



have
your
say...

...on the proposed amalgamation of The Lawns Nursery School & Children's Centre with Biggleswade Academy Trust

7 September 2015 – 5 October 2015

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**Central
Bedfordshire**

1. Introduction

Central Bedfordshire Council and the respective Governing Bodies are proposing to amalgamate The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre, The Baulk, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 0PT with Biggleswade Academy Trust, Mead End, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 8JU.

Under Education Law the amalgamation would be implemented via the closure of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre and the expansion of Biggleswade Academy Trust.

This document explains the reasons for the proposed amalgamation and how you can have your say.

2. Background

The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre is an established 78 place early years setting which operates out of its own premises that are adjacent to the grounds of Lawnside Lower School, Biggleswade. The latest Ofsted inspections judged the nursery school to be 'Outstanding' in May 2013, Children's Centre to be 'Good' in June 2013 and Early Years Provision to be 'Good' in February 2015.

In spite of a long-term reputation for excellence, significant budgetary cuts over a period of years and a rapidly changing educational landscape have left The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre unsustainable in the medium and long term and therefore under threat.

In order to guarantee the future sustainability of the organisation and remove an on-going and significant in-year financial deficit, the Governing Body of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre sought to develop a structured partnership with another local school to guarantee the future of the Nursery for the town.

Having considered the alternatives available, in 2014 the Governing Body formally approached Biggleswade Academy Trust in order to develop a long-term partnership to secure the future of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre. Both Biggleswade Academy Trust and The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre are members of the Biggleswade Community Union of Schools (BCUS).

Biggleswade Academy Trust has significant experience of early year's provision having extended its age range in September 2013, from 4 – 13 years to 2 – 13 years, in order to merge with Brigham Pre School. The aim of the merger was to further raise the level of high quality provision for all children and young people within the Biggleswade area during challenging times, as well as easier times, by developing a 'seamless' 21st Century 2-13 provision for all pupils across Biggleswade and the surrounding villages. The weight of current educational research highlighted the educational, philosophical and financial benefits (to schools, children, young people, staff and governors) of forming closer working relationships to raise the quality of outcomes for all.

The result of the merger with Brigham Pre School has been to raise standards and improve outcomes for young people through a 'one phase' approach to learning. The joint leadership has been used to provide an opportunity to develop a more detailed overview of pupils' progress from 2 -13 and a single curriculum model to match their needs. For example, children's journey between pre and lower school and the development of a seamless four year Key Stage 2 curriculum, which was previously split between lower and middle school, has resulted in greatly improved Key Stage 2 SAT results, matching the achievements of pupils at the end of Year 8.

The curriculum has been linked across all schools and tracking pupils' progress across Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 has provided opportunity to provide intervention sooner to support underperformance or other difficulties. The one governing body and leadership team across all schools has given stability, clarity of vision and direction. By working closely

together economies of scale have been delivered wherever possible to improve the resources and facilities available to pupils and to replace services no longer available through the local authority.

Since developing the long term partnership with The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre, all actions taken by the Biggleswade Academy Trust have been made with the following clear aims:

1. To secure the long-term sustainable future of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre for the Town of Biggleswade.
2. To ensure the continued development of excellence in all aspects of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre's work to build on the existing 'Outstanding' Nursery and 'Good' Children's Centre and Early Years Ofsted inspections.
3. To utilise all opportunities provided by this partnership for structured mutual support and the development of 'cutting edge' early years practice through the systematic sharing of excellence between The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre and Biggleswade Academy Trust.

3. Our proposal

It is proposed to amalgamate The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre with Biggleswade Academy Trust.

In order to do this the Council is required, by Education Law, to first close The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre.

In conjunction with this process, Biggleswade Academy Trust is required to expand in order to accommodate the children from The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre.

The Council and the Governing Body of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre have considered other options but the financial reductions, both current and projected, mean that the school is unviable as a stand-alone concern.

We recognise that this proposal to close The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre may be unsettling for pupils, staff, parents and carers and we are keen to hear from all those people who want to have their say on the proposals during the consultation.

You will find a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) starting on page 5 of this document which may help to address some immediate concerns that you have. You are also welcome to raise queries at the public meeting that is to be held at The Hub (Ivel Valley School) on Thursday 24th September 2015 at 7pm (see page 4 for details).

4. The consultation process

The two consultations are being undertaken concurrently and therefore this is a combined consultation document.

For the proposed closure of a school the Council is required to follow a five stage process. These are listed in the consultation timetable on page 4.

For stage one the Council is required to consult with a range of people and organisations including:

- Parents and carers of the pupils at both the Nursery and the Academy

- The governing bodies of both the Nursery and the Academy
- The teachers and other staff of both the Nursery and the Academy
- The pupils at both the Nursery and the Academy
- The trustees of both the Nursery and the Academy
- The governing bodies, teachers and staff of other schools and early years settings that may be affected
- Parents and carers of children at other schools and early years settings that may be affected e.g. at feeder schools
- The local diocese and other faith groups
- The local Town or Parish Council
- Neighbouring local authorities
- Any trade unions who represent staff at the Nursery and the Academy; and representatives of any trade union of staff at other schools and early years settings who may be affected by the proposal;
- Members of Parliament whose constituencies include the Nursery and the Academy that is the subject of the proposal or whose constituents are likely to be affected by the proposal
- Any other interested body/person that the proposer thinks is appropriate.

