

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic 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 Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

That the proposal to adopt the guidance outlined in Appendix A, which states that all developer contributions for education will be secured via section 106 (S106) agreements, be approved.

2. Date of decision

17 April 2025

3. Reasons for decision

- The requirement for authorities to publish a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulation 123 Infrastructure List was abolished in September 2019, therefore, a review is overdue of the means by which education contributions are secured from developers.
- As CIL funds cannot be ringfenced for a particular project, CIL funding secured with the proposed purpose being for education has often had to be reallocated to other, non-education-related projects. This has left necessary education capital works, required to meet the Council's statutory duties, unfunded or reliant on other sources of funding being required.
- Paragraph 5 of the Department for Education guidance document, "Securing developer contributions for education" (2023), states that, "When CIL funding is known to be insufficient or will be allocated to other, non-education infrastructure projects, and development will have a direct impact on education provision, we recommend close working with local planning authorities to agree using Section 106 planning obligations to secure the contributions."
- The guidance in Appendix A sets out the need for additional education places and the reasons why e.g. expansion of the funded childcare entitlements for working parents; the per pupil contribution sum that will be sought at each phase and the methodology behind it; the expected pupil yield for each age group; and the circumstances in which contributions will be sought, plus exclusions to this. The guidance will make it clear to planning colleagues and housing developers what contributions may be sought so as to inform all parties at the earliest possible opportunity.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

- No change; continue to fund education infrastructure through a combination of CIL and S106 contributions. This approach was rejected as the Council have already identified there is insufficient CIL funding to support the education demand as demand on CIL funding is required for other projects within the Local Authority.
- If housing continues to be built without adequate funding to increase education provision, the Council will be at risk of failing in its statutory duties. Consequently, the need could arise to transport children to neighbouring local authority schools. This approach was rejected due to the financial pressures that would be incurred through provision of home-to-school transport and the direct contradiction of Council sustainability targets.

5. How decision is to be funded

- Section 106 Developer Contributions

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

17 April 2025



Signed: 

Date:

17 April 2025

Name of Decision Taker: **Cllr. Andrea Spice**
Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Planning & Prosperity

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published:17April2025.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:30Apr2025.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Planning and Prosperity (inc. Town Centres) decision

Date of Report: April 2025

Report by: Chris Morris, Service Director for Education, SEND and Schools Infrastructure

SUBJECT: BEDFORD BOROUGH GUIDANCE FOR SECURING DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS FOR EDUCATION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Housing development should mitigate its impact on community infrastructure, including schools and other education and childcare facilities. The Department for Education (DfE) expects local authorities to seek developer contributions towards school places that are created to meet the need arising from housing development.
- 1.2 Developer contributions towards school places can be secured via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or via section 106 (S106) agreements, also known as planning obligations. CIL can be used to fund the provision, improvement, replacement, operation, or maintenance of a wide range of infrastructure, including education facilities whereas S106 contributions must fund projects directly related to the development.
- 1.3 Bedford Borough has not had a specific policy for securing developer contributions for education and the current approach to securing developer contributions has not been reviewed for over 5 years.
- 1.4 Changes to legislation, e.g. abolition of the CIL Regulations 123 Infrastructure List, the expansion of the entitlements of parents to funded childcare and the requirement for students to remain in education, training or employment until the age of 18 years old mean that a review of the current position of the Council with respect to funding education places arising due to housing development would be prudent.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Planning and Prosperity (inc. Town Centres) is requested to consider the report and, if satisfied, to approve the proposal to adopt the guidance outlined in Appendix A which states that all developer contributions for education will be secured via section 106 (S106) agreements.**

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 In Bedford there is significant new housing development taking place and planned, offsetting lower birth rates with inward migration as new developments are occupied. This continues the trend of overall population growth, 17.7% observed between the 2011 and 2021 censuses.
- 3.2 This is higher than the overall increase for England (6.6%) and higher than the increase for the East of England (8.3%). Between Census 2011 and Census 2021, there was an increase of 18.6% in children aged under 15 years in Bedford, highlighting a growing need for additional education places.
- 3.3 For statutory school age children, the impact of this can be seen through the school census. Taking the January school census, it can be seen that the total number of school aged children in Bedford Borough has increased by over 4500 in the past 8 years alone.
- 3.4 The requirement for authorities to publish a CIL Regulation 123 Infrastructure List was abolished in September 2019, therefore, a review is overdue of the means by which education contributions are secured from developers.
- 3.5 As CIL funds cannot be ringfenced for a particular project, CIL funding secured with the proposed purpose being for education has often had to be reallocated to other, non-education-related projects. This has left necessary education capital works, required to meet the Council's statutory duties, unfunded or reliant on other sources of funding being required.
- 3.6 Paragraph 5 of the Department for Education guidance document, "Securing developer contributions for education" (2023), states that, "*When CIL funding is known to be insufficient or will be allocated to other, non-education infrastructure projects, and development will have a direct impact on education provision, we recommend close working with local planning authorities to agree using Section 106 planning obligations to secure the contributions.*"

3.7 The guidance in **Appendix A** sets out the need for additional education places and the reasons why e.g. expansion of the funded childcare entitlements for working parents; the per pupil contribution sum that will be sought at each phase and the methodology behind it; the expected pupil yield for each age group; and the circumstances in which contributions will be sought, plus exclusions to this. The guidance will make it clear to planning colleagues and housing developers what contributions may be sought so as to inform all parties at the earliest possible opportunity.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Bedford Borough Council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places for children aged between 4 and 16 years old. It is responsible for all children and young people in the Borough in mainstream education and those who have special educational needs and disabilities. In addition, the childcare sufficiency duty requires local authorities to ensure that there are enough childcare places for parents who want to work or train.

4.2 There are 5 areas within education that must be evaluated when considering whether developer contributions are required:

1. Post-16 (contributions are only requested for sixth forms attached to schools, not for further education providers)
2. Secondary
3. Primary
4. Early years
5. Special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

4.3 Policies 33 and 86S state that development should not place undue pressure on existing infrastructure, including education, and that contributions towards measures to mitigate their impact will be required.

4.4 The historical position is that contributions from developers for primary school places was requested via CIL, whilst funding for secondary school places and home-to-school transport was requested via planning obligations/section 106 (S106) agreements.

4.5 As CIL funds cannot be ringfenced for a particular project, CIL funding secured with the proposed purpose being for education has often had to be reallocated to other, non-education-related projects. This has left necessary education capital works, required to meet the Council's statutory duties, unfunded.

- 4.6 Local authorities are expected to retain a margin of unfilled places to be able to operate their admissions systems effectively. For example, to offer places to children whose families move mid-year and to provide for parental choice. The DfE assumes a minimum 5% surplus capacity in its planning as necessary to support operational flexibility. Currently, in Bedford Borough, there are fewer than 2% surplus places within secondary schools, which makes placing pupils “in-year” challenging in certain areas and year groups.
- 4.7 If pupils are unable to be placed due to their preferred schools having insufficient capacity, they are offered a place at the “next nearest school” with capacity in the relevant year group. If this school exceeds the statutory walking distance for that age group, the Council are responsible for funding home-to-school transport, placing additional pressure on Council budgets.
- 4.8 The DfE’s position on funding additional school places arising as a result of housing development is that the additional places should be funded by the developers.
- 4.9 In the 2024 allocation, the Council received £0 of Basic Need funding from the DfE. One of the reasons cited was that the Council have been very poor at collecting developer contributions, therefore, are viewed as being too reliant on the DfE to fund school places that have been created but have not ensured are funded. The 2025 allocation was also significantly lower than other neighbouring Local Authorities.
- 4.10 The Council appear to now be being financially penalised, exacerbating the already challenging task of ensuring school places for all of the children and young people within Bedford Borough.

5. DETAILS

- 5.1 Bedford Borough is growing due to both new housing and migration into the area, and so a clear plan is required to fund and deliver mainstream education infrastructure to support this growth. The forecasts within the 5-year plan for school places (**Appendix B**) suggest that the total number on roll by the 2029/2030 academic year will be 14,115 secondary age pupils which is an increase of 1,916 secondary age pupils compared to the academic year 2023/24.
- 5.2 Housing development should mitigate its impact on community infrastructure, including schools and other education and childcare facilities. The DfE expects local authorities to seek developer contributions towards school places that are created to meet the need arising from housing development.

- 5.3 In previous years, secondary places were deemed to be sufficient whereas the greatest need was to increase primary provision, hence when CIL was introduced, the Council decided through the CIL process that primary provision would be on the 123 regulations list.
- 5.4 [DfE guidance, 'Securing Developer Contributions for Education'](#) states that local authorities can ask for Section 106 contributions for primary provision. This can incur debate, particularly from developers and their consultants therefore acceptance of the proposed guidance would ensure a consistent and transparent approach towards securing developer contributions for education.
- 5.5 The proposed Stewartby Brickworks has a draft S106 agreement which is funding primary provision so the precedent has been set to move away from using CIL to fund education capital works.
- 5.6 Education contribution requests are now higher as education are asking for funding across the 5 categories above as recent legislation and guidance now suggests that the Council should. For example, early years and post-16 are now specified in the 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) whilst published government statistics highlight the growing number of children and young people with Education, Care and Health Plans (EHCPs), consequently increasing the demand for specialist provision to support the needs of these individuals.
- 5.7 Developer contributions for education have been calculated according to DfE guidance. DfE scorecards stating the cost of provision per pupil at each phase, adjusted for the Bedford location, form the basis of the sum requested. The scorecard sum is also index-linked to the current BCIS index value to allow for inflation in construction costs over time. This is then uplifted by 10% to account for the additional costs in providing sustainable infrastructure, as recommended in, "Securing developer contributions for education" (2023).
- 5.8 Bedford Borough's Education, SEND and Schools department does not wish to create additional surplus capacity in the school system, hence contributions are only requested when there is a demonstrated need. For example, in some areas where development is proposed, local primary schools have the capacity to accept the additional pupils who may arise due to the development, thus, no contributions are requested.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 6.1 No change; continue to fund education infrastructure through a combination of CIL and S106 contributions. This approach was rejected as the Council have already identified there is insufficient CIL funding to support the education demand as demand on CIL funding is required for other projects within the Local Authority.
- 6.2 If housing continues to be built without adequate funding to increase education provision, the Council will be at risk of failing in its statutory duties. Consequently, the need could arise to transport children to neighbouring local authority schools. This approach was rejected due to the financial pressures that would be incurred through provision of home-to-school transport and the direct contradiction of Council sustainability targets.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Issues – relevant legal power

Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on Councils to secure sufficient primary and secondary school places to provide appropriate education for pupils in its area. Section 14A of the Education Act 1996 imposes a duty to consider representations about the exercise by local authorities of their functions from the parents of qualifying children in relation to the provision of primary and secondary education. Qualifying children include all those of compulsory school age or under.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives Councils a strategic role as commissioners of school places and includes duties to consider parental representation, diversity, and choice, and duties in relation to high standards and the fulfilment of every child's educational potential and fair access to educational opportunity.

Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 requires Local Authorities to secure sufficient childcare. This should be provided for working families, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 or up to 18 for disabled children. The NPPF (December 2024) now specifies that local authorities have a duty to provide early years and post-16 places for children residing within the Borough.

7.2 Policy Issues

The activity in this report is linked to the Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Children's Service Strategy 2022 - 2027, School Improvement Strategy 2019-2022, Early Years Strategy 2024-2026, Bedford Borough Corporate Plan and the Children, Young People and their Families Plan 2022-2027.

7.3 **Resource Issues**

Bedford Borough Council has a finite amount of capital to fund the expansion of school places. The Borough Council uses a mixture of funding sources to finance additional school places. Funding sources available include Basic Need grant from central government; Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy contributions from developers; Free School funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and contributions from schools. New school places must be funded through these means, as the Borough Council has no other grants or funds dedicated to providing school places unless borrowing is undertaken.

Adopting this guidance would streamline the funding for additional education places required as a result of new housing developments.

7.4 **Risks**

If this proposal is not approved, the risk would be insufficient childcare for working families of 9 month plus children and insufficient school places for statutory age pupils. Bedford Borough Council would also be at risk of failing to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable children and young persons within the Borough, including those with SEND. The Council would be accountable to local families and the DfE for not securing sufficient spaces for the expansion of the early year's entitlements or provision of school places for statutory age pupils and those with SEND.

Without appropriate investment in new school buildings and expansions, there is a risk that there will not be enough school places for Bedford Borough children.

7.5 **Environmental Implications**

In March 2019, the Council signed a Climate Emergency declaration and pledged to become carbon neutral by 2030. One of the principal areas where it is felt, as an authority, internal emissions can be addressed (over 70% of our current carbon output at almost 5,000 tonnes per annum is attributed to our buildings) is to better heat and power the Council's current and future real estate and decarbonise both.

By placing environmental sustainability at the heart of how the design, build and maintain of any future school expansions, can contribute to this target. Sustainability is included in the design approach of the projects identified. There is a focused approach to identify and provide school places where they are needed so that the Council can promote active travel of children to get to and from school. Bedford Borough Council aims to provide families with places in local schools to reduce the reliance on home-to-school transport to support the Council's commitment to reducing its carbon emissions.

Refurbishment of school premises to support additional demand for school places is planned where possible, rather than building new provision. Furthermore, any new provision will secure additional funding (via a 10% uplift applied to contributions sums requested from developers) towards achieving the sort of sustainability and design standards set out in the DfE's updated School Output Specification 2021.

7.6 Equalities Impact

BBC has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

BBC has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient early years places for children that need them. Age and disability are key considerations in respect of this duty and for the Childcare Expansion Capital programme.

7.7 Impact on Families

Bedford Borough is committed to supporting families with being able to access their nearest local school wherever possible. Through undertaking school place planning, the Council is looking to ensure that there are sufficient school places to manage growing demand, resulting in more families being able to access one of their top 3 preference schools and minimising the reliance on transport to attend schools.

The work being undertaken as a result of this report should have a positive impact on families by giving them more choice in school places for their children and a higher likelihood of accessing one of their top 3 preferences in their starting school and / or transfer to secondary school applications.

7.8 Community Safety and Resilience

The provision of addition nursery places for 9 months + will help to support families within local area, offering parent(s)/carer(s) extended options for childcare and, in some instances, helping to support them to return to workplace. Schools are often at the heart of a community, by ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of school places within a local community the Council will be supporting with the building of community resilience.

Consideration will also be given to safe walking routes when looking at local school places, this ensures that there will be improved community safety by ensuring that there are safe passages / transport to the nearest suitable school to each community.

7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing

The work detailed within this report aims to ensure that there are more school places available within Bedford Borough as access to education is one of the building blocks towards improved health and wellbeing for children.

Not being able to access your local school can have a negative impact on a parent / carer's emotional health and wellbeing, especially if the route to the nearest school with spaces is not straightforward; the work detailed within this report aims to reduce the stress that parents or carers may feel by not being able to secure a place for their child at their nearest school.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The following Councillors, Council units, Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Portfolio Holder for Valuing Families: Children's Services
Corporate Leadership Team

9. CONTACTS AND REFERENCES

Report Contact Officer:	Chris Morris Chris.morris@bedford.gov.uk
Declarations of Interest by the Report Author:	None
File Reference:	N/A
Previous Relevant Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix A – Securing developer contributions for education in Bedford Borough Appendix B – 5-year plan for mainstream school places



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Education Planning Obligations Guidance

*Developer Contributions for Education (2025)
Bedford Borough Council Policy*

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 One of the aims of Bedford Borough Council Local Plan is to encourage sustainable growth through the establishment of new housing areas and communities, supported by accessible local services and centres. The Borough will become a greener, more sustainable, more attractive and prosperous place to live and work.
- 1.2 The purpose of this document is to set out the planning obligation requirements relating to education that Bedford Borough Council may seek in association with new housing developments.
- 1.3 These standards apply to the following Council services:
 - Children’s Services (Education);
 - Home to School Transport.
- 1.4 The Council acts as a champion for all Bedford Borough residents, in respect of all children and young people and their parents / carers.

2. National Guidance

- 2.1 All infrastructure requirements must be compliant with the legal tests set out in Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 (as amended) and be:
 - Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - Directly related to the development;
 - Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 2.2 The Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2019, came into force on 1 September 2019. The key amendments were:
 - Lifting of the pooling restrictions on Section 106 (S106)
 - The introduction of monitoring fees
 - Allowing the use of both S106 agreements and the CIL to fund the same infrastructure
 - Introducing the requirement to produce an Infrastructure Funding Statement.
- 2.3 Bedford Borough Council will provide a detailed justification / explanation of any contributions it seeks. The standard charges detailed in this document illustrate the range of contributions which may be expected from developers as a consequence of new housing development.

- 2.4 Developers will be expected to enter into a Section 106 legal agreement (S106 agreement) with Bedford Borough Council regarding the contributions sought to deliver necessary education infrastructure requirements and / or home to school transport support. Developer contributions secured via S106 agreements allow funding to be ringfenced for education purposes. This prevents funding e.g. via the Community Infrastructure Levy from being allocated to other, non-education infrastructure projects, which could result in a detrimental impact on education provision¹.
- 2.5 This guidance has been updated in the light of:
- Changes in national guidance / standards;
 - Legislative changes;
 - Inflation – where costs have changed;
 - Lessons learnt over the past 10 years.
- 2.6 The following national policy and guidance have been considered:
- National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, December 2024);
 - National Planning Practice Guidance (MHCLG, September 2019);
 - Securing developer contributions for education (DfE, August 2023).

