

Business Case for proposed school and academy expansions for September 2016 implementation.

Stratton Upper School

Central Bedfordshire Council's Policy Principles for Pupil Place Planning

1	<p>The need to provide local schools for local children, ensuring a sense of community belonging and also promoting sustainable modes of travel.</p> <p>Location Stratton Upper School is ideally located to provide the additional upper school places required in Biggleswade. It is in easy walking distance from the areas of development. In addition work has already been completed to upgrade and extend an existing pathway to form a cycle route leading to and from the school and areas of new housing.</p> <p>Community The school has a strong track record of promoting community cohesion. It is a centre for a number of community activities including adult education and sports clubs. The large hall can seat up to 400 people and the stage area is professionally designed to accommodate concerts and theatre productions.</p>
2	<p>The need to create schools that are of sufficient size to be financially and educationally viable.</p> <p>Currently 15% of Stratton students are from families that have been eligible to receive free school meals in the last six years. This compares to national average of 29%. In areas of higher deprivation smaller schools (less than 900 students) may offer some cost benefit but that argument is not applicable to this context.</p> <p>The scale of the proposed expansion means that the number of 13 to 16-year-olds will increase from the current maximum of 900 to approximately 1150. This is well within the range of other upper schools in Central Bedfordshire and will create an institution of up to 1650 students including 6th form provision.</p> <p>The school has a strong ethos centred around respect and aspiration. In its most recent inspection Ofsted judged behaviour to be good and in the HMI visit of July 2013 noted that behaviour continued to improve. The school is on track to achieve an 80% reduction in fixed term exclusions and an 87% reduction in permanent exclusions measured between September 2012 and July 2014. The school's internal measurement of low level disruption reveals a reduction of incidents exceeding 90% during the same period.</p> <p>The school already benefits from having sufficient capacity to offer a wide and engaging curriculum. A further increase in student numbers would ensure that this can be sustained and enhanced in the future. Stratton Upper School has recently introduced a heavily revised curriculum offer concentrating on providing a broadly academic pathway to Key Stage 4 students. This is in line with current government thinking and supports current and future measures of accountability.</p> <p>Stratton has a proven track record of meeting student needs. In the Sixth Form students choose from a range of academic and applied Level III qualifications totalling 33 subjects. To support the Raising of the Participation Age agenda a 16+ Level 2 programme catering for the needs of students to achieve a solid qualification foundation before progressing to Level 3 academic qualifications, vocational pathways or accessing apprenticeships was successfully introduced.</p>

Larger schools are able to offer commensurately larger salaries to posts with responsibility. This will enable Stratton to attract more able and ambitious candidates for middle and senior leader positions creating capacity both in skill and scale.

The current Headteacher has been in post since 2010. He has experience of middle and senior leadership in four schools representing a range of contexts. This includes a school judged to be outstanding and a school judged to be good with outstanding features. The two most successful schools where the Headteacher worked prior to taking up post at Stratton both exceeded 1800 students. He is committed to a long-term relationship with the school and has introduced a number of reforms promoting rapid impact on school improvement. With the Governors, the school shares a joint vision of becoming an outstanding provider within three years.

3 The ability to support the expansion of local popular and successful schools or to link expanding schools with popular and successful schools.

Stratton Upper School is currently judged to "require improvement". However, this 2013 inspection also noted that the school was on "a well-planned journey of improvement" which continues.

In 2009, the school was judged to be good against the previous inspection regime though it identified weaknesses in Maths and only satisfactory performance across the Sixth Form.

The 2013 inspection recognised the measures that had been brought forward to address these areas, but also further initiatives to reshape the Key Stage 4 curriculum and improving teaching and learning. All development activities focus sharply on improving academic achievement.

At the time of the inspection 2013 the Sixth Form was judged good and the significant raising standards in maths noted. The leadership team were found to have made the correct decisions to create sustainable improvements to educational outcomes and to have the capacity to drive forward their change agenda.

Stratton Upper School continues to enjoy the confidence of its catchment. 93% of parents would recommend Stratton Upper School to another family (parent view).

Stratton Upper School has set itself robust targets to underpin school improvement over the coming years. These are summed up in the table below:

Key Stage	2012	2013	2014 (predicted)	2015 (estimated)	2016 (Targets)
	5A*-C (E&M) = 51.6%	5A*-C (E&M) = 52.4%	5A*-C (E&M) = 63%	5A*-C (E&M) = 62%	5A*-C (E&M) = 66% (note: this measure is not applicable in 2016)
4	Expected and exceeded progress English = 58%, 20% Maths = 71%, 29%	Expected and exceeded progress English = 63%, 32% Maths = 67%, 30%	Expected and exceeded progress English = 78%, 43% Maths = 77%, 42%	Expected and exceeded progress English = 84%, 45% Maths = 84%, 45%	Expected and exceeded progress English = 86%, 48% Maths = 86%, 48%
5	A Level Performance ALPS AS = 5 A2 = 4	A Level Performance ALPS AS = 2 A2 = 4	A Level Performance ALPS AS = 2 A2 = 3	A Level Performance ALPS AS = 3 A2 = 3	A Level Performance ALPS AS = 3 A2 = 3

