



# Stowmarket Consultation Booklet

**The School Organisation  
Review in Suffolk**

[www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations)

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If you need help to understand this information in another language please call **08456 066 067**.

Se precisar de ajuda para ler estas informações em outra língua, por favor telefone para o número abaixo.

Portuguese

بەم زانیاریەشینی ئەب ت گەییەتی دە یارمەر پ ویستیەت بەگەئە بکە، وە ی خوارەم ژمارەندی بەیو پەزمان کی تەرتکایە

Kurdish

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji w swoim języku zadzwoń na podany poniżej numer.

Polish

如果你需要其他語言來幫助你了解這些資訊，請撥以下電話。

Chinese

এই লেখাটি যদি অন্য ভাষাতে বুঝতে চান তাহলে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন

Bengali

اگر شما نیاز دارید که این اطلاعات را به زبان دیگری دریافت کنید لطفاً به شماره زیر تلفن کنید.

Farsi

If you would like this information in another format, including audio tape or large print, please call **08456 066 067**.

# 1. Background

## The School Organisation Review in Suffolk

In 2006, Suffolk County Council started a review of school organisation in the county. This asked whether the current situation, involving a mixture of two-tier and three-tier schools, was providing the best possible education for children in the county.

In 2007, after carrying out public consultation and considering research evidence which compared Suffolk children's progress in the two-tier and three-tier systems, the county council adopted a preferred model, based on the two-tier system, of primary and secondary schools across Suffolk.

A set of principles were developed to help guide the process of developing options for schools in different areas. Given the number of schools affected, the county council decided to carry out the review in stages. Changes to schools in Lowestoft, Haverhill, Forest Heath, Beccles, Bungay and Leiston have now taken place. In Sudbury, Great Cornard and Thurston changes have been agreed and are being implemented. This leaves only a small area of Suffolk with a three-tier system.

Stowmarket and Stowupland are part of the remaining three-tier area. We would want to reorganise them at the same time because the two groups of schools overlap. Information about the proposals for schools in the Stowupland pyramid can be found at:

[www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations)

## Reorganisation in Stowmarket

Proposals for reorganisation in the Stowmarket area have been developed by headteachers, governors, the Church of England Diocese and the county council. This booklet explains why we would like to move to a two-tier system, how we propose to do it and how you can let us know what you think about our ideas.

Please read the booklet carefully before replying. Details of how you can give your views are on page 14.

While planning for the future we are committed to making sure that the achievement of children currently in the system is not disadvantaged. It has been possible to do this in the first groups of schools that have been reorganised.



## 2. Why we are proposing change

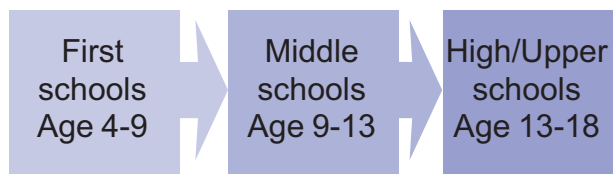
Our children are growing up in a world that is changing all the time. They will do jobs which do not exist today, using technology that has not yet been invented. We must make sure that the school system in Suffolk prepares our young people to achieve high standards and obtain the skills and qualifications they need to be successful in the future.

Raising attainment at every level in our schools remains one of the county council's key objectives.

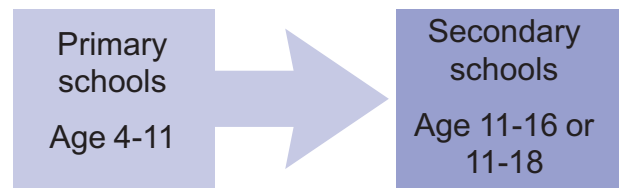
While many young people in Suffolk do very well at school, others do not do as well as they should, particularly when measured at the age of 11 and 16. We have carried out extensive research into children's progress in Suffolk. Our findings show that where children change school at age 9 and then again at 13, their progress is not as good as it is when there is the single change of school at age 11.