3. Education

Statutory Duties

- 3.1 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives Bedford Borough Council the responsibility to ensure there are sufficient school places in the Borough for children between the ages of 4 and 16 years old. It is responsible for all children and young people in the Borough in mainstream education. It also has a statutory duty to provide suitable education placement for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) to all aged 0-25. The Council works with partners to ensure a sufficient supply of 16-19-year-old places, many of which are integrated in 11-19-year-old schools.
- 3.2 In addition, The Childcare Acts 2006 and 2016 require local authorities to ensure that there are enough childcare places for parents who want to work or train. This is known as the childcare sufficiency duty. New legislation has changed the entitlements of parents to government funded childcare. These changes are listed below:
- All parents of children aged three to four can access 15 hours of government funded childcare per week;
 - Working parents of three- to four-year-olds can access 30 hours of government funded childcare per week;
 - Eligible working parents of two-year-olds are able to access 15 hours of government funded childcare per week;

¹ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 8, paragraph 5.

- From September 2024, 15 hours of government funded childcare was extended to children aged 9 months and older;
- From September 2025, the entitlement becomes up to 30 hours of childcare for eligible working families with a child from 9 months up to school age.

3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) states the importance of a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places available to meet the needs of existing and new communities². Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen the choice of education. They should:

- Give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through preparation of plans and decisions on applications;
- Work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

Mitigating the Impact of Housing Development

3.4 Housing development should mitigate its impact on community infrastructure, including schools and other education and childcare facilities. The Department for Education (DfE) expects local authorities to seek developer contributions towards school places that are created to meet the need arising from housing development.

3.5 The DfE guidance document, “Securing developer contributions for education” (August 2023), confirms the expectation that as well as securing developer contributions towards mainstream and early years education, local authorities should also ensure they secure contributions towards additional cost of providing facilities for children and young people with SEND and any expansions required to sixth form provision (which would not normally include expansions to FE colleges)³.

3.6 Developer contributions also have a role to play in helping to fund additional early years places for children aged 0-4 where these are required due to housing growth, whether these are attached to schools or delivered as separate settings⁴. In cases where housing development requires new primary schools, these are now expected to include a nursery.

3.7 The DfE’s Basic Need capital grant funding and other sources of capital funding do not negate housing developers’ responsibility to mitigate the impact of their development on education. Government funding for new school places is reduced to take account of developer contributions⁵.

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 100.

³ Department for Education (2023) Securing developer contributions for education, page 13, paragraph 25.

⁴ Department for Education (2023) Securing developer contributions for education, page 13, paragraph 23.

⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2019) National Planning Practice Guidance on planning obligations, paragraph 007 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-obligations>.

- 3.8 Developer contributions towards new school places should provide both funding for construction and freehold land where applicable⁶. Furthermore, when considering viability, there is an initial assumption that development will provide funding for construction and land for new schools required on-site⁷. Basic Need allocations do not factor in the cost of land acquisition, so it is particularly important that any land required within larger development sites for schools is provided at no cost to the local authority wherever possible⁸.

Pupil Generation

- 3.9 In Bedford, the population size has increased by 17.7%, from around 157,500 in 2011 to 185,300 in 2021. This is higher than the overall increase for England (6.6%) and higher than the increase for the East of England (8.3%). Between Census 2011 and Census 2021, there was an increase of 18.6% in children aged under 15 years in Bedford⁹.

Post-16

- 3.10 There are several options for further education for young people post-GCSE, not all of which are full-time education in secondary schools. As it would not be correct to assume the need for places is equal to the pupil generation rates for each of those years it has been assumed that school years 12/13 together would be equivalent to an additional secondary school year.

Secondary Phase

- 3.11 The birth rate in England between 2001 and 2011 was the largest ten-year increase since the 1950s and led to increased demand for primary school places¹⁰. The enlarged primary-age population is now being observed to move into the secondary phase. Larger year groups transferring from primary schools and net inward migration of families into Bedford Borough from other areas of the UK and abroad are causing significant sufficiency issues at the secondary phase across all year groups.

Primary Phase

- 3.12 Falling rolls are becoming more noticeable in the primary phase within some planning areas and are predominantly due to falling birth rates¹¹. This is mitigated by significant housing growth within development areas of Bedford Borough. The Council's Local Plan 2030 states that primary education within walking distance is one of the most valued local facilities, with sustainability and community development benefits.

⁶ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 5.

⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2019) *National Planning Practice Guidance on viability*, paragraph 029
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/viability>.

⁸ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 9, paragraph 12.

⁹ Office for National Statistics (2022) *How the population changed in Bedford: Census 2021*
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E06000055/>.

¹⁰ UK Parliament (2015) *Key Issues for the 2015 Parliament: A good school place for every child?*

¹¹ Office for National Statistics, *Census 2021. Births in England and Wales: 2023*
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2023>.

Early Years

- 3.13 Bedford's under 5s population has increased by 11% between 2011 to 2021, whereas nationally in England there has been a decrease of 7% during the same reporting period¹². The early years childcare expansion program, detailed earlier in this document, has increased the amount of free childcare available to working parents. The take-up of funded childcare entitlements is high, increasing demand for early years provision in both maintained and the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings¹³. Please note that at the time of publishing, the DfE has advised that this is not yet reflected in the Pupil Yields Dashboard (<https://department-for-education.shinyapps.io/pupil-yields-dashboard/>), which only holds data up to academic year 2021/22.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

- 3.14 The proportion of children with SEND is growing in Bedford Borough in common with other local authority areas. Bedford Borough currently has 1,150 places in special or alternative provision, all of which are filled. There is a deficiency in special school places across the Borough and as a result, there has been an increasing dependence on the higher-cost independent sector and provision outside of the Borough. This is detrimental for children who are unable to access local provision and is placing unsustainable pressure on the Council's funding.
- 3.15 The DfE report, "Special educational needs in England" (June 2024), stated that the number of pupils in schools in England with education, health and care plans (EHCPs) increased by 11.6% from 2023¹⁴. Those with SEN support / SEN without an EHCP had also increased by 4.7% from 2023.
- 3.16 In England, the overall proportion of students with EHCPs increased from 4.3% in 2023 to 4.8% in 2024, highlighting a need to improve and increase SEND provision across the Borough to accommodate what is expected to be a continuous need at a higher rate, which the Council must try to manage¹⁵.

Pupil Yields

- 3.17 Bedford Borough Council calculates pupil yields arising from new housing developments according to Table 1 below. The pupil yield factors are based on analysis of national census data, school census data and school applications from dwellings on new housing developments¹⁶. In future, the data will be updated annually, or if a significant change occurs. As Bedford Borough Council is a unitary authority, the yield factors below will be used to calculate developer contributions for all residential developments, irrespective of which school planning area(s) they fall within or border.

¹² Office for National Statistics (2022) *How the population changed in Bedford: Census 2021*
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E06000055/>.

¹³ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 13, paragraph 23.

¹⁴ Department for Education (2024) *Special educational needs in England*
<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>.

¹⁵ Department for Education (2024) *Special educational needs in England*
<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>.

¹⁶ Bedford Borough Council (2018) *Education implications for Local Plan 2030*, pages 2-4.

Table 1. The expected pupil yield across Bedford Borough at each phase.

The multiplier is applied per dwelling and the expected pupil yield per 100 dwellings is listed for clarification.

Age Range	Type of school	Number of Cohort Years	Multiplier	Pupil Yield per 100 Dwellings
0 - 2	Early Years	2	0.030	6.0
3 - 4	Early Years	2	0.060	12.0
4 - 11	Primary	7	0.060	42.0
11 - 16	Secondary	5	0.042	21.0
16 - 18	Sixth Form	2*	0.042	4.2
0 - 25	SEND	N/A	0.052	5.2

*Sixth form places are treated as one combined year group, rather than two, to reflect the lower number of students on roll in sixth forms compared with secondary provision.

Pupil Places

- 3.18 The Council will plan on the basis that pupils generated from any new development would attend the nearest suitable school, where this is reasonably possible, or the next nearest school with available places providing:
- 3.18.1 The school lies within the statutory maximum distance a child would be expected to travel (i.e., two miles for pupils under 8 years old and three miles for pupils aged 8-16 years old)¹⁷;
 - 3.18.2 Existing and planned investment in local schools is not compromised;
 - 3.18.3 The route to the school is adequate and safe. Where there is inadequate access, the Council may seek developer contributions towards safer routes to school.
- 3.19 However, DfE guidance states that depending on local admission arrangements and patterns of parental preference, children living in a development might reasonably attend any school within the pupil planning area (or even in an adjoining one in some cases), and you should not assume that they will all attend a particular school unless there are no likely alternatives. The best option may be to expand another school to free up capacity in the nearest school, as this reclaimed capacity would meet the need from the development (in compliance with the Section 106 tests) while balancing out admissions across the planning area and reducing trips to school by car¹⁸.
- 3.20 This is of particular relevance in Bedford Borough as some developments may span and / or border multiple school planning areas, meaning that the geographically closest school to a development may not be the most suitable to expand and / or improve in order to increase pupil capacity. To this end, DfE guidance also recommends identifying “preferred” and “contingency” school expansion projects or listing all schools within a planning area, if any of the identified options would address the needs from development and comply with the Section 106 tests. This enables local authorities to respond to changing circumstances and new information¹⁹.

¹⁷ Department for Education (2024) *Travel to school for children of compulsory school age*, page 11.

¹⁸ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 18, paragraph 42.

¹⁹ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 19, paragraph 47.

- 3.21 Local authorities are expected to retain a margin of unfilled places to be able to operate their admissions systems effectively. For example, to offer places to children whose families move mid-year and to provide for parental choice²⁰. The DfE assumes a minimum 5% surplus capacity in its planning as necessary to support operational flexibility²¹. Its purpose is not to meet the need for additional school places arising from proposed developments, therefore should not be counted as available when calculating developer contributions.
- 3.22 When responding to planning applications, Bedford Borough Council's Education department assesses the capacity in each school sector to accommodate the number of pupils anticipated at the time the development is expected to be built and will only seek contributions for those sectors that are deemed to be at full capacity. Owing to statutory restrictions on class sizes schools can be full in the reception year (4+) and year 1 as the class size cannot be greater than 30 even though there may be a few pupil spaces in the higher age ranges²². Available capacity now does not necessarily mean there will be capacity when the development is building out and being occupied, if children already living in the area are forecast to need the school places or other developments have already been approved but not yet implemented and will make use of that spare capacity²³.

New School Requirements

- 3.23 Developer contributions towards a new school will be sought when:
- The existing catchment area school(s) cannot be expanded any further (e.g., insufficient usable land area); and / or
 - The proposed residential development is of a scale such that a new school can be justified.
- 3.24 National Planning Practice Guidance (2019) states that mainstream schools must be of a viable size and format and planned for on the basis of standard class sizes and forms of entry²⁴. The DfE provides the example of a development that generates 400 primary school places which would require a standard two forms of entry (2FE; 420 place) school²⁵. The capacity of existing primary schools beyond reasonable and safe walking distance does not need to be considered when calculating developer contributions for permanent on-site schools in new settlements and urban extensions as if they are large enough to require a new school, they are expected to meet their full education requirement²⁶.

²² Department for Education (2012) *The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations – Statutory Instruments*

²³ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 28, paragraph 74.

²⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2019) *National Planning Practice Guidance on healthy and safe communities*, paragraph 008 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/health-and-wellbeing>.

²⁵ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 24, paragraph 62.

²⁶ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 25, paragraph 63.

- 3.25 Within Bedford Borough, the typical threshold needed to sustain a new 2FE (420 pupils) school (the recommended minimum size by the DfE) is 1,000 new dwellings (see housing mix and exclusions below). In some instances where buildings are being provided in multiple phases, the first phase will need to provide a future-proofed facility by having core facilities being built at a sufficient scale for the eventual size and land safeguarded for the school's expansion when need builds up²⁷. This applies to all primary and secondary provision.
- 3.26 The costs of a new school will need to be negotiated on a site-by-site basis and will reflect the type of school (either primary or secondary), the size of the school, whether 2FE or more is required, and the specific site's constraints. If the scale of proposed development falls below the threshold to deliver a 100% developer-funded school, the Council will generally seek a pro-rata contribution towards the new build costs where appropriate.
- 3.27 As the DfE's preference for primary schools is to be 2FE as a minimum, and to be built with on-site nursery provision and offering extended school service, this will require a 2.3-2.4-hectare site. The site should be centrally located for the dwellings and pupils intended to be served by the school. Sites should preferably be a 'square rectangle' in shape and be free from development constraints. If sites are irregularly shaped, additional site area above the required site sizes may be required. If there is not a locally available car park or other off-site facility then provision should be made in the highway layout for drop off parking provision in the vicinity of the school²⁸. The DfE encourages a range of secondary school sizes with the recommended site area of 63m² per pupil²⁹.

4. Calculating Developer Contributions

Minimum Threshold for Contributions

- 4.1 Planning obligations in respect of education and / or home to school transport will only be sought on major developments. The NPPF (2024) defines these as developments where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more.

Housing Mix and Exclusions

- 4.2 Both affordable and market housing development increase the local population. Pupil yields from affordable and market housing are considered collectively, rather than separate pupil yield factors being applied.
- 4.3 1-bedroom dwellings and homes specifically for the provision of elderly care / elderly persons housing schemes will be excluded when calculating expected pupil yields from housing developments and the consequent contributions requested.

²⁷ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 25, paragraph 64.

²⁸ Bedford Borough Council (2013) *Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document*, page 15.

²⁹ Department for Education (2014) *Area guidelines for mainstream schools*, page 44.

Contribution Sums

- 4.4 There is no expectation for the Council to produce site-specific feasibility studies or cost plans for school build/expansion projects when planning applications for housing development are under consideration, as this is extremely resource-intensive, and it is unknown if development proposals will be permitted or what circumstances will have changed by the time permissions are implemented³⁰. The funding requested through developer contributions for education infrastructure reflects the typical cost of providing school places in the region.
- 4.5 The assumed cost of mainstream school places is based on the relevant average regional costs published in the DfE school places scorecard. The regional average is adjusted to account for inflation since the latest scorecard base date³¹. This will be updated on a quarterly basis when new inflation statistics are published, therefore consultation responses from 3Q 2025 onwards may contain minor variations in the exact cost per pupil place from the figures in Table 2 below.
- 4.6 DfE guidance also advises uplifting rates by 10% to reflect the costs associated with achieving the sort of sustainability and design standards set out in the School Output Specification 2021 (or a future update which is relevant to the timing of a project) as the scorecard costs are based on historic projects that may have been built to former standards³². Table 2 shows the contributions requested by Bedford Borough Council for each type of provision.

Table 2. The cost per pupil place for expansion of existing provision and building new provision at each phase in Bedford Borough.

Values were taken from the DfE school places scorecard for England, adjusted for Bedford (location factor 0.99), adjusted for inflation to 2Q [April-June] 2025 and uplifted by 10% according to guidance.

Age Range	Type of School	Cost per Pupil Place (1Q 2025)	
		Expansion	New Building
0 - 4	Early Years	£22,382	£26,722
4 - 11	Primary	£22,382	£26,722
11 - 16	Secondary	£30,783	£32,373
16 - 18	Sixth Form	£30,783	£32,373
0 - 25	SEND	-	£106,888

- 4.7 The DfE recommends that the per pupil cost of early years provision is assumed to be the same as for a primary school, unless alternative local / regional cost data for new or expanded standalone settings (either maintained or PVI sector) are available. Similarly, sixth form places provided within secondary schools will cost broadly the same as a secondary school place³³.

³⁰ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 15, paragraph 31.

³¹ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 15, paragraph 32.

³² Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 15, paragraph 33.

³³ Department for Education (2023) *Securing developer contributions for education*, page 16, paragraph 36.

- 4.8 The cost of providing a SEND place is greater than that of a mainstream schooling place as special schools require more space per pupil than mainstream settings. In line with many other local authorities, the Council set the cost of special or alternative provision school places at four times the cost of mainstream places, consistent with the additional space requirements in the DfE's Building Bulletin 104 (December 2015)³⁴ & ³⁵.
- 4.9 Where a new housing development creates demand for education provision, that temporarily cannot be provided within local schools, the Council may seek to secure S106 developer contributions towards home to school travel assistance³⁶. Contributions will be calculated using the most recent costs available and will be for an agreed period, reflecting the number of academic years the Council would be under a duty to provide travel assistance³⁷.

5. Payments

Phasing of Payments

- 5.1 Agreed planning obligations contributions will be paid to Bedford Borough Council in accordance with triggers negotiated for each individual development.

Indexation

- 5.2 All obligations secured will be subject to indexation to account for inflation. Indices used may include:

- The Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) All-In Tender Price Index;
- The Retail Price Index;
- Any other index deemed suitable for the purpose.

³⁴ Department for Education (2015) Area guidelines for SEND and alternative provision.

³⁵ Department for Education (2023) Securing developer contributions for education, page 16, paragraph 37.

³⁶ Department for Education (2023) Securing developer contributions for education, page 18, paragraph 41.

³⁷ Department for Education (2023) Securing developer contributions for education, page 19, paragraph 45.

6. Glossary of Terms

Early Years:

The provision of childcare (including education) for a young child, meaning a child from birth to the September after the child turns 5.

Local (planning) Authority:

The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area.

Local Plan:

A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community, under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.

Major Development:

For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more.

School Planning Area:

A group of schools, defined by geography and admission patterns, wherein a sufficiency of places across the group will ensure every child can access a local school place, even if some schools are oversubscribed.

