



Department  
for Education

# Free school application form

Mainstream, studio, and 16 to 19  
schools

**Published: July 2016**

Insert the name of your free school(s) below using BLOCK CAPITALS

**ST NEOTS ACADEMY**

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## The application form explained

Before completing your application, please ensure that you have read both the relevant [how to apply to set up a free school guidance and the criteria for assessment](#) carefully. Please also ensure that you can provide all the information and documentation required.

### Sections

#### Declaration

The declaration must be made by a company member on behalf of the company/trust. The declaration section is found on page 8 of this form. All applicants are required to complete this section in full.

**All applicants will need to complete sections A, B, C, E, H and I in full.**

For sections D, F and G, the information you need to provide will depend on the type of group you are. Please refer to the relevant section of the *how to apply to set up a free school guidance document* and the *criteria for assessment*, for the information your group should include in these sections.

**Section A** asks you for applicant details in the Excel form.

**Section B** asks you to outline your proposed free school(s) in the Excel form.

**Section C** asks you for detailed information on the vision for your school(s) and is to be completed using the Word form.

**Section D** asks you for detailed information on your proposed education plan(s) and is to be completed using the Word form.

**Section E** asks you to evidence that there is a need for the school(s) you are proposing in the Word form.

**Section F** asks you to demonstrate that you have the capacity and capability to open the school(s) you are proposing and is to be completed using the Word form.

**Section G** specifically asks about costs. This requires the completion of the relevant sections of the Excel budget template.

Studio schools use a different Excel budget template than mainstream and 16-19 free schools.

**Section H** asks for information about premises, and suitable site(s) you have identified. This requires the completion of the relevant section of the Excel application form.

**Section I** is about your suitability to set up and then run a free school. The form is available [here](#).

Failure to submit all the information required may mean that we are unable to consider your application.

### **Submitting Sections A to H**

The completed Word and Excel templates and the budget plans need to be submitted by email to the department by the application deadline to: [FS.applications@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FS.applications@education.gsi.gov.uk). Your email must be no larger than 9MB in size. If your documents are larger than 9MB, please send multiple emails clearly indicating that the emails are connected (e.g. email 1 of 3).

Applications for a Studio School should also be sent to: [applications@studioschooltrust.org](mailto:applications@studioschooltrust.org).

The Word template should be between 50 and 100 pages long (depending on which type of group you are); formatted for printing on A4 paper; completed in Arial 12 point font; and include page numbers. Annexes are excluded from the page limit and should be restricted to CVs for key individuals. Please do not include photographs, images and logos in your application.

The contents of the budget Excel template and Excel application form are excluded from the page limit.

Please include the name of your school in the file name for all Word and Excel templates.

You also need to submit two hard copies (of Sections A-H and the budget plans) by a guaranteed method such as 'Recorded Signed For' post to: Free Schools Applications Team, Department for Education, 3rd Floor, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT. You may also hand deliver if you prefer.

It is essential that the hard copies are identical to the version you email.

### **Submitting Section I**

Section I, i.e. the Personal Information form, is required for each member, director, and principal designate who has not submitted forms within the past 365 days; together with a list of those members, directors, and principals designate who have submitted Section I forms within the past 365 days. These need to be submitted by email alongside a copy of Section A (from the Excel template) to [due.diligence@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:due.diligence@education.gsi.gov.uk) stating the name of the school in the subject title.

## **Data protection**

Personal data is collected on the Word and Excel templates in order to consider an application to set up a free school and will not be used for other purposes. For the purposes of the Data Protection Act, the Department for Education is the data controller for this personal information and for ensuring that it is processed in accordance with the terms of the Act. The department will hold all personal information you supply securely and will only make it available to those who need to see it as part of the free school application process. All personal information supplied in these forms will only be retained for as long as it is needed for this process.

## Application checklist

Task to complete	Yes	No
1. Have you established a company by limited guarantee?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Have you provided information on all of the following areas (where applicable)?		
<b>Section A:</b> Applicant details	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Section B:</b> Outline of the school	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Section C:</b> Education vision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Section D:</b> Education plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Section E:</b> Evidence of need	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Section F:</b> Capacity and capability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Section G:</b> Budget planning and affordability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Section H:</b> Premises	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Is the information in A4 format, using Arial 12 point font, and includes page numbers?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Have you fully completed the appropriate budget plan(s) where necessary?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Have you included CVs in the appendices for all relevant individuals in the template provided and in line with the requirements set out in the criteria?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. <del>Independent schools only</del> *: Have you provided a copy of the last two years' audited financial statements or equivalent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. <b>Independent schools only*</b> : Have you provided a link to your school's most recent inspection report and completed an externally validated self-assessment and governance assessment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. <b>Independent schools only*</b> : Have you provided the documents set out in the criteria document specifically around your current site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. <b>Re-applications only</b> : Have you changed your application in response to the written feedback you received, if you are re-applying after being unsuccessful in a previous wave, as set out in Section 4.4 of this guide?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Have you sent an email (of no more than 9 MB in size**), titled: <b>Free School Application - School Name: [insert]</b> with all relevant information relating to Sections A to H of your application to: <a href="mailto:FS.applications@education.gsi.gov.uk">FS.applications@education.gsi.gov.uk</a> before the advertised deadline?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. <b>Studio schools only</b> : Have you emailed a copy of your application to the Studio Schools Trust at: <a href="mailto:applications@studioschooltrust.org">applications@studioschooltrust.org</a> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Have you sent two hard copies of the application by a guaranteed delivery method such as 'Recorded Signed for' to the address below?  Free Schools Applications Team, Department for Education, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\* Independent schools include existing alternative provision and special school institutions that are privately run.

\*\* If your application is larger than 9MB please split the documents and send two emails.

Section I of your application	Yes	No
<p>12. Have you sent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a copy of Section A (tab 1 of the Excel template); and</li> <li>• copies of the Section I Personal Information form for each member, director, and principal designate who has not submitted one of these forms within the past 365 days; and</li> <li>• a list of those lead applicants, members, directors, and principals designate who have submitted Section I forms within the past 365 days</li> </ul> <p>by emailing scanned copies of Section I forms to <a href="mailto:due.diligence@education.gsi.gov.uk">due.diligence@education.gsi.gov.uk</a> stating the name of the school in the subject title, including a full list of members, trustees, and the principal designate (if appointed); and a copy of Section A?</p> <p>(See guidance for dates and deadlines)</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Declaration

**\*\*This must be signed by a company member on behalf of the company/trust\*\***

I confirm that the information provided in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I further confirm that if the application is successful the company will operate a free school in accordance with:

- the requirements outlined in the [how to apply to set up a free school guidance](#);
- the funding agreement with the Secretary of State;
- all relevant obligations and requirements that apply to open academies (eg safeguarding, welfare and bullying) – this includes statutory requirements (those that are enshrined in legislation) and non-statutory requirements (those contained in DfE guidance); and
- the School Admissions Code, the School Admissions Appeal Code and the admissions law as it applies to maintained schools. 16 to 19 applicants do not need to follow these codes, but must have admissions arrangements and criteria which are fair, objective and transparent.

I have fully disclosed all financial liabilities and the full extent of each/any debt for which the company, trust or existing school is liable.

I confirm that I am not and have never been barred from regulated activity within the meaning given by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. I further declare that all current members and directors of the company have confirmed to me that they are not and have never been so barred, and that if it comes to my attention whilst I am a member or director of the company that I or any other member or director are or have been so barred I will notify the Department for Education. I and all other members and directors of the company understand that the company's free school application may be rejected if a member or director of the company is found to have been barred from regulated activity.

I acknowledge that this application may be rejected should any information be deliberately withheld or misrepresented that is later found to be material in considering the application.

**Signed:**

**Position:** 

**Print name:** 

**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

**NB: This declaration only needs to be signed in the two hard copy versions of your application. Please use black ink.**



## Completing the application form

### Section A – applicant details (use Excel spread sheet)

This section will need to be completed by **all** applicants. Please:

- complete the Section A tab in the Excel spread sheet; and
- refer to the [how to apply to set up a free school guidance and the criteria for assessment](#) for what should be included in this section.

### Section B – outline of the school (use Excel spread sheet)

This section will need to be completed by **all** applicants. Please:

- complete the Section B tab in the Excel spread sheet; and
- refer to the [how to apply to set up a free school guidance and the criteria for assessment](#) for what should be included in this section.

## Section C – vision

### Section C1 – a credible proposal to deliver a high-quality free school and a clear rationale for establishing it in this area

#### Context to the academy trust

The founding statement of our academy trust is:

*“we believe that, given the right circumstances, all children are capable of extraordinary things”*

and we operate in line with our three core values of *Respect, Honesty and High Expectations*.

The founders of Bedford Free School (BFS) always intended to grow the Trust, to combine the benefits of smaller schools with those of being part of a larger organisation. Recognising the responsibilities that come with this, the plan has always been to do this only when the original school was well established and successful.

In 2015, on a number of measures BFS was the top performing state school in Bedford. This summer saw even stronger performance. In our recent Ofsted we were judged “good” in every aspect. We believe the additional choice and competition we have injected into the town’s school system is starting raise standards in other schools too.

Given this, the Trust feels that it now has the ability to become an effective multi-academy trust, and grow to support a small number of schools – reaching more families in the surrounding areas, enabling them to enjoy our distinctive approach to education.

We are confident that our vision and traditional values, underpinned by a strong and reflective leadership culture, and combined with a knowledge-based curriculum & expert pastoral care, will enable us to secure high standards across the schools we work with. The Trust has developed significant expertise in education improvement, finance, HR, governance. It also has experience of using academy freedoms to benefit students – including innovations in staffing, curriculum and the school day.

Whilst the Trust believes it has significant strengths, it intends to expand in a careful manner in order to protect standards at its existing school(s)– growing its capacity & capabilities *before* before taking new schools on.

As well as the proposal for St Neots Academy, we are currently in discussions for a local maintained primary school (graded outstanding by Ofsted) to join us in a new MAT. Through carefully managing our resources since opening, we are now able to fund & prepare for expansion through restructuring the leadership team of Bedford Free School. We have promoted people to the roles of Head of School and Office Manager, to free up the Principal and Business Manager so that they can take on the roles of Managing Director/CEO and Director of Finance & Operations.

If our bid for St Neots Academy is successful, then we would not intend to take part in any further expansion until after the new school is open and all three schools are

## **Section C1 – a credible proposal to deliver a high-quality free school and a clear rationale for establishing it in this area**

functioning smoothly, to guard against overstretch

### **The proposal for St Neots Academy**

Our proposal for St Neots Academy (SNA) is based on our experiences with BFS. Like BFS it will be an 11-16 school, and its distinctive features will include:

- being smaller-than-average in size (120 students per year group);
- a longer school day (0825 – 1630);
- a disciplined “can-do” culture to allow every student to feel safe & cared for;
- an intensive focus on the basics of maths & English;
- an academic knowledge-based curriculum for all students;
- extra-curricular activities for all students built within the school day;
- all students taught a musical instrument from Year 7;
- additional support for students with lower attendance; and
- preparing every single student from day one for a good university.

The school would be secular in basis and values driven in culture. It would share a motto & core values with BFS, the motto being “Go The Extra Mile”, and values being Respect, Honesty and High Expectations.

We believe that there are a number of compelling reasons why a new secondary school of this type should be set up in St Neots:

- secondary school standards in the town are lower than they should be, in terms of GCSE results and Ofsted judgements;
- both of the existing secondary schools are run by one academy trust – in effect there is a monopoly on secondary provision in the town, which a new school would provide an alternative to;
- our proposed school will be completely different to the existing ones – in terms of size, school day, ethos & culture, curriculum, enrichment – and so would provide families with a genuine choice in the kind of education their children receive;
- a small but significant number of families in St Neots feel they need to send their children to schools elsewhere, and are massively inconvenienced as a result;
- our proposal has been met with a breadth and depth of support from the community that suggests it would be extremely popular right from its opening;
- St Neots is rapidly growing, with thousands of new homes planned over the next

## **Section C1 – a credible proposal to deliver a high-quality free school and a clear rationale for establishing it in this area**

few years – and whilst there are plans for three more primary schools to be opened, the Local Authority has no plans to open a new secondary school to meet the basic need, instead expanding the two current secondaries.

With this in mind, we think that St Neots is similar to Bedford back in 2010/11, facing the the same kind of long-standing educational challenges. We believe that replicating our school in St Neots will have the same impact as it has had in Bedford: increasing diversity of provision, improving parental choice and, over time, raising standards overall and address basic need for places.

**Our target for SNA is simple: outstanding outcomes for all its students, so that they are able to access great courses at sixth forms, and then go onto good universities.** In terms of GCSE achievement, we would aim for all students to achieve at least good passes in both English and maths, and for a Progress 8 score of at least +0.75 (but higher than this for students with lower starting points). This is ambitious, but we are inspired by schools such as King Solomon Academy that have shown that this, and more, is achievable if one has a clear vision and works hard enough.

