

## RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER OR OFFICER

This form can be used for any decision but **MUST** be used to record:

- any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Councillor
- a key decision taken by a Council Officer

In these circumstances the form must be completed and passed to the Head of Members' Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Head of Members' Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

**1. Description of decision**

- (a) To note the responses received to the consultation
- (b) To approve the publication of statutory notices proposing:
- the closure of Woodside Middle School on 31 August 2011
  - the expansion of Putnoe Lower School to become a three form entry 4-11 primary school from 1 September 2011 and its relocation to the Woodside site, and
  - the enlargement and extension of the age range of Mark Rutherford Upper School from 1 September 2011 to accommodate in Years 7 and 8 those pupils currently in Years 6 and 7 at Woodside Middle School and from September 2012 to enable the school to admit an intake of 60 pupils into Year 7 and a further 230 pupils into Year 9
- (c) To agree that, should the closure of Woodside Middle School be confirmed following the publication of statutory notices:
- Bury Walk, Church Lane (even numbers 2-60), The Copse, Goldington Green, Sheeplands, The Spinney and Tumpike Way be included within the Goldington Middle School catchment area from September 2011
  - Bewcastle Close, Calshot Walk, Colchester Way, Devises Avenue, Dover Crescent, Exeter Walk, Farnham Way, Helmsley Avenue, Lewes Gardens, Mitford Close, Newark Avenue, Taunton Close and Wentworth Drive (odd numbers, 71 -107 and even numbers 78 and above) be included within the Newnham Middle School catchment area from September 2011.

**2. Date of decision**

29<sup>th</sup> October 2010

**3. Reasons for decision**

Woodside Middle School has been identified by Ofsted as requiring special measures. Although interim arrangements have been put in place to improve the quality of educational provision for the pupils of the school, it is necessary to determine the long term arrangements for the school

**4. Alternatives considered and rejected**

Retaining the current interim arrangements  
 Reverting to an arrangement of separate lower, middle and upper schools  
 Closing Woodside Middle School and sending the pupils to other middle schools

**5. How decision is to be funded**

£2.5 million has been identified within the capital programme for 2010/12 for the adaptation of the Woodside Middle School buildings to accommodate a 4-11 primary school

**6. Conflicts of interest**

		Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (if yes give details and date of dispensation)

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

N/A

Signed Dave Hodgson Date 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010

Name of Decision Taker MAYOR DAVE HODGSON

**This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Head of Members' Services as soon as it is completed.**

Date decision published: 1.11.10

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: 10.11.10

# Agenda Item \*

For publication

Bedford Borough Council – MAYOR

October 2010

## Report by the Executive Director for Children's Services, Schools and Families

### Proposals arising as a result of consultation on the future of Woodside Middle School

#### 1. Introduction

As the result of Woodside Middle School having been identified by Ofsted as requiring special measures, consultation has been undertaken with parents, staff, governors, pupils, neighbouring schools and other interested parties on future plans for the school and its pupils. The consultation period ended on 15 October. Responses to the consultation were received from 45 individuals or groups following the distribution of over 1700 consultation documents. These responses have been analysed, together with comments from pupils. This report contains this analysis, together with further detail on the issues raised during the consultation.

#### 2. Recommendation

That the Mayor considers the report and if satisfied:

- (a) notes the responses received to the consultation
- (b) approves the publication of statutory notices proposing:
  - the closure of Woodside Middle School on 31 August 2011
  - the expansion of Putnoe Lower School to become a three form entry 4-11 primary school from 1 September 2011 and its relocation to the Woodside site, and
  - the enlargement and extension of the age range of Mark Rutherford Upper School from 1 September 2011 to accommodate in Years 7 and 8 those pupils currently in Years 6 and 7 at Woodside Middle School and from September 2012 to enable the school to admit an intake of 60 pupils into Year 7 and a further 230 pupils into Year 9
- (c) agrees that, should the closure of Woodside Middle School be confirmed following the publication of statutory notices:
  - Bury Walk, Church Lane (even numbers 2-60), The Copse, Goldington Green, Sheeplands, The Spinney and Turnpike Way be included within the Goldington Middle School catchment area from September 2011
  - Bewcastle Close, Calshot Walk, Colchester Way, Devises Avenue, Dover Crescent, Exeter Walk, Farnham Way, Helmsley Avenue, Lewes Gardens, Mitford Close, Newark Avenue, Taunton Close and Wentworth Drive (odd numbers, 71 -107 and even numbers 78 and

above) be included within the Newnham Middle School catchment area from September 2011.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

Woodside Middle School has been identified by Ofsted as requiring special measures. Although interim arrangements have been put in place to improve the quality of educational provision for the pupils of the school, it is necessary to determine the long term arrangements for the school.

Consultation with parents, staff, governors, pupils, neighbouring schools and other stakeholders has indicated that there is general support for the closure of the school, with pupils from Years 7 and 8 moving to the roll of Mark Rutherford Upper School and for Putnoe Lower School to move to the Woodside site to join pupils from Years 5 and 6, thereby creating a primary school covering the 4-11 age group. It is felt that this is the best way to ensure long-lasting improvement in the quality of provision made for pupils from the area, whilst delivering local primary provision to the families living in the area around the Woodside site.

### **4. Key Implications**

#### **(a) Legal Issues**

The consultation which has been undertaken represents the first stage of the process which must be followed in the consideration of proposals to make statutory changes to schools, in this case altering the age ranges of Putnoe Lower School and Mark Rutherford Upper School and closing Woodside Middle School. If the Mayor agrees the recommendation, statutory notices would be published for the proposed changes to Putnoe Lower School and Mark Rutherford Upper School and the closure of Woodside Middle School. The notices in respect of Putnoe Lower School and Mark Rutherford Upper School would need to be published in the names of the Governing Bodies of those schools as they are trust schools. No final decisions can be considered about the future of the schools until after the expiry of the statutory notice period and full consideration has been given to any comments or objections received.

The Putnoe Lower School site would become surplus to requirements with the implementation of these proposals. Should the decision be taken to dispose of the site, it is expected that a first call on any capital receipts from its sale would be the funding for necessary improvements or extensions to accommodation on the Woodside or Mark Rutherford sites.

#### **(b) Policy Issues**

The proposal is in line with the Council's objective of raising standards of performance within the schools in the Borough.

**(c) Resource Implications**

Under the interim arrangements, sufficient temporary accommodation has been provided on the Mark Rutherford site for Years 7 and 8 from Woodside Middle School. There is no immediate need, therefore, for any further capital investment on this site although, as indicated above, should there be a capital receipt from the sale of the Putnoe Lower School site it is proposed that this could contribute to meeting the cost of redevelopment on the Woodside or Mark Rutherford sites.

£2.5 million has been identified within the capital programme for 2010/12 for the adaptation of the Woodside Middle School buildings to accommodate a 4-11 primary school. Plans have been produced for the delivery of the necessary adaptations within this budget if the proposals are agreed.

The additional revenue funding required by Putnoe Primary School and Mark Rutherford Secondary School would come from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This would not put an additional burden on the DSG as it would no longer be required to fund Woodside Middle School.

**(d) Risk Implications**

The main risks associated with this project are:

- the cost of building project exceeding budget provision, including the risks associated with not effectively managing expectations
- delays in the delivery of the accommodation for Putnoe Primary School
- that standards of achievement will not be raised as a result of the proposed changes
- reputational damage to the Council.

The risks over the building project will be addressed through rigorous project management to keep the project to programme and on budget. It is recognised that a robust approach will be required in order to manage expectations. The strong leadership of the Head teachers and Governing Bodies of the two schools, with support from the Local Authority, should ensure that standards of achievement should not just be raised but raised quite significantly.

**(e) Environmental Implications**

The improvements to the Woodside buildings and the relocation to these buildings of the pupils from Putnoe Lower School would be likely to result in reduced energy and water costs per capita. In addition, the move to the Woodside site would reduce the distances travelled to school by the majority of children currently attending Putnoe Lower School.

**(f) Equality Impact**

The equality impact of the proposals would be neutral at worst but is likely to be positive in respect of the benefits for pupils living in the Woodside catchment area, a number of whom experience socio-economic disadvantage.

