



*COPLE LOWER SCHOOL*



## **Transition to two-tier education**

### **Proposal for Cople and Willington Lower Schools to merge to become one primary school**

There will be meetings for parents and stakeholders.

The dates are as follows:

**Cople Lower School – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at 7pm**

**Willington Lower School – 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at  
7pm**

## **BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Transition to two-tier education – Proposal for Cople and Willington Lower Schools to merge to become one primary school**

Bedford Borough Council has been working with all its schools, looking at how best to provide education across the area, within the context of an emerging two-tier education system in the Local Authority.

Since this work first started in 2015, the Governing Bodies of Cople and Willington Lower Schools have been working together because they believe that primary education in the area is best provided by the two schools collaborating and eventually becoming one school. So far the schools have federated, to create a single governing body, and selected one Executive Headteacher, Mrs Helen Johnson, to oversee both schools from August 2017. The Governing Body and school staff are now working towards the opening of a single primary school, but located on the sites of the two existing Lower schools. The Council fully supports and welcomes the valuable work done by the schools so far.

It is now proposed by the Borough Council that a single Primary School is formed across the two sites of the existing Cople and Willington Lower Schools. This means that all the facilities at both schools merge for the benefit of pupils and the wider community.

To achieve this outcome, one of the existing schools must be deemed to be the 'continuing school' (although the name of the school formed will be different). This will be Cople Lower School. The Council is therefore consulting on technically closing Willington Lower School with the intention of retaining the land, buildings and facilities to accommodate part of the new primary school. The closure would take effect from 31 August 2017, though both sites would continue.

This means that all pupils at Willington Lower School will automatically be transferred onto the roll of Cople Lower School as it becomes a primary school (under a new name) and they will continue their education in that school, across the two sites.

#### ***Background***

In July 2015 the Council wrote to all schools in its area regarding the possibility of the schooling system in Bedford moving to a primary and secondary system with a single transfer at age 11. The intention was to bring the education system in Bedford in line with that experienced by the vast majority of schools elsewhere in the country. Primary schools and Secondary schools already exist in some parts of the Borough, with several Upper Schools already admitting some pupils at age 11. The Borough consulted on the principle of a two-tier education system in November 2015. The principle received widespread support; in January 2016, the Council's Executive made a formal decision that the structure of education in Bedford should change to two-tier, starting from September 2017.

#### ***What will be the benefits of this proposal for Cople and Willington?***

Schools in Bedford are moving towards a two-tier education system with transfer to secondary school at age 11, which is how virtually all schools in the country are organised. Whilst the schools did examine the possibility of remaining as two separate, primary schools, it was felt that neither had the physical capacity to offer the fully educational experience that a merger of the two schools would bring.

***Particular benefits of this proposal will be:***

- as one school, the intake will increase to 30 pupils per year group (currently each school takes up to 15 pupils per year group). This will mean that classes will no longer comprise different year groups and the children will have a larger peer group
- the continuation of the curriculum, whereby there is continuity within Key Stage 2 fully without having to consider the transition at Year 4
- a single school will be accountable for attainment at Key stage 1 and 2
- within the national curriculum a single school can ensure that there are no gaps in what the children are taught
- whole-school planning, which can map the progress of curriculum subjects all the way to Year 6 ensuring the foundations built lower down the school, is carried through allowing all children to continue working in an environment that completes the entire primary education in a single setting
- sustaining high standards of education and maintain the nurturing and well-being of children by providing a focused learning environment until the end of Year 6
- nurturing children and helping them work together towards their aspirations in the same organisation
- offering children in Years R - 6 an exciting and innovative curriculum provision that meets their needs and supports them to achieve their full potential
- increasing parental choice with regard to the variety of primary options and opportunities that are being offered
- avoiding transitions at the end of both Year 4 and Year 8; ensuring that the provision at the school links with other local providers
- continue to improve standards in Bedford Borough to meet the local area vision for development, including the progress of vulnerable groups
- aiding teacher recruitment and retention as, with fewer and fewer local authorities having a three tier system, the teacher education institutions no longer deliver middle years' education training.