You can have your say on this proposal via our online facility at

www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations or you can complete pages 7 and 8 of this document and return them to the FREEPOST address provided at the end of the form.

All responses should be returned by **5.00 pm on Monday 5 October 2015**

We will also hold a **public meeting** at **The Hub, Ivel Valley School, The Baulk, Biggleswade** on **Thursday 24th September 2015 at 7pm** which is open to all interested parties. We are also meeting with the staff, union representatives and governors of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre and Biggleswade Academy Trust.

Consultation Timetable – from September 2015 to January 2016

Stage	Action	Timescale/Deadline
1	Initial four week joint consultation period begins	Monday 7 September 2015
1	Staff, Governors and trade union meeting	Thursday 24 September at 3.45 pm The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre
1	Public meeting	Thursday 24 September at 7.00 pm The Hub, Ivel Valley School, The Baulk, Biggleswade
1	End of four week joint consultation period	Monday 5 October 2015
2	Statutory Notice published by CBC	Wednesday 14 October 2015
3	Representation period	= 4 weeks
3	End of representation period	Wednesday 11 November 2015
4	Final decision regarding the proposal to close The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre to be made by the Council's Executive Committee	Tuesday 1 December 2015
5	The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre would close	Thursday 31 December 2015
5	Biggleswade Academy Trust would open with nursery provision	Friday 1 January 2016

5. Frequently asked questions (FAQ's)

Q – Does this consultation mean that the Council has already decided that The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre will amalgamate with Biggleswade Academy Trust?

A – No. The Council's Executive committee has approved the start of a two part consultation for the proposed amalgamation, based upon the nursery school's financial viability. You can read the report that was considered by the Executive Committee on 7 July 2015 on the Council's website at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/executive.

The final decision will be made by the Council's Executive on Tuesday 1 December 2015.

Q – Why has The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre been subject to budget cuts?

A – From April 2011 funding from Central Government for Early Years providers has been calculated using the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) which is driven mainly by the number of hours attended by each child. This is a change from how providers were previously funded which was on a per place basis, regardless of the number of hours attended. Schools are protected for the change but on a reducing balance year on year.

Q – Has the Council considered any alternative solutions other than the proposed closure of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre and amalgamation with Biggleswade Academy Trust?

A – The Governing Body of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre began the process of reshaping the nursery in 2009 by enacting a revised staffing structure. In 2014 the Governing Body acted upon their long-term considerations of developing a structured partnership with another local school to guarantee the future of the Centre for the town. With support from Central Bedfordshire Council they approached a number of schools within the Biggleswade Community Union of School (BCUS) with their proposal. Three schools responded positively to this approach, with only one, Biggleswade Academy Trust, able to provide the required immediate assistance and long-term security, coupled with a clear organisational alignment of educational philosophy and values.

Q - Would Biggleswade Academy Trust be able to expand sufficiently to take the children from The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre?

A – Yes. A lease would be drawn up to enable Biggleswade Academy Trust to continue to use the building currently occupied by The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre for its nursery provision.

Q – Are the school staff of both The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre and Biggleswade Academy Trust being consulted as part of this process?

A – Yes - School staff and trade union representatives are being consulted throughout this consultation process. Should a decision be made to issue statutory notices to close The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre, to enable the amalgamation to take place, staff and trade unions would be further consulted. The Council and the school's Human Resources provider will work with the governing body, the staff and trade unions to ensure all staff have access to appropriate advice and support and will ensure that the relevant policies and procedures of the Council are followed.

Q- Why were parents not forewarned of this proposal?

A – This is only a proposal at this stage and a decision has not yet been made. Ultimately, children and parents would notice very little change between the two providers following an amalgamation. The proposal is now being put to you as a stakeholder and the Council and Academy invite your response.

Q – When will the decision be taken regarding whether to close The Lawns Nursery School and Children’s Centre to enable its amalgamation with Biggleswade Academy Trust?

A –The Council’s Executive will consider all of the responses received during both consultation periods and will determine whether or not to close the school at their meeting on 1 December 2015.

If the proposal is approved, the amalgamation would be implemented via the closure of The Lawns Nursery School and Children’s Centre on 31 December 2015 and the reopening of the nursery school and children’s centre by Biggleswade Academy Trust on 1 January 2016.

**Sue Harrison,
Director of Children’s Services,
Central Bedfordshire Council,
Priory House,
Monks Walk,
Chicksands,
Shefford
SG17 5TQ**

For more information about this proposal please contact Sue Barrow
by telephone on 0300 300 5700
or by email sue.barrow@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



Consultation on the proposed amalgamation of the Lawns Nursery School with Biggleswade Academy Trust



Central Bedfordshire Council is consulting on the proposed amalgamation of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre with Biggleswade Academy. We want to hear your views.

Feedback must be received by 5pm on Monday 5th October 2015.

1. Are you a: (Please tick one)

- ☐ Parent of a child/children at the Lawns Nursery School or Children's Centre
- ☐ Parent of a child/children at Biggleswade Academy
- ☐ Parent of a child/children at another school in the area
- ☐ School employee of the Lawns Nursery School or Children's Centre
- ☐ School employee of Biggleswade Academy
- ☐ School employee of another school in the area
- ☐ School Governor of the Lawns Nursery School or Children's Centre
- ☐ School Governor of Biggleswade Academy
- ☐ School Governor of another school in the area
- ☐ Local resident
- ☐ Other

If other, please specify:

2. If you are the parent of a child/children currently at another school, or the employee or governor of another school, please tell us which school. (Please write name of school)

3. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to amalgamate the Lawns Nursery and Children's Centre with Biggleswade Academy? (Please select one)

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree nor disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|

4. Are there any comments you would like to make about this proposal?

About You

This section of the survey is about you. The following information will help us when considering your opinions and to make sure that we're getting the views of all members of the community. The answers will not be used to identify any individual.

