

Title: Oakbank

Author: Department for Education (DfE)

Impact Assessment – Section 9 Academies Act Duty

1. Section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 places a duty upon the Secretary of State to take into account what the impact of establishing the additional school would be likely to be on maintained schools, Academies and institutions within the further education sector in the area in which the additional school is (or is proposed to be) situated.
2. Any adverse impact will need to be balanced against the benefits of establishing the new school.

Background

3. Oakbank is an 11-16 school for 560 pupils, due to open in September 2012 with 84 pupils in Year 7. It was proposed by existing Academy sponsor CfBT in partnership with a parent group known locally as WoW (standing for west of Wokingham). The group feel that those living in the rural villages to the West of Wokingham are disadvantaged in securing a school place for their children as a result of the admissions arrangements for other schools in Wokingham which prioritise children living closest to schools. They feel that this means that they get “what’s left”, and have to travel long distances past their closest school. It was envisaged that establishing Oakbank would provide a school closer to home to which these children would be admitted.
4. Oakbank will be situated on the site of the old Ryeish Green School in Wokingham Borough. It is, however, closer to Reading than it is to the town of Wokingham, although the M4 separates the school from the south of Reading. In order to ensure that the school caters for children wholly or mainly from the local area, and in recognition that the characteristics of secondary provision in Reading mean that many of their secondary schools are significantly oversubscribed, the admissions arrangements for Oakbank have been formulated so that pupils will be drawn not just from the rural villages, but also from the south of Reading.
5. Reading Borough Council readily acknowledges that there is a shortage of co-educational, mixed ability secondary places in the Borough, and this was confirmed by their desire for the proposal for Reading University Technical College to provide much needed places for 11-14 year olds. That proposal was approved as a 14-19 school, so the need for additional school places for 11-14 year olds remains. This appears to contradict the information that the Department holds which suggests that in 2015/16 there would be a 21.8% surplus of secondary places, even before the establishment of the Free School and the UTC are considered.
6. Wokingham Borough Council, however, argue that while there is not a

need for the school in Wokingham, although they accept that there is a demand for it from some parents in the rural villages. While they also accept that planned residential development will increase the size of the local community in time, their analysis is that under current circumstances they do not expect that this effect will be significant for at least the next five years.

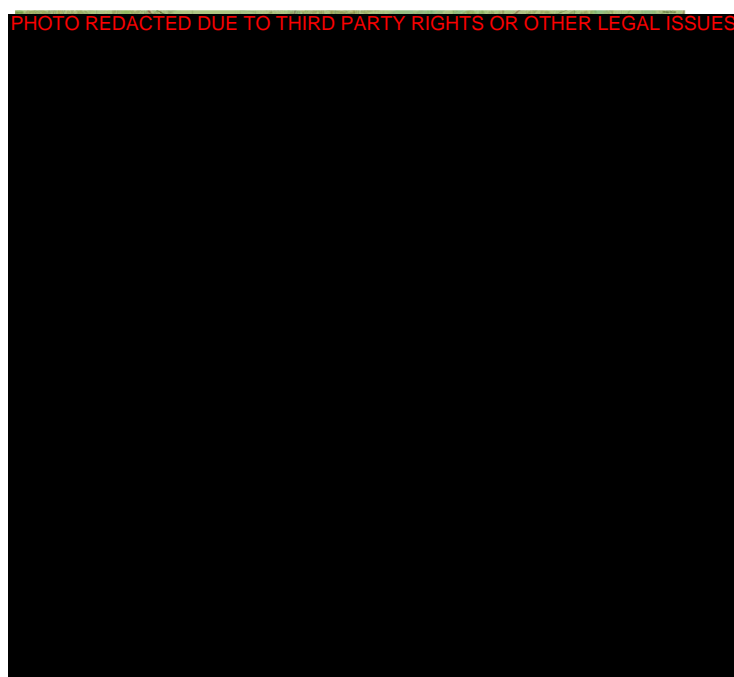
7. In the longer term the Wokingham Borough Council intends to provide a school on the site of the Arborfield Garrison. At present their plan is to relocate an existing school in Wokingham itself (Emmbrook School) which already draws a significant number of its pupils from the area to the west of Wokingham, although they are now considering whether a second Free School may be a more appropriate option. Residents in the south of the borough were campaigning for a school in this more central southern location even while the former school on the Ryeish Green site was still in operation. The Arborfield school is intended to meet the growing population needs in the southern part of Wokingham borough, including the forthcoming Strategic Development Location of Arborfield and the area south of the M4.
8. At the time of formally writing to us to express their views on the Free School, Wokingham Borough Council has indicated that a relocated Emmbrook School was critical to Wokingham's strategy for secondary pupil place planning into the middle and long distant future and will provide a challenge to the future viability of Oakbank. At the same time, they indicated that the loss of the expected capital receipt from the sale of the Ryeish Green site presented a problem to the borough in accessing the funds to build necessary provision. Again, they are now considering other options to secure the necessary funds to build a school in the south of the borough.
9. The headteachers of two local schools (The Bulmershe School and The Forest School) have written to the Department to express their view that while there may be a demand for a new school, there is not a need for new school places in the area.

