



BEDFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Moving towards a new two-tier primary/ secondary school system for Wootton and Stewartby: **a consultation**

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## Introduction

The majority of Bedford Borough's schools moved to a two-tier primary/secondary school system, from the previous three-tier lower/middle/upper school system, in 2015 to 2019. The two-tier system is the most common education system across England, where children attend a primary school from age four, and move to a secondary school at age eleven; it is also how teacher training is predominantly organised in the UK with primary and secondary specialists joining the teaching workforce. When the changes took place in most of Bedford Borough from 2015 to 2019 the Wootton and Stewartby cluster of schools chose to remain in a three-tier structure because of the cross-border relationship with Central Bedfordshire. This consultation seeks views on the proposed change to a two-tier system – including those of children and young people, parents, school staff and the whole school community.

A linked consultation is taking place in Central Bedfordshire in relation to the Cranfield area which is close to Wootton. Many children attending lower and middle schools in Cranfield progress to Wootton Academy. Some Bedford children attend lower and middle schools in Central Bedfordshire. By working together across local authorities and schools, we hope to support the creation of a consistent two-tier system across both local authority areas.

If the proposals are taken forward, children in Wootton, Stewartby and the Cranfield area will be admitted to primary school reception at the age of four and they will stay at that school until they reach the age of eleven, when they will transfer to a secondary school.

The current system means that children change school in the middle of Key Stage 2, and then again part way through Key Stage 3. The three-tier lower/middle/upper school system dates to the 1950s, before the introduction of the National Curriculum. It has gradually disappeared in most areas to be replaced by the two-tier primary/secondary system. This is demonstrated by the fact that in 1983 there were around 1,400 middle schools in England, and this has reduced to just over 100 now. Bedford Borough has already moved to a two-tier system for most schools and at present only Wootton and Stewartby retains a three-tier model.

In addition, teacher training and education across England is now geared almost entirely to the two-tier primary/secondary education system and school performance data, school inspections, and curriculum materials all assume a two-tier model.

Moving to a two-tier model of education would mean Bedford schools would:

- align with the rest of the country,
- align with the national curriculum key stages,
- help improve educational attainment by not requiring children to change school in the middle of a key stage of the curriculum,
- help attract and retain teachers who are usually trained for either primary or secondary education,
- provide a clearer pathway for parents with a common age of transfer at 11, and
- reduce the number of transitions between schools in the course of a child's school life.

This will help to give children the best chance of getting the most from their education.

Bedford Borough is a great place to live and work – and recent census results show it to be one of

the fastest growing local authority area in England. That's why we expect the number of residents and homes to grow in the coming years. New homes are being built in many areas and there are good transport links by road and rail for many centres of employment. Most of the growth of Bedford's population is driven by people moving from other English districts to take advantage of the employment and housing opportunities in the area. A large proportion of these new households include young children. Wootton, Stewartby and the surrounding villages are an area of growth, which will mean an increase in demand for new school places, over the next 10 to 15 years.

This consultation seeks your views on proposals to change the schools, in a phased pattern, in the Wootton and Stewartby area to a two-tier primary/secondary model of education.

When the consultation is complete its findings will be shared with the schools and academies affected, with Central Bedfordshire Council, and with the Department for Education's Regional Schools Director. All these – particularly schools – will have a critically important role in making the final decision on the way ahead.

**Your views, questions and comments will help shape the future of schooling in Wootton and Stewartby.**



## Summary of proposed changes

The proposals for the four schools in Wootton and Stewartby are as follows:

- Broadmead Lower School in Stewartby (Year R [Reception] to Year 4) would become a primary school (YR to Y6) – so children would remain at the school until they were ready to transfer to secondary school at age 11 to start Year 7. The school's published admission number would remain at 60. Some building works would take place to accommodate the larger number of year groups.
- Wootton Lower School (Year R [reception] to Year 4) would become a primary school (Year R [Reception] to Year 6) – so children would remain at the school until they were ready to transfer to secondary school at age 11 to start Year 7. The school's published admission number would remain at 120. Some building works would take place to accommodate the larger number of year groups.
- Wootton Upper School (Year 9 to Year 13) would extend its age range so that it admits children at age 11 (Year 7) rather than at age 13 (Year 9). Admissions would continue at Year 9 for a transitional period.
- Marston Vale Middle School in Stewartby would close in 2026 but be retained as an educational site, including the buildings, for use in the near future.

