

5<sup>th</sup> March 2015

Dear Sir,

**Reference: Lower School Expansions.**

Having previously recorded our objection with the respective schools, we write again regarding the proposed expansion of Leedon and Clipstone Brook Lower schools.

The proposed very significant increase in the size of the two lower schools within close proximity of each other very near to our catchment area cannot help but have a destabilising influence on St. Georges Lower School. We fear it could suffer a reduction in numbers during the next five years while the anticipated growth in pupil numbers synchronises with the faster increased availability of school places driven by these expansions.

Following its Ofsted inspection last year, St Georges Lower School was graded as a "Good" school. The LA has subsequently recognised it as a much underutilised lower school in the area which could absorb much of the anticipated growth in pupil numbers immediately with minimal investment which has been lacking totally in recent years.

We have been proactively making numerous efforts in order to increase our pupil numbers which are slowly increasing. However the proposed expansion of both schools would place our efforts at risk and place further pressure on our pupil numbers and the school budget.

Consequently we object to the proposed expansion program on the basis that

- the planned very significant and costly (~£3.7m) expansion of two schools is disproportionate in the light of the LAS's own annual PAN forecasts for the next few years, the School Numbers on Roll – Summer 2014 (Final) tables
- it is an inefficient use of public funds when St.George's "a Good school" could easily expand to a two form entry in time for Sept.2015 at relatively little cost and accommodate much of the forecast additional demand; other schools in the area have significant systemic spare capacity too and
- the consultation publicity/process has been designed to meet the LA's self-imposed timetable to get the new facilities in place for September, 2015

We have had visits from the Council and local politicians who agree that the school has made significant improvements which have been endorsed by Ofsted with a "Good" grading and "Outstanding" for pupil care and safeguarding. The LA has agreed that the school will feature prominently with growth plans and indeed have stated that the school's pupil numbers will increase. This however will be put at risk if the proposed expansion plans go ahead before capacity has been reached within our school.

We would like to provide you with the following background information because even the most well researched plans/projections get overtaken by events.

Greenleas Lower School – Kestrel Way was specifically intended to cater for the new developments/expansion forecast for the south-eastern area of the town. This was commissioned in October 2012 and opened in September 2013 less than two years ago.

With the benefit of hindsight

- the required size of the school was underestimated and/or if budget constraints didn't permit the building of a larger school at that time it was not designed/built with future expansion in mind.
- Such was the new school's determination to fill the reception year as quickly as possible to attract funding, the initial intake was not restricted to its catchment area with the result that parents residing elsewhere were able to place their children there attracted by the novelty of the new build. This had a demonstrable effect on other schools in the area.
- Since then, Pulfords Lower School has been granted permission to increase its size by 15 pupils per annum. This process began last year with an increase in PAN from 30 to 45.

The local authority's projected shortfall in PAN for 2015-16 of 67 places is reduced to 52 once this is taken into account. Consequently we find it difficult to understand the irrevocable investment in a further thirty additional reception places at two schools in close proximity in the middle of the town while our school and other "Good" schools have significant spare capacity which could be easily and inexpensively realised in for the Autumn, 2015 without the risks associated with new building work and/or when there is time to enlarge Greenleas Lower School – Kestrel Way before the projected increase in pupils in its catchment area comes to pass in 2017/18

We appreciate that this process has acquired its own momentum but, given the accuracy of past forecasts/projections, we think there is some value even at this late stage in revisiting the latest admission numbers for September 2015 to provide re-assurance that the proposed School expansion programme is justified or if the latest projected requirement for school places could be satisfied while scaling back the Leedon/Clipstone Brook plans, expanding Greenleas Kestrel Way and/or using the existing spare capacity in the town's schools – specifically St. George's Lower School

Miss M. Rawlings – Head Teacher

Mr S. Tiktin – Chair of Governors.

