

OVERVIEW

What is the proposal?

The proposal is to create a new Academy catering for approximately 1,440 students, of which approximately 240 will be in the Sixth Form, to replace the John Bunyan Upper School at Mile Road, Bedford, MK42 9TR in the county of Bedfordshire. The Academy will open in September 2010.

What is an Academy and why is John Bunyan Upper School being proposed for an Academy?

An Academy is a state funded school which is independent of the Local Authority and is set up by a sponsor or sponsors and run by an independent Governing Body. The sponsor brings experience and expertise to the Academy. Academies, once up and running, receive equivalent funding to other secondary schools.. Academies are given a number of freedoms to innovate in ways that will benefit each young person

Like Local Authority schools, Academies provide a free education for pupils of all abilities and are inspected by Ofsted, and have a duty to ensure that the five outcomes of 'Every Child Matters' are achieved. Each Academy specialises in one or more areas of the curriculum. John Bunyan Upper School is currently a community school, maintained by Bedfordshire County Council. In recent years standards have been well below the national and local authority averages. Although the school has a large catchment area only about 4 out of every 10 of the children of upper school age living in the John Bunyan catchment area attend the school. While the school is now showing clear signs of improvement, we recognise that it faces immense challenges if it is going to provide its students with the quality and breadth of education which they deserve.

For this reason, the Government has been working with the Bedford Charity (The Harpur Trust), Bedford College, the University of Bedfordshire and the County Council to explore the possibility of John Bunyan becoming an Academy.

Do Academies make a difference ?

There is a growing body of independent and factual evidence that prove Academies are working:

The National Audit Office report found that GCSE performance in Academies has improved compared with predecessor schools. GCSE performance is improving faster in Academies than in other types of school, including those in similar circumstances. Taking account of both pupils' personal circumstances and their prior attainment, Academies' GCSE performance is substantially better, on average, than other schools.

The 2007 PwC report "The general picture in relation to pupil performance in Academies is one of overall improvement against a range of indicators at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and post-16 levels. Furthermore, Academies' progress in terms of pupil achievement has generally exceeded corresponding improvements at a national level and amongst similar schools.

GCSE results: By 2007, for the 36 academies with underperforming predecessor schools (i.e. not including former City Technology Colleges) the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE at A*-Cs had almost doubled, from 22% in 2001 to 43.7% in 2007 compared to a national increase of 12.2 points. If we include English and Maths the increase is 11.2 percentage points from 14.0% to 25.2% compared to a national increase of 7.8 points.

KS3 results: Comparing Academy results in 2007 (36 Academies) with those of predecessor schools in 2001, Academies have improved their KS3 performance at twice the national average in English, maths and science.

2007 KS3 results of Academies with results in both 2006 and 2007 (22 Academies) show that Academies are continuing to make significantly greater progress than the national average in English, maths and science.

- In English, the proportion of 14 year olds achieving Level 5 went up by 3.1 percentage points (ppts) to 61.5%; an increase 3 times greater than the national average of 1ppt.
- In maths, the proportion of 14 year olds achieving Level 5 did drop slightly by just 0.2 ppts to 63%, compared; compared to a national decline of 1.1ppts.
- In science the proportion of 14 year olds achieving Level 5 has seen an increase of 1.1ppts to 55.7%; just over 3 times the national average when compared with maintained schools.

OfSTED: To date 24 Academies have had full OfSTED inspections. One Academy – Mossbourne – has been graded as outstanding in every single respect. In terms of their overall effectiveness, four have been graded as outstanding, 7 good, with the remaining 13 graded as satisfactory. Key to the future success of the Academies is their leadership and management. On this indicator, six Academies have been graded outstanding, 17 good and one satisfactory. That is 96% which have good or outstanding leadership, compared to 62% for secondary schools in general.

Parents are choosing to send their children to academies. Academies overall are three times oversubscribed. The five brand new Academies, without a predecessor weak or failing school, have nearly six applicants for every place. Academies directly replacing previously weak or failing schools have more than two applicants for each place. Academies replacing weak or failing schools are now filling nearly 25% more places than the schools they replaced.

