

# **Specification for a new primary school at Whitehouse South in the Western Expansion Area, Milton Keynes.**

**This document is for applicants to the free school presumption competition**

## **New school opportunity**

The council has a legal duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for all children who are living in Milton Keynes. This duty has to be met in the context of significant growth in new housing in the Milton Keynes area. By 2026, almost 300,000 people will live in Milton Keynes rising to 325,000 by 2037 (currently 287,000). Of particular importance to new families is the ability to obtain a local place at a quality school for their children. Although the pace of growth in Milton Keynes makes this a challenge, we have continued to achieve this due to excellent partnership work with our local stakeholders. Since 2019, three new schools have opened in the city and six expansion projects have been completed to accommodate the additional 3176 pupils by which the school cohort has grown during the five-year period.

The Western Expansion Area (WEA) is currently the largest of the major development sites in Milton Keynes with 3,300 homes already delivered and a further 3,300 homes to be built. The area will have four primary schools, three of which are already open, and a secondary school that opened in 2020. We are now seeking proposals from academy trusts, already familiar with or new to the area, who are able to deliver high quality education and establish a new primary school ready for opening in September 2028. This primary school will be the final school to be delivered in the WEA.

This paper provides a specification of the type of provision the council would like to secure as well as some background to Milton Keynes, information about the site and timeline for the free school presumption competition process.

If you would like further information or wish to discuss your application, please contact:

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I look forward to receiving your applications.



Mac Heath  
Director, Children's Services

## Introduction

Under section 6A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the ‘free school presumption’) where a local authority identifies the need to establish a new school it must, in the first instance, seek proposals to establish an academy. Milton Keynes City Council has identified the need to establish a new primary school in the Western Expansion Area development of Milton Keynes to open in September 2028. The authority is therefore seeking proposals from appropriate academy trusts to open this new school. This school would be deemed a free school. The proposed site for the new primary school is located in an area of the Western Expansion Area which is referred to within this specification and throughout the competition process as ‘Whitehouse South’. However, it must be noted that this is not the area’s official name and is titled as this for ease of reference.

A consultation on the proposal to create a new primary school provision within the Western Expansion Area was carried out between 17 March 2025 and 27 April 2025. The consultation was distributed to stakeholders including all local multi academy trusts, all schools in Milton Keynes, local early years providers, the parish council, neighbouring local authorities and all Milton Keynes councillors. It was also published on the council’s website.

The presumption process is the main route by which local authorities establish new schools in order to meet the need for additional places, both in terms of basic need and the need for diverse provision within their areas. The presumption process can be used to deliver all types of schools and local authorities are responsible for determining the specification for the new school and will lead and implement the project to establish the school. The Department for Education provides support and advice to local authorities and sponsors throughout the process and will appoint a lead contact for the project to assist the local authority and successful sponsor in its delivery. The presumption process sits alongside the DfE’s central mainstream free schools programme where applications are made direct to the DfE.

Information about the primary school, the development area and the timeline of the competition is provided below.

## About the primary school

This specification is for a new 630 place primary school to include a 24 place SEND unit and a 39 FTE place nursery.

<b>Opening</b>	1 September 2028 (subject to the building project)
<b>Phase</b>	Primary, including a 24 place SEND unit for pupils with a Communication and Interaction (Autism) designation and nursery provision
<b>Gender</b>	Mixed
<b>Age Range</b>	2 to 11 years
<b>Number of places</b>	<p>Eventual total capacity of 630 places plus 24 place SEND unit and 39 FTE nursery</p> <p>Note: There will be an expectation on the proposer to agree to open the pupil places gradually, in consultation with Milton Keynes City Council, beginning with 30 pupils in Years R, 1 and 2 and an agreed number of pupils attending the SEND unit. This is to avoid adverse impact on existing local schools. We would expect the nursery to open in line with school opening.</p>
<b>SEND</b>	<p>The school will be expected to be fully inclusive and to educate children with special educational needs and disabilities in line with legislation (Children and Families Act, 2014).</p> <p>In line with placing pupils with an EHCP in mainstream settings, it is expected that the school will accommodate local pupils who are deemed mainstream appropriate through the consultation process. These pupils will not be placed within the unit provision and will be included as part of the school's mainstream provision.</p> <p>The school will have a 24 place SEND unit for pupils with a Communication and Interaction designation that have an EHCP. The unit will be self-contained and have its own outside play area.</p> <p>The unit will open on 1 September 2028 and the council will work with the sponsor to increase admissions to the unit over a period of time. The capacity of the unit will build over a period of time to a maximum of 24 pupils.</p> <p>It is envisaged that pupils attending the unit would spend most of their time based within the unit but will also be able to join in with parts of the school day where appropriate.</p> <p>The successful sponsor will be required to sign a Service Level Agreement with the council for the provision of the SEND unit.</p>

