



Department  
for Education

The Office of the  
Regional Schools Commissioner for North-West  
London and South-Central Region  
34 Clarendon Road  
Watford  
WD17 1JJ

22 January 2022

Dear, [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email sent to [REDACTED] on 13 October regarding Burnham Secondary Education Provision'. I am responding on behalf of [REDACTED] as this fall under my remit.

Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your email.

### **The Closure of Burnham Park Academy**

You have enquired as to how you can ensure that Burnham re-open its non-selective secondary provision as quickly as possible. Firstly, I would like to explain the reasoning behind the decision to close Burnham Park Academy.

E-ACT requested the termination of the funding agreement for Burnham Park Academy in April 2019, which would result in the closure of the school. The reason for this was due to low pupil numbers at the school, which meant that the Trust was unable to deliver a full curriculum, and, the school was financially unviable.

Burnham Park Academy had experienced low pupil intake for a number of years and saw a significant fall in pupil intake, with the Year 7 cohort having only 21 pupils by the end of the 2018/19 academic year against an admission number of 140. The projected intake of pupils also showed that there was unlikely to be an uptake of places at the school. As such, it was clear the school was not financially viable.

E-ACT ran a full and open consultation in January 2019 and also a four-week listening period on 17 June 2019. The listening period was an opportunity for stakeholders and other interested parties to submit their views on the closure of the school. E-ACT contacted over 300 people and organisations as part of the listening period and received 66 responses to their consultation. The results of the listening period and consultation were considered by the Secretary of State prior to the decision to terminate the funding agreement for Burnham Park Academy.

Buckinghamshire Council raised concerns over the closure of the school, and consideration was given to transferring the school to a new Trust. However, this option was not considered realistic given the financial viability of the school and projected pupil numbers. The Secretary of State therefore took the decision to close Burnham Park Academy.

## Re-opening Burnham Park

Opening a free school can be pursued through two routes:

1. The LA proposes to open a new school if they consider there to be insufficient capacity in the area to meet demand.
2. Application from a potential sponsor to the Department through the Free School 'wave' route.

Further information on how to apply to open a Free School can be found [here](#).

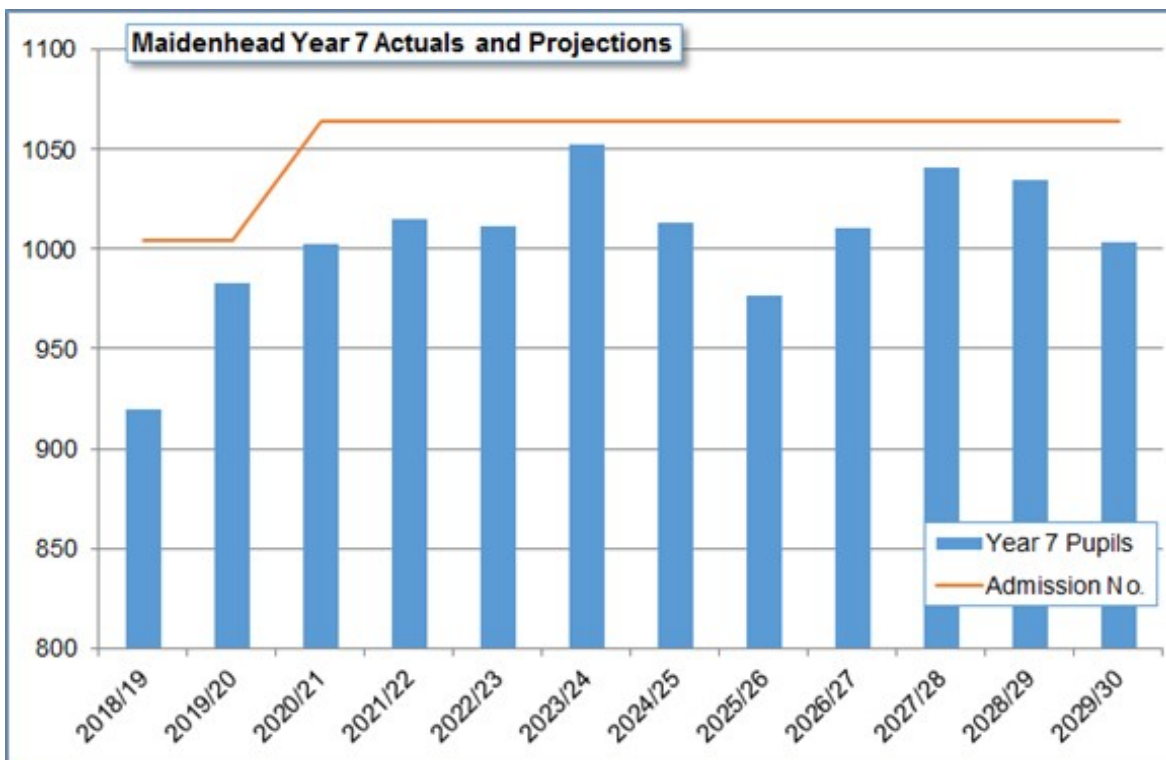
Both routes would require approval from the Regional Schools Commissioner, who would need to be satisfied that there is a basic need for places in the local area for a Free School to be built. Currently, the data and trends indicate that there is not a basic need for secondary places in the Burnham area. The LA have provided the following information:

*“At the point of closure, there were an insufficient number of pupils attending the school to keep it open and make it viable. The analysis of the current projections shows that if anything demand is expected to fall since the DfE made the decision to close the school and that there is still insufficient justification to re-open a school in the village.*

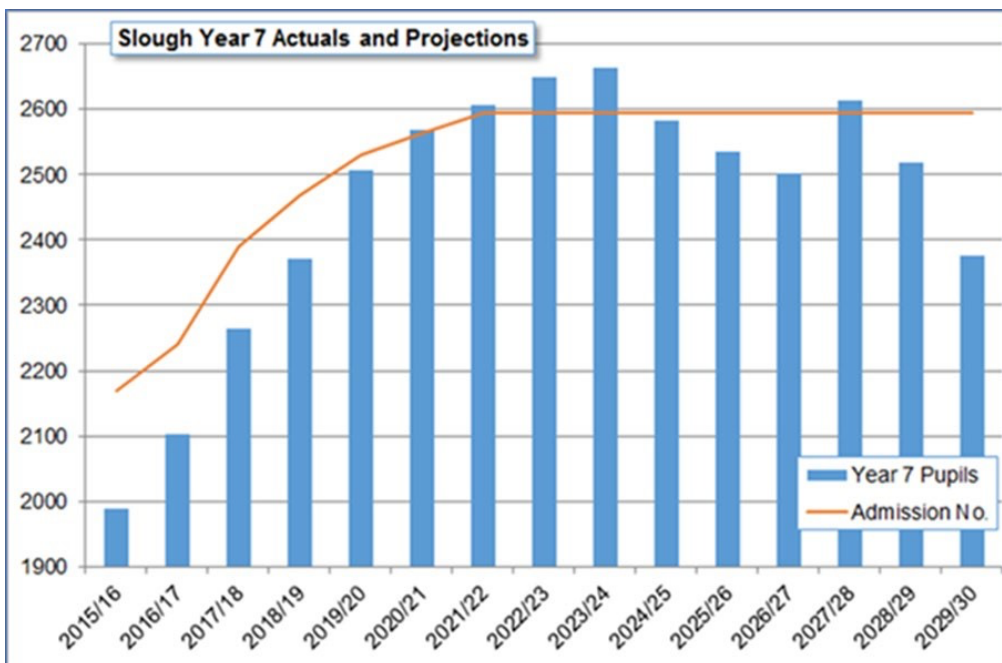
*Secondary demand is based on the number of Year 6 primary pupils from feeder schools. The table below shows that there is expected to be a fall in the number of feeder primary pupils in the Burnham area except for a peak in demand in Sept 22:*

Sept 16	Sept 17	Sept 18	Sept 19	Sept 20	Sept 21	Sept 22	Sept 23	Sept 24	Sept 25	Sept 26	Sept 27	Sept 28	Sept 29	Sept 30	Sept 31
154	148	146	152	153	152	183	145	147	158	146	149	146	143	137	135

*The vast majority of non-grammar qualified children in the Burnham area currently attend out-county secondary schools predominantly in Maidenhead. The LA monitors cross border trends with colleagues in neighbouring authorities so that we are aware of any factors that might significantly impact on these historic trends. The projections below for Maidenhead suggest that there is no significant change in demand which might affect the status quo:*



*A secondary school in Burnham would have to rely on out county pupils to ensure it remained viable. However, the demand for secondary school places in Slough is projected to fall resulting in surplus places (apart from some peak years when the authority will look to establish bulge classes to meet any excess demand)”*



If you wish to submit a Free School application when the next wave opens, you are able to do so, and this will be given due consideration by the RSC. However, the RSC would need to be satisfied that there is a basic need for places and the

Department would work with the LA on this, since the LA are responsible for assessing school capacity in their region.

Thank you for your email and whilst I appreciate this may not have been the response you were hoping for, I hope you have found the above information helpful.

Kind regards



**The Office of the Regional Schools Commissioner for North-West London and South-Central England**