

**Consultation on our proposal options
for education provision
in Great Barford by
Unity Church of England MAT
representing
Alban Academy and
Great Barford Lower School**



CONSULTATION ON OUR PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION PROVISION IN GREAT BARFORD

The Purpose of the Consultation Document

The purpose of this document is to provide information, and seek your views, on the proposals being considered by the Trustees of Unity Church of England Multi-Academy Trust (Unity MAT) in relation to how education provision is delivered in Great Barford from September 2018. Following the consultation, a business case will be submitted to the St Albans Diocesan Board of Education for consideration at its June meeting.

1. Background

The three-tier system of education has served the pupils and families of Bedfordshire very well for the past 40 years, changes at local and national level mean that this system is now an exception, rather than a rule. At its height of popularity in the 1980s, there were over 1400 Middle Schools in England. There are now fewer than 150 Middle Schools remaining in 17 out of 150 Local Authorities, the largest number being found in the combined totals of Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Local Authorities. Over 95% of children nationally are being educated in a two-tier system and teacher training colleges no longer provide courses for middle years teachers. All teachers are now trained as either Primary or Secondary specialists.

There are parts of the Borough that need to retain a three-tier system for the time being because some of the feeder Lower/Middle schools are in Central Bedfordshire, which is not proposing to change its system. This is the case for the Wootton pyramid of schools and would have been the case in Great Barford for children who enter Alban Academy from Central Bedfordshire Lower Schools, had it not been for additional changes being implemented in the Sandy pyramid of schools from September 2018.

2. The situation in Great Barford

In the context of implementing the two-tier education system, discussions between the governing bodies of Great Barford Lower School and Alban Academy, Bedford Borough Council and the Diocese of St Albans during 2016, determined that there was no capacity, or desire, within Great Barford for two Primary schools on the same campus. The decision was taken, therefore, to create a single, 3-13 school. This would be achieved by forming a Multi-Academy Trust – Unity MAT – which the two schools would eventually join, prior to being merged into a single entity.

It was anticipated that the single school would continue to incorporate Years 7 & 8 for as long as there was a need to accommodate pupils from Central Bedfordshire Lower Schools, and any parents from Bedford Borough Schools who still wanted a middle years (age 9-13) experience for their child(ren).

In October 2016, several schools within Central Bedfordshire consulted on establishing a two-tier system of education in part of the Sandy Upper School pyramid. These schools included John Donne and Moggerhanger Lower Schools, which have traditionally fed pupils into Alban Academy at Year 5 and also Sandy Upper School, which wishes to admit pupils into Year 7 from September 2018. The net impact of these changes, together with those being implemented in Bedford Borough, is that the expected intake into Year 5 in September 2017 will be significantly reduced.

Based on this scenario, all the stakeholders in Unity MAT recently sent out a letter to parents and carers of pupils at the two schools, making the following key points to consider when determining the future of education in Great Barford:

a) Two-tier Education: The move from three to two-tier education in Bedford Borough and Sandy is beginning to have an impact. There are already Year 7 places available in Bedford Borough secondary schools, and Sandy Upper School will introduce a Year 7 cohort in September 2018.

b) Pupils: We must ensure that pupils continue to receive a first-rate education and that the next steps for education in Great Barford minimise disruption for pupils.

c) Pupil Numbers: We respect the right of parents to choose the educational route that they believe is best for their child. At the same time, we must plan effectively for the future of the school. Government funding for education is based on pupil numbers. It is forecast that approximately a third of current Year 6 pupils (47 pupils) will leave Alban Academy at the end of this academic year to move to a secondary school from September 2017, along with some pupils from other year groups. A large year group (currently in Year 8) is also leaving, so the reduction in pupil numbers at Alban Academy is forecast to be approximately 100 pupils.

d) Curriculum and staff: To maintain strong standards of teaching and learning we must ensure that the curriculum is fit for purpose and can be delivered to a high standard. It is important that the best teachers are well supported to deliver the best curriculum for pupils.

e) Pupil Places: Mark Rutherford Upper School have committed to both a Year 7 and a Year 9 point of entry until September 2019. It is not clear at this point what schools in Central Bedfordshire will choose to do.

