

Response to public consultation

Your views on the future of
Burnham Park E-ACT Academy

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Background

Our aim

In January 2019 we invited the Burnham Park E-ACT Academy community to take part in public consultation on the future of the academy. It was of great importance to us to consult all of the people associated with the academy before any final decisions were made.

What was the public being consulted on?

Given the steep decline in student numbers at the academy over a sustained period of time, the trust has consulted the public on closing the academy as a mainstream secondary school.

Falling student numbers at Burnham Park E-ACT Academy

When public consultation opened in January 2019, there were only 22 students in Year 7 at Burnham Park E-ACT Academy compared with a total capacity in Year 7 for 160 students. This means that the year group was only 13% full. Across the whole academy there were only 235 students which means that Burnham Park is less than 30% full. Since the 2012-13 academic year, the academy has experienced a 63% fall in student numbers.

2012-13	633 students
2013-14	666 students
2014-15	611 students
2015-16	544 students
2016-17	434 students
2017-18	322 students
2018-19	235 students

The impact of falling student numbers

As part of a wider group of academies, the trust has been able to subsidise Burnham Park E-ACT Academy to run as a one form entry secondary school. However, in an environment where education funding is already challenging, a school with such a small number of students is very difficult to run.

In this climate, the academy has struggled to deliver significant educational improvement and has been judged to require special measures by Ofsted. Furthermore, with such small numbers of students, the academy is unable to offer a GCSE curriculum with the necessary depth and breadth to sufficiently prepare our students for the future. This places a limit on the options available to them when they apply to further education colleges and universities.

The academy has also struggled to recruit new teachers to key positions, further impacting on educational outcomes.

“Since the 2012-13 academic year, the academy has experienced a 63% fall in student numbers.”

How we have supported Burnham Park E-ACT Academy

The academy has received significant educational and operational support from the trust since it joined E-ACT in April 2012.

In 2011, just 35% of students achieved A*-C grades in English and mathematics. In 2012, the year the academy joined E-ACT, 51% of students achieved five A*-C grades including in English and mathematics.

In more recent years the academy has had some of its best GCSE results. In 2017, students were awarded more top grades than ever before:

- 32% of our students achieved a grade 7 or above – the equivalent to an A grade under the previous grading system.
- 18% of students were awarded a grade 7 or above in Mathematics.
- 24% of students were awarded a grade 7 or above in English.

In light of recent successes, the headteacher has worked extremely hard to try and secure two form entries. However, projections show that this is far from happening.

“Bourne End E-ACT Academy students have this year achieved their best-ever A Level results by a significant margin.”

A viable alternative in Bourne End E-ACT Academy

As part of our proposals, all current Burnham Park students in years 7-10 would be offered guaranteed places at nearby Bourne End E-ACT Academy. Those pupils currently in Year 6 who have chosen Burnham Park E-ACT Academy as their secondary choice would also be offered guaranteed places. The trust would provide these students with free daily transportation to and from Burnham Park E-ACT Academy and help with the purchase of uniform.

Comprised of over 500 students aged 11-18, Bourne End E-ACT Academy is located just five miles away from Burnham. If parents and carers decide to move their child to Bourne End E-ACT Academy, the trust's priority is to limit disruption to our students' learning.

Students would sit the same exams as at Burnham Park and may be taught by the same teachers. All of our students would continue to benefit from the close academic and pastoral support that they are accustomed to.

In 2018, Bourne End E-ACT Academy students achieved their best-ever A Level results by a significant margin and the academy experienced strong improvement in its GCSE results.

Community engagement

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The consultation process

- The trust formally opened public consultation on Wednesday 30 January 2019.
- Public consultation closed on Friday 29 March 2019.

Engaging the community

- Letters and emails outlining the trust's proposals and the public consultation process were sent to over 500 groups and individuals (see page 5).
- A nine page public consultation document detailing the rationale behind the trust's proposals was produced and distributed.
- A press release outlining the trust's proposals was sent to eight local media outlets.
- The trust's proposals were outlined on the Burnham Park E-ACT Academy website alongside a rolling FAQs section.