### The two-tier system

Some parts of the country introduced a three-tier system in the 1970s when the 11 plus exam was abolished across most of England. In Suffolk's three-tier schools, children change school at age 9 and 13.



Most parts of the country kept the two-tier system and since the introduction of the national curriculum most other local authorities have changed back to it.



This is because the two-tier system matches the key stages of the national curriculum and testing at age 11.

There are over 20,000 schools in England. Only about 1% of these are middle schools and very few teachers are being trained to work in them. Having a different system to most of the UK can cause difficulties for families moving in and out of Suffolk.

### Standards in Suffolk

Although some children and young people in Suffolk perform well, compared to national averages there is room for improvement.

Standards need to rise for all age groups but, in particular, improvement is needed at Key Stages 2 and 4. Virtually all the key attainment measures show that children in the two-tier system do better than those in the three-tier system.

This is in no way a reflection on staff in three-tier schools, as they work hard for the benefit of their pupils. However, the three-tier system makes it more difficult for children to make progress. Research shows this may be because the two-tier system only has one point of transfer between schools and responsibility for each key stage is in a single school. In the present system, children are also faced with choosing the options they will follow from the age of 14 shortly after they start at a new school. Transferring to a secondary school at the age of 11 would allow more time for information, advice and guidance to be given by staff who know the children and will subsequently teach them throughout Key Stage 4.

There is national assessment at age 11 and age 16, the end of Year 6 and Year 11. These assessments are published on the Department for Education (DfE) website along with background information about the group of children who took the tests. The latest published data is for 2011.

Figure 1

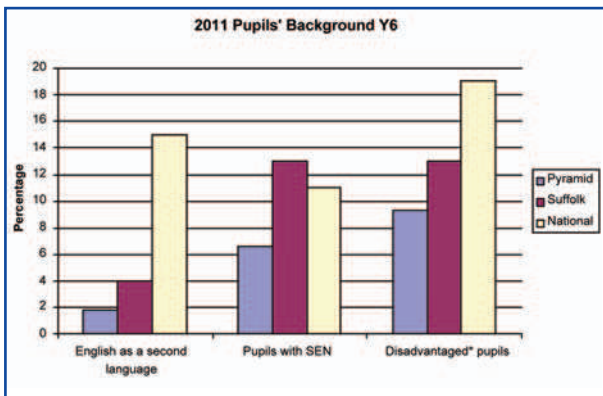
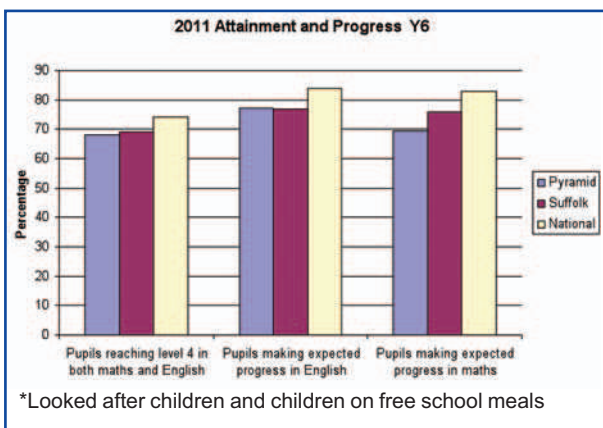


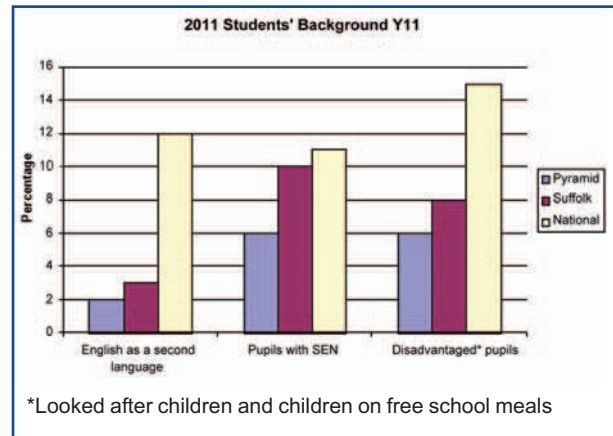
Figure 1 shows that the group of children in the Stowmarket pyramid who took the national tests in 2011 were relatively well-off and had fewer learning difficulties than average.