**5. Detail**

**Background**

- 5.1. Woodside Middle School was inspected by Ofsted in November 2009. This identified that the school was providing pupils with an unacceptable quality of education and was in need of special measures. A further visit by HMI in June 2010 found inadequate progress in terms of the issues identified for improvement.
- 5.2. As a result of the inspection, the Governing Body of Woodside and the Authority have worked with the Governing Bodies of Putnoe Lower School and Mark Rutherford Upper School to put in place interim federated arrangements so that the Head teacher of Putnoe Lower School has taken responsibility for Years 5 and 6 and Years 7 and 8 have moved to the Mark Rutherford Upper School site. These arrangements were endorsed by HMI when they undertook their monitoring visit to the school in June 2010 and were implemented this September.
- 5.3. Whilst the existing arrangements provide a very good interim solution and are already ensuring a higher quality of provision for the students, it is important to consider the longer term and what arrangements are necessary in order to continue and to consolidate this improvement. For this reason, consultation documents were sent out at the beginning of September proposing a permanent arrangement. A copy of the consultation document is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 5.4. Although they are split between the Woodside and the Mark Rutherford sites, Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 are still officially on the roll of Woodside Middle School and the responsibility of the Woodside Governing Body. The proposal within the consultation document was for Years 7 and 8 to transfer officially to the roll of Mark Rutherford and for Years 5 and 6 to transfer to the roll of Putnoe Lower School with effect from September 2011, with Woodside Middle School closing from that date. At the same time, it was proposed that the existing Putnoe Lower School pupils join Years 5 and 6 on the Woodside site to form a primary school for pupils aged 4-11. This would bring Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils together on the same site, whilst at the same time bringing the school closer to the homes of the majority of pupils.
- 5.5. Consultation documents were sent to parents, staff, governors and pupils of the schools concerned as well as neighbouring schools and

other interested parties. A public meeting was also arranged for parents and other interested parties and a surgery was held at Woodside Middle School for parents who wanted an individual discussion. In addition to the proforma included within the consultation document, there were facilities to respond on line.

- 5.6. Since two parts of the Woodside Middle School catchment area would not be included in that of Putnoe Primary School the consultation document also sought views on transferring these areas to Goldington and Newnham Middle Schools.

### **Responses to the Consultation**

- 5.7. The consultation process came to an end on 15 October 2010. Responses were received from 45 individuals or groups, the majority from parents of children at one or more of Putnoe Lower, Woodside Middle or Mark Rutherford Upper Schools. All the responses have now been analysed.
- 5.8. A full report on the analysis of the consultation responses is provided in Appendix 2.
- 5.9. It will be noted that overall:
- 64% of the respondents supported the proposed option of closing Woodside Middle School and extending the age ranges of Putnoe Lower School and Mark Rutherford Upper School
  - 11% favoured maintaining the current interim arrangements
  - 16% favoured alternative options, namely:
    - returning to separate lower, middle and upper schools
    - pupils remaining at Putnoe until the end of Year 8.
  - 69% of parents of children at Woodside Middle School who responded supported the proposed change, with 15% preferring to maintain the current interim arrangements and 15% suggesting alternative arrangements
  - 60% of parents of children at Putnoe Lower School supported the proposed change, with none preferring to maintain the current interim arrangements and 27% suggesting alternative arrangements
  - 56% of parents of children at Mark Rutherford Upper School supported the proposed change, with 28% preferring to maintain the current interim arrangements and 17% suggesting alternative arrangements
  - feedback from the Year 5 and 6 students at Woodside was very positive about the changes that had already taken place and about the preferred option for moving forward
  - responses from students at Mark Rutherford expressed a range of views, although the majority supported the continued

presence on the site of Years 7 and 8 either under the current arrangements or under the preferred option

- at its meeting on 6 September 2010, the Children's Services Policy Review and Development Committee considered the consultation document and agreed to support the proposed closure of Woodside and the extension of the age ranges of Putnoe and Mark Rutherford.

The percentages above are based on the total number of responses including those not expressing a view, which is why some figures do not add up to 100%.

5.10. The main reasons given for supporting the proposed closure of Woodside Middle School and the extension of the age ranges of Putnoe Lower School and Mark Rutherford Upper School were:

- a preference for a two tier system of primary and secondary schooling
- this would enable children to stay longer at Putnoe
- it was the only viable option to provide pupils at Woodside with the education they deserve
- if Putnoe moves to Woodside it will be closer to where pupils live.

5.11. The main reasons given for maintaining the current interim arrangements were:

- Mark Rutherford is too small for the additional pupils
- the temporary buildings will not be replaced by permanent buildings
- otherwise the schools would be out of line with other 3 tier schools.

5.12. The main reasons given in support of alternative arrangements were:

- lower, middle and upper schools should be kept separate
- Mark Rutherford is overcrowded and is having to stagger lunchtimes
- Mark Rutherford already has a staff shortage
- the issue of standards and performance at Woodside should be addressed at Woodside as a middle school not through structural change
- that the Council may have selected the preferred option as it provided a capital receipt from the Putnoe site
- that the preferred option would cause disruption and upheaval for the pupils involved, including those on the autistic spectrum
- the change could impact negatively on standards at Putnoe and Mark Rutherford

- that the interim arrangements are putting pressure on management and resources
  - that the preferred option would result in a mixed economy of both two and three tier school structures.
- 5.13. The proposed transfer of part of the Woodside catchment area to Goldington Middle School was supported by 81% of the responses which commented on the proposal, with 19% opposing the change. Those opposing the change did not generally suggest an alternative, other than to retain the current schooling arrangements, although one suggested that all areas should have a catchment middle school, with the proposed Putnoe Primary School not having a catchment.
- 5.14. The proposed transfer of part of the Woodside catchment area to Newnham Middle School was supported by 77% of the responses which commented on the proposal, with 23% opposing the change. Generally those opposing the change did not suggest an alternative, but those that wanted to retain the current schooling arrangements commented that Goldington and Newnham were too far away or suggested that all areas should have a catchment middle school, with the proposed Putnoe Primary School not having a catchment.
- 5.15. A question was raised in one response about the need for the increase in Putnoe's admission number. Concerns were also expressed over the possible impact of the move on the children at Putnoe and their school work.
- 5.16. These issues are addressed in the report under the following headings:
- School structures
  - Standards
  - Location and site issues
  - Catchment issues
  - Consultation

### **School Structures**

- 5.17. It will be noted that some responses, both in support of and against the preferred option, have referred to school structures. Some in support of the preferred option have welcomed the proposed primary / secondary structure. Some which have opposed it have advocated a return to having separate lower, middle and upper schools in the area. It is worth noting, however, that the rationale behind the proposals has not been to achieve a specific structure, merely to provide the best possible solution locally for the pupils currently attending Woodside Middle School and their successors.
- 5.18. Concerns about having a mixture of two and three tier arrangements within the Borough are understandable. However, this is likely to happen in any case, whatever the decision taken over the future of Woodside. Many local authority areas include more than one form of school organisation – decisions having been taken on what is most

appropriate for each area. That is the proposed approach for Woodside and its students.

- 5.19. A move to the preferred option for Woodside should not prove disruptive for its pupils as the interim arrangements have already moved the school in a similar direction. Indeed, it could be argued that the implementation of this option would help to resolve what uncertainties there are perceived to be currently over lines of responsibility. The main change would be the move of Putnoe Lower School to the Woodside site, which would bring the school closer to many of its pupils' homes. The move would need to be very carefully managed in order to address concerns over the possible impact on existing pupils. The plans for pupils on the autistic spectrum have also sought to avoid disruption. Those pupils who were in the provision at Woodside Middle School have transferred to the provision at Mark Rutherford as they would eventually have done in any case. Those who would have entered the provision at Woodside this September have joined the provision at Lincroft Middle School instead and can remain there for seven years, giving them the continuity they need.

### **Standards**

- 5.20. As shown on page 3 of the consultation document, the performance of pupils at Woodside Middle School at Key Stage 2 has consistently been below both Borough and national averages in English and mathematics. Furthermore the contextual value added results have repeatedly put the school in the bottom quartile. When all subjects were taken into consideration, 85% of schools in the country had better contextual value added results than Woodside in 2009.
- 5.21. The view was taken by both the Governing Body of the school and the Local Authority that the school did not have the capacity to make the necessary improvements without help from outside. This was why it was agreed to federate with Putnoe Lower School and Mark Rutherford Upper School, which have been judged by Ofsted to be outstanding and good respectively. This arrangement is working well. However, it is felt that in order to achieve the greatest improvement in pupil performance it is necessary to embed the arrangements by formally transferring the children in Years 5 and 6 to the Putnoe roll and those in Years 7 and 8 to the Mark Rutherford roll. There would then be total clarity of responsibility for each key stage. Far from impacting negatively on standards at the two schools, it is expected that these would benefit from children being able to remain at Putnoe for all of Key Stage 2 and having a full five years at Mark Rutherford before sitting their GCSEs. Mark Rutherford had a full staffing complement in September 2010 including additional staff who had been appointed to support Years 7 and 8. There has been no adverse impact on staffing elsewhere within the school.
- 5.22. The proposed change would address concerns of parents which were raised in the public meeting about the lack of clarity over whether Woodside continues to exist, which school children attend and transfer arrangements. It would also reduce additional pressures on

management and resources which have arisen as the result of implementing the interim arrangements.

