

Schools for the Future – Potton Lower and Middle

Statutory Notice results

By

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1. Executive Summary

Purpose of consultation

Central Bedfordshire is a great place to live and work. That's why we expect the number of local residents and homes to grow in the coming years. Across our area, some 43,000 new homes are expected to be built by 2035 and that means a lot more school places will be needed.

Because of the changes, our local schools have been working together, with Central Bedfordshire Council, on a long-term plan to make sure we have:

- the right schools
- in the right places
- delivering the best education

The Schools for the Future programme held a five week and 5 days public consultation on proposed changes to schools in Potton, which was longer than the statutory minimum of 4 weeks.

The proposals and consultation were widely promoted to staff, Governors, parents and the wider community.

The response

The consultation ran from 4 March 2022 until 12 April 2022 and 32 responses were received.

How they accessed the questionnaire:

- 25 (78%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through the mobile version
- 5 (16%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through a pc/laptop
- 2 (6%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through the tablet version

The consultation also went to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny for consideration. The minutes from the meeting is included in Appendix A.

To make sense of the feedback received, we employed two types of analysis. We have looked at the headline quantitative measures, followed by coding of the free text comments into themes to help understand the sentiment behind respondents' agreement or disagreement with the proposals. The findings of the consultation are set out in the next section of this report.

Please note, all quotes are shown as received, so may contain spelling mistakes. Also, the percentages shown in the charts may not total 100% due to rounding.

Summary of Findings

Conclusion

The proposal to amalgamate Potton Lower and Potton Middle Schools had majority support (69%), with the comments received also being similarly supportive. There were queries about the impact on children at village schools that haven't yet transitioned into the 2-tier model of schooling (e.g. what would happen to children in year 4 at a lower school that would traditionally feed into Potton Middle if that option was removed), and about the changes happening at different times across the cluster.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny also endorsed the proposal for Potton Lower and Potton Middle schools.

There was broad support for the change to 2-tier as respondents highlighted that many other places have already changed to the 2-tier model of schooling.

Demographics of respondents

The demographics of respondents saw females, and those aged 30-44 over-represented. Ethnicity broadly followed the Central Bedfordshire figures, and those with disabilities were under-represented.

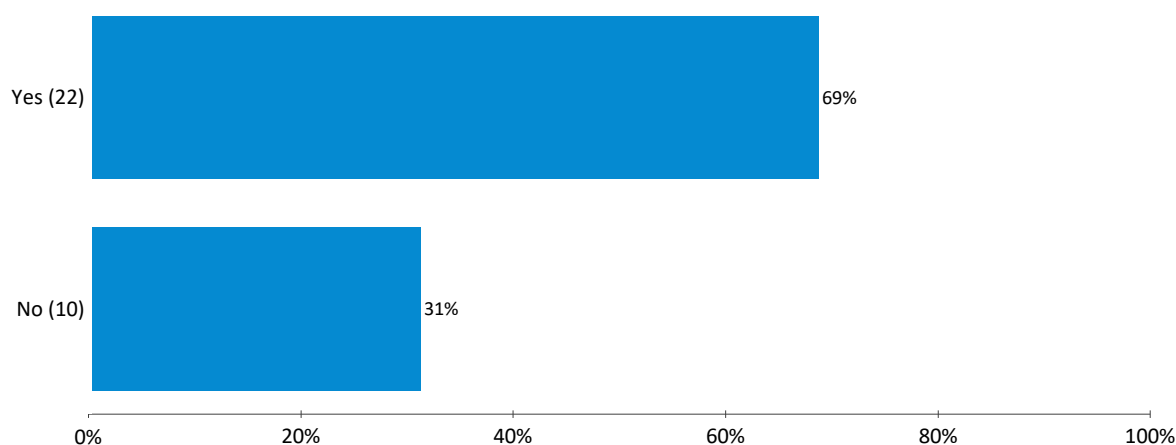
1. Detailed analysis of findings

The proposal

The proposal is to amalgamate Potton Lower and Potton Middle schools to create a 2 form of entry (2FE) Primary school with effect from 1 September 2023. This means extending Potton Lower School's age range (to include children from Reception age to year 6), and closing Potton Middle School.