Figure 2



In Figure 2, it can be seen that attainment at age 11 was below average in the pyramid and fewer children than average made the expected progress in English and maths.

Figure 3



Similarly, the Y11 group in the pyramid appear to be better off and have fewer learning difficulties than average.

Figure 4

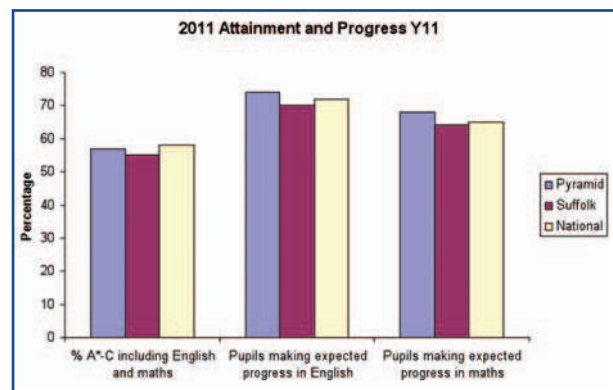


Figure 4 shows that while slightly more students made expected progress in English and maths than average. Overall attainment was about average reflecting the lower starting point at age 11.

While these graphs show a snapshot from one year, the pattern is similar in other years.

## 3. The change process

It is important that any changes to schools are the right ones and they are carried out carefully.

### Step 1 – Developing ideas

In March 2011, Simon White, the Director for Children and Young People, wrote to all headteachers in the remaining three-tier areas of Suffolk. He explained that because of reduced capital funding and schools being able to take more control of their future, the previous model of school reorganisation could not be continued. In his letter, he stated that ‘the need to address children’s progress in three-tier areas remained’ and that ‘the local authority would be willing to consider ideas emerging from schools themselves which addressed the issues associated with a three-tier system.’

Since this letter, there have been discussions with headteachers and governors of schools in the Stowmarket area. These discussions led to the proposals set out in this booklet.

### Step 2 – Public consultation

From 10 September to 9 November 2012, parents, teachers, young people, governors and all other interested parties will have the opportunity to say what they think about the proposed new organisation of schools. We welcome your views on all aspects of the proposed change, including whether or not you agree that there should be a move to a two-tier system for a particular school or schools.

Details of how you can have your say can be found on page 14. All responses will be analysed and taken into consideration. In previous consultations, comments from people at this stage helped to shape the final proposals.

### Step 3 – Statutory proposals

Once consultation has ended, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet and the governing bodies of voluntary schools will decide what the proposals should be for each school taking into consideration all consultation responses.

The legal process of making any changes to schools by publishing statutory notices will then begin. You will find these in the local paper and at schools and libraries.

They will also be available on our website, [www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/sor)

There will be a six-week period in which anyone can comment on the final proposals for each school.

### Step 4 – Decision making

In most cases, the final decision on the proposals will be made by the county council’s cabinet. However, in some cases the law states that the Schools Adjudicator must make the final decision. One example would be if the council cannot make a decision within the time limit set by law. The Secretary of State for Education appoints the Schools Adjudicator.

A final decision for the Stowmarket area is expected by March 2013.

### Step 5 – Implementation

If the proposals are approved, the first changes would happen in September 2014 when children currently in Year 3 would not transfer to middle schools, but would stay as Year 5 in their primary schools. The following year, September 2015, these pupils would become Year 6 in their primary schools.

Middle schools would close at the end of the summer term 2015 and in September 2015 their pupils would transfer to secondary school.

We intend to keep to this timeframe. However, it will be kept under continual review in the light of consultation responses and any unexpected events. Parents will be consulted if any change in the timeframe is needed.

The diagram below shows how the proposed changes would affect individual children as they progress through the school system.

### Support for change

The county council provides support for schools during the period of change. This

includes training and a process for staff to help them find jobs in other schools. Advisers are available to help schools prepare for the new age range.

