



The Report on Wootton Academy Trust's consultation on its proposal for age-range changes

January 2024

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Section 1

The Directors and Trustees of Wootton Academy Trust are now in a position to report on the outcome of the consultation and make a formal representation to the Secretary of State and Bedford Borough Council, and in turn, following further public scrutiny, to the Schools' Adjudicator for a final decision regarding:

Wootton Academy Trust's consultation on changing the school age-range and admission criteria for 2026 onwards.

The Wootton Academy Trust covers two schools in Bedford Borough



Wootton Upper School: URN 137522

Kimberley 16-19 Stem College: URN 139789

Brief history

Wootton Academy Trust came into being in October 2011 when the two member schools became Academy converters under a single Multi-Academy Trust. The Federation falls within the boundaries of Bedford Borough Council, as the Local Authority, and draws the majority of its pupils from the rural area of north Bedfordshire, although a proportion of pupils attend the Trust from the urban parts of Bedford Borough and parts of Central Bedfordshire Council.

The traditional pyramid of schools that feeds into the Federation's schools comprise six Lower Schools, two Middle Schools. The pyramid is slightly unusual in that it straddles the border between Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council.

A three-tier system of education came into being in the early 1970s when the then Bedfordshire County Council introduced the system into all its schools except Luton, which retained the Infant/Junior/High/6th Form College model. Since 1997, when Bedfordshire split from Luton under Local Government Reorganisation, attempts were made to introduce a two-tier, primary/secondary, system into Bedfordshire.

In 2008, under further local government reorganisation, the County Council was abolished in favour of two unitary authorities: Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council. Since that time, the former has moved to a largely two-tier system of education (excluding the Wootton Pyramid), and the changes in Central Bedfordshire have been somewhat piecemeal, with Dunstable and Houghton Regis areas being fully two-tier and, under current council plans, a phased approach to implementing two-tier in most parts of the Authority. The major constraint is the lack of capital funding to make the necessary changes.

During 2022, Bedford Borough Council undertook an informal consultation on a proposal to replace the three-tier structure in the schools in the Wootton and Stewartby area to a two-tier structure. At the same time, Central Bedfordshire Council undertook an informal 'have your say' consultation to introduce a two-tier structure in its schools in Cranfield and Marston Moretaine. The changes, if introduced, would change Wootton Upper School into a secondary school. Both Local Authorities received significant support to change the age-range of schools in the area. Central Bedfordshire Council has since undertaken a statutory consultation to introduce a two-tier structure.

Alteration proposal to the age range

The proposal of Wootton Academy Trust is:

That Wootton Upper School change its age range, offering provision from age 11 (Year 7) to age 18/19 (Year 13) becoming known as *Wootton Academy* from 2026

Implications and stages of implementation

If the trustees of Wootton Academy Trust decide, having considered the outcome of the consultation process, to proceed with the proposal and there is agreement from the Secretary of State for Education, the changes will be implemented from the beginning of the Autumn Term 2026. Interim planning for implementation will commence in September 2024. The following stages of implementation will apply:

- In **September 2026** there will be 150 places in Year 7, 150 places in Year 8 and 270 places in Year 9 available on the Wootton campus.
- In **September 2027** there will be 270 places in Year 7, no places in Year 8 and 120 places in Year 9 available on the Wootton campus.
- In **September 2028** there will be 270 places in Year 7, no places in Year 8 and 120 places on Year 9 available on the Wootton campus.
- From **September 2029** onwards, the normal admission point will be Year 7 only.

Capacity

The current and proposed capacities of the Academy are shown below:

Year	Capacity	Admission into all years	Proposed No. on Roll
2024	1212	297	894
2025	1212	297	894
2026	1350	570	1164
2027	1350	390	1257
2028	1350	390	1350
2029	1350	270	1350

Additionally, whilst all sixth form students are currently registered at Kimberley College, the Trust recognizes that with growth it will need to continue to provide sixth form provision on the Wootton site and this will expand in the future.

Objectives of our proposal to merge/change the age range are:

The Trust believes that education is about the whole child and supporting and guiding their development and transition to adulthood. Our aim is that every student attains their full potential academically and develops the life-skills they will need once their time in school has ended, so that they become well-rounded individuals.

Within the proposals outlined in this consultation document, the principles we are working to are:

- change must not be disruptive to students currently in the system;
- there being a single point of transfer between the ages of 4 (Year R) and 16 (Year 11);
- that Key Stage 2 is ultimately taught in a single school and is not split between schools;
- from the age of 11 (Year 7), students need to be in a secondary school with access to specialist teaching and facilities.

Consultation

An informal consultation process was carried out between 20 September 2023 and 22 November 2023. Details of the full consultation process and its outcome are contained in Section 2 of this document.

Implementation

If the Trust Board of the Wootton Academy Trust decides to progress with the proposals, following the outcome of the consultation process, it will submit a business case to the Education Schools Funding Agency, with the final decision being taken by the Regional Director, most likely at some stage during the Spring/Summer Term, 2023/24. If the proposal is accepted, full implementation will be from 1st September 2026, with preparatory work being carried out during the next academic years 2024/25 & 2025/26.

Procedures for making any representations regarding these proposals

If anyone has any objections or comments about the proposals laid out these should be sent to:

Rahella Khatun-Uddin
Team Leader,
Bedford and Central Bedfordshire Sub Region,
East of England Region
Regions Group
Level 3,
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT



Section 2

The Report on Wootton Academy Trust's consultation on changing the school age range from September 2026 onwards.

January 2024

The purpose of this section of the proposal is to:

- Provide detailed information about the responses to the consultation process;
- Respond, in particular, to the areas of concern that have been raised as part of that process;
- Identify how the Academy Trust will meet the objectives for changing the age-range, as set out in the consultation process.

