

Central Bedfordshire  
Council  
Priory House  
Monks Walk  
Chicksands,  
Shefford SG17 5TQ

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**Central  
Bedfordshire**

**please ask for** Rebecca Preen

**direct line** 0300 300 4193

**date** 12 July 2018

## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date & Time

**Wednesday, 25 July 2018 12.00 p.m.**

Venue at

**Council Chamber, Priory House, Chicksands**

Richard Carr  
**Chief Executive**

To: The Chairman and Members of the CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

Cllrs K Ferguson (Chairman), D Shelvey (Vice-Chairman), N B Costin,  
Mrs D B Gurney, P Hollick, K Janes, Cllr M Liddiard, A Ryan, B Saunders and  
P Smith

[Named Substitutes:

R D Berry, Mrs C F Chapman MBE, J Chatterley, P A Duckett,  
Mrs J Freeman and T Swain]

Co-optees: Mrs Deans (Parent Governor), Mr Court (Parent Governor),  
Mrs Rowlands (Parent Governor), Mrs Main (Roman Catholic Diocese), and  
Mr Morton (Church of England Diocese)

All other Members of the Council - on request

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# AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence and notification of substitute members.

2. **Members' Interests**

To receive from Members any declarations of interest and of any political whip in relation to any agenda item.

3. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

To receive any announcements from the Chairman and any matters of communication.

4. **Petitions**

To receive petitions from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part 4G of the Constitution.

5. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

To receive any questions, statements or deputations from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part 4G of the Constitution.

6. **Call-In**

To consider any decision of the Executive referred to this Committee for review in accordance with Part 4D of the Constitution.

7. **Requested Items**

To consider any items referred to the Committee at the request of a Member in accordance with Part 4D of the Constitution.

8. **Executive Members' Updates**

To receive a brief verbal update from the Executive Members for:-

- Families, Education and Children and
- Health

9. **The Future of Shelton Lower School**

To consider the future of Shelton Lower School following a public consultation.

## Central Bedfordshire Council

### CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 JULY 2018

#### **Proposal to close Shelton Lower School, Marston Moretaine, Bedfordshire**

Report of: Cllr Steve Dixon, ([steven.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:steven.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

Responsible Director: Sue Harrison, ([sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

**This report relates to a decision that is key**

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#### **Purpose of this report**

The report proposes the closure of Shelton Lower School, as sharply falling pupil numbers over the last two years, and projected reducing pupil numbers in future, mean the school is unviable.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The committee is asked to consider the proposal of the director of children's services that Shelton Lower School should close on 31 August 2019, and give the views of its members to the executive committee in advance of its consideration of the proposal and decision as to whether or not to close the school.

#### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Shelton Lower School is a small, rural lower school in the village of Upper Shelton in Central Bedfordshire. It is a foundation school, which means that the school is funded by the Council but employs its own staff. The school is a member of the Vale of Marston's School Trust and the land therefore belongs to the Trust. It is also federated with Southill Lower School: the two schools share a governing body and a head teacher.
- 1.2 The school has a pre-school nursery, a reception year and pupils from year 1 to 4. The total capacity of the school is 75 pupils, from reception to year 4, with an intake capacity (published admission number) of 15 pupils per year.
- 1.3 This proposal is stage 3 of the five stage process for closing a maintained school. If the executive, having considered the recommendations and any representations, determines that the school should be closed, that will be the commencement of stage 4 of the process, which lasts four weeks, during which time 'permitted appeals' may be made. Stage 5 is the implementation of the closure, which must be on the date the executive states the school must be closed.

#### **2 Evidence for proposed closure**

- 2.1 Schools are allocated funding based primarily upon the number of pupils they have. There is a point at which schools cannot continue to operate due to inadequate funding. Shelton Lower School has not been full for a number of years, and the decline in the number of pupils entering the school is forecast to continue. Only five reception-age pupils are due to start at the school in September 2018, out of a total admission number of 15.

- 2.2 Due to the low number of pupils in the school, the school has gone into a budget deficit position, which is predicted to worsen between the current and 2020/21 school years. It is projected that by September 2018 there will only be 35 pupils on roll at the school (a reduction of four from the numbers at the end of March 2018). Projecting forward from these numbers, assuming four year R entries each year, and no pupil leaving before the end of year 4 each year, there would only be 25 pupils in the school year 2021/22, 33 per cent of the school's capacity. It is estimated that the school needs 60 pupils on roll in order to be viable.
- 2.3 In February 2018 it was apparent that by the end of that month the school would have insufficient funds to pay its staff and an outstanding pension contributions invoice. The Council has provided a cash advance to the school of £50,000 to ensure the school could meet its financial obligations and ensure pupils continued to have full access to the curriculum.
- 2.4 The governing body has, since February, also attempted to address the decline in numbers by increasing efforts to market the school to prospective parents of children in all lower school ages, including the nursery.
- 2.5 These efforts have not been successful and as a consequence the pupil projections for the next four years are likely to represent a 'best case' scenario. Since there is no prospect of recovery, the Council is therefore proposing to close the school.

### **3 Results of the informal consultation regarding the proposed closure**

- 3.1 An informal consultation was launched on 23 April 2018 to gather views from parents, local residents and all other stakeholders on the future of Shelton Lower School. The consultation ran for seven weeks, during which two meetings were held, one for staff and one for parents and the public. The informal consultation document is attached as **appendix 1**.
- 3.2 The consultation responses were analysed by the knowledge and insight team. The report is attached as **appendix 2**. In summary, 118 responses were received during the consultation: 20 per cent supported the closure of the school, 72 per cent objected to the possible closure and 7 per cent expressed no view. The majority of respondents believed the school was (financially) viable, although several respondents did say the school should close if it was not financially viable.
- 3.3 Respondents suggested alternative solutions such as waiting for development in the local area (Marston, Cranfield, Wootton) to increase pupil numbers, improving promotion of the school, exploring possibilities for partnership with other schools and securing further investment to increase viability. The consultation report sets out nine 'themes' with regard to objections, which are summarised, with comments, in the bulleted points below:
- *building in the local area will increase pupil numbers*: the consultation report (see attachment 1) projects pupil numbers reducing at the school over the next four years, moreover there is the capacity to take more pupils in all year groups in the four other local lower schools, while Bedford Borough Council is planning to accommodate future pupil growth in its area;