### Impact of reorganisation

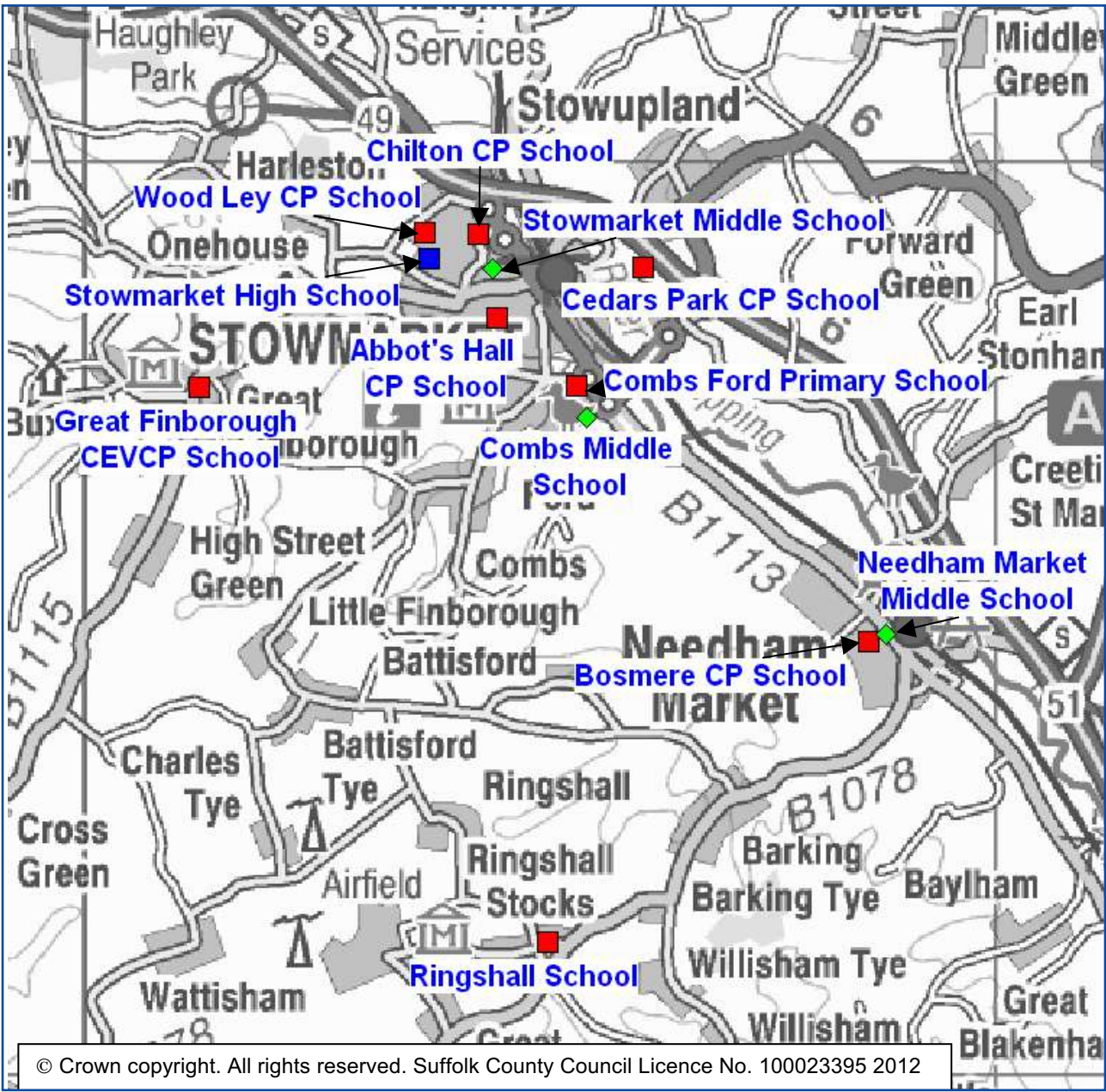
The reorganisation process is now complete in Haverhill, Lowestoft, Beccles, Bungay, Leiston, Mildenhall and Newmarket. In these areas standards in middle schools did not drop during the reorganisation and the level of achievement by 11 year-olds in the primary schools is showing a significant improvement.