### **Synergies & support to secure high standards from day one**

With St Neots only a short drive from Bedford, and St Neots Academy modelled on Bedford Free School, there will be significant synergies and support available from BFS and the Trust to ensure that SNA operates at the highest-level at all stages.

We intend for nearly all back-office processes to be run by the Trust, so the Principal and staff of SNA are freed up to focus purely on the wellbeing and academic achievement of the students in the new school.

As well as economies-of-scale from shared procurement of resources, ICT, HR services and so on, we intend for both schools to run according to the same teaching, curriculum and assessment models, allowing us to achieve significant synergies.

To give a simple example, both schools would use the Ark Maths Mastery programme. We will be able to share assessments & the marking of these, ensuring consistency of approach & accuracy of data in both schools. We'll share the lessons learned from these sorts of exercises across both schools. This becomes even more powerful as SNA reaches KS4, with GCSE expertise available to the early cohorts from BFS.

We will also be able to share specialist staff in minority but important subjects, for instance Design Technology or Music, particularly in the early days of SNA when only a small part-time equivalent might be required there.

## Section D – education plan: part 1

### How St Neots Academy will grow over time

	Current number of pupils (if applicable)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Reception								
Year 1								
Year 2								
Year 3								
Year 4								
Year 5								
Year 6								
Year 7	-	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
Year 8	-		120	120	120	120	120	120
Year 9	-			120	120	120	120	120
Year 10	-				120	120	120	120
Year 11	-					120	120	120
Year 12								
Year 13								
Totals		120	240	360	480	600	600	600

## **D1 – an ambitious and deliverable curriculum plan which is consistent with the vision and pupil intake**

The school day will be adapted from the innovative one used at BFS:

- longer than average, allowing for additional lessons in core subjects
- dedicated time given for cultural reinforcement, reflection, reading and self-study
- time carved out for enrichment opportunities on the timetable so all can participate.

It is one the key enablers of our curriculum model (which was highly praised by Ofsted.)

<b>The School Day</b>			
<b>Monday - Thursday</b>		<b>Friday</b>	
Time	Session	Time	Session
0825	Morning Lineup	0825	Morning Lineup
0830	“Morning Meetings” (Wednesdays = electives)	0830	“Morning Meetings”
0900	Period 1 (Wednesdays = electives)	0900	Period 1
0955	Period 2	0955	Period 2
1050	Morning Break	1050	Morning Break
1110	Period 3	1110	Period 3
1205	Period 4	1205	Period 4
1300	Lunch 1 / “100 Classics”	1300	Prep
1330	“100 Classics” / Lunch 2	1340	Lunch 1 / “100 Classics”
1400	Period 5	1410	“100 Classics” / Lunch 2
1455	Period 6	1440	Clubs & Electives
1550	Prep	1535	“Golden Time”
1630	End of formal day / after school support / Homework Club	1630	End of formal day / after school support / Homework Club
1800	School closes	1800	School closes

### The curriculum at Key Stage 3:

Subject/other activity	Sessions x time	Mins per week	Mandatory/ Voluntary	Comments
<b>Morning Meetings</b>	5 x 30	150	M	Daily, whole-year meetings, combining guest speakers, reflections, self-quizzing, numeracy & literacy, information sessions & celebrations.
<b>“100 Classics”</b>	5 x 30	150	M	30mins daily – see below for more information
<b>English</b>	5 x 55	275	M	
<b>Maths</b>	5 x 55	275	M	
<b>Science</b>	3 x 55	165	M	
<b>Modern Languages</b>	3 x 55	165	M	Spanish will be the core language, with French added from Year 8.
<b>Humanities</b>	5 x 55	275	M	2 x Hist, 2 x Geog, 1 x R.E.
<b>Music</b>	2 x 55	110	M	We will run a “music for all” programme, and teach all students a musical instrument in whole-class groups.
<b>Art &amp; Design</b>	1 x 55	55	M	A small number of the lowest attaining students will receive additional support upon admission, in place of art & design, & computing.
<b>Computing</b>	1 x 55	55	M	
<b>PE</b>	1 x 110	110	M	
<b>Clubs &amp; Electives</b>	2 x 55	110	M	Our model assumes a longer school day, and extra-curricular activities timetabled in twice-weekly “electives” sessions
<b>Prep/Private study</b>	5 x 40	200	M	40min sessions at the end of every school day for “prep” – to allow students time to complete much of their homework or private study in school

### The curriculum at Key Stage 4:

Subject/other activity	Sessions x time	Mins per week	Mandatory/ Voluntary	Comments
<b>Morning Meetings</b>	5 x 30	150	M	As for KS3.
<b>“100 Classics”</b>	5 x 30	150	M	30mins daily – see below for more information
<b>English</b>	4 x 55	220	M	All students will study English Literature and English Language
<b>Maths</b>	4 x 55	220	M	
<b>Science</b>	4 x 55	220	M	All will do <i>at least</i> the new combined/double GCSE in science
<b>PE</b>	1 x 110	110	M	
<b>RE</b>	1 x 55	55	M	Leading to the full course GCSE
<b>4 x GCSE Option subjects</b>	4 x (3 x 55)	4 x 165	M	Some students in need of additional time for the fundamentals may only do 3 GCSE option subjects. Option subjects will be determined at a future date but will likely include: Triple Science, Art, Design Technology, Music, Drama, Latin, Spanish, French, P.E., Computing, History, Geography
<b>Clubs &amp; Electives</b>	2 x 55	110	M	As per KS3
<b>Prep/Private study</b>	5 x 40	200	M	As per KS3



## **D1 - an ambitious and deliverable curriculum plan which is consistent with the vision and pupil intake**

Modelled on Bedford Free School's, the curriculum at SNA will be broad, balanced and knowledge-based – inspired by E.D. Hirsch's "Cultural Literacy" and the belief that only by equipping all students with core knowledge will the gap between students of different backgrounds be narrowed. This approach was highly praised in our recent Ofsted:

"Leaders have implemented a broad and effective curriculum which places a strong emphasis on developing core knowledge. The curriculum also promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. "

There will be an emphasis on depth in core subjects at KS3, and some student autonomy over GCSE option choices for KS4. The curriculum takes the National Curriculum as its starting point, but moves away from this where we feel it is appropriate, and covers far more content in core subjects too, thanks to the additional time we have on the curriculum for these. Generally there will be four classes per year group, with five for English and maths; at KS4 there will likely be 5 classes in each option block scheduled.

At all stages, the key concepts, knowledge and understanding required of every student in every subject will be codified in "knowledge organisers", as already done at Bedford Free School (and other highly successful schools elsewhere.)

### **Keep aspects of the broader SNA curriculum**

On top of this, the longer day allows for a number of extra opportunities for learning:

**"Morning Meetings"** – inspired by those at Dixons Trinity Academy, Bradford, we will gather all students in a year group together every single morning, to allow time to

- reflect on the previous day and broader issues
- share successes & celebrations
- private study/self-quizzing
- reinforce our expectations & the school's ethos.

**Prep** – time at the end of every school day for students to work on homework or any other private study they need to do, to ensure that all students have a chance to do this, regardless of their family context. (Note: a big advantage of the Morning Meeting & Prep sessions being done as whole-cohorts is that it frees up many staff for ongoing CPD/training, or time for their own planning or marking – ensuring we have the best quality of teaching and learning over time.)

**The "100 classics" programme** – daily time in form groups, to read & appreciate some of the greatest that has been written, and ensure that all our students, regardless of family context, develop their cultural literacy in the process.

**Electives** – extra-curricular opportunities such as sports clubs, cultural activities,

## **D1 - an ambitious and deliverable curriculum plan which is consistent with the vision and pupil intake**

hobbies, games etc, are so important that we will schedule them twice a week during the school day, to ensure that every single student can take advantage of them; they will have significant choice over which of these they take part in.

### **Likely differences between the student populations at SNA and BFS**

The vast majority of what we offer at BFS would be offered in SNA, as we believe that all students, regardless of background, should be taught and exposed to the very best that has been thought and said.

However, we do recognise that there are differences between the Bedford and St Neots community that will impact on the sort of things we offer students in SNA, and the way that we go about them.

Here is a table showing key statistics taken from the January 2016 information published on schools. (We have combined the data for Longsands Academy and Ernulf Academy – either at whole school or Y11 cohort level - to get a sense of what a likely SNA year group might be like.)

	Ever 6	Statements / EHCP	EAL	% LAPs	% MAPs	% HAPs
<b>St Neots overall</b>	20.5	2.8	3.3	23	51	26
<b>BFS</b>	33.5	1	20.6	22	65	13

It is clear that key potential differences with a St Neots cohort are:

- fewer students in receipt of free school meals in the last 6 years
- far fewer students with English as an additional language
- more students with higher prior attainment at KS2.

We might therefore expect a similar proportion of students to enter SNA as BFS with low prior attainment, and so be in need of intensive maths & English support to get them “secondary ready” – so no major change required here.

We might also expect fewer students to need English language support; we will likely have a higher proportion of students with high prior attainment. We could free up Learning Mentor support from EAL activities to be deployed elsewhere – perhaps working with students who join SNA below expected standards in E&M, or more able & talented students who need stretching. ( SNA *must* stretch its HAPs, although we see no particular need to adapt the curriculum offer from that at BFS, other than perhaps expect more students to do triple science at GCSE.)

### **Ensuring consistency between SNA and BFS**

**D1 - an ambitious and deliverable curriculum plan which is consistent with the vision and pupil intake**

In order to build on the success to date of BFS, we will implement processes that ensure consistency of approaches to the delivery of the curriculum.

Firstly, the curriculums and timetables for both school will be developed and written involving staff from both schools. Secondly, pedagogical training will be the same at both sites, with regular sessions that bring together staff from both schools to work on common aspects of delivery.

Finally, the curriculum delivered will be the same across both schools, with Trust and school senior staff overseeing the quality of implementation, ensuring that where things are done especially well, this is celebrated and the practice shared with the other school.

## D2 – measuring pupil performance effectively and setting challenging targets

### **D2 – measuring pupil performance effectively and setting challenging targets**

As with Bedford Free School, St Neots Academy will set ambitious targets for its students in terms of attendance, attitude and academic achievement. These will then be monitored and acted upon in order that we can fulfil our aim of all students having the option to go to a good university.

Based on our experience in Bedford, and the lessons learned from other high-performing schools such as King Solomon Academy & Dixons Trinity Academy, we believe transformational targets can be set and achieved at SNA:

- attendance of  $\geq 97\%$
- “good passes” in English and maths at GCSE of close to 100%
- (nearly) all students doing the EBacc suite, achieving well by this metric too
- Progress 8 scores of +0.75 (and higher for students with lower starting points).

These are undoubtedly ambitious – and far beyond what we have achieved to date at BFS – but we believe that having a “blank canvas” school, the experience gained from opening BFS, and the better understanding of effective schools systems now available, they are obtainable.

In this section we will briefly outline how key aspects work at BFS, and will work at SNA, in support of these targets. We will also show where the schools will work separately and where they will collaborate.

#### **Attendance**

Right from the start, where it is written into the Home-School agreement, all students will be expected to aim for 100% attendance. This is monitored daily, followed up by a Pastoral Coordinator, with absences reported to the Principal and Head of Year by 10am.

Any student whose attendance, for whatever reason, falls to 95% or below receives additional support in “Catch Up Club” – where, instead of electives & “Golden Time” (the earlier Friday finish for students who have had a good week), students use the time to catch up on the work they have missed through absence, supported by senior staff, and in a friendly, supportive atmosphere.

Persistent Absence is tracked weekly, and a close working relationship with the Local Authority EWO team will be set up even before SNA is open.

#### **Attitude**

The very successful “lesson credit” & “Achievement Card” system at BFS will be transferred to SNA. This rewards students for consistently fulfilling the school’s high

## **D2 – measuring pupil performance effectively and setting challenging targets**

expectations of student conduct, maximising the incentive for students to behave well, and minimises the low-level distractions faced in many schools.

This is tracked daily, reported weekly, and feeds into decisions around the awarding of “Golden Time” and other rewards for students.

Where students are unable to meet the school’s high expectations – be it for punctuality, conduct, homework and so on – sanctions will apply and be recorded on the achievement card and, where appropriate, the school MIS. These are tracked by tutors daily, and should students consistently fail to demonstrate the appropriate attitude, the information will form the basis of more intensive tracking by pastoral or senior staff.

As with BFS, we will work extremely closely with the Local Authority should fixed-term or permanent exclusions be necessary. All exclusions will be reported to the LA, regardless of the requirement to do so, as we believe that partnership with agencies is key to ensuring student success over time.

### **Academic Achievement – baseline information**

As well as a programme of meetings and sessions to get to know students and their families before they join SNA, including home visits, we will liaise with the feeder school of every student. This allows us to have a detailed holistic picture of every student and their specific home and school contexts. One of the primary reasons of having a smaller school is to enable all staff to know all students, so much of this intelligence will be shared with staff before the new academic year.