Three open public consultation meetings

Wednesday 6 February 2019
4.00pm-5.00pm
Burnham Park E-ACT Academy
32 attendees

Tuesday 26 February 2019
7.00pm-8.00pm
Burnham Community Library
26 attendees

Tuesday 12 March 2019
6.00pm-7.00pm
Burnham Park E-ACT Academy
54 attendees

Every meeting was chaired by the chief executive of E-ACT and was attended by E-ACT's regional education director for London & Bucks, the headteachers of Burnham Park E-ACT Academy and Bourne End E-ACT Academy and a representative from Buckinghamshire County Council.

Printed handouts of the public consultation document and an FAQs document were distributed to audience members at every meeting.

Submitting responses to public consultation

- The public were invited to submit their response by email, post or by completing our online form.
- Accessible versions of all consultation documents were available on request.
- Trust contact details were provided.

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were contacted by E-ACT with information on the trust's proposals and a request for response to the public consultation:

- Burnham Park E-ACT Academy staff, parents, students and the academy's Ambassadorial Advisory Group.
- Bourne End E-ACT Academy staff, parents, students and the academy's Ambassadorial Advisory Group.
- Community members in the local area through a media release and the public meetings.
- Over 100 primary schools, secondary schools, post-16 providers and special schools located in the South Bucks district, Slough and Maidenhead.
- Over 30 community groups including Burnham Business Association, The Burnham Foundation and religious leaders.
- Seven local media outlets.
- Three county councillors, five South Bucks district councillors and three Burnham parish councillors.
- Three representatives from Slough Borough Council including the director of children, learning and skills.
- Three representatives from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead including the director of children's services.

Meetings with specific groups

Wednesday 16 January 2019

Academy parents and staff were addressed by the chief executive of E-ACT before public consultation officially opened.

Monday 1 April 2019

Bourne End E-ACT Academy parents were addressed by the chief executive of E-ACT. Academy parents will again be addressed in the summer term by the chief executive of E-ACT.

Friday 19 April 2019

The chief executive of E-ACT met with representatives from Slough Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

Student meetings

- Burnham Park E-ACT Academy students have been addressed by the headteacher and his leadership team.
- Bourne End E-ACT Academy students have been addressed by the headteacher and his leadership team.

How the public responded

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Respondents

In total, 66 responses to public consultation were received.

Individual respondents identified themselves in the following ways:

Community member	34
Former Burnham Park Academy student	10
Burnham Park Academy parent or carer	6
Bourne End Academy parent	3
Burnham Park Academy prospective parent	1
Burnham Park Academy prospective grandparent	1
Non-teaching staff at Burnham Park Academy	1
Burnham Park Academy student	1
Parent of a former Burnham Park Academy student	1
Burnham Park Academy non-teaching member of staff	1
Former student and parent to a child at Burnham Park Academy	1
Headteacher at a Buckinghamshire primary school	1

Responses were also received from:

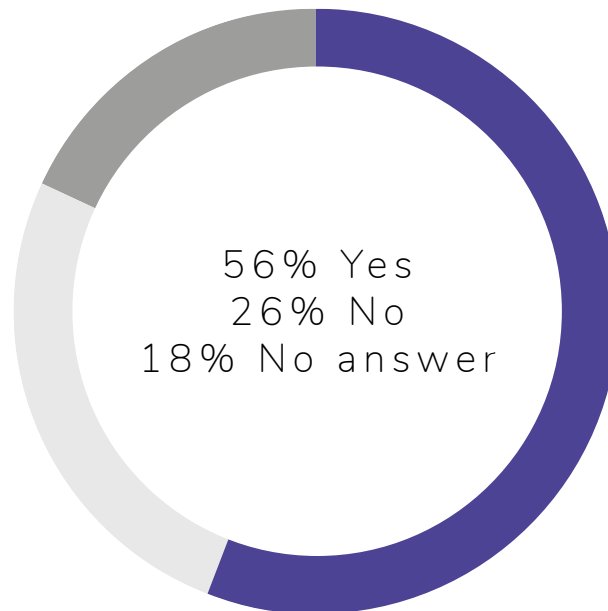
- Bucks County Council
- Slough Borough Council
- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Burnham Parish Council
- Lent Rise School governing board

Parent and student responses to public consultation

Responses to public consultation from Burnham Park Academy students and parents were relatively low. Trust staff have been in regular communication with students and parents, offering advice and support and addressing queries and concerns. Parent and student engagement will continue and includes the formation of parent and student voice groups at both Burnham Park E-ACT Academy and Bourne End E-ACT Academy.