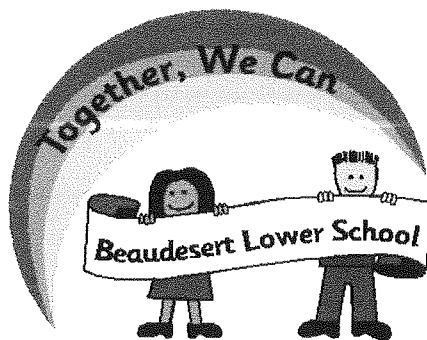
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Sources –

- Central Bedfordshire Council School Organisation, Admissions and Capital Planning PAN forecasts
- Central Bedfordshire Council School Organisation School capacity spreadsheet 2014\_tcm6-51372
- Central Bedfordshire Council School Organisation School Numbers on Roll Summer 2014 - FINAL

### Leighton Buzzard Schools

Lower Schools Reception PAN forecasts	Sep'13 actuals	14/15	+ increased capacity	inc Leedon + Clipstone Brook Expansion	Actual Roll 14/15
Beaudesert - Appenine Way	55	55	55	55	54
Clipstone Brook - Brooklands Drive	45	45	45	75	43
Dovery Down - Heath Road	30	30	30	30	30
Greenleas - Derwent Road	60	60	60	60	60
Greenleas - Kestrel Way	60	60	60	60	60
Heathwood - Heath Road	30	30	30	30	29
Leedon - Highfield Road	60	60	60	90	60
Linslade - Leopold Road	45	45	45	45	43
Mary Bassett - Bassett Road	60	60	60	60	59
Pulford C of E - Pulford Road	30	45	45	45	30
St.George's - East Street	30	30	30	30	21
Southcott - Bideford Green	60	60	60	60	58
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>547</b>



24<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Cllr J Nigel Young  
93 Mentmore Crescent  
Dunstable  
Bedfordshire  
LU6 3NW

Dear Cllr Young

**Reference: Lower School Expansions**

We write regarding the proposed expansion of Leedon and Clipstone Brook Lower schools.

The proposed very significant increase in the size of the two lower schools within close proximity of each other and very near to our catchment area cannot help but have a destabilising influence on pupil numbers at Beaudesert Lower School. We fear it could suffer a reduction in numbers during the next five years while the projected growth in pupil numbers synchronises with the faster increased availability of school places driven by these expansions and the other planned school building projects on the new estates.

Beaudesert currently has spare capacity available in most year groups. It has invested significant effort into driving up standards as seen in the 2014 KS1 and EYFS results, which has been recognised by Ofsted in their feedback from our recent inspection (as Paul Harpin will be able to confirm for the Council) and the latest Ofsted inspection in January 2015 which awarded the school a "Good" rating.

The starting point of the Council's plans is the forecast of required places for entry in September 2015. Now that the initial deadline for applications has passed, it is assumed that the total number of registered applications for the schools in the Leighton Buzzard area can be released (along with the comparable number registered by the deadline date in 2014 for entry in 2014) to substantiate these forecasts. Any shortfall in actual numbers compared to the planned expansions will adversely affect the other schools in the area that already have spare capacity.

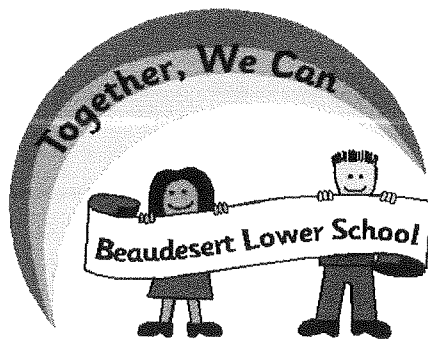
Consequently we object to the scale of the proposed expansion program on the basis that

- a) the planned very significant expansion of both these two schools is disproportionate (Φ) and
- b) it is an inefficient use of public funds while Beaudesert and other schools in the area have significant systemic spare capacity. Moreover we find it difficult to understand why the provision of any forecast extra capacity is not being based upon Greenleas Lower School – Kestrel Way which was built recently to accommodate the growth in the south-east corner of the town which is exactly the same area driving the forecast increase in pupil numbers over the next three > five years.



