

Appendix E

Executive Determination meeting 13 August 2013

Generic responses received within representation period

From: Karen miller
Sent: 25 June 2013 22:39
To: Edwina Grant
Subject: Keep the Three Tier System
Importance: High

Dear Edwina Grant

From a personal view I would like Dunstable to stay as it is - the three tier system!!! This works perfect as it is why change it. The transition from lower to middle to upper is better. If my middle child was not able to do the three tier system I am 100% sure he would not get on as well as he is now and get swolled up. The middle system helps the transition seem less frightening!!!!

Kind regards

Karen Miller

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From: JoannaLSullivan
Sent: 03 July 2013 20:29
To: Edwina Grant
Subject: Proposed age range changes in Dunstable

Dear Mrs Grant

I am writing to register my strong objection to the age range changes proposed by some schools in Dunstable.

My objection is on the grounds of educational standards. Standards must be at the heart education and I understand that one reason given for schools wanting to change their age ranges is to raise educational standards. Upper Schools in Dunstable have not performed as well at GCSE as other Upper Schools in Central Bedfordshire. However, as excellent results have been achieved in other parts of the Authority it cannot be the three-tier system that is at fault and therefore is not the answer. It seems clear that the priority for Dunstable Upper Schools is to invest their energy and resources into examining their own leadership and teaching and learning styles to see how they can improve and do the best for their students, rather than planning to admit younger students.

Added to this is the experience of Northampton, Suffolk and Norfolk where standards actually fell for an extended period when age range changes were implemented. For students in

education in Dunstable during any transition period the outcome of the proposed changes is likely be the very opposite of the stated aim of raising standards. In my view it would be wrong to jeopardize the education of these students.

Thank you for reading this email. I trust that you will give my views your consideration.

Yours sincerely
Mrs J Sullivan
Caddington Resident

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7th July 2013

Dear Edwina

Response to age range consultations in Dunstable

I hope you will accept this letter as a general response to the current consultations. I do not propose to direct my response to any particular school change.

I write in the following capacity. As chairs of Streetfield Middle School, and a Dunstable resident and as a local businessman. I am tired I suspect like many others of devoting my spare, volunteered time to dealing with this aspect instead of improving teaching and learning and standards in my school. I am tired of not having the opportunity to co-operate with other schools of defending the rumour that the school is closing, that Manshead will take us over. I am tired of asking why Upper School subject co-ordinators don't turn up to meetings, of having it implied that the problem is the Middle School when the data will show that inconveniently it is the strength, but I am not going to go away.

It has taken me some time to decide to write to you with regard to the current proposals to age range changes in Dunstable. My views about these changes are well known and have been well aired in public and with other school leaders. Those views I suspect have been made public by others and indeed make difficult and upsetting reading for some. They are my opinion based on what I know about the situation in Dunstable and I am saddened that for stating these issues I have and the school I represent has become a pariah. What we have said represents the situation as we believe it to be. It is time for others to be honest with themselves over what the believe.

The practicality of those schools wishing to change being able to deliver the current curriculum have not been considered. Teaching science and PE without appropriate facilities and specialists is a backward step. It is not as some suggest practical to bus children across town to enable this teaching to take place. The list is endless. Changing facilities need to be different as children mature, these changes now happen earlier, how are the costs of change going to be funded. Perhaps by school closure?

Pupil numbers show that if the changes take place there will be a massive overcapacity at primary. Again will this lead to closure.

Restricting entry to form 7 at the "new" secondary provisions does not equate to choice. It is also apparent that Caddington Village School who wish to remain as a Middle School provision are being told that their children will have places at Manshead where Streetfield and Ashton Middle have been specifically told that they will not have a place.

It is interesting to note that every original document of consultation started with the phrase, we must change because everyone else has. This is not an educational imperative. Central Bedfordshire and Dunstable in particular need to be able to attract inward investment in order to provide jobs, housing and quality of life for its residents. We will throw out what ought to be a unique selling point. Other areas are beginning to look at a Middle School format that separates year 7 and 8 into stand alone provisions. Central Bedfordshire is already there.

The interests of the child should be paramount. Aspiration targets should be set, trust is needed. I'm afraid that even amongst those who say they co-operate the sad reality is that they don't.

My business needs Dunstable to be a place that people want to make their home in. To live and work and start their own businesses in. Education and educational achievement is part of that equation. Sadly while results and standards have and are improving under the current system this achievement has been down played.