- 5.23. Careful consideration was given to the alternative of putting in additional support to Woodside as a separate middle school in order to bring standards up to the necessary level. This would certainly have been the preferred option if it had been considered viable. However, this was not believed to provide a long-term robust solution and would have been unlikely to gain the support of Ofsted. This position has not changed.

#### **Location and site issues**

- 5.24. Concerns were raised during the consultation about the number of children now located on the Mark Rutherford site and the impact this was having on the Mark Rutherford students. It is recognised that this is a concern of students and parents. However, it is not solely linked to the arrival of Years 7 and 8 from Woodside. The intake in Year 9 to Mark Rutherford has increased in recent years as has sixth form size. It is likely, therefore, that the staggered lunchtimes over which some parents expressed unhappiness would have needed to be introduced in any case even without the Woodside children being on site. It is also worth noting that sufficient additional accommodation, as well as external play area, has been put on the Mark Rutherford site as part of the interim arrangements to meet the needs of the additional pupils from Woodside.
- 5.25. As far as the proposed transfer of Putnoe Lower School pupils to Woodside is concerned, some parents have noted that the Woodside site is larger and may offer more possibilities as a site for a 4-11 primary school. It is also closer to the homes of many of its pupils. Equally not all responses supported the relocation of Putnoe and some parents will find that the journey to school will be longer. However, the Woodside site is far more central to the Putnoe catchment area than the school's existing site and the relocation should benefit the majority of families with children at the school.
- 5.26. One respondent was concerned that the proposal was driven by a desire for a capital receipt from the Putnoe Lower School site. This has not been a consideration. The prime consideration has always been to find the solution which would have the most positive impact on standards of achievement. However, if the preferred option is agreed, it is possible that plans would be drawn up for the disposal of the site and that any capital receipt could be used to contribute to the costs of implementation, as indicated in paragraph 4 (c) above.

#### **Catchment issues**

- 5.27. The proposals for transferring parts of the existing Woodside catchment area to Goldington or Newnham Middle Schools if the preferred option is implemented were generally supported. There were some concerns about the distance to Goldington or Newnham for some pupils, but many children from these areas are already attending non-catchment middle schools rather than Woodside by choice. Although it

was suggested that all parts of the Woodside catchment be reallocated to a middle school, this is not felt to be necessary or beneficial. Indeed the views expressed at the public meeting tended to suggest that Putnoe would be a more popular catchment school as a 4-11 primary school feeding direct into Mark Rutherford than it is currently as a lower school.

- 5.28. More concerns have arisen during the consultation over other catchment and admission issues. Some parents of children currently attending Putnoe Lower School have enquired whether they would still be able to apply for a place at a middle school for their children in Year 5, even if their children could continue at Putnoe until the end of Year 6. They have been reassured that they could do so, although it is not clear whether many would wish to.
- 5.29. Greater concerns, however, have been raised by the parents of children who live in the Putnoe catchment area, but who currently attend other lower schools. Some may wish their children to transfer to Putnoe Primary School at Year 5 and then to Mark Rutherford Secondary School at Year 7. Others may wish to transfer to a non-catchment middle school in Year 5.
- 5.30. It is recognised that there is a great deal of competition for places at other middle schools in the area and therefore no guarantees can be given over the availability of places. However, with Putnoe providing 60 places a year initially, which is in line with current uptake at Woodside in Year 5, there should be no change to the availability of places in Year 5 at local middle schools, making it no more difficult for parents to access a place of their preference for their child. The increase in intake at Putnoe to 90 places a year should in time ease pressure elsewhere. Nonetheless this situation will need to be kept under review to ensure that no parents or children are unnecessarily disadvantaged.
- 5.31. A particular watch will need to be kept on the position of children from the joint Putnoe / Renhold catchment area to the north and east of Norse Road. Many of these children attend Renhold as their catchment school. Although most of these children in the past have then transferred to other middle schools and relatively few to Woodside, it is important to keep the situation under review.
- 5.32. The increase in the admission number for Putnoe Lower School from 60 to 90 had previously been consulted upon as part of wider reorganisation issues without any concerns being raised. This increase is in fact much needed to help meet the demand for lower school places in the town of Bedford.

### **Consultation**

- 5.33. One response to the consultation raised concerns that the consultation was flawed because the consultation document was not balanced, it did not include costings or alternative options, did not deal with issues of middle school staff morale, why performance had gone down or the role of the governors in what had happened.

- 5.34. It is, however, not unusual and moreover perfectly valid for the consultation document to contain a preferred option provided it is part of a formative process and all responses received are properly considered. This does not invalidate the consultation as it is quite possible for a different route to be adopted following consultation if this is warranted as a result of a response received. The document did not deal with the cost of change as it focused on the principle of how to provide the best possible education for the children currently attending Woodside Middle School and for their successors. The financial implications of the proposal have, however, been included in this report.
- 5.35. The proposals in the consultation document form a local response to a specific local issue. There are no wider implications for middle school staff in the Borough. The proposals were also intended to deal with the current situation, not provide an analysis of past difficulties or actions, whether by the Governing Body or the Local Authority. Interim action has been taken to start addressing the issues at the school and the proposals in the consultation document represent the steps felt necessary now to consolidate and embed the improvements which are already taking place.

### **Conclusions**

- 5.36. In the light of the support demonstrated in responses to the consultation for the preferred option, it is proposed that this option be adopted. Statutory notices would need to be published indicating the intention to close Woodside Middle School on 31 August 2011, for Putnoe Lower School to become a primary school covering the 4-11 age group in September 2011 and to move to the Woodside site and for Mark Rutherford to become an 11-18 secondary school in September 2011 with an intake in subsequent years of 60 in Year 7 and an intake of 230 in Year 9. It is also recommended that the changes to catchment area proposed in paragraphs 18 and 19 of the consultation document be implemented from 1 September 2011.
- 5.37. No other changes in catchment area are proposed at this time, but it will be important to monitor the impact of the changes on the availability of local middle school places for those children whose parents want them to attend a middle school at Year 5, particularly in respect of the children from the joint Putnoe / Renhold catchment area to the north and east of Norse Road.

## **6. Summary of Consultations and Outcome**

As indicated in the report above, a full consultation has been undertaken on the proposals for the future of Woodside Middle School. The results of that consultation are summarised in Appendix 2. The following Council Members, Departments or Officers have also been consulted in preparing this report:

Director of Finance and Corporate Services  
Assistant Chief Executive (Governance)

## 7. Ward Councillor Views

Feedback received from Local Councillors has been supportive of the preferred option.

*Report Contact Officer:*

*John Goldsmith*

*File Reference:*

\*

*Previous Relevant Minutes:*

\*

*Background Papers:*

*Consultation responses.*

*Appendices:*

1. *Consultation on the future of Woodside Middle School*
2. *Analysis of responses to the consultation*



**BEDFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# **Consultation on the future of Woodside Middle School**

September 2010

## **CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

This document is also available on line at [www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk)

Consultation closes on 15 October 2010

## **Introduction**

Woodside Middle School is a three form entry middle school for pupils aged 9 to 13 years and is located in Church Lane, Bedford MK41 0DH.

In November 2009 Woodside Middle School was inspected by Ofsted, and as a result of this inspection the school was identified as needing special measures. Under the Ofsted inspection criteria, if a school is judged as inadequate and in need of special measures this means the school is failing to provide its pupils with an acceptable standard of education, and is not showing the capacity to make the improvements needed.

As a result of the Inspection the Local Authority has been working with the Governing Bodies of Woodside and other local schools to consider how to ensure that local children receive a high standard of education. This consultation document gives further information on standards, sets out options for the future and explains how you can find out more. As part of this consultation Bedford Borough Council welcomes your views on the proposals and invites any alternative proposals.

**Please note that all responses should reach us by 15 October 2010.**

## **Background**

1. Woodside Middle School was identified as needing special measures when inspected by Ofsted in November 2009.
2. Ofsted identified the following problems in the school.
  - Pupils received ‘an unacceptable quality of education’ and ‘for far too long’ there had ‘not been an adequate focus on raising standards and achievement.’
  - This was ‘particularly evident in English, notably in writing across the school, and in mathematics’.
  - Reading ages were ‘very low in Years 7 and 8’.
  - There were ‘very high levels of persistent absence and poor behaviour leading to inadequate progress in a significant proportion of lessons’.
  - Teachers did ‘not take adequate responsibility for behaviour management’ instead using ‘the easy option of sending pupils to the support centre’.  
(see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) for more details).
3. The monitoring visit from HMI that took place in June 2010 found inadequate progress in terms of the issues identified for improvement.
4. The achievement of pupils at Woodside Middle School has been a matter of concern for some time. The following tables show the performance of the school’s pupils in the Key Stage 2 assessments (taken at the end of Year 6) for English and mathematics over the past five years in comparison to national (all schools) and Bedford Borough averages.

