

Appendix B

Central Bedfordshire Council  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)



# **Consultation on the Future of Special Schooling in the South of Central Bedfordshire**

**February 14 – March 25 2011**

**Closing date for responses 12 noon, March 25 2011**



## **1. Why is Central Bedfordshire consulting with you?**

This consultation has been initiated as the next stage of the delivery of the agreed model of Area Special Schools in Central Bedfordshire. It will enable all interested parties to express their views on the development of the delivery of special schooling in the South of Central Bedfordshire. Your responses will help inform the Council's decision-making on the best way to proceed that ensures that we develop special school provision that will meet the needs of children who require it in the South of Central Bedfordshire.

## **2. What are we consulting on?**

We are consulting on the proposal to merge Glenwood, Hillcrest and Weatherfield Special Schools. We are planning to continue to use all 3 sites initially. Merger can be achieved in two ways, either through the expansion of 1 school and the closure of 2 schools or the closure of all 3 schools and the opening of 1 "new" school. If it was proposed to close all 3 schools it is expected that it would then be necessary to undertake a "competition", which means inviting anyone who might be interested (which may include the Local Authority) to propose to open the "new" school.

## **3. Background**

On 29 January 2008, the Executive of Bedfordshire County Council considered a report on Bedfordshire's Special Educational Needs (SEN) Review, which recommended a number of actions that needed to be taken to improve provision for SEN across the county. These recommendations arose from consultation meetings in 2007 with parents/carers, schools and other agencies, as well as analysis of key information.

On 6 June 2008, the Central Bedfordshire Transition Task Force considered and adopted the recommendations of the Review of Special Needs carried out by the former Bedfordshire County Council. This included the recommendation to develop Area Special Schools in the Central Bedfordshire area.

In March 2009, the Schools Forum agreed the changes to the funding formula for special schools in order to target funding appropriately to the increasingly complex needs of the pupils. It was recognised that the needs of children now attending the MLD schools were becoming more complex. The Review of Special Needs identified that mainstream schools had developed their knowledge and expertise in meeting a broader range of needs, and an increasing number of parents have chosen mainstream education for their child, even when they met the admissions guidance for a special school.

On 23 June 2009, the Executive agreed to initiate a consultation on the options for the future of special schooling in the East of Central Bedfordshire. On 8 December 2009 the Executive considered the responses to the consultation and supported the proposed merger of Hitchmead and Sunnyside schools to create

an Area Special School for pupils aged between 3 and 19 across the two existing sites. On 8 April 2010 the Executive made the final decision to proceed with the merger, and on 1 September 2010 the newly named Ivel Valley Area Special School opened across the two sites.

In March 2010, the Executive agreed the Education Vision for Central Bedfordshire, with specific reference to Inclusion and Special Needs. This included reducing out-of-authority specialist placements by re-allocating resources to make provision to meet needs locally; developing the concept of Area Special Schools with a broader role for delivering services to mainstream schools.

Headteachers of the special schools in this area have been working with officers to consider the advantages and disadvantages of possible options and these were presented in the report to the Executive.

In their meeting on 11 January 2011 the Executive considered the advantages and disadvantages of 3 options and made a decision to consult on one option as a preferred option.

#### **4. What is an Area Special School?**

Area Special Schools will provide local high quality education for the growing population of children with severe and complex needs from early years to post 16, and support mainstream schools to become more inclusive by developing and improving their capacity, through advice, support and training. We see these schools as an important part of local service delivery and at the heart of a co-ordinated multi-agency network of services that will deliver more flexible provision for young people with special educational needs and their families.

Area Special Schools offer the benefits brought about by concentrating and co-ordinating expertise and specialist resources within a single organisation. They are well placed to provide 'extended' services to support pupils with SEN and their families.

#### **5. What were the other options that were considered before the consultation?**

##### ***a. Keeping all 3 schools the same as they are now***

All of the special school headteachers are in agreement that the three schools remaining as they are is not an option.

##### ***b. To merge Glenwood and Hillcrest into an all age Area Special School and retain Weatherfield as a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD)***

- It would not achieve the aim of moving away from separately designated schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and moderate

learning difficulties (MLD) to the agreed model of an Area Special School

- This would not provide an equitable model across Central Bedfordshire.
- It would not resolve the lack of post 16 provision for pupils with MLD who could not have their needs met in other post 16 provision locally.
- It could create difficulties with admissions as some pupils could meet the admissions guidance for both an Area Special School and an MLD School.
- The continued viability of a stand alone MLD school would be an issue.

While the head teachers and Governors of Glenwood and Hillcrest Schools are in support of the proposal to merge all 3 special schools, they are in agreement that if this does not proceed they would wish to come together as 1 school under 1 leadership team.

## 6. Who is being consulted?

Central Bedfordshire is keen to make this consultation as broad as possible and so would encourage anybody with an interest to respond. Parents, staff, local community groups, other schools, local residents, professional associations, appropriate Members of Parliament and any other interested parties are all welcome and encouraged to participate and contribute to this process. Public meetings have been arranged as set out below where you can hear more information and ask questions.

Central Bedfordshire acknowledges the requirement to consult with all recognised professional associations/unions as well as staff groups, and they will all be included in the formal consultation process.

- The dates for the **staff meetings** are:

Weatherfield School: Tuesday 15 February  
Hillcrest School: Wednesday 16 February  
Glenwood School: Thursday 17 February

- The dates for the **public meetings** are:

Dunstable Fire Station: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011, 7.00pm and  
7<sup>th</sup> March 2011, 1.30pm  
The Cedars Upper School, Leighton Buzzard: 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2011, 7.00pm

These venues only hold a restricted number of people so please contact Customer Services on 0300 300 8304 or on [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) and let us know which meeting you would like to attend. We will run further meetings if required.