5. Are you (Please select one)

☐ Male

☐ Female

6. What is your age? (Please select one)

☐ Under 16 years

☐ 20-29 years

☐ 45-59 years

☐ 65-74 years

☐ 16-19 years

☐ 30-44 years

☐ 60-64 years

☐ 75 years +

7. Do you consider yourself to be disabled? (Please select one)

Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is considered to have a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which has a sustained and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. To which of these groups do you consider you belong? (Please select one)

☐ Asian or Asian British

☐ Chinese

☐ White British

☐ Black or Black British

☐ Mixed

☐ Other Ethnic group

If other, please
specify:

9. What is your postcode? This information will only be used for classification purposes.

Please return your completed form to the FREEPOST address below (you do not need to use a stamp) by 5pm on Monday 5 October 2015:

**FREEPOST RSJS GBBZ SRZT
The Lawns and Biggleswade Academy amalgamation consultation,
Central Bedfordshire Council,
Priory House, Monks Walk
Chicksands, Shefford,
SG17 5TQ**

Data Protection Act 1998

Please note that your personal details supplied on this form will be held and/or computerised by Central Bedfordshire Council for the purpose analysing feedback to the consultation on the proposed amalgamation of the Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre with Biggleswade Academy. The information collected may be disclosed to officers and members of the Council and its' partners involved in this consultation. Summarised information from the forms may be published, but no individual details will be disclosed under these circumstances. Your personal details will be safeguarded and will not be divulged to any other individuals or organisations for any other purposes.

Information classification: Protected when complete

**Consultation on the proposed amalgamation of
The Lawns Nursery School & Children's Centre
and Biggleswade Academy Trust**

Queries / comments raised at meeting with parents
and stakeholders – held at The Hub, Ivel Valley
School on Thursday 24 September 2015 at 7.00 pm

**Central
Bedfordshire**

Meeting led by –

Helen Redding – AD School Improvement, CBC

Rob Parsons – Head of School Organisation, Admissions & Capital Planning,
CBC

Shelley Flynn – Acting Academy Principal, Biggleswade Academy

Mark Steer - Vice Principal, Biggleswade Academy

Bernard Briars – Chair of Governors, The Lawns Nursery & Children's Centre

Note taker - Sue Barrow – Information Manager

Helen Redding welcomed all to the meeting and introduced colleagues to the group.

Rob Parsons gave a presentation regarding the proposal,

Query / comment	Answer / response
What evidence is there that Biggleswade Academy Trust (BAT) is the best option to take over the management of The Lawns?	Two years ago the governing body of The Lawns faced financial challenges. They were about to lose their head teacher, and despite carrying out a restructure, needed to take further action in order to make nursery viable. With the support of CBC, expressions of interest were sought from other schools willing to help the nursery. The governing body considered the responses they received and decided to accept the offer of interim support from BAT. The proposal is now to formalise that support.
If the government and local authority wants all schools to cater for early years, why is the amalgamation not with Lawnside Lower?	Further to the answer above, Lawnside Lower were not able to offer assistance when the requests were issued. BAT has supported The Lawns for the past 18 months. Staff at The Lawns will continue to manage transition to all lower schools
Can Lawnside Lower be put forward an alternative option for the amalgamation?	If another viable option is put forward the Executive will consider it.

Has Lawnside Lower been kept up to date with the nursery's progress?	Yes, there have been communications between CBC and the head of the school.
The Head of Lawnside Lower is very visible on a daily basis but we have not seen anybody from BAT present at The Lawns	The Lawns is a high quality setting and does not need day to day BAT attendance. BAT staff have been very much 'back room'
If The Lawns is to remain the same, what is the benefit to BAT? Is there a hidden agenda?	There is no hidden agenda. The Lawns is a benefit to the children of Biggleswade. Schools in Biggleswade have a history of working together. The governors of both are keen for the amalgamation as it brings numerous benefits, including for transition. Staff from both BAT and The Lawns will benefit from working together.
How can BAT provide financial stability for The Lawns but the Council cannot?	The nursery's funding comes from Central Government and is then passed directly out to the nursery. The local authority adds no additional funding and there is no saving to be made by the local authority if the amalgamation goes ahead. The Lawns will be financially better off with BAT due to economies of scale
There is a rumour that Ivel Valley School is to move and that the whole site will be sold for housing	CBC owns the whole site, apart from the health centre. There is no proposal to relocate and sell the land. It would be a huge problem for CBC to reproduce the same quality provision elsewhere.
The TUPE agreement will only last for a year – can you guarantee that there will be no changes?	There is no guarantee in education; changes are happening all of the time, both in council maintained schools and in academies. There will always be challenges.
The Lawns is a 'forest school', will this continue?	BAT is also a 'forest school' and we will learn from each other's experience. There may also be other initiatives in the future that we can embrace together.
The consultation document did not convey the passion of the nursery.	This is why we hold meetings such as this, to invite the views of both staff and parents.
Before Brigham was taken over it was in credit by £100k. This has now gone. BAT has not made it better financially.	Brigham is different to The Lawns and we have helped to develop it. The passion for The Lawns will not change. BAT is in this for the children.

