

Have
your
say...

...on proposed
changes to schools
in Biggleswade and
the surrounding area

This consultation is open from
June 23, 2021, to September 28, 2021.

You can have your say online at
www.schoolsforthefuture.co.uk/biggleswade





Background

Central Bedfordshire is a great place to live and work. That's why the number of local residents and homes are set to grow in the coming years. Across the area, 43,000 new homes are expected to be built by 2035 and that means a lot more school places will be needed.

Because of the need for change, local schools have been working together, with Central Bedfordshire Council, on the ambitious Schools for the Future programme. This is a long-term plan to raise education standards and make sure there are:

- **the right schools**
- **in the right places**
- **delivering the best education**

The aim of this is to ensure children and young people achieve the best possible outcomes in their education, while making the best use of public money.

Biggleswade, like the rest of Central Bedfordshire, has historically been an area where the schools operate in the three-tier model of education, where pupils start in lower school before transitioning to middle school and then an upper school.

Following the introduction of academisation, schools have had more control to change the age range they cater for. This has resulted in a mixed landscape of schools in Central Bedfordshire that now also includes primary and secondary schools as well as some hybrid models.

This is confusing for many parents, and some are already choosing to send their children to secondary schools in other areas. Also, where changes occur to the age ranges of schools without coordination there is a negative impact on the viability of other schools in the area.

Due to the decline in the number of middle schools nationwide (from a peak of 1,400 in 1983 to just over 100 now, including 14 in Central Bedfordshire), teacher training is now focused on the primary/secondary model. In moving to this model of education, schools will be better placed to attract and retain the best teachers.

The primary/secondary model also provides simpler pathways for children as they only move once between schools. As disruption is reduced, it ensures children and young people are better placed to succeed as it allows secondary schools to have a five-year curriculum to lead up to GCSEs.

In 2018, a decision was taken by Central Bedfordshire Council to support schools that want to work towards a primary and secondary model of education, considering that:

- the appropriate resources are in place to do so
- change is coordinated
- change supports improvements in educational outcomes

The Schools for the Future Programme aims to:

- ensure sufficient places (appropriately located) to best meet demand from housing growth



Funding for new schools

Central Bedfordshire Council has successfully secured £69.6million of government funding to provide much-needed new infrastructure and services to support the planned 3,000 new homes in Biggleswade. This funding, known as the Biggleswade Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), includes a £14million contribution for a new secondary school for Biggleswade.

This funding must be spent by March 2024 and the new secondary school is scheduled to be completed for September 2024.

As with all large housing developments, developers are required to provide some community facilities through a Section 106 (S106) agreement. In this case, the development for the 1,500 new homes on land east of Biggleswade includes provision of a new primary school.

These two new schools, which will both be located on the land east of the town and closest to the housing growth, are included in this proposed plan.

Summary of proposed changes

This consultation seeks your views on proposals to move the schools in Biggleswade and the surrounding area to a primary/secondary model of education and provide the required new school places.

The proposals include the following changes between 2022 and 2024 at the earliest:

- Potton Middle School and Potton Lower School schools to amalgamate and become a primary
- All existing lower schools and Biggleswade Academy to become primary schools
- A new primary school on land east of Biggleswade
- Possible options for Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School and Dunton CofE VC Lower School, including amalgamation
- Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School and Stratton Upper to become secondary schools.
- A new secondary school on land east of Biggleswade (this is a different site to the new primary on land east of Biggleswade). Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School would become a secondary school and relocate to this new school
- Lawnside Academy moves to the vacated Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School site
- There would be one sixth form open to pupils of both secondary schools (currently Stratton Upper and Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School).