Planning Obligation:

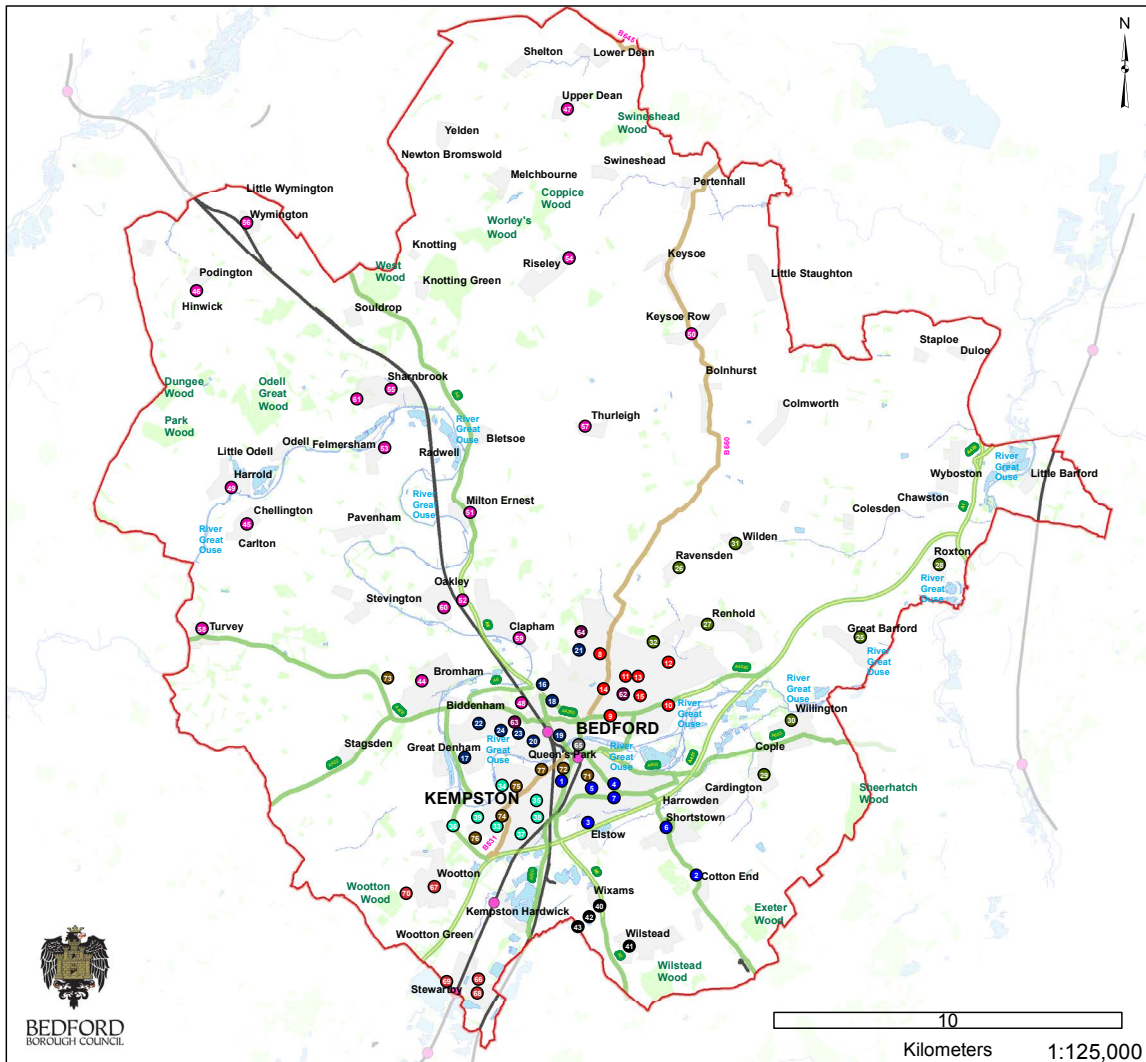
A legal agreement entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

Post-16:

Young people who are over compulsory school age but under 19, or aged 19 or over and for whom an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is maintained.

Appendix 1: School Planning Areas

Map showing all schools within each of the school planning areas in Bedford Borough.



- South Bedford
- Urban Bedford
- West Bedford
- East Bedford
- Kempston
- Wixams
- North Bedford
- Catholic Federation
- Free School
- Nursery / PRU / Special
- Bedford Borough

- South Bedford**
- 1 Cauldwell School
 - 2 Cotton End Primary School
 - 3 Elstow School
 - 4 King's Oak Primary School
 - 5 Shackleton Primary School
 - 6 Shortstown Primary School
 - 7 Bedford Academy

- Urban Bedford**
- 8 Brickhill Primary School
 - 9 Castle Newnham Primary
 - 10 Goldington Green Academy
 - 11 Hazeldene School
 - 12 Putnoe Primary School
 - 13 The Hills Academy
 - 14 Castle Newnham School
 - 15 Goldington Academy

- West Bedford**
- 16 Edith Cavell Primary School
 - 17 Great Denham Primary School
 - 18 Livingstone Primary School
 - 19 Priory Primary School
 - 20 Queens Park Academy
 - 21 Scott Primary School
 - 22 St James' CoE VA Primary School
 - 23 Westfield School
 - 24 Biddenham International School & Sports College

- East Bedford**
- 25 Great Barford Primary Academy
 - 26 Ravensden CoE VA Primary School

- East Bedford (C'td)**
- 27 Renhold V.C. Primary School
 - 28 Roxton VA CoE School
 - 29 Sheerhatch Primary School (Cople Campus)
 - 30 Sheerhatch Primary School (Willington Campus)
 - 31 Wilden CoE VA Primary School
 - 32 Mark Rutherford School

- Kempston**
- 33 Balliol Primary School
 - 34 Bedford Road Primary School
 - 35 Camestone School
 - 36 Kempston Rural Primary School
 - 37 Springfield Primary School
 - 38 Daubeny Academy
 - 39 Kempston Challenger Academy
- Wixams**
- 40 Lakeview School
 - 41 Wilstead Primary School
 - 42 Wixams Tree Primary School
 - 43 Wixams Academy

- North Bedford**
- 44 Bromham CoE Primary School
 - 45 Carlton CoE Primary School
 - 46 Christopher Reeves Primary School
 - 47 Eileen Wade Primary School
 - 48 Great Ouse Primary Academy
 - 49 Harrold Primary Academy
 - 50 Kymbrook Primary School
 - 51 Milton Ernest CoE Primary School
 - 52 Oakley Primary Academy

- North Bedford (C'td)**
- 53 Pinchmill Primary School
 - 54 Riseley CoE Primary School
 - 55 Sharnbrook Primary School
 - 56 St Lawrence CoE Primary School
 - 57 Thurleigh Primary School
 - 58 Turvey Primary School
 - 59 Ursula Taylor CoE School
 - 60 Lincroft School
 - 61 Sharnbrook Academy
- Catholic Federation**
- 62 St John Rigby Catholic Primary School
 - 63 St Joseph's & St Gregory's Catholic Primary School
 - 64 St Thomas More Catholic School

- Free School**
- 65 Bedford Free School
- Wootton**
- 66 Broadmead Lower School
 - 67 Wootton Lower School
 - 68 Marston Vale Middle School
 - 69 Kimberley 16 - 19 Stem College
 - 70 Wootton Upper School

- Nursery / PRU / Special**
- 71 Cherry Trees Nursery School
 - 72 Peter Pan Nursery School
 - 73 Greys Education Centre (Primary)
 - 74 Greys Education Centre (Secondary)
 - 75 Grange Academy
 - 76 Ridgeway School
 - 77 St John's School

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Appendix 2: Derivation of the Cost per Pupil Place

The assumed cost of mainstream school places is based on the relevant average regional costs published in the DfE school places scorecard (<https://department-for-education.shinyapps.io/la-school-places-scorecards>), as per Figure 1. The average cost does not include costs associated with land acquisition.

Figure 1. The Average Cost per Place for Permanent, Temporary and New School Projects

Region column shows England averages, adjusted for regional location factors.

Primary	England	East of England	Secondary	England	East of England
Permanent Expansion	£19,989	£19,789	Permanent Expansion	£27,492	£27,217
Temporary Expansion	£9,450	£9,356	Temporary Expansion	£10,609	£10,503
New School	£23,865	£23,626	New School	£28,912	£28,662

The average cost per place for England and the East of England, the region in which Bedford is located, are shown. The national average is adjusted to the relevant region for each local authority, using the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) March 2024 published regional location factors. The England national average has been multiplied by the relevant regional location factor for Bedford: East of England 0.99.

The regional average is adjusted to account for inflation since the latest scorecard base date. All costs in Figure 1 were adjusted for inflation via rebasing from the start of construction (or time of place provision if construction start date unavailable) to 1st Quarter (Jan – Mar) 2024 prices using the BCIS All-In Tender Price of Index (TPI), published March 2024 (Q1 2024 index value = 390).

To adjust the regional average to current prices, the cost per pupil place for the East of England/ Bedford is uprated relative to the change in inflation that has happened since Q1 2024. The BCIS All-In Tender Price Index (TPI) shows a 2.8% increase between Q1 2024 (index value = 390) and Q2 2025 (index value = 401).

DfE guidance also suggests uplifting rates by 10% to reflect the costs associated with achieving the sort of sustainability and design standards set out in the department's updated School Output Specification 2021 (or a future update which is relevant to the timing of a project).

Finding out more



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BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



5 Year Plan for Mainstream School Places

2025 - 2029

Children's Services

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Executive Summary

This plan for school places has been produced by Bedford Borough Council (referred to as BBC) to inform schools and the community, academy trusts and diocesan boards, the Department for Education, housing developers and other stakeholders, as well as elected members of the Council, about the expected demand for school and early years places including those required by children with special educational needs and disabilities. It identifies areas where new places may be required, or where there may be surplus places, providing a context for proposals which may be brought forward, whether by the Council or Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), for changes to school organisation in Bedford.

BBC has a **statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places** for children aged between 4 and 16 years old. It is responsible for all children and young people in the Borough in mainstream education and those who have special educational needs and disabilities. It also coordinates the planning and delivery of early years places. This plan sets out key data in relation to all these areas and looks ahead to expected future demand. Post-16 and sixth form provision are not within the scope of this plan but are considered when deciding solutions to ensure **efficient and sustainable choices** are made for capital investment.

Bedford Borough is growing due to both new housing and migration into the area, and so a clear plan is required to deliver mainstream education infrastructure to support this growth. Incoming families are often young, so the plan also makes reference to areas where additional early years provision may be required, although this should be viewed alongside the early years sufficiency strategy. The proportion of children with special educational needs and disabilities is growing in Bedford Borough in common with other local authority areas, so we need to ensure we have the capacity to meet their needs whether in mainstream or special schools.

The purpose of this plan is to set out:

- **The demand for early years, mainstream and special school places in the next 5 years.**
- **Solutions in the pipeline that will meet the forecast demand for school places.**
- **Options to address medium to long term forecast demand for school places.**

This plan will be updated annually to factor in new forecasts, the capital budget setting cycle, and potential options and solutions that have been identified since the previous version.

This plan is based on forecasts and data produced during the 2023/24 academic year as part of the DfE's annual School Capacity Data (SCAP) return.

In Summer Term 2024 there were 28,780 children and young people from Reception to Year 11 – the statutory school age range – made up of 16581 in the primary age range, and 12199 in the secondary age range in Bedford. There was a total of 2144 children and young people with an education health and care plan (EHCP) for a range of different special educational needs and disabilities.

The forecasts in this plan suggest that the total number on roll by the 2029/30 academic year will be 16,217 primary age pupils and 14,115 secondary age pupils which is **a decrease of 364 primary age pupils and an increase of 1,916 secondary age pupils** compared to the academic year 2023/24.

While the overall capacity of the schools in the borough may exceed the forecast number on roll, not all the capacity is in the right place, and some additional capacity is still required to ensure there is appropriate local school provision within a reasonable distance of pupils' home addresses.

An **additional 840 permanent primary school places** (Willow Grove Primary School, Wixams) and an **additional 980 secondary school places** (Wixams Academy, Bedford Academy and Lincroft Academy) are being added to the system over the next five years. This plan suggests further actions which may be taken to address a surplus or deficit of school places over the next 5 years.



Planning for School Places

Statutory Duty and Available Funding

BBC has statutory obligations to promote parental choice, diversity, high standards, the fulfilment of every child's educational potential and fair access to educational opportunity.

To ensure sufficient school places for children aged between 4 and 16 years old, school organisation changes are commissioned in response to forecast data that predicts the demand for school places. These school organisation changes include building new schools, expanding existing schools, closing schools, or reducing the intake at schools.

For the purposes of planning school places, BBC organises schools by planning areas, or planning groups, which comprise primary and secondary schools. The Wootton planning area is the exception to this, comprising upper, middle and lower schools. This planning area will also be organised as a two-tier education system by September 2027.

Planning groups are groups of schools, defined by geography and admission patterns, wherein a sufficiency of places across the group will generally ensure every child can access a local school place, even if some schools are oversubscribed. Planning groups provide the basis for the annual School Capacity Data (SCAP) return, which is sent to the Department for Education (DfE) each summer, and which determines the level of 'Basic Need' funding BBC is allocated from central government to pay for additional school places. Basic Need funding is the main source of funding for the capital programme.

BBC uses a mixture of funding sources to finance additional school places, all of which need to be coordinated through the Council's Capital Programme. Funding sources available include

- Basic Need grant from central government based on forecast numbers.
- Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy contributions from housing developers.
- Capital receipts from the sale of education assets no longer required.
- Free School funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA; closing March 2025).
- Individual contributions from schools and multi academy trusts.

New school places need to be funded through these means as BBC has no other grants or funds dedicated to providing school places. A plan for ensuring sufficient school places is required to enable capital (and revenue) financing to be secured and spent effectively.

Bedford Borough Council is responsible for ensuring there are enough school places in the borough to meet the needs of its children. It can do this by investing in maintained schools or academies.

The council is also responsible for ensuring maintained schools are in a good state of repair (condition) and are suitable for the use to which they are put (suitability). The Council is not responsible for the condition and suitability of academies: this rests with their academy trusts and the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Bedford Borough Council has an in-house team which manages the delivery of capital projects as identified in this plan. BBC also commissions project management resources to ensure that school building projects are delivered to a high standard and at good value, ensuring the best outcome from the investment of public funds.

There are several different types of school, each of which has its own powers and responsibilities in respect of admissions and its building:

Maintained schools are the direct responsibility of the local authority, which owns their site and buildings and is their admissions authority. These include **community schools and voluntary controlled schools**.

Voluntary aided schools are their own admissions authorities, and they are generally responsible for their own buildings. **Foundation schools** have similar powers.

Academies and free schools are funded through a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education. They set their own admissions policies and have considerable freedom within the terms of their funding agreement. Sometimes they own their site and buildings outright, but more often they are on a 125-year lease from the council.

Bedford Borough Council is the coordinating admissions authority for all state-funded schools in Bedford. This means it receives and processes admission applications, applying the admissions policy of each school.

If new places are required in an area Bedford Borough Council can invest in either maintained schools or academies to expand those schools.



Forecasting Methodology

To ensure there will be an appropriate number of school places in the future, Bedford Borough Council produces annual forecasts at planning group level. Reception year forecasts are calculated using birth data, which is obtained from the NHS Trust; historical trends in admissions; number on roll information from the annual School Census; and the number of places offered each September. A probability matrix is used to create the forecasts at individual school and planning group level. The same method is used to forecast pupil numbers at middle, secondary and upper schools but using actual pupil numbers rather than birth data.

The number of additional pupils likely to need school places due to new housing is then incorporated into the forecasts; though it must be recognised that market conditions, and thereby delivery rates, can change. Despite the potential for forecasts to be skewed by changeable housing data, it is important that the plan anticipates the potential increase in households in an area so BBC can meet its statutory duty to facilitate sufficient school places. The impacts of Brexit, COVID-19 and prevailing economic conditions continue to affect housing delivery and therefore pupil numbers.

The likely demand for additional places at local schools created by new housing is calculated using information from the Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire planning teams. The teams provide “housing yields” which give an estimate of the numbers of additional school age children who will need a school place as a result of the housing. Pupil number forecasts are amended to incorporate these figures and the effect of housing taking place over a number of years is modelled by cumulatively increasing the size of pupil cohorts as they move through schools.

If these forecasts indicate insufficient places being available, BBC works with schools in the planning group to decide how and where to add more capacity. If falling rolls are forecasted, the Council can make proposals for removing surplus places to ensure schools remain viable.

Falling rolls are becoming more noticeable in the primary phase within some planning areas and are predominantly due to falling birth rates. This is mitigated by significant housing growth within development areas of Bedford Borough. Some schools in rural areas, where there is no or limited new residential development, may find their pupil numbers will fall.

Factors that influence Planning for School Places

A multitude of factors influence strategic thinking and solutions outlined in this plan. These are kept under regular review and include:

- Fluctuation in forecast pupil numbers.
- Phasing and timing of housing developments and the availability of sites for new school provision (services, access, infrastructure).
- Changing patterns of growth including in-year migration.
- Parents choosing schools outside Bedford Borough and parents outside Bedford Borough choosing Bedford schools.
- Changes to schools’ admissions arrangements.
- Schools adjusting their Published Admission Numbers or capacities.
- Project viability.
- Home to school transport.

The phasing and timelines for potential new housing developments are closely monitored.

The school place planning team regularly meets with Bedford Borough Council planning officers to consider the impact of proposed new developments. Plans are progressed with developers to ensure that new school provision can be provided at the earliest viable opportunity where there is insufficient capacity within existing schools to accommodate pupils from the initial phases of housing development.

When new schools are needed, their delivery is dependent on confirmation of the housing build rate by the developer, planning permissions and the timescale for completion of necessary infrastructure to serve the new school, including services and access. The quality of the environment around the school site is essential, as a new school cannot open in the middle of a building site with no safe walking and cycling routes.

The demand for school places will vary depending on the number of school-age children living in the new homes. Larger homes such as family-sized dwellings typically accommodate more school-age children than smaller homes, such as flats. Additionally, evidence shows that new housing tends to attract more young families and therefore increases the demand for school places.

