

Key Points you could include in letters to Councillors, Education Officers and Press

- BSF funding is available for both 2 and 3-tier structures but is highly insecure - 4 expert financial groups forecast 50% cuts (or more!) from 2011.
- Embarking on a re-structuring process when the money is likely to dry up could result in a chaotic and disastrous unfinished education system. Surely investing £340 million to improve and enhance the current system which performs well and has recently shown significant improvements - is a far better option. This would avoid the risk of chaos, disruption and disaster for a whole generation of children.
- Evidence shows that when authorities have changed from 3-tier to 2-tier they suffer a significant drop in standards. Northamptonshire now has more failing schools than any other authority in the country. We have none. How can the Borough ensure that Northampton's experience isn't repeated here?
- The Borough's plan for moving all children in 2 years relies upon the transfer of 3 full year groups simultaneously into Upper School in 2014/2015 - 900 new children being admitted that September. How will schools manage such a huge number of new staff/students?
- Lower and Upper Schools will be building sites for a number of years before this time in order to fulfil the Borough's promise that all building will be finished before pupils move - noisy, dangerous, distracting environments, especially for GCSE and A-level students.
- Huge financial borrowing will have to be undertaken by the Borough to fund the Primary development programme - without the specialist teaching and facilities that Middle schools currently provide.
- Even greater borrowing would be needed if BSF dries up in the middle of a re-structuring programme - taxpayers would have to pay these bills.
- Investing BSF funding in the 3-tier system would re-model teaching and learning from the age of 9 (not 11) and allow the limited primary programme to re-model lower schools up to age 9 (not 11) - it makes financial as well as educational sense.
- Opportunities for involvement in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities would diminish in huge secondary schools and not be available in

- The Rose Report on Primary Education (published on April 30th 2009) states the need for more specialist teaching in Years 5 and 6. Middle Schools already provide this and the specialist facilities and accommodation will not be replicated in the primary schools.
- Although there are two points when children transfer, Rose clearly states that the management of transition is more significant than the timing of the transition.
- The 3 tier system has two smaller carefully managed transitions between two similar cultures, with Year 5 children experiencing a more primary model of education and Year 8, the specialist teaching model very similar to the Upper Schools.
- Secondary schools will be much bigger than the current Upper Schools and children from rural Lower Schools will have further to travel on crowded buses with older, more worldly students. Over 2,000 pupils could be on one site once the school leaving age is raised. The modern, social culture is very different today from what it was years ago with many more opportunities for young people to feel threatened, intimidated and anxious.
- There will be increased congestion on roads caused by anxious parents wishing to collect and deliver their young children at the gates of the large Secondary Schools. There are already severe traffic issues in Bedford Borough.
- The Borough's consultation shows 46.7% of students achieved 5 A*-C's at GCSE compared to a national average at 47.6%. However, the national figures include private schools (which historically have achieved higher than average results) whilst Bedford Borough have left them out of their own figures. If the private schools' results were included in the Borough's averages the figures would increase by a minimum of 3%, making the Borough's schools above statistical neighbours. Standards at GCSE improved by 11% in Bedfordshire since 2006 according to Rita Drinkwater and these improvements can be built upon.
- Some Upper Schools perform extremely highly - eg Sharnbrook. That school operates within a 3-tier structure and reflects all that is good about the current system.
- A change in structure will not by itself be a miracle cure for underperforming schools and there is no information in the document to explain what other measures will be undertaken to raise performance in schools.