Date of Birth	Year Group September 2012	Effect of these proposals
After 01.09.08	Pre-School	Remain at primary school until the end of Year 6 and transfer to secondary school at age 11
01.09.07 to 31.08.08	Reception	Remain at primary school until the end of Year 6 and transfer to secondary school at age 11 in September 2019
01.09.06 to 31.08.07	Year 1	Remain in primary school until end of Year 6 and then transfer to secondary school in September 2018
01.09.05 to 31.08.06	Year 2	Remain in primary school until end of Year 6 and then transfer to secondary school in September 2017
01.09.04 to 31.08.05	Year 3	Remain in primary school until end of Year 6 and then transfer to secondary school in September 2016
01.09.03 to 31.08.04	Year 4	Transfer to middle school in September 2013 and then transfer to secondary school in September 2015 as Year 7
01.09.02 to 31.08.03	Year 5	Remain in middle school and transfer to secondary school in September 2015 as Year 8
01.09.01 to 31.08.02	Year 6	Remain in middle school and transfer to secondary school in September 2015 as Year 9
01.09.00 to 31.08.01	Year 7	Transfer to secondary school (Year 9) in September 2014
01.09.99 to 31.08.00	Year 8	Transfer to secondary school (Year 9) in September 2013
01.09.98 to 31.08.99	Year 9	Remain at secondary school
01.09.97 to 31.08.98	Year 10	Remain at secondary school
01.09.96 to 31.08.97	Year 11	Remain at secondary school



# 4. Map of the area

## Stowmarket Schools





## 5. Primary schools

In the preferred pattern of schools set out on the following pages, all eight first schools would increase their age range to take pupils until the end of Year 6, aged 11. This would begin with the current Y3 pupils staying in their primary school in September 2014.

Where primary schools need more classrooms for the extra children permanent accommodation will be built. The curriculum for children up to the age of 11 does not need any special rooms like science labs. The primary school approach to teaching and not having to change school at age 9 will lead to higher achievement at the end of Key Stage 2. This is already being seen in the first areas which have changed.

The number of children admitted to each year group, called the published admission number (PAN), is being set to help all children find a place at their local school and allow some flexibility for people moving into the area and to meet parents' preferences. However we must also take into account the physical limitations of sites.

Following the recent growth in the number of children starting school in the area we think a new primary school will be needed in the area in the next few years. The Church of England Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich have expressed an interest in opening a voluntary aided school in the area.

### Abbots Hall, Wood Ley and Chilton

The proposals for these three schools need to be considered together because they serve the same parts of the town. Overall we expect to need these three schools to offer 135 places between them for each year group.

The current size of these schools is shown in this table.

	Chilton	Wood Ley	Abbots Hall
Current PAN	40	45	60
Current capacity	200	225	300
Number on Roll (January 2012)	167	209	210
Current Number of Classrooms	7	8	10

One option would be to make each school the same size.

	Chilton	Wood Ley	Abbots Hall
Proposed PAN	45	45	45
Proposed capacity	315	315	315
New classrooms needed	4	3	1

This would mean that there would not be enough places in Abbots Hall for all the children living in its catchment area and not enough children in the Wood Ley catchment to fill that school. If this presented problems for parents, we would review the catchments when the new pattern of schools is established.

Alternatively, the schools could be arranged to match the number of children in the catchment areas at the moment.

	Chilton	Wood Ley	Abbots Hall
Proposed PAN	45	30	60
Proposed capacity	315	210	420
New classrooms	4	0	4

This would mean that some temporary classrooms may be needed at Wood Ley

as the larger year groups moved through the school.

The third option under consideration is to reflect the current pattern of admissions to the schools.

	Chilton	Wood Ley	Abbots Hall
Proposed PAN	30	45	60
Proposed capacity	210	315	420
New classrooms	0	3	4

This would mean that a temporary classroom would be needed at Chilton while an existing larger year group moves through the school.