	<p>Since the school's last inspection the school has worked closely with Elaine Taylor, the school's appointed HMI and John Greevy, an independent experienced Ofsted inspector. In the school's section 8 report (Elaine Taylor July 2013) the school was found to have taken secure and appropriate action to further accelerate improvement in achievement. The school's plans were found to be targeted accurately against the action points highlighted by the 2013 Ofsted report:</p> <p><i>"Priorities for development in the academy's action plans are clear and focus on the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The plans show what actions the academy will take, who will lead the work and what the impact will be. Governors are supporting the improvement work well by challenging leaders and checking the impact of their work."</i></p> <p>Stratton employs Mr Greevy as an external consultant to validate the Senior Team's analysis of standards and to inform progress against the school's targets.</p> <p>The school's targets for 2014 for both achievement and attainment are compatible with an Ofsted grading of "good". The school anticipates its next full inspection in Autumn of 2014.</p>
4	<p>The potential to further promote and support robust partnerships and learning communities</p> <p>Stratton Upper School firmly believes in close partnership working in collaboration with schools to improve education practice.</p> <p>As a former training school, Stratton Upper School is a founding partner of the Central Bedfordshire Teaching School Partnership. The Headteacher is a founding Governor and Trustee of the Central Bedfordshire Academy, an alternative provision free school.</p> <p>It is the sponsoring Academy of Cambridgeshire middle school Gamlingay Village College. This school was placed in special measures in February 2011. Under the leadership of Stratton Upper School it has rapidly improved and was recently judged (October 2013) to be a secure Grade 3 (Requires Improvement). In July 2014 the Key Stage 2 results establish outcomes for the school that would support the judgement of "good" at the schools next inspection anticipated in the academic year 2014/15.</p> <p>Stratton plays a full part in the collaborative groups that exist within the authority. These include the Upper School Heads Group and equivalent Deputy Headteacher forums. Stratton has a particularly close collaborative training partnership with Vandyke Upper School.</p> <p>Stratton plays a full and active part in the development of the Biggleswade Community Union of Schools (BCUS). BCUS is a collaboration of all local education providers. This supportive network has at its core raising education outcomes at every age, stage and phase. Within the network both CBC middle schools are rated "good" whilst of the lower schools and early years providers three are "outstanding" whilst the remainder are "good".</p> <p>In support of Central Bedfordshire's wider policy of rationalising provision BCUS has actively supported the creation of Biggleswade Academy (0-13 provider), the expansion of St Andrew's Lower school (through the opening of a second site supporting demographic growth), the federation of Northill Lower with Edward Peake Middle and the latter's proposed expansion.</p> <p>On behalf BCUS Stratton has organised and presented two cross phase education conferences attended by over 400 staff. A third is planned for April 2014. As before the conference agenda is closely aligned with the area-wide BCUS development plan.</p>
5	<p>The ambition to achieve a single phase of education 0 -19 and reduce school transfer points</p> <p>Stratton Upper School is firmly committed to the vision of 0-19 seamless education. Through its collaborative work with BCUS it has promoted significant development in liaison between all phases of education to ensure curriculum continuity. Stratton's ethos is fully aligned with all members of BCUS and it has led projects designed to bring age appropriate consistency to</p>

