

Purpose of this consultation document

The purpose of this document is to provide information relating to the proposal by the Directors of Biggleswade Academy Trust to expand Biggleswade Academy for each 'lower school' aged year group, from 2 forms of entry (60 children) for children aged 5–9, to 3 forms of entry (90 children) for children aged 5–9 on a permanent basis, via an expansion to the Academy facilities, with a phased intake from September 2017.

This would eventually increase the academy's published admission number for 'lower school' year groups (Years R-4) from a maximum of 60 pupils per year to a maximum of 90 pupils per year on a permanent basis.

Background

Biggleswade Academy was opened in 2012 following the closure of its predecessor school, Holmemead Middle School. In July 2013, Southlands Lower School also converted to become part of Biggleswade Academy and on 1st September 2013 the newly merged school (also incorporating the former Brigham pre-school) opened in its current form - providing education and wrap-around care for children aged 2 to 13, 51 weeks of the year, across a single extended campus.

In order to help address the demand for lower school places in Biggleswade, St Andrews Church of England Voluntary Controlled Lower School has already been expanded to provide a total of 150 Reception places per year. This expansion was achieved via a new second campus, which opened in September 2015 on Bantock Way. Further expansion of this second campus is also required and is currently subject to consultation by the school's governing body.

Despite this expansion, the demand for lower school places is forecast to exceed the number of places available locally and, if the proposal to expand Biggleswade Academy is approved by the Department for Education (who must be consulted for all proposed changes to academies) the Directors of Biggleswade Academy Trust have indicated its willingness to accommodate an additional new class per 'lower school aged' year group.

Proposal

In July 2015 the demographic forecasts for the Council's School Place Planning pyramid area covering Biggleswade and the surrounding rural area were revised with refreshed data as part of the annual review of the Council's School Organisation Plan.

The outcome indicates a further sustained forecast deficit in Lower School provision in the town. This is as a result of additional local housing developments, including the area off Potton Road in Biggleswade, that are now reflected in the Council's current housing trajectory.

Following discussions with Central Bedfordshire Council, the Directors of Biggleswade Academy Trust have agreed to consult on a proposed expansion of Biggleswade Academy's facilities to house the provision of an additional 150 'lower school' aged places from September 2017, the increase in pupils phased over a five year period.

School capacity

The current capacity of Biggleswade Academy, for pupils entering through the Kitelands Road entrance, is 300 children from Reception to Year 4 and from the Mead End entrance is 560.

The majority of pupils and parents access the site either from Kitelands Road or from Mead End. However, some pupils and parents also utilise the school entrance from Kitelands Park (situated in the middle of these two entrances) to access both parts of the site.

The proposed expansion would provide additional accommodation for up to 150 pupils aged 3- 9 and it is proposed that such accommodation would be most easily accessed from this third entrance – directly from Kitelands Park.

This will allow the current classroom configuration at the Kitelands Road end of the site to be adapted slightly to accommodate pupils from Year R – Year 2 (Early Years and Key Stage 1 pupils, in addition to the 4+ Nursery class also situated here), whilst creating a more specifically 'Key Stage 2' area for years 3, 4 & 5 from a combination of new and existing accommodation accessed most directly from Kitelands Park.

Objectives of proposal

- To meet local demographic demand for school places in the future
- To meet parental demand for Biggleswade Academy evident in sustained levels of over subscription
- To expand an already highly regarded, Ofsted 'good with outstanding features' academy.

Timeline

Following approval by Central Bedfordshire Council's Executive Committee on 5 April 2016 for the Governing Body's consultation on the proposed expansion to commence, the timetable for the consultation process is as follows-

Action	Date –
Consultation starts	14 April 2016
Drop in meeting for staff, parents, carers and other interested parties	27 th April 2016
Consultation ends	12 May 2016
Outcome of consultation considered by the Governing Body and decision regarding whether to proceed advised to Council	By 27 May 2016
Governing Body submit application to DfE for approval to expand – if applicable	By 27 May 2016
Council Executive consider consultation outcome and determine funding for proposed expansion- if applicable	2 August 2016
Proposed implementation – if applicable	1 September 2017

Attached to this proposal is a Consultation Response Form (pages 5-7). Please complete the form and return it to the address provided. Alternatively, responses to the consultation can be made by e-mail to enquiries@biggleswadeacademy.org

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Below is a list of 'Frequently Asked Questions' that may help to address some immediate concerns that you have.

Frequently asked questions –

Q – My child currently attends Biggleswade Academy, how can I be assured that standards and provision would be maintained and improved if the academy is expanded?

A – The Governors and staff of Biggleswade Academy are proud of their Ofsted rating of 'good with outstanding features' for the main Academy and 'Outstanding' for the Pre-School.

Both of these reports graded the Leadership and Management of the Academy to be 'Outstanding' validating the fact that the Academy is well placed to grow further to support the needs of the town. In addition, the Academy are fully committed to continuing to provide a curriculum that is well designed and matched to the needs, abilities, interests and aspirations of all of their children and are confident in their ability to do so for an extended number of children.