Upon entry to the school, every student will be given a small number of screenings/assessments, to cover their current abilities in reading & comprehension and maths. Using this, plus Key Stage 2 National Curriculum assessment information, we will be able to identify which students will need to be particularly stretched, and which will need additional maths or English support to get them to secondary ready standards in the first term or two.

### **Academic Achievement – target-setting**

Across KS3 the knowledge organisers have been designed to ensure that by the end of Year 9 all students have been exposed to much of the best that has been thought and said, in order that they are not disadvantaged in life by discontinuing a particular subject at that point and opting for other subjects at GCSE.

As such, KS3 content is not constrained by the National Curriculum, nor specifically designed to prepare students for GCSEs. However, the expectations are set such that if a student is reported as being at the “expected” level in any given termly assessment, the teacher anticipates that they are on track to achieve at least a good pass in that subject if they continue with it to the end of Y11. i.e. our target is for every student to

## **D2 – measuring pupil performance effectively and setting challenging targets**

achieve at least a good pass in every subject. Where we anticipate a student should gain a higher grade than this, due to higher prior attainment at KS2, this will be reflected in the target grades they are set in Year 10.

### **Academic Achievement – tracking & assessment**

An advantage of the approach taken by BFS to the knowledge-based curriculum it has developed is that every subject has developed “knowledge organisers” for each unit of work to codify the key concepts, knowledge and understanding that students need to have mastered. This makes the planning, delivery and assessment of subjects much more straight forward – as well seeing how well individual students have actually learned subject content.

A combination of frequent, low-stakes quizzing and termly, summative assessment will allow staff, students, and their families to see how students are progressing, and where they have yet to master topics.

As SNA will fully adopt the BFS curriculum, everything will be in place before the school opens – it will be a matter of immersing any staff new to the Trust to the curriculum and supporting tracking & assessment cycle.

### **Academic tracking & reporting – to students and families**

Students & their families will be able to see from their knowledge organisers & self-quizzing how they are faring with any given topic at any given point in time. On top of this, summative assessments will be sat and their results collated termly, and reported to families as a gradesheet – with results given as a scaled percentage, and an indication as to whether or not the performance was below, at or exceeding that expected for the student concerned. Parents Evenings will occur twice a year, normally shortly after a summative gradesheet has been issued, to allow staff and families to discuss pertinent issues or share appropriate praise in person.

### **Analysis & reporting – to the LGB and Trust**

Key metrics will be reported to the Local Governing Body (and through this, the Trust) at least termly, with many twice-termly, including:

- attendance, authorised & unauthorised absence, persistent absentee rates
- rewards & sanctions issued, numbers gaining/losing Golden Time
- exclusions
- proportion achieving expected levels of academic attainment & progress in each subject

As one would expect, all metrics will be reported both on an overall and year group basis, plus a breakdown along the lines of key groups of students i.e. gender, prior

## **D2 – measuring pupil performance effectively and setting challenging targets**

attainment, Pupil Premium, EAL and so on.

### **Ensuring consistency between BFS and SNA**

If we are to maximise the benefits of two very similar schools delivering the same curriculum in different places, then we need to ensure that there is consistency in how the above is implemented.

Key to this will be the way we codify the things we expect staff and students to do, and training staff and students in how to do this.

We will base pre-opening training for SNA staff on the same key core documents that are the basis of operations at BFS. These include:

- Teach Like a Champion 2.0 – for basic classroom routines & our approach to reading & comprehension in all lessons.
- “The BFS Handbook” – which details, and in many cases scripts, other key routines and processes that underpin our culture, including rewards & sanctions, staff duties, and so on.
- School assessment calendar & subject knowledge organisers, schemes of work and assessments – so that SNA staff have everything in place for them from day one, aligned with our values and approaches, so they can focus on students and teaching, and the Trust can be sure that the same things are largely happening in the same way at the same time, to allow for lessons to be learned and best practice shared.
- Line management documentation – we have developed an effective system of formal and informal management of subject teams, supported by crib sheets for meetings.
- Ongoing peer-observation capture sheets – a powerful culture of continuous improvement in teaching practice is obtained when staff commit to watching one another in action and feeding back afterwards in a formative, constructive fashion.

Where possible, we will bring new staff into school before they start to observe key practices in action. Before SNA opens, we would do this at BFS.

Prior to SNA’s opening, we would create a “sign off” process for curriculum delivery, baseline data, assessments and reporting, to check that everything is in place and ready to use from day 1.

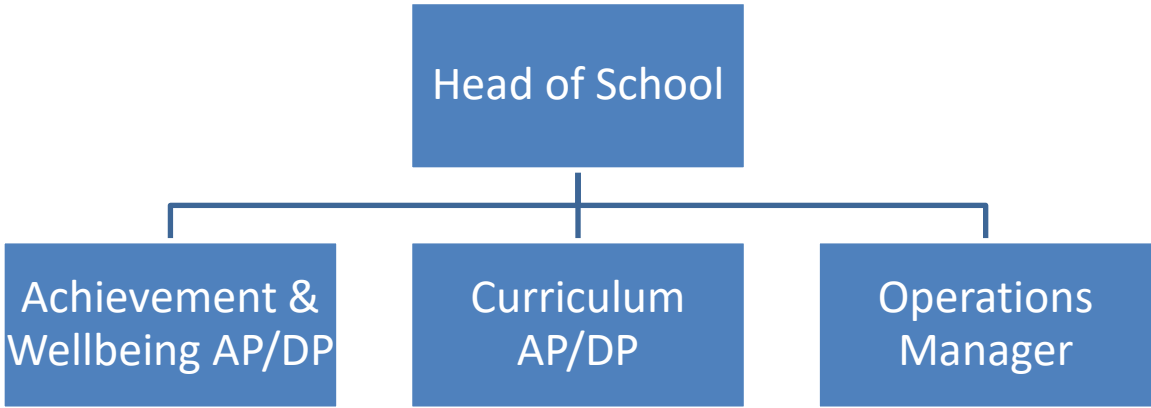
Central Trust staff and senior leaders at BFS would need to be satisfied that things are at the requisite standard to “sign off” the initial plans etc – and the state of readiness would be reported to the shadow LGB and Trustees.

**D3 – a staffing structure that will deliver the planned curriculum within the expected income levels**

**D3 – a staffing structure that will deliver the planned curriculum within the expected income levels**

We believe that our organisational structure at Bedford Free School will provide an appropriate structure for that of St Neots Academy.

Whilst the initial structure with only one year group and 120 students will be more fluid, ultimately the steady state organisation of staff will follow a three-legged model and look like so:



We have modelled staffing requirements for our curriculum during the growth phase to be as follows:

Year	Leadership		Curriculum	Wellbeing & Achievement		Operations	
	Head of School	Asst Princ.		HoD/ teacher	Learning Mentors	SENCO / PCs	Site
2018	1	0	5.2	1	1	1	1
2019	1	0	11.4	1	2	1	1.5
2020	1	1	16.5	2	3	1.5	2.0
2021	1	2	22.5	3	3	2	2.5
2022	1	3	30	4	5	2	2.5



### **D3 – a staffing structure that will deliver the planned curriculum within the expected income levels**

These have been costed against likely revenues for the school, using current Cambridgeshire funding formula levels and start up subsidies. We have been cautious in modelling income, and assumed higher staffing costs than we have experienced to date, and are confident that we can deliver our broad curriculum in a high-quality fashion right from the start.

#### **Sharing staff across schools**

It should be noted that in the first couple of years we anticipate making use of some of our specialist staff at BFS, and have them teach at SNA for 1 or 2 days a week. Once SNA is of a size that it can appoint a high enough FTE in each subject, we anticipate that staff would not be shared, unless there were clear benefits to doing so.

(Right from the start at BFS, contractually, all staff can be asked to work at any Trust site if directed. We have always pointed this out when recruiting people, as this is not standard practice locally, and do not anticipate that this would pose a concern for the staff asked to do this.)

We anticipate no more than 2 or 3 staff would need to work across sites in the early stages – mainly in subjects such as P.E., Music and Art & Design. To minimise the challenges that split-site working inevitably poses we would:

- schedule these staff to work full days at SNA (i.e. include PPA sessions there)
- schedule them on the same days;
- provide work spaces for them to be at when not teaching; and
- write the two schools' timetables together to make this possible

Doing things this way will also allow the affected staff the option to share lifts to-and-from St Neots if they wished.

We can provide the modelling behind these staff numbers at request.

#### **Contingency in the event of lower students numbers/revenue**

Obviously we need to be cautious in modelling initial student numbers and growth thereafter. There are inherent risks in a new school, and we have successfully managed these at BFS through a deliberate process of forecasting lower student numbers than we thought we would actually get, and higher costs than we thought likely.

(This is one reason why we have generated healthy reserves in our early years.)

Our curriculum model is extremely flexible, especially in the early years of the school. This is because we focus on depth of learning, and so in terms of different subjects, it is slightly narrower than many, so we need more teaching hours of fewer subjects. A

**D3 – a staffing structure that will deliver the planned curriculum within the expected income levels**

consequence of this is that we can flex the number of classes more easily than a traditional curriculum model.

If we filled up to only 70% of our proposed PAN, we believe that we could still deliver our curriculum model as it is by:

- reducing the number of classes per year group, from 5 or 4, to 4 or 3;
- sharing staff with BFS for longer;
- the Head of School retaining a teaching commitment for longer;
- not growing the Senior Leadership Team and/or middle leadership posts so quickly;
- employing fewer Learning Mentors and Pastoral Co-Ordinators;

Our estimate of an affordable staff level that delivers the proposed curriculum with the above changes is as follows:

	Leadership		Curriculum	Wellbeing & Achievement		Operations	
Year	Head of School	Asst Princ.	HoD/ teacher	Learning Mentors	SENCO / PCs	Site	Admin/ technicians
2018	1	0	4.0	1	1	1	1
2019	1	0	9	1	1	1	1.5
2020	1	1	13	2	2	1	1.5
2021	1	1	18	2	2	1.5	2.0
2022	1	2	22	3	3	1.5	2.0

It should be noted that even at 70% capacity, the vast majority of lessons can be taught by subject specialists still.

**If numbers were below 70% of PAN**

Below 70%, we would need to have more non-specialist teaching, particularly across humanities, English and maths. Whilst this is far from ideal, we are confident that with our well established schemes of work and assessment for each subject, plus support and oversight from BFS staff, quality could largely be maintained.

That said, we would look to review the curriculum model if student numbers looked to

**D3 – a staffing structure that will deliver the planned curriculum within the expected income levels**

remain low. However, we would do this in a constructive and optimistic fashion, knowing that one of the top performing state schools in the country is King Solomon Academy, which has a PAN of 60. One of our project team was a founder of that school, and so we have on hand the expertise to make a really small school very successful.

## D4 – the school will be welcoming to pupils of all faiths/world views and none

### **D4 – the school will be welcoming to pupils of all faiths/world views and none**

During the pre-opening stage we will work hard to ensure that all *prospective* students and their families feel that they would be welcome and could succeed at St Neots Academy – in order that we are seen as a genuine option for every family.

#### **Being welcoming and inclusive towards *prospective* families**

We have already met with Heads of the majority of St Neots primaries, and been endorsed by six of these. During the pre-opening stage we would continue our programme of community engagement by building links into every primary school in the town and nearby villages, in order that students can see and feel for themselves our welcoming ethos.

We would also look to form relationship with local sports clubs, the Town and District Council, Rotary Club and any other community organisation that reaches into local families.

#### **A school that is inclusive and welcoming to all students and their families**

Inspired by our founding belief, in order to create the necessary circumstances where all students can achieve incredible things, St Neots Academy must be a school where all students and their families feel welcome.

It will adopt the practice already established at BFS of every family being given a phone number and email address for the Principal/Head of School – so they know that in the event of a serious concern they go direct to them for support or advice. This is only practical and possible due to the smaller size of the school, and is a valued, distinctive feature of our approach.

The basis of our inclusive, can-do culture will be the school motto of “Go The Extra Mile”, supported by our core values of “Respect”, “Honesty” and “High Expectations”, will be.

We define these like so:

***Go The Extra Mile*** - “performing acts of service for others that go beyond what is required or expected.”

***Respect*** – “regard for the feelings, wishes or rights of others & yourself”

***Honesty*** – “being truthful, genuine & open”

***High Expectations*** – “the belief that everyone can achieve something great - and acting accordingly”

#### **D4 – the school will be welcoming to pupils of all faiths/world views and none**

St Neots, like BFS, will be a values-driven school as we believe it is essential to establish common ground, with a common set of beliefs and understandings, in order to mesh students and their families into a coherent and harmonious community.

This is particularly important in modern Britain where we are fortunate enough to have our communities made up of people with so many different experiences, backgrounds, nationalities and beliefs.

However, it is one thing to say what organisational values we have, and another to live and operate according to them. As has been recognised in both of BFS's Ofsted inspections, we really do have a school that embodies this approach, and St Neots Academy would do this as well.