Helen Redding thanked everyone for their attendance and encouraged them to respond to the consultation.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

**Consultation on the proposed amalgamation of
The Lawns Nursery School & Children's Centre
and Biggleswade Academy Trust**



Queries / comments raised at meeting with staff and
governors – held at The Lawns Nursery &
Children's Centre on Thursday 24 September 2015
at 3.45 pm

Meeting led by –

Helen Redding – AD School Improvement, CBC

Rob Parsons – Head of School Organisation, Admissions & Capital Planning,
CBC

David Waller – HR Policy & Implementation Manager, CBC

Shelley Flynn – Acting Academy Principal, Biggleswade Academy

Caroline McGuckian – Vice Principal, Biggleswade Academy

Mark Steer - Vice Principal, Biggleswade Academy

Bernard Briars – Chair of Governors, The Lawns Nursery & Children's Centre

Note taker - Sue Barrow – Information Manager

Helen Redding welcomed all to the meeting and introduced colleagues to the group.

Rob Parsons gave a presentation regarding the proposal, during which David Waller spoke about TUPE and staff transfers

Query / comment	Answer / response
Would we lose the school's title?	No, the name will remain the same.
Ofsted currently inspect us as a nursery school, would this change?	Ofsted would continue to carry out a separate inspection for the nursery, early years and the children's centre.
Parents are asking why the merger is not with Lawnside Lower – how will you respond to this?	When schools were invited 2 years ago to help The Lawns, the governing body of Lawnside Lower were not in a position to offer help at that time. We will advise parents that Biggleswade Academy Trust (BAT) have successfully supported The Lawns over the past 2 years. This is a consultation process, not a referendum.
If our accounts close on 31 January 2015, how will we function, ie purchase items.	BAT currently operates across different sites and each individual area can raise their own orders. Procedures will be put in place to enable The Lawns to operate as it currently does, with possible changes to make things easier.
What would happen to any surplus balance?	This would come back to CBC, but we will recommend to the Executive that an equivalent

	amount be transferred back.
Is there enough time to carry out the consultations and individual meetings?	Yes, running the TUPE consultation in process with the current consultation process helps to save time. Individual meetings will be available to address any individual concerns We are required to transfer data from CBC to BAT 28 days before the date of transfer – Executive meet on 1 December so we do have sufficient time.
If all staff are TUPE'd across to BAT, at what point could BAT change staff contracts?	TUPE only protects on the day of transfer .If any potential changes are identified ahead of the transfer, these are open to scrutiny by the trade unions and staff will be consulted on these.
What will happen to those staff on fixed term contracts up until 31 December?	These staff will transfer to BAT. Continual service via a succession of fixed term contracts is protected by law. We will speak to BAT re these contracts, the reasons for these and their proposals going forward.
Would pensions remain with CBC?	This will be covered via the TUPE process. The new employer has to provide a pension that is comparable to your current scheme.
Following a restructure 5 years ago, salaries were reduced to make the nursery sustainable. Will the 3 year safeguard carry over?	The contracted terms would transfer over therefore any pay protection would also transfer.
We do not want to be branded with the negative image of BAT. People feel that BAT are taking over. Southlands and Holmemead changed following the takeover and parents feel that we will be changed also	BAT have supported The Lawns and wish to continue to do so There are various rumours regarding the current position of the academy and non of these are true
What will happen if there are too many objections to the proposal?	Members will consider the issues raised via the responses to the consultation including any other viable options that are put forward.
If members do not accept the proposal, would The Lawns close?	No, because we need the places. The nursery would continue to a deficit budget. With poor financial support, education would suffer and Ofsted would get involved. The proposed amalgamation, which is supported by the nursery governing body, is the right choice.
When will we hear of the Executive's decision?	On 1 December, the day of the meeting.

- David Waller is to meet with Shelley Flynn and Mark Steer on 6 October.
- Following this meeting, a letter will be produced in order to provide staff with a summary of what the transfer will look like.

- A group meeting will then be arranged to discuss the transfer further, and to raise any further queries.
- Individual meetings will also be available
- Staff will be asked to check the data that CBC is proposing to transfer to BAT to ensure its accuracy. This data will not be transferred until after the Executive's decision on 1 December

Rob Parsons encouraged all staff to raise any concerns that they might have and to respond to the consultation, either as groups and or as individuals.

The meeting closed at 5.15 pm

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Comments received to initial consultation

As a Governor of the Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre, I have been involved with the difficult situation the school has been in since 2009 until now. Due to changes in Central Government funding, we were left with no other choice than to consider a partnership with another local school in order to sustain the future of this 'outstanding' educational facility for Biggleswade and its young children and families. Biggleswade Academy Trust was the only school to come forward with the offer of immediate support and have been assisting the Lawns in a very positive way for the last 18 months. I have every reason to believe that they will continue to support in this way if the proposed amalgamation goes ahead.

As a parent of children at both Lawnside school and The Lawns ,I absolutely have no doubt the Academy have helped this past 18months. I would like to see Lawnside being considered as a merger. Having just two 'nursery providers' in an ever growing Biggleswade (minus the private ones) is ridiculous. Lawnside is in a better position now than two years ago. The parent-pupil-teacher relationship at Lawnside is amazing! It mirrors the parent-pupil-teacher relationship The Lawns had two years ago. As a parent i tonight at the public meeting first see the 'head'. The staff are amazing. You honestly could not get better. I feel The Academy would ruin the nursery over time. Parents need choice. Two providers in such a busy town is not reasonable.

