



Cabinet Member Education & Children's Services

[REDACTED]
Buckinghamshire Council
The Gateway
Gatehouse Road
Aylesbury
HP19 8FF

[REDACTED]@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk

14th June 2022

Ref: MPE [REDACTED]

Mrs Joy Morrissey MP
Houses of Parliament
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Joy

MPE [REDACTED] - Burnham New Secondary School Campaign Request (Case Ref: [REDACTED])

Further to the correspondence you have received from [REDACTED] regarding the former Burnham Park site, we have provided below a response to each of the specific points made. However, it is also important to make it very clear that the decision to close the school did not sit with the Local Authority, the decision was taken by the Secretary of State for Education despite us raising similar concerns with regard to the need for local places. Any decision to re-open a new school on the site would also be a Secretary of State decision as Local Authorities no longer have the powers to open new schools.

- 1) The email address: (MINISTERS@education.gov.uk) that we have included within our response letter was provided to us by the DfE when we requested an email address for the community to contact the DfE about this matter. We have personally tested the address and received an automated message that the DfE will respond to queries within 15 working days. The email address is therefore working and the DfE will respond accordingly to any emails they receive to that address.
- 2) With regards to the two schools that cover the Burnham area:
Bourne End Academy: is not over subscribed from its own catchment area, in the last 2 years the school has admitted less than a hundred catchment children out of an admission of 150. In addition, we have undertaken feasibility studies at most schools in the area and subject to planning/consultation/need it is feasible to expand Bourne End Academy. However, due to the fall in births in Wycombe based on current trends in parental choice/migration there is not expected to be a need.

Khalsa Academy was re-brokered and became Pioneer Academy on 1st May 2022. The Council will ensure that all future correspondence reflects the very recent change of name of the Academy. Pioneer School was established by the DfE and the admission arrangements approved by them prioritise 50% of students on faith and 50% non-faith. I can confirm that the

school is 4.5 miles from the Burnham Park site by road, clearly as with all school catchments areas there may be some families who live on the outer limits of the area who may be more than 4.5 miles from the school and therefore may be nearer Bourne End Academy which is 5.5 miles from the Burnham Park site.

- 3) Parents are eligible for free home to school transport if they choose to attend their nearest school and live over 3 miles away from the school. As with all areas of the County if parents choose to send their child to a school other than their nearest then it will be for the parents to meet the costs of transport. The movement of pupils from the Burnham area to Maidenhead schools is a long-established trend and predates any issues with the former Burnham Upper School
- 4) The reason why the Council is building a new secondary school in Aylesbury is because there is a deficit of places in the area, mainly due to there being c.10,000 new homes in the town which has generated a need for an additional 6fe secondary school to meet the needs of the local population. This is a completely different situation to that in the Burnham area where we are seeing a decrease in the population.
- 5) We have reviewed the population data and unfortunately there is not sufficient surplus demand locally to ensure that if a school opened on the site, it would be viable. So, for instance, if a new school were to open in Burnham and begin to attract back the pupils living in the former catchment area of Burnham Park Academy (which includes Slough) then this is likely to negatively impact on the intake of neighbouring schools. There is further no guarantee that a new school would attract all these children back as the trend for parents to attend a comprehensive secondary school in Maidenhead was well established even before the school's problems.
- 6) We have reviewed the GP data for all areas across Buckinghamshire including Burnham. The data shows that the population is falling across many areas of the County (similar to most other authorities). In the Burnham area we have seen a fall from its peak by 0.5-1FE over the last 4 years. However, in High Wycombe for instance we have seen births fall by over 7FE over the past 4 years. This will eventually feed through into the secondary sector and is forecasted to result in significant surplus places at schools in the area which rely on demand from the town which includes at Bourne End Academy.
- 7) With regards to the use of the former school site's sporting facilities. We have contacted colleagues within the Property Team who are managing the site. They have confirmed that they have engaged with the Parish Council to arrange a way for community groups who may wish to use the sports facilities to do so. They have not received any details of groups requiring the use but will follow up with the Parish Council again as interest may have changed since they last met with them.

Yours sincerely



Cabinet Member Education & Children's Services