

School reorganisation in Crewkerne and Ilminster – update – November 2021

Dear parent/carer,

I hope that this letter finds you and your families well. Crewkerne, Ilminster and some of the local villages have had first schools, middle schools and an upper school for many years. Following a decision by Somerset County Council's Cabinet in March 2021, we are **reorganising existing schools to create primary schools (Reception to Year 6) and a secondary school (Year 7 to Year 13)**, which would be the same as in other areas nearby.

We are committed to providing you with information at each stage of the process. I last wrote to you in September to update you on the transition arrangements to this new school structure from September 2022. I am writing again now by way of further update.

This is to inform you of the outcome of the legal challenge, to remind you about the admissions process and provide an update on other aspects of the project. In addition, we invite you to **join a further virtual event** – being held on Wednesday 24 November between 5pm and 6pm – to ask any questions you may have of us.

As you know, we received two legal challenges to the decision made by the Cabinet. A judicial review hearing took place at the High Court in Cardiff on 14 and 15 October and on 4 November, the judge dismissed both claims. On this basis, we continue to implement the decision as planned by September 2022.

1. Does the reorganisation affect my child?

For many children, they will not experience much that is different. However, some children will be more affected. The children who are most affected are those in:

- Misterton First School, which is due to close.
- Children in early years who can choose Maiden Beech as a new non-denominational primary school when they make their application in January.
- Year 4 pupils who will no longer go to middle school next September but will instead stay in their first school when it becomes a primary school.
- Year 6 pupils who should now have applied to secondary school in October.
- Year 7 pupils who will be transferred to Wadham at the end of this academic year if they have not already applied to and been placed in a different school.
- Year 8 pupils who were asked to apply to upper school in October (in case the legal challenge succeeded). These applications will now be set aside. These pupils will also be transferred to Wadham at the end of this academic year if they have not already applied to and been placed in a different school.

2. Admissions and school choices

If your child will be aged four by 31 August 2022 you need to apply for a primary place for your child. The deadline for primary applications is 15 January 2022 and outcomes will be notified on 19 April 2022. Applications can be made on our website <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/apply-to-start-school/>

If your child is in Year 6 you should have already applied for a secondary school place for your child. The deadline for secondary applications was 31 October 2021 and outcomes will be notified by email on 1 March 2022. If you missed the application deadline, late applications can also be made on our website

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/starting-at-a-secondary-or-upper-school-in-september/>.

Thank you to all parents and pupils who applied for year 9 places. We regret the additional work that this has created, however, it was important that we respect the legal process that was ongoing at the time of the national application deadline. Now that the legal process has concluded, applications for a year 9 place at Wadham School will be set aside.

Instead, year 7 and 8 pupils currently on roll at Swanmead and Maiden Beech will automatically transfer to Wadham School at the end of this academic year. PLEASE NOTE, however, that this will only take place if an application has not already been made and a place allocated at a different school. If parents/carers wish to choose a different school, applications open on 6 June 2022 for any places starting September 2022.

Parents/carers of children who attend Misterton will be contacted directly by the end of November with information on how to apply for alternative schools.

3. Building improvements

We are investing £8.6m for condition and building works to support the transition. The complete programme has not been finalised in all details, and there are areas where we continue to negotiate priorities with affected schools. However, you may have seen that condition works have already started in a number of schools, with more planned to start later this academic year. Building improvements will be made over a three-year period for all schools affected by these changes.

4. School staff training and development

Schools plan staff training every year to meet the priorities within their improvement plans. We have commissioned additional training to support any school staff who are moving to a new post within the new structure. This includes training for school staff teaching different year groups in the primary phase to make sure that they have the most up to date knowledge and skills.

5. Focus on children with additional needs

We regularly review provision for children with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). We will continue these reviews to make sure that each child experiences a smooth transition between schools. In addition, information is always shared between schools – leaving and receiving – to support this process. Transition arrangements will be addressed within the annual review process for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

6. How do I find out more?

We would like to invite you to attend a virtual event on Wednesday 24 November, as outlined below. This event is designed to remind you about the admissions process, provide an update on other aspects of the project and offer an opportunity to ask the project team any questions you may have.

Date: Wednesday 24 November

Time: from 5pm to 6pm

Venue: Microsoft Teams Live event

How to book: Go to www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/crewkerne-and-ilminster-area-schools-review-update-tickets-204555670517

In the meantime, if you have questions about what a particular school will offer pupils in future, please get in touch with them directly. They may not be able to answer all your questions straight away, but it will help them to know what matters to you and will be able to provide more information as the year progresses.

If you have any questions about this letter, please email crewkerneilminsterschools@somerset.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Amelia Walker
Assistant Director – Education, Partnerships and Skills
Somerset County Council