	<p>The school would be responsible for the quality and outcomes of the provision.</p> <p>Admissions for the unit would be managed by the council’s SEND service. Trusts cannot be the admissions authority for the unit.</p> <p>One of the key aims of the unit is to enable SEND pupils to access a mainstream offer, whilst accessing specific specialist support for their needs.</p> <p>The unit will be funded in line with other SEND units within MKCC with current rates sent out below.</p> <div><p><b>Primary Model</b></p><table><thead><tr><th>Places</th><th>Place Funding Per Pupil Paid from High Needs Block</th><th>Per Pupil Funding Paid from School Budget Share</th><th>Top-Up Funding Per Pupil</th><th>Total Funding Per Child</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>8</td><td>£6,000</td><td>£4,000</td><td>£12,882</td><td>£22,882</td></tr><tr><td>16</td><td>£6,000</td><td>£4,000</td><td>£12,632</td><td>£22,632</td></tr><tr><td>24</td><td>£6,000</td><td>£4,000</td><td>£11,123</td><td>£21,123</td></tr></tbody></table><p>If a place is not filled at the October census date £10,000 place funding will be paid from the High Needs Block.</p></div> <p>In addition to the above, £2,500 per pupil will be paid based on commissioned numbers as one-off funding for equipment requirements. The exact funding will be determined nearer school opening.</p>	Places	Place Funding Per Pupil Paid from High Needs Block	Per Pupil Funding Paid from School Budget Share	Top-Up Funding Per Pupil	Total Funding Per Child	8	£6,000	£4,000	£12,882	£22,882	16	£6,000	£4,000	£12,632	£22,632	24	£6,000	£4,000	£11,123	£21,123
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School organisation	<p>The council is seeking a Multi Academy Trust, already familiar with or new to the area, who are able to deliver high quality education and establish the school ready for opening in September 2028.</p>																				
Published Admission Number (PAN)	<p>The immediate demand for school places is for Years R, 1 and 2; as such it is anticipated that the new school will initially need to open with places in these year groups only. The initial PAN for the school is likely to be as indicated below with one class per year group opening in Year R to Year 2. Note: these are best estimates and the actual number of places to be opened will be agreed one year prior to opening when a funding agreement with the Secretary of State is finalised.</p> <table><thead><tr><th>YR</th><th>Y1</th><th>Y2</th><th>Y3</th><th>Y4</th><th>Y5</th><th>Y6</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr></tbody></table> <p>The new sponsor is expected to agree to open the pupil places gradually, in consultation with the council.</p>	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	5	5	5	0	0	0	0						
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Admissions	<p>All proposers must adhere to the <a href="#">School Admissions Code 2021</a> and the <a href="#">School Admissions Appeals Code 2022</a>, including determining arrangements, providing relevant information to the local authority and participating in the local Fair Access Protocol.</p>																				

	<p>To help with a swift opening, for at least the first two years of operation, the admission arrangements for the school must be in line with the <a href="#">admissions arrangements for maintained schools in Milton Keynes</a>.</p> <p>The current oversubscription criteria at the time of specification launch are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A looked after child or previously looked after child including children previously in care outside of England</li> <li>2. Children eligible for the service premium</li> <li>3. A sibling at the school who is expected to be on roll at the school at the time of admission and the place of residence is within catchment of the school</li> <li>4. The child's place of residence is within the catchment area of the school and there is no sibling on roll at the school</li> <li>5. There is already a sibling at the school who is expected to be on roll at the school at the time of admission and the place of residence is outside of the catchment area</li> <li>6. Children of staff</li> <li>7. Distance from the school to the place or residence</li> </ol> <p>Where oversubscription results in the PAN being reached within one of these seven criteria then prioritisation (within each criterion) will take place using distance between the child's home address and the school main entrance, measured in a straight line.</p> <p>The successful sponsor will be responsible for dealing with admission appeals.</p>
<b>Catchment area</b>	<p>It is anticipated that the school will serve residents living in the Whitehouse area of the Western Expansion Area of Milton Keynes (exact catchment area to be determined at a later date).</p> <p>The catchment area for the school may need to be altered slightly as the development grows and builds out across the years.</p>
<b>Transport</b>	<p>It is expected that pupils attending the school will be within statutory walking distance. The council's policy on School Travel Support can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<b>Partnership working with the council and the community</b>	<p>The council has a strong working relationship with all schools in the wider Milton Keynes area. It is expected that any provider will cooperate with the council and other schools, by engaging with and providing relevant information as determined by law and information reasonably requested by the council. This new school should work closely with schools in the liaison group, especially relating to admission arrangements and community engagement and actively engage with and adhere to all local policies and protocols.</p>