Q - Would Biggleswade Academy be able to continue to provide a full and varied curriculum on the expanded campus?

A – The curriculum taught across Biggleswade Academy is well designed and matched to the needs, abilities, interests and aspirations of all children, also being commented positively upon during the school's last inspection. Staff regularly review this curriculum and would simply continue to plan this to meet the needs of the additional children. The academy also already has an extremely well developed extra-curricular programme and extended school activities which would be able to be accessed by all new children joining the Academy.

Q – What are you proposing to build and what facilities would be available?

A –Proposals are being developed which would provide accommodation for an additional 150 pupils, also allowing the more logical re-grouping of pupils across the Academy site into their related Key Stages. All building will be to the recognised standards for our size and type of school.

There will be a town planning application process for the propose expansion and therefore there will be a separate opportunity to comment on the plans as part of that process.

Q – When would the new facilities open?

A - Subject to obtaining all the necessary consents it is likely that the new facilities would be operational from September 2017 with the Academy gaining an additional class per year group (YR-4) from this point. An additional class could also be accommodated from September 2016 utilising alternative accommodation.

Q – Does the Council have the funds to provide this expansion for Biggleswade Academy??

A –The costs for building the extension to the academy and fitting it out would be paid for by developer's contributions and the Department for Education's basic need grant via the Council's New School Places Programme.

Q – How would admissions to the expanded campus be managed? Would there be an intake from across the age range?

A –. The same admissions arrangements and criteria would remain in place for the expanded campus and the catchment area for the academy would remain unchanged. The only difference would be that a total of 90 places would eventually be available per year group from Years R-4.

As always, the Council and Biggleswade Academy would work very closely together to plan for specific numbers and year groups in more detail as parental preferences are known and admission numbers are confirmed.

Q – Would this expansion impact upon the existing staff at the academy?

A – The academy would need to recruit new teaching and support staff to enable the larger academy to operate effectively.

– Have any alternative solutions been considered, other than the expansion of Biggleswade Academy?

A – Yes. A number of options were considered by the Council including the possible creation of a completely new school. However, by asking Biggleswade Academy to expand, the Council is following its Policy Principles for Pupil Place Planning, which underpin all council decisions regarding new school places. These policy principles include -

1. the need to provide local schools for local children, ensuring a sense of community belonging and also promoting sustainable modes of travel
2. the need to create schools that are of sufficient size to be financially and educationally viable
3. the ability to support the expansion of local popular and successful schools or to link expanding schools with popular and successful schools
4. the potential to further promote and support robust partnerships and learning communities

Consultation Response Form

Please read the consultation document and tell us what your views are.

If you prefer not to use this form, you can put your views in a letter or email.

Letters or completed forms should be returned to -

Biggleswade Academy, Kitelands Road, Biggleswade, Beds SG18 8NX

or responses can be sent by e-mail to enquiries@biggleswadeacademy.org

All responses must be received by 3.30 pm on Thursday 12th May 2016

How much do you agree with the following statement? Please tick as appropriate.

- I support the proposed expansion of Biggleswade Academy

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

Do you have any comments/concerns regarding the proposed expansion? If so, please list them here -

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

	Please tick
Individual	
Organisation – please specify	

Optional information -

Name	
Address	
Postcode	

If you are responding as an individual, please tell us a little bit about yourself.

The following information will help us when considering your opinions and to make sure that we are getting views from all sections of the community. All the questions are optional, and you can give as little or as much information as you wish.

Please tell us if you fall into any of the following categories (please select all that apply)

Please tick all categories that apply	√	Additional information
Pupil - please state which school/academy and which year group		
Parent/ carer of child / children - please state which school/academy		
Parent/ carer of preschool child / children		
School Governor - please state which school/academy		
School Staff - please state which school/academy		
Other please specify		

Gender

Male	Female	Transgender	Prefer not to say

Age

Under 18	18 - 24	25- 34	35- 44	45- 54	55- 64	65 and over

	Yes	No
Do you consider yourself a disabled person		

Ethnic Group	Please tick as appropriate
White British	
White Irish	
White other – please specify	
Black or Black British Caribbean	
Black or Black British African	
Black or Black British other – please specify	
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	
Mixed White and Black African	
Mixed White and Asian	
Mixed other – please specify	
Asian Indian	
Asian Pakistani	
Asian Bangladeshi	
Asian other – please specify	
Chinese	
Other – please specify	

Data Protection Act 1998 - please note that your personal details supplied on this form will be held and/or computerised by Biggleswade Academy for the purpose of the consultation. Summarised information from the forms will be shared with Central Bedfordshire Council and may be published, but no individual details will be disclosed under these circumstances. Your personal details will be safeguarded and will not be divulged to any other individuals or organisations for any other purposes.