Both permanent school buildings would be retained in order to provide the accommodation required for a primary school.

Do you support the proposal to amalgamate Potton Lower and Potton Middle schools?



69% of respondents supported the proposal to amalgamate Potton Lower and Potton Middle schools, with 31% not supporting the proposal.

In addition to this, Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny also endorsed the proposal.

Respondents were asked if they would like to make comments about the proposal. 11 chose to provide comments and they are summarised below. Despite the small number of comments, some common themes did emerge. They are broadly supportive of the proposal, but a few were concerned about the impact of children from the surrounding village schools that have not yet transitioned to the primary/secondary model:

Theme	No. of comments
Supportive of proposal	7
Comments about students from village schools that haven’t transitioned to the primary/secondary model yet	2
Other	3

Some examples of the comments received are:

Supportive of proposal

“Should have happened years ago.”

"I think it's lovely that the children can stay in the same school for longer before having to make it in a massive secondary school gives them the extra time to grow a little more and not be so frightened of the transaction into bigger school"

"This is the only option for Potton as all children go to Sandy or Cambridge schools and so numbers are tiny in y7 and y8 so the school is financially unviable. Changes to Sandy should have been planned with local schools years ago. The move to 2 tier has been poorly led."

"I believe children benefit educationally, mentally and emotionally much more by not being moved from school to school. It is totally unnecessary."

"This is a sensible move that should have been initiated sooner. As a governor involved in the same changes in Gamlingay nearly 5 years ago the evidence was compelling and it was what most parents wanted."

"This move makes sense given the lack of children in years 7&8. The commitment to using both sets of school buildings is also very welcome."

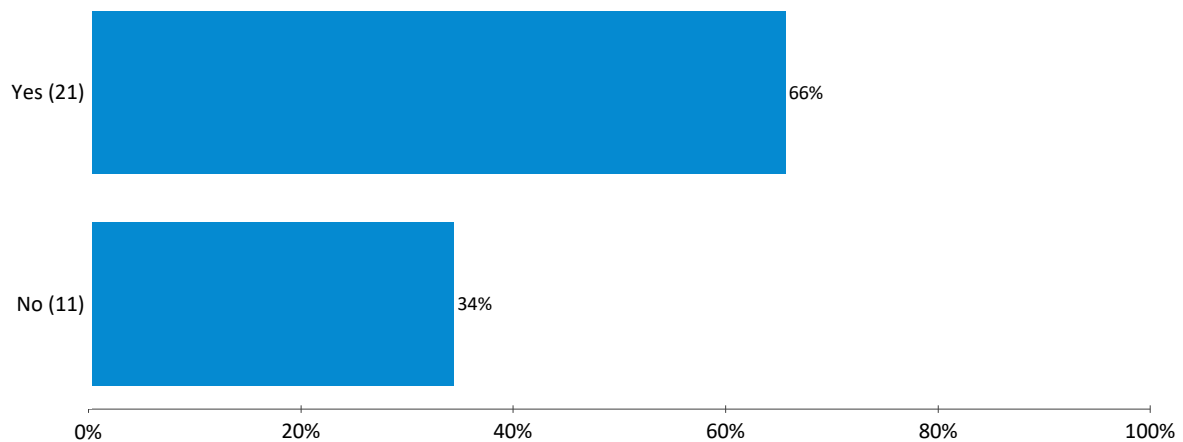
Comments about students from village schools that haven't transitioned to the primary/secondary model yet

"This would affect pupils at Wrestlingworth Lower School who would normally be going to Potton Middle and cause uncertainty about the sustainable future of schooling in Wrestlingworth."

"Whilst I support the changes in Potton, the impact upon the neighbouring village schools of not transitioning as a single cluster, especially upon children at Sutton and Wrestlingworth, where several pupils who live in the Potton area attend these village lower schools and would expect to (and historically have) feed into Potton Middle, has not been properly considered and provisioned for. Specific provision needs to be made for existing pupils at the nearby village lower schools (including Sutton and Wrestlingworth) who would previously feed into Potton Middle School at the end of year 4."