The consultation with stakeholders covered a single proposal:

That Wootton Upper School change its age range, offering provision from age 11 (Year 7) to age 18/19 (Year 13) becoming known as *Wootton Academy* from 2026

In addition, the Academy Trust consulted on the respective admissions procedures that would need to be in place were the proposal to be accepted.

How did we consult?

The formal consultation document (attached as Appendix A), formed the basis of the consultation. It was posted on the Academy's website and hard copies were made available to everyone who requested one and was also distributed at the several consultation briefing sessions.

The following meetings and briefing sessions were held:

Meetings with the Mayor of Bedford and Education Portfolio Holder; officers from CBC over a period of time;

Meetings with Lower School Headteachers within the pyramid;

Six consultation meetings were held for parents and other stakeholders:

- Monday 9 October: Stewartby Village Hall
- Tuesday 10 October: Cranfield Village Hall
- Thursday 12 October: Marston Vale Community Forest
- Monday 16 October: Wootton Upper School
- Thursday 19 October: Wootton Upper School
- Wednesday 1 November: Marston Moretaine Forest End site

A meeting was held with teachers, teaching assistants, office staff, site agent and domestic staff at Wootton Upper School

Details of the questions raised at each of those meetings are contained within Appendix B, together with the Academy Trust's responses.

Statements made through the on-line consultation process are grouped together in Appendix C, with separate sections relating to the proposed move to two-tier and the proposed admissions policy.

With whom did we consult?

- Parents of current pupils
- Parents of potential pupils in our feeder lower schools
- Staff who work at WAT schools
- Our feeder lower schools
- Our local communities, including pre-school groups and Early Years Providers, Parish Councils and our current site users
- Neighbouring schools

- Bedford Borough Council, neighbouring Local Authorities, the Church of England and Roman Catholic Dioceses representing the area, the NHS Health Authority and other stakeholders
- Our local MPs
- Children and young people in our WAT schools were consulted using the appropriate Pupil Voice mechanisms.

How could people respond?

The consultation document and consultation events urged everyone to make a response, either using the online facility, or by submitting a hard copy that could be analysed alongside the electronic ones. Everyone was encouraged to attend one of the consultation events and people were discouraged from making verbal responses since these were difficult to record verbatim. Rather, attendees were encouraged to ask questions of clarification at the meetings prior to making a formal submission using either of the means previously described.

No formal letters of response were received from specific statutory bodies or individuals since the major statutory bodies like the two Local Authorities and Dioceses are directly involved in the process for the whole pyramid.

Summary of Responses

The consultation questionnaire posed two binary questions:

- **Do you agree with the proposal that Wootton Upper School should become a secondary school offering provision from age 11 (Year 7) to 18/19 (Year 13) becoming known as Wootton Academy?**
- **Do you agree with the proposed changes to admissions criteria proposed by Wotton Academy Trust?**

Respondents were also invited to give reasons/make comments about their answers.

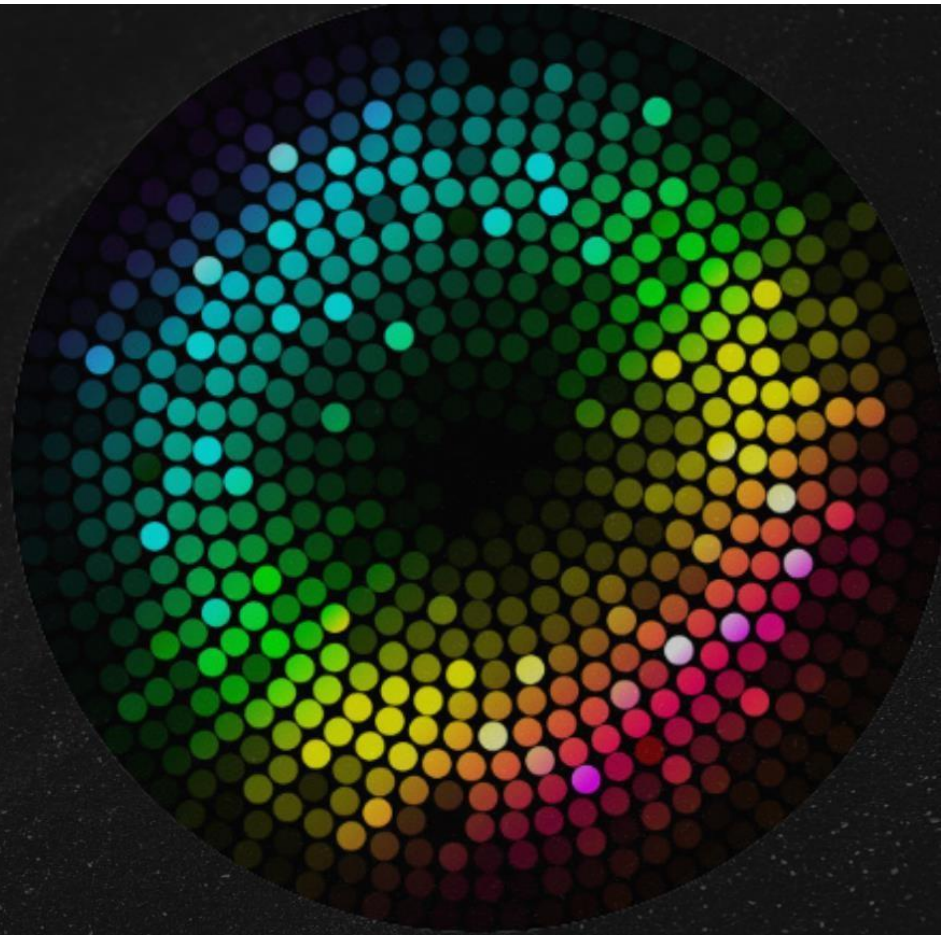
There was a total of 77 responses. Of these, respondents indicated:

	Yes	No	Making a comment
Becoming a secondary school	58	19	65
Changes to admissions	58	19	

It should be noted that a few respondents gave a different answer to each question.