<b>Profile of the Milton Keynes area</b>	<p><b>Milton Keynes:</b></p> <p>Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals – 24.37%</p> <p>Percentage of pupils with SEND – 17.45%</p> <p>Percentage of ethnic minority group pupils – 54.84%</p> <p>Key Stage 2 attainment in 2024 – 59%</p> <p>Percentage of LAC pupils – 1.14%</p> <p>Percentage of PLAC pupils – 0.75%</p> <p><b>Western Expansion Area:</b></p> <p>Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals – 9.29%</p> <p>Percentage of pupils with SEND – 13.82%</p> <p>Percentage of ethnic minority group pupils – 62%</p> <p>Key Stage 2 attainment in 2024 – 72.3%</p> <p>Percentage of LAC pupils – 0.16%</p> <p>Percentage of PLAC pupils – 1.05%</p>
<b>Impact and equalities analysis</b>	<p>No negative impact on schools in the surrounding area and positive impact on protected characteristics. Full analysis can be found in the Impact and equalities assessment at Annex A and Annex B.</p>
<b>School building and design</b>	<p>The school building will provide accommodation for up to 630 pupils. It will have capacity for three forms of entry and will cater for 90 pupils from Year R to Year 6. In addition, there will also be provision for a 24 place SEND unit and a 39 place FTE nursery.</p> <p>The successful sponsor will be invited to take part in the design of the school building, alongside colleagues from the council and the chosen design team. The building construction will be managed by Milton Keynes City Council.</p> <p>The school will be built to current Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Standard Specification and in line with DfE Building Bulletin 103 requirements for primary schools. The new school will be a modern design offering high quality facilities for the benefit of the school and the wider community.</p> <p>The successful sponsor will be required to permit community use of any sports facilities on site on a year-round basis and will be subjected to a legally enforceable Community Use Agreement, the guidance for which is set out by Sport England. We would also expect school facilities to be accessible to the local community as appropriate.</p>

	<p>The building is currently scheduled to be ready in the summer of 2028. The site is offered on a leasehold basis, with a 125-year lease which will be agreed and signed before the building is completed.</p>
<b>Address of new school</b>	<p>The proposed site of the school is located in the south of the Western Expansion Area. A school location map is included in this specification. Address details to be confirmed.</p> <p>Nearest available postcode – MK8 1FY (postcode to be confirmed)</p>
<b>Revenue funding</b>	<p>Milton Keynes City Council will meet all pre and post opening costs associated with establishing the 630 place new school from the schools block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG), in line with the growth criteria agreed by the Milton Keynes School Forum. This will remain the case whilst the decision of the growth fund criteria and allocation are within the local authority's area of responsibility. All proposed growth funding figures within this document are based upon the current criteria set by the local Schools' Forum. Should there be any changes to this in the future prior to the signing of a funding agreement these figures will need to be revised.</p> <p><b>Revenue:</b> Milton Keynes Schools Forum has agreed to fund the following payments to support the establishment of new school provision:</p> <p><b>Growth Funding:</b> exact figure to be determined nearer school opening.</p> <p><b>Initial new school allowance:</b> A payment of £76,195 will be paid to the school to cover payments such as salaries and upfront costs in April 2028 prior to the school opening.</p> <p><b>School budget share:</b> The school will be funded for the total number of 90 children in the first financial year. This will be pro-rated to 52.5 pupils for the 2027-28 financial year to reflect that the school will only be open from September 2028. For following years, the council will work with the new school to determine anticipated demand based on the latest housing figures on an annual basis.</p> <p>The 24 place SEND unit will be funded from the high needs block of the DSG. This allocation will consist of place and top up funding applicable to any phasing of the places becoming available.</p> <p>The 39 FTE nursery places will be funded from the early years block of the DSG for the government education entitlement.</p>
<b>Capital funding</b>	<p>The capital building scheme is to be developed. The source of this funding could be a combination of Basic Need, Tariff, Section 106, and council borrowing. This budget includes the SEND unit and 39 place FTE nursery.</p>