Proposal to close the academy

In answer to the question "Are the reasons for E-ACT's proposal to close the academy clear".



A selection of comments from individuals against closure

"Parents at the consultation were clear and unanimous that they wanted a good local school. They do not willingly send their children to Maidenhead. If there was a good local school, they would use it."

"Very old, not very well looked after school became unpopular. Urgent need for redevelopment of school & new facilities to attract new teachers and students not only from Burnham but also from Slough, Maidenhead etc."

"Slough has been desperate for land to build schools and has built several over the last few years, meanwhile a school on the borough border has been run down to failure. A complete waste of an extremely valuable resource."

"It doesn't make sense when there is a shortage of school places nationally. It always feels like Burnham is the poor relation of South Bucks (and Buckinghamshire in general)."

A selection of comments from individuals in favour of closure

"The school is clearly no longer viable and should close completely as soon as possible."

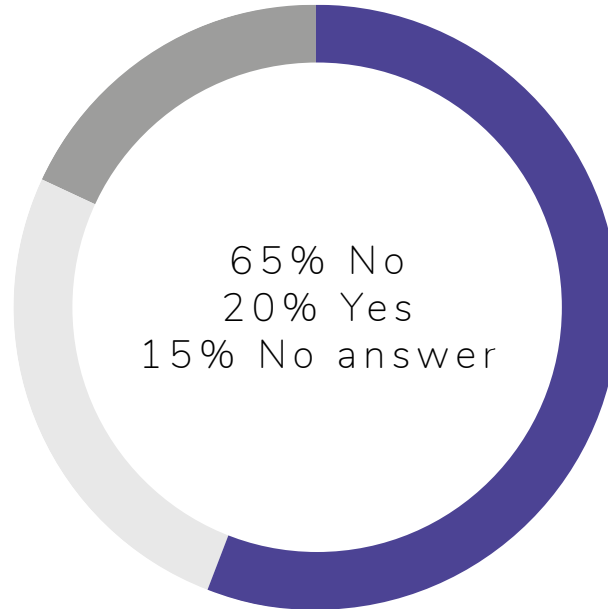
"I understand that there are not enough students to fund the school so closure is the only way forward."

"I completely understand the need for the closure; it's an untenable situation and throwing money at it isn't going to help."

"I have read the consultation document and it is clear that the school is in a position that it can no longer continue due to falling students' numbers."

Proposal to transfer students to Bourne End E-ACT Academy

In answer to the question "Do you agree with E-ACT's proposal to guarantee Burnham Park E-ACT Academy students a place at Bourne End E-ACT Academy".



Comment from an individual against the proposed transfer

"I feel that the merger will change the character of Bourne End Academy for many years to come. It will no longer be a local school for local children. In addition, local children will find it harder to access Bourne End Academy if siblings of ex-Burnham Park children are allowed to attend in future years."

Comment from an individual in favour of the proposed transfer

"Pupils will receive a guarantee of an education within a trust familiar to them and their families."

The main issues of concern

Whilst most people who took part in public consultation state that they understand the reasons for E-ACT's proposal to close the academy, many took the opportunity to share their views on why they feel the academy has failed to attract students over the years.

In order of frequency, the main areas of concern highlighted by respondents:

- Burnham is in need of a secondary school.
- E-ACT has not improved the academy.
- Bourne End E-ACT Academy is not a viable alternative.
- Burnham Park E-ACT Academy has a poor reputation.
- E-ACT should keep the academy open and continue to improve it.
- Burnham Park E-ACT Academy parents were promised new facilities.
- The Bucks selective system is populated by too many non-Burnham residents and is failing the majority of local students.
- The impact of a potential transfer on Bourne End E-ACT Academy students and the wider academy community.
- The future of the site if Burnham Park E-ACT Academy is closed.
- Disruption to Burnham Park E-ACT Academy students.