Who are the sponsors of the Academy?

The Sponsors for the proposed Academy at John Bunyan are:

- The Bedford Charity (The Harpur Trust), a local charity that operates four large, successful independent schools and an extensive community grants programme and
- Bedford College, one of the most successful colleges of further and higher education in the country

The Sponsors will bring additional resources and expertise which will help the school to raise its standards, increase the levels of attainment of its students and improve their future prospects. The Sponsors plan to work in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire and the Local Authority.

What are the Sponsors' plans for the Academy?

The Sponsors' aim is to create a vibrant, successful academy, which will provide the highest quality of education raise aspirations and the standard of achievement in academic and vocational studies for students and the community, and also help address the challenges facing the area.

They plan to achieve this aim by:

- fully involving parents and families in their children's learning
- ensuring that the local community benefits from the Academy
- providing strong leadership from the principal and the management team, supported by a dedicated governing body
- focusing on the individual learner, ensuring everyone makes the most of their own talents and abilities
- improving the quality of teaching and learning in all disciplines, with extensive use of IT and a clear focus on student results
- encouraging aspiration and valuing effort, courtesy, and consideration for others: good behaviour and attendance will be the norm.
- actively involving the students in the running of the academy as mentors and researchers, and at school council and governing body level
- working closely with other schools, particularly the current lower and middle schools, to provide a clear learning pathway, from the start of a student's education right through to them gaining qualifications

Are the Sponsors likely to back out ?

The reputations of both Sponsors are at risk if this should occur. There is a strong emotional commitment to sponsor the Academy and the money is available to provide the financial sponsorship, i.e. £1m each.

Why do we need Sponsors at all ?

Sponsors challenge traditional thinking on how schools are run and what they should be like for students. They seek to make a complete break with cultures of low aspiration which afflict too many communities and their schools. The DCSF want this to happen, and it is why they entrust the governance of Academies to them.

The different perspective that sponsors can bring to both the basic curriculum and curriculum extension and enrichment activities is key to the change in culture and attitude required to break the cycle of underachievement. Sponsors can give extra focus and sharpness to the management of Academies. Sponsors do not make a profit and Academies cannot and do not charge fees.

What will be the measures of success for the Academy ?

Other than improved exam results, the success of the Academy will be judged upon :

- When the Academy becomes the school of choice for the local community
- When students are achieving what they want to achieve
- When the Academy is over subscribed
- When the Academy is drawing from all parts of the catchment area
- When students' and parents' definitions of success are met

What are the key challenges for the Academy ?

Gaining and maintaining parental involvement and support is the greatest challenge. Ensuring strong leadership from the Principal, Governing Body and students will also be influential.

What will the curriculum be like?

The curriculum will be innovative, comprehensive, stretching and exciting. It will meet the needs of all students by offering a wide range of high quality vocational and academic subjects through the involvement of the four schools of the Bedford Charity and the College and University.

There will be improved tutorial support and parental education services. Links with the University of Bedfordshire and other universities will be strengthened and the college's relationship with employers will be used to develop visiting speaker programmes, lectures, work experience and skills competitions.

The academy will be a part of the North Bedfordshire and Bedford 14-19 consortium, which from 2009 offers the exciting new diplomas in construction, engineering, hairdressing and creative & media. The "Bridges" Skills Academy which runs courses to 14-16 year-olds in business, care, construction, engineering, hairdressing and hospitality will continue to be used to offer a taste of different occupations in order that young people will make good choices for their futures. Science and Technology will be the specialism. This will enable the Academy to develop facilities and resources for the study of both academic and vocational subjects such as pure science, arts (through the study of music/design technology or technical theatre), engineering (including aerospace), construction, food technology and computing.

How will admissions be arranged?