As a parent who has over the past 15 years seen 6 children pass through The Lawns and with one child left to do so I feel strongly that the Lawns does not become another part of the Academics' 'franchise'! Although most of my feelings are founded on how amazing the staff have been and its wonderful atmosphere I can honestly tell you that it has lost so much of my respect over the past 18 months since Mr Phillips took over. Previously the staff always let you know what has happened and there was a presence at the gate every morning for you to sound off to if needed and now there is nothing. No one can make any decisions because they then have to be scrutinised by 'the academy'. I was a member of the PTA which was a nightmare as getting any answers was nigh on impossible. The majority of children from The Lawns will attend Lawnside and whilst I know the nursery is not a feeder school would it not be feasible to join these two together instead. I know that when Mrs Ellar left the headmaster at Lawnside had only just started so it was infeasible for him take over but a lot has changed since then and he has made amazing improvements to the school and would im sure be prepared to take on another 78 familys - the majority of which would end up with him anyway! How can this amalgamation take place after the temporary measure of appointing Mr Phillips - who incidentally has never shown his face at the Lawns to meet parents and is on long term sick leave - without also offering the position out to other schools in the area as before. We are a school not a business and as such should not be gobbled up by an academy who see it as another string on their bow. I vote it is again put out to tenure and let the headships all apply. I know they have said they will keep the buildings and staff but how long before they decide this isnt feasible and then where is the Nursery for this side of

Biggleswade? Councils and Central government have made so many cuts that 'allegedly' the nursery is unsustainable yet they are building new housing as we speak, where will these children go? the academy is not the way forward here and I, as a parent will not send my child to an amalgamation, she will just attend Lawnside as soon as she is old enough. Provision needs to be made for families not for franchises.

As long as staff and location remain as they are now, as both are what makes the Lawns many people's number 1 choice

Both schools are well rated by ofsted. However, they offer different environments and experiences to the children. The beauty of The Lawns lies in their outdoors experience, values, respect to nature, gardens, health eating where children have access to a balanced meal combined with great curriculum and staff. Biggleswade Academy has great staff but the infrastructure is far behind The Lawns. My daughter started pre-school at Biggleswade academy full time aged 3 and was forced to live on sandwiches because it is inconvenient to walk the children to the building where hot meal is served. The garden has been extended but has no trees. They have two rooms for 39 children per session, circa 65 children per day having in mind some are full time. They have so many children that they don't take them out for visits, library, park, anywhere. The children move from the room to the garden and that is it for the day. The only good thing is the staff who are fantastic. The infrastructure gets worse at Biggleswade Academy when they move from pre-school to what they call blossom which takes place in a container. Merging both schools would ruin The Lawns. The only reason parents opt for Biggleswade Academy is because of the wrap around care offered which allows parents to work full time. The Lawns would benefit by offering after school club until 6:00pm. The Lawns is the best nursery in town, don't change it.

I absolutely love the way The Lawns is and has been run. All of my children have attended. Our youngest has just started Saplings. It is an amazing nursery as it is. With incredible staff. If I wanted my son to attend Biggleswade Academy nursery I would have applied there! We do not like the way academies are run and will not be happy with our son going to Biggleswade Academy.

I agree on the basis that our child who currently attends the Lawns Nursery School will still attend the same building/sessions on return to education after the process has been completed as discussed with the Lawns Nursery on the 14/09/2015

I do not feel the Academy should take over the Lawns. The Lawns is an unofficial feeder school into Lawnside Lower. It would make more sense to both in common sense and in location.

I do not see why or how the academy has more funding per child than Central Beds, so it's hard to see this as anything other than complying with central government's ideological desire to move schools away from local government

control. The Lawns is a fantastic Nursery School and I fear it will be changed for the worse as a result of this merger. Lawnside school, which is a fantastic school, also stands to be put at a serious disadvantage if the academy takes over the Lawns, being left as the only lower school without an associated nursery in Biggleswade. Central Beds Council should continue to support the Lawns until Lawnside School is able to amalgamate with it, as it inevitably will in time.

I feel very grateful to Biggleswade Academy for stepping into the breach and allowing our nursery school to continue running when other schools on our doorstep could have stepped in and supported us but instead chose to leave us out in the cold

I have concerns that the Lawns will be changed dramatically and not be the wonderful place it is at present. I think the academy is taking on far too much and cannot cope / manage the schools it has on its books now without taking on more. The Lawns and Childrens Centre are so popular and well thought of - why is it not sustainable on its own as it stands. It seems to be a done deal that it will go ahead even though we have only just heard about it. Will the name stay the same? and staff? they are so valued. If it were a case of helping the Lawns financially to enable them to stay as they are, I am amongst those that would be willing to offer help.

I love the Lawns Nursery as it is

I never sent my daughter to the academy for this to happen, I already feel there are enough children in the pre school .

I think clear and transition routes from The Lawns to Lawnside school need to be fostered for the wellbeing of all children particularly those with insecure attachment patterns. I always valued the communication between The Lawns and Lawnside School and it helped my children to settle. The Lawns needs to be kept a feeder school for Lawnside and if anything the Head of Lawnside could also take on a role within The Lawns. It would be very sad to see The Lawns go to The Academy.