A selection of comments reflecting some of the issues highlighted:

“Unfortunately, despite high achievement in its grammar schools, the Buckinghamshire secondary school system, like its Children's Services, is failing the majority of local students. At any one time, a third of the non-selective schools are failing, with schools deemed to require improvement or to be inadequate.”

“The demolition of the school building (other than the sports centre) and the rebuilding of a new state of the art school is the only alternative to attract the next generation of pupils. You are currently patching up a carbuncle that has long seen its sale by date.”

“I think it shows that E-ACT have failed the school. The school's reputation wasn't great to begin with but E-ACT have done nothing to rectify it.”

“I am torn. I completely understand the need for the closure; it's an untenable situation and throwing money at it isn't going to help. I attended the last meeting at BPA - listened to both David Moran and Ben Dunne from Bucks and both made valid points which were hard to argue with.”

Group responses

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A number of group responses were received as part of the public consultation process. Here we detail the main points highlighted by each group.

Buckinghamshire County Council

In its official response to public consultation, the council states that it understands “some of the rationale” behind the trust’s proposal.

However, the closure of the academy would result in children in the Burnham catchment area not having a catchment school and may result in a transport burden for the local authority.

Equally a proposal to relocate the students to Bourne End E-ACT Academy would result in a potential “sufficiency duty” issue in the High Wycombe area.

The local authority would seek the Secretary of State to re-broker the site to identify a new sponsor for the academy or for key stakeholders to work with neighbouring schools to identify a suitable secondary school option.

Bucks County Council’s figures show significant surplus capacity at the academy

- The Burnham area generates three forms of entry which is expected to remain static for the next six years. Of those 90 students, the majority (80) go to other schools, mainly in Maidenhead.
- Currently less than 100 Buckinghamshire resident students attend the academy across all five year groups. There are less than 15 Buckinghamshire-based students in Years 7 and 8.
- Burnham Park, which has a Published Admission Number of 140, has significant surplus capacity.

The local authorities' student projections for Burnham Park E-ACT Academy

The projections for Burnham Park based on current trends show that there is unlikely to be any significant increase in intake unless there is a change in parental choice both from within Buckinghamshire and Slough.

Slough

- Burnham Park E-ACT Academy has always relied heavily on families living in Slough to send their children to the academy. Slough Borough Council however are forecasting that the borough will have sufficient school places should Burnham Park E-ACT Academy close.
- Slough have confirmed to Bucks County Council that whilst it is helpful to have Burnham Park E-ACT Academy as a fall back, they do not look to out of county schools to meet demand from within Slough.

Maidenhead

The Royal Borough Windsor & Maidenhead have confirmed that with 9,000 new homes planned in the area, it should not be assumed that Maidenhead secondary schools will have the capacity to absorb Burnham Park's three forms of entry indefinitely.

Transportation

The closure of the academy could lead to increased transport costs for the local authority.

Housing growth

In the longer term there is little housing growth proposed in the South Bucks District Council local plan for the Burnham and Farnham area.

Alternative options

Discussions about alternative sponsorship or new provision arrangements have already started with local primary and secondary schools.

Slough Borough Council

As a neighbouring local authority, the trust contacted Slough Borough Council for their response to public consultation.

In their official response, Slough Borough Council state that they “fully understand the need for the trust to consider difficult options, given the falling rolls at the school”.

Slough Borough Council believe it is unlikely that demand from Slough parents will make Burnham Park E-ACT Academy viable:

- Burnham Park has become less popular with Slough parents in recent years. The number of Slough children has fallen dramatically from 77 in the current Year 11 to 20 in the current year 7.
- Fewer Slough students are expected to take up a place at Burnham Park E-ACT Academy in September 2019.
- Slough Borough Council projections show that demand for Year 7 places within Slough schools will continue to grow until 2023.
- The council’s school place strategy will prioritise Slough schools for expansion. The council states that it does not plan “to rely on places at Burnham Park for Slough students” given its current Ofsted rating.