Admissions arrangements

10. Oakbank's admissions arrangements were developed to ensure that its intake was balanced, and served not just the pupils who lived in the immediate vicinity of the school, but also those that lived further away but struggled to gain access to other local schools because of their rural location. The parents' group has also asked for priority admission for a small number of founders. The oversubscription criteria would be:
 - a. Children in public care (looked after children);
 - b. Children with a brother or sister who will be attending the school at the time of proposed admission. The children concerned must live at the same address.

- c. Children of founders of the school
- d. Children living nearest to the school, measured in a straight line from the child's home to the main entrance of the school (travel by private car or public transport is not taken into account), within each of three identified segments in the following proportions:
 - i) Shinfield segment (30% of remaining PAN)
 - ii) Grazeley and Three Mile Cross segment (30% of remaining PAN)
 - iii) Spencers Wood and Swallowfield segment (40% of remaining PAN)

The segments are set out in the map below.



11. The boundary of each segment is four miles from the site of the school. In the case of one or more segments being undersubscribed, remaining places will be allocated to the other segments in line with the original proportions allocated. After places have been filled under the first five criteria, any remaining places will be offered to children living beyond the identified segment boundaries. Where the number of applicants in this category exceeds the number of places, offers will be determined by random allocation.
12. Oakbank was not part of the co-ordinated admissions process for Wokingham or Reading. The School had [78] applications for 84 places in its first year of which [68] have been provisionally accepted. As the Funding Agreement has not yet been signed, parents have been holding two places in local schools: one at Oakbank and another allocated through the coordinated admissions process. While negotiations around leasing a site for the school are ongoing, CfBT and WBC have not shared

information about which parents have applied for places in which schools. This may exacerbate the impact on other local schools.

Population growth

13. In assessing the impact of the new Free School on other local schools it is useful to look at the projected growth of the pupil population in the area. In Wokingham itself, it is anticipated that there will be a 9.7% increase in the secondary school age population (an increase of about 750 places) between 2010/11 and 2015/16. While the increase in the population is unlikely to be entirely uniform, this equate to approximately 107 additional places per year, broadly in line with the additional places that will be offered by Oakbank. In addition, Reading, whence given the admissions arrangements it is reasonable to assume perhaps a quarter of the pupils will come, will see a 7.5% increase in its secondary pupil population (equating to about 400 places) over the same time period.

Surplus places

14. Evidence suggests that both Wokingham and Reading Boroughs have surplus places within their secondary school population and will continue to do so in 2015/2016 even before the establishment of a Free School is taken into account. However, the pattern of spare capacity is not uniform with some schools being at or over capacity, with others carrying significant surplus places.
15. These patterns do not appear to be linked to either the Ofsted rating of the school or the academic attainment of the pupils at the school. This point is highlighted by the experience of Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School some 3 miles away from Oakbank which is judged to be satisfactory by Ofsted and where academic attainment is relatively low (43% of its pupils achieved the equivalent of 5A*-C including English and maths in 2011, with just 5% achieving the English Baccalaureate) but still has 803 pupils on roll despite having a capacity of 779. In comparison, the Prospect School, the closest school to Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School has similar academic attainment (and until 2011 better academic attainment), and is judged to be good by Ofsted, but has a surplus of almost 450 places. We can infer from this that, in the case of this school, the demand for a faith education outweighs the demand for a high achieving school.
16. Overall, the population growth across the two local authorities is likely to outstrip the additional places provided by the school, however local patterns of attendance mean it is hard to be precise about which schools will be affected in the meantime. This depends as much on local perceptions (and changing perceptions) or the various schools as much as the evidence provided by Ofsted judgements and attainment data.

