



PROPOSAL TO INCREASE STAFF TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FROM SEPTEMBER 2025

18th June 2025

Dear Parents/Carers at The Heights Academy

Please read this letter carefully and respond to this consultation. I really hope that as you read this letter you can appreciate that our proposal is needed and is in the best interests of your children and young people. If we are going to continue improving all our schools so that our pupils have the very best experiences, we need to make some significant changes to the amount of training that our staff receive.

Proposed change to the school year from September 2025

Our proposal is that each of our schools (Brays School, The Bridge School, Hallmoor School, The Heights Academy, High Point Academy and Leycroft Academy) will have an extra 5 days of CPD (Continuous Professional Development) per year from September 2025 onwards, making our total INSET day capacity 10 days in each school year.

The additional 5 days will be taken as 10 half days, as indicated by the calendar that appears in this letter.

With the half day INSETs, we have tried to balance our schools' operational needs and consider how we place them at times that we feel may maximise opportunity for staff but minimise impact on parents.

School will be shut to pupils on the afternoons on these days (for precise timing for your school, please refer to the section below). In subsequent years, you will be told in the summer term what the dates for the following school year are. These will only change in exceptional circumstances. For the school year 2025-26, the applicable dates are detailed in this letter.

Background to the proposal

Special schools are subject to legal requirements which state that we must have 190 school days (within which there are 380 sessions) during any school year. Sessions are normally AM and PM.

We believe that the current allowance of 5 whole INSET (in service training) days is insufficient to meet our needs and whilst we understand that a change such as proposed could be perceived as 5 school days lost, we strongly believe that this additional investment of time and capacity for our staff will make the remaining 185 school days much more productive, fulfilling and meaningful for our children.

Our Trust Board is responsible for the length and structure of the school day. We have presented a compelling case to the Trust Board which has been accepted, such that we are now consulting with parents and seeking your input on this change.



What does this proposal actually mean?

On the 10 identified days (which are noted in this letter), and on those days only, we will change the school day at each of our schools, so that there will still be two sessions, but they will be:

Children arrive at the normal time, whether on transport or by parents.		
First session	Start 8.45am	End 10.55am
Second session	Start 11.10am	End 12.05pm
Lunch break as normal		
Children to be collected, or transport leaves school at 1.00pm on these days.		

Attendance marks will be given at the start of each of the two sessions.

What does this mean for parents/carers?

Transport will run as normal on all days on the journey to school, or if you bring your child to school, they should arrive at the normal start of the day.

We will plan with transport on each of the 10 days in question for children to be collected at the end of lunch and brought home to you. If you normally collect your child from school, please collect them at the end of lunch break (times detailed above).

We understand that this may cause some logistical issues or caring challenges. But by giving notice now, before the end of the summer term, for the next academic year, we hope that you will be able to accommodate this change.

What period does the consultation cover?

The consultation period runs from Wednesday 18th June at 9am until Tuesday 8th July at 5pm (15 school days in all). This document will be available electronically on the school websites and includes information on how you can make your views known.

Why do we need to do this?

There are many reasons why it is important that we make this change now:

Reason 1: It has become increasingly difficult to provide the required amount of training that our staff need to best meet the needs of our pupils. There are a range of extra things that staff working in special education need to be trained in. This includes Team Teach, which now has a mandatory annual refresher, as well as training relevant to the medical or other specialist needs of children in our schools. Our aim is to provide the best quality education & care for our children for all of the days they are in school.



THE
BRIDGE
SCHOOL



THE HEIGHTS
ACADEMY



LEYCROFT
ACADEMY

Reason 2: The creation of extra training time will enable staff to engage more in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) alongside more regular team-based planning and assessment. This will have a positive impact on the skills of staff, pupil progress and the emotional well-being of both pupils and staff, thus having a beneficial positive impact on the experience of children on the 185 days that they are in school.

Reason 3: Most of our staff are 'support staff' who work set hours. Time for CPD, planning and reflection are very limited within these times. There is very little time before the pupils arrive and after they go home. It is essential that Teaching Assistants and teachers have time to train together.

Reason 4: Recruitment and retention of great staff has become very difficult. We need to invest time in the development of our staff so that they stay and develop with us rather than leaving for other jobs. This has become a huge challenge recently and it is widely acknowledged that investment in professional development can act as a very positive retention mechanism.

Reason 5: Our expectations in terms of curriculum opportunities for pupils and meeting their individual needs are very high. There are hardly any 'off the shelf' resources, so time is needed to adapt resources and discuss how to use them.