These changes would be introduced over several years as illustrated in table 1, 2 and 3.

The changes could be introduced as follows:

### September 2025

In September 2025 children aged 9 would stay at Broadmead and Wootton Primary Schools into Year 5 rather than transferring to a middle school. Marston Vale middle school would not take a year 5 intake in this year. Wootton Academy would take a year 9 intake.

### September 2026

In September 2026 Year 4 pupils would move up to Year 5, and Year 5 pupils would move up to Year 6 at Broadmead and Wootton, completing those schools' transition to primary schools.

All remaining pupils in Year 7 and 8 at Marston Vale middle school would transfer across to Wootton Academy. Wootton Academy would thereby become a secondary school with pupils from Year 7 to Year 8 and would also take a year 9 intake. Marston Vale middle school would close.

### September 2027

Wootton Academy would admit pupils at Year 7 and also have a Year 9 intake.

### September 2028 and beyond

Wootton Academy would admit pupils at Year 7 and it would admit pupils at year 9 for the last time, completing its transition to an 11-16 secondary school (with a sixth form provision). This means that all Bedford Borough residents who join Holywell Middle School in 2024 (its last Year 5 intake) will have the opportunity to transfer across to Wootton Academy in Year 9 as they would have done in the previous three tier system.

From this date onwards a two-tier system would be operational in Wootton and Stewartby, with two primary schools, Broadmead and Wootton, and one secondary school, Wootton Academy. Wootton Secondary would continue to recruit a proportion of its intake from schools in the Cranfield area of Central Bedfordshire.

The following chart may be helpful to parents wishing to understand how their children may be affected:

**Table 1: Lower Schools turning to Primary Schools (Wootton Lower and Broadmead Lower Schools):**

What year group is your child in? (School Year Group as at September 2023)	September 2024	September 2025	September 2026	September 2027	September 2028	September 2029	September 2030
<b>Year R</b> Stay in same school then transfer at the end of Year 6 into secondary school	Year 1 at Lower school	Year 2 at Lower School which converts to Primary	Year 3 at Primary School	Year 4 at Primary School	Year 5 at Primary School	Year 6 at Primary School	Year 7 at Secondary School
<b>Year 1</b> Stay in same school then transfer at the end of Year 6 into secondary school	Year 2 at Lower School	Year 3 at Lower School which converts to Primary	Year 4 at Primary School	Year 5 at Primary School	Year 6 at Primary School	Year 7 at Secondary School	Year 8 at Secondary School
<b>Year 2</b> Stay in same school then transfer at the end of Year 6 into secondary school	Year 3 at Lower school	Year 4 at Lower School which converts to Primary	Year 5 at Primary School	Year 6 at Primary School	Year 7 at Secondary School	Year 8 at Secondary School	Year 9 at Secondary School
<b>Year 3</b> Stay in same school then transfer at the end of Year 6 into secondary school	Year 4 at Lower school	Year 5 at Lower School which converts to Primary	Year 6 at Primary School	Year 7 at Secondary School	Year 8 at Secondary School	Year 9 at Secondary School	Year 10 at Secondary School
<b>Year 4</b> Transfer into Year 5 at middle schools and then on to Secondary Schools, see table 2 and 3 for more details	Year 5 at Middle school	See Table 2 and 3 for more details on the Marston Vale Middle and Holywell Middle School proposals					



**Table 2: Marston Vale Middle School**

What year group is your child in? (School Year Group as at September 2023)	September 2024	September 2025	September 2026	September 2027	September 2028	September 2029	September 2030
<b>Year 4</b> Transfer into Year 5 at middle school. Then transfer at the end of Year 6 into secondary school.	Year 5 at Marston Vale Middle School	Year 6 at Marston Vale Middle School	Offered a guaranteed place in Year 7 at Wootton Academy School	Year 8 at Wootton Academy	Year 9 at Wootton Academy	Year 10 at Wootton Academy	Year 11 at Wootton Academy
<b>Year 5</b> Stay in middle school until the end of Year 7 then transfer into secondary school	Year 6 at Marston Vale Middle School	Year 7 at Marston Vale Middle School	Offered a guaranteed place in Year 8 at Wootton Academy School	Year 9 at Wootton Academy	Year 10 at Wootton Academy	Year 11 at Wootton Academy	Further Education
<b>Year 6</b> Stay in middle school until the end of year 8 then transfer into Secondary School	Year 7 at Marston Vale Middle School	Year 8 at Marston Vale Middle School	Transfer to Year 9 at Secondary School	Year 10 at Wootton Academy	Year 11 at Wootton Academy	Further Education	
<b>Year 7</b> Stay in middle school until the end of year 8 then transfer into Upper school turning Secondary School	Year 8 at Marston Vale Middle School	Transfer to Year 9 at Upper / Secondary	Year 10 at Secondary	Year 11 at Secondary	Further Education		
<b>Year 8</b> Year 8 transition as normal to an upper school	Year 9 at Upper / Secondary	Year 10 at Upper / Secondary Year 11 at Secondary Further Education					