	<p>A budget allocation of approximately £334,500 is proposed to be given to the nursery and primary phase for furniture and equipment based on £500 per nursery/primary aged pupil. This also includes for ICT set-up allocation costs.</p> <p>Funding of £500 per pupil place for SEND provision will also be provided.</p>
<b>Application process and assessment criteria</b>	<p>Only applications submitted by the published deadline of <b>midday on 25 July 2025</b> using the appropriate application form will be considered for evaluation.</p> <p>All bids received will be evaluated against the criteria set out in the application form and the key criteria set out by the DfE, including partnership working, strategic vision, educational capacity and performance, financial planning and operational capacity and governance.</p> <p>A timeline of the free school presumption competition is included at the end of this document.</p>

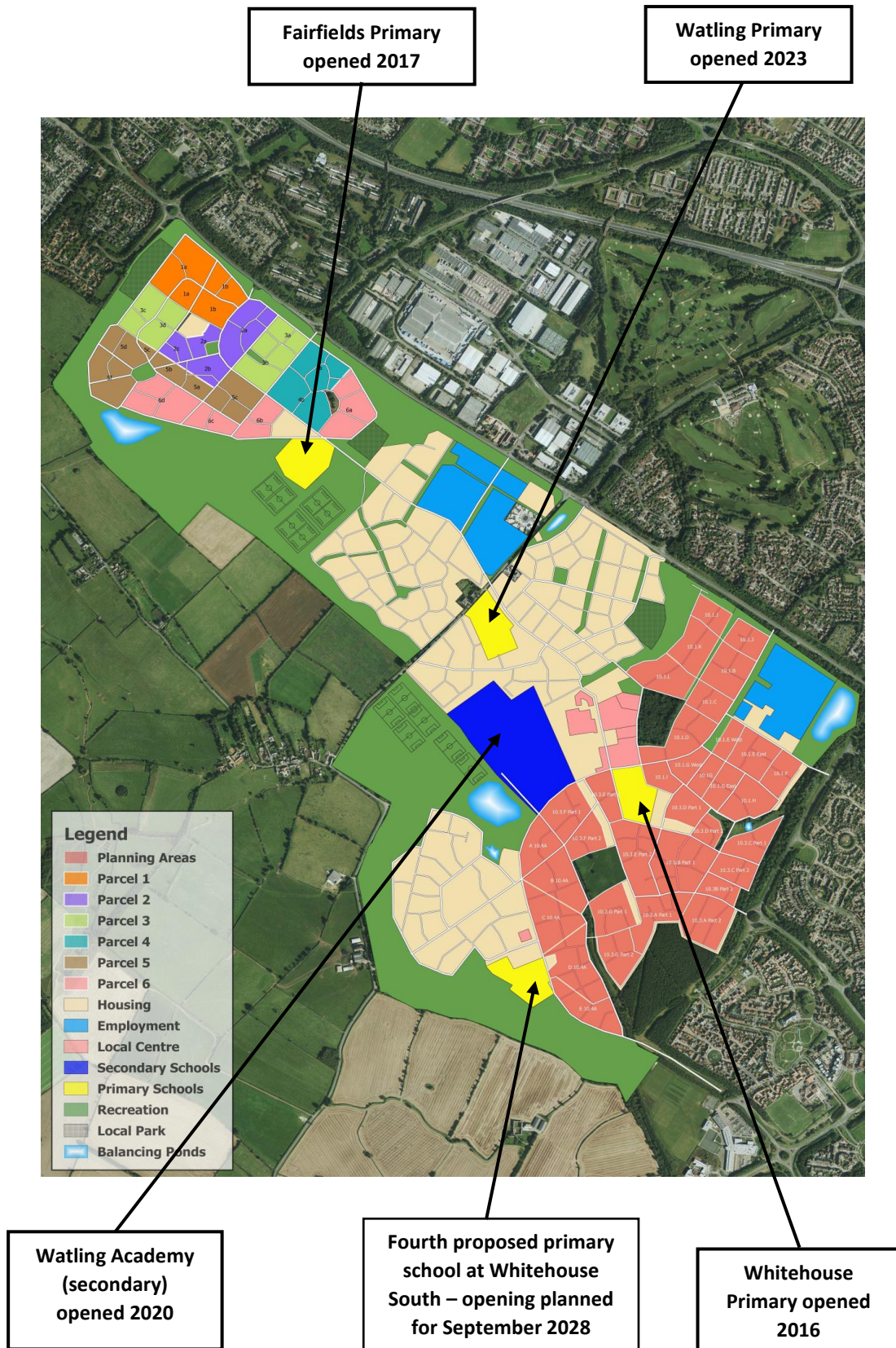


## **About the Western Expansion Area development**

The Western Expansion Area (WEA) is currently the largest of the major development sites in Milton Keynes with a total of 6,600 homes to be built: a pupil yield of c.380 pupils per year group. When complete, the WEA will be comparable in size to Buckingham. This significant development incorporates provision for four new primary schools and a secondary school. Three of the primary schools are already open; Whitehouse Primary School opened in 2016 followed by Fairfields Primary School in 2017 and Watling Primary School in 2023. The secondary school, Watling Academy, opened in September 2020. Sport and leisure facilities, multi-purpose community centres, a library facility, health centre, large open spaces and play areas are also planned to be included within the area along with a supermarket and several other shops.

Overall, current projections indicate that the final additional three forms of entry of primary provision will need to be created in the local area for September 2028 entry. The school location map on the following page shows where the school sites are located.

## WEA School location map



## Timeline for the free school presumption competition

Action	Approx Date
<b>Start of the free school competition</b> - Notice will be issued to all local schools via the council's Heads Up newsletter and by email to academy trusts which already have schools in Milton Keynes. It will also be published on the council's website at <a href="http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning">http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning</a> . The competition is national and will be publicised on the DfE website <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-school-proposals">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-school-proposals</a> . The competition will open on <b>19 May 2025</b> and will close at <b>midday on 25 July 2025</b> .	19 May 2025