Whilst this is a fairly low response rate in terms of the numbers of people who had access to the consultation, the comments that accompanied these responses and the questions that were raised either on-line or at the meetings, were extremely helpful in formulating key questions that form the basis of the majority of concerns and to which the Trustees have made a response. It is also clear that this is classed as an informal consultation process (as opposed to a statutory consultation) and the outcome and comments are intended to support the Trustees in making a final decision as to whether or not to proceed to the next stage.

Appendix A - Formal Consultation Document



Wootton
Academy
Trust



Consultation on proposed changes to age-ranges and
admissions to Wootton Upper School

20 September 2023 – 22 November 2023 at 12.00pm

Wootton Upper School: consultation on proposed changes to age ranges and admissions

20 September 2023 – 22 November 2023 at 12.00pm

The consultation will last for eight school weeks. Consultation events will be arranged for stakeholders to attend and ask questions and there will be a survey for stakeholders to give their views.

Stakeholders include current and future pupils and their parents and carers, WAT staff and governors, others in the local community, other schools [including their staff and governors] local councillors and their officers, local MPs.

Introduction

During 2022, Bedford Borough Council undertook an informal consultation on the proposal to replace the three-tier structure in the schools in the Wootton and Stewartby area to a two-tier structure. At the same time, Central Bedfordshire Council undertook an informal 'have your say' consultation to introduce a two-tier structure in its schools in Cranfield and Marston Moretaine. The changes if introduced would change Wootton Upper School into a secondary school.

Both Local Authorities received significant support to change the age range of schools in the area. Central Bedfordshire Council has since undertaken its statutory consultation to introduce a two-tier structure.

Wootton Academy Trust is now undertaking its own statutory consultation process to gather the views of stakeholders. WAT has sought to work in partnership with other responsible authorities on statutory consultation.

Wootton Academy Trust has developed this consultation in partnership with Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council and other local Trusts.

It is worth restating the reasons for this consultation: Wootton Academy Trust (WAT) believes that education is about the whole child, supporting, and guiding their development and transition to adulthood. Our aim is that every pupil attains their full potential academically, and develops the lifeskills they will need once their time in school has ended, so that they become well-rounded individuals.

Within the proposal outlined in this consultation document, the principles we are working to are:

- Change must not be disruptive to pupils currently in the system;
- There being a single point of transfer between the ages of 4 (Year R) and 16 (Year 11);
- That Key Stage 2 is ultimately taught in a single school and not split between schools;
- From the age of 11 (Year 7), pupils need to be in a secondary school with access to specialist teaching and facilities.

Whilst WAT takes pride on delivering high-quality education, the current structure provides challenges to sustaining that.

There are very few Middle Schools, left in England and therefore:

- There is a lack of teacher training for middle years teachers;
- A decline in the number of middle schools nationally is resulting in fewer teachers being available with the relevant experience, skills and specialist subject knowledge (e.g. Science);
- A move into middle schools for Early Career Teachers (ECTs) could be seen as a limiting career choice; and
- Our pupils have to change schools part way through a key stage, in most areas of the country a school will teach all of Key Stage 2 (Years 3 - 6) or all of Key Stage 3 (Years 7 - 9).

In the Upper School, the issues are:

- The school only has 2½ years to prepare students for GCSE;
- Recruitment and retention of staff to any school whose age range is seen as outside the norm is difficult, especially since upper schools are often seen as being 'exam factories';
- Pupils joining at age 13 (Year 9) are making GCSE subject choices after only two-terms. They may know little about some of the subjects, and staff are still getting to know the pupils;
- Transfer to upper school is the second change that pupils make within four years and numerous educational research reports show that pupil learning is significantly hindered at each point of transfer;
- A move into an upper school with just three-year groups for Early Career Teachers (ECTs) could be seen as a limiting career choice; and
- School accountability measures such as Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measure at Key Stage 4 will be a greater challenge for an upper school since we will have pupils for half the time that other secondary schools do.

Our Proposal is:

That Wootton Upper School change its age range offering provision from age 11 (Year 7) to age 18/19 (Year 13) becoming known as **Wootton Academy** from 2026.

What will these changes mean?

Wootton Upper School (Wootton Academy)

- Teaching in Years 7 and 8 will all be on the Wootton site, delivered by specialist staff in specialist facilities;
- Pupils joining in Year 7 will continue through to Year 11 and then onwards to Kimberley 16 - 19 STEM College, subject to minimum entry requirements being achieved (i.e. a single point of entry);
- Sixth Form teaching in subjects such as Art, Dance, Drama, Music, Music Technology, Photography and Textiles will remain on the Wootton Academy site;
- Staff will have the opportunity to teach a wider age-range, supported by appropriate development programmes;
- **In 2026**, there will be 150 places in Year 7, 150 places in Year 8 and 210 places in Year 9, available on the Wootton campus.
- **In 2027**, there will be 270 places in Year 7, NO places in Year 8 and 60 places in Year 9
- **In 2028** there will be 270 places in Year 7 for children and 60 places in Year 9