The proposals are that:

- The Academy will accommodate up to 240 students in each year group
- The Academy will initially cover the 13-18 age range as John Bunyan School does at present. However, the sponsors believe that the secondary education of young people is best served in a school with an 11-18 age range. It is their firm view, therefore, that the Academy should become an 11-18 Academy in due course
- All students attending John Bunyan School at the time would be offered places in the Academy, including those that wished to stay on into the sixth form
- The Academy would have very similar admission arrangements to those at John Bunyan at present and would be required to comply with the statutory Code of Practice on Admissions. It is intended that admission arrangements will be compatible with those for other local schools and that priority will continue to be given to those children living in the catchment area
- The Academy will admit children of all abilities including those pupils who have statements of Special Educational Need. The Academy will be accessible to pupils with disabilities
- Looked After Children. The Sponsors are particularly keen to ensure that the Academy is a welcoming and supportive place for those students who are looked after by local authorities

Admissions will continue to be co-ordinated by the Local Authority.

How is the Academy being funded ?

The Sponsors will contribute £2 million towards an endowment fund for the Academy to be managed by the Members of the Academy Trust to support the needs and aspirations of the Academy. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) will fund the capital cost of the new buildings. The DCSF will fund the annual running costs of the Academy on a comparable basis to other schools in the area with similar characteristics. The Sponsors will also bring in money through access to local employers and businesses.

How much will the Academy cost?

A capital budget of £27.8 million has been allocated for the construction of the new Academy. The architects will be designing the new buildings to the specifications outlined in the DCSF's building bulletins, i.e. to the latest modern standards.

When will the new buildings be available?

Our intention is to have them by September 2012, but this is subject to Partnership for Schools who will be working with the Borough to deliver the new buildings.

If the proposal is successful, will the land and buildings be handed over to Sponsors who are not elected ?

The land will be handed over to the Academy Trust on a 125 year lease. As part of the Funding Agreement, which is a mutually binding contract between the Academy Trust and the Secretary of State, the Academy is fully accountable to the DCSF. The Trust cannot sell the land.

How will the Academy affect the Bunyan Sports Centre?

The set up of the Academy will not affect the Sports Centre in any way. It will still continue to be operated by the local authority. The Academy will continue John Bunyan's arrangement for use of the facilities, until the Academy's new sports facilities are built in 2012.

How will the Academy's governing body ensure democratic representation ?

The Academy will be a Charitable Trust, registered with Companies House and the Charities Commission, and therefore subject to specific legal guidelines. Ultimately, the Academy Trust will be accountable to the students, parents and community and will act in the best interests of the school. It is responsible to the DCSF and there will be local authority representation on the governing body. There will also be parent and staff representation on the governing body who will be elected by parents and staff respectively.

Will the agreement between the Academy and the DCSF be in the public domain ?**Will the Academy's results be published with other schools ?**

Individual Academies are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act as they are not defined as public bodies under that Act. However, the Department of Children, Schools and Families is subject to the Act and proactively publishes a great deal of information relating to Academies – for example, Expressions of Interest, Funding Agreements, examination results, attendance figures, and so on. Further details available at : <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/foischeme/>

Most education law applies to academies through their Funding Agreements. Also, academies operate under the same rules as other maintained schools with regards to admissions and SEN practice. The information that academies are required to publish in their prospectuses is the same as the information that maintained schools are required to publish. Neither maintained schools nor academies are required to publish their examination results, but results are published as Statistical First Releases by the Department.

How will the Academy involve parents ?

We are open to suggestions on how best to do this. We are already away of some best practice from other schools and Academies, e.g. home learning agreements ; access to ICT equipment at home ; extended services support to parents ; networks into employers. Our intention is to treat students and parents as customers, therefore their views will be paramount on how the relationship will work.

How will the Academy establish tangible links with the feeder schools ?

It is in the Academy's interest to work closely with its feeder schools and it is intended that it would share facilities, teachers and best practice with them. As a Trust itself, the Academy cannot be a member of another Trust but if its feeder schools form a Trust in the future, it would seek to be an associate member of the feeder school Trust.

How would the Academy continue the middle feeder schools' great work in developing and preparing the students ?

The Academy would wish to work closely with the feeder middle schools in order to build on the work that they were doing and ensure continuity for the pupils on transfer to the Academy. This work will involve close liaison between staff and is likely to include staff from the Academy working alongside staff in the middle schools and students from the middle schools accessing facilities at the Academy.

What assurances will the Academy give to guarantee the terms and conditions of the teaching and support staff ?