Nearby maintained schools and Academies

17. The school does not have a self-defined catchment area. Creation of a proxy catchment area based on average distance travelled to school in this

instance is not helpful, because in a rural setting very few schools would be captured, and because of the location of the school in relation to the M4 motorway. The limited number of crossing points heavily influences local decisions about preferred schools.

18. As part of their consultation, CfBT Schools Trust have proactively approached local schools. Several have subsequently written to the Department to express their views directly having seen CfBT's consultation document.

Impact of primary schools

19. In considering the impact on other local schools we have primarily considered the impact on secondary schools. We have not considered the impact on primary schools in detail as:

- a. attendance at a particular primary school is not an oversubscription criteria;
- b. no child's chances of being admitted to the school are either enhanced or diminished by attending a particular school;

therefore

- c. it is unlikely that the establishment of the Free School will impact the local primary schools in anyway save for the potential need to liaise with a new school to ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary school.

20. On that basis, we judge the impact of local primary schools to be negligible. Any impact is likely to be positive, as in enabling more children living in the rural villages to be educated together at the same secondary school, the primary schools in this area may actually have to liaise with fewer secondary schools than they currently do ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary school.

Impact of special schools and alternative provision

21. We have also not considered the impact on alternative provision or special schools in detail as the school will not offer a special education unit or an alternative provision unit, so there is no reason to believe that it is more or less likely to attract pupils that might otherwise have attended a special school, or be referred to alternative provision. It is unlikely that the establishment of the Free School will impact the local special schools and alternative provision in anyway save for the potential need to liaise with a new school to ensure a smooth transition from if children transfer from one establishment to another. On that basis, we judge the impact of local special schools and alternative provision to be negligible.

Impact on further education provision

22. All of the local secondary schools are 11-18 schools. There is no

dedicated 16-19 provision in the local area, although there are sixth form colleges further away in north Hampshire, which because of the range and combination of subjects they are able to offer 16-19 year olds, do draw pupils from both Wokingham and Reading. Oakbank, as an 11-16 school, will not draw pupils away from these institutions. As it aspires for its pupils to be in a position to pursue an academic post 16 curriculum, the reverse may be true: that given the choice between joining a small sixth form at a local school, or a larger institution further away, more pupils from Oakbank choose to travel longer distances. Given these colleges are popular and already oversubscribed, and that pupils from Oakbank choosing to travel to them are likely to be dispersed between different colleges it is unlikely that the establishment of the Free School will impact them in anyway save for the potential need to liaise with a new school to ensure a smooth transition from if children transfer from the secondary school to a sixth form college. On that basis, we judge the impact on sixth form colleges in the region to be negligible.

Impact on secondary schools

23. There are 10 state funded secondary schools within a five mile radius of the planned site of Oakbank. Given that we know that we know that part of the reason for the establishment of the school was that children in the villages to the west of Wokingham were dispersed to a significant number of schools, and in some instances had to travel a significant distance, it seems reasonable to assume that there is a possible impact on these schools within five miles.
24. We have also considered the impact on three other secondary schools: The Holt, St Crispin's and Emmbrook School, which have a shared catchment area which covers 70% of Wokingham Borough and are schools that while further away from the site of Oakbank would have likely accommodated those children who will instead attend Oakbank.
25. A table setting out each of the 13 schools we have considered, the type of school, how far it is from the proposed site and information about their Ofsted inspection and academic attainment is set out in Figure 1.

Likely Moderate Impact

26. In considering the impact on secondary schools, we judge that the impact is likely to be greatest on **The Emmbrook School and The Bulmershe School**. The impact on these schools is likely to be moderately detrimental.
27. In the case of the Emmbrook School our judgement based on five factors:
 - a. Emmbrook School is a satisfactory school which is not popular with parents locally. Of the 210 places available for entry in September 2012 only 192 were allocated, four of these to children of parents who were not successful in their application to any school, and so were allocated the nearest school place;

- b. anecdotal evidence suggests that of the children who have accepted places at Oakbank, more would have been allocated places at Emmbrook than anywhere else and so this is likely to increase the number of surplus places at Emmbrook in Year 7 in September 2012; and
- c. in occupying the Ryeish Green site, Oakbank is limiting the proportion of that site the local authority is able to sell for development. The local authority had planned to use the capital receipt for that land as a contribution towards the cost of relocating Emmbrook School to a more suitable site to the south of the borough. It is highly unlikely therefore that Emmbrook School will relocate, and as their current site is prone to flooding, this may well have a detrimental impact on the school;

but

- d. Emmbrook School is five miles away from the site of Oakbank so pupils living close to Emmbrook are unlikely to travel such a distance to attend the new school, and so fewer parents than otherwise might be expected will make the switch; and
- e. population growth in the area will minimise the impact of a new school in the longer term.