***Why the need to change?***

With the different arrangements across the Borough we have a system that:

- is confusing for parents
- with low numbers of middle schools nationally there are difficulties in recruitment
- teachers are no longer trained for the middle years

With transfer at 11, the same school will be able to deliver the whole of KS2 and be accountable for progress from KS1 to KS2 and transition points will match the end of national curriculum key stages and be in line with 95% of the country.

***What will happen to the pupils in Willington Lower school?***

All pupils on the roll of Willington Lower School, or those who have been offered a place at the school for September 2017, will automatically have a place at the continuing primary school.

***What will happen to the staff at Willington Lower School?***

Whilst the vast majority of staff are unlikely to be affected by this proposal, the Council is supporting the schools to look at maximising opportunities for staff. It has also drawn up protocols to support

any staff who are affected by changes to their current school; these have been agreed with the appropriate Professional Associations and Trade Unions.

***What will happen to pupils at Cople Lower School?***

Pupils will stay at the school and will continue into Year 5 in 2017. No application will be required.

***What size will the merged school be?***

The school will have a published admission number of 30

Date	Year R	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	TOTAL
Sep 2017	30	30	30	30	30	30		180
Sep 2018	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	210

***Will any of the school site or buildings be sold?***

There are no plans to sell any of the buildings or playing fields; all facilities will still be accessible for pupils of the primary school.

***How can I find out more?***

There will be meetings for parents and stakeholders. The dates are as follows:

**Cople Lower School – 15 November 2016 at 7pm**

**Willington Lower School – 16 November at 7pm**

There will also be separate meetings for the staff at each school

The consultation period runs from **1 November 2016 to 12 noon 13 December 2016**. Please let us have your views.

***How will the decision be made?***

Following this consultation, the Council will carefully consider all responses. If it decides to proceed with the merger, it will then publish statutory proposals to close Willington Lower School and to expand and extend the age range of Cople Lower School operating from two sites. These proposals will be decided upon by the Council through the Executive,

**Key dates**

<b>7th October 2016</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder decision to consult on the closure of Willington Lower School and, after reviewing the consultation, to publish statutory proposals if necessary.</b>
<b>1st Nov 2016</b>	<b>Consultation starts</b>
<b>13th December 2016</b>	<b>Consultation ends</b>
<b>By end of Dec</b>	<b>Portfolio holder to review consultation and decide whether to publish statutory proposal to close school and extend age range of school remaining open.</b>
<b>3rd Jan</b>	<b>Publish statutory proposal with a 4 week representation period (should decision be taken to move towards closure and expansion)</b>

<b>31st Jan</b>	<b>4 week representation period ends</b>
<b>Next steps</b>	<b>Executive to consider whether to enact the school closure and expansion (should decision be taken to move towards closure and expansion)</b>

## **CONSULTATION ON PROPOSAL TO MERGE COPLE and WILLINGTON LOWER SCHOOLS**

### **How to have your say**

Please take the time to read the consultation document, and hopefully attend one of the consultation events. We are interested to hear your views.

More information can be found at: [www.bedford.gov.uk/schoolsconsultations](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/schoolsconsultations)

You can email us at [consultingbedford@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:consultingbedford@bedford.gov.uk)

You can write to us at Consulting Bedford, Bedford Borough Council, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, MK42 9AP

We are particularly interested to hear your responses to the following:

- 1) Do you support or oppose the proposal that from September 2017 Cople and Willington Lower schools merge to become a single primary school for children aged 4- 11?
- 2) Any comments you may have on the proposal including any alternative ideas or suggestions.
- 3) In what capacity/capacities you are responding (parent, member of governing body, local resident etc..)

The consultation runs between 1<sup>st</sup> November – 13<sup>th</sup> December 2016. Comments received may be published. Details of what will happen after the consultation can be found in the 'key dates' section above.