Schools in the area now

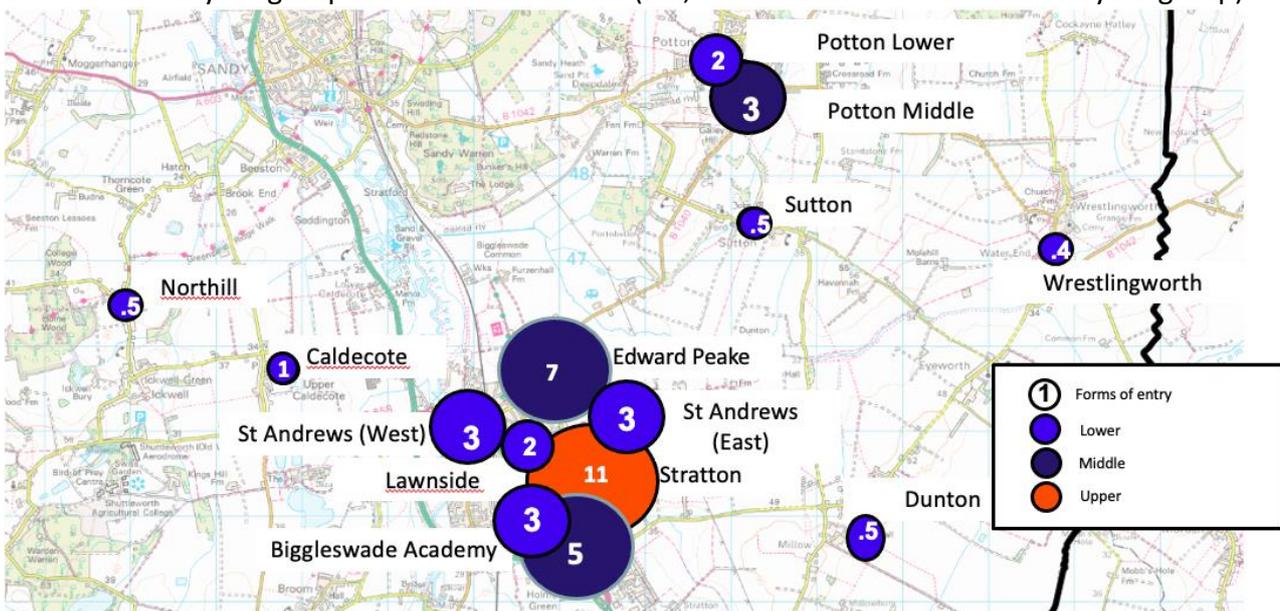
There are currently 12 schools in Biggleswade and the surrounding area: eight lower schools, with pupils moving into two middle schools (Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School and Potton Middle School) and then on to Stratton Upper School. Biggleswade Academy is an extended middle school, it covers lower and middle school ages. The following map indicates where all of these schools are currently located:



Source: Google Maps

The Biggleswade area is close to Cambridgeshire, which is a two-tier area, and Sandy which has a secondary school. More and more pupils are leaving middle school early to attend secondary schools nearby. The schools in this area are a mixture of council-maintained schools and 5 academies (which are independent of the council). Stratton Upper School is the existing post-16 education provider.

The following map shows the current location of all the lower, middle and upper schools and the classes in each year group that each school has. (i.e., the number of classes in each year group):



Please note: In the above map, Biggleswade Academy is represented by two circles, even though it is one school. The light blue circle represents the number of year groups (three) in Reception to Year 4 and the dark blue circle represents the number of year groups (five) in Year 5 to Year 8.



The following table shows the schools included in this area and their current school type, pupil admission number (PAN), current capacity and the pupils at the school as of spring 2021:

| School name | Current school type | PAN | Current school capacity | Pupils at the school (spring 2021) |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Biggleswade Academy | Middle school deemed a primary (recorded here as lower and middle school aged pupils) | 90 Lower pupils 140 Middle pupils | 450 lower pupils 560 middle pupils | 922 pupils |
| Caldecote CofE Academy | Lower | 24 pupils | 120 pupils | 55 pupils |
| Dunton CofE VC Lower School | Lower | 15 pupils | 75 pupils | 62 pupils |
| Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School | Lower | 13 pupils | 65 pupils | 54 pupils |
| Lawnside Academy | Lower | 60 pupils | 300 pupils | 213 pupils |
| Northill CofE VA Lower School * | Lower | 15 pupils | 75 pupils | 66 pupils |
| Potton Lower School | Lower | 60 pupils | 300 pupils | 268 pupils |
| Potton Middle School | Middle | 90 pupils | 360 pupils | 184 pupils |
| St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – East | Lower | 90 pupils | 450 pupils | 761 pupils |
| St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – West | Lower | 90 pupils | 450 pupils | |
| Sutton CofE VA Lower School | Lower | 15 pupils | 75 pupils | 73 pupils |
| Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School | Middle | 210 pupils | 840 pupils | 546 pupils |
| Stratton Upper (Yr9-11 only) | Upper | 330 pupils | 990 pupils | 682 pupils |

* Northill CofE VA Lower School is in the process of converting to an academy in the summer/autumn 2021.

