

Appendix A

Ms Joan Wheeler
BSF Projects Manager
Children's Services, Schools & Families
Bedford Borough Council
Borough Hall
Bedford MK42 9AP

Tel: 01462 611498
Your ref:
Our ref: AL/ae
Date: 14th July 2009

Dear Ms Wheeler

Re: Bedford Schools for the Future – Consultation Response

I write to you as Portfolio Holder for Children's Services with regard to Central Bedfordshire's response to Bedford Borough's School Organisation Review.

Whilst I have not used the form provided as your consultation document, I have responded to the questions. However, before addressing the questions, I would like to make general observations.

My first comment is that many of the Central Bedfordshire residents will have their children in schools on the Borough Boundary and Borough residents will have their children in Central Bedfordshire schools. I am concerned that these communities need to be given particular consideration. I will be keeping an on-going communication with you in representing the needs of these constituents as I know Edwina Grant will be talking to Chris Hilliard at officer level.

My second point is regarding the implementation of any decision. Should the responses to your consultation be in favour of your proposal this will take some time to implement. Reassurance will need to be given by yourselves to new parents with very young children and all parents with children already in schools about the continuity of high quality education and proper transition between existing school phases so that confidence in the system is maintained throughout any change.

On the questions that are particularly relevant for me to address, I have commented below.

How do you think that schools in Bedford Borough should be organised?

We think that schools should be organised in a way that provides good outcomes for children and takes account of the need to personalise the education for every child. I firmly believe that "one glove does not fit all hands". It is important that the provision

is responsive to the context of the area the school serves and the needs of the community.

Please give any comments you have about the proposed timing of any change

With respect of the timing, I think that this consultation has happened very quickly after Bedford Borough Council was established as a new Unitary Authority. This speed is of concern in that we have had limited time to engage with you in preparation for the change.

Please give any comments on the individual proposals for any of the schools

On comments about individual proposals for schools, I do not propose to comment on schools within your area. However, I would need to make strong representation as we go forward should there be any negative impact on the continuity of learning for pupils in Central Bedfordshire schools.

I have copied this letter to all of our Central Bedfordshire schools so that they are aware of my response. I will continue to keep in close contact with our own schools and our parents to make representations as appropriate as we go forward.

Finally, to further my aim to represent our constituents, I ask for a meeting with your Lead Member for Children's Services, along with each authority's Director of Children's Services so that we can discuss issues. If necessary, after this meeting, we may need to have a further meeting to include the two Leaders and Chief Executives of the Councils. It is disappointing that the consultation closes one week after schools have themselves moved into the holiday period.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Mrs Anita Lewis
Portfolio Holder – Children's Services