

This is the fifth 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.

NEW CBC PLAN MEANS A NEW DAWN FOR CLUSTER

The summer term has started with Central Bedfordshire Council revealing a new plan for the second phase of the Shefford and Stotfold cluster. And with it comes renewed optimism that real progress can now be made on a full transition to the primary-secondary model of education.

Earlier this week you would have received from your school a letter by Schools for the Future Programme Director Sue Archer and Deputy Director of Children's Services Sarah Ferguson.

They provided an update which included new proposals for many BEST schools, as well as confirmation that September 2023 was no longer achievable for transition and, therefore, the new target date was September 2025.

The major change surrounds Robert Bloomfield and Samuel Whitbread Academies. Originally planned to come together as an all-through school, both will now instead convert into secondary schools.

The PAN (Published Admissions Number – how many pupils can be admitted each year) will be 150 for Robert Bloomfield and 210 for Samuel Whitbread.

Both Etonbury and Pix Brook Academies will retain their current PANs of 180 as they convert from extended secondary schools to secondaries, while our three remaining lower schools in the cluster will become primaries as planned.

While it is early days and lots of the finer details still need to be worked out by CBC, there is much in this revised cluster plan to be excited about. There are new builds for both Campton and Gothic Mede Academies, while new chapters will open for those BEST schools that will become secondaries.

But, importantly, after much recent uncertainty we now have clarity about the future, which will enable us to stay focused on educating and improving outcomes for our children.

As this cluster plan moves forward, we are committed to holding consultations as part of the approval seeking process with the Department for Education. If you have any questions now, please email schoolsforthefuture@bestacademies.org.uk and we will endeavour to answer them. We will also keep you updated on progress in future issues of this newsletter.

Dr Alan Lee, CEO, Bedfordshire Schools Trust

AT A GLANCE – WHAT NEW CLUSTER PLAN MEANS FOR YOUR SCHOOL

LANGFORD VILLAGE ACADEMY

Converted to a 1FE primary school in September 2021*



The school's PAN is set to increase to meet demand in the area (*turn over to read more*).

CAMPTON ACADEMY

Expanding to a 2FE primary on a new site in September 2025*



Plans remain unchanged. The school will increase in size from a current PAN of 26 to a PAN of 60, and relocate to a new site off Hitchin Road in Shefford, on land next to Shefford Sports Club.

ETONBURY ACADEMY

Converting to a 6FE secondary school in September 2025*



The school's PAN will remain the same as it is now for intake at Year 5 (180 pupils) when it converts to a secondary school, with an intake at Year 7. Ahead of this, Etonbury is also set to open a new sixth form (*turn to back for more*).

GOTHIC MEDE ACADEMY

Converting to a 3FE primary in September 2025 and moving to a new purpose-built site*



Plans remain unchanged. The school will expand to accommodate 90 pupils per year group and move to a new site on the planned Chase Farm development on the eastern edge of Arlesey.

**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 (PAN) of 210 pupils*



Langford's first ever Year 5 cohort, pictured back in September at the start of this academic year

Langford to take extra pupils as PAN goes up

Langford Village Academy – which converted to primary in September as part of the first phase of the cluster plan – has agreed to take in more pupils next year to meet local demand.

The school PAN had reduced from 45 to 30 as part of the move to primary status, but demand in the last two years has far outstripped that – and looks set to do so in the longer term as well.

Working with the parish council, CBC and local parents, the school and BEST have agreed to take above the 30 PAN this year, and again in 2023, with the expectation that all those who live in Langford itself will gain entry.

CBC will also be undertaking a feasibility study with a view to further building work which would enable the school to increase its PAN to 45 or 60 from 2024 on a permanent basis.

New sixth form at Etonbury to open in September 2023

Etonbury Academy is forging ahead with plans to open a new sixth form in the 2023/24 academic year – increasing post-16 choice in the area.



The plan, while not directly linked to the Schools for the Future programme, will be coherent with the plans for Etonbury and the local area.

The school is currently recruiting staff, including a Head of Sixth Form, who will help in the planning and development of the curriculum offer.

GRAVENHURST ACADEMY

Converting to a 1FE primary school in September 2025*



Plans remain unchanged. The school's intake will stay at 15 when it converts to primary.

PIX BROOK ACADEMY

Converting to a 6FE secondary school in September 2025*



The school's PAN will remain the same as it is now for Year 5 intake (180 pupils) when it converts to secondary, with a Year 7 intake.

ROBERT BLOOMFIELD ACADEMY

Converting to a 5FE secondary school in September 2025*



The biggest change in the entire cluster plan. Robert Bloomfield will convert from a middle school with a PAN of 240 to a secondary with an intake of 150 at Year 7.

SAMUEL WHITBREAD ACADEMY

Converting to a 7FE secondary school in September 2025*



With the originally-proposed all-through school no longer part of the new cluster plan, Samuel Whitbread will become a secondary school, with an intake of 210 pupils as well as an enlarged sixth form.

LAWNSIDE ACADEMY

Converting to a 2+FE primary school and moving site. Date of cluster transition now TBC*



CBC's changes to the principles and policies of the Schools for the Future programme, and the delay in the Shefford and Stotfold cluster plan, has had an inevitable knock-on effect on progress in the Biggleswade cluster. Schools are still waiting to receive a further report on the model and timescale of transition from CBC following last year's public consultation.