- **From 2029** onwards, the normal admission point will be Year 7 only
- Parents of children in Years 6, 7 and 8 in 2025 at Marston Vale Middle School will apply for Year 7, 8 and Year 9 places respectively at Wootton Secondary Academy in 2026. There will be sufficient spaces to accommodate all the Marston Vale Middle pupils from these two schools.
- There will be some places available for children to join Year 7 in 2026 and in 2027 from Holywell School and from other schools. We expect that some parents, possibly those who live in Wootton and near to the school, may wish to transfer their children at that point.
- A pupil will remain in a single school for longer, giving more opportunity to develop strong, positive and supportive relationships between the school, pupil and home;
- The school will have longer to prepare pupils for GCSE and offer wider access to subjects at a lower age. Currently some subjects are only available to all pupils in Years 10 and 11;
- There will be higher-quality and better-informed advice and guidance for GCSE options because staff will have known pupils for longer;
- Smaller year groups in Key Stage 4 will enhance intervention strategies where pupils are not making expected progress;
- Wootton Academy will be able to harness the enthusiasm of Year 7 and 8 pupils to take part in a wide range of activities, particularly in the arts and sport, which will enrich the school and give it breadth beyond exam focus; Whilst current standards for Years 9 to 11 are strong, Wootton Academy Trust firmly believes that these changes will secure better GCSE results and an improved whole school experience. In turn, this will provide greater opportunities for students in the sixth form through either academic or vocational routes.

When will the changes happen?

If, after the consultation, Wootton Academy Trust determines it wishes to proceed with the proposal and the Secretary of State for Education agrees, it will be implemented from the beginning of the autumn term 2026, with the Wootton campus taking its first entry of pupils into Years 7 and 8. Interim planning to enable this to happen will commence in September 2024.

New admission arrangements will apply for children joining Wootton Academy from September 2026. How will this affect our current Catchment Area?

Changes have been made to catchment areas to reflect the proposed change in age range, not only at Wootton Academy but also at Holywell School. The draft admission arrangements (available from Wednesday 20 September 2023) can be viewed at <http://www.wootton.beds.sch.uk/admissions> or can be obtained as paper copies from Wootton Upper School reception.

Impact on Current Year Groups

2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Year 2	Year 3 at Lower School	Year 4 at Primary [exlower] School	Year 5 at Primary School	Year 6 at Primary School	Year 7 at Secondary School [e.g. WA or Holywell]	Year 8 at Secondary School [e.g. WA or Holywell]	Year 9 at Secondary School [e.g. WA or Holywell]
Year 3	Year 4 at Lower School	Year 5 at Primary [exlower] School	Year 6 at Primary School	Year 7 at Secondary School [e.g. WA or Holywell]	Year 8 at Secondary School [e.g. WA or Holywell]	Year 9 at Secondary School [e.g. WA or Holywell]	Year 10 at Secondary School [e.g. WA or Holywell]
Year 4	Year 5 at MVMS Year 5 at Holywell	Year 6 at MVMS Year 6 at Holywell	Year 7 move to WA from MVMS Year 7 at Holywell or apply to join WA	Year 8 at WA Year 8 at Holywell	Year 9 at WA Year 9 at Holywell or apply to join WA	Year 10 at WA Year 10 at Holywell	Year 11 at WA. Year 11 at Holywell Apply for place at Kimberley or other sixth form or college
Year 5	Year 6 at MVMS Year 6 at Holywell	Year 7 at MVMS Year 7 at Holywell	Year 8 move to WA from MVMS Year 8 at Holywell	Year 9 at WA Year 9 at Holywell or apply to join WA	Year 10 at WA Year 10 at Holywell	Year 11 at WA. Year 11 at Holywell Apply for place at Kimberley or other sixth form or college	
Year 6	Year 7 at MVMS Year 7 at Holywell	Year 8 at MVMS Year 8 at Holywell	Year 9 move to WA from MVMS Year 9 at Holywell or apply to join WA	Year 10 at WA Year 10 at Holywell	Year 11 at WA. Year 11 at Holywell Apply for place at Kimberley or other sixth		
2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030

					form or college		
Year 7	Year 8 at MVMS Year 8 at Holywell	Year 9 at WA Year 9 at Holywell or apply to join WA	Year 10 at WA Year 10 at Holywell	Year 11 at WA. Year 11 at Holywell Apply for place at Kimberley or other sixth form or college			
Year 8	Year 9 at WUS	Year 10 at WUS	Year 11 at WA Apply for place at Kimberley or other sixth form or college				
Year 9	Year 10 at WUS	Year 11 at WA Apply for place at Kimberley or other sixth form or college					

In 2027 when pupils at Holywell complete GCSEs for the first time, they will be able to apply for a place in Year 12 at Kimberley College in line with the admissions criteria.

Which other schools are involved in the change?

The following lower schools are consulting on becoming primary schools with pupils in Year R to Year 6:

- Bedford Borough Schools - Wootton Lower School and Broadmead Lower School
- Central Bedfordshire Schools - Cranfield Academy, Houghton Conquest Academy, Marston Moreteyne School, Thomas Johnson Lower School.
- Central Bedfordshire Council has consulted on closing Shelton Lower School.
- Chiltern Learning Trust has consulted on closing Marston Vale Middle School.

- Bedford Borough Council is consulting on where the primary school in Stewartby should be. ➤ Holywell School is consulting on becoming a secondary school with pupils in Years 7 - 11.

How will school admissions be managed?

Currently, our admissions are managed by the Local Authority (Bedford Borough).

Places are allocated based on the admissions criteria, which take into account various factors such as catchment area, whether there are siblings at the school, whether the child is 'looked after' and attendance at feeder schools.

The admission arrangements for the school will need to change to take account of the proposal.

These are being consulted upon now and can be viewed at:

<http://www.wootton.beds.sch.uk/admissions> so that parents can see how the schools would be organised if the proposal is approved by the Department for Education.