Being a good employer is one of the Sponsors' strategic aims. TUPE regulations are very clear that terms and conditions will be transferred. However, we intend to better the Ts & Cs to attract good teaching and support staff. The Academy will be very strong on performance.

LOCAL ISSUES**Are the transport links sufficient to support this proposal?**

As an integral part of the outline planning application, an independent traffic and parking assessment will be carried out. The study will assess the impact of the increased intake of the Academy on parking, traffic, public transport and the local road network. Further details will be included within the application for detailed planning permission.

What will the new school look like?

The design process for the new buildings have yet to commence, but we are planning to deliver an innovative, inspiring and functional building which provides an excellent learning environment and enhances the local community.

The detailed design will be consulted upon, and just like any development in the Borough will be available for review at a future Open Day.

As residents, how will you ensure our right of light won't be compromised ?

The final designs will be submitted for planning permission. One of the planning control body's considerations is the impact on local residents, including issues of daylight etc. We plan to hold a meeting specifically for residents to talk to the architects, during the design process so we can be aware of all residents' concerns.

Will the allotment area adjacent to the current school be used for the new buildings ?

There are no plans for the Academy to have any impact on the allotments.

THE SCHOOL AND ITS FACILITIES

Will the Academy charge fees?

No fees are paid by parents. Academies are set up and managed by independent sponsors and funded by the Government at a level comparable to other local schools.

Will the Academy be selective?

No, the Academy will not have a selection or fair banding process. Academies are all-ability state schools charged with raising aspirations and transforming educational opportunities.

What will happen to John Bunyan Upper School staff, their contracts/conditions of service and pay/ability to be members of professional associations?

All terms and conditions will be maintained and the Academy will recognise professional associations and unions.

What will the age range be at the Academy?

It is proposed that the Academy will initially cover the 13-18 age range as the predecessor school does at present. However, the sponsors believe that the secondary education of young people is best served in a school with a 11-18 age range. It is their firm view, therefore, that the Academy should become an 11-18 Academy in due course.

Close links will be developed with John Bunyan's traditional feeder schools, Abbey and Harrowden Middle Schools so that students will be able to make a smooth transition from Years 8 to 9 and subject to future decisions of the local council, there will be careful planning to ensure the change to an 11-18 school will not adversely affect students' educational experience.

What will happen to the Academy if the decision to move to a two tier education system is not taken?

The plans for the age range of the Academy would then be reviewed.

Given the large decline in student numbers at John Bunyan Upper School, how will the Academy reach the projected student roll of 1440?

We believe that 1440 is a realistic target for the Academy, which is supported by the projected population growth in the catchment area.

Will the Academy cause a significant decline in student numbers in other local schools?

We believe the Academy can operate without adversely affecting other schools.

When will my child be able to go there?

The Academy will open in existing buildings in September 2010. All existing students of John Bunyan Upper School will automatically transfer across.

How will the Academy work with students who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) needs?

Students with EAL needs will be assessed on entry to the Academy and provided with a carefully designed programme of study and support which will enable them to swiftly and progressively gain competence in spoken and written English. The Academy will recruit teachers and support staff who are fluent in community languages and will provide excellent facilities and resources to support students' learning. Additional peer support from specially selected students will enable a smooth transition into the social life of the Academy for students with very limited language skills.

How will the Academy work with students who have SEN?

SEN provision will be integrated alongside whole school strategies for learning, to meet the personalised needs of all students and appropriate interventions will be informed by high quality monitoring and tracking procedures. Students will be fully integrated into and proactively supported by the framework of tutoring and mentoring that will be a feature of the Academy. Specific learning and behavioural needs will be met by the provision of appropriate expertise and resources.

Will the Academy receive excluded students from other schools ?

We will work with the LA and other Upper schools and we will have an inclusive approach. We intend to be supportive of all children in the community.

How will the Academy work with children who would potentially be excluded?

The Academy will seek high standards of attendance and behaviour from students and will also have a robust inclusion policy. Exclusions will only be used as a last resort after a range of strategies and interventions have been fully explored. The Academy will not accept behaviour that causes anxiety and fear to any of its staff or students and we will work closely with local and external partners to support the Academy and in making it a safe and happy place to work and learn.