<b>Key Stage 2</b>	<b>Percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above</b>				
<b>ENGLISH</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010*</b>
<b>Woodside</b>	72	67	65	49	57
<b>Bedford Borough</b>	76	76	80	76	77
<b>England average</b>	79	80	81	80	81

<b>Key Stage 2</b>	<b>Percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above</b>				
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010*</b>
<b>Woodside</b>	61	58	69	65	50
<b>Bedford Borough</b>	73	73	76	75	77
<b>England average</b>	76	77	79	79	80

<b>Key Stage 2</b>	<b>Percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above</b>				
<b>BOTH ENGLISH &amp; MATHEMATICS</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010*</b>
<b>Woodside</b>	56	51	55	40	43
<b>Bedford Borough</b>	67	67	71	67	70
<b>England average</b>	70	71	73	72	74

<b>Key Stage 2</b>	<b>Percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above</b>				
<b>SCIENCE</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Woodside</b>	93	91	88	72	Assessment not taken
<b>Bedford Borough</b>	87	85	85	84	
<b>England average</b>	87	88	88	88	

\*2010 results are provisional

5. As the above tables show, the performance of pupils at Woodside Middle School has consistently been below both Borough and national averages in English and mathematics, with performance in English showing a worrying decline in 2009, only partially recovered in 2010, and performance in mathematics dipping in 2010.
6. Another way of examining the progress of the pupils is to look at contextual value added results. These show the progress pupils have made between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, taking account of the nature of the intake. The figures for English put Woodside in the bottom quarter of schools in 2007, 2008 and 2009 and the figures for mathematics put the school in the bottom quarter of schools in 2007 and 2009. In 2009, 85% of schools in the country had better contextual value added results across all subjects than Woodside. The figures are not yet available for 2010.

7. Since the Ofsted inspection, the Governing Body of the school has been working with the Local Authority to make immediate improvements to the provision made for pupils at the school.
8. Having agreed that the school did not have the capacity to make the necessary improvements without help from outside, it was agreed to consult with parents on the federation of Woodside with Putnoe Lower School and Mark Rutherford Upper School so that these two schools could provide Woodside Middle School and its pupils with the necessary additional support.
9. Following consultation with parents the Governing Bodies of the three schools agreed to federate. As a result, Years 7 and 8 from Woodside are now based on the Mark Rutherford site so that they can be supported by the skills and expertise of the staff of Mark Rutherford. Some of the Woodside staff have moved to the Mark Rutherford site under this arrangement.
10. This has left just Years 5 and 6 on the Woodside site. The Head teacher of Putnoe Lower School has responsibility for these pupils as well as the children attending Putnoe Lower School. She and the staff from Putnoe are working with the remaining Woodside Middle School staff to ensure that Years 5 and 6 receive the best education possible in the coming academic year.
11. While this provides a solution for 2010/11, we need to consider the options for next year.

### **Future proposals**

12. The proposed option would be to close Woodside Middle School from September 2011, with Putnoe becoming a 4-11 primary school and Mark Rutherford an 11-18 upper school at that time. It is proposed at the same time to move the Nursery class, Reception, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4 pupils from the current Putnoe site to join Years 5 and 6 on the Woodside site. The advantages of this proposal would be:
  - clearer accountability for pupils in Years 5, 6, 7 and 8
  - a single staffing structure across Key Stage 2 and a single staffing structure across Key Stage 3
  - better continuity between Key Stages
  - more efficient use of resources
  - Putnoe Primary School being located more centrally in its catchment area than Putnoe Lower School is currently
  - a shorter distance for most Putnoe pupils to travel to school.

13. This would mean the closure of Woodside Middle School from September 2011. It would also result in some parents of children at Putnoe Lower School having further to take their children to school. The distance between the Putnoe and Woodside sites is just under a mile. Therefore some parents may need to travel nearly 4 miles a day extra in order to drop their children off at school and pick them up again after school. However, the majority of children attending Putnoe live closer to the Woodside site than to the Putnoe site. For these parents and children, the journey to school will be shorter. This is particularly true for most of the children living in the Putnoe catchment area.
14. An alternative option could be to keep the arrangements planned for September 2010 in place indefinitely. However, this would mean that children at Woodside Middle School would continue to be split between two sites. Keeping only two year groups on the Woodside site would not make best use of that site and would put pressures on both management and resources. The children in Years 5 and 6 would not enjoy the benefits of being on the same site as the children up to Year 4. It is also thought that Woodside could become less attractive to parents thinking about the options for their children in Year 5 because of the unusual arrangement.

### **Admission Arrangements**

15. The Council's Executive agreed in April that the admission number for Putnoe would increase from 60 to 90 when it moved to the Woodside site as a 4-11 primary school.
16. It is proposed that if Woodside Middle School were to close at the end of August 2011, Mark Rutherford would have an admission number of 60 in Year 7, so as to be able to admit the children from Putnoe at age 11, and a further admission number of 230 at Year 9 in order to admit children from the remaining middle schools at age 13. The admission policy for Mark Rutherford would be adjusted to ensure that children from Putnoe School would be given priority on entry to Mark Rutherford at age 11 and would not have to apply again at 13.
17. It is not proposed to change the catchment areas of Putnoe Lower School and Mark Rutherford Upper School. However, there are two parts of the current Woodside catchment area which are not included in the Putnoe Lower School catchment area. If Woodside closes, these children would not have a catchment school from ages 9-13. It is therefore proposed that one part be added to the catchment area of Goldington Middle School and one part be added to the catchment area of Newnham Middle School, as set out below.
18. It is proposed that the following roads are added to the Goldington Middle School catchment area from September 2011:  
Bury Walk, Church Lane (even numbers 2-60), The Copse, Goldington Green, Sheeplands, The Spinney and Turnpike Way.

19. It is proposed that the following roads are added to the Newnham Middle School catchment area from September 2011:  
Bewcastle Close, Calshot Walk, Colchester Way, Devises Avenue, Dover Crescent, Exeter Walk, Farnham Way, Helmsley Avenue, Lewes Gardens, Mitford Close, Newark Avenue, Taunton Close and Wentworth Drive (odd numbers, 71 -107 and even numbers 78 and above).

### **Accommodation**

20. The necessary accommodation for Years 7 and 8 is now in place at Mark Rutherford. No additional accommodation will be needed from September 2011.
21. The buildings at Woodside would be adapted over the coming 12 months so that all the children from Putnoe could be accommodated on the site from September 2011, at which point Putnoe would become a full 4-11 primary school on the Woodside site.

### **Provision for pupils on the Autistic Spectrum**

22. Should Woodside Middle School be closed, Year 5 and 6 pupils on the autistic spectrum needing specialist support would attend the provision at Lincroft Middle School and those in Years 7 and 8 would be accommodated at Mark Rutherford Upper School, both of which already have specialist provision for such pupils.

### **Projected Pupil Numbers**

23. The table below shows the current and projected pupil numbers for Putnoe Lower School, Woodside Middle School and Mark Rutherford Upper School if Woodside Middle School remained open until September 2015. This does not take account of any drop in the intake at Woodside due to uncertainty over future arrangements.

	<b>PUPIL NUMBERS</b>					
	Jan 2010 (actual)	Jan 2011	Jan 2012	Jan 2013	Jan 2014	Jan 2015
Putnoe	255	263	259	246	248	323
Woodside	245	227	220	208	218	165
Mark Rutherford	1124	1162	1180	1200	1200	1186

24. The following table below shows the likely numbers at Putnoe and Mark Rutherford if Woodside Middle School were to close in August 2011.

	<b>PUPIL NUMBERS</b>					
	Jan 2010 (actual)	Jan 2011	Jan 2012	Jan 2013	Jan 2014	Jan 2015
Putnoe	255	263	360	355	359	373
Mark Rutherford	1124	1162	1293	1299	1301	1295

### **The Views of the Governing Bodies**

25. The Governing Bodies of Putnoe Lower School, Woodside Middle School and Mark Rutherford Upper School all support the proposal for Woodside Middle School to close at the end of August 2011 and for the children in Years 5 and 6 and in Years 7 and 8 to transfer to Putnoe and Mark Rutherford respectively.