Paper copies are available by request from any of the WAT schools. There will be close liaison with the Local Authority over the implications for school transport that arise from this proposal.

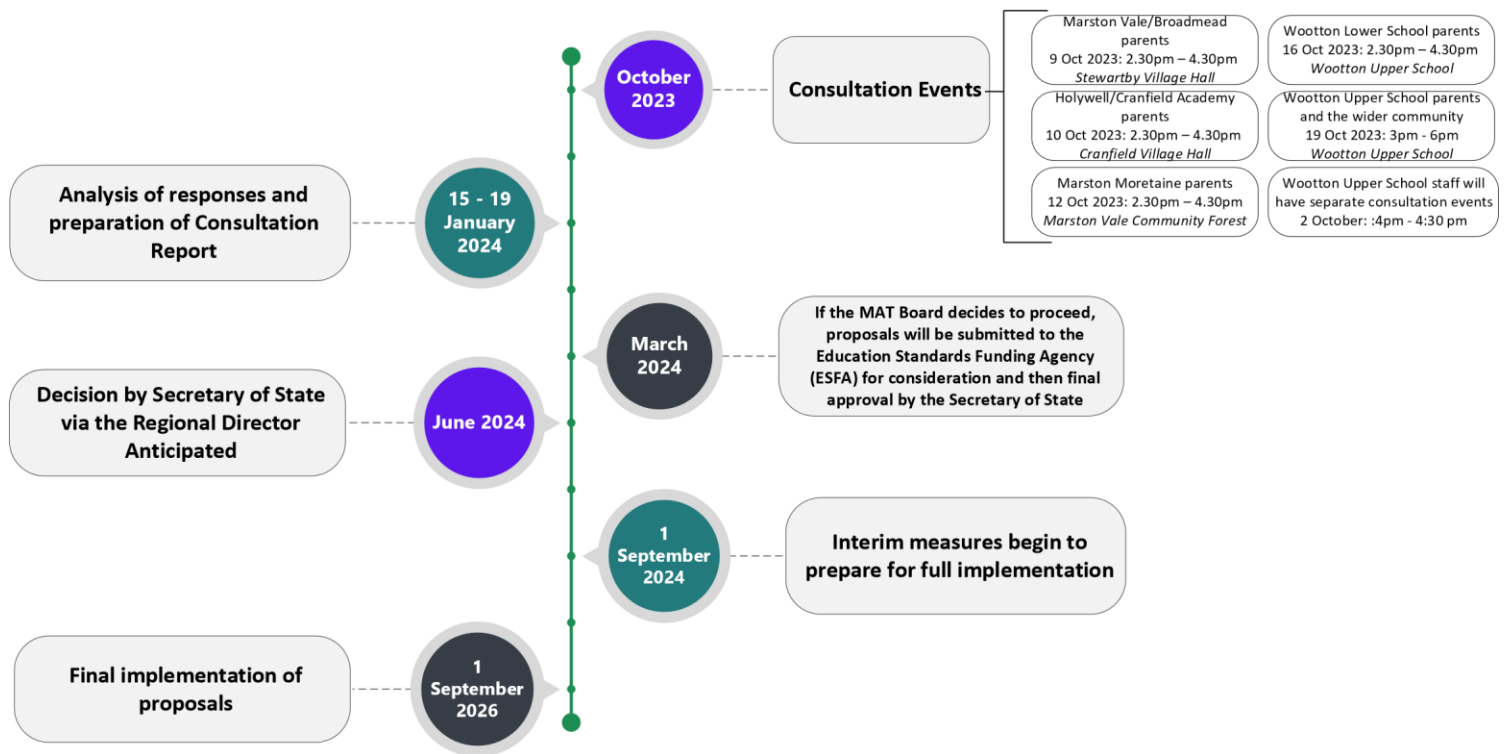
What are the arrangements for the consultation process?

The consultation process will run from 20 September 2023 until 12pm on 22 November 2023.

During that period, we want to hear the views of:

- Parents of current pupils
- Parents of potential pupils in our feeder lower schools
- Staff who work at WAT schools
- Our feeder lower schools
- Our local communities, including pre-school groups and Early Years Providers, Parish Councils and our current site users
- Neighbouring schools
- Bedford Borough Council, neighbouring Local Authorities, the Church of England and Roman Catholic Dioceses, the NHS Health Authority and other stakeholders
- Our local MPs
- Children and young people at all WAT schools will be consulted with using the appropriate Pupil Voice mechanisms.

What is the timescale for the whole process?



Consultation Response Form

An online form is available [here](#). Alternatively, you may respond using the form below. A hard copy of the form can be requested by emailing consultations@wootton.beds.sch.uk. Before responding, you may wish to attend one of the consultation events. This is not a vote or a referendum but a chance to make your views known so that WAT can consider them when making its decision.

Based on what you have read in this document, and through information gathered at a consultation event please give a response to the following proposal:

That Wootton Upper School change its age range offering provision from age 11 (Year 7) to age 18/19 (Year 13) becoming known as Wootton Academy.

Consultation Response Form

Please tell us who you are and where are you from

We intend to analyse responses according to stakeholder group and geographical location however no response will be attributed to any individual in the Consultation Report.