The school place planning team liaises with its counterparts in all the neighbouring areas, particularly Central Bedfordshire Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Milton Keynes City Council and North and West Northamptonshire Councils. Parents have a right to seek a place in a school in another local authority area and they will be offered one if they meet the admissions criteria. This works in both directions; Bedford children sometimes attend schools outside the borough, and children from outside sometimes attend Bedford schools.

The Home to School Transport Budget comprises of a minimal grant contribution from the Department for Education ('Extended rights to home to school transport' grant for families on a low income) and significant contributions from the Council's General Fund. This budget is under constant pressure. When considering the strategic need for additional school places in an area, the transport implications are key to determining the locations of solutions, and thereby the cost / benefit of those solutions. Where solutions do not address need locally and transport must be provided, BBC is obliged to meet the cost of the transport in perpetuity.

Other policies and priorities also impact the decisions on how, when and where to provide or remove school places. A major consideration is the quality of education at the schools under consideration for expansion and the potential impact that expansion could have on schools' operations. Others include active travel, carbon reduction and net-zero, sustainable growth and infrastructure.

Areas of Growth and Additional Places Planned

In Bedford Borough in September 2024 there were 54 primary schools, 12 secondary schools, 2 lower schools, 1 middle school and 1 upper school. The total capacity, as submitted for SCAP 2024, was 19,146 primary places (YR to Y6) and 12,322 secondary places (Y7 to Y11). In Summer 2024 there were 16581 primary pupils and 12199 secondary pupils on roll at Bedford Borough schools.

The forecasts in this plan suggest that the total number on roll by 2029/30 academic year will be 16,217 primary pupils (a decrease of 364) and 14,115 secondary pupils (an increase of 1916).

In common with most of the country, the number of births has fallen in the Borough over the last few years. The decline in birth rates is less than the national average but it has resulted in smaller reception year intakes than previously. Any increase at primary level is caused by in-year migration and additional pupils moving into new housing. Some primary schools may experience falling rolls as the number of children in their locality decreases.

The increase at secondary level is caused by the anticipated new housing and by larger year groups transferring from primary schools. In time, the number of primary to secondary transfers will decline. For now, the challenge in the secondary phase is to respond to rising numbers.

We have continued to see a rise in the number of in-year admissions due to families moving into Bedford Borough from other areas of the UK and abroad. Bedford Borough is currently able to accommodate this growth in primary provision, however the increase of secondary in-year applications is causing significant pressure across most year groups.



We are further concerned about the implications relating to VAT and independent schools, having already experienced a number of enquiries for in-year moves. In the school census of January 2024, Bedford Borough schools registered a total of 36558 pupils with 4,595 pupils (12.6%) being recorded as attending independent schools; this is almost twice the national average of 6.5%. Whilst not all of these pupils will be Bedford Borough residents, the Institute of Fiscal Studies predicts between 3 – 7% of pupils leaving independent schools due to fee increases. This range could be between 138 – 322 additional children in our school system. We must also account for those children who would have previously left the state system to join the independent sector; again this could be as high as an additional 300 children. Whilst we could accommodate additional numbers in primary schools, we would simply not have capacity within our secondary schools without additional capital works taking place to increase capacity.

The actual need for places is greater than the BBC-wide figures above suggest, as the **available capacity is not all in the right areas or year groups**. The National Audit Office report ‘Capital Funding for New School Places’ (2013) refers to a **minimum 5% surplus** that the Department for Education (DfE) assumes in its planning as necessary to support operational flexibility and enable the exercise of parental preference.

For school management reasons, the number of pupils that can be admitted each September varies, and overall capacity cannot simply be divided by the number of year groups to calculate the number of pupils that can be admitted each year. When planning school places, it is prudent to focus on the Published Admission Number of schools in each area and the number of pupils in each corresponding admission year.

When comparing the anticipated number of children requiring school places with the schools’ existing capacities it is likely that the following planning area will need additional places:

- West secondary.
- South primary and secondary.
- East secondary.
- Kempston secondary.

Several changes to planning areas have been made since the previous version of this plan:

- Bedford Free School is no longer treated as a single school planning area; it now joins Bedford Academy in the South Bedford planning area.
- At the secondary phase, Urban Bedford and East Bedford planning areas have been combined into a larger East Bedford planning group comprising Castle Newnham School, Goldington Academy and Mark Rutherford School.

Although the plan looks ahead five years, it is renewed annually to reflect new data such as updated numbers on roll, school organisation changes including new schools, expansions, amalgamations, changes in age range, etc., as well as the impact of proposed new housing developments.

Forecasts and Plans

The forecast tables in this section show for each future academic year whether there is predicted to be a deficit or surplus of places in each of the planning groups, at primary and secondary level. This is shown in two complementary ways.

For each group the places available for Reception or Year 7 are shown, as well as the total capacity across all year groups based on the school PAN, as they will be from the 2025/26 academic year.

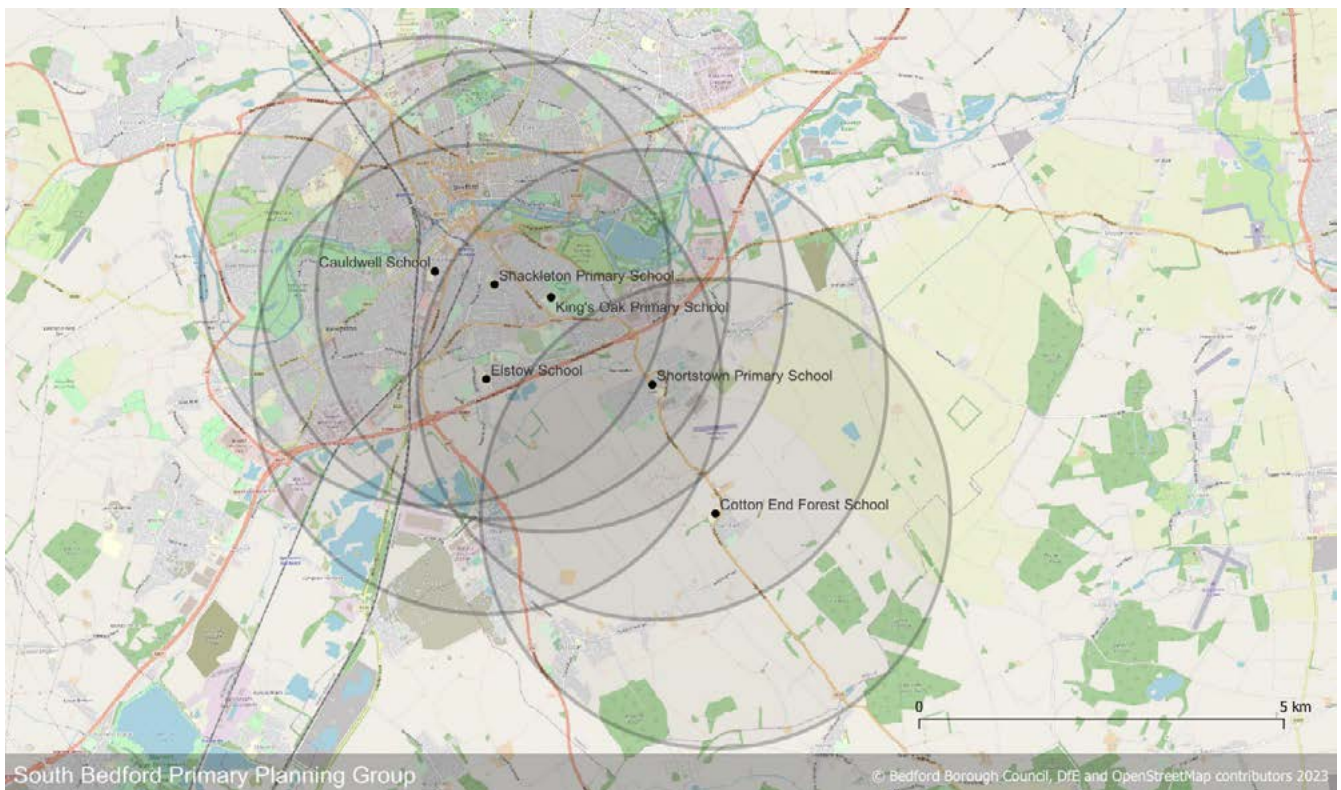
The forecast and predicted deficit/surplus is shown for the normal point of entry to the school, which is Reception at primary level and Year 7 at secondary, as well as for the total capacity. These forecasts take into account projects planned to increase capacity, which are described in the commentary for each group. Predicted deficits in an academic year are highlighted in red.

For the Wootton planning group, the figures are shown as if two-tier, while the schools currently operate a three-tier system of lower, middle and upper schools. Reorganisation of this planning group from a three-tier to a two-tier system in line with the other schools across Bedford is planned to commence in phases from September 2025.

Primary

South Bedford

- Cauldwell Primary School (PAN 60)
- Cotton End Primary School (PAN 60)
- Elstow Primary School (PAN 60)
- King's Oak Primary School (PAN 120)
- Shackleton Primary School (PAN 60)
- Shortstown Primary School (PAN 60)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 2-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Reception (YR) places available: 420

South Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR	394	402	372	391	386
Capacity	420	420	420	420	420
Surplus / Deficit	26	18	48	29	34
Surplus / Deficit %	6%	4%	11%	7%	8%

This number of reception (YR) places is based on the sum of PANs for all schools in the planning area. The total forecast is the sum of the base forecast and new housing pupil yield. To allow some flexibility of parental preference, it is recommended to aim for a surplus of 5%.

Total capacity: 2940

South Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR - Y6	2871	2938	2950	2995	3014
Capacity	3000	2970	2940	2940	2940
Surplus / Deficit	129	32	-10	-55	-74
Surplus / Deficit %	4%	1%	0%	-2%	-3%

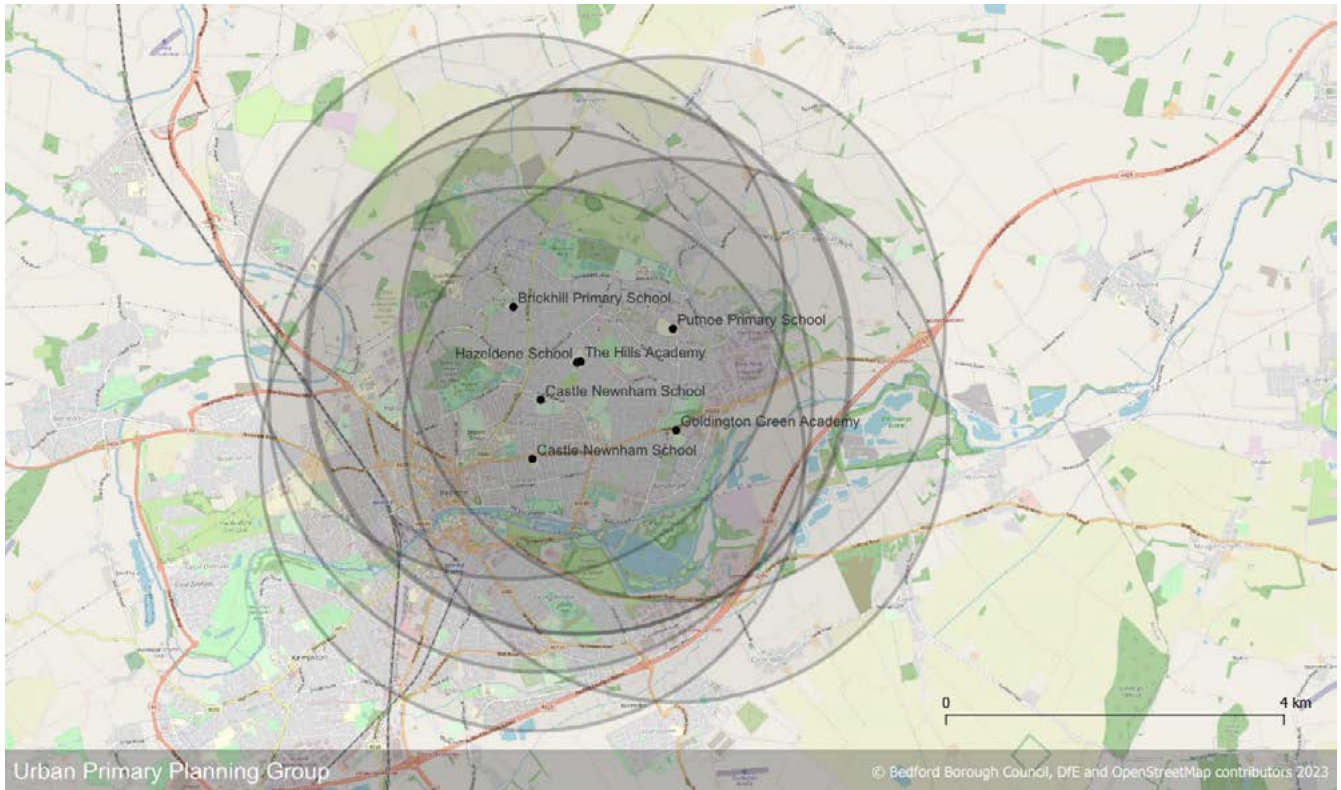
The total capacity is the number of places available based on the schools' PAN multiplied by the number of year groups. In primary, this is reception to Year 6.

Commentary

- Shackleton Primary School accepted an additional 30 pupils in two consecutive years, who will have left the school in July 2027, accounting for the capacity values being higher in 2025/26 and 2026/27 than in average years.
- Challenges to sufficient school capacity in the primary phase in South Bedford are likely to start in 2027/28 and become more pronounced thereafter.
- Both Cotton End Forest School and Shackleton Primary School have the capacity to accommodate a PAN of 90 pupils and so will be able to accept additional students to reduce this shortfall, however, this will be dependent upon schools being within statutory walking distances from pupils' homes and the numbers of pupils in each year group.

Urban Bedford

- Brickhill Primary School (PAN 30)
- Castle Newnham Primary School (PAN 90)
- Goldington Green Primary School (PAN 90)
- Hazeldene Primary School (PAN 60)
- Putnoe Primary School (PAN 90)
- The Hills Primary School (PAN 60)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 2-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Reception places available: 420

Urban Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR	328	304	277	297	294
Capacity	420	420	420	420	420
Surplus / Deficit	92	116	143	123	126
Surplus / Deficit %	22%	28%	34%	29%	30%

Total capacity: 2940

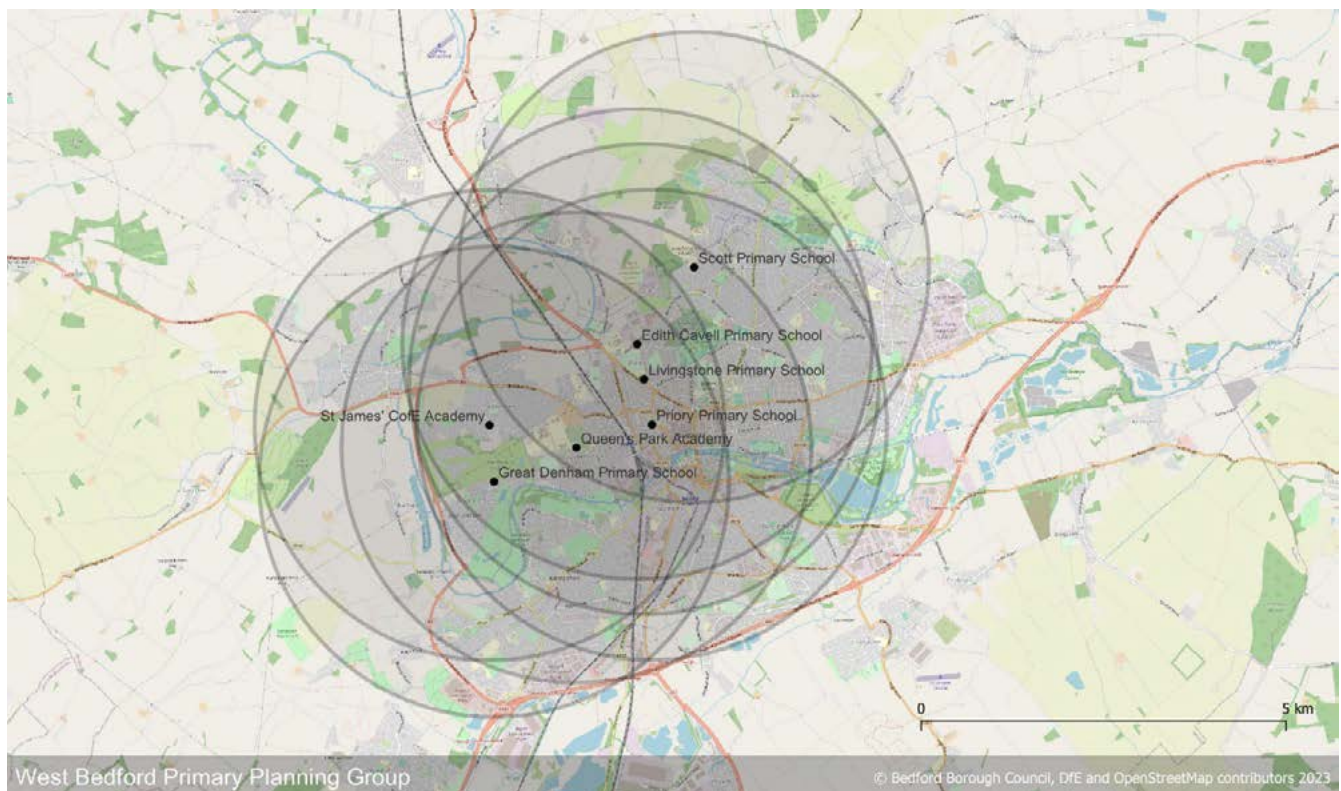
Urban Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR - Y6	2514	2458	2349	2284	2215
Capacity	2880	2910	2940	2940	2940
Surplus / Deficit	366	452	591	656	725
Surplus / Deficit %	13%	16%	20%	22%	25%

Commentary

- Some schools in this planning group are operating below their capacity. This reduces surplus spaces in the system and allows the schools to operate more efficiently.
- Putnoe Primary School, for example, capped numbers of pupils in two year groups to 60 places, thereby reducing surplus places in the system and accounting for the difference in capacities in 2025/26 and 2026/27.
- A meeting of the schools within this planning area would be helpful to review PANs and whether any school may wish to reduce their PAN.
- Developments in and around the town centre are likely to generate pupils via inward migration which will fill some of this surplus capacity across all year groups.

