

Samuel Whitbread Academy

Proposed Age-Range Extension (September 2028) — Consultation FAQ

Context of the Consultation: This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document supports the formal statutory consultation regarding the proposal to extend the age range of Samuel Whitbread Academy (SWA) from an Upper School (Years 9–13) to a Secondary School (Years 7–13) effective from September 2028.

Section 1: Overview & Strategic Rationale

Q1: What exactly is being proposed for Samuel Whitbread Academy?

We are proposing to formally extend the age range of Samuel Whitbread Academy to become a full Secondary School (Years 7–13) starting in September 2028. This involves introducing a new Year 7 entry cohort with a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 90 pupils, alongside our traditional Year 9 point of entry.

Q2: Why is this change being proposed now?

This proposal ensures that Samuel Whitbread Academy aligns with neighbouring educational providers which already operated as secondary or extended secondary provisions, providing educational stability and parent choice.

Q3: How does this proposal fit into the wider local educational landscape?

All educational providers situated immediately to the east of Samuel Whitbread Academy are already operating successfully as either secondary or extended secondary provisions. This proposal ensures SWA is fully synchronised with the established structures of the broader local area, facilitating uniform transition pathways for all students.

Section 2: Curriculum, Facilities & Student Experience

Q4: Will a 3-form entry (90 pupils) at Year 7 be large enough to offer a broad and deep curriculum?

Yes, exceptionally so. Because Year 7 and 8 pupils will be integrated into the wider, highly resourced structure of Samuel Whitbread Academy, they will benefit from the breadth and depth of the curriculum. They will receive an outstanding Key Stage 3 curriculum taught by subject specialists. In addition, they will have early opportunities to explore Key Stage 4 specialised subjects such as Psychology, Sociology, Finance, Business, Film and Media.

Q5: What specialist facilities will be available to the new Year 7 and 8 cohorts?

Students will have full access to our state-of-the-art Key Stage 4 and 5 learning environments. These include:

- Six dedicated food technology suites, DT and engineering workshops equipped with laser and 3D printers.
- An elite arts infrastructure featuring a professional theatre, three drama studios, a dance studio, and a multi-track recording studio.
- Superb physical education facilities, including a fully equipped gymnasium, supported by a specialized team of 19 PE teachers and professional Directors of Football, Netball, and Rugby.

Section 3: Admissions & Transition Mechanisms

Q6: How will having two entry points (Year 7 and Year 9) work in practice?

Dual entry points allow incremental transition to a secondary without structural disruption. The Year 9 point of entry will temporarily remain at a PAN of 360. By September 2030, our Year 9 cohort will naturally and cohesively blend 90 internal transitioning students with 270 external admissions. The Trust has extensive operational experience managing mixed entry points seamlessly.

	Year 7	Year 9
September 2028	90	360
September 2029	90 (with 90 moving up to Year 8)	360
September 2030	90 (with 90 moving up to Year 8)	90 internal + 270 external (Total 360)

Q7: What is the timeline for changing the admissions criteria?

A formal statutory consultation covering both the age-range extension and the updated admissions criteria is scheduled to launch in early October 2026. This process will ensure complete transparency. We anticipate that the updated policy will closely mirror the trusted oversubscription criteria currently utilised across the Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST).

Q8: Will this proposal create an oversupply of school places in our area?

This proposal will add an additional 90 places to the system. However, we do not believe it will create an oversupply and would allow more choice for parents in the area when seeking secondary options at Year 7.

Section 4: Impact on Neighbouring Schools & Community

Q9: How will this affect Robert Bloomfield Academy (RBA)?

SWA and RBA leadership are working in close, transparent collaboration. BEST is proposing to name RBA as an exclusive feeder school for the Year 9 entry point, giving a priority criterion so that students can continue their four-year journey at RBA before joining SWA if they wish.

Q10: What is the impact on other local schools?

We do not anticipate any negative impact on local schools. Recent data shows that other local schools have taken numbers significantly over their standard PAN for Year 7 for September 2026, proving that localised demand remains strong and sustained. To handle this transition responsibly, SWA propose to formally remove Henlow Academy as a named traditional feeder school within our revised admissions criteria.

Q11: Will my child be eligible for school transport if they enter at Year 7?

Statutory home-to-school transport rights will apply as per the Local Authority policy.

Next Steps in the Process

The formal statutory consultation will open on **1 October 2026**. This will provide a dedicated email for parents, staff, community members and other stakeholders, such as the Local Authority, to submit formal representations before the final application is submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) Regional Director.