### **Basis of Consultation**

26. The Council is consulting with parents and carers of the children at Putnoe Lower School, Woodside Middle School and Mark Rutherford Upper School, staff, neighbouring schools and other interested parties on whether:

- Woodside Middle School should close on 31 August 2011
- Putnoe should become a 4-11 primary school from 1 September 2011
- Mark Rutherford should become an 11-18 secondary school from 1 September 2011.

27. In addition, it is consulting on the proposed adjustment to the admission arrangements for Mark Rutherford Secondary School in order to give priority to the admission at age 11 of children who have attended Putnoe Primary School and on the proposed changes to catchment areas set out in paragraphs 18 and 19 above.

### **Consultation Process**

28. A public meeting is planned at **Woodside Middle School at 7 pm on Wednesday 22 September** to which all parents are invited. This will provide an opportunity for parents and others who are interested to meet with representatives of the schools, Councillors and officers of the Council in order to ask questions about the proposals and to express a view. If you plan to attend the meeting, please return the attached slip so that we have an idea of how many people will be coming.

29. There will also be a surgery at Woodside Middle School between 4 pm and 6 pm on Tuesday 28 September for parents to make appointments and meet in private with a Council officer in order to discuss the proposals. These surgeries are by appointment only. If you wish to have an appointment, please telephone Liz Pryor on 01234 228290 to arrange one.

30. It is important that we hear the views of all parents before the Council makes a decision about the future of the school.

**31. Please let us know your views on the proposals, using the attached proforma if you wish, by sending them by Friday 15 October 2010 to John Goldsmith, Assistant Director (School Organisation and Planning), Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AP.**

### **Finding out more**

If you would like further copies or information about this consultation please telephone or write to us at our address below.

This consultation can also be produced, on request, in an alternative current format (e.g. audio tape, Braille or large print). If you require one of these formats please use text phone number: 01234 221827.

Për Informacion

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برای اطلاع

Per Informazione

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Informacja

Za Informacije

তথ্যের জন্য

John Goldsmith  
Bedford Borough Council  
Borough Hall  
Cauldwell Street  
Bedford  
MK42 9AP

01234 228196 [john.goldsmith@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:john.goldsmith@bedford.gov.uk)

**CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF WOODSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**PUBLIC MEETING**

I/We\* hope to attend the meeting to be held at Woodside Middle School at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 22 September

Signed .....

(Please print your name(s) below)

.....

Please return this form to Liz Pryor, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AP by Monday 20 September if you are planning to attend the meeting.



# BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF WOODSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL

### CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

Name .....

(Please use block capitals)

\*Parent / Member of Staff / Other (please specify) .....

If parent, which school(s) do your children attend?

.....

1. I agree with the proposal to close Woodside Middle School with effect from 31 August 2011 and to extend the age ranges of Putnoe Lower School and Mark Rutherford Upper School to 4-11 and 11-18 respectively\*

OR

I believe that the existing arrangements at Putnoe, Woodside and Mark Rutherford should continue\*

OR

I would support the following alternative proposal (please set out briefly below):\*

.....  
.....  
.....

OR

I am undecided about the best option\*

Reasons/ Comments.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

\* Please circle as appropriate  
(please use the other side of the paper or attach additional sheets for further comments)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. I agree with the roads listed in paragraph 18 of the consultation document being included in the Goldington Middle School catchment area from September 2011\*

OR

I do not agree with the roads listed in paragraph 18 of the consultation document being included in the Goldington Middle School catchment area from September 2011\*

OR

I have an alternative proposal for the catchment arrangements for the roads listed in paragraph 18 of the consultation document, which I have set out below:\*

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3. I agree with the roads listed in paragraph 19 of the consultation document being included in the Newnham Middle School catchment area from September 2011\*

OR

I do not agree with the roads listed in paragraph 19 of the consultation document being included in the Newnham Middle School catchment area from September 2011\*

OR

I have an alternative proposal for the catchment arrangements for the roads listed in paragraph 19 of the consultation document, which I have set out below:\*

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

\* Please circle as appropriate

## About You

If you are responding as an individual, the following information will help us when considering your opinions and to make sure that we're getting the views of all members of the community. The answers will not be used to identify any individual.

### Responses from individuals:

Please tell us about yourself and which school you are connected to.

Are you a:	Which school(s) are you connected to?			
	Putnoe Lower School	Woodside Middle School	Mark Rutherford Upper School	Other (please specify)
Pupil?				
Parent / carer?				
School Governor?				
School Staff?				
Other – please specify				

### Gender<sup>#</sup>

Male                  Female                  Transgender                  Prefer not to say

### Age<sup>#</sup>

Under 16 yrs                  16-19 yrs                  20-29 yrs                  30-44 yrs                  45-59 yrs  
60-64 yrs                  65-74 yrs                  75+ yrs

### Disability<sup>#</sup>

The Disability Discrimination Act defines disability as 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term effect on the person's ability to carry out day to day activities'.

### Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995?

Yes                  No

<sup>#</sup> Please circle as appropriate

**Ethnic Group<sup>#</sup>**

WHITE British

WHITE Irish

WHITE Other (Please write in) .....

BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH Caribbean

BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH African

BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH Other (Please write in) .....

MIXED White & Black Caribbean

MIXED White & Black African

MIXED White & Asian

MIXED Other (Please write in) .....

ASIAN Indian

ASIAN Pakistani

ASIAN Bangladeshi

ASIAN Other (please write in) .....

CHINESE

OTHER (Please write in) .....

<sup>#</sup> Please circle as appropriate

**Thank you**

**Data Protection Act 1998**

Please note that your personal details supplied on this form will be held and/or computerised by Bedford Borough Council for the purpose of the consultation. The information collected may be disclosed to officers or members of the Council and its partners involved in this consultation. Summarised information from the forms may be published, but no individual details will be disclosed under these circumstances. Your personal details will be safeguarded and will not be divulged to any other individuals or organisations for any other purpose.

**Please return this form by Friday 15 October to John Goldsmith, Assistant Director (School Organisation and Planning), Borough Hall, Bedford, MK42 9AP**

## **Analysis of responses to the Consultation on the future of Woodside Middle School**

### **1. Consultation Methodology**

The consultation sought views on the future of Woodside Middle School. It ran from 2 September 2009 to 15 October 2010. The consultation document set out a preferred option of moving Putnoe Lower School to the Woodside site as a primary school covering the 4-11 age range, closing Woodside Middle School and establishing an intake to Mark Rutherford Upper School for pupils from Putnoe Primary School at the age of 11. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they supported this option, preferred to retain the current arrangements for Woodside pupils, with Years 5 and 6 on the Woodside site and Years 7 and 8 on the Mark Rutherford site, or preferred to propose another option. The document also sought views on two consequent changes in catchment area which had been proposed to ensure that those living in the current Woodside catchment area but outside the Putnoe Lower School catchment area had a catchment school for Years 5 to 8.

#### 1.1 Circulation of the Consultation Document

1,700 consultation documents were distributed during the consultation period. Copies of the Consultation Document, which is included as Appendix 1, were sent to the Putnoe Lower School, Woodside Middle School and Mark Rutherford Upper School for distribution to parents/ carers, school staff and school governors, as well as consultation with pupils. Consultation documents were also sent to Goldington Green, Hazeldene, St John Rigby and The Hills Lower Schools and to Goldington and Newnham Middle Schools so that staff, parents and governors could be made aware of the consultation, particularly where the proposed catchment area adjustments might impact on them. The document was also sent to pre-schools in the area and to other key stakeholders including Borough Councillors, Dioceses, the local MP, Trade Union and Professional Associations and colleges and was made available in local libraries.

The consultation document was available on the Council's web site, where there was the facility for on line responses and put in the local library.

#### 1.2 Meetings

A public meeting was held at Woodside Middle School on 22 September so that parents, staff and governors could find out more about the proposals and an after school surgery was held on 28 September. The public meeting was chaired by the Chair of Governors of Woodside Middle School. It included short presentations by officers from the Children's Services, Schools and Families directorate and concluded with a period for questions from the audience. The notes of the meeting, which was attended by over 60 people, are attached at Appendix 2a.

One parent took up the opportunity to attend a surgery.

## **2. Level of Response to the consultation**

There were responses to the consultation from 45 individuals or groups, i.e. around 2.6% of the number of consultation documents distributed.

## **3. Responses regarding the options for Future of Woodside Middle School**

### **3.1 Responses from Individuals**

Of the forty four responses from individuals one was from a pupil at Woodside Middle School, thirty seven were from parents or carers of pupils attending Putnoe, Woodside or Mark Rutherford, a few of whom were also staff or governors, one came from a prospective Putnoe parent, three from staff or governors of the three schools who were not also parents or carers, one came from a member of staff of another school and one from someone who did not provide any indication of his background.

