

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 life-skills 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.

Proposal

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 [ex-lower] 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 [ex-lower] 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		



Wootton Academy Trust

Wootton Upper School & Arts College Kimberley 16-19 STEM College

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.

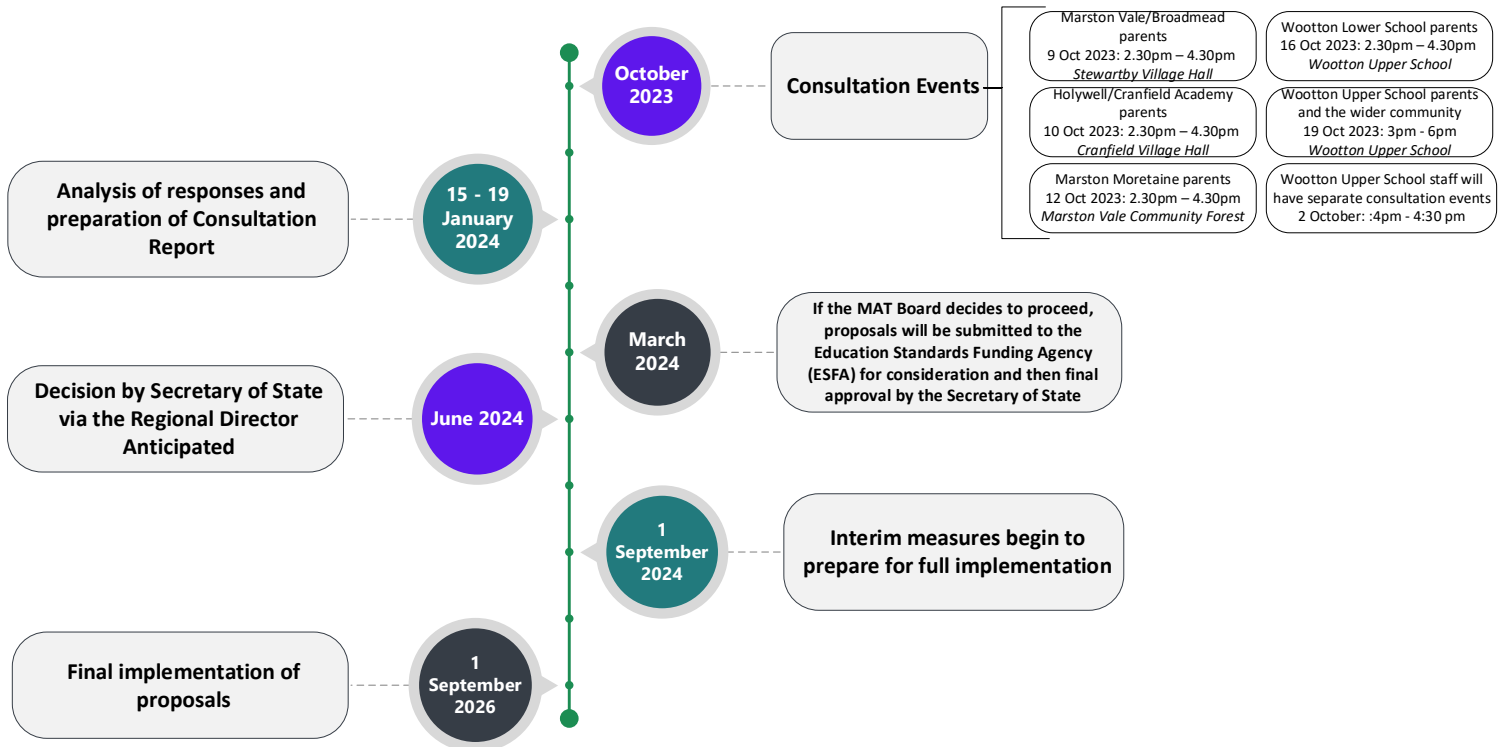
What are the arrangements for the consultation process?

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]



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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:



Wootton Academy Trust

Wootton Upper School & Arts College Kimberley 16-19 STEM College

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.