As the table shows, all of the schools are currently not filled to capacity. This has been accounted for in the forecasting and demand for new school places.



Some of this is because parents are already choosing to send their children to other secondary schools, which accounts for some of the lower number of pupils in the middle and upper schools. Low pupil numbers impact on the financial viability of schools.

Proposed changes in detail

This document outlines the proposed changes to schools in Biggleswade and the surrounding area, which would see them transition from the current three-tier model of education to a primary/secondary model, in line with neighbouring areas and the rest of the country.

By making this change it will reduce transition points which will support the improvement of educational attainment, as well as aid recruitment and retention of the teaching workforce. It will also help improve school viability and provide a clearer pathway for children and parents.

The focus has been on making sure children and young people have the best educational journey, both through the transition to the primary/secondary model and beyond.

The proposals include the following changes between 2022 and 2024 at the earliest:

- Potton Middle School and Potton Lower School schools to amalgamate and become a primary
- All existing lower schools and Biggleswade Academy to become primary schools
- A new primary school on land east of Biggleswade
- Possible options for Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School and Dunton CofE VC Lower School, including amalgamation
- Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School and Stratton Upper to become secondary schools.
- A new secondary school on land east of Biggleswade (this is a different site to the new primary on land east of Biggleswade). Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School would become a secondary school and relocate to this new school
- Lawnside Academy moves to the vacated Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School site
- There would be one sixth form open to pupils of both secondary schools (currently Stratton Upper and Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School).

Housing growth

Planning for new school places is linked to housing growth. Overall, in the town of Biggleswade alone, there are 987 new homes are expected by 2025 with 770 forecasted pupils across all year groups. Beyond 2031 there will be 3,057 new homes, with 2,384 forecasted pupils.

Most of this housing growth will be in the east with around 1,500 new homes planned and therefore a brand-new primary school with two classes in each year group is proposed to be built on land east of Biggleswade, funded through developer contributions.

Proposed locations

The yearly pupil place forecast is expected later in summer 2021, and this will be reviewed in parallel with the consultation. The following map indicates where, under these proposals, the schools in this area would be located:



Source: Google Maps

* Current locations of Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School and Dunton CofE VC Lower School

** The approximate proposed locations, subject to planning, of where the new secondary school (the relocated Edward Peake CofE VC Middle school) and the new primary school would be located on land east of Biggleswade.

Proposed primary school overview

The following table shows the schools that would convert to primary schools as part of this proposal, with their current capacity, how many pupils are currently on roll and what their capacity will be as a primary school:

| School name | Proposed school type | Proposed capacity as a primary | Current Pupil Admission No. (PAN) | Current school capacity | Pupils at the school (spring 2021) | Capacity against pupils at the school |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Biggleswade Academy* | Primary | 840 pupils | 90 Lower pupils 140 Middle pupils | 450 lower pupils 560 middle pupils | 922 pupils | 66 pupils below capacity |
| Caldecote CofE Academy | Primary | 168 pupils | 24 pupils | 120 pupils | 55 pupils | 65 pupils below capacity |
| Dunton CofE VC Lower School | Primary | To be informed by an | 15 pupils | 75 pupils | 62 pupils | 13 pupils below capacity |