In the longer term this may also need the catchment areas of Wood Ley and Chilton to be changed.

On balance, the county council prefers the third option as it is important that we can meet as many parents' wishes as possible when they ask for school places. This option also makes best use of existing buildings and needs fewer new classrooms to be built.

We would like to hear your views on these three options.

### Great Finborough

In April 2012, there were 89 pupils at the school which currently offers 20 places in each year group. Data from the health authority on pre-school children suggests that there are not enough children living in the school's catchment area to fill 20 places in future years. However, the school attracts children from further away, particularly the Onehouse area. Some of these families choose the school on denominational grounds as it is currently the only Church of England school in the area.

It would be possible to meet the catchment area needs with just 15 places in each year

group, which would need just one more classroom giving a capacity of 105 places. However, this could restrict our ability to meet parental preferences. Therefore, it is proposed to continue offering 20 places in each year group. This would require two more classrooms, taking the capacity from 100 to 140.

### Ringshall

This school currently offers 40 places in each year group giving the school a capacity of 200 pupils. However in April 2012, there were just 111 on roll. This suggests that offering 30 places in each year group will be sufficient to meet local needs in the future. The school will not need any more classrooms to take up to 210 pupils.

### Bosmere

In April 2012, there were 193 pupils at the school which currently offers 60 places in each year group. Data from the health authority on pre-school children suggests that there are not enough children living in the school's catchment area to fill 60 places in future years.

It is therefore proposed to offer 45 places in each year group, taking the capacity of the school from 300 to 315. This would need one more classroom to be built.

As Needham Market Middle School is very close to Bosmere, we are proposing transferring the Middle School playing fields to Bosmere. This would be an additional asset for the school.

### Cedars Park

The proposal for this school needs to be considered alongside those for Combs Ford and the proposed new primary school.

This school currently offers 60 places in each year group. In April 2012, there were 254 pupils on roll. Data from the health

authority suggests that there are now more than 60 children living in the school's catchment area who are due to start school in future years. This is why temporary classrooms are being provided to allow the school to take up to 90 children in reception class for September 2012 and 2013. However, if the school continued to take 90 pupils every year the site would become very congested.

It is therefore proposed to offer 60 places in each year group, taking the capacity of the school from 300 to 420. This would need four new classrooms to be built.

With further housing development in the catchment area, the current level of demand is expected to continue for the next five years. However in the longer term, as children living in the area move on to secondary schools, the number of primary school places required can be expected to reduce.

The proposed new primary school would provide the additional places needed in the area from September 2014.

### **Combs Ford**

The proposal for this school needs to be considered alongside those for Cedars Park and the proposed new primary school.

In April 2012, there were 342 pupils on roll. This school has had the capacity for 450 pupils, with 90 in each of the five year groups. However, the school rarely filled all its places and the admission number was reduced to 60. This has helped the school organise its classes more effectively. With two more year groups, the school can continue offering 60 places in each year without needing any more classrooms.

We have considered putting more children on the site to help meet the needs of the wider area, but that would lead to it being very congested. It is therefore proposed to continue offering 60 places in each year group, setting the capacity of the school at 420 places.

In order to ensure there are enough playing fields, it is proposed to allow the school to use the Combs Middle School playing field alongside the proposed new primary school on that site which is needed to meet the high numbers of pupils currently living to the east of Stowmarket.

### **Possible new school**

Based on data from the health authority, we need another 45 places in each year group in the east of Stowmarket. To add these places at existing schools would lead to their sites being very congested. This is enough children to fill a new school.

The only site available for a new school in the area is Combs Middle School if its closure is agreed. This could be converted into a primary school of the required size.

As the site is close to Combs Ford Primary School, it would be difficult to establish a separate catchment area. The Church of England Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich has said it would like to have a voluntary aided school in the area. Voluntary aided schools serve a wider area and would relieve pressure on places across the town.

