



2023-0020747DBPO

Baroness Barran

Minister for the School System and Student Finance
Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe

Joy Morrissey MP
By email: joy.morrissey.mp@parliament.uk

Your ref: JM32084

19 June 2023

Dear Joy,

Thank you for your email of 31 May, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Councillor Ekta Kaur Ross, regarding secondary schools in Burnham. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

The department has previously advised that we are not able to re-open a school that has closed. Burnham Park Academy closed due to low pupil numbers and was not considered to be viable.

Local authorities (LAs) are responsible for planning and securing sufficient school places for their area. Departmental officials, including Pupil Place Planning Advisers, work closely with LA officers to help them meet their statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. The closest non-selective Buckinghamshire secondary school to Burnham currently has capacity to admit additional children.

As highlighted previously, parents and carers can apply to their LA for any state school, including those situated in another LA. This can support greater choice of schools, such as academically selective, faith and single sex options. Furthermore, where families live close to LA boundaries, such is the case for the residents of Burnham and the surrounding community, many of their nearest or most accessible schools may be in an adjacent LA. As you know, a significant number of secondary aged children from the Burnham area currently attend a Maidenhead school due to parental choice coupled with good transport links. This was also the case when the Burnham Park Academy was open.

We previously provided information to you and members of your constituency of the opportunity to apply to open a free school last year. The department received no applications to open a new secondary school in the Burnham area.

The department also has a free school presumption process. The guidance for which is available at: tinyurl.com/2S3CMHBN. This guidance is for LAs and prospective proposers who may wish to establish a new free school in response to an invitation published by the LA.

The process for opening new schools through the free school routes is well established and is the only option to open a new school. It is unclear what could be achieved through meeting with the Councillor or the party seeking to open a new school on the Burnham Park Academy site at this time.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Baroness Barran".

BARONESS BARRAN

MINISTER FOR THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND STUDENT FINANCE