28. In the case of the Bulmershe School our judgement is based on similar factors:

- a. Bulmershe School is a satisfactory school which is not popular with parents locally, being both significantly under capacity and undersubscribed for entry in Year 7. Of the 240 places available for entry in September 2012 only 168 were allocated, 26 of these to children of parents who were not successful in their application to any school, and who were, therefore allocated the nearest school place; and
- b. anecdotal evidence suggests that parents who are appealing the decision to allocate their child a place at the Bulmershe School rather than any other are making enquiries about Oakbank. Should they lose their appeal, and continue to be allocated a place at Bulmershe, it is likely that some of them will choose a place at Oakbank instead (although we do not know how many). This is likely to increase the number of surplus places in Year 7 at Bulmershe School in September 2012.

but

- c. Bulmershe School is four miles away from the site of Oakbank, in addition to being the other side of the M4 motorway, so pupils living close to Bulmershe are unlikely to travel such a distance to attend the new school, and so fewer parents than otherwise might be expected will make the switch; and

- d. population growth in the area will minimise the impact of a new school in the longer term.
29. Both schools, therefore, are likely to have fewer pupils than if Oakbank was not established. The schools are likely to see this to be a detrimental impact, but both are, however, large schools (Emmbrook School has seven forms of entry and Bulmershe eight) and it is unlikely the viability of either school is likely to be threatened, although it may be that they will need to adapt their structures to reflect that they are likely to become slightly smaller schools. They will also have to refocus their efforts to improve standards in order to continue to attract pupils and parents to the schools.

Possible Moderate Impact

30. We have also judged that it is possible that the establishment of the Free School will have a moderate impact on four other schools: **The John Madejski Academy, Prospect School, and Reading Girl's School.**
31. The John Madejski Academy is the closest school to the proposed site of Oakbank. The attainment of its pupils is low and it has recently been judged to be in need of special measures despite being a sponsored Academy of 7 years standing. Potentially, therefore it will lose more pupils to the Free School than schools further away. However, while the school currently has some surplus places, it was oversubscribed for entry in 2011, so even if it does lose a few potential pupils to the Free School, it should still be able to fill its places. The extent to which it is effected by the Free School will depend on the extent to which:
- a. parents north of the M4 choose to send their child to an alternative school south of the M4 which would be likely to involve a longer journey;
 - b. parents opt for the narrower academic curriculum at Oakbank as opposed to the broader curriculum and state of the art facilities at the John Madjeski Academy;
 - c. the pupils that otherwise would have gone to the John Madjeski Academy but who actually attend Oakbank because they are attracted to the academic curriculum are skewed towards higher performing pupils; and
 - d. any remaining available places that may not be utilised by pupils from within the school's designated area are utilised by pupils who are in the designated area of other schools who historically have not been admitted to the John Madjeski Academy (only one place, other than those offered on the basis of sport's aptitude was offered to a child not living in the designated area of the John Madjeski Academy in 2011, and no places had been offered in 2010 or 2009).

32. The Prospect School is not the closest school to the proposed site of

Oakbank, but it does have a significant number of surplus places. The attainment of its pupils is well below average although this needs to be considered in the light of the existence of selective schools near by, so comparisons to genuinely comprehensive schools are not necessarily valid. While the school does currently have a large number of surplus places, so even the loss of a few pupils to the Free School may exacerbate the issues, the school was significantly oversubscribed in 2011, which suggests it should be able to fill its places in future. The furthest offer it made was to a pupil who lived 1.5 miles away, less than half the distance to Oakbank. Again, the impact on The Prospect School will depend on:

- a. the extent to which parents decide the unknown quantity of Oakbank is preferable to the educational provision offered at The Prospect School;
- b. the extent to which Oakbank is oversubscribed, and thus needs to employ its oversubscription criteria. Given the demographic pattern in the area, if the school is oversubscribed it is unlikely that offers will be made as far as the 2.3 miles in the segment in which The Prospect School falls; and
- c. what the knock on impact for that school will be of parents potentially deciding not to apply for a place at the John Madjeski Academy now that it is in an Ofsted category.

