

Frequently Asked Questions Relating to Heathside & Belstead Amalgamation

General Questions

Q. Will my child be guaranteed a place in the new school?

A. If your child already has a place at either Belstead or Heathside their place will be guaranteed. New referrals will be considered through the normal admissions process.

Q. Where will the new school be situated?

A. We are proposing that the new school would, if approved, be situated on the site of Westbourne Sports College

Q. Will there be any transport implications?

A. Transport will be provided to the new site on the same basis as it is now, so there shouldn't be any transport implications

Q. How are you going to pay for all the building works?

A. Building works at secondary schools will be paid for from the Government's Buildings Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. We are planning to use the investment from this Programme to fund the cost of the new school.

Q. Will schools have enough money during the changes to pay the teachers and maintain the buildings?

A. Yes. The amount of money schools get is linked to the number of pupils they have. This is to ensure they have the money to afford enough teachers. Schools will continue to receive sufficient money to maintain their buildings.

Q. How do you decide what happens to school sites when the school closes?

A. If a school closes as part of the review the first option would be to consider the site for other educational purposes, for example for use as a different type of school, community education or youth activities. It is possible that a site could be used for community facilities.

Only after all of these options have been fully considered would a site be considered for sale. The income from any sale, if generated as a result of Building Schools for the Future investment, is required to be ring-fenced for that programme. (as would be the case in the event that the existing Belstead or Heathside buildings were no longer required in the future).

Facilities

Q. Why are you planning to merge the two schools?

- A. There are a number of reasons:
- The buildings of both schools are in need of redevelopment.
 - Belstead will find that its pupil roll will reduce by about half when the new SWISS centre opens (September 2010) and it will not really be viable for the long term.
 - The Building Schools for the Future Programme gives us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to provide the facilities that the young people deserve and merging the two schools will mean that we have a single school of a viable size.
 - When the school is built if it is on the same site as Westbourne Sports College we can link it to this high school and neighbouring primary schools so that children can experience working alongside children of their own age in a mainstream setting

Q. If it is decided that the schools should merge but on a split site in the short term what differences will there be for my child?

A. We don't expect your child will experience any significant changes because we want to make sure that there is minimal disruption. The leadership team of the school will decide on how the school is organised on the two sites before the schools are merged in September 2010 and they will be informing you when that happens.

Q. My child benefits from the sensory room at school. Will there be the same facilities?

A. When we provide the new school we will work closely with the headteacher and governing body in order to determine what facilities should be provided in the new school. The precise facilities will be decided at that time, but that is likely to include facilities such as a sensory room.

Q. Will children have playtimes in designated play areas, or will they all be together?

A. Although this will be a decision for the leadership of the school to decide when the new school is being planned. Children's needs will be accommodated to ensure that they feel safe at all times during the school day.

Q. Will there be an outdoor play area?

A. Should the Westbourne site be chosen, there is sufficient land to accommodate the High School and Special School and to enable outdoor play facilities to be provided

Q. Has Belstead got a swimming pool?

A. Belstead School does have a swimming pool, as does Heathside. A new school is likely to have a pool, although this will be provided in line with the Department for Children Schools and Families guidance, which currently means that funding would be provided for a hydrotherapy pool at the new location

Q. Will the nursery provision remain?

A. Nursery provision will remain at Heathside in the short term. In the longer term we are looking at the options to integrate nursery provision at a mainstream school site, although at this stage we do not have a preferred location.

Q. How will the site be divided up and how will pupils/ staff move between the sites?

A. This is a matter that will be considered at the planning stage for the new schools and it will be some time before we can answer this.

However, staff, parents and governors will be given an opportunity to visit the new Thomas Wolsey school located on the Thurleston High School site. This visit will hopefully alleviate some of these concerns, and give reassurance that any new special schools being built will have the same as and additional provision.

Inclusion

Q. Will there be opportunities for the older children to be included in lessons within the high school site?

A. Yes, depending on whether the students themselves would like to join in the mainstream lessons and whether they feel they can achieve what they would like to in that learning environment.

Q. How will the younger children be included in the wider school?

A. Through different celebration events, social activities, assemblies, creative activities, extended school initiatives etc.

Q. Will the children from Heathside and Belstead wear the Westbourne uniform?

A. There will need to be a consultation process with the students once the new building is ready for occupation.

Personnel

Q. Will the terms and conditions of employment for staff remain the same?

A. From September 2013, one of the obvious changes in terms and conditions of employment will be the work base, when the new school opens on the high school site. In the meantime, terms and conditions will remain largely the same. Both schools will start to work together more closely to plan their future staffing needs. From September 2010 a single governing body will make decisions on staffing issues for the single school, operating on two sites.

Q. Will there be the same number of staff in the new school?

A. This will be a matter for the Headteachers and Governing Bodies, working closely together, to determine, on the basis of pupil numbers. The opening of the SWISS Sixth Form in September 2010 has implications for the number of staff required at Belstead, which have been under discussion for some time. Once the new school is opened in 2013, there is likely to be a further impact on the number of staff required in a single site.

Q. Will my child have the same teacher?

This will be a matter for the Headteacher to determine. The interests of the child will be paramount as the Head seeks to ensure continuity and the most appropriate provision for children. Staff at both schools have a great deal of expertise and knowledge of the children; this will continue to be needed.

Q. Will staff have to apply for their current jobs?

A. This depends on the way in which the school is amalgamated. Suffolk's preferred option is that one of the schools is closed and the age range of the other school is extended. Posts would then be ring fenced so that only staff at the existing schools could apply.

Q. How will staff in all the schools work together to ensure that the children from Heathside and Belstead become an integral part of the school?

A. This will be a matter for the Headteachers of all three schools to work through. There are a number of ways in which integration can be made to work effectively, and a number of considerations that need to be taken into account to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils.

Q. Will staff be expected to teach children in the mainstream school and vice versa?

A. It is not expected that staff will be expected to teach in the mainstream school or vice versa. Certainly, staff teaching in any special school must be appropriately qualified to do so.

Q. What are the training implications?

A. Initially, staff will work with the age range that they are familiar with. In the longer term, the joining of the two existing schools will provide opportunities for working with different age ranges.

Q. Will all staff know about my child's medical condition?

A. All staff working with your child should be fully briefed with regards to your child's medical condition and will be advised of the action to take if any problems arise that are related to your child's diagnosis.