Slough Borough Council are supportive of the trust’s plan to offer every Burnham Park student a place at Bourne End E-ACT Academy should the academy close:

- The council is pleased that students will be able to continue with existing GCSE courses and may, in some cases, be taught by the same teachers.
- The council has also offered its support to Bucks County Council should Bucks parents prefer to send their children to a Slough school.
- The council have asked for confirmation that all current Slough pupils at Burnham Park E-ACT Academy and those that are due to start in September 2019 will have free transportation provided to them for the duration of their time at Bourne End E-ACT Academy. The trust can confirm that this will be the case should Burnham Park E-ACT Academy be closed.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM)

As a neighbouring local authority, the trust contacted RBWM for their response to public consultation.

In their official response, RBWM state that the closure of Burnham Park E-ACT Academy could increase the demand for secondary school places in Maidenhead. This is because Burnham would be left without a non-selective secondary school and because not all students will choose to go to Bourne End E-ACT Academy.

Furthermore, given that the borough is developing 9,000 new dwellings, it may mean that fewer out of borough children will be given places at Maidenhead schools.

The local authority would therefore prefer that secondary school provision is maintained on the site.

RBWM have however stated that the reasons for possible academy closure are clear. They also note that very few students from the borough attend Burnham Park E-ACT Academy, so there will be "little direct impact" on the borough's residents should the academy close.

RBWM are also supportive of the trust's plan to offer every Burnham Park student a place at Bourne End E-ACT Academy should the academy close.

Burnham Parish Council

- The parish council expressed disappointment at the level of communication and consultation.
- The council questioned the timing of the public consultation as "a final decision [is] due only one term before E-ACT propose to close the school".
- The poor public image of the academy and subsequent fall in numbers is due to E-ACT's poor performance.
- There is a market in Burnham for a good, non-selective secondary school.
- The council believes that student numbers would recover should the school continue to improve.
- Transferring Burnham's school children to Bourne End E-ACT Academy will cause "a breakdown in the local social networks".
- The council has expressed doubt at whether E-ACT is able to assure a long term and sustainable transportation provision.
- Questioned the timing of the trust's proposals given that the current headteacher and staff have been making sustained improvements to the academy.
- The council agrees that E-ACT should no longer manage the academy. However, E-ACT should remain in place until there has been a transition to new management or all potential avenues have been exhausted.

**Governing board of Lent Rise
Primary School, Burnham**

In their official response to public consultation, the governing board of Lent Rise Primary School in Burnham have stated that the reasons for possible academy closure are clear.

However the board does not agree that Bourne End E-ACT Academy is the best option for Burnham students. They have also expressed concern at there potentially being no local non-selective secondary provision for future generations of students should Burnham Park E-ACT Academy be closed.

Whilst the board acknowledges that most Burnham students who do not go to a grammar school travel to Maidenhead and Slough for their secondary education, they feel strongly that a good non-selective secondary provision is essential in Burnham.

**Iver Heath Junior School,
Buckinghamshire**

In his formal response to public consultation, the headteacher of Iver Heath Junior School in Buckinghamshire states that the reasons for possible academy closure are clear, describing the future of the school as “unsustainable in the current financial climate”.

The headteacher is supportive of the trust’s plan to offer every Burnham Park student a place at Bourne End E-ACT Academy should the academy close, describing it as “a guarantee of an education within a trust familiar to them and their families”.

Trust reassurances

The trust's reassurances in relation to the main issues and concerns raised during public consultation are detailed below.

A secondary school in Burnham is needed

Bucks County Council projections clearly show that there is unlikely to be any significant increase in intake at Burnham Park E-ACT Academy unless there is a change in parental choice both from within Bucks and across the border in Slough. The Burnham area generates three forms of entry which is expected to remain static for the next six years. Of those 90 students, the majority (80) travel to Maidenhead and elsewhere.