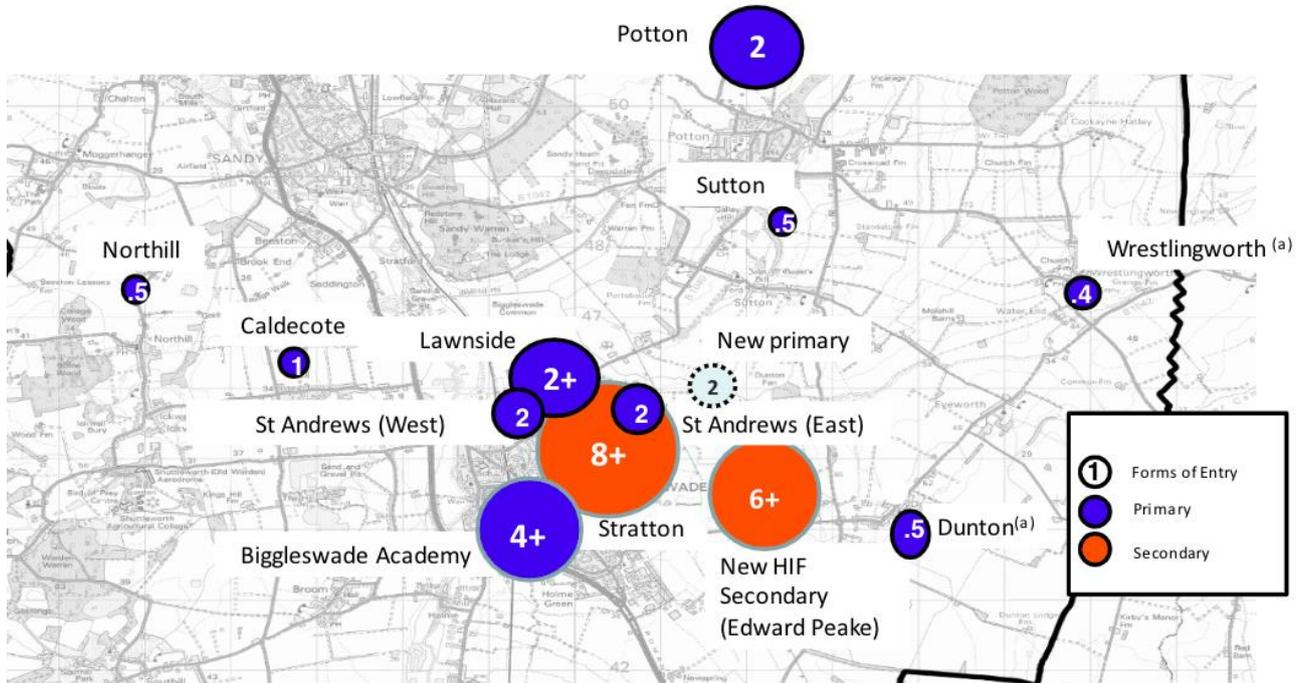


| | | options appraisal | | | | |
|---|---------|--|-----------|------------|------------|---------------------------|
| Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School | Primary | To be informed by an options appraisal | 13 pupils | 65 pupils | 54 pupils | 11 pupils below capacity |
| Lawnside Academy | Primary | 420 pupils | 60 pupils | 300 pupils | 213 pupils | 87 pupils below capacity |
| Northhill CofE VA Lower School | Primary | 105 pupils | 15 pupils | 75 pupils | 66 pupils | 9 pupils below capacity |
| Potton Lower School | Primary | 420 pupils | 60 pupils | 300 pupils | 268 pupils | 32 pupils below capacity |
| Potton Middle School | Primary | | 90 pupils | 360 pupils | 184 pupils | 176 pupils below capacity |
| St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – East ** | Primary | 420 pupils | 90 pupils | 450 pupils | 761 pupils | 139 pupils below capacity |
| St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – West** | Primary | 420 pupils | 90 pupils | 450 pupils | | |
| Sutton CofE VA Lower School | Primary | 105 pupils | 15 pupils | 75 pupils | 73 pupils | 2 pupils below capacity |
| New primary (land east of Biggleswade) | Primary | 420 pupils | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

*Biggleswade Academy increases from a school with three classes in each year group to a school with four+ classes in each year group.

**The St Andrew's sites reduce from three classes in each year group to two classes in each year group each

The following map shows the proposed location of the schools in the area, as primary and secondary schools, and the classes in each year group that each school would have. (i.e., the number of classes each has in its first point of entry year group, which would be Reception/Year 1 for primary schools and Year 7 for secondary schools)



Transition to primary

The current earliest date for the proposed primary transition is 2024/25, except for Potton Middle School and Potton Lower School, which would amalgamate and become a primary in 2022/23.