Of the responses:

- 29 supported the preferred option, i.e. the closure of Woodside Middle School on 31 August 2011, the relocation of Putnoe Lower School to the Woodside site as a 4-11 primary school and the inclusion of Years 7 and 8 on the roll of Mark Rutherford Upper School
- 5 supported retaining the current arrangements which would keep Woodside Middle School open, with Years 7 and 8 on the Mark Rutherford site and Years 5 and 6 on the Woodside site, overseen by Putnoe Lower School.
- 7 supported an alternative approach. Suggested alternatives were either returning to three separate schools, lower, middle and upper, each operating with all its pupils on its own site, or the retention of children within an enlarged Putnoe school until the end of Year 8.

Of the responses to the proposed changes in catchment area:

- 21 supported the proposed transfer of Bury Walk, Church Lane (even numbers 2-60), The Copse, Goldington Green, Sheeplands, The Spinney and Turnpike Way to the Goldington Middle School catchment area from September 2011 and 5 responses did not support the transfer.
- 20 supported the proposed transfer of Bewcastle Close, Calshot Walk, Colchester Way, Devises Avenue, Dover Crescent, Exeter Walk, Farnham Way, Helmsley Avenue, Lewes Gardens, Mitford Close, Newark Avenue, Taunton Close and Wentworth Drive (odd numbers, 71 -107 and even numbers 78 and above) to the Newnham Middle School catchment area from September 2011 and 6 responses did not support the transfer.

A number of the responses made no comment on the proposals for changes to catchment areas, some indicating that this was because they would not be affected or had no view on the proposals.

The individual responses from the key stakeholder groups, i.e. parents and carers, staff and governors from the three schools are summarised in the following tables.

**Parents and carers of pupils attending the three schools:**

	Move to preferred option	Retain current arrangements	Suggested alternative proposal	Undecided / did not express a view
<b>Putnoe</b>	9		4	4
<b>Woodside</b>	9	2	2	
<b>Mark Rutherford</b>	10	5	3	1
<b>Total*</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>

\* Please note that the totals do not equal the sum of the number of parents / carers from each school as a number of the parents / carers have children at more than one school. The totals only count each parent or carer once. In two cases, where two parents responded on the same form, the responses were counted for each. Some parents / carers also chose more than one option.

**Governors of the three schools:**

	Move to preferred option	Retain current arrangements	Suggested alternative proposal	Did not express a view
<b>Putnoe</b>	1			
<b>Woodside</b>	2			
<b>Mark Rutherford</b>	3	1		
<b>Total*</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>		

\* Please note that the total does not always equal the sum of the number of governors from each school as one respondent is a governor at two schools. The totals only count each governor once.

**Staff of the three schools:**

	Move to preferred option	Retain current arrangements	Suggested alternative proposal	Did not express a view
<b>Putnoe</b>	3			
<b>Woodside</b>				
<b>Mark Rutherford</b>	2			
<b>Total*</b>	<b>5</b>			

In some cases, where staff or governors of the schools are also parents of children at one of the three schools their responses will be shown in more than one of the above tables.

**3.2 Responses from Children and Young People**

The one pupil who responded direct to the consultation by completing a proforma supported the preferred option.

The schools also consulted with pupils. On the Woodside site this was done with Years 5 and 6 through the School Council. They were extremely positive in support of the preferred option, recognising the improvements which have already taken place on the site. Comments made included:

- We now have more play equipment
- More artwork is displayed around the school
- Pupil behaviour has improved
- Fruit pots have been introduced at break time
- The school has a set of Values and a Charter of Rights that are displayed in the classrooms and children follow
- The school has been cleaned up
- They are not using the DT block, Music room and Science Lab any more
- There are less staff but now they show more interest in pupils as they teach them all day
- Maths lessons are a lot better as there are no supply teachers teaching them
- There are less pupils walking around the school when they shouldn't be
- Teachers are stricter.

The pupils made the following comments on the preferred option:

- It is a really good idea, we are sorry not to be part of it as we will have moved to Mark Rutherford by then
- It is a fabulous idea but there need to be plans in place for Year 6 in preparation for joining Mark Rutherford in Year 7
- There was a request for water fountains as they currently do not have access to any.

Responses were received from 37 pupils based at Mark Rutherford including Year 7 and 8 pupils from Woodside and pupils currently on the roll of Mark Rutherford. The largest group (fifteen) supported the preferred option, although this did not constitute an absolute majority. However, twenty-four (65%) either supported the preferred option or retaining the current arrangements, which would in either case result in Years 7 and 8 remaining on the Mark Rutherford site. The only reason given by any of this group for the view expressed was that the arrangement is working well at present, although one respondent did suggest that moving to the preferred option might be unfair on pupils joining the school in Year 9 from other middle schools as the children from Woodside would have built up their confidence.

Ten pupils suggested alternative proposals, either that we should return to having three separate schools, with a new Head teacher at Woodside, or that Years 7 and 8 should go to other schools. Most responses cited the introduction of split lunchtimes and additional numbers on site as the reasons for wanting this. Of the three pupils who were undecided, two also cited split lunches and numbers on site as issues, whilst the third acknowledged that the change seemed to have 'worked OK'.

Of those pupils who commented on the proposed changes in catchment area, 83% supported the proposed additions to the Goldington Middle School catchment area and 81% supported the proposed additions to the Newnham Middle School catchment area.

### 3.3 Responses from Governing Bodies

Goldington Middle School Governing Body expressed concern and disappointment in their response that the consultation had not taken place at an earlier stage when

there was 'the opportunity to support, improve and turn around' Woodside Middle School. They were also concerned that the decision had created a perception of "2-tier by the back door". Under the circumstances they felt that there was no realistic alternative choice at this stage. They supported the proposed changes in catchment area but were disappointed that no explanation had been given for the proposed increase in admission number for Putnoe.

### 3.4 Response from the Children's Services Policy Review and Development Committee

The Children's Services Policy Review and Development Committee considered a report on the consultation at its meeting on 8 September 2010. It resolved that the proposed option to close Woodside Middle School from September 2011, with Putnoe becoming a 4-11 primary school and Mark Rutherford an 11-18 upper school at that time, be supported.

## 4. **Additional Comments Received**

Respondents were invited to make additional comments in response to the consultation, explaining why they preferred a particular option or highlighting issues which they felt relevant to the consultation.

The comments made by respondents who supported the preferred option included:

- a preference for a two tier system of primary and secondary schooling
- that they would be very happy for their children to stay longer at Putnoe as a 4-11 primary school
- that this was the only viable option to provide the pupils at Woodside with the education they deserve
- support for Putnoe to move to the Woodside site as it is closer to home.

One respondent who supported the preferred option nonetheless raised a concern over the possible impact on the Putnoe children and their school work.

The only comments made by a respondent wishing to retain the existing arrangements at the schools were that:

- Mark Rutherford is too small for the additional pupils
- the temporary buildings will not be replaced by permanent buildings
- the schools would be out of line with other 3 tier schools.

Respondents suggesting alternative approaches indicated that:

- lower, middle and upper schools should be kept separate
- Mark Rutherford is overcrowded and is having to stagger lunchtimes
- Mark Rutherford already has a staff shortage
- the issue of standards and performance at Woodside should be addressed through the deployment of appropriate resources at Woodside, not through structural change
- that the Council may have selected the preferred option as it provided a capital receipt from the Putnoe site
- that the preferred option would cause disruption and upheaval for the pupils involved, including those on the autistic spectrum
- the change could impact negatively on standards at Putnoe and Mark Rutherford

- that the interim arrangements are putting pressure on management and resources
- that the preferred option would result in a mixed economy of both two and three tier school structures.

The proposed solutions were either to return to having totally separate lower, middle and upper schools or for pupils to remain within Putnoe until the end of Year 8, to avoid them having to transfer in two years' time after having only joined Woodside Middle School in September. It was also proposed that the existing Governing Body of Woodside Middle School be replaced and that more consideration be given to the children from the Putnoe area. In addition, concerns were expressed over the lack of information made available to parents, particularly when they joined Woodside Middle School.

Few comments were made about the proposed changes to catchment areas. Comments from those opposed to the change included:

- Goldington and Newnham are too far away
- all areas should have a catchment middle school with Putnoe not having a catchment.

One response to the consultation expressed no view about the proposals but argued that the consultation was flawed because the consultation document was not balanced, it did not include costings or alternative options, did not deal with issues of middle school staff morale, why performance had gone down or the role of the governors in what had happened.