#### **Reinforcing our values and culture**

On top of the all-important day-to-day expectations and routines within the school, there are several explicit means every day by which St Neots Academy will encourage and support students to embrace our tolerant and inclusive culture.

The whole school will gather together for our **Morning Lineup** – 5 minutes at the very start of every day where we will reflect on the previous day, and consider what we can look forward to in the day ahead. This is a wonderful opportunity to get students and staff to consider pertinent issues from current affairs, or festivals, or significant dates.

At BFS we have used Morning Lineup to consider things from Magna Carta to WWI, from Martin Luther King to Margaret Thatcher. Where Armistice Day has fallen on a school day, we have gathered everyone together for poetry and other readings, and had a student play the Last Post at 11am.

As well as our Morning Lineup, St Neots Academy students will benefit from daily **Morning Meetings**. These have been directly inspired by practice seen at Dixons Trinity Academy in Bradford. On top of opportunities for study, these will enable students to have time every day to reflect on their personal development, hear from guest speakers, share achievements with their peers, thank others for acts of kindness, and so on.

We would look to have people from all across the St Neots community to visit SNA and meet students in Morning Meetings. This would include local councillors, sports coaches, employers and business people, careers speakers, faith leaders and the like. The aim would be to expose students to role models, who embody our school values, and raise their aspirations towards a good university and fulfilling career.

#### **The importance of respect & tolerance**

Within the boundaries required for a secondary school, we will reinforce with all our students the importance of respect and tolerance for people with different outlooks on

#### **D4 – the school will be welcoming to pupils of all faiths/world views and none**

life. We will emphasise that a strength of British culture is its historical embrace of diversity, within a framework of tolerance – and that whilst one isn't required to embrace or agree with everyone else's beliefs or value, they should recognise their right to hold them.

Specifically within the R.E curriculum, students will predominantly study Christianity, as it is the basis of British culture and values, but they will also study all the major world faiths and systems of ethic and philosophy. Every student will study R.E. to full course GCSE level (unless their families exercise their right to exempt them from this.)

#### **A broad and balanced curriculum, preparing students for life**

As can be seen in section D1, the school will have a longer school day to incorporate a broad and balanced curriculum. It should be noted that we make extra time available for English, Humanities and music, and time daily dedicated to reading classic literature.

Whilst an important reason for this is to improve English literacy standards of our students, it is also to ensure all our students, regardless of background, receive a solid foundation of *cultural literacy*.

We believe this is especially important in today's diverse communities – to ensure that every child is exposed to the best that has been thought and said, and that will enable them to thrive in British society as an adult. Immersing all our students in our common cultural heritage, of Shakespeare, Dickens, Mary Shelley, Bach, Zephaniah and the like, will help them to better appreciate modern society, and see that we have more in common than differences.

#### **Embedding PSHE/SMSC**

From our work with BFS, we know firsthand how important it is to give students opportunities to consider the issues covered by PSHE and SMSC.

We believe that these are best covered through a combination of specific, focused sessions in collapsed-timetable days, assemblies/guest speakers and through the academic curriculum too.

We will ensure full coverage of this important element of the curriculum in the same way that we do at BFS, with our innovative audit matrix. This enables us to know which aspect is covered for which students and when and how – so that we can easily identify where there are gaps in coverage and address them.

For example, important elements of Relationship & Sex Education will be covered in KS3 and KS4 Science lessons – but the most sensitive and important aspects of this will be done in small gender-separated groups at appropriate times with specially trained staff, so as to ensure they are done sensitively.

#### **D4 – the school will be welcoming to pupils of all faiths/world views and none**

##### **Leadership opps**

An integral part of integrating students from all different backgrounds and views is to give them the opportunity to work together and take on leadership responsibilities within the school.

This also give students experience of the importance of debating, disagreeing, compromising and coming to a common decision that all must abide by.

Right from the start, SNA will have a student parliament, made up of elected or nominated representatives from across the school. Over time we will appoint prefects, House Captains and ultimately Head & Deputy Head Boys and Girls.

##### **Independent Information, Advice & Guidance, and Work Experience**

Not having a sixth form means we can be completely independent in advising students as to the best 16-18 options for them. Knowing our students that bit better due to our smaller size, we will work with them and their families to consider all options open to them – ensuring that they are not limiting themselves due to inexperience of university or high-status careers and sectors.

An important part of raising student aspirations, and giving them opportunities to work alongside people of different backgrounds to their own is Work Experience. Whilst this is no longer statutory, we will ensure that every single SNA student has at least one work experience placement of at least one week in duration during their time at the school.

We will particularly encourage students to have placements that are completely different to the kind of work their family does – to expose them to careers they might not have considered, and to work with people they might not normally meet.

##### **Safeguarding & wellbeing – including Prevent & British values**

Fundamental to our responsibilities at SNA will be the safeguarding and wellbeing of all our students.

The Trust will have a link Trustee with specific responsibility for Safeguarding, as will the LGB for SNA. There will of course be a Designated Lead for Safeguarding within the school, who will liaise with the link Trustee and Governor to ensure that the appropriate procedures are being adhered to and are effective.

We have detailed above how the core values of Respect, Honesty and High Expectations will be interwoven into the school culture, and through these and the other elements of our broad offer we will be explicitly and implicitly promoting British Values.

The Designated Lead for Safeguarding will also take responsibility for ensuring that the school embraces the spirit as well as the letter of the Prevent duty, to ensure that all

**D4 – the school will be welcoming to pupils of all faiths/world views and none**

our students are educated to be aware of potential radicalisation risks, and staff are able to identify potential vulnerable students too.

Regular training and briefings for Safeguarding (including key aspects such as Prevent, and FGM) will take place, so that staff are able to keep students safe, and students can feel safe and comfortable in discussing any concerns with staff too.



## Section E – evidence of need

### **E1 – provide valid evidence that there is a need for this school in the area**

In this section we will detail evidence that families in St Neots both need and want St Neots Academy. Our case for the school includes:

- an educational need due to low standards in local schools;
- a need for greater choice & diversity in schools available to local families;
- demand from local parents for the specific school we are proposing; and
- an impending need for more secondary school places in the town.

#### **An educational need due to low standards in local schools**

At a constituency level of Huntingdon, of the five secondary schools, 1 has been graded as at least good in its last two inspections (Longsands Academy), two have recently been uprated from Requires Improvement to Good (Hinchingsbrooke School and St Ivo School), and two are currently Requires Improvement having been this or Inadequate for some time (St Peters and Ernulf).

**Appendix A contains key data on the performance of these schools**, including the last two Ofsted judgements. It also shows the attainment of St Neots schools for the last decade and how this compares to the LA and national average.

Focusing in on the town of St Neots itself, parents currently have two secondaries to choose between: Longsands Academy and Ernulf Academy. Over the last decade, Ernulf has consistently underperformed the national and local averages and schools of similar intakes, in terms of 5A\*-C inc. English and maths, and progress measures.

Combining results for both St Neots secondaries over the last decade produces the graph in Appendix A, which shows that their students have consistently performed worse than the national and Cambridgeshire pictures overall.

Latest data suggests that **there are 684 students on roll at Ernulf – this is greater than the capacity we are proposing for St Neots Academy** (as mentioned in the free school criteria for assessment.)

By providing a distinctive alternative to existing schools, with a rigorous knowledge-based curriculum leading to academic choices at GCSE for every single student, we believe that St Neots Academy will help to challenge this historical underperformance and narrow attainment gaps – particularly among the significant number of white British working class students living in the St Neots.

#### **A need for greater choice & diversity in schools available to local families;**

There are two main reasons why St Neots Academy will address a need for greater

## **E1 – provide valid evidence that there is a need for this school in the area**

choice and diversity available to families in the town and surrounding villages:

- Longsands & Ernulf are both run by the same MAT – the St Neots Learning Partnership (SNLP) – and so families have a monopoly provider for secondary places, unless they travel significant distances to schools elsewhere
- Whilst they have very different intakes and outcomes, the two existing schools are run along very similar, traditional lines, and both have large PANs (Ernulf – PAN =232, capacity = 1274; Longsands – PAN = 290, capacity = 1838)

As a school outside of the SNLP, St Neots Academy will immediately provide an alternative choice to local families, and break the monopoly on secondary provision in the town.

It will also be fundamentally different in its curriculum when compared to the existing schools, with its smaller size, longer day, inbuilt enrichment programme, “100 Classics” and “Music for All” programmes, and so on. We are able to do these kinds of things more easily than traditional schools as they are built into our design, with processes and staff terms and conditions adapted to ensure we can deliver them effectively.

There is some evidence that parents are already seeking alternative choices when their child reaches Year 7.

The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust (a small MAT of five primary schools based in St Neots) has told us that in recent years around 10% of their students have sought schools other than Longsands or Ernulf when applying for secondary places, and that a number of students on top of this have switched to schools outside St Neots during Year 7 when places have become available elsewhere.

### **Demand from local parents for the specific school we are proposing**

We have run a high profile community engagement campaign since late August (launching [www.stneotsacademy.co.uk](http://www.stneotsacademy.co.uk) & [www.facebook.com/stneotsacademy](https://www.facebook.com/stneotsacademy) on August 30<sup>th</sup>). Details of this engagement are in section E2 and the appendices.

We have experienced an extremely high level of demand from local families for our specific proposal. For this initial stage of engagement, we have specifically targeted parents of primary-aged students, and to date (27<sup>th</sup> September 2016) we have collated the following evidence of demand:

- 327 “likes on our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/stneotsacademy](https://www.facebook.com/stneotsacademy) )
- 61 followers on Twitter ([www.twitter.com/stneotsacademy](https://www.twitter.com/stneotsacademy) )
- 35 families visiting us at our drop-in session on 24<sup>th</sup> September

**E1 – provide valid evidence that there is a need for this school in the area**

- 15 families attending our meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September
- 207 families have completed our online survey stating that they would choose SNA for their child(ren)
- These families account for 327 children, the age breakdown of which is as follows:

Year 1 or younger	95
Year 2	34
Year 3	45
Year 4	54
Year 5	43
Year 6	24
Older	32

A map showing where most of these registrations come from can be seen in Appendix B. A copy of the survey used is here too. A selection of the comments made by those registering can be seen there also – this gives a good sense of the strength of support for what we are proposing amongst many families. Support is widespread in terms of feeder schools – registrations come from every primary in St Neots, and beyond.

Whilst we recognise that we are much more likely to hear from families disillusioned with existing provision – as those happy with it have less incentive to register interest – it is clear that there are strong feelings about the perceived historical and current quality of secondary provision in St Neots. It is also clear that some perceive that things at Ernulf Academy have not improved sufficiently within SNLP.

**We recognise that this is just a starting point, as we have only had a relatively short period of time to gather these registrations – 4 weeks.** However we intend to continue with our programme of community engagement throughout the autumn term and right up until the first round of admissions. (See details in section E2.)

We were extremely successful when we worked through this engagement process in Bedford in 2010/11/12 – opening 95% full in an area with a significant number of surplus places. Given the strong response from families so far, and the endorsements we have received from the Diamond Learning Partnership Trust and Little Paxton Primary Schools, we are confident that by Christmas registrations will be close to or exceed our PAN in the current year groups that would make up our first few intakes.

## E1 – provide valid evidence that there is a need for this school in the area

### An impending need for more school places in the town

There are currently surplus places within the secondary schools in St Neots:

Schoolname	PAN	MAY NOR	Netcapacity	surplus/deficit
Ernulf Academy	232	684	1274	590
Longsands Academy	290	1776	1838	62
	522	2460	3112	652

However, as can be seen from this table, nearly all the surplus places are in Ernulf – where standards have unfortunately been weak for an extended period of time.

We made contact with Penny Price and Ian Trafford at Cambridgeshire County Council, to share our plans and better understand the Local Authority's intentions regarding future pupil places in St Neots.

There are plans for several more primary schools in St Neots, and to expand other existing primary schools too.

However, as can be seen from the email reproduced in Appendix C, there are currently no immediate plans for the LA to expand secondary provision in the town. It is believed that the existing spaces at Ernulf should be filled up before any new ones are provided.

Also, when additional basic need is required (they believe from 2022) the current plan is to do it through expanding Longsands and Ernulf.

Current projections for student numbers in the St Neots cluster of primaries and secondaries can be seen in Appendix C, and they imply an additional 400 or so students of secondary school age by 2022, with the bulge starting to feed through from 2019.

(Note: as can be seen in the year-to-year dip in Y6 -> Y7 numbers, this is with an assumption that many students in St Neots primaries go elsewhere for secondary; if they stayed within St Neots, the secondary population would be even higher over time.)

If the information shared with us by a local councillor is to be believed (see Appendix C), then there may be a need for even more school places prior to 2022.

Also, we would argue that a more effective way of meeting any additional need, in terms of raising standards, improving parental choice, and allowing for diversity of provision, would be to open a third secondary school for the town. This is something supported by families and some of the primary schools we have engaged with (see endorsements for our project elsewhere in this document.)