- *promote the school more*: the difficulty with promotion, however well done, is that there is a significant surplus number of places in the area, with good and sustainable schools that are highly popular with parents – it is highly unlikely that many parents will move their children from schools where standards at key stage one are higher than Shelton Lower to the school;
- *the consultation contains inaccurate information*: there were two main areas of concern relating to accuracy – one was the difference between the financial deficit forecasts presented at an initial, informal meeting with parents: the reason for this is that at the initial meeting, the financial forecast of the school was used, which was, with Council officers examined it, inaccurate – so at the informal consultation, the Council’s projections, which were much lower, but still unsustainable, were presented;
- *the second complaint*: referred to the pupil number total projected for October 2019, where the year group numbers was greater than the total, and that this resulted in inaccurate budget information – in fact, it was only one year group number that was wrongly transcribed, and the overall pupil number was correct, and parents were informed about this after the consultation meeting, by letter;
- *consideration of another / extended federation*: officers have approached a number of local maintained schools, and other maintained schools whose governing bodies have said they are interested in talking to other schools about federating – there has been no interest from local schools, and other schools considering joining or forming federations do not want to do so with a school in severe financial difficulties;
- *joining an academy trust*: no academy trust with multi-academy or similar status has expressed an interest in taking the school into its trust – it must be noted that all academy trusts must undertake due diligence for new proposals and in light of Shelton’s financial position and outlook, it is understandable that academy trusts will be unlikely to take the risk;
- *investment*: schools in England are funded by a formula, which is, by law, mainly through pupil numbers, and there is no scope to vary this formula, other than time-limited funding for schools fitting certain criteria, which the school does not meet;
- *other local schools are too large*: there are only two ‘large’ lower schools in the area – one is an academy, and therefore not in the control of the authority, and another is a popular maintained lower school that has been expanded – there are no plans to reduce the PAN of a popular school that has very good pupil outcomes, and where the evidence is a two form entry or above lower school provides the delivery of a broader education curriculum and use of a wider staff skill set for teaching children;
- *change the age range*: while there are discussions with the Cranfield cluster about the movement to a two-tier system, this requires discussion with, and agreement by, all schools – this discussion has just started, and in any case would not help the school as there is sufficient primary capacity in the lower and middle schools;

- *change the catchment areas*: it is difficult to see why the Council would want to do this, or that there would be any effect on the school if it did – since three of the four local schools, including Shelton, do not reach their planned number in year R, and thus children from anywhere outside the catchment area can get their child a place in the school; and
- *get developers to fund existing schools*: there is no legal curb on agreeing the funding of existing schools to developers – but there are no plans for new schools in this area in the foreseeable future, or developer-funded expansions, and the Council will seek funding in an area for education provision when the forecast for additional school places as a result of a development means more places are required – which is not the case here.

3.4 Parents have said at the public meeting, and subsequent to it, that given time, pupil numbers will increase. However, the pupil numbers projected for the next four years show a decline every year, leading to annual budget reductions and making it impossible for the federated governing body to submit a recovery plan to Council officers.

#### **4 How the proposal would affect standards, parental preference and the area**

- 4.1 The closure of Shelton Lower School would not affect educational standards in the area. Parents would be able to apply for a school place at one of three lower schools within the immediate area: Church End Lower School in Marston Moretaine, Cranfield Church of England Academy in Cranfield and Thomas Johnson Lower School in Lidlington.
- 4.2 All three of these schools currently have vacancies and all are rated by Ofsted as 'good', with the potential to be 'outstanding' as assessed by the Council's school improvement service. The two key measures of achievement in lower schools are the early years foundation stage and key stage one standard assessment tests (SATs). Pupils at the three schools all achieved well in the 2017 assessments, with attainment above the national and local averages, and those of Shelton Lower School.

#### **PROPOSED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALTERNATE SCHOOLS**

- 4.3 If the decision is taken to close Shelton Lower School, the Council will contact the parents and carers of pupils who are currently on roll at the school and who are due to join the school in September 2018, to advise how to submit an application for a place at an alternate school. All parents and carers will be told that their child can remain at the school until the end of the summer term 2019, if that is their wish.

#### **COMMUNITY SERVICES AND COHESION**

- 4.4 The lack of use of the school by the local community would mean that the closure of Shelton Lower School would have minimal effect on local community services or cohesion.

#### **RURAL SCHOOLS AND THE PRESUMPTION AGAINST CLOSURE**

- 4.5 There is a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that a rural school will never close, but the Department for Education requires a case for closure to be strong and for a proposal to be clearly in the best interests of

educational provision in the area. Because Shelton Lower is a rural school, the Department for Education requires the Council to consider a range of different factors before there is any proposal to close it. These factors are as follows:

- i) the likely effect of closure of the school on the local community;
- ii) educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools;
- iii) the availability, and likely cost to the Council, of transport to other schools;
- iv) any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the closure of the schools and the likely effects of any such increase; and
- v) any alternatives to the closure of the school.

4.6 The Council has considered these and believes that the case for closure remains strong. To address the five factors directly:

- i) The local community does not use the school facilities for community activities. The closure would therefore have minimal effect on the local community;
- ii) There are three lower schools in the immediate area: Church End, Cranfield Academy and Thomas Johnson. All three schools currently have vacancies. The other lower school in the area, although further away, is Houghton Conquest Lower School. The three neighbouring schools also have provision for pre-school nursery children and can accommodate the children currently at Shelton Lower. The standards and most recent regulator assessment of the three schools is set out in paragraph 4.2 above, and in the table on page 4 of the informal consultation document.
- iii / iv As nearly all pupils attending the school come from outside of the village, the effect of the use of motor vehicles in the area, if the school closes, would be negligible. Council officers have assessed the travelling distance of the Central Bedfordshire resident current (year R to year 3) pupils, plus the pupils due to start year R in September 2018. The total mileage is 34 to Shelton, and 39 to prospective schools. It is very hard to assess the extra CO2 emissions exactly, but they are highly likely to be very small, and significantly less than the carbon footprint of Shelton Lower School.

In the event of closure, pupils on the school roll at the end of the summer term 2019 may be eligible for assistance with travel costs, in line with Central Bedfordshire Council's home to school transport policy. Parents would be notified of any school transport eligibility at the time of making an application for an alternative school place.