## **5. Surgery**

One parent attended the surgery at Woodside Middle School. She supported the preferred option and was strongly in favour of a two tier arrangement of schools. However, she was concerned about whether her children would be able to remain at Putnoe Primary School until the age of 11 if the change were made because they did not live in the Putnoe catchment area. It was possible to reassure her on this point.

## Consultation on the Future of Woodside Middle School

### Notes of the Public Meeting held on 22 September 2010 at 7 pm at Woodside Middle School

The public meeting was attended by over 60 people and was chaired by Lee Robinson, Chair of Woodside Middle School Governing Body.

Lee Robinson welcomed people to the school and clarified that the purpose of the meeting was to explain the proposals, to give people the opportunity of asking questions and to express their views. He hoped that the meeting would also allay any fears or concerns that people had about the proposals. Lee Robinson explained that the proposals outlined in the consultation document had arisen as a result of the OFSTED report and that, in developing the proposals, the Governing Body had worked closely with the Local Authority and with colleagues at Putnoe Lower and Mark Rutherford Upper Schools.

Geoff Bent, Head of School Improvement, Bedford Borough Council, explained that, as a consequence of Woodside being placed in Special Measures, OFSTED was carrying out regular monitoring inspections to check progress. Although OFSTED was happy with the arrangements that had been put in place for September 2010 it also needed to be satisfied that the long term plans would ensure that there was no recurrence of the issues identified.

John Goldsmith, Assistant Director, School Organisation and Planning, outlined the decision making processes and timescales. Parents and other stakeholders were encouraged to respond to the consultation by 15 October 2010. Following this, all consultation responses would be read and analysed. These would form the basis of a report to the Mayor, who would decide whether or not the proposals should proceed to formal statutory notice. If a decision were taken to publish statutory notices these would be published in the local press, and be posted outside the schools, giving people the opportunity to make representations within a 6 week period. It was anticipated that a report would then be prepared for consideration by the Executive in February so that a final decision could be taken before the allocation of places for September 2011. John Goldsmith clarified that parents or carers with children currently in Year 4 were advised to apply for a middle school place for September 2011. If a decision was taken to proceed with the closure of Woodside Middle School then parents would be invited to clarify their preference for a school place for September 2011.

The Chairman then invited questions from parents and other attendees.

*Q. As a parent with a child at Putnoe Lower School I have different concerns, the different groups of parents will have different issues. I find it hard to respond to the consultation because there is limited information about the move of Putnoe Lower to the Woodside site. What are the benefits and the risks and how would the process be managed?*

Lee Robinson – let us know what information you would find useful and we will try to provide this.

*I need information on the implications of this being a two tier system, although the rest of the Borough is still three tier. How will this impact on the children as they go forward?*

Gill Peck, Head teacher Putnoe Lower School – Parental preference will continue to exist whatever school children go to.

Geoff Bent ,– It is true that with the loss of Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding the Authority is no longer able to implement a wholesale change to a two tier system. The Mayor has made it clear that future school organisation will be a matter for localities, based on community

solutions. We do however understand that the Catholic Federation is looking at a two tier arrangement as is Bedford Academy, so it is possible that we may end up with a mixed economy across the Borough.

*Q. My son attends an out of catchment area lower school, but Woodside would be my catchment area middle school. I am concerned about the transfer to middle school. I would not want him to move to Putnoe for two years then transfer again to Mark Rutherford, but am concerned that the closure of Woodside would mean that more parents will chose Goldington or Newnham. I would want him to move to a middle school but may not get a place.*

John Goldsmith - We don't feel that our proposals will have a huge impact on the neighbouring schools. There are a lot of children who live in the Woodside catchment area but who attend schools outside the area.

Looking at the intake for Goldington and Newnham, a lot of pupils come from outside of the catchment area. There will continue to be the option of applying for Goldington, Newnham or Beauchamp Middle Schools and, although parents of children at Putnoe could apply for a middle school place for Year 5, we anticipate that most of the children at Putnoe will prefer to continue there until the end of Year 6. We will also be increasing the places available at Putnoe from 60 to 90 per year. If your child currently attends a lower school we would expect that there will be a middle school place available, although we cannot guarantee a place at any particular middle school.

*Q. You paint a very positive picture of getting a place at a preferred school. This is not the case. I spent most of last year appealing for an upper school place for my daughter because I did not want her to go to Mark Rutherford. I am concerned now about my younger child's transfer from a lower to a middle school.*

John Goldsmith - I accept that we can't always meet parental preference. What I was saying was that we do not believe that these proposals would make the situation more difficult.

*Q. I have one child at Goldington Green Lower, one here in Year 5 and one at Mark Rutherford Upper. Could my younger child come here for two years?*

A. If there are places available, yes.

*Q. My child is here in Year 5, they are being taught to use a pen and I feel it is still like a lower school, although I accept it is early days.*

Gill Peck, Head teacher Putnoe Lower School - Pen license is a middle school culture which instils pride in the children's work. My deputy is a middle school practitioner and I am confident that the curriculum here is second to none. I am happy to talk to parents directly about what we are doing and what is planned for the term.

*Q. My child has been here for 3 weeks and has only had two pieces of homework.*

Gill Peck – again I invite you to come into school and talk to us about this. Children are getting appropriate homework.

Brian Glover, Chief Education Officer - Over the past six months I have spent a lot of time here and at Mark Rutherford. I last visited Woodside Middle School in June and then came last week. The difference was amazing. I came unannounced, went into every classroom, and saw that there was productive work in every class, the behaviour was exemplary and there was a first aid session in the hall. I can't imagine the same last year. The commitment from staff is outstanding and the behaviour significantly improved. Although I accept that there may be teething problems, when I came away I was satisfied that we had done the right thing by the kids.

*Q. My child transferred to Woodside last year from Hazeldene. The school was bad last year but I have seen a difference this year. I want her to go onto to Mark Rutherford, I have no qualms about a two tier system. But I have a younger child who is due to start school in September 2011. If Putnoe becomes a primary school I will want her to come here, if not I would prefer her to go to Hazeldene. But when will we know what is happening?*

John Goldsmith - You will know by November whether the Mayor has decided that statutory notices should be published but, if we go down that route, there would be no final decision until February. In selecting a school for next September parents will need to make a judgement on the information that is available at that time. We have to follow the processes required by the Department for Education, but if you feel that the timescales are tight please say so in your response.

*Q. I am excited about the new school but disappointed that the consultation wasn't offered earlier. If the school has been failing over the past four years what has the Governing Body been doing?*

Lee Robinson – It was rather like trying to put fires out. For some time we have had no Head teacher We needed to get the right Head teacher in post but it was difficult to appoint, particular given the uncertainties over the system. We worked in partnership with the School Improvement Team, but struggled even though we were getting extra support. I had two children go through Woodside. There was a lot that was good about the school and it had many pastoral strengths but it was difficult to solve all the issues.

Geoff Bent – There were indicators of decline but the Governing Body was outstanding in the way it tried to address these. It was difficult to recruit Head teachers to middle schools even before the consultation, this is part of the issue. Outstanding Head teachers drive forward schools

*Q. Was the Head teacher here on the governing body and is there an on going involvement?*

Geoff Bent - Yes he was, all Head Teachers are a member of their schools' governing bodies but there is no continuing involvement.

*Q. I am a parent of a child at Putnoe but have read the Woodside OFSTED report and am concerned about the culture of the school. We are happy with Putnoe, how will this be different?*

Chris Hilliard, Executive Director for Children's Services, Education and Families – I used to be Deputy Head at Mark Rutherford so have worked in this community. Bedford Borough only became a unitary authority in April 2009, and immediately was concerned about Woodside. We worked closely with the governing body and tried to initiate some changes but we were not surprised by the OFSTED report. If we had not put the measures in place for September there was a real risk that OFSTED would have recommended that the Secretary of State close the school from September 2010.

The decisions have not been easy to take but the governing body has accepted the OFSTED judgement and the need to do something radical about it. Putnoe Lower School is Category 1 an outstanding school, with an outstanding Head teacher. Mark Rutherford Upper has been on an ambitious journey, it is Category 2 a good school with outstanding features. Neither school had to do what they have done. The Local Authority talked to these schools and asked what they could do to help.

The culture of a school is very important and the Head teacher is responsible for driving that culture and for setting high expectations for the school. Brian Glover was very impressed with the culture and expectations after his recent visit here. We believe that we made the right decision for the immediate arrangements but the Local Authority does now have to decide whether we continue with the temporary arrangements or what permanent arrangements are made.