So what to do? You have a alternative proposal on the table, I suspect that it won't be considered hence the reluctance in writing. The political winds blow entirely in the direction of academies and free schools. But what of the future, who will pick up and be accountable for the future. It may be that to have that alternative work governing bodies will need to change. Certainly they will need to improve as the current state of this process is a sad reflection on that leadership function. We are all part of the problem but the "I'm alright Jack" solution being proposed looks no further than the end of their noses. The stakeholder group that will suffer the most are the children and it is this that saddens me most. There is as I have previously stated no evidence that change will lead to anything other than a drop in standards.

Yours in hope

Donald Brown FCA
Chair Streetfield Middle School

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From: jmhoy
Sent: 12 July 2013 08:40
To: Edwina Grant
Subject: Age Range Change in Dunstable school

Good morning Ms Grant

I am writing with regard to the above issue currently occurring in Dunstable. I am not in favour of this change, I have had children go through the current system and both have excelled and may well have not done quite so well had they changed schools at 11 years old - I know you may say unless tried we would not know but I feel personally my children benefited so much from a middle school education.

I am concerned that the new curriculum will not be implemented correctly in primary schools - middle schools have specialised teachers, rooms and equipment able to deliver this with no major upheaval or expense. Our children currently in the Dunstable system receive a very good standard of education within middle schools. Can the Local Authority afford to train existing teachers to teach specialised subjects

in-depth? I understand that across the Country a two-tier exists but our current system works - let us lead by example and show how good our system works, that our Y8 children leave middle school with levels above the national average.

I feel the current upper schools will not do a better job by changing to secondary, their grades currently take a large tumble and this needs to be addressed before we start sending younger children to them and they can go on to ruin their education.

I hope you make the right decision in August, one that will benefit all children in Dunstable.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Hoy

Parent of children who have passed through the system but have great nephews and nieces who still have their education in front of them.

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From: Kim Fraser
Sent: 12 July 2013 08:25
To: Edwina Grant
Subject: Proposed age range changes in local schools

For the attention of: Edwina Grant, Director of Children's Services

I wish to register my deep concerns about the proposed changes.

It is widely accepted (and has been the case in other local authorities recently) that a change from 3 tier to 2 tier or any age range change in an authority will not benefit children already in the system (especially those in Year 7 and 8). We cannot afford to dismiss their education. Education is regularly in our news headlines and it is vital to support the staff and schools already in place to improve standards for all children not just those who MAY or MAY NOT benefit in the future. Pupil progress is how we measure success and the middle schools regularly show this is where the difference is made.

**K. Fraser
Local Resident and School Governor**

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Dear Edwina Grant,

Even after going to a number of meetings and reading all the consultation documents I still cannot see the **educational reasons** for changing the age ranges of schools in Dunstable.

The main reason given is that by changing schools age range educational standards will rise as well. However this is not backed up by any of the present data. Is it not the case that exam results are improving at all key stages with the present system?

At KS2 the middle schools in Dunstable are doing a good job in fact Priory is the highest achieving school in Central Bedfordshire. According to the latest Ofsted reports for Priory, Streetfield and Caddington pupils are leaving year 8 attaining above the national average but this attainment is not being harnessed by the Upper schools who quite frankly have a very poor pass rate at GCSE – Manshead only 48% 5 x A-C at GCSEs, Queensbury 54% 5x A-C at GCSEs, All Saints 44%.

These schools cannot blame the 3 tier system as other upper schools within Central Bedfordshire and Bedfordshire produce much higher results at GCSE, eg Redbourne 74% 5 x A-C , Harlington 70% 5 x A-C, Cedars 68% 5 x A-C. All above the national average.

Dunstable upper schools also cannot blame the number of feeder schools as Harlington Upper has pupils from approximately 20 different middle schools and their results are well above the national average.

Surely if it is all about raising standards then the upper schools need to concentrate inhouse first and look at the teaching and learning in year 9 and above and raise attainment here and focus on becoming an outstanding upper school, rather than a satisfactory one in Manshead case.

It has been proven that there is a significant fall in results for 7 years when schools have been changed to the 2 tier – look at the results in Northampton. And Manshead's results are already very low and below the national average! Will you have the next generations' poor results on your conscious!

I am also concerned with Manshead's plan of phased entry with some pupils starting in year 7 while the pupils in year 8 at middle school will not start till year 9. This surely cannot be conducive to raising standards.

