



# Consultation Report: Pondhu Primary School Area Resource Base

## Executive Summary

Pondhu Primary School is an inclusive primary school serving 166 pupils 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' by Ofsted, Pondhu Primary School has the capacity to expand its provision, and the proposed plan aims to meet increasing need in the local community by creating an Area Resource Base (ARB) on its site for 25 pupils with autism and/or speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

CELT already offers an ARB at Bodmin College, and works closely with the Special Partnership Trust (SPT) to deliver ARBs on the sites of two of its schools: Mount Charles primary school and Brannel secondary 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 support an increase in SEN spaces in mid-Cornwall, and the ARB at Pondhu Primary School forms part of that response.

In addition, CELT is also consulting on the expansion of its existing ARBs and the creation of other new provisions at Newquay Primary Academy, Newquay Tretherras, Poltair School and Penrice Academy. Together, these represent an extensive expansion of specialist spaces in the region and the creation of new all-through pathways for our communities.

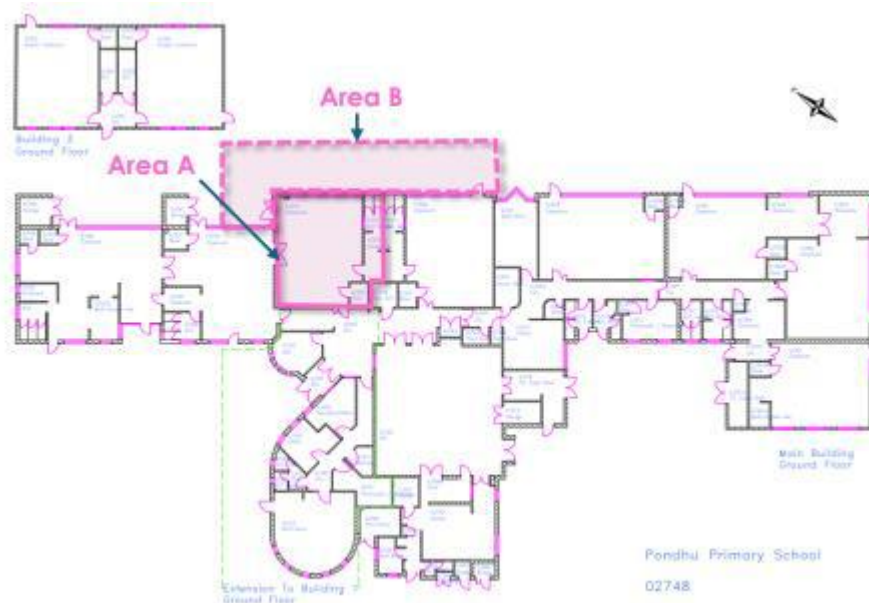
The creation of the ARB at Pondhu Primary School does not affect its PAN. It will provide:



- September 2026: 9 places in Year EYFS, Year 1 and Year 2 to meet immediate local need
- September 2027: A further 8 places for a total 17 places across EYFS to Year 4
- September 2028: A further 8 places for a final capacity of 25 places across EYFS to Year 6)

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 opportunities for learners to transition into mainstream settings where appropriate.

Existing space in the school has been identified that could be used for this ARB. An external canopy to provide sheltered outdoor learning and slight change to the designated toilet facilities 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 Academy
- 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 responded positively throughout this period and this consultation report is based on the responses we received to the online survey.