The Academy will establish an Independent Appeal Panel. The Academy will have regard to, and will ensure that the Independent Appeal Panel has regard to, the Secretary of State's guidance on exclusions for maintained schools, in accordance with any written directions from the Secretary of State on the interpretation of such guidance.

What is the Academy's commitment on its exclusion policy ?

The Academy is committed to meeting the needs of all its students and will only use exclusion as a last resort.

DCSF information shows that many Academies have exclusion rates no higher than the rest of their Local Authority. Academies play an active part in their local admissions system, and have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance on exclusions. As many Academies have exclusion rates below the national average as have exclusion rates above the national average.

The School Census shows a downward trend in permanent exclusions from Academies:

	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Percentage of school population	0.96	0.83	0.67	0.55	0.47

It should be noted that some Academies have inherited a large number of disruptive pupils and need to establish good behaviour in order to raise attainment. At the opening of an Academy exclusions may rise initially as the new ethos and behaviour policy brought into the school is enforced in its early days, but as the academies become established the proportion of exclusion tends to drop, suggesting that they have got on top of behaviour and things are improving.

What communication on student performance and behaviour will there be to parents?

The Academy will value and make communication with parents a high priority. Mechanisms to ensure there is regular communication between parents and teachers on students' welfare and progress will be put in place to achieve this.

How will students with aptitude be further encouraged?

The Academy will offer a range of opportunities to stretch students with particular interests, including a gifted and talented programme. Partnerships with business, the community, further and higher education will offer students' a range of opportunities to be challenged and stretched to achieve their full potential.

How will the Academy work and form part of the local community?

The Academy will encourage use of its facilities (e.g. sports and ICT) by the community. The Academy will also put a high value on behaviour of its students in and out of school. Working with parents we will encourage the students to become good citizens.

Will the Academy offer pastoral care, and if so how robust will it be?

This will be a significant part of the Academy. The mechanisms for achieving this will be consulted on.

The sponsors aim to develop, communicate and nurture a cohesive ethos which will celebrate and capitalise on the range of cultures and social backgrounds of students and their families, ensuring that the curriculum and wider opportunities fulfil the potential of all. Pastoral care will be based on key principles of trust, respect, openness, secure relationships, positive behaviours and effective partnership-working

What will be the Academy's 14-19 provision?

The timetable would be structured to enable students to study vocational subjects from the age of 14 and to enable some students to undertake some opportunities for study at other schools or at the college. The new 14-19 vocational diplomas will offer the opportunity for students to choose to

follow programmes of study which enable them to gain hands-on experience of the world of work and the underpinning knowledge and skills required at work. They will be able to mix the study of both traditional academic subjects and vocational diplomas thus gaining credits and experience which will enable them to make the right personal choices for their future careers.

The University of Bedfordshire has been asked by the Training and Development Agency to develop three new diplomas in Business, Travel and Tourism and Health, Society & Personal Development, then later a fourth in Sport & Active Leisure. These brand new subjects would broaden and enhance the Academy's curriculum and stimulate ways of learning and working.

The Academy would be a part of the North Bedfordshire and Bedford 14-19 consortium, which is able to offer diplomas in Construction, Engineering, Hairdressing and Creative & Media from 2009. The Academy will run a wide range of GCSE and Diploma options as they come on stream. Other lower level vocational programmes may also be offered to facilitate progression to the rest of the offer where students are not yet ready for the new programmes.

The Academy would continue to make use of the "Bridges" Skills Academy that runs courses for the 12 upper schools in Bedford and Mid-Bedfordshire offering courses to those aged 14-16 in Business,

What after school clubs (and breakfast clubs) will the Academy encourage?

The Academy will be open for extended hours. The Academy fully understands and values the importance to students and parents of having a safe environment to participate in extra curricular activities.

What will the Academy opening hours be and will they clash with the feeder schools?

As mentioned above, the Academy intends to open for extended hours but it will consult with the relevant groups prior to commencement.

How will parents be involved in the Academy?