I think it is important for those in education to work together, for the benefit of the children across the town. However, I disagree with the proposed merger on several counts: 1. I do not think that an educational establishment should be responsible for the children's centre - this is the responsibility of several agencies, which may include education but not solely them. As the children's centre is integral to the proposed amalgamation I disagree with it. 2. Biggleswade Academy is already large and has a pre-school within it. I do not think it should take on another one. I feel that there is a serious risk of resources being spread too thinly - financial, practical and people - and staff being asked to do yet more and I do not think that this is a good thing. 3. The principal of Biggleswade Academy - Mr Phillips - is currently not at work and there is an acting principal, Ms Flynn. As parents we have not have any information regarding whether or not Mr Phillips is coming back, and if so when, or if not what is going to happen. It doesn't seem to me that this is a

good time, or position from which Biggleswade Academy should be expanding.

I think it would be a great opportunity for ideas to be shared between an Outstanding Nursery and an Outstanding Preschool, where the children and high standards are put first.

If my child will stay at this nursery and I will not need to walk him all the way to Biggleswade Academy . I live in Fairfield area and it will take me about an hour to get there. I have no car, then I agree. If the staff will stay the same the I agree. My son and me love the teachers and the atmosphere in this nursery.

It is important to provide choices to parents of early years children in Biggleswade. The Lawns have always had an outstanding reputation and many local residents are now seeking alternative childcare as a result of the amalgamation. If you do not provide choice and diversity every child will learn the same.

It makes no sense to merge with the Academy. Most children from The Lawns feed in to Lawnside, as my son did and the transfer process was made pain free and easy. The Academy doesn't have a great reputation. The Lawns is great as it is but surely if merging, Lawnside would be the obvious choice?

It will be very sad to see the closure of The Lawns & Children's Centre close just because of cuts,there isn't another nursery that has had an outstanding ofsted,I went there as a child & my children go there too & they love it,please don't close it!!!!

Lawns is a small and very personal nursery ran successfully this way, to be incorporated into the academy will be detrimental to the current children and many more following Has consideration been given to head of Lawnside to take over? He was new in post at time of Mrs Ella's retirement but I believe him to be a fantastic head and has bought many wonderful opportunities to Lawnside and can only further the lawns in a positive way

Lawnside Lower School Governing Body Response to the Public Consultation on the Amalgamation of The Lawns Nursery and Children's Centre with Biggleswade Academy Trust. 25th September 2015 Two years ago Lawnside Lower School were informally approached to provide assistance to The Lawns. At that time the Governors of Lawnside felt that with a new Head Teacher and Governing Body only recently appointed it would not be in the best interest of Lawnside or The Lawns to offer assistance at that time. Subsequently on 7th September 2015, as a result of information from a parent with children at both The Lawns and Lawnside we became aware of the consultation and public meeting about the amalgamation of The Lawns with Biggleswade Academy Trust (BAT). The Governing Body have met twice since that date and members attended the public meeting, to discuss this matter and decide upon a response. These discussions have given rise to the following questions: Why was Lawnside not approached again when it

became clear an amalgamation was the way forward for The Lawns? Why was there no formal communication from Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), Biggleswade Academy Trust (BAT) or The Lawns informing Lawnside of their intention to go forward with a consultation on the amalgamation? Why was the Biggleswade Community Union of Schools (BCUS), of which BAT, Lawnside and The Lawns are all members not informed that the amalgamation consultation was to proceed? Whilst acknowledging that BAT running The Lawns may not hinder the transfer of pupils from The Lawns we were pleased to receive the assurances that: The name of The Lawns will not be changed. The uniform at The Lawns will not be changed. There is no intention of relocating The Lawns to the BAT site. That there are no plans to increase the nursery provision on the BAT site. We are keen to ensure that the relationship between Lawnside, The Lawns and BAT, which has been very successful in ensuring a smooth transition of pupils from The Lawns to Lawnside, will continue in the future. We have been approached by several parents who have asked that Lawnside amalgamate with The Lawns rather than BAT, and the Governors have given this a great deal of consideration. The Governors have agreed that at this time they do not want to risk diluting the standards and successes at Lawnside, and indeed wish to build on these to further improve standards, and that this should not be impeded by other distractions. However, this does not preclude us from giving this further consideration in the future should circumstances change and we are of course always open to requests for assistance and co-operation between all of the BCUS schools. We are fully supportive of The Lawns and wish to see this wonderful facility for the children of Biggleswade continue to thrive at its' current site. Jason Dorasamy Chair of Governors Lawnside Lower School.

My position is that the Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre provides an outstanding service to children under 5 in Biggleswade. I understand the financial pressures they face and therefore the status quo is not possible and therefore support from another establishment must be sought. If that is the Biggleswade Academy, so be it. However, in any such arrangement the Lawns must be left to get on with what they do best which is providing education to our children. They should not be changed.

My son went to The Lawns, and then onto Lawnside Lower School. The set up is perfectly formed. I believe the changes proposed are a cost cutting exercise that will be of detriment to the exceptional experience that children currently get at The Lawns. The Academy is already big enough! I believe families should have a choice of where their child goes and this is a backwards step and certainly won't improve services by spreading the leadership over a bigger picture, rather it will weaken the offer at The Lawns. I would appoint a new Headteacher for the Lawns for it to be run as it had been before the retirement of the previous head teachers.

Surely it would make more sense for Lawnside Lower School to take over the running of the Lawns Nursery school and children's centre as they are on the same site. Biggleswade Academy already runs on paper a nursery, a lower

and a middle school. Apparently the head of Biggleswade Academy is already off sick with stress.