**E1 – provide valid evidence that there is a need for this school in the area**

In conversation with Cambridgeshire C.C. it was suggested that given the large housing developments underway and planned to the east of the town (the “Love’s Farm” and “Wintringham” developments), there could be a case made for a new secondary school to be placed there, as a natural next school for students who will attend the several primary schools already opened/planned to open there.

Please tick to confirm that you have provided evidence as annexes:



## E2 – successful engagement with parents and the local community

### **E2 – successful engagement with parents and the local community**

We have carried out a comprehensive and thorough engagement programme since launching our proposal, including:

- Meetings with primary school Head Teachers
- Intensive online & social media activity
- Ongoing communication with the Local Authority, MP & councillors
- Public information sessions

#### **Primary school meetings**

Whilst our public engagement campaign has only run for a month so far, we approached the Diamond Learning Partnership Trust for their insights about our proposal back in July.

Having visited ██████████ at DLPT, at one of ██████ schools, and hosted ██████ for a return visit to BFS, ██████ agreed to allow us to share our plans through ██████ schools. They have shared information about us, disseminated leaflets electronically, and publicised the public session we have held to date.

As well as this, I have met with, or have meetings fixed with, Heads of 5 other St Neots primary schools (St Mary's, Eynesbury, Priory Juniors, Little Paxton Primary). I have shared our plans, and sought their views on the proposal. Three of the five schools have disseminated an information leaflet. (Context of which can be found in appendix D.)

We have received official endorsements for our proposal from the Diamond Learning Partnership Trust and from Little Paxton Primary School – copies of their endorsement letters can be found in Appendix D.

Following submission of this application, we intend to meet with the remaining primary schools, the special school, and the St Neots Learning Partnership (who run both existing secondary schools in St Neots.)

#### **Online & social media activity**

We have launched a public website – [www.stneotsacademy.co.uk](http://www.stneotsacademy.co.uk) – hosting key information about our proposal. It is through this website that we have collected registrations of interest using an online survey. (A copy of the questions/information gathered can be seen in Appendix B.)

(Website activity up to 27<sup>th</sup> September:  
Sessions 1,548 Users 1,287 Pageviews 4,225 )

## **E2 – successful engagement with parents and the local community**

Alongside this, we have created a very popular and active Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/stneotsacademy](http://www.facebook.com/stneotsacademy)) - with 327 likes, and hundreds of interactions so far.

Through both these channels we have received many messages, asking us questions about the school – and we have responded to every single one. The most frequently asked questions have been on the topics of:

- where the school will be sited
- what provision there will be for students with SEND
- which year groups we would open with.

### **Political engagement**

In section E1 we mention our interactions with Cambridgeshire County Council officers; we have also made contact with a number of town, district and county councillors in order to discuss our plans & seek feedback on them – a copy of some feedback received from one councillor is enclosed in Appendix D. On September 5<sup>th</sup> we met with the [REDACTED] for [REDACTED], [REDACTED], to explain our plans and the rationale behind them.

This engagement will continue during the autumn and beyond: we are keeping the [REDACTED] updated, and have request a slot to present our plans to the town council.

### **Public Information sessions**

We have started a series of public information sessions, in order for people to be able to come and meet the project team, and ask in person any questions that they have about our plans.

We have run two so far, with attendance as follows:

24<sup>th</sup> September – Drop In, 9.30am – noon – Love's Farm House

- during the morning over 60 people, making up 35 families, attended to ask about plans.

27<sup>th</sup> September – Presentation/Q&A, 7.30pm – 8.30pm – Round House Primary Academy

- 23 people, representing 15 families, to hear a short presentation on our plans, followed by informal Q&A with the senior team from BFS.

We intend to continue with these public sessions during the autumn term, holding them fortnightly, in different venues in different parts of the town, to ensure that we reach as many different parts of the community as possible. Already from the two sessions to date we have had a flurry of further interest & registrations off the back of them, and

## **E2 – successful engagement with parents and the local community**

more suggestions as to where else we can meet families.

We will also continue with our online & social media campaigning – just as happened when we were running the Bedford campaign in 2010/11/12, we are now finding word-of-mouth is taking over as people who have already met us, and/or registered, encourage their friends to do so too.

(If called to interview regarding our application, we would bring updated evidence of parental demand and engagement.)



**Section F – capacity and capability**

**F1 (a) Skills and experience of your team**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Where they live</b> (town/city)	<b>Member of core group</b>	<b>Role(s)</b> (pre-opening team, member, trustee, principal designate, local governor once school is open)	<b>Summary of relevant expertise</b> Please refer to the relevant section of the assessment criteria booklet to check what detail you need to give	<b>Available Time</b> (hours per week)

## F1 (a) Skills and experience of your team

In section F2 we detail how we have already restructured Bedford Free School's leadership, to create additional capacity and capability for this project. We anticipate that this will create enough time for [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to oversee the bulk of the day-to-day work in the pre-opening stage.

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were two of the [REDACTED] of BFS, so have significant experience of the successes and pitfalls that may come along the way. [REDACTED] is an extremely experienced [REDACTED] & [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] has overseen the conversion of a lower school to academy status, as has [REDACTED] and so we are fully aware of the necessary Academies Handbook and other compliance challenges new academies face.

Whilst we are largely looking to duplicate our BFS provision in SNA, we recognise that there are schools out there with unbelievable outcomes for students, and this is why we have asked [REDACTED] – one of the [REDACTED] of King Solomon Academy – to work with us. We hope to harness much of his experience of creating one of the top performing secondaries in the country.

From our experience with Bedford Free School, we know how important it is for the Principal Designate to have been chosen in time for when parents apply for secondary places in the autumn – they want to know who will be heading up any school that their child will go to.

While we believe that are likely to be strong, interested, candidates from BFS, we would ensure that the very best person for the job is appointed by running a nationwide recruitment process, and incorporating people who are external to BFS into the various interview panels.

With all this in mind, we would run an early timeline for the recruitment of the Principal Designate (assuming approval for SNA in Spring 2017):

First half of summer term 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- social media &amp; marketing campaign to raise awareness of the school</li><li>- Open Events for potential candidates (held at BFS)</li><li>- timelines for recruitment published</li></ul>
Second half of summer term 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- National advert/recruitment campaign (local and national press e.g. TES)</li><li>- Shortlisting &amp; Interview process (with panels made up of Trustees, Trust SLT, people from the shadow LGB, and, if desired, DfE/RSC representative)</li></ul>

**F1 (a) Skills and experience of your team**

	- Appointment of successful candidate
September 2017	- (If no appointment made, readvertisement will take place now.)
October 2017	- Principal Designate fronts Open Events to recruit Year 7s for September 2018
January 2018	- Principal Designate takes up post

## F1 (b) Skills gap analysis

<b>Skills/experience missing</b>	<b>Where is the gap?</b> i.e. pre-opening team, trustees, local governing body	<b>How and when do you plan to fill the gap</b>
Admin support for the pre-opening team	Pre-opening team	We would appoint an admin support assistant to start alongside the Principal Designate in January 2018
Up-to-date experience of the pre-opening stage of a free school	Pre-opening team/Trustees	<p>We would make full use of the support and advice available from the DfE and New Schools Network all the way through the pre-opening stage.</p> <p>We would allocate a link Trustee to oversee the SNA project, and place them on the shadow LGB that we would create for the pre-opening stage.</p>
Technical & professional expertise in areas such as property, legals, HR, ICT etc	Pre-opening team	<p>We are aware that at various points we will likely need specific professional and technical advice from lawyers etc e.g. when entering into the supplementary funding agreement, signing freeholds/leases, any changes to H.R. Ts &amp; Cs.</p> <p>We would procure the necessary capacity and expertise for such things from appropriate external organisations when needed.</p>
Recruitment & training of an LGB for SNA	Pre-opening team / governing body	In summer 2017 we would recruit a small shadow governing body to operate during the pre-opening stage – to oversee, support, and hold to account the Principal Designate, and ensure milestones towards opening are being met.

Skills/experience missing	Where is the gap? i.e. pre-opening team, trustees, local governing body	How and when do you plan to fill the gap
		<p>We anticipate that this would be made up of existing Trustees, prospective parents, and people local to St Neots, chosen for the specific expertise and skill sets that they have – including project management, education, safeguarding, HR and finance. They would be appointed for a fixed term, initially to last until just after the school is opened (at which point a full LGB would be appointed.)</p> <p>We would ensure that all people appointed received full governor training – probably through our agreement with Bedford Borough – in order that they were fully aware of their responsibilities and capable of carrying these out effectively.</p>
Deep local knowledge of St Neots & its community	Pre-opening team / Trustees	To ensure we have a the deepest and most accurate understanding of the community of St Neots, and enable us to know how best to target the school to prospective students and their families, we would add one or two community opinion formers/leaders to the pre-opening team. Working in a voluntary capacity, they would be able to point us towards key organisations, schools, families and employers, in order to get across our message to as many people as possible, in the most effective way. (This worked really well with BFS, and we are looking to replicate it this time too.)

## **F2 – a governance structure, and roles and responsibilities that will ensure accountability and effective decision making in this academy trust and drive improvement in the new free school**

### **F2 – a governance structure, and roles and responsibilities that will ensure accountability and effective decision making in this academy trust and drive improvement in the new free school**

#### **Confirmation of capacity and capability**

We met with [REDACTED] on June 14<sup>th</sup>, to outline our proposal and seek [REDACTED] guidance as to its potential viability. Following this, we have remained in contact with [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] team, updating [REDACTED] as the project has progressed.

We received written confirmation of our capacity and capability to open this free school as planned, and this can be found in Appendix E.

#### **Changes to governance and leadership required for a successful MAT**

Currently Bedford Free School is the only academy in a single academy trust, but we have already started the process of creating our multi-academy trust, as we are in discussions with a local (Ofsted outstanding) maintained primary school to join us.

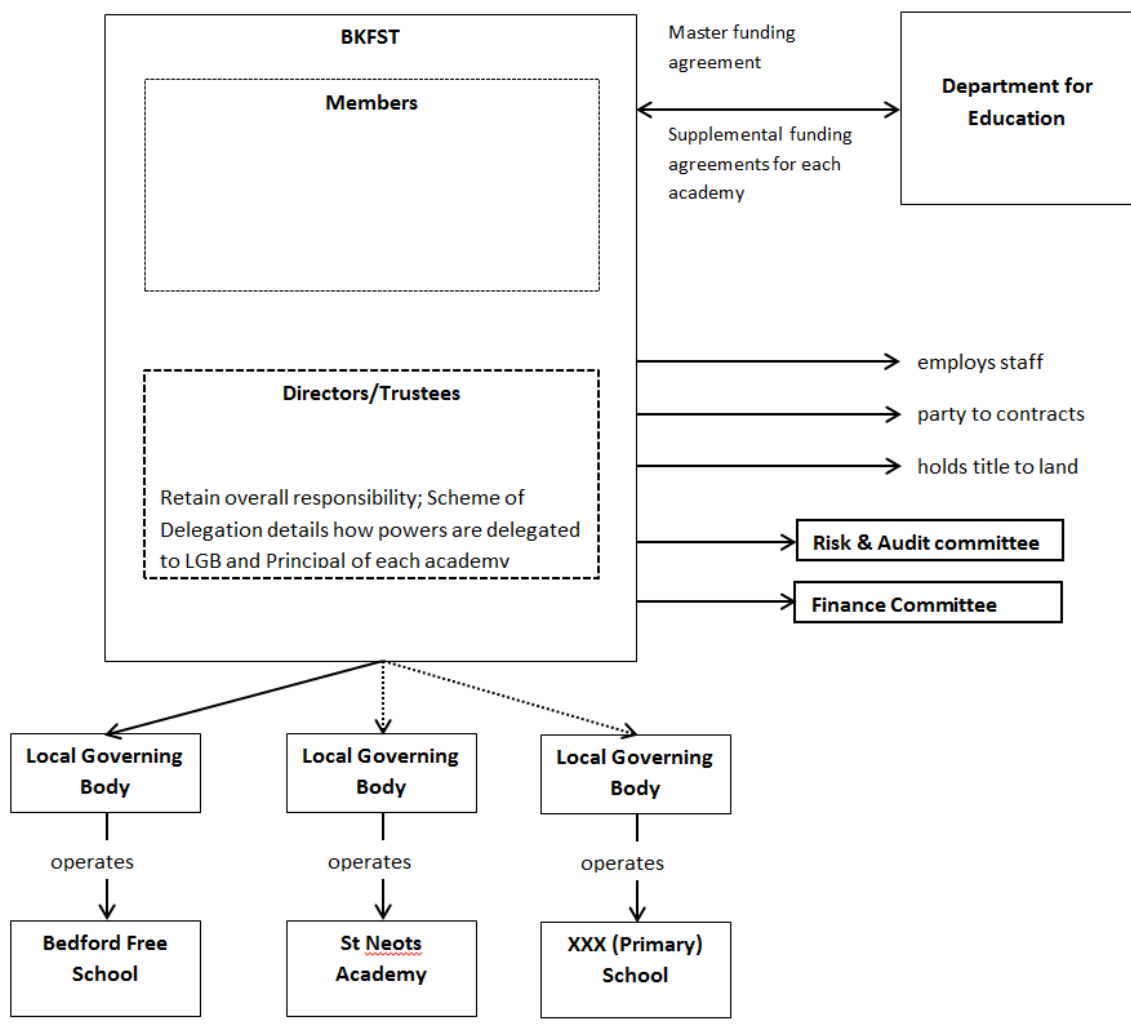
As a first step, in advance of any other projects, we have grown the Leadership Team at BFS, creating & filling the roles of Head of School and Office Manager. This has freed up [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to take on the mantles of Managing Director and Director of Operations & Finance, and to focus significant amounts of their time on MAT projects – namely converting the primary school to academy status, and St Neots Academy.

