primary and secondary schools.

After individual visits at all Frome schools to hear the views of school leadership teams, the shared conclusion is that this conversation needs to involve a broader representation from Frome’s communities in order to ensure that any future proposals best serve the needs of Frome and its children and families. We are therefore looking to establish a steering group made up of a wider group of stakeholders in Autumn 2023 to continue these discussions further. No decisions have been taken and no changes will be made unless there is support from within the school system and community for change.

While Somerset Council has no immediate intention to propose any changes to the education system in Frome, local schools and academy trusts may exercise their statutory right to explore changes to individual settings. Where they choose to do so, they will be working with Somerset Council and the Regional Director’s Office to ensure that any proposals are in the best interest of Frome’s children and families.”

21st June 2023

Next Steps

In June 2023 officers began preparations for this extended piece of work.

A further survey was sent to school leaders asking them to confirm what subject areas they would like discussions to cover and which other stakeholders they would like to invite to participate.

A Steering Group will begin meeting in the Autumn. These will be in-person meetings held at a venue in Frome.

Subject areas are likely to include:

- Education Structures and Partnerships
- Post-16 Provision
- Early Years
- SEND and Vulnerable Learners

Frome Town Council is very keen to be involved in this work and has provisionally offered to host the Steering Group's meetings.

Risk & Issues

In parallel to ongoing discussions, it is likely that schools will continue to consider their individual arrangements including formal partnerships, academisation and changes to their age ranges.

There is a risk that this will serve to add greater complexity to discussions in Frome in the short-term but, in the medium term, is likely to reduce the overall number of stakeholders, making wholesale structural change easier.

Changes that are currently known about:

- Selwood Academy (Middle) has formally consulted to change its age-range
- Frome Community College (Upper) has applied to become an academy and join the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership Trust – potential conversion date is September 2024
- St Louis Primary School will become an academy in April 2024 and join the Dunstan Education Partnership
- Beckington, Berkley, Mells, Norton St Phillip, Rode and Trinity first schools have begun the academisation process with potential conversion dates in late 2024

Questions



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