- v) The Council has considered all possible alternatives to the closure of the school, including those submitted during the preliminary consultation, but none are believed to be viable. Officers note the comments of many respondents questioning the lack of viability as they believe the places will be needed in the area in future. However, there are sufficient planned places in the area until the 2022, and there is potential for additional places being provided by other schools. Central Bedfordshire's school organisation plan shows that the expansion of Church End lower school with effect from September 2018 will ensure there are

sufficient places, taking account of the birth rate and local housing plans within the (2017-2022) planning period.

#### **EARLY YEARS PROVISION**

4.7 The Council is also required to consider whether the alternative provision that is available for early years will integrate pre-school education with childcare services and/or with other services for young children. All three neighbouring schools to Shelton Lower, ie Church End, Cranfield Academy and Thomas Johnson, have provision for pre-school nursery children and can accommodate the children currently at Shelton Lower. All three are also rated 'good' by Ofsted.

#### **SCHOOL PREMISES AND PLAYING FIELDS**

4.8 Shelton Lower School is a member of The Vale of Marston's Schools Trust. If the school closes the future use of the land and building will be the responsibility of the Trust.

#### **PROPOSED STAGES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

4.9 It is the Council's proposal to close Shelton Lower School on 31 August 2019. Staffing levels at the school would have to be reviewed if there is a fall in the number of pupils on roll before that date.

### **5 Options for consideration**

5.1 There are two options – to close or not to close the school. The recommendation of the director of children's services is to close the school.

5.2 To determine not to close the school would mean the Council funding the school outside the dedicated schools grant (DSG), as it is not acceptable to use the contingency budget to support a school other than in the short term, or the costs of closing the school. If the Council's executive determines not to close the school, and the situation continues to deteriorate, then the Council would have to start a closure process again. The earliest date for closure would be 31 August 2020, and there is a risk the Council would need to contribute resources to the DSG if schools forum – as it is entitled to do – decides it is not a reasonable use of the contingency.

### **6 Reason for decision**

6.1 The proposed closure is being considered because the school is not financially viable. It has a budget deficit, which is projected to increase between now and 2021/22, and there is no possibility of the school's governors providing a credible recovery plan.

### **7 Council priorities**

7.1 The proposed action supports two of the Council's priorities, listed below:

- a) **Improving education and skills:** the closure of the school has the potential to improve the education offer to parents of children in the local area, as other schools in the area show better pupil attainment in the main standardised tests for pupils in lower schools.
- b) **A more efficient and responsive Council:** the Council's efficiency, while technically not affected by the schools block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG), a failure to address the viability issues within a reasonable timescale could lead to

schools forum rejecting the current use of the DSG's contingency. This is currently being used to fund the deficit of Shelton Lower School, in circumstances where the governing body is unable to produce a recovery plan.

## **8 Corporate implications**

8.1 There are no implications for the Council aside from the financial risk if the school does not close and is unable to submit a recovery plan.

## **9 Legal Implications**

9.1 A local authority can propose the closure of all categories of maintained school, following the five-stage statutory process in [part 4](#) of the government's statutory guidance from the Department of Education on opening and closing maintained schools dated April 2016.

9.2 The Council's constitution provides at Part 3E that the exercise of the Council's functions for the establishment and discontinuance of schools maintained by the Council in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Education and Inspections Act, 2006, the School Standards and Framework Act, 1998 and regulations made under those Acts is delegated to the director of children's services subject to consultation with the relevant executive member and the monitoring officer, to take particular account of: statutory and non-statutory guidance; the admissions code; and full consideration of the budget implications.

9.3 The executive is recommended to take the decision because of its significance.

## **10 Financial and risk implications**

10.1 Should the school close, the Council would be required to meet any closing deficit balance from school contingency.

10.2 The school contingency balance currently stands at £123,000.

## **11 Equalities implications**

11.1 Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. During the consultation process some respondents have highlighted the positive contribution the school makes in supporting children with additional needs. The Council has identified that places are available at good schools in the local area in all year groups, and there are no pupils in key vulnerable groups, for example, pupil with education, health and care plans, or children looked after.

## **12 Conclusion and next steps**

12.1 There are two separate scenarios to be considered. The first is if the executive determines to close the school. In this scenario:

- following the decision, there is a four week period, which ends on 5 September, within which appeals, if permitted, must be made (an interested party can apply for judicial review of the decision, and certain parties – in this case, the governing body or the local diocesan bodies – can appeal to the Schools Adjudicator);

- if there is a successful appeal using either of the means available, the closure does not go ahead, and must be re-started should the local authority still want to close the school; and
- if there is no appeal, or an unsuccessful appeal, the closure must be implemented on the prescribed date.

12.2 The second scenario follows the executive decision not to close the school. In this scenario:

- on the pupil numbers currently projected, the school will require cash allocation totalling about £111,000 between March 2018 and March 2022;
- this allocation must come from Council and not school budgets;
- even if there were another 15 pupils on roll by the October 2021 roll count, there would still be a £30,000 deficit, without accounting for the extra costs of the extra pupils;
- on current pupil projections, there will be surplus school places in the area until the end of the 2021/22 financial year, and it cannot be foreseen that the school will achieve a roll of 60 that is the minimum number of pupils required if the school is to move to a balanced budget; and
- even in this highly optimistic scenario, the school's governing body would not be able to produce a recovery plan – that is, repay the cumulative deficit built up by that date.

### **13 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Shelton Lower School consultation, 23 April 2018

Appendix 2: Shelton Lower School: summary of responses to the consultation, June 2018

### **14 Background papers**

None

#### **Report author**

Chris Kiernan, interim head of school improvement

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have  
**your**  
say...

# ...on the future of Shelton Lower School

**Central  
Bedfordshire**

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## Summary

Shelton Lower School is a small rural lower school in the village of Upper Shelton.

The school has an overall pupil capacity of 75 pupils but has not been full for a number of years and unfortunately this decline is forecast to continue. Only five children's parents have requested a place in the September intake out of a total admission number of 15.

Shelton Lower School has, this year, gone into a budget deficit position and this looks set to worsen.

The governors alerted the council to the deteriorating financial situation in February 2018. The council has been providing financial support to the school and exploring possible options. At present there seems to be no prospect of recovery and therefore we must consider the future of the school.

The council has to follow statutory guidance in any circumstance where closure of a school might result. We are consulting on all options, and are inviting parents, local residents and stakeholders to give us their views on the future options for the school. It is only after this stage that any proposal to close the school will be considered.

This consultation document sets out the rationale for considering the future of the school, how you can have your say and the decision-making process.