Trustees have also agreed to proceed with the necessary changes to the schools articles of associate and funding agreement to officially form the MAT. Alongside this, we will be working with Academy Ambassadors to review our governance structure as we go from a single board of Trustees/Governors to a separate Board of Trustees and a Local Governing Body for BFS (and the primary school, at the point that it joins us.)

Key to the smooth working of the MAT will be a clear, strong Scheme of Delegation – and from work already carried out, we have a draft that we are currently working through with our primary partner, in anticipation of them joining us.

The intention is to create a “shadow” LGB for St Neots Academy during the pre-opening stage, thus creating a governance structure like so:

**F2 – a governance structure, and roles and responsibilities that will ensure accountability and effective decision making in this academy trust and drive improvement in the new free school**



In terms of Trust leadership – [redacted] and [redacted] will have strategic and operational responsibility for the schools in the MAT, reporting to the Trust accordingly, with Heads of School in each school being accountable to their respective LGB.

**Managing conflicts of interest**

Given the make up and nature of our current Trustees & project group, and any future members of these, we will need to be extremely cautious in identifying and managing potential conflicts of interest.

Given BFS is a current school, we have experience of this already, and we would look to expand our current good practice in this area into the SNA project.

We have identified two potential conflicts of interest that might arise with people currently involved in the project:

- BFS has for some time now subscribed to [redacted] “Times Tables Rock Stars” website [redacted] a year), and as this is such an excellent educational product it is possible that SNA might purchase a subscription too. [redacted] also has a number of

**F2 – a governance structure, and roles and responsibilities that will ensure accountability and effective decision making in this academy trust and drive improvement in the new free school**

companies that potentially provide maths teacher consultancy services to schools.

██████ is involved with the SNA project in a purely voluntary capacity, and will receive no remuneration for █████ time or inputs. █████ involvement with SNA will cease at the point that the school opens, and were SNA wish to procure █████ support in any way, we would expect this to be done on an “at cost” basis given █████ previous involvement with the school.

- █████ employer – LGSS Law Ltd – does some work for Cambridgeshire County Council. It is possible that they could be involved in property or legal work on behalf of C.C.C, to do with St Neots Academy. If this were to be the case, █████ would remove █████ from any discussions or decisions where this was relevant.



## Section G – budget planning and affordability

### **G1 – budget planning and affordability**

#### **The healthy state of the Trust's finances**

Due to cautious budgeting and management of resources, we have run a surplus at BFS for every year of operation, and as such managed to build up a healthy level of reserves for the Trust. We have done this to enable us to smooth out any future funding changes, and to enable us to explore MAT opportunities that will enhance the quality of education that we can provide current and future students.

The past 12 months saw a significant level of in-year growth. Due to the lag in receiving this additional funding we have set a very tight budget for this academic year, in anticipation of a significant surplus for 2017/18 (when the additional revenues due to higher student numbers come through.)

#### **Contingency planning in the event of lower income for SNA**

In section D3 we have shown in outline how we would adjust staffing levels if student numbers, and therefore income, was to fall to as low as 70% of PAN. We believe that our curriculum model is sufficiently flexible to manage this and still provide high quality learning for students.

#### **Centrally provided services**

We anticipate that core operational support functions will be centrally arranged by the Trust. This will include:

- finance
- human resources & payroll
- resource procurement
- marketing
- processing of staff recruitment
- network services, staff & classroom ICT
- canteen service provision.

This is not an exhaustive list. The intention is to arrange services centrally where doing so makes sense in terms of lower costs, greater choice or better quality. The costs of providing this will be covered by a central Trust charge, at a percentage of income, the level of which is still to be determined by the Trustees but to be .

## Section H – premises (use Excel spread sheet)

This section will need to be completed by **all** applicants. Please:

- complete the Section H tab in the Excel spread sheet; and
- refer to the relevant section of the [how to apply to set up a free school guidance and the criteria for assessment](#) for what should be included in this section.

## Annexes

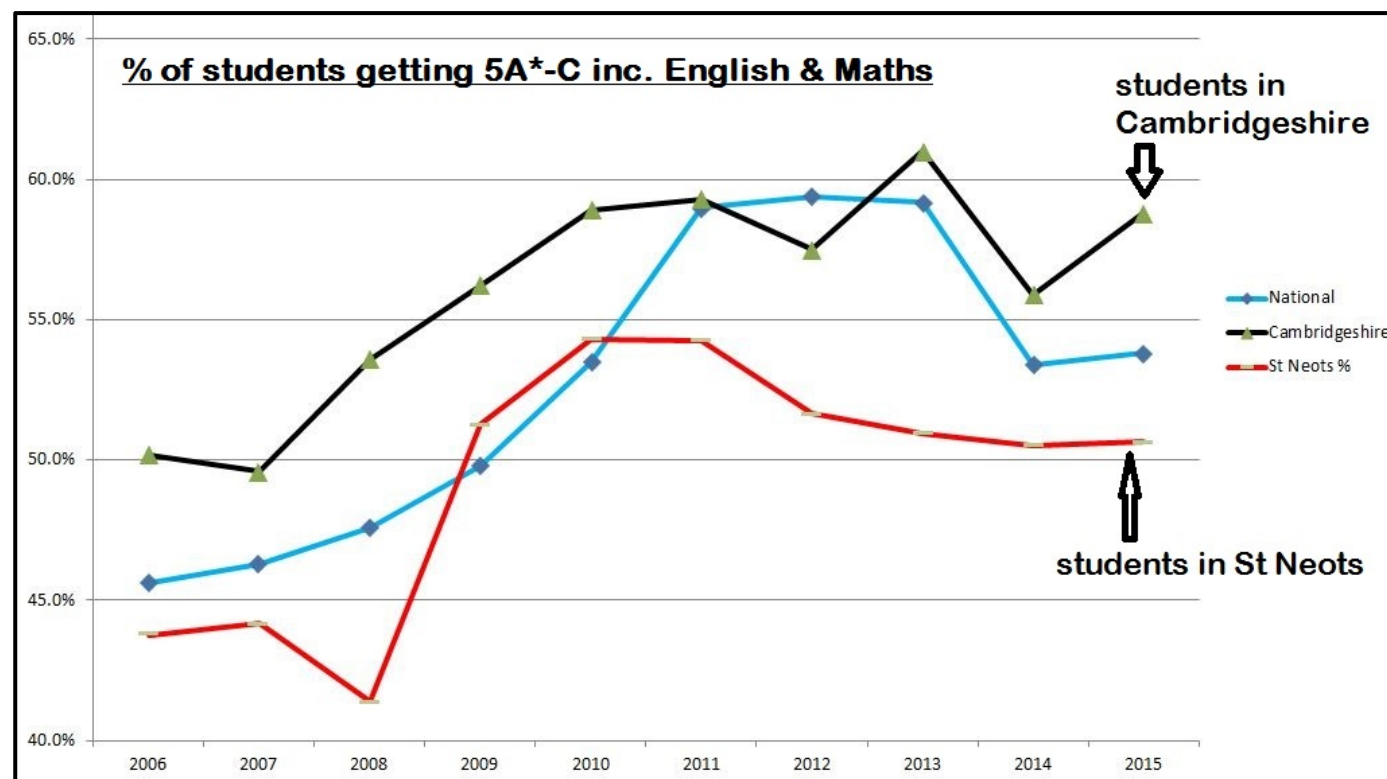
Appendix A	Standards data for secondary schools in Huntingdon constituency and St Neots
Appendix B	Evidence of demand from families
Appendix C	Correspondence & data regarding pupil place plans & requirements
Appendix D	Evidence of successful engagement with parents and the local community
Appendix E	CVs for the core St Neots Academy project team  Letter from RSC confirming our group's capacity and capability to successfully deliver this project

## Appendix A

### Standards data for secondary schools in Huntingdon constituency and St Neots

School	No. pupils end of KS4	% expected prog.		achievement			Latest (previous) Ofsted grades	Date of latest inspection
		English	Maths	5A*-C inc. E&M	EBACC	Basics		
Ernulf Academy	123	69	55	36	7	39	3 (4)	Dec 2014
Longsands Academy	284	67	75	57	30	61	2 (2)	Oct 2014
St Peter's School	198	61	59	39	15	41	3 (3)	May 2014
Hinchingbrooke School	299	82	71	64	30	66	2 (3)	Apr 2016
St Ivo School	297	69	74	64	26	65	2 (3)	July 2016

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>National</b>	45.6%	46.3%	47.6%	49.8%	53.5%	59.0%	59.4%	59.2%	53.4%	53.8%
<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	50.2%	49.6%	53.6%	56.2%	58.9%	59.3%	57.5%	61.0%	55.9%	58.8%
<b>Ernulf</b>	28%	31%	25%	30%	36%	39%	29%	39%	35%	36%
<b>Longsands</b>	56%	54%	53%	66%	67%	64%	63%	59%	59%	57%
<b>St Neots %</b>	43.8%	44.2%	41.4%	51.3%	54.3%	54.3%	51.7%	50.9%	50.5%	50.7%



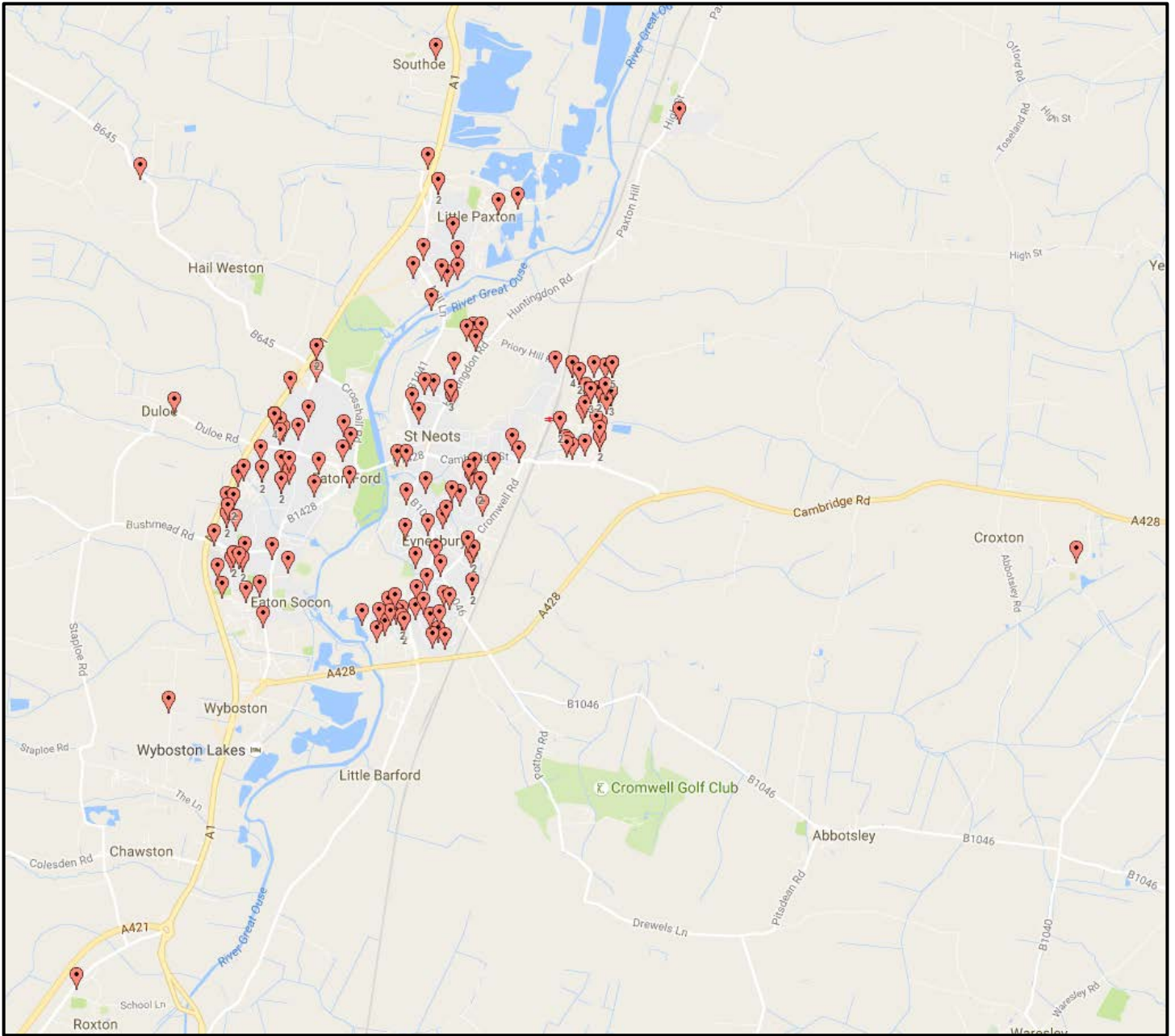
## Appendix B

### Evidence of demand from families

Survey generated from [www.stneotsacademy.co.uk](http://www.stneotsacademy.co.uk)

Your name	
E-mail address	
Contact number	
Postcode	
Would you like to receive email updates?	
I would consider St Neots Academy for my child(ren)	
My child/children is/are in Year(s):	
Current school(s):	
Any other comments?	

