



The Rt. Hon. Bridget Phillipson MP

Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Dear Bridget,

Future of education in Bedfordshire

We hope this letter finds you well.

As you may know, Bedfordshire's independent schools play a key role in our local education system – offering an alternative to state schools and providing real choice for parents. Having heard the anxiety caused to local parents over Labour's ill-conceived Education Tax, we wanted to write to you to set out our deep concerns about these plans.

In the most recent statistics, just 91.6% of pupils in Central Bedfordshire and 84.4% of pupils in Bedford Borough received an offer from their first-choice secondary school¹. It is clear that an increased number of pupils entering our state schools from the private and independent sector will reduce the performance on this matrix further.

Years of rapid housing growth has put extra strain on the availability of places at state schools - particularly in secondary education. Bedford Borough's secondary school system is effectively full as has been recognised by the Department for Education. This situation will not ease until a new school is built, which is planned for 2027, and even that will be filled by anticipated future housing growth. So, what is your government going to do about the impact on local state schools from this policy?

We believe that the job of Government is to make it easier for parents and children to choose the best school for their future – whether that be private or public. It is clear that the Government's decision to make it harder for parents to pay for private schools will make it harder for all parents in Bedfordshire to send their child to a school of their choice – particularly given that the decision to apply the new tax from January leaves parents with very little time to consider the best option for their child for the coming academic year.

Not only will forcing more children into the state sector reduce choice, but it will also necessitate an increase in class sizes for many of our local schools. That will damage the education and attainment of both current state and private school students, with larger class sizes inevitably resulting in a school experience less individually focussed on their education.

We urge you to re-consider your decision.

Yours sincerely,

Blake Stephenson MP
Member of Parliament for Mid Bedfordshire

Richard Fuller MP
Member of Parliament for North Bedfordshire

¹ Department for Education Statistics | <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/secondary-and-primary-school-applications-and-offers>.

² In the interests of transparency, please be aware that Blake Stephenson MP is Chair of Governors of the Shillington and Stondon Federation.