Lower school pupils in Year 4 in 2023/24 would remain in their schools into Year 5 for 2024/25. This means that parents would not need to apply for the Year 5 place for 2024/25, as pupils would automatically remain at their lower school as it changes its age range, and they would remain there until they applied for a secondary school place. At that point, there would be no Year 5 intake to Biggleswade Academy (except in-year admissions) or Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School.

Potton Middle School

As pupils have increasingly accessed schools in neighbouring Sandy and Cambridgeshire in recent years, this has led to a significant decrease in pupil numbers in years 7 and 8, which impacts on the educational and financial viability of the school.

For example, the Pupil Admission Number (PAN) is 90 for each year and in 2020/21 there were 22 pupils enrolled in Year 7, but this will reduce to 4 pupils in 2021/22 and an estimated 5 pupils in 2022/23. And in Year 8, there will be 21 pupils in 2021/22, but this will reduce to an estimated 4 pupils in 2022/23.

As a result, the proposed amalgamation with the neighbouring Potton Lower School, to become Potton Primary, would need to happen from September 2022, ahead of the transition of other schools to primaries.



It is proposed that Potton Lower School and Potton Middle School amalgamate to create a primary with 2 classes in each year group as a first phase to address the urgent need to resolve the educational and financial viability of Potton Middle School.

Small rural lower schools

There are four small rural lower schools in the area with small class sizes in each year of approximately 15 places (pupil numbers based on spring 2021 census). These schools are:

Northill CofE VA Lower School

Northill CofE Voluntary Aided Lower School is located to the west of Biggleswade and on the western side of the A1 so draws on a different part of the population from the other three small rural lower schools which are all on the eastern side of the A1. Northill currently has 66 pupils with a capacity of 75. There is currently no significant housing growth planned for Northill. Central Bedfordshire Council will continue to monitor the scale of any developments in the parish. The school site is currently 6,115 sqm. Any proposals brought forward will reflect that the school site is held in trust for the provision of a Church of England School and this will be factored into future planning. From our initial review the school site could accommodate some expansion to become a primary school. Therefore, we propose this school transitions to a primary school offering 15 places in each year.

Sutton CofE VA Lower School

Sutton CofE Voluntary Aided Lower School is located between the towns of Biggleswade and Potton. The school currently has 73 pupils with a capacity of 75. There is some housing growth planned for the village of Sutton (34 homes on High Street). The school site is 5,237 sqm. Any proposals brought forward will reflect that the school site is held in trust for the provision of a Church of England School and this will be factored into future planning. From our initial review the school site could accommodate some expansion to become a primary school. The school already has planning permission to build an additional classroom. Therefore, we propose this school transitions to become a primary school offering 15 places each year.

Dunton CofE VC Lower School

This school is located east of Biggleswade. The school shares a headteacher and governing body with Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School.

The school currently has 62 pupils and a capacity of 75. There is some housing growth planned for the village (37 new homes nearby on Greenfield Way). The school site is 5,081sqm. Any proposals brought forward will reflect that the school site is held in trust for the provision of a Church of England School and this will be factored into future planning. Our initial review indicates there may be constraints to the expansion of the school on the current site which we need to explore further. Therefore, we are considering a number of options for the future of this school.

Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School

This school is located further east of Biggleswade than Dunton. The school shares a headteacher and governing body with Dunton CofE VC Lower School.



This school currently has 54 pupils and a capacity of 65. There is no housing growth planned for the village. The school site is 4,984sqm. Any proposals brought forward will reflect that the school site is held in trust for the provision of a Church of England School and this will be factored into future planning. Our initial review indicates there may be constraints to the expansion of the school on the current site which we need to explore further. Therefore, we are considering a number of options for the future of this school.

Demand for places at Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School

| School | Pupil Admission Number (PAN) for 2021 | Number of pupils admitted for 2021 | Current total pupil capacity | Pupils at the school in spring 2021 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Dunton CofE VC Lower School | 15 | 14 | 75 | 62 |
| Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School | 13 | 12 | 65 | 54 |

The table above shows the current pupil numbers. A proposed new primary school is due to be built on land East of Biggleswade which is likely to create additional places within the local area in the future, to meet forecast need.