The Academy is in a state of financial disarray as a result of the Principal's uncontrolled spending and has lost countless key staff as a result of his bullying style of 'management'...it simply does not have the resources to effectively support the Lawns.

The Academy needs to consolidate what it is already doing before expanding and without a Principal in place should not be taking on more.

The Lawns is a fantastic setting. I am worried that by becoming part of the Academy the ethos of the school will be diluted by an organisation becoming too large, as with many academies throughout the country. If the merger goes ahead, I would like to see The Lawns keep its name to give some level of independence. It is also part of Biggleswades history.

The Lawns Nuresry has been an excellent choice for my son and daughter. I have never been able to fault the care that we have received and the support that the staff have given us as parents. The Lawns offers so much more than just a nursery. It offers the parents guidance and support throughout the early years of parenting (eg the parenting course). I would be upset to see the ethos of the nursery change and staff going as they merge with the academy.

The Lawns Nursery has children who go on to attend vrious lower schools in Biggleswade, and the majority go to Lawnside Lower School. In order for this to continue I think it is very important that The Lawns retains its name, its separate identity and its location. It would be wrong if this was seen by Biggleswade Academy as a way to expand.

The Lawns nursery school is a great place for children to develop, learn and have fun. Staff are great, highly committed and focused. The Lawns nursery school needs to continue with its service and support for the whole community for many years ahead and for staff to keep their jobs.

There should be choice of schools with choice of leadership, procedures and vision for the school

this is a bad idea merging a religious school and a non religious school

This seems to be the only viable option to continue to provide quality nursery education for the children of Biggleswade. My child attended The Lawns and it gave him the most fabulous start to his education. I only hope that The Lawns can maintain it's identity and individuality and not be swallowed up by Biggleswade Academy.

We have worked well with The Academy and have been fully supported. I feel positive about the future with the Academy Trust. Working with the Academy will allow us to a degree to continue as we are.

Whilst I agree with the proposal, my concerns is what would the land be intended for. There is enough of a problem already with traffic and parking in The Baulk

Why does the Lawns have to be merged with Biggleswade Academy rather than the Lawns or Edward Peake? Geographically it is not close to the Academy. Also, why does a council owned/run school have to go to an academy rather than another council owned/run school. The academy model and commercialisation of education is not shown to benefit children's education. The council should be focusing on putting more money into the Sure Start and parts of the centre and maintaining the nursery as the example of how brilliant a council run facility can be.

Why the academy? It already had a nursery/early years set up. Spreading resources thinly will not be in any one's interest. Can it not form a partnership with Lawnside Lower School/ Edward Peake.

Yes I think that the merger will be a very good for the Lawns Nursery. The Academy have been very supportive over the last year in many ways with staff, parent and children to maintain high standards and develop the nursery for the future together.

Response from Biggleswade Academy Trust

It is the intention of Biggleswade Academy Trust that The Lawns Nursery School will maintain its current name, location and structure.

There is no intention by Biggleswade Academy Trust to close the provision.

Within Biggleswade Academy Trust there is an outstanding pre-school. It is the intention of Biggleswade Academy Trust that both outstanding provisions of The Lawns Nursery School (Ofsted, 2013) and that of Biggleswade Academy Trust (Ofsted, 2014) will share best practice in order to continue to provide the best possible pre-school provision for the families of Biggleswade.

It is intended that the unique and distinct identities and styles of both pre-schools are maintained to provide for parental and child preferences and choice.

It is the wish of Biggleswade Academy Trust that the excellent links between The Lawns Nursery School and Lawnside Lower School are maintained and developed.

There will continue to be complete parental choice for parents when choosing which statutory provision they select after leaving The Lawns Nursery School.

Response from the Governing Body of The Lawns Nursery School

Future Procedures / Practice / Location

The support received from Biggleswade Academy has been to maintain the structure and future financial stability of the Lawns Nursery. They have acknowledged that the day-to-day procedures and practice within the Nursery are 'outstanding' and do not wish to change any aspect.

The Lawns Nursery School will remain true to its Nursery School educational values, and maintain the personal relationships it has built up with its pupils and parents.

The Nursery provision for children will still continue at the Lawns Nursery School

The Lawns Nursery will not receive any extra income by becoming part of the Academy, but there are savings to be made by having a shared infrastructure.

The Lawns Nursery School, an educational establishment, is currently responsible for the Children's Centre and there are many examples throughout Bedfordshire where Children's Centres are linked to or run by educational establishments.

The existing and future partnership with Biggleswade Academy

The support and help received from the Leadership Team of Biggleswade Academy has always been positive, professional, supportive and demonstrating a desire to ensure the Lawns Nursery and Children's Centre remains outstanding. The Academy has the resources to maintain the current 'outstanding' practice.

Since becoming an Academy, Biggleswade Academy has improved its educational standards throughout, enjoyed a Pre-School Ofsted evaluation of 'outstanding' and a whole school evaluation of 'good', with 'outstanding' leadership.

Neither the Lawns Nursery School nor Biggleswade Academy are religious schools.

Other schools within Biggleswade

At the beginning of this process all other schools in Biggleswade were formally invited to explore working with the Lawns. In the period that followed only the Academy could offer an immediate working response.

Since the partnership with the academy and up until the consultation period, no school has contacted the Lawns to explore a future partnership.

As part of the public consultation Central Bedfordshire made a further invitation to the schools for other offers to be tabled. At close of the consultation period no other offers have been tabled.