	<p>issues as diverse as Sex and Relationship Education and homework policies across the area.</p> <p>Although Stratton Upper School has a particularly stable cohort of students it also has the ability to support mid-phase transfer through well-developed induction processes.</p>
6	<p>The need to support the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA).</p> <p>Stratton Upper School prides itself on its ability to instil lifelong love of learning into its students. It is well placed to cope with the increasing demands brought about by the Raising of the Participation Age. Exceptionally few Stratton students become "NEET". A well-established pattern of post 16 destinations consists of 66 to 70% of students transferring to Stratton Sixth Form. Of the remainder, 25%-28% are tracked to other post 16 providers, typically FE colleges offering strong vocational pathways, whilst of the remaining students approximately 8% enter the workplace with training opportunities.</p> <p>In preparation for the Raising of the Participation Age Stratton Upper School Sixth Form strengthened its Level 2 curriculum offers to provide a viable alternative for students who narrowly missed out on qualification for Level 3 study. More recently, Stratton Upper School has identified a small demand amongst students who at 16+ are not yet emotionally ready to undertake the necessary travel arrangements to access alternative providers. With that in mind and in collaboration with the Ivel Valley school, a limited range of Level 1 provision has been developed.</p> <p>It should be noted that numbers in the Sixth Form have increased steadily over this period, and dedicated accommodation, particularly to support independent learning is at a very high premium within the campus. Our proposals include significant investment in Sixth Form provision.</p>
7	<p>To seek opportunities to create inspirational learning environments for the school and to maximise community use.</p>
	<p>The centrepiece of our proposal is the building of a dedicated block of Science Laboratories. We believe that providing the opportunity for a strong scientific education will enhance future employment prospects for the students we serve. Our ambition is to create an exciting and inspirational learning environment that will inspire future generations of Stratton Upper School students.</p> <p>A strength of Stratton Upper School in recent years has been the performance of its A-level scientists. Across Central Bedfordshire Stratton Upper School already leads the way for the number of students who successfully complete three facilitating A-levels. Many of these students chose a science pathway. Each year we are able to prepare candidates for the take-up places at the country's leading universities to read Natural Sciences, Medicine, Veterinary Science and Dentistry. In addition many other students choose university courses that have a strong science-based element. In a recent example a Stratton student has graduated from Cambridge University (June 2014) with a first-class honours degree in Geography.</p> <p>We want to use the opportunity of this expansion to develop Central Bedfordshire's premier 13 to 19 education facility for Science and become a beacon for outstanding practice.</p> <p>The other significant aspect of this project is the redesigning of the front of school which we see as having particular benefit to the community as well as a school itself. Improved reception facilities will support the use of the Great Hall as a community resource capable of supporting professional and amateur arts productions. In the second phase of our Masterplan (not part of this current investment) the school will further enhance role as a community resource by improving parking and seeking to build an artificial sports pitch capable of supporting numerous sport clubs.</p> <p>Local clubs supporting tennis, badminton, archery and cricket already make extensive use of the school's sports facilities now wholly managed by the school following the demise of the joint partnership arrangements with Stevenage Leisure (from April 2011). The school is proud</p>

	<p>to be a resource widely used and enjoyed by the community.</p> <p>Stratton Upper School is one of 100 schools nationally that have a school farm. At over 9 acres, it probably represents one of the biggest such organisations in the country. The new Science provision has been designed to have a close relationship with the farm. In addition to the fantastic learning opportunities enjoyed by Stratton Upper School students, the farm is open to the community on several occasions across the year and is widely accessed by pupils from local schools representing all phases of education.</p>
8	<p>To promote the diversity of provision offered in Central Bedfordshire to increase opportunities for parental choice</p> <p>Stratton Upper School is fully comprehensive and inclusive. It has supported a more diverse approach to local education provision by developing relationships with the soon-to-be opened Plymouth Brethren school in Biggleswade.</p> <p>The Local Authority's own notes make it clear that the increase in student numbers envisaged within Biggleswade would not adequately support a new school other than for early years and lower school pupils. The Authority recognises that to provide a breadth of curriculum at secondary/upper school level a minimum of six forms of entry is required whilst the growth anticipated in Biggleswade even when the new development is a full capacity would generate less than 50% of the student numbers</p> <p>Stratton Upper School is not a faith-based school but has a long tradition of inclusion and tolerance that supports successful education provision for students from families representing all faiths and none.</p>
9	<p>To support vulnerable learners in Area Special Schools and integrate appropriate Special Educational Needs provision within mainstream schools</p> <p>Stratton Upper School has well-established links with the Ivel Valley school. Students from Ivel Valley are based at Stratton Upper School and integrate into form groups, assemblies and where appropriate, lessons. Stratton and Ivel Valley have collaborated to provide a number of specialised courses to support both Stratton and Ivel Valley students with specific needs.</p>

	<p>Capacity to Deliver the proposed expansion.</p> <p>For schools/academies that would like to procure design and construction works directly and manage the project to completion, please set out below the project management approach that you intend to take, including governance arrangements. Please ensure that you are clear of the professional support that you intend to engage and of the experience of the School and its Governing Body in successfully delivering significant capital projects.</p>
1	<p>Stratton Education Trust has set up a Project Board to manage the process of taking the project from initial scope to actual delivery of the finally agreed scheme. This Project Board includes representation from:</p> <p>School Governors (Including Chairman of the Trust) Staff including Executive Headteacher and Director of Finance Design Team Project Management</p> <p>In the preparation for the project the school has revised the support staffing structure. This review led to a recognition that there was a lack of experience in delivery of schemes of this size. As a consequence the Trust has appointed a</p>

Director of Finance, who will be responsible for being the initial point of contact within Stratton Upper School with both the externally appointed Project Management staff from Frost Associates and the externally appointed Design Team from Penoyre & Prasad.

Both Frost Associates and Penoyre & Prasad have demonstrable experience in the delivery of significant capital projects. Equally the newly appointed Director of Finance has over 30 years' experience within Local Government and for the past 8 1/2 years he was Deputy S151 with Milton Keynes Council, which has delivered significant new school build throughout that period.

The Project Board meets on a regular basis and reports directly to the Full Governor meetings at key milestones through the period covered by the project.