



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Proposed Reorganisation of Schools in Bedford Borough: Broadmead Lower School

Statutory Notice Consultation

Appendix A

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Key factors considered in relation to the proposal to close Broadmead Lower School

The Department for Education (DfE) expects all decision makers to adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that a rural school will never close, but that the case for closure should be strong and clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area.

In accordance with the guidance the DfE requires that, in formulating any closure proposals in relation to a rural primary school, the Council has given regard to:

- **The likely effect of the discontinuance of the school on the local community**

The impact on the local community is limited as the school is to be replaced by a new Primary School, based at the nearby site of the previously 'Marston Vale' Middle School. The newly established Primary school will continue to offer a range of 'wrap around' care and clubs, limiting the impact of change on working families.

- **The availability, and likely cost to the local authority, of transport to other schools**

The newly established primary is to be located on the current Marston Vale Middle School site which is less than a 10-minute walk from the current Broadmead Lower School site. Therefore, the closure of Broadmead Lower School is not expected to have the effect of unreasonably extending existing journey times or increasing transport costs, or result in too many children being prevented from sustainable travel due to unsuitable routes e.g., for walking, cycling etc.

- **Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase**

The majority of children currently attending Broadmead Lower School reside within the Stewartby area. The Council and Chiltern Learning Trust recognise that offering too many places could result in 'out of area' applicants, thus increasing traffic flow. The newly established Primary School is therefore planned to maintain the PAN of 60 per year group, ensuring there are sufficient places for local children but not significant excess capacity.

- **Any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school**

The Council considered the following options prior to proposing the discontinuance of Broadmead Lower School:

- a. **Bedford Borough Council change age range to convert Broadmead Lower School, and Chiltern Learning Trust convert Marston Vale Middle School, to primary phase. Resulting in a choice of two Primary Schools in Stewartby**

Pupil Place Planning forecasts of school place demand were reviewed, alongside the wider Central Bedfordshire conversion from three tier to two tier education. Our findings were that two primary schools would result in an excess of school places and be financially unsustainable for schools.

b. Expansion of Broadmead Lower School site to become a Primary School and discontinuance of Marston Vale Middle School

The capital works be required to convert Broadmead Lower School into a primary school would require 'new build' expansion. This would result in more investment than the internal reconfiguration works required to convert the Marston Vale site. Additionally, the Broadmead Lower site is limited in space and, once converted to primary, would not fully meet area guidelines for Mainstream Schools however Marston Vale site would be ample in terms of the recommended area for a school of the proposed site.

c. A single primary school within Stewartby, operating over two sites

Making use of both the existing school sites, operating in an Infant Junior style provision was considered. However, this wasn't felt to be the most efficient means of offering primary provision; split sites can lead to duplication of support staff (catering services, office staff) as well as increased costs relating to utilities and operational running of the buildings.

The DfE also advises the Council should provide evidence to show they have carefully considered alternatives to closure including:

- **Conversion to academy status and joining a multi-academy trust or federation with another local school**

The Council is working with Chiltern Learning Trust (CLT) to support TUPE transfer of experienced Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Lower Key Stage 2 staff from Broadmead Lower School to the newly established Stewartby Primary. Whilst Broadmead Lower School itself would not move into CLT, the teaching staff will be supported to move across, should they wish to.

- **The scope for an extended school to provide local community services and facilities (e.g., childcare facilities, family and adult learning, healthcare community internet access)**

The Council is working with CLT to ensure the new Stewartby Primary can offer at least the same level of wraparound care and after school clubs offered by Broadmead Lower School. Additionally, the Council are considering opportunities for the Broadmead Lower School site beyond the school closure in 2027; this could be for additional Early Years provision or other community usage.

- **The availability, and likely cost to parents, of transport to other schools and whether the proposal will result in unreasonably long journey times**

The Council duty to provide home to school transport is published within our policies online www.bedford.gov.uk/schooltransport. Should a child be assessed as eligible for home to school transport provision, this would be provided free of charge. The planned location for the newly formed primary school is under half a mile and less than a 10-minute walk from the current lower school site; proposals will therefore not have the effect of unreasonably extending existing journey times or increasing transport costs.

- **The size of the school and whether it puts the children at an educational disadvantage e.g., in terms of breadth of curriculum or resources available**

The newly established primary school will be housed in what is an existing middle school site; the site itself already offers a wider range of resources and facilities which will be further improved by the reconfiguration works CLT will be undertaking.

- **The proportion of pupils attending the school from within the local community i.e., whether the school is being used by the local community**

83% (Summer Census '23) of pupils on roll at Broadmead Lower School are from the local area; the newly formed primary is expected to serve the local community in the same way. The site for the new primary, at The Crescent, also offers the opportunity to expand the primary in future should we see any increase in demand from the local area (due to additional residential development for example).

- **The overall and long-term impact on local people and the community of the closure of the school and of the loss of the building as a community facility**

We foresee that the plans for the new primary school will have a positive impact on the local community. The outcome of our consultations evidenced the proposals now being put forward are the preferred option with our consultees. The Marston Vale school site dates back to the development of Stewartby as a “model village” associated with the nearby brickworks. The site and building were originally provided as a benefaction by the proprietors of the brickworks. They are reserved for educational use by covenants, and parts of the Marston Vale building are Grade 2 listed. The site is in the heart of the village and can be considered a landmark in Stewartby.

- **Educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools**

The Council foresees that the integration of teaching staff from Broadmead Lower School (rated Good by Ofsted, September '23) into the new primary school, to be operated by CLT, will help to ensure a good standard of primary education is maintained within the local area.

- **Whether the school is now surplus to requirements (e.g. because there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils, and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium or long term)**

The Council has considered demand for school places and identified there is currently only need for 1 primary school operating with an intake of 60 children per year group. The proposal to establish the new primary at the Marston Vale site would however offer opportunity to grow the school, should there be a significant increase in demand.

- **Wider school organisation and capacity of good schools in the area to accommodate displaced pupils**

Pupils on roll at Broadmead Lower School will be offered a place to transfer to the new Primary School, the Councils proposal ensures there will be sufficient places to support pupils and avoid any wider displacement.

Finding out more

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