

EMS Expansion Consultation Summary

Date: 1st September to 12th October 2021

Activities:

- We published our expansion plans and ways to consult on the school website: [Exeter Maths School | Our Story \(exetermathematicsschool.ac.uk\)](https://www.exetermathematicsschool.ac.uk)
- We arranged for one online and one face-to-face meeting to answer questions
- We shared an online response form on the website and:
 - Wrote to all secondary schools in the current and proposed catchment area
 - Emailed all local authorities in the current and proposed catchment area
 - Emailed all current students and their parents and those who had recently left
 - Notified alumni of the school's plans via their Facebook group

Meeting Responses

One parent of a current student attended the online meeting but had technical difficulties interacting. No others attended. The same parent booked a place for the face-to-face meeting but no others did – they were therefore offered a telephone conversation instead which was declined.

Consultation Feedback Form

We received 94 responses:

- 59 from current or former students
- 29 from parents of current or former students
- 1 from a teacher
- 1 from a local education authority
- 4 other responses

The counties of those responding were:

- 73 Devon
- 7 Cornwall
- 7 Dorset
- 6 Somerset
- 1 Wiltshire

Brief summary of results:

1. **The vast majority (91%) agree with expanding the school's catchment area**
2. **All agree (100%) that affordable boarding should be provided**
3. **Most agree (84%) with in an increase in numbers**, those with concerns want to ensure that the current ethos of the school remains; some felt more admissions should be taken from the current catchment area, others felt the opposite to be true
4. **Most agree (85%) with a corresponding increase in outreach**, although a range of views were expressed about how this is best done; there was some conflation between outreach and recruitment activities within the responses given

Detailed summary of results (comments are indicative of those received):

1. The school's catchment area should increase to include Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and the City of Bristol

● Strongly agree	50
● Somewhat agree	36
● Neither agree or disagree	3
● Somewhat disagree	4
● Strongly disagree	1



It's logical since it not only allows more to have access to EMS it would be more inclusive of the surrounding areas, which would give the south west more of the opportunities that you could find if you lived in a denser city like London.

Including Bristol and (especially) Swindon to the catchment area would improve the opportunities for students in this area hugely. I came from North Somerset when I went to EMS and it changed my life (and wasn't too far to travel for boarding)

I was on the edge of the catchment area as it is, and even though I didn't board, I feel EMS really helped me, and was the best possible school for me to go to, for more students to get to experience what I did is nothing but a positive, and with including Bristol, an extremely diverse city, the school itself could become more diverse, having larger representation from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

EMS is an incredibly special environment for many students, giving them a community of like-minded people that is safe and accepting in a way that non-specialist area schools can't offer. Having a wider catchment area means that more students can take up this opportunity and that students of the highest calibre can mix with their peers to enhance their skills and to build their love for the subject even more.

My only issue with this is that the increase in pressure on places will necessitate a more strict entry process, and require judgments made more and more on academic ability than the personal element - which I believe is one of the primary driving factors in the wonderful environment EMS fosters and enjoys, which is its primary selling point for prospective students (in my opinion - it's what made me want to come, and, is a core reason why I have such a high opinion of EMS). If this increase in the catchment area were to not degrade the entry process, then I'm all in favour of a larger area from which to draw that special sort of folk for whom EMS is the best place to be - and expose them to the life-changing experience EMS can be for such a person.

I feel that what makes the school special is that it is for students from the southwest, in an area where state sixth form provision isn't particularly strong. I also worry that from a social point of view, if the catchment area is too wide, the students won't form a bond as geographically they will be so far apart at weekends and in the holidays

2. The school should provide affordable boarding to students who are unable to commute daily.

● Strongly agree	88
● Somewhat agree	6
● Neither agree or disagree	0
● Somewhat disagree	0
● Strongly disagree	0



I boarded when I was at EMS, it was essential for me to do so as I live a 3.5 hour train ride away, and I come from a low income family so it had to be affordable. Going to EMS was a turning point in my life and enabled me to get where I am now, doing a PhD in maths at Edinburgh, I deeply hope that other low income students can get the same benefits I did thanks to EMS.

Without this provision I would not have been able to attend the college, and would have been a lot less likely to get into and then succeed at university as a direct result of this. In my view this is a vital part of the provisions of the school

We fall into that band between being poor enough to qualify for a bursary and rich enough to afford boarding. Luckily we live within easy commuting distance but luck is not a good basis for access provision!

Due to there only being a very small number of Maths Schools in the country (even after the new ones are created), to get any sort of fair availability of access to the provision, there needs to be boarding made available. I think the current system of boarding during the week and going home at weekends is a good way to manage being able to attend Maths School, and still partially living at home.

Although I was privileged enough to have parents who could afford it in full, I know of at least 2 cases relating to my year group alone where the too expensive boarding was a problem. One where the person elected to commute over 2 hours every day for the 2 years, another who elected to not attend at all despite being offered a place. The boarding is brilliant and wish more had the opportunity to experience it.

I think the proposals are excellent and will work really well having the boarding provision on site. We have managed to find the money but it hasn't been easy (worth every penny!) and I can see it is prohibitive for some whereas the reduced amounts proposed would bring it into reach of more people.

I think there is a good argument for school-owned boarding rather than staying in the private sector, but an onsite solution does seem a rather limiting experience for a 16-18 year old.