Map showing distribution of postcodes:



Comments made about our proposal via the survey:

Any other comments?
Very pleased to see proposals for a new school as we have been considering leaving St Neots due to the current secondary education offer
i know my children are very young, but a good secondary schools are very important to their eduction. We have been discussing relocating from st Neots to find a better secondary school eduction then st Neots can currently offer. This academy gives me some hope of a good school in St Neots.
A new, progressive school is needed in St Neots, especially one that gives students a much more rounded, modern day education. I hope your application is accepted. We're not planning on sending our youngest to either of the existing secondary schools.
I am a teacher at a St.Neots locality primary school in the village of Eltislely, as well as a parent of a twelve and sixteen year old. Having been the [REDACTED] in a local school and having worked in education for twenty years (as well as being a local for forty!), I would be keen to discuss the needs of St.Neots families with you.
If you stick to the principles you have laid out already we are certain you will have another success on your hands.  Decision made.
I am hugely interested in this school potentially opening as I am a parent of 3 boys who would be an intake for future years.
I believe a new school for St Neots is long overdue as the current schools have not been in a good way for some time and the size of St Neots & Little Paxton has increased massively in the last 10 years. I like the idea of an Academy where parents can have more input into the school.
I'm extremely interested in learning more about St Neots Academy and would like to be kept up to date with progress and opportunities for my son
I feel that a new secondary school is essential to our area
One of my children has ASD and Sensory Processing disorder, i hope the school will cater well for special needs also.
Think this school is a great idea!!!!
With the huge housing developments that have occurred and are planned in st Neots a new school is desperately required! Exciting times ahead
I am interested in where the possible locations are.
Although both my children are very young at the moment it's refreshing to hear that there could be more secondary education options for St. Neots in the future. I would certainly consider St Neots Academy for my children when the time arises in a few years, and wish you every luck with your campaign.
As we are an expat family (Dutch/French) we would like to see a more international approach to schooling in St Neots, for instance we would be interested in having a mother tongue program set up (comparable to what Cambridge international school is doing with lessons in French, Dutch, Chinese, German, Spanish, Polish and Russian for native speakers). We believe that learning foreign languages other than only English is vital for this next generation of children and as Loves farm (and St Neots) has many bilingual families we think this new school could distinguish itself by offering a varied language program at GCSE levels.



Location will be an important factor. We would also welcome a smart uniform policy and good sports facilities and after school activities.
Eynesbury and Priory Park areas already have a secondary school and so it would be great if it was located on the Eaton Ford/Eaton Socon side of town. I think you would receive a high intake sited in that area. Either way, having another school in St Neots would be fantastic as it is always good to give people more choice.
My older daughter has additional needs and currently stated, she is doing ok at her main stream school, but the idea of her going to Longsand in a few years scares the life of me. I love the idea of a free school, and would love to have more information about it. Thanks, [REDACTED]
Desperately needed
My son is due to start secondary school in September 2018 but I am keen to know location details.
We currently live in somerset but are locating to the above postcode in December of this year
Will the school cater for ADHd and children with sligitt learning difficulties? Especially as live just into Bedford shire
Good luck
I am very keen for another school within our community and really feel that this would be a wonderful thing. Very keen on my children coming there.
Having looked through the website for Bedford free I think a similar thing here would be great, especially for noah my middle child who would be due to start year 7 when you are looking to open. The longer days and structure would be really good for him and your range of options is great with so many things to choose from. Please keep me updated
I'm Very interested in supporting a very much needed new school for St Neots!
Planning ahead for secondary school
Excellent concept for St Neots and hopefully will provide challenge to the other schools in the town. St Neots is expanding and with an influx of London commuters to the East it feels like things are starting to shift. The town must get its act together with school places. Loves Farm junior and pre school are over subscribed. What about opening a junior school with flexibility to change into a secondary school as the sizeable infant cohort in the East changes too?! As Camborne failed to plan for. The Eastern Expansion is a long way off being able to provide a second junior school ...
" If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn....." The above quote is what I am looking for within a school .
I have twin boy and girl aged 9 both have educational statements will they get the support they require.
Really excited to read this and wish you all the best. It is just what St Neots needs. Thank you.
Obviously my daughter is a long way off secondary school age but want to show my support for a new secondary school, especially from people who've started up free schools (I love that idea).
I am looking for an outstanding school for my 8 year old to join when he goes to secondary school. He is currently in year 4 and do not want to send him to the existing local schools, Ernulf and Longsands as they are both failing. My eldest son, who is currently in year 9 goes to Cambourne Village College as he was bullied at Ernulf to the extent that we had no choice but to take him out and thankfully, Cambourne had a space for him, which is an outstanding school. He is now thriving. I do not want the same thing to happen to my other two children and see Ernulf and Longsands as a disappointment. I would love my other two to go to a local school but will not be sending them to Ernulf or Longsands!! Thank you.

I am a [REDACTED]
Be very interested to support the build
Delighted to hear this. My daughter would have to go to the failing Ernulf in 2020.
Look forward to seeing this develop and give parents another choice is secondary school in St neots. Fingers crossed this could be my option for my eldest
I am very interested with this both as a parent and possible employment possibilities with regards to support staff positions
We the people of St Neots need a new school asap. I look forward to seeing the new one up and running.
Our current Head Teacher just shared your leaflet on my daughter's school's Facebook page and all I can say is yes yes yes please. I have been very worried about the secondary school situation in St Neots and I know a lot of other parents feeling the same way. Your proposal is exactly what I want for my children, particularly the focus on extracurricular activities which have been proven to improve children's learning but are largely ignored by most schools in favour of teaching to the test. I'm keeping my fingers firmly crossed that your proposals are approved and that we live close enough to the school site that my children will get in!
We were thinking of sending our children further afield for a good school as the options are limited in St Neots. Very excited about this proposal.
This is a much needed and exciting thing for our children in St .Neots.  Hopefully there will be a good location found ideally Eaton Socon area as currently both secondary schools are the opposite end of town.
I am currently a [REDACTED] (formerly [REDACTED] [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] which has consistently improved over the last four years since it's conversion to Sponsored Academy. As a Ernulf parent for the last four years I have seen the problems in Ernulf that have held it back. As a primary school governor I very much welcome a fresh approach to Secondary school education in St Neots and would be interested in getting involved.
If your school was built near Eaton Socon or Eaton Ford it would not be adding to the traffic hold ups in town. Plus access to motorway would mean easy access for children in local area.
Do you know where the school will be based. This is very much needed in St Neots.
i also have a older daughter child who when to UTC Cambridge so have experience the free school environment and wish for my younger daughters to experience it too. I strongly feel that a smaller school is better for the children and totally agreed with the free school approach.
Currently considering moving to a better secondary school area
Having worked at BFS I know first hand what a successful school is, I was more than impressed when I worked there and would recommend the same type of school within St.Neots, particularly if it has the same sizing structure of BFS.
As a local parent I would be interested in becoming involved in some way
Will you have a sixth form?

## Appendix C

### Correspondance & data regarding pupil place plans & requirements

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 26 August 2016 14:37  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Thanks you for your time just now.

Dear [REDACTED]

I will respond on the basis of my understanding of the local authority position. This position was agreed by Council members following a place planning review undertaken in response to the proposals for housing growth contained in the Huntingdonshire District Council Local Plan in place at the time.

The Council intends to expand the existing secondary schools in St Neots in response to the proposed levels of growth. Financial provision is made in the Council's capital programme in 2022/23 for this work based on current pupil forecast numbers.

The Council has no plans to review this position at present.

However, it cannot prevent any potential sponsor submitting an application to open a new free school.

The Council will be consulted by the Regional Schools' Commissioner on any application made. The issues which would arise if you submitted an application in wave 17 of the Free School programme as I see it would be ones of:

- Timing; the current project 500 free schools are to be delivered within the lifetime of the current Parliament. Meeting I have had recently with the EFA have confirmed this. A new secondary school in St Neots opening within this time frame would create surplus capacity in the system for a number of years. This may prove to be destabilising and have a detrimental effect on existing schools and/or reduce the chances of a successful opening of a new school.
- Securing member support; if the Council response is to be amended so that it can support the opening of a third secondary school in St Neots then a compelling needs based case will need to be made which sets aside the evidence base supporting the current position
- Strategic planning; no sites for a new secondary school are identified in the major housing growth sites. Section 106 contributions and the Council's capital programme are predicated on the sums of money negotiated for the extension of the existing secondary schools.

When [redacted] returns to the office in a couple of weeks' time I will check this position back with [redacted] as I have not been involved in the Huntingdonshire District Council area for some time

[redacted]

[redacted]

-----  
September 9th

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your email.

I am also a District and Cambridgeshire County Councillor.

My colleague, Councillor [redacted] is also a [redacted] and I believe [redacted] of the St Neots Learning Partnership.

I am rather sceptical about the data used for projections of school numbers and have raised this with Officers at Cambridgeshire.

We have recently undergone an electoral Boundary Review which looks as though 2,500 residents were missed. The data did not become available until after the Review had been completed but the error has been accepted by both Cambridgeshire Insight (CCC statistics Officers) and LGBC.

St Neots has the highest percentage rate of population growth in the UK. Only new homes at St Neots East were included in the LGBC review. 1,000 homes were built in other parts of St Neots during the LGBC review but not included in statistics.

Obviously, the St Neots colleges serve surrounding villages but I have no information of whether those children might be diverted to other colleges in the event capacity constraints are reached.

There is also the interesting geographical dimension of St Neots which effectively has Bedfordshire potential catchment from Little Barford and Wyboston, which I do not believe are considered in Cambridgeshire calculations.

May I suggest you contact [redacted], St Neots [redacted] to present at a Town Council meeting. You should also copy [redacted], [redacted] of St Neots Town Council and also a [redacted] and Councillor [redacted] (another 3 hatter). Their email addresses are on all of the three different Council websites.

Kindest regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

## Projected Pupil Numbers in St Neots area

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	total secondary age
<b>2014/15</b>	560	604	585	515	474	497	465	408	384	411	422	407	259	181	<b>2472</b>
<b>2015/16</b>	595	567	609	589	519	486	501	391	406	384	415	419	231	213	<b>2459</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	646	601	572	611	590	525	487	412	389	406	388	412	237	197	<b>2441</b>
<b>2017/18</b>	628	653	607	575	614	607	528	391	412	391	412	387	235	204	<b>2432</b>
<b>2018/19</b>	664	638	662	613	581	624	613	434	392	415	398	412	228	204	<b>2483</b>
<b>2019/20</b>	651	674	647	668	619	588	630	492	435	395	422	398	240	200	<b>2582</b>
<b>2020/21</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	541	494	439	403	423	238	210	<b>2748</b>
<b>2021/22</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	549	543	498	447	404	250	211	<b>2902</b>

## Appendix D

### Evidence of successful engagement with parents and the local community

This is the text from a leaflet circulated to local families electronically and paper-copy:

#### **Why a new school for St Neots?**

We believe there are 2 main reasons why the children of St Neots would benefit from a new, smaller, secondary school.

#### **MORE CHOICE FOR FAMILIES**

We believe that families and their children will be better served by having a greater choice of schools – and we know many local families already drive long distances to seek alternatives that feel better suit their child.

#### **THE NEED FOR HIGHER STANDARDS**

While there has been some improvement in results in the last decade, local students are still behind both the Cambridgeshire and national averages.

We believe that providing families with more choice will enable more secondary-aged children to be educated locally, benefitting the town and saving their families the complications and costs of sending them miles away.

#### **ABOUT US**

The team proposing this school are the same people who successfully opened Bedford Free School in 2012.

About to enter its fifth year, Bedford Free School has just celebrated its second set of GCSE results. It was the top performing state school in the town in 2015, and has seen even better results this summer.

BFS was set up by a group of local teachers, in partnership with local families and community groups, and we now feel that we are in the position to take what we have learned in Bedford and apply it to other nearby areas.