E-ACT has not improved the academy

Whilst the trust accepts that the academy did not improve as quickly as we would have liked when it first joined E-ACT, in more recent years the academy has had some of its best GCSE results.

In 2017, students were awarded more top grades than ever before:

- 32% of our students achieved a grade 7 or above – the equivalent to an A grade under the previous grading system.
- 18% of students were awarded a grade 7 or above in Mathematics.
- 24% of students were awarded a grade 7 or above in English.

Burnham Park E-ACT Academy was however the subject of an Ofsted inspection in March, the month during which public consultation on the future of the academy was being held.

Given its timing, the trust requested that the inspection be deferred on the basis that the academy could well be closing just months after the inspection was taking place. Somewhat inexplicably, this request was turned down by Ofsted.

The trust registered concerns about the impact an inspection would have on the well-being of our staff, students and families as we know they have experienced uncertainty as they plan for life at another school. In the event, only academy leadership were present on the first day of the inspection due to a high number of staff absence.

Unfortunately, Ofsted have since taken the decision to keep the academy in special measures. We are naturally deeply disappointed by this news as we strongly feel that this Ofsted report fails to accurately reflect Burnham Park E-ACT Academy's progression in recent years. In their last monitoring inspection less than one year ago, Ofsted inspectors noted that better teaching was leading to stronger progress and that outcomes for Year 11 pupils were continuing to improve.

These points are completely overlooked in the latest report giving the impression that there has been very little progression at the academy. Sadly, due to the unfortunate timing of this latest inspection, this report reflects the academy at a time when its future is so uncertain. However, staff are working hard to ensure that students continue to receive the best possible education at Burnham Park E-ACT Academy until a final decision on the future of the academy is made.

Bourne End E-ACT Academy is not a viable alternative to Burnham Park E-ACT Academy

We are unable to provide Burnham Park students with the variety of subject choice they need given falling student numbers. However, Bourne End E-ACT Academy, due to its larger size, can offer students a wider variety of subject. Furthermore, the trust would provide free transportation and support with the purchase of uniform to Burnham Park E-ACT Academy students should they choose to transfer to Bourne End E-ACT Academy.

E-ACT should keep the academy open and continue to improve it

As part of a wider group of academies, the trust has been able to subsidise Burnham Park E-ACT Academy to run as a one form entry secondary school. In light of recent successes, the headteacher has worked extremely hard to try and secure two form entries. However, projections show that this is far from happening.

Put simply, parents are still choosing to send their children elsewhere despite an upturn in student outcomes at the academy. In an environment where education funding is already challenging, a school with such a small number of students is very difficult to run.

Burnham Park parents were promised new academy facilities

Several respondents have commented that academy parents were promised a new building and/or new IT facilities. We can find no evidence of this, however, we cannot discount the fact that this may have been discussed as part of the 'Building Schools for the Future' scheme which was scrapped before Burnham Park Academy joined E-ACT. The academy has however received significant educational and operational support from the trust.

The impact of a transfer on Bourne End E-ACT Academy

There are currently 118 Burnham Park students in years 7-10 who will be given the option to transfer to Bourne End E-ACT Academy in September 2019. This would equate to around one additional class in each year group. Whilst there is no guarantee that all of these places will be taken up, Bourne End E-ACT Academy has both the physical space and the capacity within every year group to offer places to these students.

Disruption to Burnham Park E-ACT Academy students

Senior Burnham Park staff are working closely with Bourne End E-ACT Academy staff to ensure a smooth transition should the academy be closed. Every Burnham Park student who decides to move to Bourne End E-ACT Academy will have a clear educational plan as well as a number of opportunities to visit Bourne End E-ACT Academy with family during the current academic year. Burnham Park students will be able to continue with the same subjects and will in many cases be taught by the same teachers as Burnham Park staff are being offered equivalent roles at Bourne End.

"Transport burden" for the local authority

The trust will support Bucks County Council by helping to alleviate some transportation pressures by providing a free coach service to Bourne End. The service will be provided to current Burnham Park E-ACT Academy students for the duration of their time at Bourne End E-ACT Academy. Longer term, the trust is working with the local authority to expand Bourne End E-ACT Academy's catchment area so that children growing up in Burnham have a good non-selective secondary option within the county.