Educational landscape in Potton

Do you support the proposed change of educational landscape within Potton, in response to the pupil numbers in the area, and the move towards a primary/secondary model of schooling?



66% of respondents were supportive of the proposed change of educational landscape in Potton towards a primary/secondary model of schooling.

12 comments were received about the overall plan for Potton which covered a number of topics and they have been summarised below:

Theme	No. of comments
Supportive of 2 tier schooling	4
All of cluster should change together / impact of changing differently	2
Get on with the change	2
Supportive of 3 tier schooling	2
Other	6

Some examples of the comments received are:

Supportive of 2 tier schooling

"I agree with the two tier system, however believe a secondary school should be built in Potton to cater for Potton and surrounding smaller villages."

"Whilst I agree there is a need to convert Potton Lower and Middle to Potton Primary, as we move to a two tier structure, I don't see how this will facilitate the growing population in our area in years to come. I feel we will still find a shortage of school places vs the vast amount of housing being built. A longer term plan needs to be decided to accommodate ours, and the surrounding areas, growing numbers."

"Three tier education is now so uncommon, it makes sense for the Biggleswade cluster to also adapt,"

All of cluster should change together / impact of changing differently

"I think all the schools in our local area should be changing at the same time as potton, my son has additional needs and is due to move to middle school autumn 2023. He will

be very unsettled moving school, and he will have only just settled by the time he has to move yet again, and I'm sure he will not be alone. When the plan was initially discussed, we were told that he would more than likely not have to move, which is a big part of why I chose the school that he is in. The smaller form entry means that although his needs aren't profound enough to warrant an EHCP, he is extremely well supported where he is now, and I have very few options of where to move him next year. His class has already lost classmates who have moved to primary schools, and I'm sure that will continue if the school remains a lower school for much longer. Our school is ready to move to primary, as soon as the new classroom is built."

"The impact on the lower schools in the neighbouring villages and upon the children who attend these lower schools must be considered and provisioned for. What will happen to the current year 3 children at Sutton Lower School and Wrestlingworth Lower School?"

Get on with the change

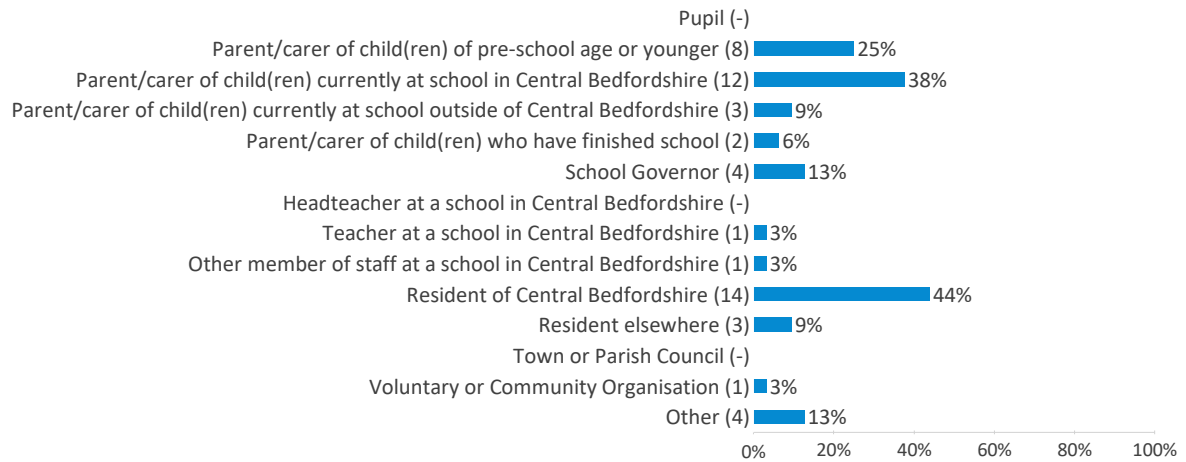
"A piecemeal approach is damaging to pupils and schools alike. If a 2 tier model is the future, which it seems to be, then why are the council faffing around?"