Appenine Way  
Leighton Buzzard  
Beds LU7 3DX  
Telephone: 01525 373019  
Fax: 0871 223 0233  
E-mail: [beaudesert@cbc.beds.sch.uk](mailto:beaudesert@cbc.beds.sch.uk)  
Website: [www.beaudesert.beds.sch.uk](http://www.beaudesert.beds.sch.uk)  
Headteacher: Mrs Elaine Cox





(φ) The catchment area of both schools extends eastwards to include areas such as Cherrycourt Way and Meadow Way which are physically nearer to Beaudesert than either Leedon or Clipstone Brook. There is confusion in the L.A's own planning documents – see below - about the need to meet short term increases in “local” demand and the longer term need driven by housing developments to the east and south of the town. There appears to be acknowledgement that the long term growth will be around the periphery of the town and not within easy walking distance of either Leedon or Clipstone Brook.

The L.A's own School organisation plan states

“2015-16 is a very high year in the lower school forecasts for South Leighton with a deficit of places of 2 forms of entry in that year alone, which, although not immediately sustained in 2016/17, is forecast to be required in the long-term as the area continues to see significant housing development.

An additional 2 forms of entry will be required, on a permanent basis, from 2015-16 to cater for children living **within the catchment for South Leighton Schools, the exact form and location of this provision is still to be determined.** As demand is being driven by pupil yield from **new housing towards the South East of the town**, the additional places are likely to be provided through expansion of lower schools in this area.

The Land East of Leighton housing development will eventually include two 2 form entry lower schools, or a total of 120 places per year group. The timing of the phased introduction of this new provision will be in line with the rate of development on site, but is expected to be required from September 2017

Regards



Mrs.E.Cox  
Head Teacher



Mr.S.M.Tikin  
Chair of Governors



Appenine Way  
Leighton Buzzard  
Beds LU7 3DX  
Telephone: 01525 373019  
Fax: 0871 223 0233  
E-mail: [beaudesert@cbc.beds.sch.uk](mailto:beaudesert@cbc.beds.sch.uk)  
Website: [www.beaudesert.beds.sch.uk](http://www.beaudesert.beds.sch.uk)  
Headteacher: Mrs Elaine Cox





Mr S Tiktin  
Chair of Governors  
St George's Lower School  
East Street  
Leighton Buzzard  
Beds  
LU7 1EW

**Your ref:**  
**Our ref:** MV/jac  
**Date:** 12 March 2015

Dear Mr Tiktin

### **Lower School Expansions**

Thank you for your letters sent on the 24 February (Beaundesert Lower) and 5 March (St Georges Lower) to members of the Council's Executive regarding the proposed expansions of Clipstone Brook Lower and Leedon Lower School in Leighton Buzzard.

The Council's Executive received a report in December 2014 which set out the background of demographic growth in Leighton Buzzard and the need to plan for new school places as a consequence.

The report explained that in total there are currently approximately 640 school places in each lower school year group in schools within the South Leighton Buzzard school place planning area. The table provided in the letter from St Georges Lower School quoted 580 places but did not include the places also provided for the local area at St Leonards Lower School, Stanbridge Lower School and Hockcliffe Lower School.

The increase in admission number at Pulford Lower School took effect as of Sept 2013, not 2014 as stated in the letter from St Georges, as the school chose to exceed its admission number in that year ahead of the Council's determination in December 2013 of the school's proposal to expand to meet unmet demand for faith places at the school.

The proposed expansion of Clipstone Brook and Leedon will provide a total of 700 reception places across the South Leighton pyramid area from September 2015.

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Organisational changes that impact the availability of places, underlying increases in the demographic and changes in forecasts of housing trajectories require the Council to review and amend its pupil forecasts on an ongoing basis which I appreciate can cause confusion if you reference our assumptions at any given point in time.

In September 2014 the 640 places available in Year R were accommodating a total of approximately 550 children although this has increased as a result of in-year growth to 564. Schools in this area have historically attracted a high number of late applications with 49 late applications for September 2014 received from parents living in Leighton Buzzard with a further 9 late applications from Linslade.

The number of children living in the area who will be of reception age in September 2015, including additional yield from new housing to be built and occupied in the forthcoming year was forecast to be approximately 700.

Based on previous experience a number of late applications are expected to be received from now until September, especially during late April following the media interest in the national primary offer day on 16 April 2015, In-year applications are also anticipated from new families moving into the housing developments throughout 2015/16.