Please provide your postcode here:

Tick all the boxes that apply in the list below.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent of a pupil attending Wootton Upper School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent of a pupil attending Wootton Lower School/Broadmead Lower School.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent of pupil attending Marston Moreteyne School/Cranfield Academy/Thomas Johnson Lower School/Houghton Conquest Lower School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent of pupil attending Marston Vale Middle School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent of pupil attending Holywell School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent of a pupil attending another Bedford Borough School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent of a pupil attending another Central Bedfordshire School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff member at Wootton Upper School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff member at another Wootton Lower School/Broadmead Lower School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff Member at Marston Moreteyne School/Cranfield Academy/Thomas Johnson Lower School/Houghton Conquest Lower School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff Member at Marston Vale Middle School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff Member at Holywell School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Governor on the Local Governing Board for Wootton Upper School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Governor at Wootton Lower School/Broadmead Lower School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Governor at Marston Moreteyne School/Cranfield Academy/Thomas Johnson Lower School/Houghton Conquest Lower School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Governor at Marston Vale Middle School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Governor at Holywell School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parish Councillor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bedford Borough/Central Bedfordshire Councillor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Representative of a local authority
<input type="checkbox"/>	Representative of the diocese [specify]
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other [please specify]

We will respect any desire to remain anonymous (no one will be publicly identified in the report on the consultation) but if you are content for us to know your name (or names if this is a joint response), please enter it/them here:

If you would like us to send you a copy of the final consultation report, please provide an email address here:

Do you agree with the proposal that Wootton Upper School should become a secondary school offering provision from age 11 (Year 7) to 18/19 (Year 13) becoming known as Wootton Academy?

YES

NO

Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

Do you agree with the proposed changes to the admissions criteria proposed by Wootton Academy Trust?

YES

NO

If you would like to comment on the proposed Wootton Academy admissions arrangements, please do so below:

**The online form for responses to the Consultation Proposal will close at 12pm
Wednesday 22 November 2023**

If sending your response by post, please send to: Wootton Academy Trust, Hall End Road,
Wootton, Bedford, MK43 9HT.

Please ensure it arrives by 12pm.

If you have any questions regarding the completion of this form, please contact
consultations@wootton.beds.sch.uk

Thank you for taking the time to respond to our consultation.

Appendix B

Questions asked at face-to-face meetings:

Q. How many forms will there be in each year?

A. It is planned that the secondary school will have nine forms of entry.

Q. Where are all the extra students going to go? (new residents of Wootton/space on site)

A. There will be more pupils in the school (900 → 1350). The capacity of the school is 1212. There will be additional accommodation built, expected to be a new block at the rear of the school, to accommodate the additional pupils.

Q. Are the communal spaces big enough? (e.g. canteen)

A. The architects are planning additional dining room space to accommodate the additional numbers. Each year will have social time space.

Q. How will stability be managed for pupils only doing two years in middle school?

A. This is a question for Marston Vale Middle School to answer since the students will be their responsibility. However, we will work closely with Marston Vale Middle School to ensure a seamless transfer.

Q. How will Holywell cope with managing KS4/5 when the systems aren't in place, and WUS have all of this?

A. This is a question for Holywell Middle School to address as part of their separate consultation process.

Q. What are the plans for transport.

A. Transport issues are the responsibility of the respective Local Authorities who make the necessary access arrangements.

Q. What's the transition to Wootton Upper? Where will the younger child end up?

A. We recognise that some children who historically would have transferred to Wootton Upper School will in future likely go to another school, most probably Holywell. However, there is nothing to stop parents applying for places at Wootton and if there is space available, then of course younger children can continue to come to Wootton.

Q. Will you keep the teachers?

A. Experience in other parts of the wider county show that this type of transition does not have an impact on teacher movement. There are many teachers who will welcome working with Key Stage 3 students, and, within the constraints of the national recruitment issues, teacher training institutions no longer train for a three-tier education system – just primary and secondary.

Q. What provisions are you making?

A. The addition of two new year groups, Year 7 and Year 8, necessitates not only creating more physical space but also the introduction of a Key Stage 3 curriculum. All our staff are trained as secondary school teachers and are therefore familiar with the full secondary curriculum. Given the lead in time for the transition to full secondary school, there is ample time to ensure that the necessary curriculum provision is in place, that staff are adequately prepared, and that on-going dialogue with our current feeder schools ensures a smooth transition.

Q. Do you have sixth form, can they stay for sixth form if they get the grades?

A. Wootton Upper School is a 13-18 Academy. Currently WUS pupils are encouraged to go to Kimberley 16-19 STEM College. Students who achieve the necessary grades at GCSE level are able to apply for a place there. Given the increase in numbers, we expect sixth formers will, in future, once again be registered at WUS once it becomes a secondary school. We already teach Kimberley students on the WUS site in Art, Dance, Drama, Photography, Music and Textiles.

We will work with partners to ensure that there is sufficient sixth form provision at Wootton Secondary School and Kimberley 16 - 19 STEM College.

Q. How will transition work for the pupils?

A. Working with our feeder Middle schools has always been an important part of ensuring a smooth integration into Upper school education. During the transition period, we will continue to work with those schools and increasingly with the Upper Key Stage 2 years of the new feeder primary schools so that students are as fully prepared as possible to engage with the Key Stage 3 curriculum in the new secondary school.

Q. What about if siblings get split due to the new catchment areas?

A. The admission arrangements for WUS were set out in the consultation document and are subject to final agreement by the Schools' Adjudicator. WUS will continue to use Bedford Borough Council as the admissions body. They will allocate places

according to the agreed admissions criteria. There is an independent appeals system in place for those who are unhappy with the school place allocated.

Q. Will the consultation report be published?

A. Once the report is agreed by the Trustees, it will be published on WUS web site, with hard copies being made available to those who request it. If the Trustees decide to pursue the proposal, the consultation will form part of the submission to the Secretary of State for Education who requires that meaningful consultation has taken place.

Q. Who is the consultation with. Is it Bedford Borough or Central Bedfordshire?

A. The consultation is with all stakeholders, of which the local authorities are a part. If the trustees decide to pursue the proposal to a full business case, the Secretary of State for Education will make the final decision, probably in the summer term of 2024.