Bourne End E-ACT Academy

Transition plans

As the final decision on academy closure may not be known until June 2019, senior Burnham Park staff have been working closely with Bourne End E-ACT Academy staff to ensure a smooth transition should the academy be closed.

As part of our transition plans, the academy has already started running a series of events for both sets of students themed around the creative arts, enterprise, rewards and a joint sports day.

In addition, the student leadership teams from both academies have already met, and Burnham Park parents will be invited to Bourne End in the summer term for a series of open events.

In preparation for a possible transfer, staff are currently looking at our form tutor programme per year group. We are also planning five joint Inset days in September. Some Burnham Park teaching staff will also be basing themselves at Bourne End this term.

“The number of students per teacher will fall to 11, the best of any mainstream secondary school in both Buckinghamshire and Wycombe.”

How many Burnham Park students could join Bourne End?

There are currently just 118 Burnham Park students in years 7-10 who will be given the option to transfer to Bourne End E-ACT Academy in September 2019. There is no guarantee that all of these places will be taken up, however, a summary to illustrate how 118 Burnham Park E-ACT Academy students would affect form size at Bourne End E-ACT Academy is provided below:

Year 7: 21 BP students which would equate to roughly four additional students per form

Year 8: 16 BP students which would equate to roughly three additional students per form

Year 9: 42 BP students which would equate to roughly nine additional students per form

Year 10: 39 BP students which would equate to roughly eight additional students per form

Bourne End will have a student-staff ratio of just 11:1

We value our staff and we want to keep them within the trust. It is our aim to move every member of staff from Burnham Park to Bourne End or into one of our other 28 academies. This means that we will have more members of staff at Bourne End than is required for the total number of students at the academy. The number of students per teacher will fall to 11, the best of any mainstream secondary school in both Buckinghamshire and Wycombe.

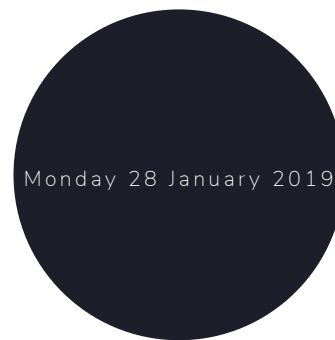
Bourne End students will also have access to more specialist staff than ever before. From Duke of Edinburgh to construction, special educational needs and more pastoral support including our own on-site counsellor and mental health specialist.

Listening period

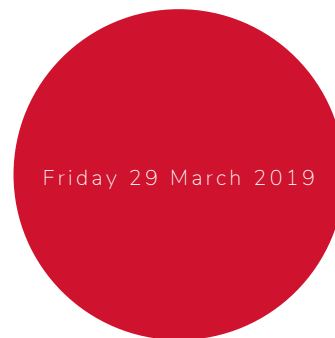
After considering the trust's formal business case, the Secretary of State has given a substantive decision to proceed to closure of Burnham Park E-ACT Academy.

Given the Secretary of State's decision, we now enter a four-week listening period starting Monday 17 June and ending Friday 12 July 2019.

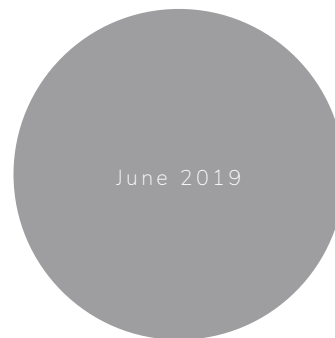
You can send us your comments to consult@e-act.org.uk.



Consultation formally opened



Consultation period closed



The Secretary of State's final decision on closure

Accessibility

Should you require a more accessible version of this document please contact us using the email address consult@e-act.org.uk.



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Contact us

We hope that you will find all of the answers you need within this document. However, if there is anything else we can help with, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us using the email address consult@e-act.org.uk.



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Thank you

Your views are very important to us. We thank you for taking part in our consultation process.

WWW

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