I can confirm that at the close of the Starting School admissions application round on 15 January 2015 the Council had received a total of 660 on-time first preferences for starting school in Leighton Buzzard schools in September 2015. If 58 late applications were to be repeated for September 2015 as was the case for September 2014 then the total number of applications would be 718, exceeding the forecast number of around 700. It is anticipated that targeted promotion of the 2015 admissions round will have reduced the potential for a repeat of the high level of late applications as seen in 2014 but as of the date of this letter a further 3 late applications have been received.

Although the forecast deficit of available school places for September 2015 requires an additional 2 forms of entry (60 places) in reception in that year alone, it is acknowledged that this may not be immediately required as a result of a smaller cohort feeding through in 2016/17 but is forecast to be sustained from 2017/18 with a larger cohort in the area and as the area continues to see further significant housing development to the South East of the town.

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**Central Bedfordshire Council**

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

**Telephone** 0300 300 8301

**Email** [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

One of a number of areas of significant housing growth in the south of the town is the Pratts Quarry/Billington Road development. The site for Greenleas Lower School (Kestrel Way) was secured in 2007 in a developer agreement with the former District Council, at the request of the former County Council for a 2FE Lower School as a result of that development. No other sites for new schools have been secured within the smaller developments in the south of Leighton Buzzard.

The site area provided by the developer agreement for Greenleas Lower was sufficient for a school of that size and was aligned with DfE guidance but further expansion of the buildings on the site would severely compromise the school's ability to manage teaching and learning, would inevitably reduce external areas currently provided to below DfE guidelines and would risk the success of its continued metamorphosis as a two site school as it progressively fills in every year group as a result of its recent completion.

At present there are a total of 564 children in Year R, 557 in Year 1 and 574 in Year 2 across all schools in this area and surplus places do exist in some schools across certain year groups. In managing demographic increases and in certain situations it is possible to rearrange the internal organisation of schools to accommodate on a temporary basis, an increase or bulge year group within existing school buildings. This often requires additional teaching and non teaching staff and resources and can require mixed year groups but is an effective solution where a demographic increase is unlikely to be sustained.

As set out within the report and this letter, the forecasts for the area indicate a sustained, not temporary demographic demand and the additional places are required to serve the south of the town. Both Beaudesert Lower School and St Georges Lower School have surplus places across their year groups but neither is situated in the area local to the geographic area of housing growth in the south of the town. The Council will continue to keep catchment areas under review in this and other areas where demographic growth is changing patterns of historical parental preferences.

The Council must balance the need to provide sufficient school places in the short term, the forecast of fluctuations in the existing demographic over the next two years, the specific area of need in the locality and the inevitability of additional yield from housing in the area, against the supply of places in existing schools and across current year groups when seeking to commission new places. This is particularly relevant given the challenge for less popular schools in the area to achieve sufficiently high sustainable intakes to make them financially efficient and educationally viable.

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

**Telephone** 0300 300 8301

**Email** [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

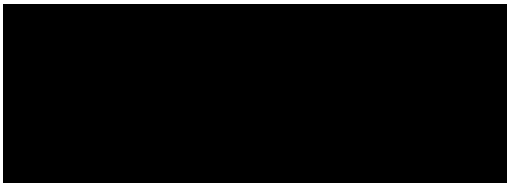


It would indeed be inappropriate to bring forward new places that are not required by the demographic but the Council also has a duty under the section 9 of the Education Act 1996 and s86 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to promote parental choice and the DfE suggests a surplus of 5-10% in places should be provided across an area to give operational flexibility and to enable parents to have a level of choice for schools.

The additional places required within the lower school age range are proposed to be provided through the expansions of Leedon Lower and Clipstone Brook Lower Schools each along with the new Greenleas Lower School site within statutory walking distance of the new housing developments, both Ofsted Good Schools with site areas capable of expansion and sharing a catchment area that includes a proportion of the Sandhills development.

I understand your concerns for the viability of schools in the area but I can assure you that the Council will continue to support all schools to improve educational outcomes for our children, throughout periods of significant demographic change.

Yours sincerely



**Cllr Mark Versallion**  
**Executive Member for Children's Services**  
Central Bedfordshire Council  
Telephone: 0300 300 8555  
Email: [mark.versallion@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:mark.versallion@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)