33. In both instances, as both schools were significantly oversubscribed of the schools in 2011, although there is a potential for a moderate detrimental impact on the schools, it is unlikely that there will be one. In any case, the establishment of a Free School, and competition for pupils should encourage both schools to improve their standards in order to continue to attract pupils, and so there is a potential for moderate positive impact as well.

34. There is also the potential for a moderate impact on Reading Girl's School. As Figure 1 shows the school has a significant number of surplus places, and was undersubscribed in 2011 despite being judged as good by Ofsted and its pupils having better academic attainment than either the John Madjeski Academy or The Prospect School. This may be a reflection that the school is single sex, with parents preferring to send their children to co-educational schools, but in contrast a strongly performing comprehensive girl's school – The Holt School - in Wokingham is oversubscribed and over capacity. Again this indicates the difficulty in predicting the impact of a new school on other schools in the local area, but there may be a moderate impact on Reading Girl's School if:

- a. parents decide the unknown quantity of Oakbank is preferable to the educational provision offered at Reading Girl's School; or
- b. parents prefer co-educational provision for their children and being unable to secure a place at the John Madjeski Academy or the The Prospect School their next preference is Oakbank rather than single

sex provision at Reading Girls' School.

35. As the second closest school to the Free School, Reading Girl's School may lose more pupils to the Free School than schools further away – although the location of the M4 motorway means the loss of pupils is not likely to be anywhere near as significant as might otherwise be the case. The key determining factor here as to whether there will be a moderate impact detrimental impact on Reading Girl's School appears not to be the standards at the school but whether the parents of children attending the school have actively decided to send them to a single sex school (in which case there is unlikely to be a significant impact by the establishment of Oakbank) or whether it is simply the only option left when local co-educational comprehensive schools are oversubscribed. The admissions data available suggests that both factors are at play. On that basis, it is more likely that there will be a less detrimental impact than on similarly performing co-educational schools.
36. All three of these schools, therefore, may in future have a handful fewer first choice applications than if Oakbank had not been established. The extent to which this results in fewer pupils depends on the intricate patterns of parental preference which is difficult to predict. The number of pupils involved, however, is likely to be small, and so while the impact may be detrimental, it will likewise be small. In the case of John Madjeski Academy and the Prospect School, the risk of such an impact would be significantly mitigated if standards at these schools improved.

Marginal Impact

37. It is expected that the following secondary schools in the area will feel a negligible impact when the new school opens:

- Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School
- Forest School
- The Holt School
- Kendrick School
- Maiden Erlegh
- Reading School
- St Crispin's School
- The Willink School

The negligible impact is especially likely as the secondary population is set to increase over the next few years so any loss of pupils to the Free School should also be mitigated by the increased demand in the area.

38. The least impact is likely to be felt by Maiden Erlegh School, Kendrick School, Reading School, St Crispin's School, and the Holt School. These schools all have outstanding Ofsted ratings, and have above average attainment. 2012 admissions data is available for the three schools in Wokingham and all were oversubscribed. Even if they did lose pupils to the Free School, it is likely they should still be able to fill most or all of their

places.