Reason 6: All our pupils have additional challenges in their lives. Some have very complex needs. Staff need more time and regular input in terms of CPD so that we can really provide the opportunities and provision that match our high aspirations with an increasingly 'complex' cohort of pupils across many of our schools.

Reason 7: The school day is very intense. In terms of safety, engagement and learning, the staff have to operate consistently at very high levels of alertness and skill. Providing more regular learning and training time will really help everybody.

Reason 8: Like other educational establishments, we are allocated a minimum of 5 training days per year. We tend to use 1 or 2 days at the start of term so that we are prepared for the pupils' arrival, alongside training on things such as safeguarding. 3 other days spread over the year is not enough for the regular training we need, as outlined in the response to Q1. Therefore, a different approach is needed.

Reason 9: By having all the same dates for our schools, via this change we will also enable staff to benefit more from shared training with other schools across our Trust.

Reason 10: Staff feedback from our wellbeing surveys shows that staff want more time for regular training, and we know that this would help us to improve further.

Reason 11: Most of our staff do lots of 'unpaid' work and really do go the 'extra mile'. We cannot rely on this as a way of keeping our standards high in a context of cost-of-living challenges. The fact that many other jobs are now more financially appealing means that we must provide opportunities for staff to develop. These changes would help with recruitment, development, and retention of great staff to a modern, more professionalised workplace. This isn't a change designed to save money directly, but it would increase the wellbeing of staff and hopefully reduce absence levels.



Reason 12: We are always alive to the need to ensure we meet high standards of safeguarding training, so that we can keep our children safe in the face of new and diverse risks, some via online platforms, social media and temptations which are sometimes not easy to see. Keeping staff well-trained and up to date has a significant impact on time available for other professional development.

Reason 13: The focus of attention on each of the 10 half days will primarily be about development of our curriculum, enhancing our teaching & learning capability with a view to being more ambitious for the outcomes for our children. There may be some medical or mandatory training. What training is being delivered will be agreed term-by-term with the Trust, in conjunction with school leaders and staff, according to the identified school improvement priorities. Some of those priorities will be common across all our schools, in other cases, it will be personalised to the needs of the school's pupils.

How do you express your views?

Consultation opens	Wednesday 18th June @ 9am
Consultation closes	Tuesday 8th July 2025 @ 5pm

We would welcome your view on this proposal. You can do so in one of four ways:

1. By completing and returning the response form attached to this letter to school reception.
2. Completing the online form available via this [link](#).
3. Emailing a completed form to the email address consultation@fet.ac
4. Attending one of our in-person or online consultation events – information is available at <https://heights.fet.ac/consultation/>

In all cases, the closing date for responses is 8th July 2025 at 5pm. Any responses received after this will not be considered.

The consultation is also available to view on the school website:

<https://heights.fet.ac/consultation/>

We are consulting with:

- Parents/carers at Brays School, The Bridge School, Hallmoor School, The Heights Academy, High Point Academy and Leycroft Academy.
- School staff and their representative trade unions.



Consultation events

The school will provide group meetings for you to attend and discuss the proposal. There will be one in person and one on Teams

	In person	Microsoft Teams
The Heights Academy	23 rd June 9.15am	23rd June 4.30 to 5.30pm If you wish to join this meeting, please follow the link embedded into the date/time details

Please let us know if you are planning to attend either of the above events. To do this, please email (or call) the school office who will deal with your enquiry.

Feedback: Please use the space below to share your views (attach separate sheets if necessary)

We will take the feedback from the consultation to our Trust Board before any final decision is made. We will confirm our final plan to you by the end of the summer term, no later than Thursday 17th July.

Yours sincerely

Simon Dilkes

Chief Executive Officer – Forward Education Trust



PROPOSAL TO INCREASE STAFF TRAINING DAY CAPACITY (CPD DAYS) FROM SEPTEMBER 2025

Consultation period runs from Wednesday 18th June at 9am until Tuesday 8th July at 5pm.
Responses received after that time will not be considered

To provide feedback online, visit <https://heights.fet.ac/consultation/>

Alternatively, use the electronic [form link here](#) or complete the form below and hand it in to your school office.

Name of school: The Heights Academy

Your name (Optional):

Your child's name (Optional):

Do you agree with this proposal? Yes No Neither agree nor disagree

Please provide more detail to your response, if you wish

2025-2026 Term Dates

The Heights Academy

September '25

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

October '25

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

November '25

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

December '25

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

January '26

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

February '26

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

March '26

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

April '26

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

May '26

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

June '26

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

July '26

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

August '26

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

School Days
 Bank Holidays
 Whole INSET day
 Half day INSET

 School Holiday