Q. Is the consultation just playing lip-service to parents?

A. The Trust is required to consult as part of the proposal to moving towards a two-tier, in line with other proposals for the area. This is an informal consultation, and therefore not a referendum, but the views of all stakeholders, including parents, will be taken into account before the trustees make a final decision on whether or not to proceed to the next stage.

Q. We haven't seen any evidence that two tier is better than three tier.

A. This is very much a pragmatic issue. In 1983, there were around 1400 middle schools nationally. Now, there are around 100, of which 14 are in Central Bedfordshire. Therefore, the vast majority of children in England are educated in a two-tier system, which means that the five key stages are split between primary (1 and 2) and secondary (3, 4 and 5). Teacher training institutions no longer train teachers for middle years education, so all teachers coming out of college or training schools are now trained for primary or secondary phases.

Q. What percentage of SEND pupils does WUS take? Is it higher or lower than the national average? Will WUS need more SEND provision if it becomes a secondary school?

A. For 2022/23 (the latest information available), 1.30% of students had EHCPs (against a national average of 4.3%) and 13% of students required SEN support – exactly the same as the national average.

For 2023/24, the figures for Wootton are 1.8% EHCP and 14% SEN, but there is no national average figure available as yet.

It is difficult to predict, so far in advance, whether more support will be needed, but any increase in EHCP students will bring additional resources with the Care Plan.

Q. How many children will there be per class?

A. There will be a maximum of 30 pupils per class, with the possibility of 10 classes of 27. This will depend very much on the resources that are available.

Q. Are architects involved in the plans for the building?

A. Architects and structural engineers have been appointed by Bedford Borough Council, who are responsible for provision of new capital infrastructure, and meetings with them are on-going.

Q. What happens if there are delays in planning and deadlines are missed. Is there a back-up plan?

A. WUS is the last school in Bedford Borough to change. Bedford Borough met the deadline on all other 72 schools that have changed, therefore it is not a concern. There is enough land at the back of the school to accommodate years 7 & 8.

Q. Will there be building at the Wootton Lower School site?

A. This is a question for them to answer.

Q. According to Ofsted terminology, does the school need improvement.

A. All schools are currently subject to Ofsted inspection, whatever their status. WUS is currently deemed Good by Ofsted. In its last ungraded inspection of the school Ofsted commented that, had the inspection been a graded inspection, the school might not have retained its current grading. The Trust Board strives to secure continuous improvements across its schools.

Appendix C

Comments made through on-line responses

Supporting the move to two-tier (comments are grouped where there are similarities)

- It is part of a whole-cluster programme and move to primary/secondary and will benefit performance data e.g. SATS (x11)
- Brings the school in line with other Borough schools (x8)
- Removes additional transition, continuity of key stages, quality of teaching, retention and recruitment of teachers, economic savings in current climate, specialist provision and opportunities (x9)
- I have personally experienced both 2 and 3 tier and have no objection to either
- Makes sense. Wootton children don't have to be bussed to another village to go to school (x3)
- The three-tier system has its own benefits but with the lack of national provision of the model, I think it is right to move to a two-tier system for both the pupils and the schools in the area (x2)
- Less school moves which my children struggled with (x5)
- It's an opportunity for siblings to be in the same school despite age gap
- I feel that our students will be more GCSE ready if we teach them from Year 7. I also feel that it would improve students' behaviour if we teach them how to behave at an earlier age. (x8)

Concerns about the move to two-tier

- I have significant concerns about whether the school will be ready in terms of infrastructure and staffing. The current behaviour is a concerns in terms of the impact on Year 7 students (x5)
- The concern arises from the changes being made so that siblings cannot follow, as catchment areas changing, unless parent preference and then transport won't be provided (x2)

- I do have a concern, based on the standard of education at WUS at present, that this cannot be achieved
- Holywell cannot cope with being a secondary school – the location and size of the school are not suitable (x2)
- I prefer the 3 tier system. I think it is more nurturing and keeps numbers lower. Too much increase in numbers makes children’s behaviour and wellbeing much harder to manage (x3)
- None of the schools impacted are adequate to accommodate the volume of pupils or to cater with the breadth of education requirements across the age groups (x2)
- Schools become overcrowded. More pressure on school staff and the local area, with increased traffic etc
- Pandemic left students and the teachers in a very bad situation, they need to recuperate all that the pandemic took away as the discipline and the quality of learning. I don’t think it is the moment for it now
- I was under the impression that Wootton would not be following the other schools
- A school that is likely to become ‘requires improvement’ to me should not make such a huge change to the school structure while it is facing numerous other issues (x2)
- I am concerned that teaching levels will go down due to everyone concentrating on their jobs and the conversion, rather than getting the children from Year 11 through their exams (x3)

Comments made regarding proposed admissions criteria

- I am concerned at the Year 7 entry for Holywell students in September 2026 and 2027. This will have a detrimental impact on Holywell School and has not been part of our ongoing discussions
- I have been advised postcode will dictate catchment (which is normal). Originally it was proposed we would have a choice of secondary. The siblings will be split (as I understand it) due to one changing to upper in 2024 and the next in 2026 Year 9, followed by a further in 2027 to Year 7. All previous children went through

WUS/Kimberley. The first would be entitled to transport to WUS, but this may not be the case for the following two children if opting for WUS over Holywell. Also, Holywell will not have a 6th form and Kimberley is oversubscribed, offering places to WUS pupils as their 6th form. Holywell have no such guarantee