## Introduction

Councils (or local authorities) have a duty to ensure there are enough suitable school places for children aged 5-16. As part of delivering this role councils can open new schools and close existing schools.

Shelton Lower School is a Foundation school. As such it is overseen and funded by the council and follows the national curriculum, but is the employer of its staff. The governing body and head teacher are responsible for running the school, including recruitment, marketing and financial management.

## About the school

Shelton Lower School is a small rural lower school in Lower Shelton Road, in village of Upper Shelton in Central Bedfordshire.

The school is a Foundation school, federated with Southill Lower School (this means they share a governing body and head teacher) and the land belongs to The Vale of Marston Schools Trust.

The school has a good reputation, being rated as Good in the latest Ofsted inspection.

The school has a pre-school nursery, a reception year and pupils from year 1 to year 4. No pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

The total capacity of the school is 75 pupils (years 1-4 and Reception year) with an intake capacity of 15 pupils a year.

About 40 per cent of pupils at the school will live outside the school's catchment area in September 2018 with only three living in the village of Upper Shelton.

## Rationale for considering the future of the school

The school has not been full for a number of years and only five children are due to start in the September year R intake out of a total admission number of 15.

Taking account of these pupils, and pupils whose parents have taken places in other schools, the number of pupils on roll in September will be 39, which is 52 per cent of Shelton lower school's capacity. In addition, there are currently 11 children attending the pre-school nursery but no new applicants for September 2018, and the head teacher is currently reviewing its viability.

Despite the governing body making a significant effort over the years to increase pupil numbers through publicity, providing a pre-school nursery and federating with another school, and undertaken marketing activity, there has been a steady decline in pupil numbers and this decline is forecast to continue.

At the point of producing this document it is predicted that by September 2018 there will be only 39 pupils on roll. The projected pupil numbers for the school are provided below. These projections take account of the planned housing growth in the local area. The numbers show a continued decline with the school expected to be operating at under a half of capacity (41 per cent) by 2020 and around a third by 2021.

Year group	Oct-18	Oct-19	Oct-20	Oct-21
Reception	5	4	4	4
Year 1	8	5	4	4
Year 2	9	8	5	4
Year 3	5	9	8	5
Year 4	8	5	9	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Percentage of capacity</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>33%</b>

Schools are allocated funding based on the number of pupils they have. There is a point at which schools cannot continue because they have too few pupils and therefore inadequate funding to keep operating. Shelton Lower School has gone into a budget deficit position and this looks set to worsen.

The table below shows the forecast financial position for the school based on the predicted pupil numbers. This information was accurate at the point of producing this document. Given the projected decline in pupil numbers, the deficit cannot be repaid and is projected to increase.

Forecast school budget, March 2018 to March 2021				
	31.3.2018	31.3.2019	31.3.2020	31.3.2021
Income	£338,712	£285,680	£268,078	£252,702
Expenditure	£348,680	£303,822	£301,939	£292,554
In year revenue deficit	(£9,968)	(£18,142)	(£33,861)	(£39,852)
Deficit brought forward	(£8,786)	(£18,754)	(£36,896)	(£70,757)
Cumulative revenue deficit	(£18,754)	(£36,896)	(£70,757)	(£110,609)

It will be increasingly difficult with reducing budget year on year for the school to sustain the broad and balanced curriculum required by the national curriculum, which is a legal requirement.

The governors alerted the council to the deteriorating financial situation in February 2018. The council has been providing financial support to the school and exploring possible options. At present there seems to be no prospect of recovery and therefore we must consider the future of the school as its financial viability is in question.

Therefore, in the best educational interests of pupils, the council has started the statutory process to consider the future of the school and possible closure.

## Impact of closure

Shelton Lower is a rural school and therefore the council must consider;

1. the effect of closure on the local community
2. educational standards at the school and likely effect on neighbouring schools
3. the availability, and cost, of transport to other schools
4. any increase in motor vehicle use as a result of closure and the effects of any increase
5. any alternatives to closure.

Below provides an initial view on the potential impact of closure but this consultation gives you an opportunity to raise any other issues that you feel should be considered.

### Impact on community

The local community does not use the school facilities for community activities.

### Impact on schools

Parents of pupils currently attending the school may express a preference to send their children to neighbouring schools in the area, or outside it. There are three lower schools in the immediate area: Church End, Cranfield Academy and Thomas Johnson. All three schools currently have vacancies. The other lower school in the area, although further away, is Houghton Conquest Lower School. The three neighbouring schools also have provision for pre-school nursery children and can accommodate the children currently at Shelton.

With regard to standards in alternative schools, they are all rated by Ofsted as good, with all (including Shelton) assessed by the council's School Improvement Service to have the potential to be 'outstanding'. The table below shows the current Ofsted rating, foundation stage profile, key stage one assessment outcomes for 2016 and 2017 and pupil characteristics of all the schools in the area.

Ofsted, attainment and pupil data of lower schools in the area								
School	Ofsted	2016		2017		English as additional Language	Free school meals	Special Educational Needs
		FS	KS 1 RWM	FS	KS 1 RWM			
Church End	Good	66	78	70	76	11%	7%	17%
Cranfield Academy	Good	72	70	79	68	22%	4%	7%
Houghton Conquest	Good	79	78	78	88	0%	5%	8%
Shelton	Good	70	70	80	66	3%	10%	5%
Thomas Johnson	Good	84	70	79	86	8%	7%	13%

### Travel

As nearly all pupils attending the school come from outside of the village, the effect of the use of motor vehicles in the area, if the school closes, would be negligible.

In the event of closure, pupils on the school roll at the end of the summer term 2019 may be eligible for assistance with travel costs, in line with Central Bedfordshire Council's home to school transport policy. If the council proposes to close the school (stage 2), there will be a detailed assessment of current travel distances to the nearest other suitable school. Parents would be notified of any school transport eligibility at the time of making an application for an alternative school place.

## Process for decision making

The council is required to follow a prescribed process to close a school. The process has five stages and the process for this is set out below.

We are currently at stage 1 – informal consultation. We are inviting parents, local residents and stakeholders to give us their views on the future of the school before we propose closure.