39. In the case of the two schools in Reading (Reading School and Kendrick School), places are offered on the basis of performance in a selection test. It is possible that some parents of children who would have passed the test and secured a place prefer would choose to accept a place at a coeducation comprehensive school instead. Given the ongoing popularity of both schools, however, that impact would be marginal and it is highly likely they would be able to fill their places, although they may need to alter their selection criteria in order to do so.
40. The impact on the Forest School is also likely to be marginal although it may be greater than that felt by the five outstanding schools. This school has a good Ofsted rating, but has seen a decline in its GCSE performance in recent years, and two places would have been left unfilled in September 2012 had it not been the closest school for two children whose parents made otherwise unsuccessful applications. It should however, be able to fill most or all of its places, despite the establishment of Oakbank.
41. The impact on Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School is more difficult to predict, but on balance is judged to be marginal. The school has below average attainment and has satisfactory Ofsted rating so parents may be attracted to an alternative. Although the school currently has no surplus capacity, it was slightly undersubscribed for entry in 2011. With the introduction of the new Free School, this school might find it harder to fill its places in future years. However, given its location, the potential reluctance of parents in Reading to travel to a school across the city and then the M4, and the fact that many parents choose a Roman Catholic school for its ethos as well as its academic performance, it is less likely that these parents will be attracted to Oakbank. Therefore we do not expect the potential loss of pupils to the new school to be large enough to have a detrimental impact on Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School.
42. The impact on the Willink School is also more difficult to predict, but on balance is also judged to be marginal. The school has a satisfactory Ofsted and slightly above average GCSE attainment, but 30% of its pupils achieve the English Baccalaureate and it is highly regarded by local parents. Indeed it was the difficulty in securing places at the Willink School, historically a school where many children living in the villages to the West of Wokingham had attended, which was the catalyst for the application to set up Oakbank in the first place. The school is over capacity and offered more places than its PAN in 2012. With the introduction of the new Free School, this school might find it harder to fill its places in future years, but the extent to which this occurs will depend on its performance relative to schools further afield in north Hampshire and West Berkshire.

Conclusion

43. Of the 13 schools we have considered, it is impossible to know for sure which schools are most likely to be affected if at all. Our judgement is that it is likely that the Emmbrook School and the Bulmershe School will feel a

moderate impact, and we consider that impact to be detrimental should their pupil numbers decrease as a result of the establishment of the Free School. The impact may be more detrimental in the short term, as parents hold two school places and the time for the two schools to plan for their potentially smaller intakes will be less than would normally be the case. The impact will decrease over time, however, as demographic pressures increase the demand for secondary school places. In any case, we believe this possible detrimental impact is out-weighed by the positive impact that the school will have on parental choice and in driving up standards in nearby institutions.

44. Based on the analysis undertaken and the evidence considered, officials believe that the school is likely to have a moderate detrimental impact on pupil numbers in two schools, a possible moderate impact on a further three schools, and a marginal potential impact on a further eight schools. This is significantly out-weighed by the positive impact that the school will have on parental choice and in driving up standards in nearby institutions. We do not believe that there is any impact that should prevent the Secretary of State from entering into the Funding Agreement, in light of the positive benefits arising from the opening of the Free School.

Figure 1

School	Type	Distance from Oakbank (miles)	Pupil Intake	Ofsted	Pupils on roll v Capacity	% achieving equivalent 5+ A*-Cs including English and maths GCSEs			% achieving English Bacc
						2011	2010	2009	
Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School	VA	3.3	Comprehensive Co-educational	Satisfactory	803 / 779	43	34	34	5
The Bulmershe School	C	4.1	Comprehensive Co-educational	Satisfactory	1078 / 1383	53	49	45	12
The Emmbrook School	C	5.0	Comprehensive Co-educational	Satisfactory	1220 / 1219	59	54	59	21
Forest School	C	4.2	Comprehensive Boys	Good	1134 / 1166	61	62	73	15
The Holt School	CAC	5.4	Comprehensive Girls	Outstanding	1238 / 1209	78	78	81	49
John Madejski Academy	SAC	1.5	Comprehensive Co-educational	Special Measures	966 / 1100	31	28	18	1
Kendrick School	CAC	3.4	Selective Girls	Outstanding	709 / 742	100	100	99	87
Maiden Erlegh	CAC	2.9	Comprehensive Co-educational	Outstanding	1795 / 1788	74	75	74	33
Prospect School	CAC	3.8	Comprehensive Co-educational	Good	1164 / 1606	40	43	36	5
Reading Girl's School	F	2.3	Comprehensive Girls	Good	653 / 947	54	45	37	12
Reading School	CAC	3.1	Selective Boys	Outstanding	890 / 820	100	100	100	73
St Crispin's School	C	6.2	Comprehensive Co-educational	Outstanding	1080 / 1091	68	59	71	32

The Willink School	C	4.6	Comprehensive Co-educational	Satisfactory	1012 / 995	61	62	66	30
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These figures are in comparison to 58.9% of pupils in all schools in England achieving 5A*-C at GCSE including English and maths, and 67.6% of pupils in state funded schools in Wokingham achieving the same measure. 17.6% pupils in England achieve the English Baccalaureate compared to 26.8% pupils in state-funded schools in Wokingham.