



Notification of proposal by Buckinghamshire Council to open a Cognition and Learning Unit at The Buckingham School

Contact details

Proposal, published by Buckinghamshire Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 8FF, to open an 8 place Cognition and Learning Unit at The Buckingham School, London Road, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire MK18 1AT

Implementation

It is proposed to open an 8 place Cognition and Learning Unit with effect from 1st January 2027.

Reason for the Proposal

As part of our SEND Education Sufficiency Strategy the Council sought expressions of interest from Schools interested in opening a secondary age inclusion unit. The Buckingham School submitted an expression of interest to open a Unit to meet the demand for places and we are therefore proposing to open a Cognition and Learning Unit.

Proposal to open a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Unit

Over the last five years, the number of Special Educational Needs and Disabled (SEND) pupils with an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) has increased by 48% (1901 pupils). Current projections forecast a further 51% increase in the number of EHCP pupils over the next five years. The number of secondary aged children with Cognition and Learning needs has risen by 30% over the last 5 years and we are expecting the numbers to increase further in the future.

As part of our SEND Education Sufficiency Strategy the Council sought expressions of interest from Schools interested in opening a secondary age inclusion unit. The Buckingham School submitted an expression of interest to open a Unit to meet the demand for places and we are therefore proposing to open a Cognition and Learning Unit. The proposal being progressed reflects the phased approach to the delivery of new SEND Units across the County which are prioritised by the profile of need by type and geography. The Council has no secondary ARP/Unit in the north of the county resulting in a significant gap in provision for C&L students.

The provision of new SEND Units are a key element of the Service's Medium Term Financial Planning programme to ensure the council meets the increased demand for SEND places, with a particular focus on inclusion within Mainstream Schools. The proposal at The Buckingham School would be an 8 place Unit for pupils with Cognition and Learning needs as detailed in their Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). Only children whose EHCP states they need support from a unit would be admitted and admissions will be controlled by the SEND team; parents would not be able to apply directly to the school for a place in the unit. The 8 pupils would be in addition to the school's current Published Admission Number of 210.

A key aim of the unit is to enable pupils to access a mainstream curriculum, whilst accessing specific specialist support. Pupils attending the unit are likely to spend the majority of their time based within the new Unit. The new Unit will be self-contained with its own external courtyard for external learning and recreation. Pupils in the Unit will be able to join in with parts of the school day, where appropriate.

Specialist teachers would be employed to manage the new Unit. All staff working in the Unit will have received specialist training on supporting children with Cognition and Learning needs. The Unit will be staffed with teachers and learning support assistants; additional professionals will support the children including a speech and language therapist and occupational therapist. Additional professionals will be employed depending on the needs of the children, such as a play therapist, an art therapist etc.

Project costs and an indication of how these will be met

The new Unit would be accommodated in an existing drama room which will be refurbished to provide a dedicated classroom, an intervention room and an office. In order to compensate for the loss of the existing drama room, the old lecture theatre will be refurbished to create a new multipurpose performance/drama space. The Unit will have its own outdoor courtyard which will be refurbished as part of the planned works.

The cost of the planned works would be funded using government funding that has been made available for providing new/expanding existing SEND provision across the county. Additional revenue funding would be provided to fund the Unit. It would therefore not have a detrimental impact on the school's existing revenue budget or impact on provision for pupils.

It is proposed that works would commence on the Unit during the summer 2026 and complete by the end of the year such that the new provision will open from January 2027.

Statutory process for prescribed alterations

The Local Authority and Governing Board is required to publish statutory proposals when it seeks to make a significant change to a school. The statutory process is summarised below:

Stage 1: Consultation - Proposers must consult with the parents of registered pupils at the school and should consult with key stakeholders including:

- the governing board
- the diocese or relevant faith group of school's affected by the proposal
- teachers and other staff at the school
- any LA likely to be affected by the proposal
- the governing bodies, teachers and other staff of any other school that may be affected
- parents of any pupils at other schools who may be affected by the proposal
- any trade unions who represent staff at the school
- MPs whose constituencies include the school that is the subject of the proposal or whose constituents are likely to be affected by the proposal
- any other interested organisation / person that the proposer thinks are appropriate

Stage 2: Statutory Proposal – the proposal must be published within 12 months of the initial consultation stage; this must contain sufficient information for interested parties to make a decision on whether to support or challenge the proposed change.

Stage 3: Representation - once proposals are published there follows a four week statutory period during which representations (e.g. support, objections or comments) can be made. The representation period is the final opportunity for people and organisations to express their views about the proposals.

Stage 4: Decision – the Council must decide proposals within two months of the end of the representation period, otherwise the proposal will be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.

Stage 5: Implementation – In general, proposals should be implemented within three years of their publication.

Outcome of the Consultation Stage

The first stage consultation process on a Proposal to open an 8 place Cognition and Learning Unit at The Buckingham School commenced on 16th March 2026 and concluded on 26th April 2026. In line with statutory requirements the consultation letter (see APPENDIX 1) was sent to the following consultees and also promoted via a dedicated webpage and survey on Your Voice Bucks.

In line with statutory requirements a consultation letter was sent to all parents/carers of children on roll at the School, governors and staff at the School, schools in the local area, all special schools and other statutory consultees. Copies of the consultation letter were also sent to the following stakeholders:

- Local residents
- Local MP, Councillors, Parish Council
- Trade Union representatives
- Church Diocese representatives
- FACT Bucks

In addition, a drop in session was held at the school on Wednesday 25th March at 5:30-7pm so that parents, local residents and any other interested parties could drop in to look at the plans and ask any questions that they had either with members of school staff or Local Authority Representatives. 4 people attended this meeting. A separate meeting to brief local councillors on the proposal was held on 12th March 2026.

The Council received 29 responses to the consultation proposal. 28 of these came in via the Your Voice consultation page and 1 came to the consultation mailbox.

In summary of the 29 who responded 24 (83%) were in agreement with the proposal to open a Cognition and Learning Unit, 4 (14%) did not agree and 1 (3%) didn't know.

Agree/Disagree with proposal to open Unit	Responses Received
Agree with proposal to open	24
Disagree with proposal to open	4
Don't know	1
Total	29

None of the respondents said they did not understand why a proposal to open a Cognition and Learning Unit at The Buckingham School had been made.

Timetable for these proposals

The proposed timetable below, which may be subject to change, sets the timeline and next steps out:

Start Date	End Date	Description
20 th May 2026	16 th June 2026	Publication of Statutory Notice and formal 4-week representation period
17 th June 2026	12 th August 2026	Buckinghamshire Council and School Governing Board review the responses from the consultation. Leader of Buckinghamshire Council in consultation with Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services takes a decision on the final outcome
January 2027		Subject to the outcome above, the Unit will open.

Procedure for making representations (objections and comments)

Within four weeks of the date of publication of this proposal, any person may agree, object to, or make comments on the proposal online via the Buckinghamshire Council consultation website: <https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/>

Alternatively, representations can be made by email to:

BuckinghamSchoolSENDunitconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

or by post to:

The School Commissioning Team
Buckinghamshire Council
1st Floor
Walton Street Office
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire, HP20 1UZ

The closing date for comments is 11:59pm on 16th June 2026.