Statutory process	Action	Date/time
Stage 1 – Informal	Six-week consultation starts	23 April 2018
	Staff meeting	30 April 2018, 3.30pm
	Public meeting	30 April 2018, 6.00pm
	Consultation closes	8 June 2018
Stage 2 – Proposal to close	Director of Children’s Services decision	22 June 2018
Stage 3 – Representations	Four-week representation period starts	25 June 2018
	Representation period closes	23 July 2018
	Overview and scrutiny committee	30 July 2018, 10.00am
Stage 4 - Decision	Executive make a decision	7 August 2018, 9.30am
Stage 5 – Implementation	School to close if this is the decision	31 August 2019

It should be noted that time process and timetable is illustrative after stage 1. No decision has been made about closure, and no decision will be made until careful consideration and due process following this informal consultation.

We understand that the possibility of closure is very unsettling for parents and they want to know more about what would happen if the school does close. We have therefore prepared a separate factsheet to explain the process for allocating new school places for Shelton Lower School pupils.

## Have your say

You can have your say online at [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations) or you can pick up a paper response form from the school.

All responses should be received by **5pm Friday 8 June 2018**.

We will also hold a public meeting at the school on 30 April at 6pm to answer your questions. You do not need to register to attend the meeting.

**Central  
Bedfordshire**

# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

## **Contact us...**

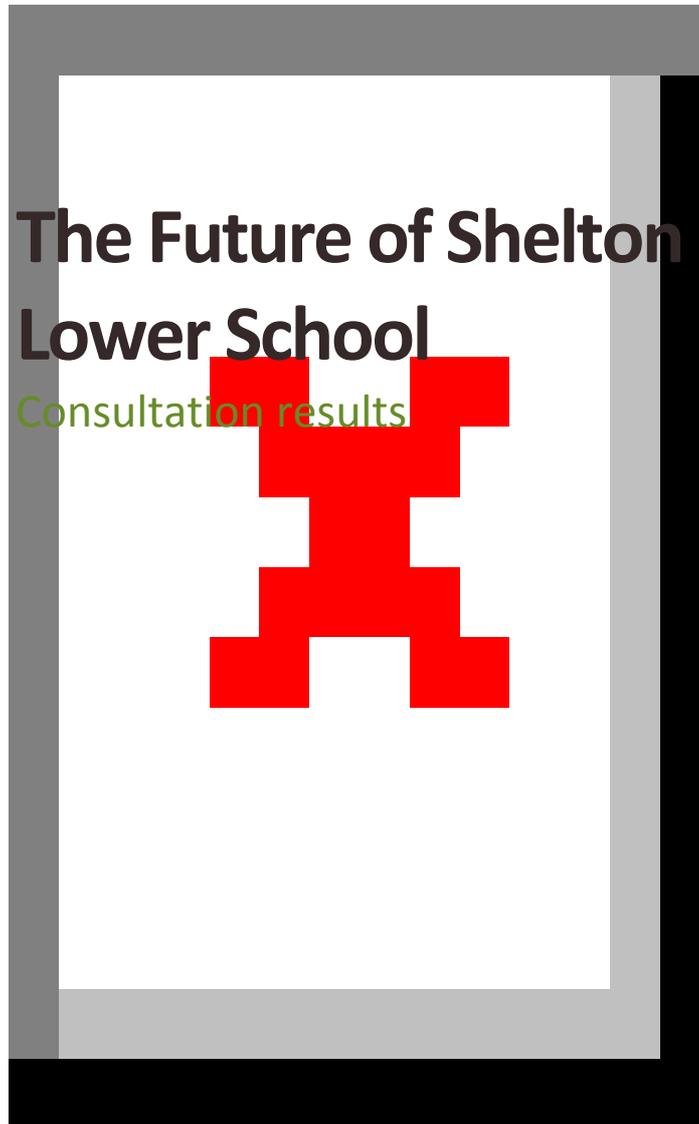
by telephone: 0300 300 5700

by email: [school.organisation@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

on the web: [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations)

Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,  
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

Appendix 2



By  
Knowledge & Insight

## Purpose of consultation

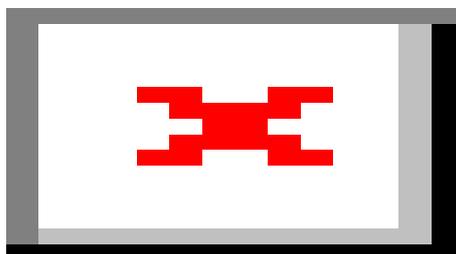
Shelton Lower School is a small rural lower school in the village of Upper Shelton. The school has an overall pupil capacity of 75 pupils but has not been full for a number of years and unfortunately this decline is forecast to continue. Only four children's parents have requested a place in the September intake out of a total admission number of 15. Shelton Lower School has, this year, gone into a budget deficit position and this looks set to worsen.

The governors alerted the council to the deteriorating financial situation in February 2018. The council has been providing financial support to the school and exploring possible options. At present there seems to be no prospect of recovery and therefore the future of the school must be considered.

The council has to follow statutory guidance if consideration is being given in relation to the possible closure of a school. The consultation on the future of the school is the first step in the process. Parents, local residents and stakeholders were invited to give their views on the future options for the school.

## Feedback on proposal

A total of 118 responses were received. The greatest number of responses, 47, were from local residents (40%). This was followed by 31 responses from parents with children at the school (26%). A small number of responses, 4, came from parents whose children would be joining the school (3%).



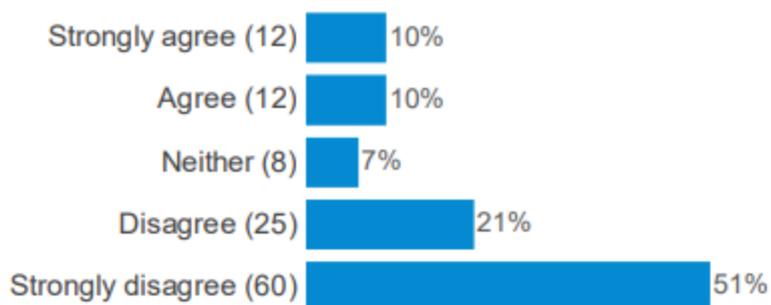
**If other, please specify:**

Parent of child applying to start in September 2018 and another child September 2019  
I have my child in the robin nursery  
I used to live in the area  
Worked at the school many years ago as a nursery nurse. The school was the best I had ever worked at  
Central Bedfordshire Resident  
Ratepayer  
Parent of child due to start school next year  
Parent of 2 children who attended Shelton Lower School  
Resident of next village  
local resident with a young child who would be joining the school  
ex-pupil  
Parent of former pupils

**If you are the parent of a child/children at another school or the employee or governor of another school, please specify:**

Church End Lower School  
Forest End (Church End)  
Cranfield and wootton  
Marston Vale Middle  
Church end  
Marston Vale middle  
Church end  
Southill  
Wootton Upper School  
Church end lower  
Church End  
Wootton Lower  
Church end lower  
Southill lower school  
Southill  
Parent of a child at another school but looking to transfer my son to Shelton in September.  
Employee at Church End Lower School  
I have a son at Wootton Lower school  
Wootton lower  
None of these  
School in Leicester  
Pippins and Bramleys  
Thomas Johnson Lower school, Lidlington  
Church End  
pupil at Marston Vale Middle  
St Marys C of E, Clophill  
N/A  
No  
Wootton Lower  
I am the parent of a pupil currently in year 1

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that the current situation at Shelton Lower School is increasingly unviable?**



The majority of respondents 85 (72%) disagreed that Shelton Lower school was becoming increasingly unviable.