Mr Parker, Head teacher at Manshead, in answer to a question at the consultation evening stated that a pupil who decides to go to a middle school may not have a place in year 9; this is tantamount to blackmail as it is not true – there is capacity, especially if Priory also changes to a secondary school. What about the pupils from Caddington Village school which is an R to year 8 school. Where will they go in year 9? Or is it a backdoor way to change Caddington into a primary school. Are the parents, staff and pupils at this school aware of this inevitable change? Especially as Councilor R. Stay is on the board of Governors at Caddington and he is a very vocal supporter of the 2 tier system and has publically supported Manshead's proposed change.

Both Streetfield and Ashtons' Governors have now voted to stay middle schools surely Manshead proposal is no longer viable – where would their 210 proposed Year 7 intake come from?

Manshead also don't seem to have taken into account the raising of the school leaving age to 18 in their VIth form figures. They will have to provide / offer a place to all

students, I know some will go into vocational training but in theory there could be over 400 students from Manshead wanting a place and that is not taking into account any students from Priory if they change to a 9-16 school.

To me it is a great shame that Manshead wants to follow the model of the other 2 failing upper schools in the town – Queensbury and All Saints, instead of concentrating on becoming a good / outstanding upper school with good GCSE results.

Regarding the proposed changes to lower schools, again I am very concerned that this is not being thought through on educational standards – it is all being financially driven and each school is looking after itself instead of thinking what is beneficial to the pupils.

Middle schools have specialized facilities, specialized teachers and are geared up to delivering a good balanced, broad curriculum with the educational and social development of each child to the fore, and are producing good results at both at KS2 and the progress being made by end of year 8.

Can the lower schools deliver this? Do they have specialist science teachers and labs, specialist food / textiles teachers and facilities, specialist modern languages teachers and facilities, specialist P.E. teachers and facilities, specialist music teachers and facilities, specialist art/ design teachers and facilities? Being bused once a week / once a term to another school for science or P.E or any of the above subjects is time consuming, expensive and not in the best educational development/ progress of the child. Surely this is wasted time and money – time which should be spent in teaching and learning and money which should be spent improving existing facilities.

My final questions are:

Why are the 3 “Christian” schools within the Ashton foundation all fighting against each other rather than working together as a unit / partnership?

How many of the schools involved have REALLY openly consulted with their parents and kept the parents fully informed of their proposed changes and what it will really mean for the educational development of their child?

Are you sure that these proposed changes are for educational reasons and not politically motivated?

Are you sure these proposed changes are for educational reasons and not financially motivated?

Will these proposed changes benefit not only the present generation of children within the system but also future generations?

I hope you can find the time to reply to my questions and take into account the above comments when debating the future of the schools in Dunstable.

Yours faithfully,
Jean B. Large (Mrs

Head of P.E. Streetfield Middle School

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From: Jane Cross
Sent: 12 July 2013 11:48
To: Edwina Grant
Subject: Proposed Age Range Changes

Dear Mrs. Grant,

Proposed Age Range Changes in Dunstable

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed age range changes in Dunstable and the consequent effect it will have on pupils and the town.

It would appear that the real reason for many of the schools to change their age range is financial as pupil numbers have been falling and the shortfall will be overcome by admitting or keeping pupils for a further two years. If these proposals are all approved then middle schools will be at risk of being squeezed out by the primary and secondary schools.

My concerns are:-

- How are primary schools and secondary schools going to improve standards when they will be working with a wider age range and a larger number of pupils who have very differing needs?
- How will primary and secondary schools ensure that the pastoral care for their pupils is not diminished? At present middle schools are ideally equipped to care for those who are vulnerable and/or have special needs. In a larger, secondary school some of these children are in danger of becoming lost and overlooked. At the Manshead community and stakeholders' consultation meeting Jim Parker admitted that dealing with the needs of younger pupils was not covered in their proposal and was something they would have to address. It was worrying that this issue had not occurred to them.
- Middle schools cater for pupils at a key time during their adolescent development in a smaller environment where they can develop, mature and be prepared for a large upper school in a nurturing and supportive way. I am not confident that this will happen in a primary school to the same extent.
- The differing choices for parents are overwhelming and baffling especially to parents moving in to the area from other authorities where the transfer process is much clearer.