***We are proposing this new school because we believe that it will massively benefit the children, families and communities of St Neots.***

We will submit our proposal to the Department for Education this month. If it is successful preparations for opening the school will commence in spring 2017, in time for opening in September 2018.

#### **OUR PROPOSAL**

Opening in September 2018, St Neots Academy will be a smaller, 11-16 secondary school, modelled on existing high-performing smaller schools such as King Solomon Academy in London, and Bedford Free School.

With no more than 100 students in each year group, we will be able to get to know every single one of our students.

It will be a “grammar school for all” - open to students of all backgrounds and aptitudes, and with an emphasis on all the things associated with the best traditional state schools.

#### **HOW WE ARE DIFFERENT**

Learning from the best schools in the country and our experiences in Bedford and elsewhere, we believe that some radical changes are needed to ensure that every student can be better prepared for university and a successful career.

Whilst many of these changes are not innovative in themselves, they are highly effective if applied together, and these include:

- **longer school days** to allow for more learning time, electives and private study
- a “no-excuses” culture and firm discipline
- placing personal responsibility on students rather than teachers
- teaching every student a musical instrument, opening the world of the arts to all
- building extra-curricular activities into the standard school day
- **an emphasis on traditional academic subjects**, teaching students the things that have stood the test of time
- **dedicated reading time every day**, to expose every student to great novels and classic literature
- preparing every student for university right from day one in Year 7

**Want to learn more about us?**

Then please feel free to get in touch through any of the methods listed below. Alternatively, come and visit Bedford Free School and see for yourself our school in action - drop us a line to arrange a personal tour.

**Phone:** 01234 332277

**Email:** [info@stneotsacademy.co.uk](mailto:info@stneotsacademy.co.uk)

**Website:** [www.stneotsacademy.co.uk](http://www.stneotsacademy.co.uk)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/stneotsacademy](http://www.facebook.com/stneotsacademy)

**Website activity up to 27<sup>th</sup> September:**

Sessions **1,548** Users **1,287** Pageviews **4,225**



Learn. Enjoy. Achieve.



23<sup>rd</sup> September 2016

**Letter in Support of The St Neots Free School Bid**

We have both spoken with [REDACTED] and heard firsthand about the proposal to open a free school in St Neots. We were impressed with the plans. We can see that the Free School in Bedford has been very successful and we would welcome students in St Neots being offered similar opportunities.

Whilst there is not a shortage as such of secondary school places in St Neots there is, in fact, very little choice for families. There are only two secondary schools in the area and both belong to the same MAT under the same leadership. We would support the opening of a free school in order to widen the range of options for children and their families. Given the scale of housing developments in the St Neots area, there will come a time when more secondary places will be needed in any case.

We understand that the planned free school is intended for students aged 11 – 16 years and would be interested to hear if there are any plans to cater for students post-16 as there is even less choice for this age group in the town. This has become increasingly important now all children are required to be in education or training of some sort until the age of 18.

We are aware that parents of some of the pupils at our school have already registered an interest in this proposal and believe this demonstrates that there is already local enthusiasm for a free school in St Neots.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



# THE DIAMOND LEARNING PARTNERSHIP TRUST



Established in the Queen's Jubilee Year 2012



22<sup>nd</sup> September 2016

Dear Sirs

St Neots is the largest town in Cambridgeshire and has two Secondary Schools both in the same Multi Academy Trust, with only one providing Sixth Form provision.

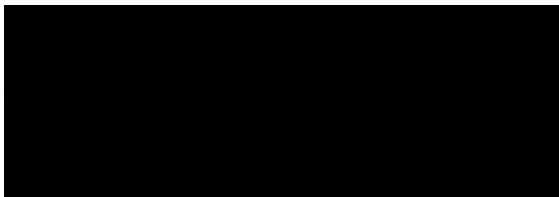
The town is continuing to grow with the final phase of Loves Farm currently being completed and an additional 3000 homes to be built in the next five years.

In order to develop capacity to cope with the additional growth a two form entry primary school was built in 2008. This school is part of our Trust and is over subscribed as it does not have the capacity to give places to all catchment children. A further three primary schools are planned to be built to address the issue of school places as the town grows. There are no plans to increase the capacity in the Secondary Schools or Sixth Form for families moving into the area.

Parents in St Neots have the choice of two Secondary Schools in the same Multi Academy Trust. A few select parents have the choice of other Secondary schools outside this MAT. They can either send their child via rush hour train to Huntingdon or drive them sixteen miles to the next closest school as there are no public transport links.

For these reasons The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust supports the Free School bid by St Neots Academy as the children of St Neots deserve to have a real choice in Secondary provision.

Yours faithfully



# Does town need a new school?

Plans to open a new secondary school in St Neots have been met with a mixed response.

The proposal, to open the St Neots Academy, under the Government's Free School Programme, in 2018, is being driven by the team behind the Bedford Free School.

The news comes in the wake of the prime minister's policy announcement on the introduction of grammar schools, which would effectively allow schools to select pupils on the basis of academic ability.

Mark Lehain, who is the principal of Bedford Free School and heading the project, told *The Hunts Post* that while he and his team recognised the hard work and successes of the existing two St Neots's secondary schools, there were "compelling reasons" why the town needed a new educational facility for 11-16 year olds.

## **Debbie Davies**

[debbie.davies@archant.co.uk](mailto:debbie.davies@archant.co.uk)

"We have decided to propose this new school because we believe that it will massively benefit the town.

"Local children do well in their SATs when aged 11, yet don't seem to do so well by the age of 16. It is heartening to hear local schools announce improvements this summer, but we feel that if children in St Neots are ever going to match, or do better than their peers elsewhere, something significant needs to change. We are confident that the St Neots Academy could be a big part in this change."

Mr Lehain plans to submit a proposal to the Department of Education at the end of this month, which, if approved next spring, could mean the school will open in September, 2018.

St Neots mayor Derek Giles said: "The town is expanding and we will probably need another secondary school at some stage, but that may not be for some time yet."

Rick Carroll, chief executive officer for the St Neots Learning Partnership which includes Longsands and Ernulf secondary schools, said: "We will continue to focus on our priorities to provide the best education for pupils in St Neots."

Mr Carroll told *The Hunts Post* that both schools had enough capacity to cope with future housing expansion in the town. He also pointed out that Longsands' A-level results this summer were "well above the national average" and Ernulf "continued to show improvement".

"We have no intention of allowing this to distract us from working hard for our learners."

## Appendix E - CVs for Core Project Team

CV template		
1	Name	[REDACTED]
2	Area of expertise (i.e. education or finance)	[REDACTED]
3	<p>Details of your last three roles including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>name of school/organisation</li> <li>position and responsibilities held</li> <li>length of time in position</li> </ul> <p>This should cover the last four years. If not, please include additional roles</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
		Name:
		Position:
		Dates:
		Name:
		Position:
		Dates:
4	<p><b>For finance only:</b> details of professional qualifications, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	N/A
5a	<p><b>For education only:</b> if you are in a leadership position in your latest school (where available):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school's results for the years you were in post – these should include, as appropriate, Key Stage 2 results, 5A*-C GCSE including English and maths results or, for <b>16 to 19</b>, average point score per entry and per student for level 3 qualifications.</li> </ul>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
5b	<p><b>For education only:</b> if you are in a teaching or head of department role in your latest</p>	N/A

CV template		
	school (where available): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>	
6	Brief comments on why your previous experience is relevant to the new school	[Redacted]
7	<b>Optional:</b> brief comments on how the role you played helped to raise standards in any or all of your three previous roles.	[Redacted]
8	Reference names(s) and contact details	[Redacted]
CV template		
1	Name	[Redacted]
2	Area of expertise (i.e. education or finance)	[Redacted]
3	Details of your last three roles including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• name of school/</li> </ul>	[Redacted] [Redacted] [Redacted]

CV template		
	<p>organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• position and responsibilities held</li> <li>• length of time in position</li> </ul> <p>This should cover the last four years. If not, please include additional roles</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
4	<p><b>For finance only:</b> details of professional qualifications, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• date of qualification</li> <li>• professional body membership number</li> <li>• how your qualifications are maintained</li> </ul>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
5a	<p><b>For education only:</b> if you are in a leadership position in your latest school (where available):</p>	N/A
5b	<p><b>For education only:</b> if you are in a teaching or head of department role in your latest school (where available):</p>	N/A
6	<p>Brief comments on why your previous experience is relevant to the new school</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>

CV template		
		[Redacted]
7	<p><b>Optional:</b> brief comments on how the role you played helped to raise standards in any or all of your three previous roles.</p>	[Redacted]
8	Reference names(s) and contact details	[Redacted]
CV template		
1	Name	[Redacted]
2	Area of expertise (i.e. education or finance)	[Redacted]
3	<p>Details of your last three roles including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• name of school/organisation</li> <li>• position and responsibilities held</li> <li>• length of time in position</li> </ul> <p>This should cover the last four years. If not, please include additional roles</p>	<p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p>

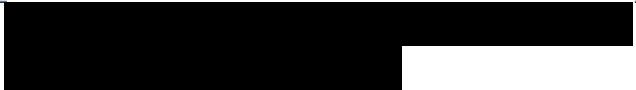






CV template		
		<div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 15px;"></div>
4	<b>For finance only:</b> details of professional qualifications, including:	N/A
5a	<b>For education only:</b> if you are in a leadership position in your latest school (where available):	N/A
5b	<b>For education only:</b> if you are in a teaching or head of department role in your latest school (where available):	N/A
6	Brief comments on why your previous experience is relevant to the new school	<div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 100%; min-height: 400px;"></div>

CV template		
		[Redacted]
7	<b>Optional:</b> brief comments on how the role you played helped to raise standards in any or all of your three previous roles.	
8	Reference names(s) and contact details	[Redacted]
CV template		
1	Name	[Redacted]
2	Area of expertise (i.e. education or finance)	[Redacted]
3	Details of your last three roles including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• name of school/organisation</li> <li>• position and responsibilities held</li> <li>• length of time in position</li> </ul> This should cover the last four years. If not, please include additional roles	[Redacted]
		[Redacted]
		[Redacted]
		[Redacted]
4	<b>For finance only:</b> details of professional qualifications, including:	



CV template	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• date of qualification</li> <li>• professional body membership number</li> <li>• how your qualifications are maintained</li> </ul>
5a	<p><b>For education only:</b> if you are in a leadership position in your latest school (where available):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school's results for the years you were in post – these should include, as appropriate, Key Stage 2 results, 5A*-C GCSE including English and maths results or, for <b>16 to 19</b>, average point score per entry and per student for level 3 qualifications.</li> </ul>
5b	<p><b>For education only:</b> if you are in a teaching or head of department role in your latest school (where available):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your subject/department's results for the years you were in post, compared to your school's averages – these should include, as appropriate, Key Stage 2 results, 5A*-C GCSE including English and maths results or, for <b>16 to 19</b>, average point score per entry and per student for level 3 qualifications</li> </ul>
6	Brief comments on why your previous experience is relevant

CV template		
	to the new school	[Redacted]
7	<p><b>Optional:</b> brief comments on how the role you played helped to raise standards in any or all of your three previous roles.</p>	<p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p>
8	Reference names(s) and contact details	[Redacted]
CV template		
1	Name	[Redacted]
2	Area of expertise (i.e. education or finance)	[Redacted]
3	<p>Details of your last three roles including:</p> <p>name of school/ organisation</p> <p>position and responsibilities</p>	<p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p>

CV template		
	<p>held</p> <p>length of time in position</p> <p>This should cover the last four years. If not, please include additional roles</p>	     
4	<b>For finance only:</b> details of professional qualifications	N/A
5a	<b>For education only:</b> if you are in a leadership position in your latest school (where available):.	N/A
5b	<b>For education only:</b> if you are in a teaching or head of department role in your latest school (where available):	N/A
6	Brief comments on why your previous experience is relevant to the new school	

CV template		
		[Redacted]
7	<b>Optional:</b> brief comments on how the role you played helped to raise standards in any or all of your three previous roles.	
8	Reference names(s) and contact details	[Redacted]



12 September 2016

Dear Mark,


#### APPLICATIONS FOR FREE SCHOOLS

We have spoken at various times about your plans to [open one or more free schools](#). These conversations have taken into account your growth as an approved sponsor. I hope you are aware of the DfE guidance document published in December 2015 - and updated in July 2016, which includes the following sections:

*Page 4 -You can apply to open a free school in Wave 12 from 1 September 2016 to midday on 28 September 2016. Completed applications must be submitted within this timeframe. Applications received after this time will be considered in the next wave (March 2017).*

*Page 7 - If the RSC can see that you have capacity for the free schools for which you want to apply, he or she will provide written confirmation. Please include it (and any other useful correspondence) with your application and complete the shorter information.*

I am happy to confirm your capacity to apply to set up one free school in Cambridgeshire:

- An 11-16 mainstream secondary school in St Neots, opening date to be confirmed. Please keep  from my team up to date.

Of course this letter does not guarantee any successful application. Still, I wish you the best of luck with your proposal.

Yours sincerely,