As much as possible is the simple answer. We will establish a partnership with all parents as this is crucial to the success of the Academy.

How will the Academy work with John Bunyan Upper School in advance of the Sep '10 opening of the Academy to prepare the students and staff for the changes?

We are already working in close partnership with John Bunyan Upper School and the feeder schools and we will continue to do so, through regular staff briefings, engagement of the students in the building design process and in our education vision workshops.

How will the Academy engage with the community support agencies, inc. the Police as well as the pyramid of local schools?

Support of youngsters at the Academy will be enhanced through a robust multi-agency approach, i.e. students and parents will have access to a wide range of support services through the Academy.

How many students will attend the new school?

Ultimately, we aim to have 1,440 students from 11 to 18 (of which 1200 will be 11 to 16 and 240 16 to 18).

What facilities will be provided at the new school?

The detailed design has yet to be developed. Every effort will be made to ensure that the design, functionality and facilities provided best suits those who will make use of the building as a learning environment.

The DCSF has completed a lengthy study of exemplar designs for new schools including schools within urban environments. For more information see (<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/funding/bsf/exemplars/>)

The Academy will have facilities to enable teachers to deliver a full and broad curriculum to all students. DCSF Building Bulletin 98 provides guidelines on the nature and range of space and facilities: Area Guidelines for Schools. More information can be obtained from www.teachernet.gov.uk

The ongoing building work at other Academies opened in the last two years has rendered some of them as 'building sites', how can we ensure this will not be the case for this Academy?

It is quite normal for new schools to be built adjacent to existing schools, often while classes continue. This is particularly true of urban areas, where there is a lack of open space. Obviously the safety of children is of prime importance and contractors will ensure that best practice is strictly adhered to.

From another perspective, it will be particularly good for students to see construction going on, to be able to work with architects and influence designs as the building progresses. This will be facilitated through the engagement of students from John Bunyan, the feeder schools and other groups coordinated by representatives of the Sorrell Foundation as part of their 'Joinedupdesign for Academies' programme. We are delighted that Bedford Academy has been asked to participate in this scheme.

Further details of the programme are available at <http://www.thesorrellfoundation.com/bsf.html>

Should the Academy look at a different location to establish itself to better encompass the wider communities of Bedford ?

The current assumption is that the Academy will be developed on the current John Bunyan Upper School site. During the feasibility stage of the project we will assess the viability of the site with the local authority and will look at other options if appropriate. However, our principle is that it will be one school on one site.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

What is the vision for the new school?

The overall aim of the sponsors and partners is the creation of a vibrant, successful Academy with a strong identity which will develop aspirations and raise the standards of achievement in academic and vocational studies for the students and the local community.

Who will be the Principal?

The Sponsors have appointed Claire Smith to be the Academy's first Principal. Claire Smith will take up post in January 2010, having been involved in transforming her two previous schools, which were in "special measures". Claire has a clear understanding of what makes a successful school, with personalised learning and high expectations key to raising standards. She was part of the team that led Hartshill School to an improving three year trend with their best ever GCSE results in all measures in 2008.

Will the Academy address students' vocational needs as well as academic needs?

The timetable would be structured to enable students to study vocational subjects properly and enable students to undertake some opportunities for study at other schools or at the college as necessary. The curriculum would be widened more fully to embrace vocational subjects linked broadly to skills needs within the region. It will also be widened to establish a broader range of academic subjects pre and post-16. Using the sponsors' strengths in academic provision (the four schools of the Bedford Charity) and in vocational and occupational learning (the College and the University), vocational resources would be used to enable students to demonstrate the application of academic skills.

Why specialise in Science and Technology? What if my child is not interested in Science and Technology - how will his/her needs be met?

The Academy will aim to meet the full range curriculum and extra-curricular needs of all students. The Academy will specialise in Science and Technology in its widest sense. This embraces subjects as varied as pure Science, Arts (through the study of music/design technology or technical theatre), Engineering (including Aerospace), Construction, Food Technology and Computing. The Academy would use its specialist status to create a stimulating, up-to-date, exciting and challenging environment which raises standards of achievement and the quality of teaching and learning for all students, leading to whole school improvement in performance.

