

# Worries that new CofE school won't serve the whole community

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Rumours that Pulford Church of England School is likely to be the successful bidder to run the new school on Sandhills Estate in Bedfordshire have caused concern to the local Labour Party.

"We would like assurances that the selection criteria for this new school will give priority to residents from the Sandhills Estate," said local Town Councillor, John Bone. "Residents here are worried that religious criteria may be used which could disadvantage them. We have effectively paid most of the cost of this school which is being financed from a planning agreement with the developers who, of course, passed the cost on to us in the price of our homes. We have heard that Pulford will apply different criteria if they are successful but so far replies from Central Bedfordshire Council have not confirmed this.

"We have waited far too long for this school and need to be assured that our children will actually have a real chance to go there. Why can we not have a firm assurance that any bidder will be required to give assurances that the family's religion will play no part in determining their right to attend this school?"

Another point of concern is that it has also been suggested that the school will only have a first year intake. What about those residents with older children who have paid for the school through their house price, paid Council Tax for several years and now might not have the benefit of a local, convenient school? Will some of them still have to take their children on the seven-mile round trip to Stanbridge? Apart from the time involved there is also the environmental impact such as unnecessary journeys.

The decision is to be made by Central Bedfordshire's Executive Committee on the 27th March. "Hopefully our fears are unfounded" said John Bone "but residents have a right to have these assurances before the decision is taken."

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