*Q. As a parent of a child at Putnoe we are very confident about the leadership of that school, but the Woodside OFSTED report was critical of the culture of the school and that is not exclusively the Head teacher. OFSTED was critical of the quality of teaching. How many inadequate teachers are still here and how many have been moved on?*

Brian Glover - Gill Peck and Steve Peacey interviewed the Woodside Middle staff to decide whether they should continue to be employed, either on this site or at Mark Rutherford. They were clear that they would not take on staff that had no interest or did not have the capability to raise standards. It is clear to me that the staff teaching the former Woodside pupils now here, or in the Mark Rutherford provision, want to do their best.

Gill Peck – I am confident that there are no inadequate teaching staff here now. I would be quite happy if HMI had visited the school during the first week. Targets are in place for the current year, challenging targets, and we know how we are going to achieve them.

*Q. My child is here, and there has been a definite improvement. I would have been disappointed to send my child here previously. I do, however, have a concern that the children will become confused and not know what school they belong to. They are in limbo; for example they are still bringing letters with Woodside Middle on them.*

*Q. I feel I have been conned. That, having sent my child here, despite what I was told they will not now stay here until Year 8.*

Brian Glover - We have had very positive feedback from the pupils who have moved to the Mark Rutherford site. I accept that pupils may feel confused at the moment but they will increasingly feel that they are part of either Putnoe or Mark Rutherford. Unfortunately, there are procedures that we have to follow. The Government sets out the rules for school closure and for other changes to schools, with timescales, and we have to follow these.

*Q. Will you be consulting with the children?*

A. Yes we hope that the pupils will have the opportunity to be involved.

*Q. I am the parent of a child in Year 5. The parents are confused and don't understand how their children will progress as they get older.*

John Goldsmith - Under the proposals children who are currently in Year 5 will stay here until the end of Year 6 and, if the proposals are agreed, by September 2011 they will be pupils of Putnoe Primary School and on the roll of that school. At the end of Year 6 we would expect the pupils to transfer to Mark Rutherford Secondary School, although parents would still have the right to express a preference for other schools.

So, there would be a good option available: Putnoe Primary, which would be 4 to 11, and Mark Rutherford Secondary, which would be 11 to 18. Under the proposals all Putnoe pupils would be on this site and could move to Mark Rutherford at 11.

*Q. Why do you keep referring to Woodside? We have 100% confidence in Mrs Peck but it is confusing to keep talking about Woodside.*

John Goldsmith - We accept that people want clarity, we are hoping to provide this as soon as possible.

*Q. I have a three year old starting school in September. If a decision won't be made until February will the building be ready for September 2011? I don't want her to be disrupted.*

Brian Glover - Yes. We have the budget in place and have started working on the plans so that they can be implemented as soon as a decision is taken. We have put a Project Board in place to manage the project and ensure it is delivered on time.

Chris Hilliard – we also want there to be clarity. If we look back a few years to when Mr Andrews was the Head teacher, Woodside had a good OFSTED inspection, but there have been issues since he left the school. We want to bring clarity to the area but it will take time. In monitoring reports OFSTED will refer to Woodside and will come to inspect the Woodside provision. I am happy to confirm that the capital budget is allocated for this site and that we will carry out the works on this, and the Mark Rutherford, site during the summer holidays. We will invest in the schools for the benefit of the community. Mark Rutherford will continue to have two admission numbers, one for a Year 7 intake and one for a Year 9 intake and this will continue whilst we have two systems, two tier and three tier, running across the Borough.

Parents will have the opportunity to express a preference for a two tier or three tier option.

*Q. How will the disruption to the pupils be managed at Mark Rutherford? There will be Years 7 and 8, then a big intake to Year 9. What has been done at Mark Rutherford to accommodate the Woodside pupils?*

Steve Peacey, Head teacher of Mark Rutherford Upper. 16 and 18 year olds are not that scary. The other pupils have been very supportive of the Years 7 and 8 pupils, after all in the rest of the country 11 year olds are at school with 16 to 18 year olds. The building works were carried out in the summer holidays and the Year 7 and 8 pupils are now in their own accommodation with dedicated play areas for social times. We have trained and employed sixth formers to work with these pupils on organised games and will be making a bid to enhance the play equipment.

I have asked the Year 7 and 8 pupils for their thoughts during the first two weeks of term. 90% were positive, with 1 or 2 saying they found the school to be big.

In terms of teaching staff, only two of the staff are former Woodside staff, the rest are new appointments from elsewhere. This will be my fifth year at Mark Rutherford and this is the strongest teaching team I have had. To get 'good' at OFSTED only 2 years after coming out of special measures is good, but we are looking to move to outstanding. I am confident that OFSTED will like what they see when they inspect Years 7 and 8. The students are happy. We didn't have to do this and have taken on some pupils with quite challenging behaviour and are giving these additional support. Our assessment of pupils' needs come from reports, but also my staff spent some time with the pupils at Woodside during last term to get a clear picture.

*Q. And the impact of a further intake at Year 9?*

Steve Peacey – I can't see this as a problem. As Head teachers we had been planning for a systemic change to a two tier system but now have to work in a different environment. We are working very closely within the Trust and, if the system stays, will need to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Brian Glover – As the youngsters move through the school they will be in option groups with other pupils that have joined from middle schools. There is actually the opportunity for the pupils who have been in the school since 11 to be the leaders.

*Q. I have a daughter here, but am concerned about my younger daughter as we are not in the catchment area.*

A. It may be better if parents discuss their specific concerns about individual children with officers at the end of the meeting.

*Q. When are OFSTED coming back?*

A. Soon, certainly this term. They will be looking to see what progress has been made on the issues they identified. I am confident that they will find good progress, and before long will find that there has been sufficient progress for the school to come out of Special Measures.

*Q. As a parent of a child at Putnoe Lower I am concerned how the change for these pupils will be managed. What are the risks at the younger end?*

Gill Peck – We will make the children confident to deal with the situation, give them the skills to manage change, our ethos supports this. Children are the most important people to me in all of this, I already think of this as one school. So, when the decision is made, we will put plans in place to manage this.

*Q. My child attends a feeder school for Woodside. Can I make an application for her to transfer to Putnoe?*

A. You can make an application at any time, however we can't guarantee a place at Putnoe or any other school. It is subject to the preferred school having places.

*Q. What will happen to the additional support services that serve the school?*

Chris Hilliard - The budget position is not good. The Directorate is looking at potential budget reduction of 16% in centrally held budgets for April 2011. We will have to make difficult decisions about the staff in support services.

*Q. My child progressed well at Putnoe Lower School but, when she transferred to middle school, I applied for a place at Newnham Middle School due to the poor reputation of Woodside. When I found out that Mrs Peck was coming here, I changed my preference. She has been here three weeks and it is brilliant, the homework is brilliant, it is not hard as they are only in Year 5. You have to take into consideration the needs of your own child. I don't have any qualms about children going up to Mark Rutherford at 11.*

*Q. My child is in Year 7 at Mark Rutherford. She has settled in so well. My daughter is thrilled and so am I.*

*Q. What will happen if the proposals do not go ahead?*

John Goldsmith – The Options are set out in the consultation document. We could continue with just Years 5 and 6 here, but as we explain in the document there would be problems with this. Other options may come out of the consultation. We couldn't easily move the Woodside pupils to other middle schools.

Geoff Bent – The long term solutions must also satisfy OFSTED, there are limited options. We are trying to find the best solution for the local community and to avoid the Secretary of State closing the school.

John Goldsmith – We are very fortunate that the local Head teachers are working in partnership with the Governing Body and the Local Authority. We do need people to respond to the consultation saying what they think is the best way forward and give the reasons for their views.

Chris Hilliard – Woodside Middle School needs clarity, and Putnoe and Mark Rutherford need clarity as well. We have been clear about what we think is the best way forward. I have recently spoken to a couple of young people from Mark Rutherford who are members of the Youth Parliament. They were full of praise for the provision at Mark Rutherford and did not identify any concerns. They loved having the younger pupils in the school.

So you may ask how will we know whether we have been successful? We have made unplanned visits and we have been asked whether we believe the children are getting a better deal now than they were a year ago and our answer is yes. But we do need to resolve the uncertainty once and for all.

John Goldsmith – It is important that people respond. Please fill in the pro-forma, adding more sheets if necessary. Say what option you support and why, because qualitative information is as important as the numbers. We will read all the responses and analyse these for a report to the Mayor. In other consultations the Members have read the responses themselves.

Lee Robinson – I hope you found this meeting useful and will respond to the consultation. The Governing Body is still responsible for the school for at least the next year. OFSTED will be looking in great detail to make sure that their concerns have been addressed. This gives me confidence that my children will get the good standard of education they deserve.

Brian Glover – Thank you all for attending the meeting, I hope you have been able to say all you wanted to and found the meeting useful.