Table 3: Holywell Middle School

What year group is your child in? (School Year Group as at September 2023)	September 2024	September 2025	September 2026	September 2027	September 2028	September 2029	September 2030
<b>Year 4</b> Transfer into Year 5 at middle school. Then transfer at the end of Year 6 into secondary school.	Year 5 at Holywell Middle School	Year 6 at Holywell Secondary School	Year 7 at Holywell Secondary School	Year 8 at Holywell Secondary	Year 9 at Holywell Secondary or can transfer to Wootton Academy	Year 10 at Secondary school	Year 11 at Secondary school
<b>Year 5</b> Stay in middle school turning Secondary with option to transfer at end of Year 8	Year 6 at Holywell Middle School	Year 7 at Holywell Secondary School	Year 8 at Holywell Secondary School	Year 9 at Holywell Secondary or can transfer to Wootton Academy	Year 10 at Secondary school	Year 11 at Secondary school	Further Education
<b>Year 6</b> Stay in middle school turning Secondary with option to transfer at end of Year 8	Year 7 at Holywell Middle School	Year 8 at Holywell Secondary School	Year 9 at Holywell Secondary or can transfer to Wootton Academy	Year 10 at Secondary school	Year 11 at Secondary school	Further Education	
<b>Year 7</b> Stay in middle school turning Secondary with option to transfer at end of Year 8	Year 8 at Holywell Middle School	Year 9 at Holywell Secondary or can transfer to Wootton Academy	Year 10 at Secondary	Year 11 at Secondary	Further Education		
<b>Year 8</b> Year 8 transition as normal to an upper school	Year 9 at Upper / Secondary	Year 10 at Upper / Secondary	Year 11 at Secondary	Further Education			

## Admission to schools

Parents in England have the right to express a preference for a place at any maintained school or academy. Generally, if a place is available it must be offered to the parent. If there are more preferences than available places then the published admission criteria must be applied to decide how places are allocated.

It has been established in law that the local authority border may not be used as an admission criterion. This means that parents living in one local authority area have the right to express a preference for a place in another area. If they meet the admissions criteria they must be offered a place.

In the context of these proposals this means that Central Bedfordshire parents will continue to be able to express a preference for school in Bedford – including in the Wootton area; and Bedford parents will continue to be able to express a preference for a place for a school in Central Bedfordshire – including in the Cranfield area. It is likely that substantial numbers of pupils will attend schools over the border for the foreseeable future and this will not change as a result of the introduction of the two-tier system.

## Staffing

The Lower Schools that are becoming Primary schools will need to recruit high quality staff to lead on their Key Stage 2 provision, and the Upper School will also need to recruit high quality staff to lead on their new Key Stage 3 (Year 7 and 8) provision. Across the new Primary and Secondary Schools within this proposal, the number of pupils will likely increase or at a minimum will stay the same. Due to this, at least the same number of staff, and likely more, will be required in the new structure as in the old one. All schools affected by these proposals are committed to working together to support with the recruitment and retention of staff in this area.

Those staff affected by the proposed closure at Marston Vale Middle School will have the option to remain within Chiltern Learning Trust as their employer, but they will also be guaranteed an interview in the new Primary and Secondary Schools as part of those schools expansion and recruitment.

## Who decides if these changes should go ahead?

A range of decision-makers would be involved in taking the decisions necessary to implement these proposals. The decision makers are:

- Bedford Borough Council – in respect of its community schools (Broadmead and Wootton Lower Schools) and its commitment to supporting the change through capital works and in listening and representing whole school communities whether academies or maintained schools,
- Chiltern Academy Trust, Wootton Academy Trust and the Secretary of State for Education advised by the Regional Schools Commissioner in respect of the academies (Marston Vale Middle School and Wootton Academy).