## 7. What are the previous and current numbers of pupils at the schools?

All schools have children on their roll who live outside Central Bedfordshire. The current numbers are as follows, but projected figures depend on any further request for changes in placement, further new admissions or additional leavers. Children can be admitted to a special school at any point in a year and so numbers can increase throughout the year. This is particularly the case for Glenwood school.

Glenwood:	74 including (2 Luton and 1 Bedford Borough)
Hillcrest:	64 (including 9 Luton and 1 Bedford Borough)
Weatherfield:	93 (including 4 Luton, 1 Bucks, 1 Bedford Borough and 2 Herts)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>231</b>

### Glenwood

PUPIL NOS	Jan 06	Jan 07	Jan 08	Jan 09	Jan 10	Jan 11
<b>TOTAL</b>	62	61	70	72	78	74

Potential numbers for Glenwood for September 2011 are currently 66.

### Hillcrest

PUPIL NOS	Jan 06	Jan 07	Jan 08	Jan 09	Jan 10	Jan 11
<b>TOTAL</b>	91	87	84	79	72	64

Potential numbers for Hillcrest for September 2011 are currently 60.

### Weatherfield

PUPIL NOS	Jan 06	Jan 07	Jan 08	Jan 09	Jan 10	Jan 11
<b>TOTAL</b>	136	122	106	98	93	93

Potential numbers for Weatherfield for September 2011 are currently 86

27 Central Bedfordshire pupils are currently attending Grange School (MLD), 31 attending St John's School (SLD/PMLD) and 29 attending Ridgeway School for children with physical disabilities, all in Bedford Borough. There are smaller numbers of pupils attending other Authority Special Schools in surrounding Authorities.

We recognise the increase in children with more complex needs in our special schools. We also recognise that some parents are choosing their local

mainstream schools and that these schools are successfully meeting their children's needs.

## **8. What might the advantages and disadvantages be?**

The Council and the headteachers from the 3 schools involved have suggested some advantages and disadvantages of this option, and would welcome your views on these and any further advantages and disadvantages or issues that you feel arise from this. We have attached a form to help you with your response.

### **Advantages**

- This would bring together the skills, knowledge and expertise of the 3 schools which would enrich the teaching, learning and curriculum for all of the pupils.
- This would achieve the agreed model of an Area Special School, and is likely to provide the best basis for long term sustainability and high quality provision.
- This would be consistent with the Members' decision regarding Ivel Valley Area Special School and provide an equivalent model to that in the east of Central Bedfordshire.
- Due to the existing expertise at Glenwood and Hillcrest schools, this would provide the specialist Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) provision currently lacking for Central Bedfordshire pupils with MLD and complex ASD. Currently pupils who are assessed as requiring this type of provision travel to a Bedford Borough School.
- For those pupils currently attending Weatherfield School for whom it is appropriate, there would be access to school-based post 16 provision.
- There would be increased access to a diverse range of specialist resources for all pupils across the 3 sites as appropriate to need and age.
- This would provide a substantive centre for professionals from health and other services to support future provision for children with complex needs.
- The size and type of the school would have a model for leadership that would provide for the growth of future leaders in SEN
- The size of the school would provide an economy of scale that would support recruitment and retention of high quality staff, and provide career development
- It would put the school in a strong position for considering the future development as a Teaching School
- This could provide an integrated model for coordinating specialist peripatetic services and outreach to support the most vulnerable children wherever they are receiving education as part of an extended role for

special schools. Glenwood School is already the school identified for Outreach in this area of Central Bedfordshire.

- This would provide focussed professional development for all staff working with the most vulnerable children 0-19 and post 19 that supports continuity and progression and aids transition into the next stage of their lives.
- Subject to the Council's Asset Management Policy, future consideration could be given to the disposal of one site and a possible future use of capital finance to extend the buildings on another site to create a two sited school (primary/secondary). That would reflect the model in the East of the County.

### **Disadvantages**

- More objections are possible from parent groups and governing bodies if one or more of the schools are not in agreement with this, or if the intent of this option is misunderstood.
- Closing 2 of the 3 schools and expanding 1 or closing all 3 schools and opening as one may invoke more opposition if the intent is misunderstood.
- Closing all 3 schools and opening as 1 through "competition" could delay the process, and therefore create uncertainty for pupils, parents and staff for longer.

## **9. The process**

There is a period of 6 weeks, during which you are asked to express your views. The Council will consider responses to the consultation at its Executive Meeting on 31 May 2011. If after this consultation it is decided by the Council to take forward a proposal that requires publishing a statutory notice, there will be a further period of six weeks, during which there is an opportunity for further views to be expressed in writing to the Council.

## **10. How to express your views**

We want to receive your views on this matter as fully as possible. You can do this by completing the attached response form to the consultation document, by attending the public meeting detailed in section 6 and you will be given a response form there, or by responding on the Central Bedfordshire website [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/surveys/SpecialSchools/south.htm](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/surveys/SpecialSchools/south.htm) by **12 noon on 25 March**. Points raised at the meetings will be reported back as part of the process. If you would rather provide your feedback verbally, then please contact Customer Services on 0300 300 8304 so arrangements can be made.

**Please return your completed form to one of the schools or by post to:  
Special School Consultation  
FREEPOST RSJS-GBBZ-SRZT  
Central Bedfordshire Council**

**Priory House  
Monks Walk  
Chicksands  
Shefford SG17 5TQ**