<b>Early notice</b> - We would welcome early notice from providers intending to submit an application. It will be strictly confidential and will help us with preparations for the remainder of this timeline. Please send a brief email to <a href="mailto:sufficiencyandaccess@milton-keynes.gov.uk">sufficiencyandaccess@milton-keynes.gov.uk</a> . If you choose later not to apply, please let us know.	May 2025
<b>Application deadline</b> - Applicants must use the council's application form which is based on the Department for Education criteria " <a href="#">Model criteria for local authorities and proposers</a> ". Please send your form to <a href="mailto:sufficiencyandaccess@milton-keynes.gov.uk">sufficiencyandaccess@milton-keynes.gov.uk</a> by <b>noon on 25 July 2025</b> or earlier.  The list of proposers who submit applications will be strictly confidential but must be sent to the Department for Education.  <b>By applying you are confirming that your Multi Academy Trust:</b>  1. Will open the primary school from 1 September 2028  2. Agrees to open the pupil places gradually, in consultation with Milton Keynes City Council  3. Is an approved sponsor registered with the Department for Education. If not applicants must go through the DfE approval process <b>before</b> submitting an application.	25 July 2025
<b>Applications assessment panel</b> – The assessment panel will comprise of expert representatives from Milton Keynes Council and the Department of Education (subject to availability). There will be a stage one assessment and applicants successful at stage one will be invited to make a presentation to the panel at a stage two assessment.	Autumn term 2025
<b>Recommendation</b> – The council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People will be asked by the assessment panel chair to approve the panel's recommended proposer. The council will then notify the Regional Director (RD). All applicants' scores from the assessment panel must be sent to the RD to aid their approval process. The ultimate decision rests with the Secretary of State who does not have to agree with the council's recommendation.	Autumn term 2025
<b>Notification of selected provider</b> - The RD will notify the selected provider, Milton Keynes City Council and the local Member of Parliament.  Milton Keynes City Council will notify unsuccessful organisations.	December 2025
<b>Project resource from the chosen provider</b> – the council will expect the provider to join two project teams with the council and its contractors; the capital build project team and the 'opening a new school' project team	To be confirmed
<b>Consultation</b> - the successful Multi Academy Trust must carry out their consultation for a period of 6 weeks as prescribed in Section 10 of the Academies Act 2010 and it must complete this <b>before the Department for Education funding agreement</b> can be signed.	To be confirmed
<b>New school opens</b>	September 2028