Supportive of 3 tier schooling

"The three tier system allows children more time to mature in a smaller environment. At 11 year olds I do not feel children should be in a school with 16-18 year olds as the differences in needs and approaches from teachers/SLT is significantly different. The secondary provision in our area is already under serious strain and I have concerns about sending my children to either Stratton or Sandy Upper Schools currently. I would rather time/focus was on improving those rather than reinventing the wheel unnecessarily by switching to two tier."

About the respondents

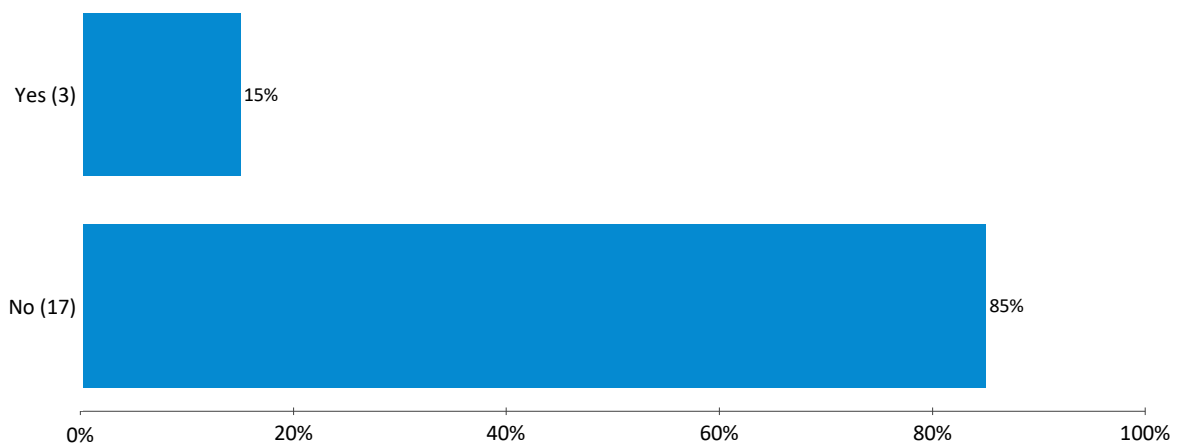
Which of the below are you?



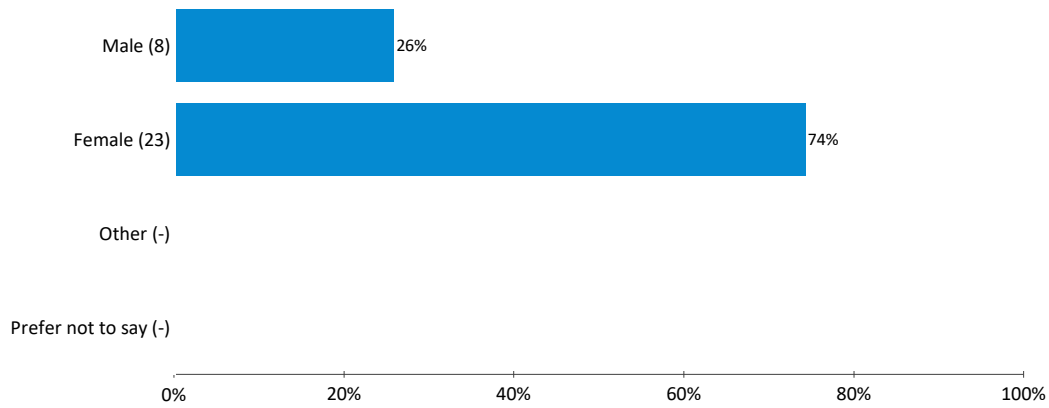
Those that responded as a pupil, parent of a child at school, School Governor, Headteacher or teacher, were asked to identify the school. The number of responses per school are as follows:

School	No. of responses
Potton Lower School	5
Potton Middle School	1
Sutton CofE VA Lower School	2
Schools outside of the cluster	3

Does your child(ren) have any special educational needs?