West Bedford

- Edith Cavell Primary School (PAN 45)
- Great Denham Primary School (PAN 90)
- Livingstone Primary School (PAN 60)
- Priory Primary School (PAN 26)
- Queens Park Academy (PAN 60)
- Scott Primary School (PAN 60)
- St James' CE Primary School (PAN 30)
- Westfield Primary School (PAN 60)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 2-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Reception places available: 431

West Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR	383	388	379	387	382
Capacity	431	431	431	431	431
Surplus / Deficit	48	43	52	44	49
Surplus / Deficit %	11%	10%	12%	10%	11%

Total capacity: 3017

West Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR - Y6	2855	2938	2950	2995	3014
Capacity	3017	2987	3017	3017	3017
Surplus / Deficit	162	49	67	22	3
Surplus / Deficit %	5%	2%	2%	1%	0%

Notes

- Multiple residential developments in Biddenham, building out circa. 1600 homes by 2032/33, will utilise any surplus places in West Bedford primary schools.

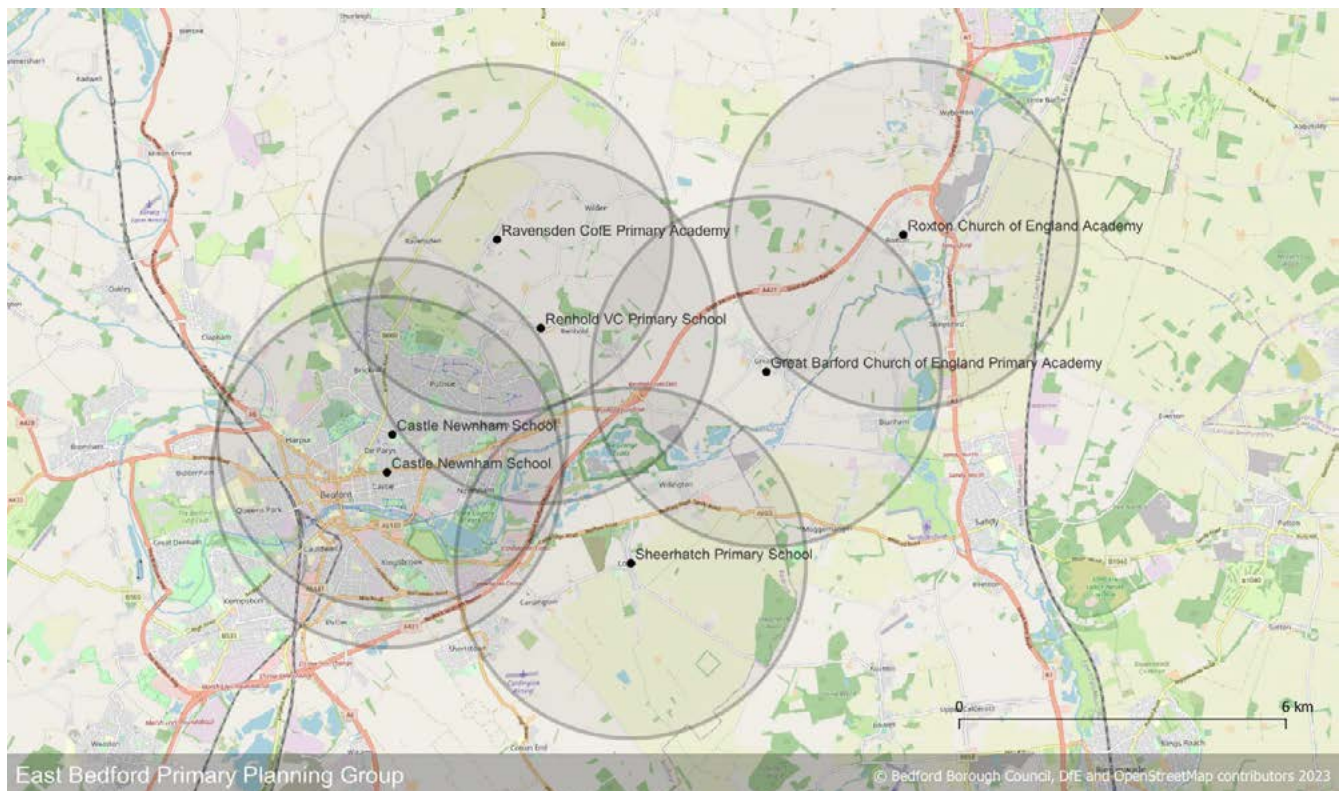
Commentary

- Some schools in this planning area are operating slightly below their capacity which reduces surplus places in the system and allows the schools to operate more efficiently.
- Westfield Primary School, for example, capped numbers of pupils in one year group to 30 places, thereby reducing surplus places in the system and accounting for the difference in capacities in 2025/26 and 2026/27.
- The West Bedford planning area is operating with less than the minimum 5% surplus capacity recommended by the DfE and by 2029/30 this surplus is likely to reduce to 0%.

East Bedford

- Great Barford CE Primary Academy (PAN 30)
- Ravensden CE Primary School (PAN 15)
- Renhold VC Primary School (PAN 30)
- Roxton VA CE Academy (PAN 15)
- Sheerhatch Primary School (Cople campus)* (PAN 30)
- Sheerhatch Primary School (Willington campus)*
- Wilden CE VA Primary School (PAN 12)

* Sheerhatch is one primary school with one admission number. It operates from two campuses; juniors are based on the Cople campus and infants on the Willington campus.



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 2-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Reception places available: 132

East Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR	80	71	70	73	86
Capacity	132	132	132	132	132
Surplus / Deficit	52	61	62	59	46
Surplus / Deficit %	39%	47%	47%	44%	35%

Total capacity: 924

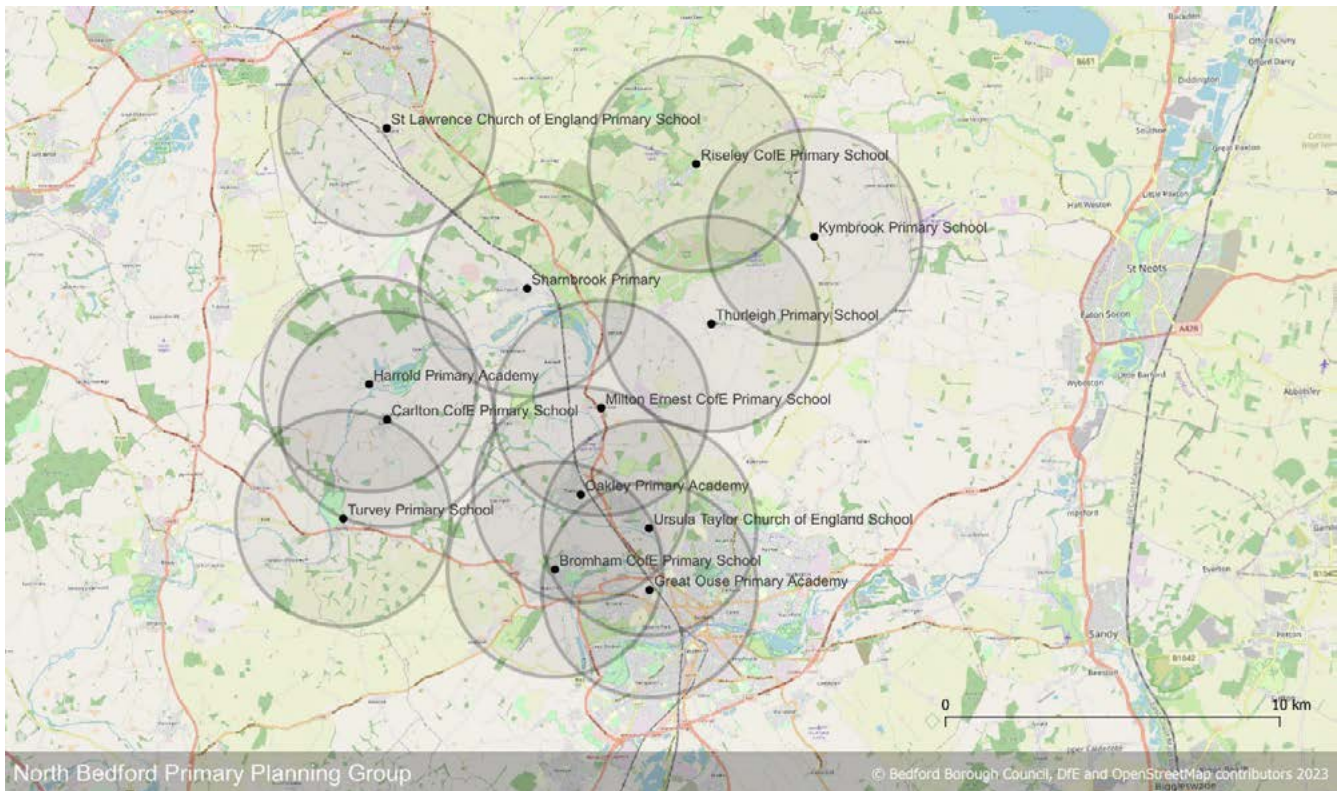
East Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR - Y6	631	623	617	617	699
Capacity	924	924	924	924	924
Surplus / Deficit	293	301	307	307	225
Surplus / Deficit %	32%	33%	33%	33%	24%

Commentary

- Some schools in this planning area are operating below their capacity. East Bedford

North Bedford

- Bromham CE Primary School (PAN 90)
- Carlton CE Primary School (PAN 15)
- Christopher Reeves Primary School (PAN 15)
- Eileen Wade Primary School (PAN 10)
- Great Ouse Primary Academy (PAN 60)
- Harrold Primary Academy (PAN 30)
- Kymbrook Primary School (PAN 15)
- Milton Ernest CE Primary School (PAN 12)
- Oakley Primary Academy (PAN 40)
- Pinchmill Primary School (PAN 15)
- Riseley CE Primary School (PAN 28)
- Sharnbrook Primary School (PAN 30)
- St Lawrence CE Primary School (PAN 30)
- Thurleigh Primary School (PAN 15)
- Turvey Primary School (PAN 15)
- Ursula Taylor CE School (PAN 60)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 2-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Reception places available: 480

North Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR	336	303	307	312	306
Capacity	480	480	480	480	480
Surplus / Deficit	144	177	173	168	174
Surplus / Deficit %	30%	37%	36%	35%	36%

Total capacity: 3360

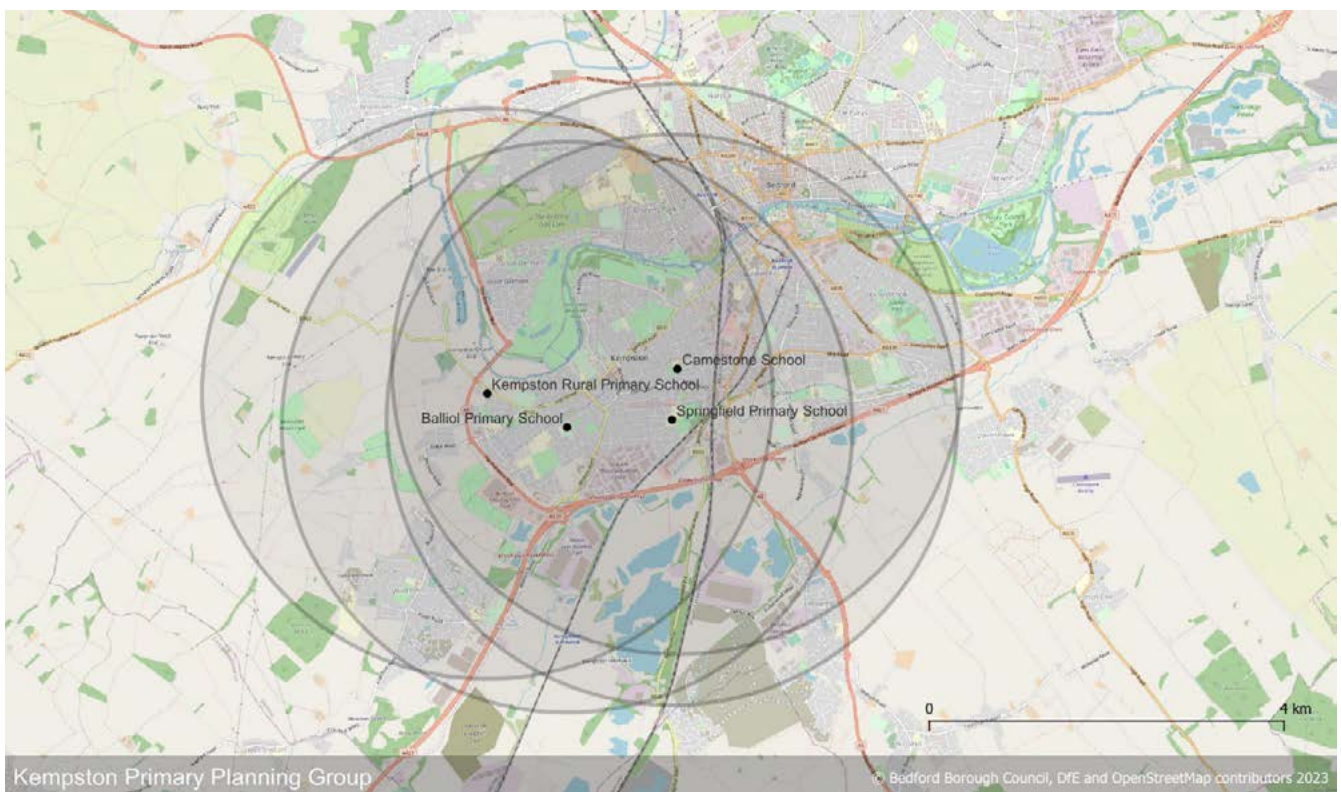
North Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR - Y6	2623	2647	2676	2661	2656
Capacity	3330	3330	3330	3345	3360
Surplus / Deficit	707	683	654	684	704
Surplus / Deficit %	21%	21%	20%	20%	21%

Commentary

- The northern part of the North Bedford planning area is very rural and many of the schools in this area are small. Towards the south of the area the schools are generally larger.
- A large housing development of circa 500 homes near Clapham will add to demand for places in the area.
- A large housing development of circa 500 homes near Sharnbrook will necessitate increased capacity to ensure children can access local school places. There are plans to increase the existing Sharnbrook Primary School to become a 2 form entry primary school to accommodate the growth from this new development, however, this additional capacity should only be created when there is a clear and real demand for school places so as to avoid negatively impacting other local schools.
- There is lots of surplus capacity within the North Bedford schools, however, not all of this is in the areas where it is needed. Many of the smaller schools serve rural communities and primary schools with surplus capacity are further away from pupils' homes than the maximum statutory walking distance permitted.

Kempston

- Balliol Primary School (PAN 52)
- Bedford Road Primary Academy (PAN 60)
- Camestone Primary School (PAN 60)
- Kempston Rural Primary School (PAN 60)
- Springfield Primary School (PAN 60)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 2-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Reception places available: 292

Kempston	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR	250	200	250	235	233
Capacity	292	292	292	292	292
Surplus / Deficit	42	92	42	57	59
Surplus / Deficit %	14%	31%	14%	20%	20%

Total capacity: 2044

Kempston	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR - Y6	1858	1814	1824	1792	1777
Capacity	2044	2044	2044	2044	2044
Surplus / Deficit	186	230	220	252	267
Surplus / Deficit %	9%	11%	11%	12%	13%

Commentary

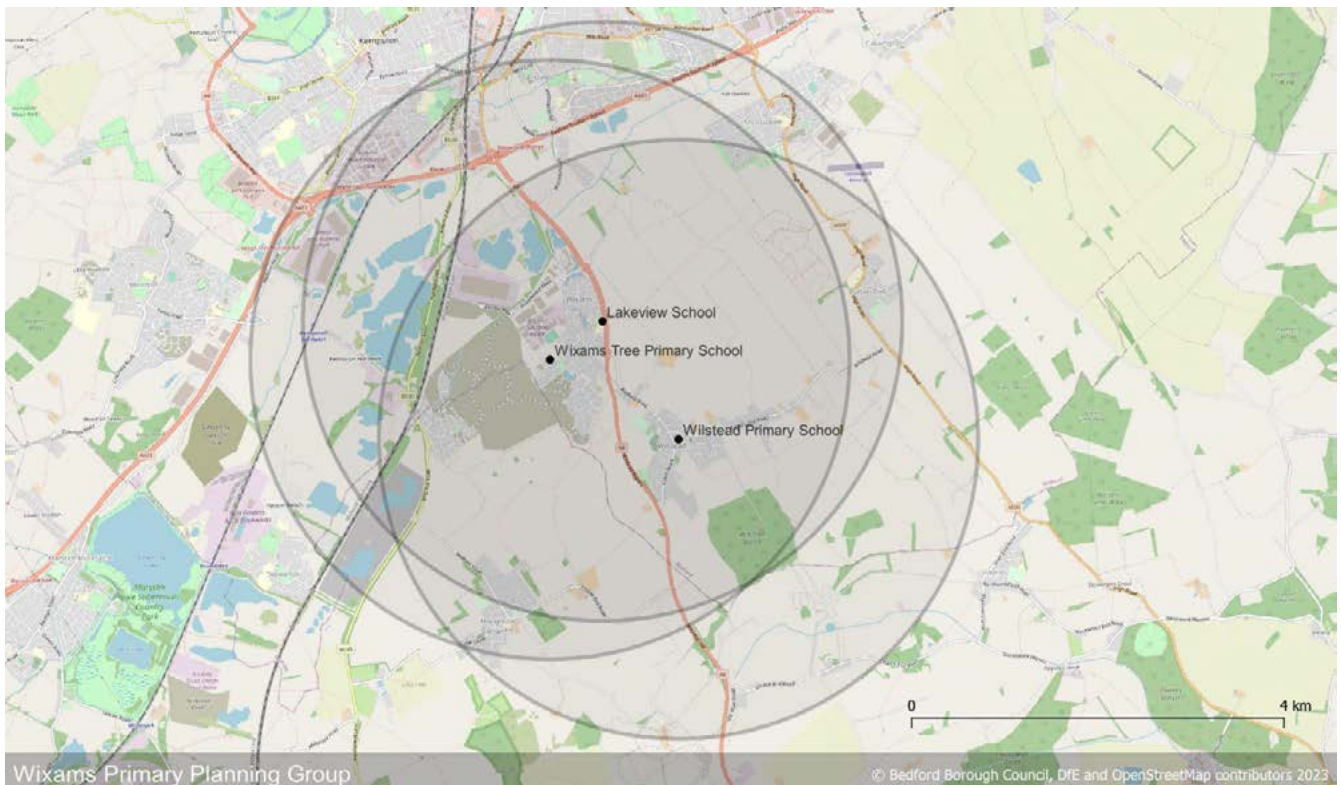
- Currently no actions planned.