- I feel that this whole process has been rushed and, to a certain extent, driven by a feeling of panic that if a school doesn't change it won't survive. A lot of money will be involved in making the necessary changes which I feel could be better used to improve the existing system with less disruption to learning.
- If the proposals all go through then schools will be in direct competition with each other to gain pupil numbers. Schools should be working together not against each other.
- There will be a period of change which will undoubtedly affect pupil progress as staff have to adapt to different ages and teach parts of the curriculum they have not delivered before.
- Primary schools do not have the specialised facilities that a middle school can offer – e.g. science laboratories, design, textile and food technology workshops or specialised teachers for P.E. and French.
- The whole process has caused stress and uncertainty amongst parents (as clearly demonstrated at the public meeting at All Saints Academy and the Dunstable Conference Centre) as well as making school staff anxious about their job security.

I work at Streetfield Middle School where both my children were educated. I am so glad they are through the education system which served them so well at the time. If my children were of school age now I would be looking to send them to Leighton Buzzard where the schooling system is more stable and I could be sure that they would get a good education. Sadly, the ever-changing picture and uncertainty within Dunstable does not inspire any confidence in the education system. Children only have one chance at a school education – as adults we must take responsibility and ensure that we make the right decisions for them so their future is not compromised. Their future is in your hands. History and current pupils will look back and judge the consequences of the decision you are about to make so please consider my concerns as part of that process and make the right decision for our pupils.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. J. A. Cross

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12th July 2013

Dear Mrs. Grant,

A great deal has been said and written with regard to the various proposals put before you for consideration. I would like to offer a few thoughts about some of the aspects of these suggestions but preface it by expressing my deep dismay that this situation in Dunstable has come to pass.

Given the long, close association between schools and the local authority I am saddened by the disruption and division these proposals will inevitably cause.

- This period of uncertainty will in turn impact on learning pathways in the area through choices that parents may be forced to make and ultimately on standards – the very aspect schools espouse to improve.
- The proposals, by their very nature, cast aspersions upon standards in other schools and infer that others do not have the same aspirations. This is both unfair and contentious.
- Given the current, ever-changing educational climate with imminent changes to the national curriculum, changing the local structure of schools at the same time will only cause further confusion and place increased pressure on schools to deliver quality education and raise standards.
- Yet schools which serve the middle years age range are already well-placed to meet the demands of a changing curriculum as they have a blend of specialist and general teachers with the subject knowledge and background to deliver the revised curriculum – much of which is already taught.
- Middle schools combine the very best of primary and secondary practice. They provide secure, happy, fulfilling teaching and learning environments with facilities which offer broad, balanced and richly diversified curriculum opportunities for all pupils.
- The raising of standards is cited by most schools seeking to change their age range as their *raison d'être* – however it should be noted that KS2 results have risen significantly already, before any changes have taken place, which begs the question – why is there a need to go through such an upheaval?
- Manshead has submitted at least two proposals with vastly different reasons for its action – ranging from having insufficient funds, low projected pupil numbers, pupils leaving the sixth form to raising standards. It would appear that most of these issues no longer exist leaving raising standards as the main reason for its proposal. Standards can be raised without changing age range.

- Currently pupils change school after two years of KS3 i.e. two thirds not midway as Manshead's document suggests. Middle schools teach an agreed accelerated curriculum in the core subjects to enable upper schools to get a head start on KS4; this should enable upper schools to concentrate on preparing for G.C.S.E.s early with an uplift in results. Are they doing this successfully? If not, why not?
- The wealth of information exchanged on all national curriculum subjects provides for far greater continuity of curriculum, assessment data and prior learning information at present with just a few feeder schools. Changing the system would mean liaising with 15 or more different schools – all with different systems, assessment procedures and curriculum organisation making for an unwieldy process – hardly coherent, let alone consistent and conducive to raising standards.
- Manshead's proposal to change to admit pupils into Year 7 is an interesting one. It has three principal feeder schools – Ashton Middle, Streetfield Middle and Caddington Village School; all three belong to the Learning Partnership. In May the governors at Ashton Middle voted overwhelmingly not to change to a primary school following a consultation and intend to remain a middle school for the time being. Streetfield actually asked its parent body first what they wanted to do before even considering a top down consultation. The parents voted overwhelmingly to i) remain as a middle school and ii) remain within the Local Authority. Caddington Village School and its parents wish for their pupils to leave at the end of Year 8 as at present.
The question for consideration therefore is – where are the Manshead Year 7 intake pupils going to come from?
- There are already 3 upper schools (2 changing age range) serving older pupils – add to this Kings Houghton's changing status, the UTC, Priory Academy's proposal plus a change at Brewers Hill and all of a sudden there is a plethora of choice for a cohort of pupils – which is not even large enough to fill the existing schools. This will surely lead to future surplus places with associated financial and staffing problems. Not the best use of taxpayer's money.
- Compounding all of this is a steady trickle of Year 8 pupils leaving for upper schools outside Dunstable and Houghton Regis. Clearly parents value the work of these upper schools and are prepared to make the effort to get their children there. Note that they are choosing to remain in a three tier system.
- There is also the distinct possibility that even more parents will in future look elsewhere at 13+ if denied entry to Manshead of a time of their choosing i.e. Year 9.
- Manshead's proposal is misleading by stating that 'From September 2014 Year 7 pupils will be admitted to Manshead School as well as Year 9' as page 4 in the consultation document indicates that there will be a single admission point in Year 7. How are these statements compatible?