**Do you have any suggestions or alternative solutions to closing Shelton Lower School?**

Theme	No of comments
Don't shut yet - building in the local area (Marston, Cranfield, Wootton) will increase numbers*	22
Promote it more	13
Consultation contains inaccurate information	11
Multi academy trust / merger / partnership with other schools	9
Invest to make it viable / fund it properly	8
Other schools too large (taking pupils away)	5
Change age range to include years 5&6	4
Change catchment areas of local schools	3
Get developers to fund existing schools, not just new ones	1
Other	27
<b>Total comments</b>	<b>83</b>

35 respondents did not leave a comment.

\* It should be noted that that some of the comments refer to development in Wootton, such as Berry Wood which is in another local authority area.

**Comments included:**

*Given the new housing developments planned for the immediate area local to Upper Shelton, Berry woods for one example, the school should be promoted, and reinvested in by the new housing developers.*

*Keep the school open and advertise it to residents I. Marston Moretaine. My son is in reception at church end and I was not aware of Shelton when I was choosing his school. If people don't know it is there they won't use it.*

*My understanding is that the numbers and finances have been wrongly calculated and the school's financial situation is far less serious than was projected.*

*It would appear that mistakes have been made leading to the original deficit figure being incorrect. This has led to some parents worrying that they will not find a suitable local alternative for their child and moving them already, before any decision has been made about closure. The school is now in a worse position due to these mistakes being shown at the original parents meeting.*

*Has the council considered a partnership arrangement with local schools? Has the council considered whether changing from a lower school to a R to 6 school could help to restore growth?*

*I believe that capital funding should be given to the school to make it more viable, as I believe this is the case, and that the school has not received any capital funding to invest in the school to make it more attractive to potential parents.*

### **Do you have any other comments regarding the future of Shelton Lower School?**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>No of comments</b>
Don't close it	28
Shelton will be needed with the planned expansion locally	27
School is part of the community	18
It's a good / lovely school which supports pupils	17
Impact on current pupils / parents	9
Inaccurate information in report	9
Increase in commuting	7
School should close if not economically viable	5
Work with other schools / Multi Academy Trust	2
Other	16
<b>Total comments</b>	<b>87</b>

31 respondents did not leave a comment.

#### **Comments included:**

*Pupil numbers are going to increase given all the new building going on in the vicinity. With a short sighted intention, a much bigger problem is created. I am aware that councils now get the builders to build the schools as part of their planning conditions on the new estates, but surely it does not relinquish them from the responsibilities of their existing schools.*

*It would seem logical to me that the school remain open and a decision not be looked at until the surrounding areas development plans and schedules are finalised.*

*I think it will take away a part of the Shelton community. We were cut off from the main village by the bypass leaving us with no easy access to shops etc. and now the school may be taken away as well. With all the new developments locally surely given time the numbers of*

*pupils in the other local schools will increase and Shelton would be relevant to take the overflow*

*This small rural school accommodates children from families at Cranfield University, where English is not their first language, and children with disabilities as it is a small school who can accommodate individual needs. The closure of this school would be utterly detrimental to the children and the local community. This school is loved - listen to us before disregarding our recommendations and ideas.*

*This could be ideal for children who require small classroom sizes due to additional needs.*

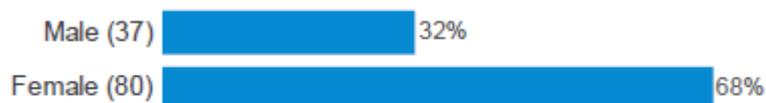
*Both of my children are thriving here, the nursery has helped my son in so many ways - he struggles with his speech and confidence, since going to Shelton that has improved, more than you'll ever know. My daughter has come on leaps and bounds since starting reception here.*

*It would be a shame if the school has to close. It was a good school when my children were there and from what I hear it still is. Children tend to learn better in smaller classes where they can have individual attention when needed. But I understand the need for it to be financially viable.*

*I live across the road from Shelton Lower School, my son is 2 years old and I was planning on him starting at Shelton School in September 2020. It will take me less than 1 minute to walk him to our lovely village school, if you close it we will be in the car for 10-20 minutes driving to another school.*

*If the school is not economically viable then it should close. These children and the funding they attract would be better served in schools that are attracting students. Money should not be frittered away trying to save a school which only attracts a small proportion of children, many of which don't even live in Lower Shelton. In my view the benefits of closing out weight any benefits from keeping it open*