Wixams

- Lakeview School (PAN 60)
- Wilstead Primary School (PAN 30)
- Willow Grove Primary School (PAN 25)*
- Wixams Tree Primary School (PAN 90)

* The new Willow Grove Primary free school serving Wixams opened in September 2024.

Its admissions number will be 25 initially, increasing to 120 as Wixams is built out over coming years.



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 2-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Reception places available: 205 in September 2024 rising to 300

Wixams	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR	169	154	145	146	143
Capacity	205	205	205	205	205
Surplus / Deficit	36	51	60	59	62
Surplus / Deficit %	17%	25%	29%	29%	30%

Total capacity: 1390 rising to 1435

Wixams	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR - Y6	1499	1574	1606	1597	1301
Capacity	1390	1390	1390	1435	1435
Surplus / Deficit	-109	-184	-216	-162	134
Surplus / Deficit %	-8%	-13%	-16%	-11%	9%

Commentary

- A one form entry expansion of Wixams Tree Primary provided an additional 30 Reception places in 2023 and 210 additional places overall.
- Willow Grove Primary School opened in September 2024 which initially added a further 25 Reception, Year 1 & 2 places but which could increase to 120 Reception places and 840 school places overall based on a phased opening programme.
- The timeline of increasing available pupil places will predominantly be determined by the build rate of houses within the Wixams villages and additional residential development sites in Central Bedfordshire which are also coming forward.
- The sites in Central Bedfordshire are expected to provide their own education provision in time, however, initially education needs arising from these sites may be met through the new Willow Grove Primary School.



Catholic Federation

- St John Rigby Catholic Primary School (PAN 60)
- St Joseph's & St Gregory's Catholic Primary School (PAN 60)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 2-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Reception places available: 120

Catholic Federation	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR	62	61	61	61	61
Capacity	120	120	120	120	120
Surplus / Deficit	58	59	59	59	59
Surplus / Deficit %	48%	49%	49%	49%	49%

Total capacity: 2044

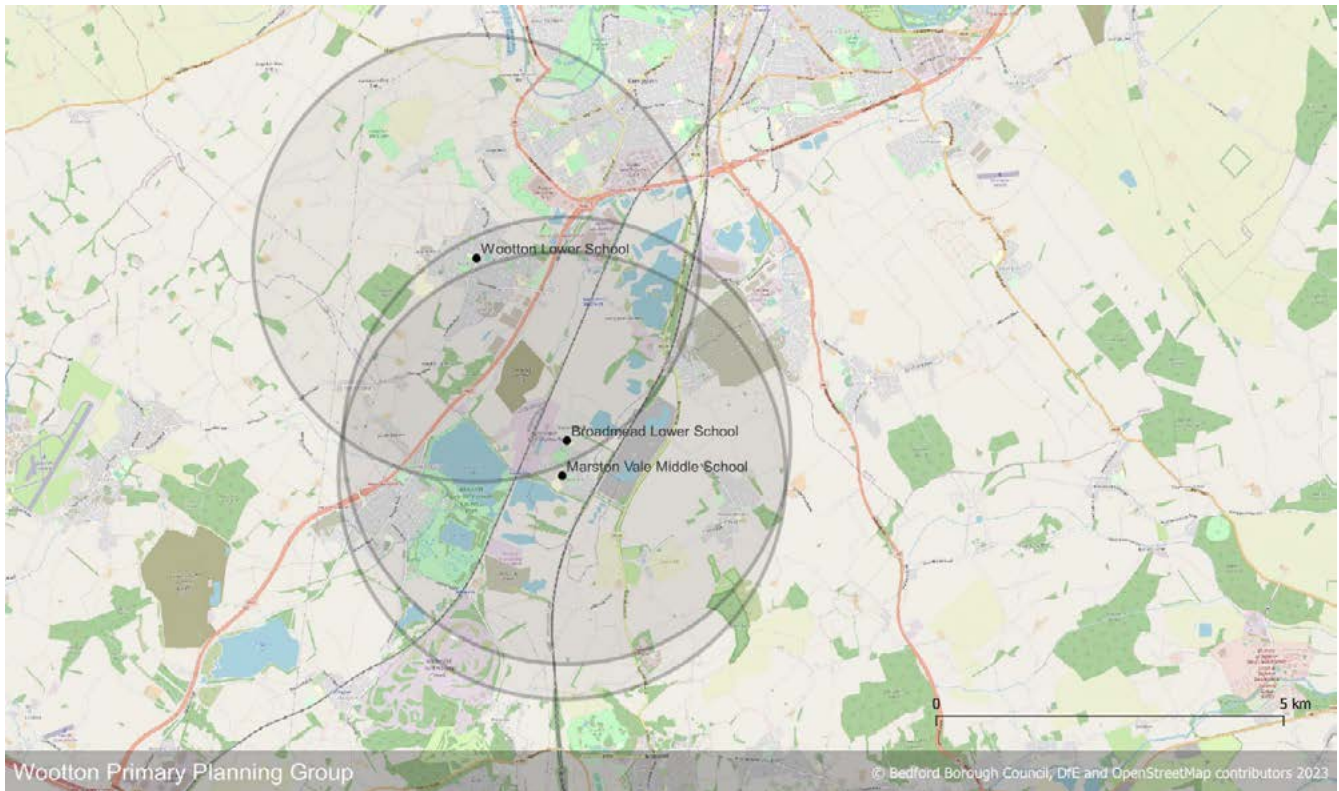
Catholic Federation	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR - Y6	840	1814	1824	1792	1777
Capacity	2044	2044	2044	2044	2044
Surplus / Deficit	186	230	220	252	267
Surplus / Deficit %	9%	11%	11%	12%	13%

Commentary

- Decreasing numbers of applications for the two schools in this planning area may necessitate a review of PAN.
- These schools may be able to admit pupils who are unable to secure a place at nearby schools as the local population grows.

Wootton

- Broadmead Lower School – entry point YR (PAN 60)
- Wootton Lower School – entry point YR (PAN 120)
- Marston Vale Middle School - entry point Y5 (PAN 150)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 2-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Reception places available: 180

Year 5 places available: 150

Wootton	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR	152	142	150	148	147
Capacity	180	180	180	180	180
Surplus / Deficit	28	38	30	32	33
Surplus / Deficit %	16%	21%	17%	18%	18%

Total capacity: 1320 reducing to 1260

Wootton	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast YR - Y6	1160	1173	1147	1131	1123
Capacity	1320	1350	1260	1260	1260
Surplus / Deficit	160	177	113	129	137
Surplus / Deficit %	12%	13%	9%	10%	11%

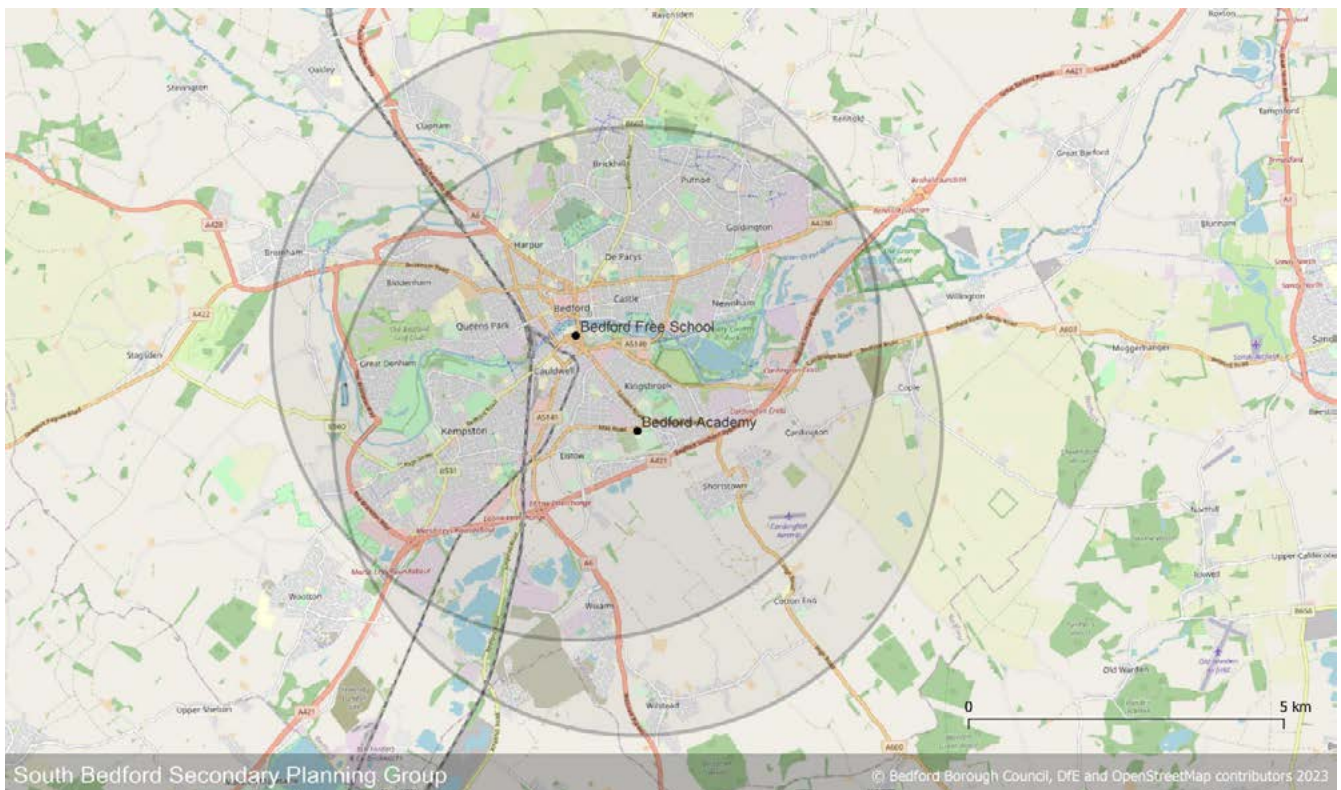
Commentary

- While displayed as primary and secondary, this planning group currently operates a three-tier system, due to be reorganised to a two-tier system in phases from 2025.
- Wootton Lower School will increase its age range, becoming a primary school, and children from this school will likely transfer at Y7 to Wootton Academy (formerly Wootton Upper School).
- Broadmead Lower School and Marston Vale Middle School will become Stewartby Primary School.
- Many pupils cross the border with Central Bedfordshire in both directions.
- Linked proposals for reorganisation to a two-tier school system are being taken forward in the neighbouring Cranfield area in Central Bedfordshire.
- Some schools in the area are not yet operating at their capacity, however, this will be impacted by the timelines of the Central Bedfordshire school reorganisation and the numbers of pupils still attending schools across the border in both directions.

Secondary

South Bedford

- Bedford Academy (PAN 224 increasing to 300)
- Bedford Free School (PAN 100)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 3-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Year 7 places available: 400

South Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7	377	390	407	431	426
Capacity	400	400	400	400	400
Surplus / Deficit	23	10	-7	-31	-26
Surplus / Deficit %	6%	3%	-2%	-8%	-7%

This number of Year 7 places is based on the sum of PANs for all schools in the planning area.

The total forecast is the sum of the base forecast and new housing pupil yield. To allow some flexibility of parental preference, it is recommended by the DfE to aim for a surplus of 5%.

Total capacity: 1820 increasing to 2000

South Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7 - Y11	1812	1881	1940	2018	2078
Capacity	1820	1910	2000	2000	2000
Surplus / Deficit	8	29	60	-18	-78
Surplus / Deficit %	0%	2%	3%	-1%	-4%

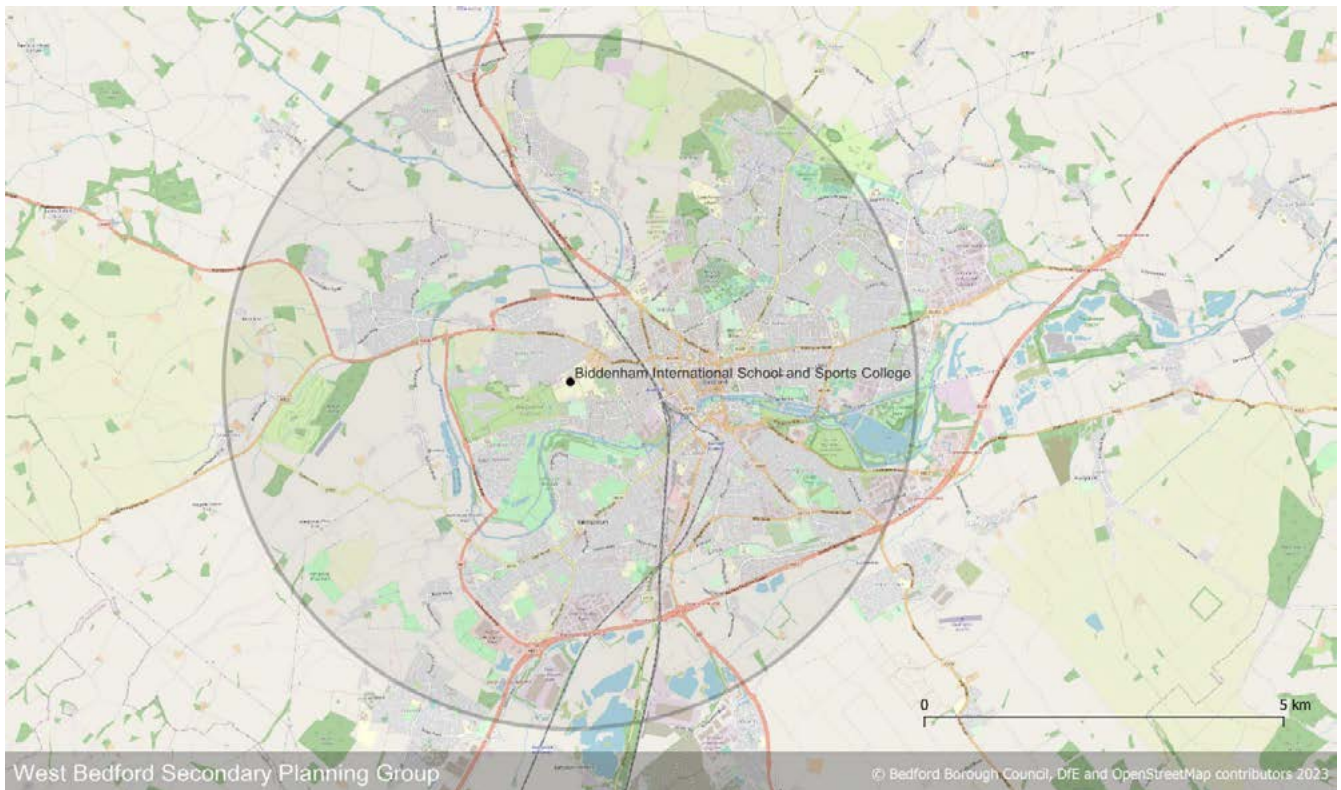
The total capacity is the number of places available based on the schools PAN multiplied by the number of year groups. In secondary, this is Year 7 to 11.

Commentary

- This planning group combines the previous South Bedford and Bedford Free School planning groups.
- Bedford Academy PAN is 224, however they took a 'bulge' year 7 intake of 270, to support oversubscription for 2023/24 and did so again in 2024/25.
- Expansion at Bedford Academy will provide an additional 1FE Year 7 places in 2025/26, bringing the Y7 capacity to 300 places.
- Following a review of admissions patterns (to be completed) consideration will be given to timing for increasing the school capacity to 10FE in each year group.

