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Bedfordshire Schools Trust Limited, BEST House,
Shefford Road, Clifton, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5QS



1 October 2026

Dear Parents/Carers, Staff and Members of the School Community

Re: Formal Consultation on the Proposal to Extend the Age Range at Samuel Whitbread Academy

I am writing to update you on plans to formally extend the age range of Samuel Whitbread Academy (SWA) to transition from an Upper School (Years 9–13) to a full Secondary School (Years 7–13), effective from September 2028.

Our Vision: Becoming a Full Secondary School (Years 7–13)

The Trust Board of Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST) will submit an application to the Department for Education (DfE) Regional Director to formally extend the age range of Samuel Whitbread Academy. Central Bedfordshire Council's strategic plan is to transition the local authority area from a three-tier to a standard two-tier model via a co-ordinated approach. We feel this change aligns with the aims of transitioning Samuel Whitbread Academy to a secondary school.

This proposal ensures that Samuel Whitbread Academy synchronises SWA with neighbouring educational providers, which already operate as secondary or extended secondary provisions.

Integrating Year 7 and 8 pupils into the wider, highly resourced structure of Samuel Whitbread Academy, offers significant educational and personal development benefits:

- **State-of-the-Art Facilities:** Pupils will benefit from four dedicated food technology suites, engineering workshops equipped with laser and 3D printers, an elite arts infrastructure (a professional theatre, four drama studios, a dance studio, and a multi-track recording studio), and superb sports facilities supported by a team of 19 PE teachers and Directors of Football, Netball, and Rugby.
- **Specialist Subject Teaching:** Key Stage 3 pupils will receive a broad and deep curriculum taught exclusively by subject specialists.
- **Advanced Curriculum Opportunities:** Students will gain early access to explore Key Stage 4 specialised subjects such as Psychology, Sociology, Business, Finance and Media.

Proposed Admission Arrangements & Transition Mechanisms (Effective September 2028)

To facilitate a smooth structural transition for our local school cluster, the academy will implement temporary, incremental admissions mechanisms starting in September 2028:

- **Introduction of Year 7 Entry Point:** A new Year 7 entry cohort will be introduced with a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 90 pupils (three-form entry).

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Dr Alan Lee
CEO & National Leader of Education



Campton Academy, Castle Newnham, Etonbury Academy, Gothic Mede Academy, Gravenhurst Academy, Langford Village Academy, Lawnside Academy, Pix Brook Academy, Robert Bloomfield Academy, Samuel Whitbread Academy, St Christophers Academy, BEST Nurseries

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- Year 9 Entry Point will remain: To allow current three-tier cohorts to flow through the system without disruption, the Year 9 point of entry will become a PAN of 360 (currently 380) for September 2028 and 2029.
- Phased Integration: By September 2030, the Year 9 cohort will cohesively blend 90 internal transitioning students with 270 external admissions (totalling 360).

Oversubscription Criteria & Feeder School Adjustments

- Robert Bloomfield Academy (RBA): SWA and RBA leadership are collaborating closely. To support families who prefer their children to complete Key Stage 2/3 at RBA (Years 5–8), RBA will be named as the exclusive feeder school for the Year 9 entry point.
- Henlow CoE Academy: To responsibly reflect sustained localised demand and operating structures at Henlow CoE Academy, SWA will formally remove Henlow Academy as a named traditional feeder school within the revised admissions criteria at Year 9 point of entry.
- School Transport: Statutory home-to-school transport rights will apply as per the Local Authority policy.

The Consultation Process

This letter formally announces the upcoming public consultation period covering both the structural proposal to extend the age range (effective September 2028) and the consequential changes to admission arrangements.

We warmly invite all stakeholders—including parents, staff, prospective parents, local schools, and community representatives—to share their views.

Consultation Schedule

- Opens: at 9.00am on 1 October 2026
- Closes: at 12.00noon on 12 November 2026

An information session will be held on Monday 19 October 2026 between 5.00pm and 7.00pm at Samuel Whitbread Academy for any interested parties to attend. Trust and school staff will be available to answer any questions you may have. If you would like to attend this event, please complete the google form linked [here](#) by 12noon on Thursday 15 October 2026.

Alternatively, if you cannot make the above date, then please contact us with your views on the email below.

How to Submit Your Views

Your feedback is vital to our decision-making process. All representations will be carefully reviewed by the Trust Board before any final submission is made to the DfE Regional Director.

Feedback can be submitted by email or in writing to:

swaconsultation@bestacademies.org.uk

Compliance Manager
Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST)
Shefford Road
Clifton
Bedfordshire
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We look forward to receiving your valuable input as we shape this exciting chapter for Samuel Whitbread Academy.

Yours faithfully



Dr Alan Lee
Chief Executive Officer
Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST)