- One of the reasons cited for younger pupils to stay on at lower school is because the prospect of moving to a big middle school is daunting. Yet how is an 11 year old from an entire school of 100-150 pupils going to feel upon entering an establishment of 1,350? Hardly a stepping stone approach which meets the sequential, emotional and developmental needs of a child. Parents, understandably, don't want their young children mixing with 16-18 year olds. Equally nor do 16-18 year olds wish to share a Learning Guide with an eleven year old; their respective needs are quite different.
- It is well known that other authorities such as Northampton and Norfolk experienced a large drop in results following reorganisation. Do we want this to happen here? Surely not.

A consultation is a time for true reflection, discussion and deliberation. The education of all young people in our care is priceless and should be a precious entitlement for their successful future. Let us not lose sight of that key principle in the pursuit of change for change sake – pursued by a few people whose actions will surely have far-reaching consequences and deny many others the choice they have already taken and wish to retain.

I submit my thoughts to you for serious consideration as I do believe that is only by working together that we can achieve success for all pupils in our care.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. A.M. Phillips
Headteacher

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12th July 2013

Dear Ms Grant,

I write to you to express my great concern about the proposed changes to the age ranges in Dunstable. I am very concerned at a number of levels.

If all the lower schools are allowed change there will be a chronic oversupply of primary places in the town. According to figures that I have seen there will be a 36% oversupply. This will mean that some school will have to close. The question is will it be you closing schools or will you expect the DfE to be doing the closing.

The suggestion from Manshead Upper school that they have to change due to the changes that are going on in other parts of the town is false. Ashton Middle school, Caddington Village school and Streetfield Middle school have all stated that they intend to remain middle schools for the foreseeable future which leaves no source of

pupils apart from the approximately 10 pupils who will be at St Mary's Primary. (Assuming that they do not go to JFK)

The key information from the past couple of Local Authorities to attempt the change is that there is a great impact on the pupils for over five years. This combined with the fact that OFSTED have said that there is no difference between the three tier and primary secondary system.

I hope that you will consider all of these things when you are weighing up the decision that you will make prior to Councillor Versallion's formal announcement during the summer break.

Thank you for the consideration for my thoughts.

Yours sincerely

Mr Alex Robinson

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13th July 2013

Dear Mrs. Grant,

We are writing to express our serious concerns and disagreement at the changes proposed and those which have already been allowed to happen in Dunstable schools. It seems to be that decisions are being made based solely on individual schools needs without considering the impact on the rest of the town.

The Middle school system in the town has been hugely successful and having both passed through the three tier system we were only too happy for our children to do the same. This choice is now being taken away from parents with some schools current proposals , which are not thought out, not all options have been considered and sadly it's the children that are to be the losers in this mess. Our eldest son has benefited beyond doubt, from going to a Middle school where he has had the opportunity to grow and develop as a person, find his strengths and weaknesses and have his voice heard as an individual. How could this be achieved with such large numbers in the proposed secondary schools? Education at ages 9-13 is more than English, Maths and Science. The social skills he has gained from being in this age range are second to none, he has blossomed and begun to turn into a confident young man. Had he not gone through the middle school system, we feel he would have been lost and his individual needs would simply not of been met. We fail to see how Secondary schools can provide a wide curriculum to children right up to age 16. Parents voted overwhelmingly in Dunstable in the past to keep our three tier system and this is still possible if you agree to work together and listen to your parents. Parents like us, who are being left out of critical decisions in our children's education. Ultimately, it is our children who will suffer and carry the burden of these rash decisions.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. & Mrs. Cartwright

From: Carla Stachini
Sent: 14 July 2013 20:57
To: Edwina Grant
Subject: Save our middle schools

Dear Edwina

I'm a science teacher at a middle school in central beds & wanted to put my view forward about the proposed changes to the 3 tier system. First of all I really don't understand the need to change the current system as the majority of teachers, parents & children would like our school to stay as a middle school...surely they are the most important people in all of this? I believe the main reason given by Councillor Versallion was that we needed to raise standards but what is he comparing this to & where is the proof? And why will the 2 tier system work better? Our pupils are taught by specialist teachers & make very good progress...not just academically but I have seen children's lives turned around by the work we do with them. I love working at a middle school & would hate to see them disappear.