The map below shows where the new primary school is likely to be, subject to planning, in relation to Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School, and also the proximity of Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School to Potton. The maximum likely distance from the two existing schools to the new primary site on land east of Biggleswade would be:

- Dunton CofE VC Lower School – 3.8 miles
- Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School – 6.1 miles (this school is also 3.5 miles from Potton)





Room to grow at Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School

A primary school would need to accommodate two more year groups than a lower school (Reception + Year 1 to Year 6). The national guidance recommends that the space for a primary school with:

- One class of 30 pupils in each year group is 11,220 square metres (sqm)
- One class of 15 pupils in each year group is 5,496sqm

A comparison with the current school site sizes of Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School can be seen below:

| | Dunton CofE VC Lower School | Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School | National guidance of recommended size for a primary with one class of 15 places in each year group |
|-----------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Site size | 5,081sqm | 4,984sqm | 5,496sqm |

Site size is one indication of a school's room to grow against a national benchmark, so further work is required to test the options. Based on the evidence available at the moment a transition to a primary school may not be possible at Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School because the current site may be too small, and its playing field is not attached to the site. Initial analysis shows that this may not be possible at Dunton CofE VC Lower School because the site may be too small and there is no room to extend on the current site. This is unique within Biggleswade and the surrounding area because, while all lower schools proposed to transition to primary would require expansion, this can be accommodated within their existing schools' boundaries. As part of the consultation process more detailed work will be undertaken at the schools to consider this issue further.

Options for change at Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School

There are three options being considered for the future of Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School. For each option, the schools' leadership will not change, as they both share the same headteacher and governing body. The schools would also remain diocese schools. Central Bedfordshire Council has more detailed work to do to understand the feasibility of expansion on the current sites, but it is important to hear your views on the three different options being considered. The options are:

- **Option A:** Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School and Dunton CofE VC Lower School each transitioning to primary on their current sites (with one class of 15 places in each year group per school)

Both Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School, each transition to be a primary school with one class of 15 places in each year group on their current sites. New land would need to be acquired to accommodate the extra year groups for a primary school.

- **Option B:** Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School and Dunton CofE VC Lower School to amalgamate as a primary school with 30 places in each year group on the Dunton CofE VC Lower School site



Dunton CofE VC Lower School may require additional land to be acquired to accommodate the extra year groups for a primary school.

- **Option C:** Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School and Dunton CofE VC Lower School to amalgamate and relocate as a new primary with two classes of 60 places in each year group in a brand-new school on land east of Biggleswade.

The new primary would be located on land provided to Central Bedfordshire Council by the housing developer.

Lawnside Academy

Lawnside Academy would move 0.7 miles into the current Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School site. This would follow the relocation Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School to the new secondary site on land east of Biggleswade (see secondary school proposal section from page 14).

The Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School site would provide space and facilities not available on the Lawnside Academy site. No decision has been made on the future use of the existing Lawnside Academy site once it is vacated. This will not be determined during this consultation.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

The Schools for the Future programme is [currently consulting](#) on the educational support and provision for children and young people identified with special educational needs or disability (SEND) across Central Bedfordshire. Within Biggleswade, this includes the future provision at Ivel Valley Special School. The outcome of that consultation will be considered alongside the outcome of this consultation for mainstream schools in the Biggleswade area.

Proposed secondary school overview

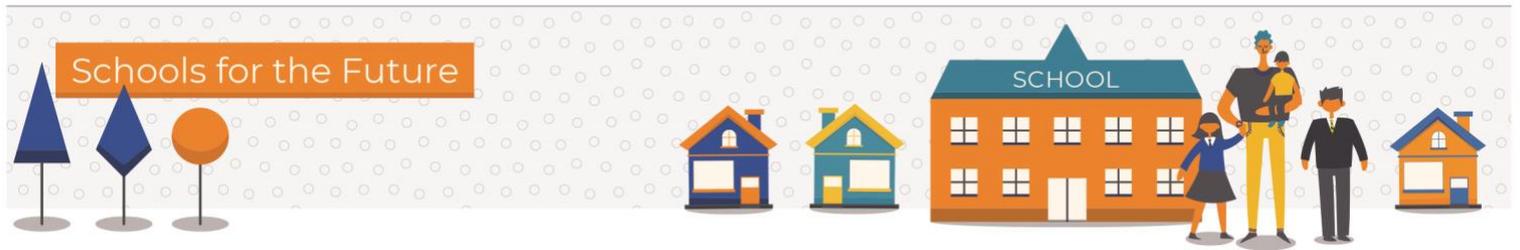
The following table shows the schools that would convert to secondary schools as part of this proposal, with their current capacity, how many pupils are currently on roll and what their capacity will be as a secondary school:

| School name | Proposed school type | Proposed secondary capacity | Current Pupil Admission No. (PAN) | Current school capacity | Pupils at the school (spring 2021) | Capacity against pupils at the school |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School | Secondary | 900 pupils | 210 pupils | 840 pupils | 546 pupils | 294 pupils below cap. |
| Stratton Upper (Yr9-11 only) * | Secondary | 1,200 pupils | 330 pupils | 990 pupils | 682 pupils | 308 pupils below cap. |

*Stratton Upper figures in the above table exclude the current sixth form pupil numbers, which is 187.

Transition to secondary

The current proposed earliest date for secondary transition is 2024/25. Under this model, pupils due to be in Years 7 and 8 at Biggleswade Academy in September 2024 would need to apply for a



place at a secondary school. Within the area this will be either Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School (subject to availability) or Stratton Upper. There would be no Year 5 intake to Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School or Biggleswade Academy in 2024/25 as the lower schools would remain at their lower school.

Stratton Upper School

Stratton Upper School would transition to a secondary school with eight classes in each year group, with scope to grow in line with anticipated growth.

Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School

Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School would transition to a secondary school with six classes in each year group, which would increase to eight classes in each year group, in line with anticipated pupil growth.

The school would relocate to a new secondary school site on Central Bedfordshire Council-owned land to the east of Biggleswade. This will be subject to a feasibility study and planning. The construction of the school will be part funded through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (outlined on page 4).

Sixth Form proposal

To provide greatest curriculum choice and financial sustainability there would be one sixth form in the area, open to pupils of both the existing Stratton Upper School and Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School. This proposal is supported by the schools.

The current sixth form attached to Stratton Upper has 187 students. The proposed new sixth form would have a proposed capacity of 420 students.

Leaders at Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School and Stratton Upper School are working together in reviewing options to provide the best collaborative town-wide post 16 provision.

Managing changes

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 Central Bedfordshire Council.

Should the above 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.

How to have your say

The future of our education system in Biggleswade and the surrounding area matters to our whole community, including current and future generations of children and young people. Everyone who has an interest is invited to give their views on the proposals for change.



This aim of this consultation is to help decision makers understand the views of everyone who is interested in these proposals. A consultation is not a referendum or a vote. The views of the public, whilst being incredibly important, are one of several factors such as evidence, lawfulness and financial constraints that need to be taken into account when making the final decision.

You can read more information and have your say by answering a questionnaire online at www.schoolsforthefuture.co.uk/biggleswade.

The consultation is open from 23 June 2021 to 28 September 2021.

What happens after the consultation?

The final model will be informed by feedback from this consultation.

Implementation of the model will be subject to the outcomes of more detailed feasibility studies and confirmation that the plans can be delivered within an agreed budget from a number of funding sources, from across the school system.

The council and the academy schools will need to consider the feedback and make a decision on the final plan. The aim is for this decision to be made in 2022.

Central Bedfordshire Council is the decision-maker for the maintained schools.

Where an academy proposes any changes, this will require the approval of the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). This would apply to Stratton Upper, Caldecote CofE Academy, Lawnside Academy, Northhill CofE VA Lower School and Biggleswade Academy. Central Bedfordshire Council has a very productive working relationship with the RSC who is fully informed of these plans.

Assuming a decision is made to proceed, the council is required to publish statutory notices for each of the maintained schools that will change. You will be able to comment on these for a period of a minimum of four weeks. The aim is to publish these for comment in 2022.

Again, the council and academies will consider the feedback and make a final decision on the plans. This is likely to be in 2022.