

This is the fourth in a regular series of BEST newsletters to keep our parents, staff and the community informed on two-tier education conversion in the Central Bedfordshire area.

CBC ADMISSIONS CAST DOUBT ON PHASE TWO

It has been just over a month since we sent [our open letter](#), right, to the nine members of Central Bedfordshire Council's Executive to express our concern about the lack of progress of the Schools for the Future programme.

In the weeks since, we have worked tirelessly to understand fully the implications of the admissions CBC leader Cllr Richard Wenham made in [his reply to us](#).

Our Trustees and senior leaders have had multiple meetings with Principals, Chairs of Governors, the CBC Chief Executive and officers.

While CBC is legally responsible for the provision of pupil places, it is in the interests of everyone to work together to look for a way forward for the second phase of the Shefford and Stotfold cluster.

Cllr Wenham's reply stated, for the first time, that CBC can no longer commit to the all-through school which would have brought together Robert Bloomfield and Samuel Whitbread Academies.

THE PLEDGES

- 1** 5FE primary provision as part of the 0-18 all-through school
- 2** Entry to 0-18 all-through secondary for RBA feeder school pupils
- 3** CMA becoming a new build 2FE primary school
- 4** Additional sixth form provision on the SWA and ETA/PBA sites
- 5** Development of a joint solution to PFI-related issues on SWA site

This showcase institution for the community would have been the centrepiece of the entire cluster.

With no alternative idea yet to be announced by CBC, hundreds of families who have been expecting their children to be studying in a pioneering new school in 2023 are now in limbo.

Cllr Wenham's letter also jeopardises the pledge for further sixth form provision at Samuel Whitbread, Etonbury and Pix Brook. >>



THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AT YOUR SCHOOL

LANGFORD VILLAGE ACADEMY

Converted to a 1FE* primary school in September 2021



Latest progress: See article overleaf for an update as the school converted to a primary in the first phase of the cluster's two-tier switch.

CAMPTON ACADEMY

Expanding to a 2FE* primary on a new site in September 2023



Latest progress:



ETONBURY ACADEMY

Converting to a 7FE* secondary school in September 2023



Latest progress:



GOTHIC MEDE ACADEMY

Converting to a 3FE* primary in September 2023 and moving to a new purpose-built site



Latest progress:



*1FE (and so on) stands for 'one form of entry' and describes how many classes there are per year group. Each 'FE' equates to 30 places, so a 7FE secondary has an intake of 210 pupils a year

While CBC continues to support the growth of this provision, Cllr Wenham's letter warned sixth form funding is not a function of local authorities and the council would need to prioritise spending money on its statutory duties.

Our support for two-tier was always conditional on CBC's commitment to the pledges and these admissions, therefore, leave the entire second phase of the cluster plan in disarray.

As we stated in our open letter, the five pledges were the result of years of negotiation between BEST and CBC, and already represented significant compromises on our part.

CBC needs to publish its suggested revisions to the plan as soon as possible. However, this cannot result in rushing out a 'solution' that is poorer than what had been agreed before.

As we move towards the end of 2021, it is regretful we cannot give you any clarity on the pathway for your child.

We will, however, do our utmost to ensure a place at one of our schools to any child currently in BEST who is displaced due to any delay or revision to the cluster plan.

We have a moral responsibility to look after our children and we will do just that, irrespective of the external challenges we will all face over the coming months and years.

CBC has stated it hopes to make more information available about its amended proposals 'towards the end of 2021'. As soon as we have an update, we will share this with you.

Dr Alan Lee, CEO, Bedfordshire Schools Trust

Langford turns primary – but question marks remain

Langford Village Academy's primary conversion is an exciting new chapter for the school and its first Year 5 cohort has settled in well.



However, we were left disappointed CBC did not hand over the mobile unit on time (pupils did not move in until the end of September), nor did it oversee the delivery of a building meeting the required standards.

Issues over pupil admissions and whether the school will be large enough to meet future local needs remains. A working group continues to explore options, but time is tight.

Meanwhile, CBC's phase two pause also brings into question what will happen to Langford pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2023 – although we hope our pledge to do our utmost to help (*main read, above*) will reassure parents.

GRAVENHURST ACADEMY

Converting to a 1FE primary school in September 2023*



Latest progress:



PIX BROOK ACADEMY

Converting to a 7FE secondary school in September 2023*



Latest progress:



ROBERT BLOOMFIELD & SAMUEL WHITBREAD ACADEMIES

Becoming a 0-18 all through school in September 2023



Latest progress:



LAWNSIDE ACADEMY

Converting to a 2+FE primary school and moving site in September 2024*



Latest progress: The public consultation on plans in the Biggleswade cluster closed on 28 September. CBC and schools are currently considering the feedback received before deciding on a final model, which will then be subject to a further consultation process.

We want to hear from you! Share any views or concerns you may have by emailing us at schoolsforthefuture@bestacademies.org.uk