Carla Stachini

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From: Julia Worrall
Sent: 14 July 2013 20:55
To: Edwina Grant
Subject: What I believe is the best for the children of Dunstable

Dear Ms. Grant,

I am writing to you to express my deep concern about the changes and proposed changes taking place with regard to the change in status of some of the schools in Dunstable.

It seems to me that many schools are panicking and making changes or proposing to make changes that will affect the lives of future generations with little regard to the children, but they are doing so in order to preserve their school by keeping numbers up.

I have been a Learning Support Assistant since 1991 and have been at Streetfield Middle School for 18 years. I would appreciate it if you would answer the following questions.

I understand that the proposed changes regarding changing from 3 tier to 2 tier is to raise the standards and thus benefiting the children.

- What is the evidence that this would be the case?

- What percentage of parents and future parents vote on these proposed decisions?
- How will some schools cope with teaching a full and rich curriculum e.g. Priory Middle?
- Is it fair that children will have to spend school time moving off site in order to study e.g. P.E. Science?

Some schools who are proposing to or have already changed status do not have the facilities to adequately provide the children with education that they should have.

I can only really comment from first hand experience and will use Streetfield as my example. Streetfield does an amazing job with integrating Yr. 4 pupils from a large amount of Lower Schools. A very high number, approximately 50%, are from deprived backgrounds and the change at this age undoubtedly helps them immensely by nurturing them so that they can progress socially and emotionally and therefore educationally. These children would find it very difficult to handle moving only twice in a 2 tier system. The 3 stages are ideal for them to grow into confident young adults and our pupils are ready to move to a larger school, with pupils up to 18, at the end of year 8.

I believe parents and children should be given the choice of whether to use a 2 or a 3 tier system and that both could run together. There should be a choice as children have different needs and these needs can be accommodated both systems.

Children are our future.

Yours sincerely,

Julia Worrall (Mrs.)

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Dear Mrs Grant,
 I am writing to express my thoughts and concerns to you regarding the age range changes in Dunstable over the coming years. Having attended many of the consultations and public meetings I believe that I have an understanding of the situation across the town and still remain unwavering in the view that the proposed changes will not result in any better education for the children of the town.

My concerns:

- It was shown at the public meeting at All Saints that the results of Key Stage 3 are significantly below the expected national levels. The Lower and Middle School in the town perform averagely or above average. My concern – it is the Upper Schools that are clearly performing worst yet it is them that wish to expand their intake. How do they expect to raise their results when clearly the education they are providing is not good enough?
- It is clear and has been stated by at least three Head Teachers at consultations or public meetings that they are actually proposing the changes in age range because other schools are and they are wishing to save their school and compete with others. They would not have proposed the changes had the likes of All Saints and St. Marys not done so. Do they really believe in what they are proposing and have the skill to deliver their promises? Should Head Teachers and Governors really propose such radical changes for the town just because others are, to be on their band wagon? This is the reason I was so pleased with Ashton Middles not to continue with their proposal and stand firm with the opinion of their parents.
- Schools are presenting information that is misleading. They stated how many parents replied to questionnaires and how many of these said yes. Instead shouldn't they be stating how many of ALL the parents said yes – therefore a non reply means no or impartial. Just because a small percentage replied should we take it that the others don't matter? How far did they go to get the views of all parents? How well publicised were the consultation and public meetings? Did all schools share the information regarding the second public meeting? I believe they didn't. Is it right that schools censor and manipulate the information shared on such an important matter?
- There is no real evidence to show that one system – two tier or three tier works better than the other. Why do we need to change the current system? Why do we need to condemn 7-12 years of school aged children (the number of negative years experienced by Norfolk, Bedford and Suffolk) to disruption because of the unnecessary change in age ranges.

What concerns me the most about the whole issue is the distinct lack of unity and consistency amongst the schools. Why has Dunstable not followed the paths of Leighton Buzzard and Houghton Regis and worked together to make a unified decision. Is the current situation fair on our children and parents – how can they be expected to choose?

I appreciate you taking the time to read my letter and I hope you will bear these considerations in mind when making decisions.

Kind Regards,
Coralie Shaw