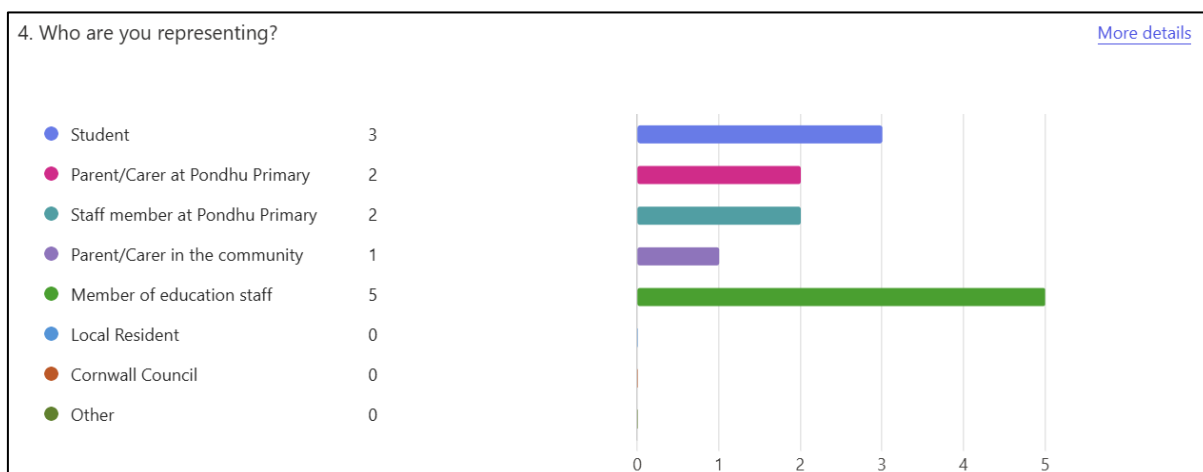
## Responses

The consultation evening was attended by 6 members of the community. The online survey, which we communicated to all as the way to officially record their thoughts and feelings about the plans, received 13 responses.

All 13 expressed outright support for the new provision.



Of the 13 supportive respondents, 3 were pupils, 2 were parents or carers of children at the school, 1 was a parent or carer in the wider community, 5 were members of the school's education staff, and a further 2 were other school staff members.



Pondhu Primary serves a semi-rural and dispersed community, so the engagement of a range of stakeholders, including one with no direct affiliation to the school, is positive. That pupils as well as teaching and non-teaching staff took the time to express their welcome for the plans is also very positive.

The comments we received from this cross-section of our community were overwhelmingly positive:

*"I am **so pleased this is a possibility**. [...] I am [REDACTED]'s mum and I would love this for her."*

*"**As a parent of a child with suspected Autism this will be very helpful** for myself as I'm still learning the process along with dad."*



**“As a parent of two ex-Pondhu students, one with SEN needs, I fully support this proposal.”**

**“I do think it a fantastic idea.”**

Some pointed out the benefits for the school and pupils attending it.

**“This proposal represents a significant step toward creating a more inclusive, supportive, and responsive educational environment at Pondhu Primary School. It has the potential to make a lasting difference to pupils’ lives and to serve as a model of good practice within the wider community.”**

**“Placing an ARB at Pondhu will benefit the whole school with increased specialist staff. It will also benefit the community and help to provide much-needed places for those that are currently without provision.”**

**“I really support the idea of a new ARB at Pondhu School. There just isn’t enough support locally for children with SEN, and it would make such a difference to families like mine.”**

**“My [child] has SEN needs and currently attends Pondhu School. Having the right support there would help her feel more settled, understood, and able to learn properly. It would also minimise disruption for her and prevent the need for further transitions, which can be really challenging.**

But most of the detailed comments were focused on the benefits to the region, which speaks highly of the school’s families and wider community.

**“Being educated in their geographical area, alongside familiar peers, supports wellbeing, attendance, and a strong sense of belonging. This approach also allows for more flexible, responsive support while maintaining meaningful links with mainstream learning and expectations.”**



***“Its impact on Inclusion across mid-Cornwall will be incredible.”***

*“The opening of an ARB at Pondhu School would **enable children** in our community **to access a specialist provision which could meet their needs in the locality in which they live.** It would be **positive for the children, staff and local community.**”*

*“This is **a much-needed facility for local pupils** and will really support inclusion in the St Austell area.”*

*“It is encouraging to see **CELT leading the way with such a proactive response to a growing challenge.** This investment in **local children and families** will make **a meaningful difference to the St Austell community.**”*

One parent specifically noted the inclusive nature of the proposal.

*“An ARB at Pondhu would **give children the extra support they need while still being part of a mainstream school,** which is so important for their confidence and social development. Overall, it would be **a really positive step for the community** and for children like [REDACTED] who deserve the right support to thrive.”*

## Conclusion and next steps

We are confident that the proposed Area Resource Base at Pondhu Primary 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 minor adaptations required to make the Area Resource Base a physical reality, the school and its academy trust have drawn up plans.



We have also begun the process of hiring and developing the 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 ARB 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 grateful to all the stakeholders who took part, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with them to ensure the provision meets everyone's needs.