How will you create a disciplined environment?

Students at the new Academy have the right to a good learning environment so that they can learn effectively, achieve what they are capable of and genuinely learn to love learning. We have no qualms in underlining our belief that firm but fair discipline is essential so that pupils can achieve their potential.

As students get older, most achieve a high level of self-discipline, but if this were not to happen, a student would not be allowed to disrupt the work of others. As part of our behaviour policy, a series of sanctions will be available for staff, alongside help and incentives for the student. We will be recruiting experienced teachers with proven records in achieving standards in discipline.

The Academy will not accept behaviour that causes anxiety and fear to any of its staff or students and we will work closely with local and external partners to support the Academy and in making it a safe and happy place to work and learn.

How will you provide a safe environment?

We are aware that parents are rightly concerned about their child's safety at school. At the start and end of each school day, staff will be on duty at the school gates to ensure good behaviour and a sense of security for students. Inside the Academy itself, we will ensure proper supervision of students and also ensure that intruders cannot access students or staff.

The design process of the new buildings will ensure causes of inappropriate behaviour are addressed, e.g. no hidden corners are built in and circulation areas are wide enough.

What processes will be in place for ensuring high standards of teaching?

High standards are essential to the success of the Academy. We intend to expect of teachers the highest standards of teaching which will encourage in students a love of learning. We will ensure this happens by ensuring that performance management is rigorous and regular with appropriate lesson observation and staff training, coaching and mentoring..

How will I be told how my child is getting on?

Students do better in school where there are strong links between the school and parents or carers. At Bedford Academy, from the first weeks your child attends the Academy, we will establish a close dialogue between parents and school staff. We will aim to develop close relationships with you, enable you to ask questions, comment and raise concerns as well as sending you regular reports during the course of the academic year, outlining the standard your child is currently working at, the standard we think they should currently be at, the standard they should achieve by the end of each year, what they need to do to achieve it and how you will be able to help them..

There will also be opportunities for consultation at the school, when you will be invited to meet specialist subject staff and the dedicated staff member with responsibility for monitoring your son or daughter's progress through the school. You will have a named member of staff as your point of contact so that if you or we have any concerns, this staff member will invite you to the school to chat them through and decide a way ahead.

We will report on not only the students' academic progress but on the whole range of activities students are involved in and achieving at the Academy, such as the enrichment activities.

Will there be a uniform?

Yes! Children who take a pride in their appearance are also likely to take a pride in their achievements and conduct. And we will also expect staff to dress smartly, illustrating that while we aim for the Academy to be a friendly community, it will also be a serious learning place where high standards are the norm.

The uniform will be smart, simple and easily available in order to keep down cost. We will expect the support of parents in ensuring that each child is properly dressed and equipped for school.

The specification of the uniform has been designed in consultation with student, parent and community groups.



Will the new uniform be provided for new Year 9 students?

As part of the transformation of John Bunyan Upper School to the Bedford Academy, no parent whose child is currently in the school and transfers to the Academy September 2010 would be expected to pay for the new uniform themselves. However, as with entry into any new school, parents of Year 9 students will be expected to pay for the uniform.

TIMINGS / NEXT STEPS

What has happened to date?

The Sponsors submitted an 'Expression of Interest and Proposal to Develop an Academy' in June 2008 to the DCSF Academies Group. The Secretary of State for Education and Skills approved full feasibility funding in November 2008.

This feasibility phase is ongoing. It will culminate in the submission of a Funding Agreement report to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in December 2009.

When will you make a final decision about the school progressing?

As stated above, the feasibility study phase is currently being completed. A report will be compiled which will include detailed scheme designs. Subject to the designs being approved by the Council's planning department, and the DCSF's approval, this report will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in December 2009. Subject to the Minister's approval, a funding agreement is signed which is a binding contract committing all involved to establishing the Academy. This agreement specifies an opening date for the Academy.

For more information on the project and how you can make your views known please contact Mousumi Saikia at Tribal Group by telephoning 020 7323 7110 or e-mailing info@bedfordacademy.co.uk