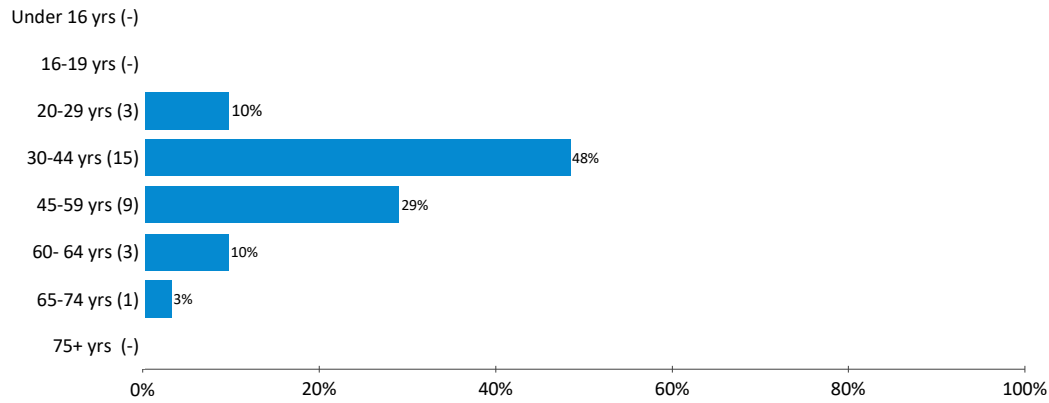


Are you:



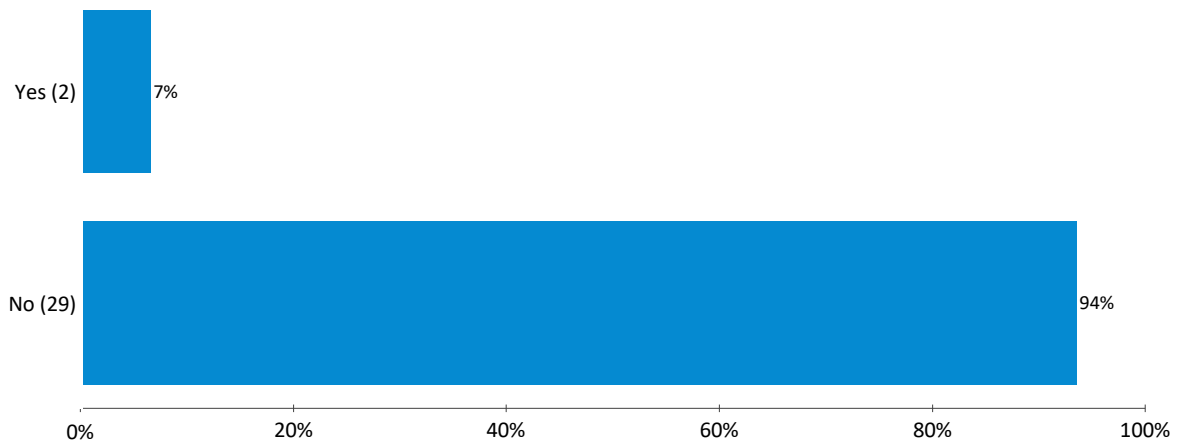
Females were over-represented compared to the CBC population figures.

What is your age?