- I do not agree with them
- The proposed admission policy seems fair and reasonable. However it appears that the intake into Year 7 in 2026 will adversely affect at least one, if not two, year groups with a lot of changes in succession. Robust transfer and induction processes would need to be in place.
- The exclusive nature of the entry point for Year 7 and 8 pupils in 2027 for pupils at Marston needs looking at. There should be a guarantee of a place for pupils living in Wootton who are at Holywell to transfer to WUS. Otherwise this means pupils moving part way through secondary school or being bussed from Wootton to Cranfield when there is a secondary school available in Wootton
- 2025 would be better
- Wootton is a great upper school and shouldn't have to make changes to accommodate more than they need to. Marston Moretaine and surrounding is a big enough village to support its own secondary school and share the proposed cost of a sixth form with Holywell. I feel Wootton is perfect as it is, and more children would equate to more pressure and less resources available for the children
- To be honest I'm not too sure about the admissions criteria other than the year group changes. I am aware that Cranfield academy is looking to change to a primary and Holywell become a secondary. This I am all in favour of as I have a child due to start in September 2025. I would rather she went to a two tier school rather than the three
- I think as long as the children from Wootton village are assured a place. As that is why parents move there, then the proposed admissions arrangements seem fine
- Would transport be available for those who live in Cranfield to attend WUS during the first couple of years when Holywell convert

- While I agree on the whole, Wootton Primary (currently Lower) should be identified as a/the feeder to Wootton Secondary, to ensure continuity for pupils, especially where circumstances may have changed but they can remain in friendship groups and within the Wootton community.

Governors' response to issues of general concern

1. Readiness of the School to meet both the physical and learning needs related to increased numbers and the introduction of Key Stage 3 students.

Given that the transition to a two-tier system of education is not going to be fully implemented in this area by both local authorities until 2029, and that the process doesn't start to be implemented until 2025, discussions and preparation have been on-going for several years, with momentum gathering during the current academic year, to ensure that the school will be ready, both physically and educationally, to meet the needs of its first students into Key Stage 3. Being part of a wider plan for the whole pyramid, WUS is working in close collaboration with the DfE, both local authorities and all other schools in the area that will be impacted by the changes. Moving forward our closest working relationship in terms of changes to the physical changes to the site will be with Bedford Borough Council.

2. Impact on families with siblings who might be split between two schools over time and issues over transport.

The Local Authorities remain responsible for the provision of school transport and they will work within the criteria established for such provision to ensure that there is the necessary access to schools where the criteria apply. Whilst WUS will continue to work with the authorities on this area, it does not set the policies nor have control over funding for such provision.

3. How behaviour management systems will address potential concerns with Year 7 and Year 11 students in the same environment.

The primary/secondary school model is now very much the standard for the vast majority of schools in England. As such, all teachers are trained in one or the other of these areas. Transition to secondary school can often be a daunting experience for a child, especially if they are transitioning from a small primary school environment. In the first instance, our transition arrangements will ensure that all students and their parents are aware of what to expect in Year 7. In addition, the curriculum they follow in Key Stage 3 will be more akin to what they have been used to in upper Key Stage 2. Where possible, Year 7 students will benefit from their own, dedicated physical space, which will make the transition easier. Heads of Year will ensure that,

alongside their form teachers, there is always a point of contact should there be any concerns.

4. The ability of the secondary school to retain and recruit staff to ensure a breadth of education provision is available, whilst ensuring standards are maintained and improved.

As previously stated, all teachers in the English education system are now trained in either primary or secondary education. Staff recruitment and retention is a vital part of delivering an effective learning environment, and thus maintaining standards. It is acknowledged nationally, and by all the professional associations, that recruitment and retention are current issues affecting the profession, especially for some of the specialist subjects. We will continue to look to recruit the best staff for our school which, as a full secondary school, might become more attractive to staff who either have a preference for Key Stage 3 provision, or to those staff who see the opportunity to teach the whole secondary curriculum, including GCSE and post-16 provision.

5. How disruption will be kept to a minimum during transition, especially for those students who might be subject to more than one change of school during the transition period.

Changing a system from three-tier to two-tier is never achieved without some degree of impact on students, staff and parents. The advantage we have at WUS is that the rest of Bedford Borough schools made the transition a few years ago, so we can benefit from the lessons learned as part of that experience. In addition, because, unlike parts of Bedford and Kempston towns, the Wootton pyramid tends to be very much self-contained, with little movement in and out, it is possible for all the schools impacted by this transition to ensure that it is carried out with as little disruption as possible. That is why there are regular meetings between headteachers and other key staff to ensure this happens as smoothly as possible.

Governors' response to issues of general concern on proposed Admissions Policy

Near the end of the Trust's consultation process, Central Bedfordshire Council, announced a delay in the implementation of a two-tier structure in its schools in the Cranfield and Marston Moretaine area of one-year. Clearly, this impacts on the Trust's proposal to change its admissions criteria, with effect from September 2025. The current admissions criteria will need to operate from entry into Year 9 in September 2025 and there will need to be 297 places available to accommodate children in the catchment area.

There were no concerns expressed about the proposal to reduce the Published Admission Number [PAN] from 297 to 270 as part of the plan to become a two-tier school.

Our consultation proposed reducing the PAN for one-year only - in 2025 - to 210, as there were fewer children in the catchment area for that cohort. Given the delay there will be no need to reduce the PAN in 2026 as there are more children in the catchment area.

In the consultation meetings the Trust held with parents, the main issue was in respect of around 50% of Marston Moretaine being in the Wootton catchment area and the other 50% being in the Holywell catchment area. Consultees were concerned that this would mean younger siblings would not necessarily be able to go to the same school as their older siblings. In response to these concerns the Trust plans to list the whole of Marston Moretaine as a catchment village - maintaining the existing criteria for Marston Moretaine.