Ideally, the new school would open in September 2014 with a reception class. This may need to be in temporary accommodation until conversion work is completed at the middle school.

If the new school is not a voluntary aided school, we would have to invite applications to set up an academy.



## 6. Middle schools

### Stowmarket Middle School

The county council has a preferred option to move to a two-tier system with primary schools covering the 4 to 11 age range and secondary schools covering the 11 to 16 or 11 to 18 age range. If the preferred option is adopted then Stowmarket Middle School would be closed.

If the proposed pattern of primary schools set out above is agreed, there would be no admissions to Stowmarket Middle School in September 2014 when Year 5 pupils would stay in their primary schools.

This would mean that in September 2014 Stowmarket Middle School would teach Years 6, 7 and 8. In September 2015, the three year groups remaining at the middle school would transfer to secondary school and Stowmarket Middle School would close.

The site and buildings would be transferred to Stowmarket High School.

### Combs Middle School

The county council has a preferred option to move to a two-tier system with primary schools covering the 4 to 11 age range and secondary schools covering the 11 to 16 or 11 to 18 age range. If the preferred option is adopted then Combs Middle School would be closed.

If the pattern of primary schools set out above is agreed there would be no admissions to Combs Middle School in September 2014 when Year 5 pupils would stay in their primary schools.

This would mean that in September 2014 Combs Middle School would teach Years 6, 7 and 8. In September 2015, the three year groups remaining at the middle school would transfer to secondary school and Combs Middle School would close.

The site and buildings would be retained as a potential new primary school and the playing fields would be shared with Combs Ford Primary School.

### Needham Market Middle School

The county council has a preferred option to move to a two-tier system with primary schools covering the 4 to 11 age range and secondary schools covering the 11 to 16 or 11 to 18 age range. If the preferred option is adopted then Needham Market Middle School would be closed.

If the pattern of primary schools set out above is agreed there would be no admissions to Needham Market Middle School in September 2014 when Year 5 pupils would stay in their primary schools.

This would mean that in September 2014 Needham Market Middle School would teach Years 6, 7 and 8. In September 2015, the three year groups remaining at the middle school would transfer to secondary school and Needham Market Middle School would close.

If the middle school closes, we are proposing that playing fields would be transferred to Bosmere Primary School. We would seek the Secretary of State's permission to dispose of the building after consulting on its future use with the local planning authority.

## 7. High schools

Across Stowmarket and Stowupland we need 480 places in each year group for students aged 11-16.

We are proposing to offer 300 places in each year group at Stowmarket High School and 180 at Stowupland High School.

The additional places at Stowmarket would be provided at the Stowmarket Middle School site in Walnut Tree Walk.

Currently the headteacher and governors are planning for year 7 and 8 students to spend most of their time on the Walnut Tree site and years 9-13 on the Onehouse Road site. However, there are very good reasons for students in years 7 and 8 to be timetabled to spend at least some of their time on the Onehouse Road site – there are more, and better, facilities for some areas of the curriculum, such as outdoor PE, technology and science. It is also an important part of students feeling that they belong to the whole school; not just a single site.

The aim will be to timetable students so that movement between sites during the day is kept down to a minimum; for example, by timetabling them for one whole day a week at the Onehouse Road site. There are many excellent examples, both locally and nationally, where travel between sites of similar distance and in areas of similar character is managed safely for students of this age range and we will learn from this good practice.

All of the evidence is that, with the same quality of teachers and other factors, children achieve better in a two-tier system. This is not in any way a criticism of the work which has been done by partner middle schools – this is entirely about the system, not the individual schools or teachers within them. One of the factors is that a ‘dip’ in achievement commonly happens when children start a new school, as they familiarise themselves with new teachers, new friends and new ways of working. In a three-tier system this

happens twice, in the middle of key stage 2 and again the middle of key stage 3.

That’s why it’s absolutely crucial that, for the students and staff, we make this new school a single school, not two separate schools sharing the same name. The first, and probably the most important part of that, is for students to see and get to know the same teaching staff.