3. Proposals

Having considered the situation, the Trustees of Unity MAT now want to receive your views on two alternative proposals, again outlined in the recent letter to parents and carers. These are:

- ***One Primary School across both sites accommodating pupils from Year R to Year 6***
- ***One Primary School 'plus' across both sites accommodating pupils from Year R to Year 8***

4. What are the arrangements for the consultation process?

The purpose of the consultation is to seek views of parents, staff and the wider community about the proposals being put forward. Whilst this process allows for expressing a preference, the Trustees want to make a fully-informed decision about the recommendation to the Diocesan Board of Education, so your comments are equally valuable. It also provides for an opportunity when you can ask questions about the proposals, or make alternative suggestions.

You can take part and have your say in the following ways

- By completing the attached response form and returning to either of the school offices
- By email: publicconsultation@unitycemat.org
- By letter: Chair of The Trust Board, Unity MAT, c/o Alban Academy, Silver Street, Great Barford, Bedford MK44 3HZ
- Consultation meetings: Wednesday 29th March 2017, Alban Academy (a separate consultation meeting is being held for staff)

The consultation will run from Tuesday 21 March 2017 until 12 noon on Friday 28 April 2017. We are specifically consulting the following groups, and would encourage anyone interested to read through this proposal document and give us your views:

- Parents of every registered pupil at the schools
- Parents of potential pupils in our catchment area and in Early Years provision
- Staff who work at the schools
- Our local communities and our current site users
- Neighbouring schools within Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire
- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- The Church of England and Roman Catholic Dioceses
- Anyone else who has an interest in the proposal

Once the consultation process is completed, the Trust Board of Unity MAT will meet in mid-May to consider the responses and to respond to queries that have been raised about particular issues. It will then publish a Consultation Report on the schools' websites and the MAT's own website

The Trust Board will then prepare a business case to be considered by the Diocesan Board of Education at its next meeting on Wednesday 21st June 2017.

As has already been stated in the letter to parents and carers, **there will be no changes to provision for the academic year 2017/18 and any decisions to change will only be implemented from September 2018.**

Event	Timescale
Consultation process	21 March 2017 – noon 28 April 2017
Consultation Events:	28 March 2017 (staff only) 29 March 1900-2100 (parents and wider community) Main Hall, Alban Academy
Analysis of responses and preparation of Consultation Report	2 May 2017 – 9 May 2017
Trust Board meet to consider to consultation outcome, respond to consultation comments and prepare business case for Diocesan Board of Education.	May 2017
Decision and Implementation	21 June 2017 Diocesan Board of Education decides on preferred model of education for Great Barford and communicates to all stakeholders. Academic Year 2017-2018 used to prepare for implementation.
Final Implementation of Proposal	1 September 2018

CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN GREAT BARFORD

Please take the time to read our Consultation document and complete this questionnaire. Your feedback is important to us. Please email completed questionnaires to publicconsultation@unitycemat.org, hand in at either of the schools' offices or send by post to:

Chair of the Trust Board, Unity MAT, c/o Alban Academy, Silver Street, Great Barford, Bedford MK44 3HZ (please mark your envelope 'Consultation')

All responses must be received by noon on 28 April 2017, please.

PROPOSALS

There are two proposal for you to consider. You are invited to express a preference and also make comments about either proposal, or suggest another option.

- **One Primary School across both sites accommodating pupils from Year R to Year 6**
- **One Primary School 'plus' across both sites accommodating pupils from Year R to Year 8**

One Primary School Years R -6	One Primary School Years R-8	Don't know	Alternative Model (please detail below)

Comment (Please give any comments or suggestions you may have including any alternative proposals you wish to put forward here. Please continue overleaf if necessary)

1. Please tell us who you are.

We intend to analyse responses according to stakeholder group.

Please tick all the boxes that apply in the list below.

- Parent of a student(s) currently attending one of the schools
- Member of the Governing Body at one the schools
- Member of staff who works at one of the schools
- Parent of a child in local Early Years provision
- Governor, including Headteacher, at a neighbouring school
- Member of the local community
- Representative of a Local Authority
- Representative of a Diocese
- Other (please specify)

2. 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:

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