

1<sup>st</sup> March 2023

### **School Expansion Proposal**

Dear Parents and Carers, (Please note, this letter has been sent to all current Parents and Carers, as well as those parents/carers of Year 7 students joining us in September 2023)

Wixams Academy is working in partnership with Bedford Borough Council to increase its capacity in response to the future shortage of secondary school places, in Wixams. This will ensure that the Borough can meet the needs of its secondary age students, by providing school places. This will mean that over time Wixams Academy will gradually increase in size to 10 forms of entry (from currently 150 pupils on average in most year groups to 300 per year group). This will involve the construction of new teaching and sporting facilities, which will also benefit the local community in terms of community use outside of school hours. We attach a fact sheet and overview of the build design.

As a parent/carer, we are keen to hear your views on this proposal. Please note this is a consultation on the increase of the capacity of the school and separate to the planning permission consultation which runs concurrently.

We have written to and shared these plans with local stakeholders. We encourage parents/carers to share their views on our plans to meet pupil need in the area. There will be parent/stakeholder meetings at Wixams Academy on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March and Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March from 4.30pm-7pm on each day where you will be able to speak to us and see further aspects of the build design. Feel free to come along at any time during these hours. We also encourage you to share your views by email at [expansionconsultation@BCAT.co.uk](mailto:expansionconsultation@BCAT.co.uk). The consultation is open for a period of 4 weeks from the 1<sup>st</sup> March to 31 March 2023.

With best wishes

Hywel Jones

Paul Spyropoulos

Chief Executive Officer

Headteacher

Below - Wixams Academy Expansion Fact Sheet



### Context & Pupil Growth

Wixams Academy was built as a 4 Form Entry (120 pupils) Secondary School with a view to expand in later years, however the school has recently routinely taken 150 pupils in Year 7. The school has been taking pupils above its PAN (allocated DfE pupil numbers) for the past 4 years to accommodate this increase in demand and for Bedford Borough Council to meet basic pupil need, this has partly been made possible by utilising space original allocated for sixth form (the school did not open its sixth form until September 2022) and in the last census the school had 796 pupils on roll.

Local 2022 data shows that the number of pupils requiring a school place at Wixams Academy will rise again to 1,167 in 2024 and continue to increase year on year until at least 2028. This is when all 'villages' of the Wixams development are due for completion, however it should be noted that further development in the Wixams area is included in the Local Plan 2040. Local 2022 data shows 302 children potentially requiring a school place at Wixams Academy in Year 7 in September 2026.

Due to this increase in pupil numbers in the area, plans have been drawn up (by Bedford Borough Council) to expand the school by a further 6 forms of entry so that it becomes a 10FE Secondary School with a PAN of 300 per year group. The current plans for this expansion would result in a possible completion date of July 2024 to enable the increased capacity to be available for September 2024. As there will be pressure in September 2023, before the 6FE expansion can be completed, it is proposed that 3 of the additional classrooms proposed as part of the expansion, be delivered early as modular classrooms which can be used from September 2023. This would enable the school to increase its capacity to 180-210 (depending on demand) in Year 7, 180 in Year 8 and Year 9 and 170 in Year 10 and 11 which will help with the increased numbers of pupils possibly requiring places at the school in 2023.

### Will the look and feel of the school change?

The most significant changes will be the addition of a 35 classroom teaching block, a new sports hall, enlarged canteen facilities, covered outdoor eating space, new multi-use games area (MUGA) and a full-size all-weather sports pitch. We will maximise the use of these new facilities for local community use outside of school hours.



The increased dining facilities and covered outdoor eating space will enable us to cater for the gradual increase in pupil numbers.



Where is the planning permission and planning consultation?

Please note this is not a planning consultation. Full designs and specifications are now live on the Bedford Borough Council Planning Portal (link can be found [Here](#)) and you can respond formally to the planning consultation there. This is a consultation to gauge parental and local community stakeholder support for this expansion and significant change to the school.

How will it be paid for?

All capital costs associated with building the new building will be funded by the Local Authority and pupil funding will be guaranteed for a period of 4 years.

What are the risks?

With any change of this magnitude, there could be risks or unintended consequences. We have taken all of these into consideration and have plans in place to mitigate these. The main potential issues we have highlighted are as follows:

Risk Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Effect the proposed building has on the education of existing students, either during the redevelopment, or after the extension is completed.	This will be covered in planning consultation. The company delivering the project has extensive experience of this kind of work. The location of the new teaching block and the building work noise should not intrude in lessons in the current building. The Project Manager for the proposed build has conducted sound emissions tests to verify this.
How will the school prevent overcrowding in corridors and communal areas at times such as lesson changeovers?	As always, at Wixams Academy, student and staff safety is paramount. Staff at Wixams Academy carry out break and lunch duties to ensure easy and safe movement around the school and this will continue. There will be more pupils but equally there will be both more space and more staff for supervision. The new building will have stairways at both sides of the building along with a lift and with double-width stairwell entrances. The increase in pupil numbers will be gradual over several years, which will allow us to observe and manage any issues about pupil movement around the site.

<p>How confident is the school in recruiting more teachers for expansion?</p>	<p>Our teacher recruitment has been healthy in the last two years and our retention rate of existing staff has been strong. The existing facilities and planned new facilities are a great working environment.</p>
<p>What expertise and support does the school have in terms of delivering education to more pupils?</p>	<p>The gradual increase in pupil numbers will enable us to increase the size of the current School Leadership Team. Since the summer of 2022 a permanent central team has been appointed at trust-level. Hywel Jones, has experience of line managing large schools and a track record of leading on school change to improve pupil outcomes. Tony Quinn, Chief of Finance and Operations provides daily operational support and will take the lead on liaising with project managers and builders, to enable the School Leadership Team to focus on education. During this academic year the school has put in place new behaviour systems to strengthen standards and to get ready for gradual pupil expansion. The 2022 GCSE outcomes for pupils were pleasing and show the school has added value for pupils through a positive progress score (0.13+). Further information on our 2022 GCSE results can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>