3. Admissions numbers should increase to between 90 and 100, subject to demand from the broader catchment area

Strongly agree	42
Somewhat agree	37
Neither agree or disagree	10
Somewhat disagree	3
Strongly disagree	2



As long as class sizes remain as small with the larger intake.

Being with like minded people is part of this unique setting and broadening that to more numbers would make it more varied and better for everyone

Absolutely agree and word of EMS and the reputation it has as a wonderful learning establishment is spreading a larger cohort will bring challenges, but also benefits, provided sufficient space is available.

Completely agree with this. Still small enough to be able to offer what makes EMS so special and allows more to access it.

I think the increase in numbers needs to be done in such a way as to ensure that the close community feel of the school does not get lost or diluted. It's nice at EMS that you can know everyone in your year group so maybe there should be more opportunities for mixing with your year group when numbers are increased

Increased numbers should first come from the existing catchment.

The school is currently, I believe, drawing well beyond those who cannot be well provided for more locally. Increasing numbers less ambitiously might allow a shrinking of the EX10 intake, restoring to local schools greater viability as centres of high quality post-16 mathematics provision. EMS also already employs highly knowledgeable and skilled teachers who could have a much wider impact if less concentrated. I am sure they enjoy that, but there are other students who also need mathematically-knowledgeable inspiration, and other teachers who could 'catch' that. Expanding beyond what is strictly needed for those young people who *cannot* be adequately provided for more locally, means expanding the concentration of such teachers further. That does not seem fair to those who are not able to take advantage of such provision, especially if their own education is further impoverished by the loss locally of the most mathematical, and of the most mathematical teachers because they no longer have access to a full mathematical range of students.

4. Outreach provision should be expanded to reflect any change in catchment area

Strongly agree	60
Somewhat agree	20
Neither agree or disagree	8
Somewhat disagree	4
Strongly disagree	1



This is important work, and will help spread the word of the school to future potential students

Our local schools are involved and I am hearing really positive feedback from friends whose children are involved.

If it benefits any students, it should be offered to them all.

Given the wide catchment area, the ability to offer outreach work will be important as long as the offer covers all corners of the area and peninsulas.

Maths outreach in general is a great thing (if delivered to a good quality). EMS seems to know this and handle it well. Any outreach work should probably be coordinated alongside the AMSP and Maths Hubs already working in this area.

I don't agree with any expansion to a wider catchment until the school can evidence they are reaching all potential students from existing

EMS does a great job in terms of outreach - but again, many of those coming should be getting that enriched provision more locally.

5. We offered the opportunity for additional comments and questions

I think it's extremely important to keep the culture of EMS intact with any proposed expansion

Keep a central town location to stay close to amenities.

Having read the proposals it seem like a no brainer!

The more students able to experience this fantastic facility the better.

I absolutely love that the school that I really found myself in is getting the chance to expand. I have every faith it will be a huge success

A really insightful, positive and ambitions project, but certainly possible.

It makes sense to improve the facilities. I don't think the case to do this should be used to disadvantage the students from the real SW who already have so little choice and

provision. If anything the provision for Cornwall Devon first and Somerset should be increased before the catchment extended.

More non classroom space would be great, as it would allow those who want to socialise, study or just do their own thing in peace aren't competing for space. A lot of people at EMS are highly introverted and space to avoid socialising is limited

I believe anything that can be done such that more pupils can experience the amazing experience I had and is still provided at EMS will benefit society immensely. I know that the education I received here has had an incredible positive impact on my educational and professional life.

If this works financially it would be good. It would be a shame to lose the gravitas that Rougemont House has but appreciate it is difficult to work in and having no staff room must be very difficult. Having your own residential accommodation makes a lot of sense.

My main concerns about the proposed greater area of cover relate to the social needs of the young people who attend the Math school. It is very challenging for them, particularly as boarding is week day only, to maintain social contact with friends over this very large geographical area. My daughter has travelled a lot on bus and train to visit friends and some places are just almost impossible to get to without a car. At present the accommodation costs seem very high, particularly compared to Uni fees, I appreciate this must be due to the need for tutors to stay in accommodation with under 18 year old students. I would really hope they come down substantially as this must be a real blocker to many families in accessing the Math school experience.

I am all for the idea of Maths Schools, and Exeter Maths School in particular. I realise that it was started as a pilot, and understand that now is a sensible time to expand. I think that it is a good idea to grow into new premises and with increased admissions, as long as you don't grow so much that you lose what makes you special (lots of time for and understanding of each individual student, and lots of opportunities for exciting maths (etc) challenges outside of the usual curriculum), and I don't think that 100 students per year would be a problem from that point of view. (You may however need to rethink things like the Christmas Lectures, which would go on for rather a long time...) I am unconvinced that expanding your catchment as well is the right way to go, but if that is what it takes to get the expansion, then so be it - your track record thus far for sensibly thinking things through before doing them means that whatever you decide will be the right decision for EMS.

Broadly supportive of this proposal, though I would advise caution - do not lose that which makes EMS so special, and so when I remember the fondest memories of my formative years it is not as something which has come and gone, but as something that yet endures, providing those same wonderful memories to some new group of inquisitive youngsters. EMS is a special and wonderful place full of special and wonderful people - students and staff - do not lose that spark, and the rest shall follow.