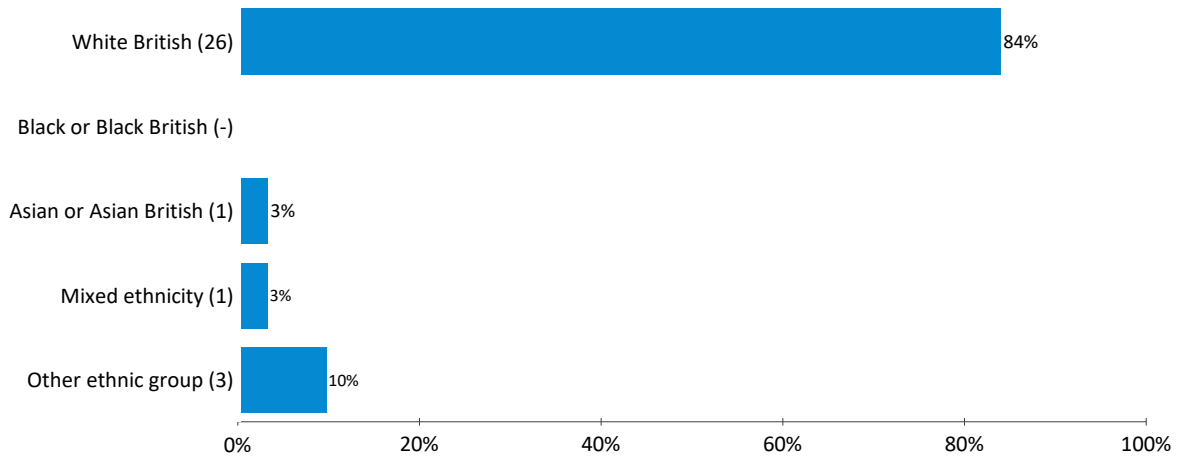
Those aged 30-44 were over-represented compared to the CBC population figures.

Do you consider yourself disabled?



Those with disabilities were slightly under-represented compared to the CBC population figures.

To which of these groups do you consider you belong?

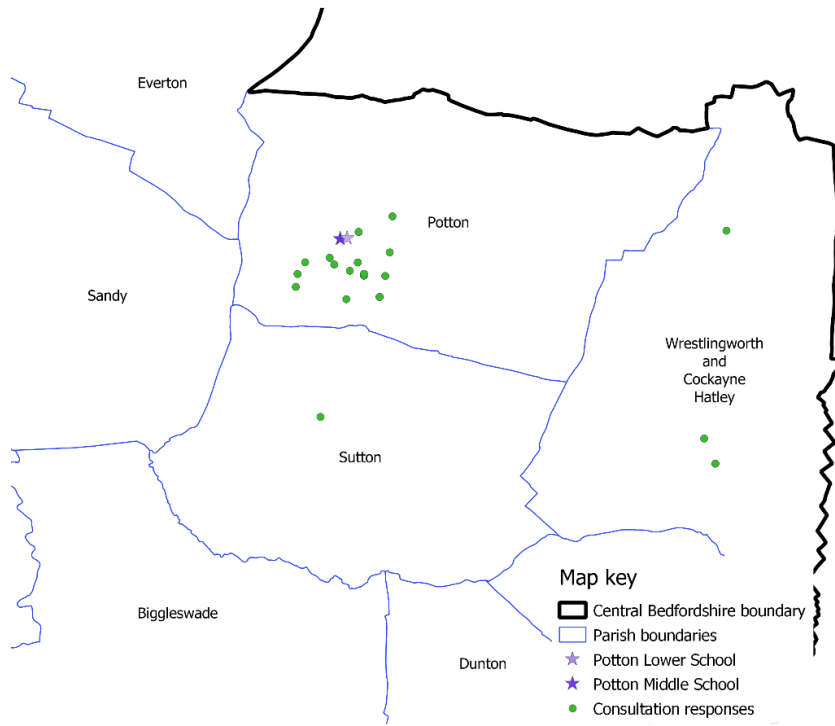


The 'other' responses provided were as follows:

- White european
- White non-British
- White

Postcode analysis

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Responses were received primarily from the Potton area – with some scattered across the nearby villages.

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Appendix A – excerpt from the minutes of Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny on 12th April 2022

The Interim Director for Children’s Services delivered a report which set out proposals for the future of Potton Lower and Middle Schools as part of the Biggleswade cluster. The report asked OSC to consider the statutory consultation for the prescribed alterations.

NOTED the report and Consultation and ENDORSED the proposals in response to the Statutory Consultation

**Central
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Central Bedfordshire in contact

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