All staff in every subject area would be timetabled to teach on both sites so that students in year 7 and year 8 get continuity with the same teams of teachers when they progress through into Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

A year-based pastoral care system where the pastoral team and head of year move with the students through the years will mean that they know the individual students well by the time they are helping with key decision-making and supporting their students through the usual challenges for adolescents.

It is a real strength that teachers who are teaching at any level know, and can refer constantly to, where their subject is heading in future years.

The split-site arrangement is accepted as a necessary step for the continued development and growth of secondary education in the growing town of Stowmarket. Governors and town planners, with support and encouragement from the county council and the local MP, are committed to the longer-term aim of a new school as soon as funds are available to accommodate years 7 to 13 on a single, purpose-built site.

Stowupland High School has sufficient capacity on its site for about half the extra students it would take. We intend to build a new teaching block on the site to add the extra space needed.

Both schools would retain their sixth forms at the current size.

## 8. Next steps

All consultation responses will be analysed and reported to county councillors and governors. In December, the county council’s cabinet will decide what final proposals it wants to make. For voluntary schools, this is a decision for the governing body.

These final proposals will be published in the local paper, on school gates and

elsewhere in the community. People will then have six weeks to make their final comments on the proposals before the county council’s cabinet takes its final decision in February 2013.

If the proposals are approved, work will begin on building the new classrooms, training staff and all the other preparation that is needed.

## 9. How to have your say

Comments from parents and others have been very useful in shaping the final proposals for change in other parts of Suffolk.

You can learn more about the proposals by attending one of the consultation meetings.

At these meetings any comments you make will be recorded and will be part of the evidence considered by councillors. All meetings start at 7pm.

	Date
Great Finborough	19 September
Needham Market Middle	24 September
Ringshall	26 September
Wood Ley	27 September
Combs Ford	3 October
Chilton	4 October
Abbots Hall	9 October
Cedars Park	10 October
Bosmere	16 October
Stowmarket Middle	17 October
Combs Middle	18 October
Stowmarket High	23 October

You can also complete a questionnaire online at:

[www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations)

A paper version of the booklet and questionnaire is also available from schools.

If you prefer you can also email or write to us at:

[StowmarketConsultation@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:StowmarketConsultation@suffolk.gov.uk)

or

**SOR Stowmarket  
Suffolk County Council  
FREEPOST NAT 18364  
Ipswich IP1 2BR**

Please make sure your comments reach us by 9 November 2012.



# Stowmarket Questionnaire

1. Are you a:  parent/member of staff  governor  student  other

2. Which school or schools are you associated with?

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3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Suffolk schools should change to a two-tier school system?  agree  disagree  don't know

4. Please say why you think this

--

## Primary Schools

Please tell us what you think about proposals for the following schools. Please say why you think this.

5. **Great Finborough**  agree  disagree  don't know

--

6. **Bosmere**  agree  disagree  don't know

--

7. **Ringshall**  agree  disagree  don't know

--

8. **Cedars Park**  agree  disagree  don't know

--

9. **Combs Ford**  agree  disagree  don't know

--

10. **Possible New Primary School**  agree  disagree  don't know

--

**11. Abbots Hall, Wood Ley and Chilton primary Schools**

Please tell us which of the three options for these schools you prefer. Please say why you think this.

Equal sizes with all three schools offering 45 places each year

agree  disagree  don't know

Matching the catchment area Chilton 45, Wood Ley 30, Abbots Hall 60

agree  disagree  don't know

Matching the current pattern of admissions Chilton 30, Wood Ley 45, Abbots, Hall 60

agree  disagree  don't know

**Middle Schools**

Please tell us what you think about proposals for the following schools. Please say why you think this

**12. Stowmarket Middle School**  agree  disagree  don't know

**13. Combs Middle School**  agree  disagree  don't know

**14. Needham Market Middle School**  agree  disagree  don't know

**High School**

**15.** Please tell us what you think about proposals for Stowmarket High School.

Please say why you think this  agree  disagree  don't know

**16.** Have you had enough information to comment  yes  no

**17 .** Have you had enough time to comment?  yes  no

Please use the space below to add any other comments.