West Bedford

- Biddenham International School & Sports College (PAN 240)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 3-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Year 7 places available: 240

West Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7	263	271	290	287	289
Capacity	240	240	240	240	240
Surplus / Deficit	-23	-31	-50	-47	-49
Surplus / Deficit %	-10%	-13%	-21%	-20%	-20%

Total capacity: 1200

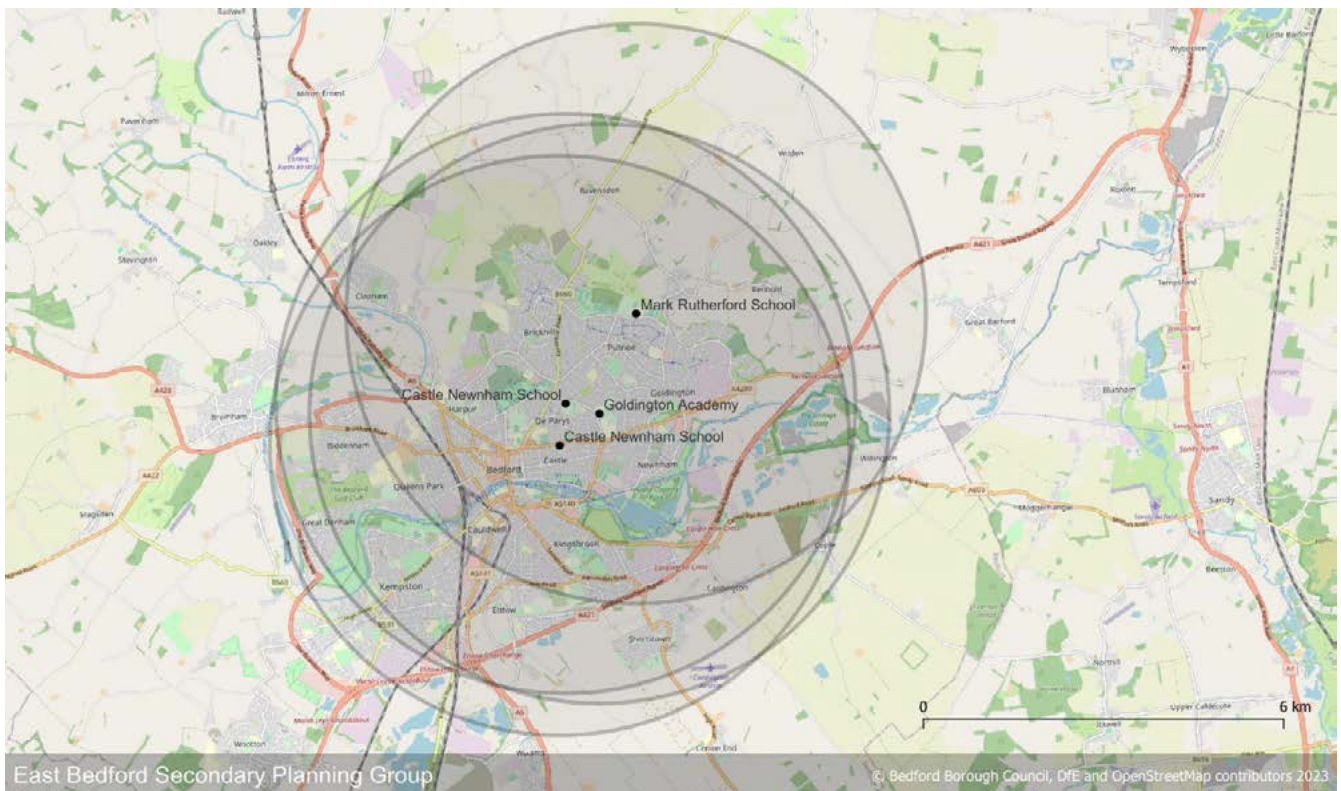
West Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7 - Y11	1279	1323	1360	1414	1438
Capacity	1200	1200	1200	1200	1200
Surplus / Deficit	-79	-123	-160	-214	-238
Surplus / Deficit %	-7%	-10%	-13%	-18%	-20%

Commentary

- An expansion of the school increased its capacity in 2023/24, enabling it to admit 240 pupils into Year 7.
- Following a review of capacity and admissions patterns (to be completed), further expansion may be required.
- There is a proposed new Free School allocated to Bedford Borough that is currently under review by the DfE. This Free School was proposed to open in 2027 and would be located within the West Bedford Planning area.

East Bedford

- Castle Newnham School (PAN 150)
- Goldington Academy (PAN 168)
- Mark Rutherford School (PAN 200)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 3-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Year 7 places available: 518

East Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7	583	547	562	562	582
Capacity	518	518	518	518	518
Surplus / Deficit	-65	-29	-44	-44	-64
Surplus / Deficit %	-13%	-6%	-9%	-8%	-12%

Total capacity: 2590

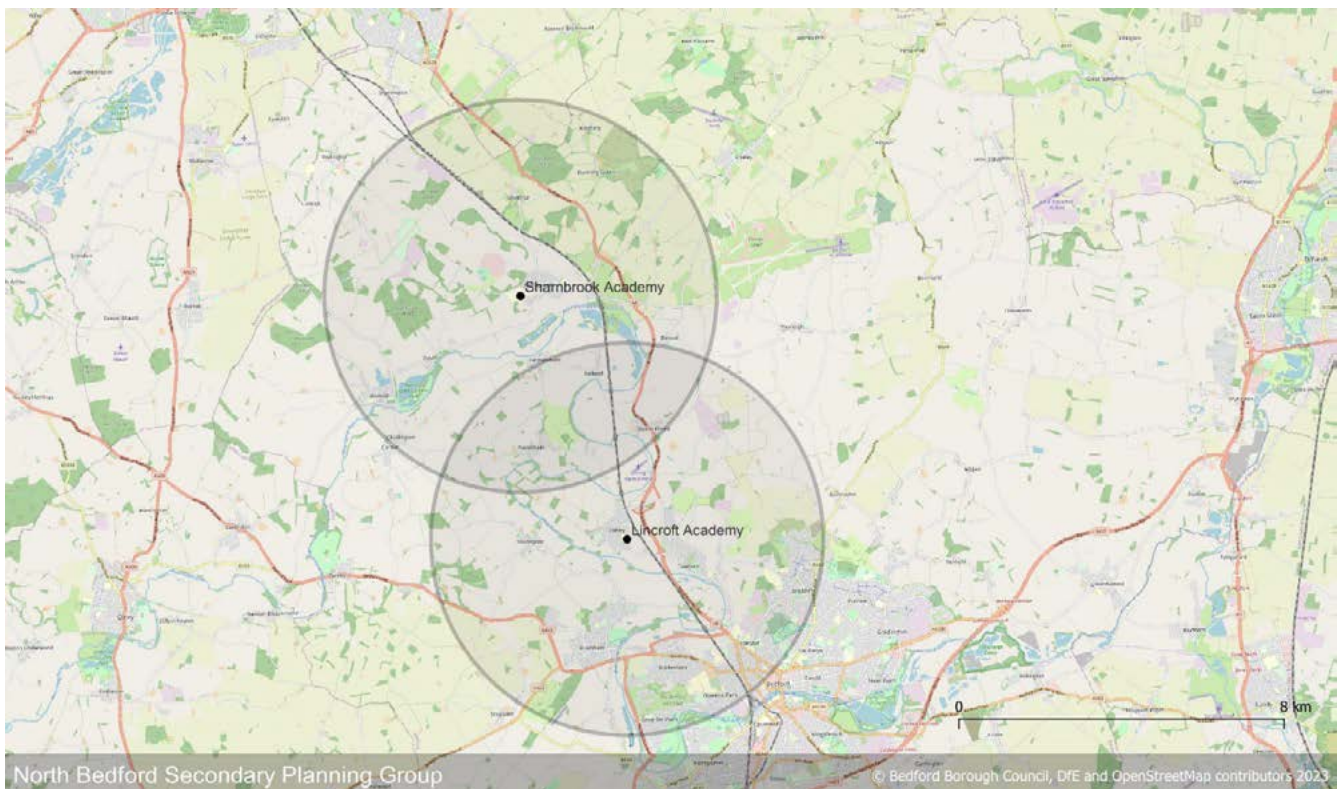
East Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7 - Y11	2807	2787	2782	2814	2880
Capacity	2590	2590	2590	2590	2590
Surplus / Deficit	-217	-197	-192	-224	-290
Surplus / Deficit %	-8%	-8%	-7%	-9%	-11%

Commentary

- Currently no actions planned.
- Mark Rutherford has admitted over PAN in recent years within its existing accommodation; a recent capacity analysis indicates sufficient capacity in the buildings to continue to do so.
- Goldington Academy has also admitted up to 186 per year group in recent years to support oversubscription from catchment children.

North Bedford

- Lincroft Academy (PAN 210)
- Sharnbrook Academy (PAN 270)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 3-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Year 7 places available: 510

North Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7	438	425	497	505	485
Capacity	510	510	510	510	510
Surplus / Deficit	72	85	13	5	25
Surplus / Deficit %	14%	17%	3%	1%	5%

Total capacity: 2550

North Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7 - Y11	2194	2170	2252	2335	2397
Capacity	2550	2550	2550	2550	2550
Surplus / Deficit	356	380	298	215	153
Surplus / Deficit %	14%	15%	12%	8%	6%

Commentary

- There is a proposed development of 500 homes in Clapham which will have an impact on demand for secondary school places at Lincroft Academy.
- Works are underway to increase capacity at Lincroft by 1FE, increasing its PAN to 240 with the additional places available from September 2025.
- Forecasts identify that additional school places are required to support residential development at Bromham and Clapham.
- A large number of pupils currently at schools in this planning group are from out-of-borough, particularly North Northamptonshire. Liaison with colleagues in that area are ongoing.



Commentary

- Available capacity in these schools has historically mitigated some of the deficits in secondary provision in neighbouring areas, however, this capacity is rapidly dwindling and across Y7-Y11 falls short of the DfE’s recommended minimum 5% surplus.
- In 2023/24 there was a consultation to close Daubeney Secondary and merge with Kempston Academy. Bedford Borough Council agreed to provide some capital funding to enable Daubeney to improve its facilities and remain open as the merging of the two schools would have removed any additional capacity within the Kempston planning area.
- Kempston Academy has the capacity to increase to 210 per year group which will mitigate the growing demand within this planning area.

Wixams

- Wixams Academy (PAN 210 rising to 300)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 3-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Year 7 places available: 210 rising to 300

Wixams	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7	239	274	293	311	348
Capacity	240	270	300	300	300
Surplus / Deficit	1	-4	7	-11	-48
Surplus / Deficit %	1%	-2%	2%	-4%	-16%

Total capacity: 1050 rising to 1500

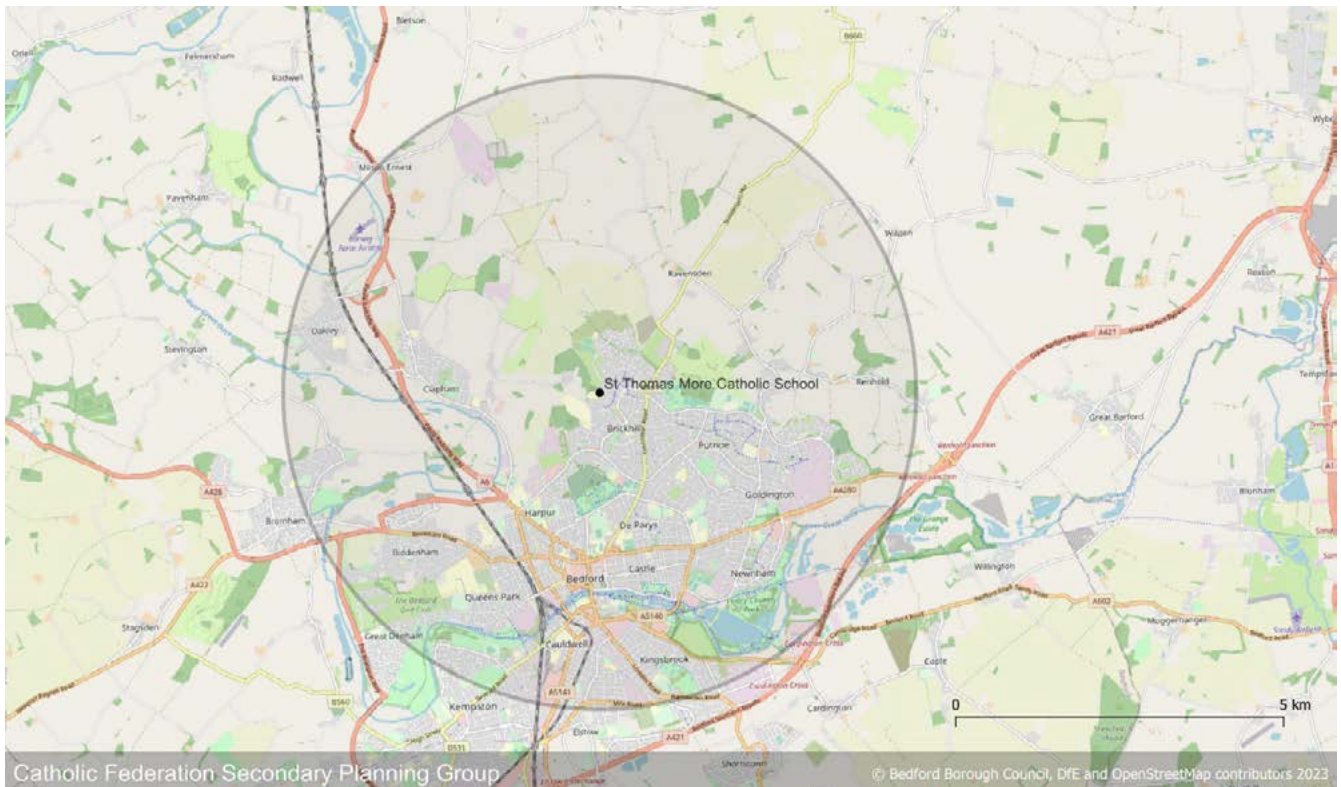
Wixams	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7 - Y11	1153	1305	1435	1522	1653
Capacity	1200	1350	1500	1500	1500
Surplus / Deficit	47	45	65	-22	-153
Surplus / Deficit %	4%	3%	4%	-1%	-10%

Commentary

- In response to continued housing development a 6FE expansion was implemented, increasing the PAN and capacity of the school in 2023/24 and again in 2024/25.
- The school is planned to grow from the bottom up, eventually offering 300 places per year group. This timing of opening additional classes will be dependent upon an annual review of applications and admissions data.
- Pupils continue to access the school from out of area, particularly from Central Bedfordshire, and so the remaining deficits forecast are not anticipated to lead to a lack of spaces for local pupils. Over time the proportion of local children attending the secondary school is likely to increase as further new housing is developed.

Catholic Federation

- St Thomas More Catholic School (PAN 150)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 3-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Year 7 places available: 150

Catholic Federation	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7	137	133	138	135	126
Capacity	150	150	150	150	150
Surplus / Deficit	13	17	12	15	24
Surplus / Deficit %	9%	11%	8%	10%	16%

Total capacity: 750

Catholic Federation	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7 - Y11	722	712	702	692	677
Capacity	750	750	750	750	750
Surplus / Deficit	28	38	48	58	73
Surplus / Deficit %	4%	5%	6%	8%	10%

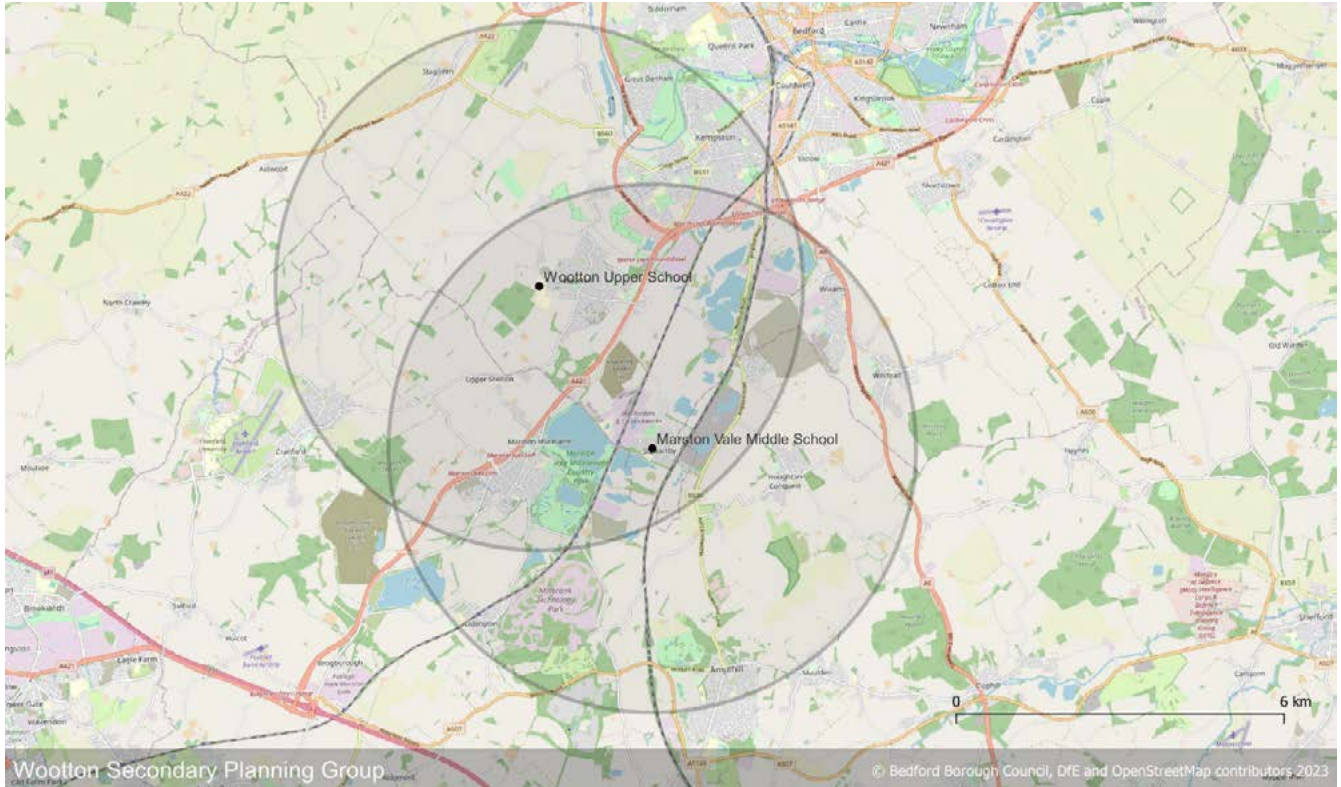
Commentary

- Currently no actions planned.
- St Thomas More Catholic School has in the past admitted students as the next nearest school when Mark Rutherford School has been oversubscribed.
- St Thomas More is also located to the north of Biddenham School’s catchment, therefore the surplus capacity can also help address any shortfall of places in West Bedford secondary planning area.