The linked proposals for schools in Cranfield will be taken by Central Bedfordshire Council in respect of community and voluntary controlled schools, the relevant trusts in respect of academies.

Broadmead Lower School and Wootton Lower School are community schools. This means they receive their funding from Bedford Borough Council, which is also the employer of their staff. The Council would make any formal proposal to change the age range of the schools and would be the decision maker.

Marston Vale Middle School is an academy, part of the Chiltern Learning Trust. This means it receives its funding from the Department for Education, and the Trust is the employer of its staff. The Trust would make any formal proposal to close the school. The decision maker would be the Secretary of State for Education advised by the Regional Schools Commissioner for the East of England.

Wootton Academy is part of Wootton Academy Trust. This means it receives its funding from the Department for Education, and the Trust is the employer of its staff. The Trust would make any formal proposal to change the age range of the school. The decision maker would be the Secretary of State for Education advised by the Regional Schools Commissioner for the East of England.

## **Marston Vale Middle School Closure**

The decision by Chiltern Learning Trust to close Marston Vale Middle School has come following extensive discussions regarding pupil numbers within the cluster of schools. The following is a statement from Chiltern Learning Trust:

***“We gave our commitment three years ago to work with both Local Authorities and the schools within the Wootton and Cranfield area to model a transition to two tier which would be for the benefit of all children and families in the community.***

***We accept, reluctantly that the demographic forecasts of the growth in local student numbers, the resulting modelling of proposed changes to the age ranges of other schools in the area and the proposed timeframe for the changes to be implemented, which will now go forward to consultation, will mean that Marston Vale Middle School will not be viable as either a primary or a secondary school in the foreseeable future.***

***We continue to explore opportunities for partnerships with other local schools that could have sustained the Stewartby site for education and as an asset for the local community but unfortunately these have not been successful as yet.***

***We will continue to work with each LA, with the RSC and all local schools to ensure that our students are supported through any period of change, if the proposal are taken forward.”***

Adrian Rogers, Chief Executive, Chiltern Learning Trust

This model ensures that children attending Marston Vale Middle School will be guaranteed a place at Wootton Academy with a proposed ‘porting’ of Year 7 and 8 across to Wootton Academy in September 2026. Both Wootton Academy Trust and Chiltern Learning Trust are fully committed to working together, with the LA to ensure that this transition is as smooth as possible with lots of transition support put in place over the next 4 years.

## What is proposed for schools in Cranfield in Central Bedfordshire?

### September 2025

Under linked proposals, Year 4 children at the following Central Bedfordshire lower schools would continue into Year 5, starting the school's transition towards primary:

- Cranfield Academy (St Paul's)
- Cranfield Academy (St Peter's)
- Houghton Conquest Lower School (CBC community school)
- Marston Moreteyne (CBC Voluntary Controlled) (Church End)
- Marston Moreteyne (CBC Voluntary Controlled) (Forest End)
- Thomas Johnson Lower School (CBC community school)

There are also some proposed changes to the published admission numbers at these schools.

Holywell Middle School would not take in a Year 5 but children in year 8 will be able to continue on into year 9, starting this school's transition towards becoming a Secondary school.

### September 2026

In September 2026 Year 4 pupils would move up to Year 5, and Year 5 pupils would move up to Year 6 at Cranfield Academy, Houghton Conquest, Marston Moreteyne and Thomas Johnson, completing those schools' transition to primary schools.

Year 6 pupils at Holywell Middle school would move up to Year 7 meaning that Holywell would now have a Year 7, 8, 9 and 10.

### September 2027

Holywell would now have a Year 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 and will complete its transition into a Secondary school.

Central Bedfordshire Council is also asking for views on the options for the future use of the following schools:

- Shelton Lower School (CBC community school)

## How to have your say

The future of our education system in the Wootton and Stewartby area matters to our whole community and everyone who has an interest, for current or for future generations of children and young people, is invited to give their views on the proposals for change. You can read more information and have your say by answering a questionnaire online at [Have Your Say Consultation](#)

The consultation is open from October 31, 2022, until December 12, 2022. During the consultation period, in October/November 2022, the consultation proposals will be considered by Bedford Borough Schools Places Board and Executive. It is important to recognise that a public consultation is not a vote or referendum, but an opportunity to gather a range of insights, views and feedback on proposals before any decisions are made.