From their publicly published response to the Public Consultation, Lawnside have stated their wish to focus on their own standards and have not expressed an intention to support or merge with the Lawns Nursery.

At the Full Governing Body Meeting on 12th October 2015 The Governors also agreed that they wished to proceed with the proposed merger with Biggleswade Academy.



Proposal to close The Lawns Nursery School & Children's Centre, Biggleswade

Notice is given in accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Central Bedfordshire Council intends to close The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre, The Baulk, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 0PT, on 31 December 2015

The proposed closure of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre is as a result of the financial viability of the nursery and changes to both the funding methodology for local authority maintained nursery schools and to the admission arrangements for children into mainstream schools.

This notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be obtained from: The Information Manager, Central Bedfordshire Council, Room DC2, Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable, Beds, LU6 1LF, telephone 0300 300 5700. It can also be viewed on the Council's website at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/publicstatutorynotices

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, by 11 November 2015, any person may support, object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services, Central Bedfordshire Council via the on-line facility on the Council's website at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/publicstatutorynotices or by post to Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Beds, SG17 5TQ.

Signed: Sue Harrison

Director of Children's Services

14 October 2015

Explanatory notes

In conjunction with the proposed closure of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre, Biggleswade Academy Trust, Mead End, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 8JU is to apply to the Department for Education for permission to expand the academy. If the Department for Education approves the change, The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre will amalgamate with Biggleswade Academy Trust. The current nursery and childcare provision provided by The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre would therefore continue within the same facility but as a part of Biggleswade Academy Trust.



BUSINESS CASE - PROPOSAL FOR CLOSURE

of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre

In parallel with the proposed expansion of Biggleswade Academy Trust

1 - Name of Proposer

Central Bedfordshire Council

Contact: Sue Barrow, Information Manager, Central Bedfordshire Council,
Room DC2, Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable, Beds LU6 1LF
sue.barrow@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

2 - School Name

The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre
(Local authority maintained nursery school)

3 - School Address

The Baulk
Biggleswade
Bedfordshire
SG18 0PT

4 – Implementation – proposed closure date

31 December 2015

5 – Objections and reason for closure

The proposed closure of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre is as a result of the financial viability of the nursery and changes to both the funding methodology for local authority maintained nursery schools and to the admission arrangements for children into mainstream schools.

The report to the Council's Executive, which gives greater detail regarding the proposed closure and subsequent amalgamation with Biggleswade Academy Trust is available on the Councils Website here, www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/executive within the report dated 7 July 2015

6 – Pupil numbers

The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre currently has 144 children.

7 – Displaced pupils

In conjunction with the proposed closure of The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre, Biggleswade Academy Trust (Mead End, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 8JU) is to apply to the Department for Education for permission to expand the academy. If the Department for Education approves the change, The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre will amalgamate with Biggleswade Academy Trust.

8 – Impact on the community

The current nursery and childcare provision provided by The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre would continue within the same facility but as a part of Biggleswade Academy Trust. There would therefore be no impact upon the local community.

9 – Maintained nursery schools

The Lawns Nursery School was judged 'Outstanding' at its last Ofsted inspection in May 2013. The Lawns Children's Centre was judged 'Good' at its last Ofsted inspection in June 2013. The Lawns Early Years provision was judged 'Good' at its last Ofsted inspection in February 2015

The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre has been supported by the head teacher and other staff of Biggleswade Academy Trust following the retirement of the nursery's head teacher in 2013.

Biggleswade Academy Trust has significant experience of early year's provision having extended its age range in September 2013, from 4 – 13 years to 2 – 13 years, in order to merge with Brigham Pre School.

The proposal to amalgamate The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre with Biggleswade Academy Trust, via the closure of the nursery and the expansion of the academy, is to ensure the continuation of the quality and quantity of nursery and childcare facilities within Biggleswade.

10 - Consultation

A consultation regarding the proposed amalgamation between The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre and Biggleswade Academy Trust was carried out between 7 September and 5 October 2015.

Stakeholders consulted included -

- Staff and governors of both The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre and Biggleswade Academy Trust
- Parents/carers of both The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre and Biggleswade Academy Trust
- Local Roman Catholic and Church Of England Diocese
- Ward Members of Central Bedfordshire Council
- Other schools and academies within Central Bedfordshire
- Neighbouring local authorities
- Relevant Trade Unions
- Local MP
- Biggleswade Town Council

- Local residents

Stakeholders were able to submit responses to the consultation either on-line or via a paper response form.

Two meetings were held on 24 September 2015 regarding the proposal; one for staff and governors at The Lawns Nursery School and Children's Centre and one for parents/carers and other stakeholders at The Hub, Ivel Valley School, The Baulk, Biggleswade.

The 56 responses received to the consultation were collated and the results shared with the nursery and the academy. 29% of respondents were in favour of the amalgamation.



Biggleswade Academy Trust
Mead End
Biggleswade
Bedfordshire
SG18 8JU

Tel: 01767 318123
Fax: 01767 310848

Web: www.biggleswadeacademy.org
E-mail: enquiries@biggleswadeacademy.org

11th November 2015

To whom it may concern:

I can confirm that after the completion of both stages of the 2 stage consultation process, Biggleswade Academy Trust wish to proceed with the proposal to amalgamate with The Lawns Nursery School, subject to the approval of the Education Funding Agency.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Flynn", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shelley Flynn
Acting Academy Principal
Biggleswade Academy Trust