## About you

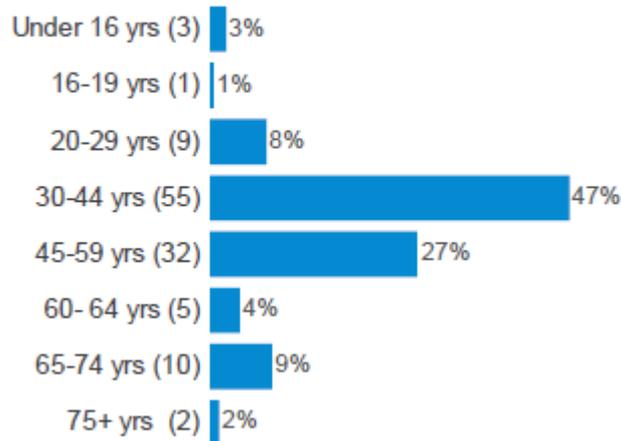


### Do you consider yourself disabled?

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



**What is your age?**



**To which of these groups do you consider you belong?**



**If other, please specify:**

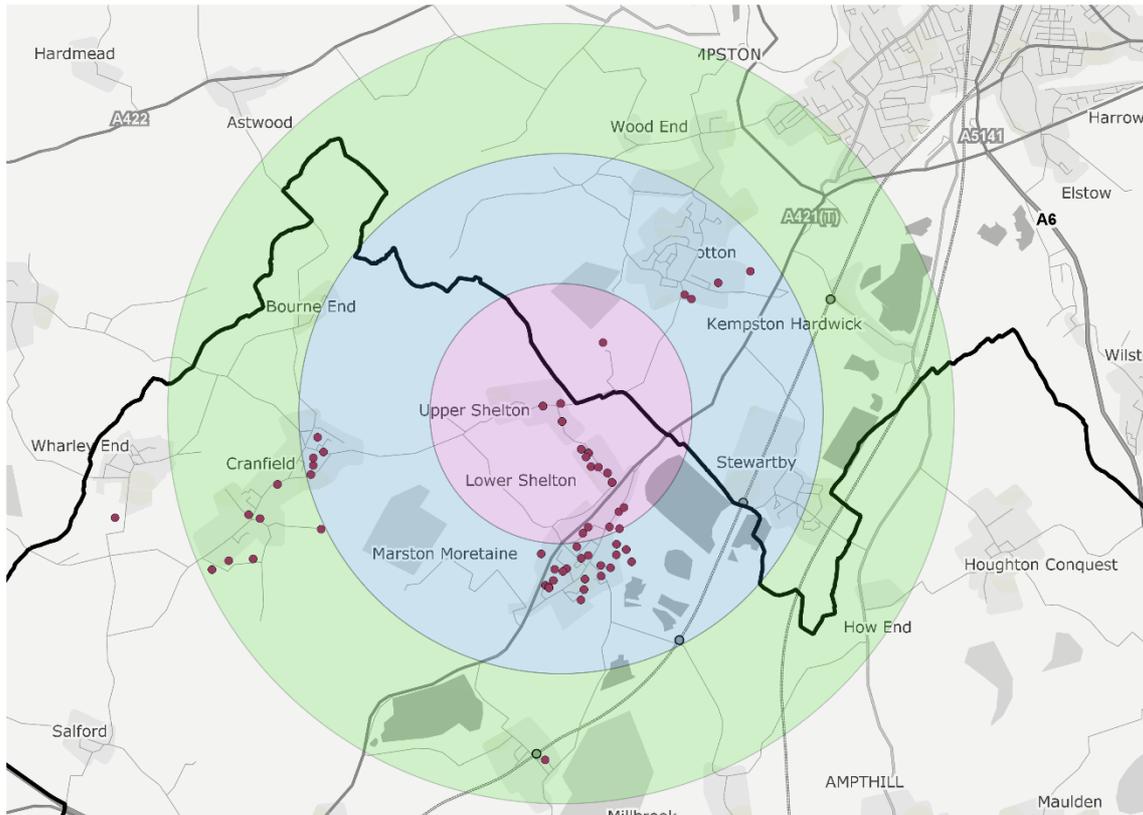
White European  
white French

**Postcode analysis**

A review of postcodes indicates that the majority of respondents were from the local area around Shelton, ensuring those most affected by the proposal were able to have their say.

Location of respondent	Respondents
<b>Central Bedfordshire</b>	<b>98</b>
Cranfield and Marston Moretaine ward	86
Other Central Bedfordshire wards	12
<b>Bedford and Luton</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Unidentifiable</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>118</b>

This is confirmed by the map below, which shows that most of the respondents to the consultation lived within two miles of Shelton Lower School.

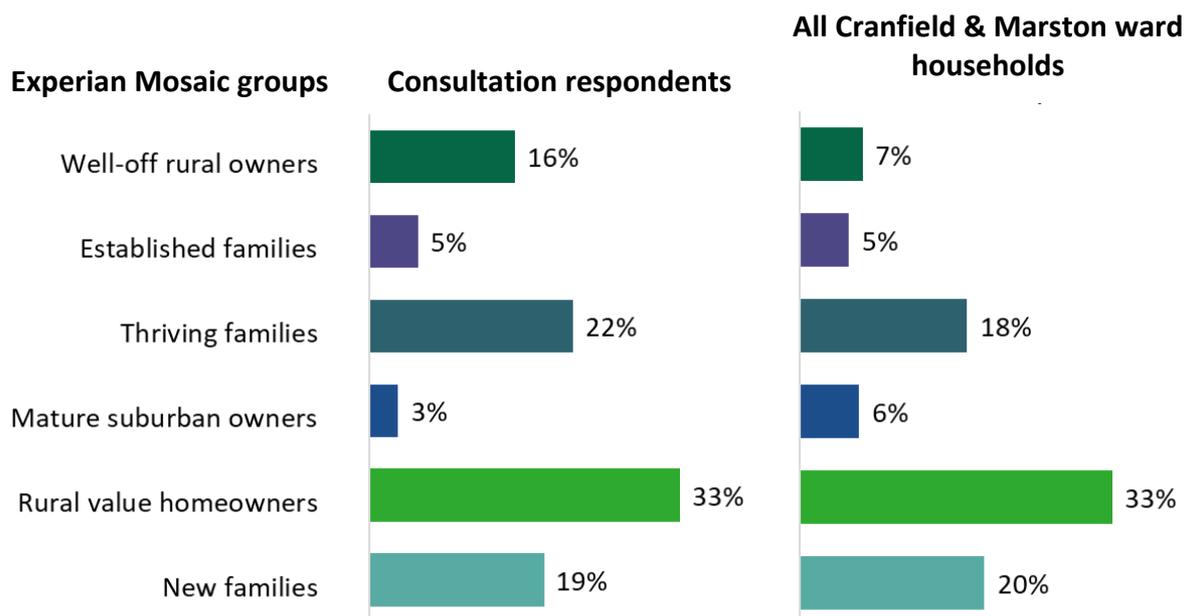


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Each coloured circle on the map represents a distance of 1 mile from the school. The thick black line is the Central Bedfordshire Council area boundary. Note that there were also respondents from outside the area shown on the map.

- 49 respondents (42%) lived within 1 mile of the school
- 31 respondents (26%) lived within 1-2 miles of the school
- 10 respondents (8%) lived within 2-3 miles of the school
- 16 respondents (14%) lived more than 3 miles from the school
- 12 respondents (10%) did not give a full postcode.