Wootton

- Marston Vale Middle School - Y7 and Y8 only (PAN 150)
- Wootton Upper School (becoming Wootton Academy) – entry point Y9 (PAN 297)



N.B. Each school is at the centre of a 3-mile radius circle indicating the likely area served. It does not indicate the catchment of the school.

Year 7 places available: 150 rising to 270 (upon change to ‘two-tier system’)

Wootton	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7	169	147	184	175	183
Capacity	150	150	270	270	270
Surplus / Deficit	-19	3	86	95	87
Surplus / Deficit %	-13%	2%	32%	35%	32%

Total capacity: 1191 rising to 1350

Wootton	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Forecast Y7 - Y11	1249	1259	1303	1341	1358
Capacity	1191	1164	1257	1350	1350
Surplus / Deficit	-58	-95	-46	9	-8
Surplus / Deficit %	-5%	-8%	-4%	1%	-1%

Commentary

- While displayed as primary and secondary, this planning group currently operates a three-tier system, due to be reorganised to a two-tier system in 2025. These plans have been developed with Central Bedfordshire Council and the schools and academies in the area.
- The capacity shown is based on the planned phased changes to PAN during the transition period.
- Marston Vale will cease to be a middle school, and instead will become the primary school for Stewartby and the surrounding area. Wootton Upper School will become a secondary school, Wootton Secondary Academy, admitting pupils at Year 7 rather than Year 9.
- Holywell Middle School in Cranfield, Central Bedfordshire, will become a secondary school with proposals to take its first Year 9 cohort in September 2026.
- The likely effect is that in time Wootton Secondary Academy would mainly serve Bedford children, 3FE of those Central Bedfordshire children closest to the border, while Holywell Secondary would mainly serve children living in the Cranfield area.
- The opening of Y7 classes may be phased and will be determined based upon an annual review of applications and admissions data.
- The need for additional places will be heavily impacted by the timing of the reorganisation to a two-tier school system in Central Bedfordshire.



Planned Projects and Exploring Options

To ensure that plans for expansion of school capacity can be effectively implemented, a process of viability assessments of potential projects is undertaken to ensure that best value can be achieved.

At times of falling rolls the Council can make proposals for removing surplus places to ensure schools remain viable. Falling rolls are starting to be seen in the primary phase across multiple planning areas. The impact of falling rolls, due to falling birth rates, is mitigated by significant housing growth within development areas of Bedford Borough. Some schools in rural areas, where there is no or limited new residential development, are forecast to find their numbers decreasing.

Primary Schools

1. Merge/reduce PAN/combine year groups to reduce surplus capacity in North Bedford schools.
2. Site identified for expansion of existing school in Sharnbrook village to 2FE.
3. Great Barford Primary School – increase to 2FE to support 500 houses in GBNP.

Secondary Schools

Existing programme of work for 2025/26:

- a. Expansion of Bedford Academy to 300 PAN.
- b. Expansion of Lincroft Academy to 240 PAN.

Possible options for 2026/27 and beyond:

1. Bedford Free School expansion:
 - a. The central location of this school will support growth from both the South and West of Bedford Borough. Section 106 contributions from developers will be used towards the expansion of Bedford Free School.
2. New free school within the West Bedford planning area:
 - a. If this is not forthcoming then we will need to revisit whether there is capacity within Biddenham School for further expansion, however the schools governing body have indicated that they are not keen to expand beyond the current PAN.

Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities (SEND)

Bedford Borough Council is responsible for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who live in the Borough. Wherever possible, pupils with special educational needs are educated within mainstream schools. The benefits of this approach include maximising the opportunity for children and young people to be included within their local community, often minimises journey time to school and enables pupils to spend more time with their peers and families.

Some children are placed in schools outside Bedford Borough at their parents' request. This can be in a maintained or academy special school or, in some cases, at an independent or non-maintained special school. There may also be children living outside Bedford Borough who have been placed in a Bedford Borough school by their home local authority.

There are various levels of SEND. The level that is of particular interest in this plan is that of children with an education health and care plan (EHCP). This is produced following a multi-disciplinary professional assessment including parents, where children's needs require additional resources that cannot be met within the normal budget of a mainstream school.

The categories of SEND used by the DfE are:

- **Cognition and learning:** includes children who learn at a slower pace than their peers, and those with specific learning difficulties (SpLD), moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD).
- **Communication and interaction:** includes speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and autistic spectrum condition (ASC).
- **Social, emotional, and mental health:** includes children who may be withdrawn or isolated, as well as those displaying challenging behaviours.
- **Sensory and/or physical needs:** includes children with a disability that prevents or hinders them from making full use of general educational facilities e.g. hearing impairment (HI), visual impairment (VI), multisensory impairment (MSI) and/or physical difficulties (PD).

The most common type of need for those with an EHCP in Bedford Borough is autism spectrum condition. There have also been noticeable increases nationally in the number of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and social, emotional and mental health needs.

Sometimes an EHCP will result in additional local authority funded support in a mainstream school. Other times, it may result in a place in a special school. Some mainstream schools have resourced units designed and funded to meet the needs of children with a particular need, such as autism or sensory impairment.

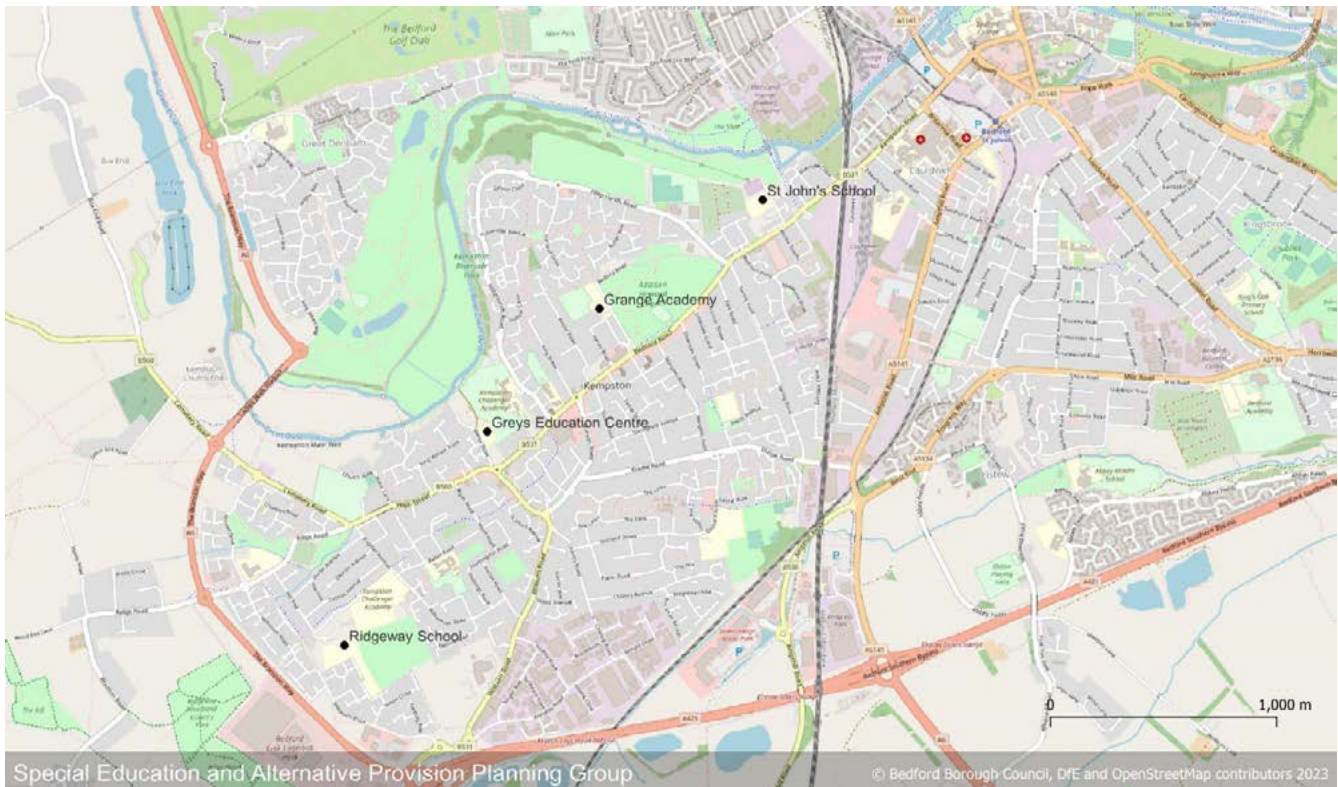
Over the past decade, the number of children with SEND requiring EHCPs has increased in Bedford Borough and across the country. Over 1.6 million pupils in England have special educational needs. This has increased by 101,000 since 2023 and includes both those children with an EHCP and those with SEND support. There are now 434,354 pupils in England with an EHCP, an increase of 11.6% from 2023 (DfE, June 2024). Pupils with an EHCP now comprise 4.8% of pupils in the country (up from 4.3% in 2023).

Within Bedford Borough schools, in the summer of 2024 there were 1504 pupils with EHCPs, forming 4.9% of the whole school population. There are currently 2146 EHCP's in total for children and young people aged 0-25 in Bedford Borough. BBC will endeavour to continue making progress in enabling children and young people who require specialist provision to be educated within the mainstream sector wherever possible, and in the most appropriate settings.

Analysis of data shows that of the 1899 pupils with EHCPs, 24.3% attend special schools (although this figure will increase with the opening of Rivertree Free School) and 51.8% attend mainstream schools and academies or specialist units located within them.

The majority of Bedford children with SEND access their learning in a mainstream school. However, there are a significant number of children whose special needs cannot be wholly met in a mainstream setting. In such circumstance these pupils may be educated in one of our four special schools, our six enhanced resource bases at other schools outside of Bedford Borough or in one of our alternative provision settings.

- Grange Academy
- Ridgeway School
- St John's School



Based on national and local trends, we expect that in future years the number of pupils requiring access to specialist provision may increase. Increasing the capacity of special needs facilities requires a much greater scale of investment per pupil place than for mainstream education, due to its specialist nature. However, such investment, although sizeable, can lead to a significant reduction in revenue expenditure - by reducing the requirement to fund high-cost placements in the independent school sector. Reducing these revenue costs and ensuring value for money has continued to be an ongoing priority for BBC.

To this end, capital works have been ongoing to deliver a new special free school, Rivertree Free School in Kempston, which will be run by the Bedford Inclusive Learning & Training Trust (BILTT). This new special school opens in January 2025 and will serve 200 pupils aged 2 to 19 years old. Pupils attending this new school will predominantly have profound and multiple learning disabilities, severe learning disabilities and autism.

Alternative Provision

Alternative provision is commissioned by schools or local authorities when pupils are not able to access mainstream education provision. This may be due to a child being permanently excluded, at risk of exclusion or due to complex medical, social or emotional needs. It is vital that the educational needs of the pupil are met in the most suitable setting to enable continuity of support and prevent disadvantage to the learner.

Greys Education Centre (run by BILTT) offers primary (Bromham campus) and secondary provision (Kempston campus) for permanently excluded pupils and hospital education. The HIVE is based at the Bromham campus for primary children with an EHCP who have SEMH needs.

The Virtual School is an additional service for children and young people in public care and in need of a social worker, providing support to improve their educational achievements and raise aspiration. The Virtual School is responsible for Bedford's children in care educated locally or out of authority, as well as those in care to other authorities placed in Bedford.

BBC is committed to developing the work of the behaviour partnerships, in the belief that alternative provision is most successful when provided in local settings and will therefore explore ways that we might build upon current arrangements. This will include working with those schools that might wish to establish their own alternative provision arrangements on site.



Early Years

Early years provision refers to all provision for children below school age. Children reach statutory school age the term after their fifth birthday. In Bedford they usually start school in Reception in the September before their fifth birthday.

Early years provision includes:

- Childminders – these are usually people who look after children in their own home.
- Day nurseries – these are usually commercial services run from dedicated premises. Some large employers provide day nurseries.
- Nursery classes in schools – these are run by schools, although applications for a reception place still need to be made for children in nursery classes.
- Pre-schools – these are usually run by voluntary associations of parents and others. They may use community halls or have premises on a school site. Sometimes a school governing body may also run a pre-school.

Local authorities are required to ensure there is a sufficiency of early years places, although a large proportion of these are provided in the private or voluntary sector. The local authority is responsible for distributing funding for early years places.

New legislation has changed the entitlements of parents to government funded childcare.

These changes are listed below:

- All parents of children aged three to four can access 15 hours of government funded childcare per week.
- Working parents of three- to four-year-olds can access 30 hours of government funded childcare per week.
- Eligible working parents of two-year-olds are able to access 15 hours of government funded childcare per week.
- From September 2024, 15 hours of government funded childcare was extended to children aged 9 months and older.
- From September 2025, the entitlement becomes up to 30 hours of childcare for eligible working families with a child from 9 months up to school age.

A large proportion (45%) of surveyed parents in the Borough said they would like to increase the number of hours they were using childcare for and are keen to take up the extended funded entitlements to support them with work.

Within the Borough, there has been an increased demand for full daycare places, 30 hours childcare places and funded places for two-year-olds (aligned to the April 2024 expansion of the funding entitlement) and additional demand for childminders, particularly on Thursdays and Fridays.

Demand for places is expected to increase the most in South Bedford. Future demand for funded childcare places will particularly have to be monitored in the Wixams and Wilstead locality, where there is still set to be more construction of new dwellings throughout the remainder of the decade.

Another consideration is the provision of wraparound childcare within the Borough. Wraparound childcare is childcare before a school day and/or after a school day covering the period of 8am-6pm, not requiring parents to pick up their children and drop them off at another location. This is mainly delivered by local primary schools but does not include school-delivered clubs (e.g. football club).

Around 50% of primary schools in the Borough are experiencing an increase in demand for wraparound childcare, particularly for the 'breakfast club' offer and midweek (Tuesdays-Thursdays) with further increases expected.

Surveyed parents in the Borough stated that a nursery located at a primary school was their preferred choice of early years provision. Likewise, parental preference for wraparound care was also predominantly at a primary school and the demand is expected to be highest in South Bedford.

Challenges are faced in meeting the existing and forecast increased demand for early years provision with childcare providers/settings citing ongoing issues concerning the recruitment and retention of staff as the key obstacle. Around 30% of surveyed primary schools in the Borough believed there was scope to increase the capacity of their wraparound childcare, however, concerns also surround financial viability due to additional staffing costs, fluctuating demand and lack of suitable space within the school.



Post-16

The LA has the duty to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training. It therefore has the responsibility to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people in the Borough who are over compulsory school age but under 19 or aged 19 to 25 and for whom an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is maintained. The Council works with schools and colleges to ensure a strategic overview of provision and needs.

The Government policy Raising the Participation Age (RPA), states that young people who started education in year 11 (or the years below) in September 2013, must remain in some form of education or training until 18 years old. This is to help young people fulfil their potential, regardless of their background or life circumstances. The statutory school leaving age has not changed. Young people will be able to leave school after year 11 and choose the post-16 option that is best for them. The available options include:

- Full-time education – such as school or college.
- An apprenticeship or traineeship.
- Part-time education or training - as well as being employed, self-employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week.

Some secondary schools in Bedford Borough have post-16 provision, whilst others cater for up to 16 years and the normal pathway from these schools is to attend sixth form at another school or at a sixth form college if students wish to remain in full-time education.



Large primary school cohorts are moving into secondary schools, therefore the demand for post-16 places is expected to increase as the secondary sector grows. However, the reduction currently being felt in the primary sector will feed through to the post 16 sector in time. Forecasts indicate that school-based sixth form provision across the Borough is sufficient to meet the expected demand over the duration of our timeline.

Total Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
Forecast Y12	722	775	821	851	878	915
Capacity	890	915	915	915	915	915
Surplus / Deficit	168	140	94	64	37	0
Surplus / Deficit %	19%	15%	10%	7%	4%	0%

Total Bedford	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
Forecast Y13	669	696	745	791	824	854
Capacity	865	890	915	915	915	915
Surplus / Deficit	196	194	170	124	91	61
Surplus / Deficit %	23%	22%	19%	14%	10%	7%

It must be noted that the table above does not include all pupils accessing post-16 provision; it only shows those pupils accessing post-16 provision in a Bedford Borough secondary school. Kimberley STEM College offers an additional 350 places per year group, with additional places available at Bedford College and Bedford Sixth Form (part of the Bedford College Group) and various providers within the independent sector.

Population projections from The Office for National Statistics indicate that the bulge population currently observed moving into the secondary phase will have moved into the post-16 phase by 2034, after which the populations of Bedford residents in each single year of age decrease. The demand for post-16 provision is expected to decrease as the population of 16- to 19-year-olds decreases.

Notes

Finding out more

If you would like further information about us and our services, please telephone, email or write to us at our address below.

Për Informacion

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برای اطلاع

Za Informacije

Per Informazione

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