### What happens after the consultation?

The council and the schools will consider the feedback and make a decision together on the final plan. The results of the consultation will then be considered alongside completed feasibility work which will demonstrate what can be delivered alongside pupil growth data to ensure that the proposed model is the most appropriate and still delivers the required changes in the Wootton and Stewartby area. The aim for this review is January 2023.

If changes are required to the proposed model because of the consultation feedback, these will be considered and agreed with the schools in the area, their governors, diocese, and trusts. This would then be deemed as the final model for the schools in the Wootton and Stewartby area.

## Statutory consultation

If the proposals are to go ahead Bedford Borough Council is required to publish statutory notices for each school that will change. The Council can only do this as the decision-maker for the maintained schools, which are: Broadmead Lower School and Wootton Lower School

Academies will undertake a parallel process to submit a business case to the Regional Schools Commissioner as the decision maker on behalf of the Secretary of State for England.

A statutory consultation means you will be able to comment on the proposals for maintained schools for a period of four weeks, within school term dates. The aim is to publish these for comment in May 2023.

During the consultation period, in May 2023, the Statutory Notices will be considered by Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as a consultee.

The results of the Statutory Notice consultation will be then considered by Bedford Borough School Places Board and Bedford Borough Executive within two calendar months, for a final decision. This is likely to be in August 2023.

Academy schools will be supported in preparing and submitting their business cases for change to the Regional Director, who is the decision-maker on behalf of the Secretary of state for Education for the legal basis of change.

Assuming a decision is reached, implementation will be as set out earlier in this document.

Implementation means the legal change from the three-tier model of education to the primary/secondary model of education. Any necessary building works may take longer and will be determined through the design and planning process.

## Managing the change

Maintaining the quality of education provided to our children through the process of change is an absolute priority for all the schools in the area and for Bedford Borough Council.

Should the plan be approved, these organisations will work together to make sure that disruption is minimised and that both pupils and school staff are well supported through the process of change.

Proposals for schools in Central Bedfordshire will be consulted on and implemented separately by Central Bedfordshire Council. See Appendix 1: Central Bedfordshire Schools for the Future Consultation.

## Bedford Borough Council - Proposals to create a two-tier primary/secondary system of education in Wootton and Stewartby

### Consultation questionnaire

Name: ..... Postcode: .....

Local authority: Bedford ☐ Central Bedfordshire ☐ Other ☐

I am (tick all that apply):

☐ a parent of a child/children at ..... school(s)

☐ a former parent of a child/children at ..... school(s)

☐ a parent of a child/children below school age .....

☐ a teacher at ..... school(s)

☐ a member of support staff at ..... school(s)

☐ a governor/board member at ..... school(s)

☐ a member of the local community .....

☐ other .....

I support **the principle** that a two-tier (primary/secondary) system replaces the current 3-tier (lower/middle/upper) system in Wootton/Stewartby

Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ No view ☐

Comment .....

I support the proposal that **Broadmead Lower School** becomes a Primary School by extending its age range from 4 to 8 (Year R to Year 4) to 4 to 10 (Year R to Year 6).

Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ No view ☐

Comment .....



I support the proposal that **Wootton Lower School** becomes a Primary School by extending its age range from 4 to 8 (Year R to Year 4) to 4 to 10 (Year R to Year 6).

Agree ☐                      Disagree ☐                      No view ☐

Comment .....

I support the proposal that **Wootton Academy** becomes a Secondary School rather than an Upper School by extending its age range from 13 to 15 (Year 9 to Year 11) to 11 to 15 (Year 7 to Year 11).

Agree ☐                      Disagree ☐                      No view ☐

Comment .....

I support the proposal that **Marston Vale Middle School** closes, that pupils transfer directly from a primary to a secondary school, and that an alternative educational use is found for the Marston Vale site.

Agree ☐                      Disagree ☐                      No view ☐

Comment .....

Please put any questions you have in the section below:

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Please provide any additional comments you may have in the section below

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## Appendix 1

### Central Bedfordshire Schools for the Future Consultation



## Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.

Për Informacion

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برای اطلاع

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