In addition to the location of respondents, we also looked at the profile of respondents. This showed that the profile of respondents was similar to the profile of residents within Cranfield and Marston ward, and included people from less well off rural households, as well as more affluent families.



Note 1: the chart for consultation respondents only shows those responses that had a full valid postcode. This includes 80% of all respondent to the consultation. Most of those not included did not give a full valid postcode.

Note 2: the chart for all Cranfield & Marston ward households only displays those groups that also had respondents to the consultation. As a result, some of the smaller groups within Cranfield and Marston ward are not shown. However, the groups shown in the chart account for 93% of all households within the ward.

The largest group of respondents was 'Rural value households'. These are less well off rural households, and they are the biggest group within the ward as a whole. They are therefore reflective of the local community. Many of the responses also came from affluent families and from 'New families', who are young families in new build housing.

## Conclusions

The majority of the 118 respondents were from the local area. The profile of respondents was similar to the profile of residents within Cranfield and Marston ward, including people from less well-off rural households, as well as more affluent families.

The greatest number of responses, 47, were from local residents (40%), followed by 31 responses from parents with children at the school (26%).

The majority of respondents, 85, (72%) disagreed that Shelton Lower School is becoming unviable.

Respondents suggested alternative solutions such as waiting for development in the local area (Marston, Cranfield, Wootton) to increase pupil numbers, improving promotion of the school, exploring possibilities for partnership with other schools and securing further investment to increase viability.

Other comments highlighted the potential impact on the local community in terms of the loss of a valuable community asset, the positive contribution the school makes in supporting children with additional needs and the likely increase in driving children to school.

A few comments highlighted that the school should close if it was not economically viable.

# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

**Find us online:** [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations)

**Email:** [consultations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:consultations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

## Updated projected pupil numbers for Shelton Lower School (23 July 2018)

### 1 Background

1.1 Central Bedfordshire council commenced an informal consultation on the future of the school on 23 April 2018. The consultation contained a table showing projected pupil numbers, and a budget and expenditure table based on this.

1.2 Several individuals and bodies have asked whether pupil numbers have changed since the informal consultation, and whether any changes affect council officers' view that the school is not financially viable. Accordingly, this update shows the original pupil number forecasts and the projected budget, expenditure, and in year and cumulative deficits between March 2019 and March 2022.

### 2 The original pupil number forecasts and projected budget and expenditure

2.1 The pupil numbers presented originally are shown below. The complaint that the 2019 total was incorrect was because of a transcription error in the year 4 number that year. The overall pupil total on which the budget and expenditure forecasts were based, was correct.

Year group	Oct-18	Oct-19	Oct-20	Oct-21
Reception	5	4	4	4
Year 1	8	5	4	4
Year 2	9	8	5	4
Year 3	5	9	8	5
Year 4	8	5	9	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>% capacity</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>33%</b>

2.2 The table setting out financial projections based on the above pupil numbers is set out below. Each year, the in-year deficit is projected to increase, so that the cumulative deficit reaches £110,609 by 2022.

Forecast school budget, March 2018 to March 2021				
	31.3.2019	31.3.2020	31.3.2021	31.3.2022
Income	£338,712	£285,680	£268,078	£252,702
Expenditure	£348,680	£303,822	£301,939	£292,554
In year revenue deficit	(£9,968)	(£18,142)	(£33,861)	(£39,852)
Deficit brought forward	(£8,786)	(£18,754)	(£36,896)	(£70,757)
Cumulative revenue deficit	(£18,754)	(£36,896)	(£70,757)	(£110,609)

### 3 Updated pupil forecasts and projected budget and expenditure

3.1 Since April, the numbers of pupils whose parents have been offered a reception place for September 2018, and accepted it, and the pupils in year groups 1-4, have changed. The table below shows the changes, and the amended pupil number projections. The projected roll for October 2018 is likely to be fairly accurate, unless more pupils in years 1-4 leave, and year R parents for whom Shelton was not a first preference do not get an offer of a place at their preferred school.

Year group	Oct-18	Oct-19	Oct-20	Oct-21
Reception	10	4	4	4
Year 1	7	10	4	4
Year 2	4	7	10	4
Year 3	2	4	7	10
Year 4	6	2	4	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>% capacity</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>39%</b>

3.2 The table above shows a significant (projected) drop in pupil numbers in the October pupil count – from 39 to 29 (26 per cent fewer pupils). This is despite the increased projected year R roll increasing from 5 to 10. The key issue is whether this number of pupils might be expected in future years, and should be included in pupil number forecasts. This year, there were only 2 ‘on-time’ first preferences, 5 late first preferences, 2 late second preferences and one late third preference. Of the 10 pupils, three are Central Bedfordshire first preferences (one of which was a late application), six are from Bedford Borough and one is from Hertfordshire.

3.3 Bedford Borough officers have advised that:

- both Broadmead Lower (Stewartby) and Wootton Lower are at capacity for September 2018. As a result of applicants who have now moved into the catchment area or late catchment applications both schools have catchment children on their waiting list;
- the next nearest school with vacancies is in Kempston but some parents have asked for and been offered a place at Shelton;
- there are plans to expand Wootton in 2019; and
- it is likely that section 106 resources will be available to expand Broadmead lower school by September 2019.

3.4 The table below shows the likely financial implications of the revised pupil projections.

Forecast school budget, March 2018 to March 2021				
	31.3.2019	31.3.2020	31.3.2021	31.3.2022
Income	£338,712	£255,680	£247,078	£258,702
Expenditure	£348,680	£303,822	£301,939	£292,554
In year revenue deficit	(£9,968)	(£48,142)	(£54,861)	(£33,852)
Deficit brought forward	(£8,786)	(£18,754)	(£66,896)	(£121,757)
Cumulative revenue deficit	(£18,754)	(£66,896)	(£121,757)	(£155,609)

3.5 In summary, on the latest pupil projections, the overall deficit increases by £35,000 to £155,609 by March 2022, principally because the numbers in years 1-4 now have reduced from 34 to 19, and the effects of these numbers going forward for three years.

3.6 Even if there is an assumption that pupil numbers in year R between 2019 and 2021 are between 5 and 10 – say, between 7 and 8, this would be four more pupils in 2019 and 7 more in 2020. However, overall pupil numbers are three fewer than the original forecast in 2019, and only 5 more in 2020. While this reduces the projected deficit by over £20,000 by the end of March 2022 compared with the table above (£155,609), it is still £134,609, which is £24,000 more than the original forecast of £110,609.