

HSH group response to the LA consultation about expansion and age-range change of Whitefriars

To: Johanna Morgan, Lead Officer, School Organisation, Harrow Council

From: Harrow High School Headteachers group

Subject: Consultation about the proposed expansion and age-range change of Whitefriars Community School

The High School Headteachers recognise:

- The medium term need for additional secondary phase places within the Borough
- The appropriateness of the Teachers Centre as a location for additional secondary phase places in a borough where it is difficult to find appropriate sites
- The Government requirement that places established with funding from the Targeted Basic Need Programme begin to be available by September 2015.

Within that context, the group would wish to make the following observations regarding the proposed age-range change for Whitefriars so that it becomes a 4-18 school.

1. The consultation documentation places far more emphasis upon, and is far more tailored towards, the 1FE expansion of the primary phase rather than the creation of the high school provision. Given that the former creates 210 places, and the latter over 800, this seems an unfortunate neglect of the high school phase.
2. The consultation document provides no information about the proposed curriculum of the high school phase, or how the school would manage the incremental growth through the secondary phase. These are significant issues. The high schools would want to work with Whitefriars on the development of the curriculum and staffing to ensure that students have access to appropriate specialist teachers during the growth of the school when staffing may be a challenge (it is noted that the consultation document is silent about any equivalent to the 'diseconomies of scale' funding that a free school would receive).
3. The consultation document talks about a 5FE intake, but also states that "the intake to the secondary provision would be phased and increase over time with the first Year 7 intake occurring in September 2015." The Council is aware of the sensitivity of the implications for existing high schools of additional provision in 2015 when the Council's projections do not show a need for 150 additional places, so the phased approach is welcomed. Given that the high school phase would be a part of Whitefriars Community School, it is suggested that the initial Year 7 cohort may simply comprise those children moving up from Y6 at Whitefriars with little or no additional PAN. The external PAN would then grow towards its full 90 (and then shrink to 60 as the 3FE Whitefriars cohorts move through). We would welcome clarification on this point.
4. The group assume that admission oversubscription for the 'external PAN' would use the same criteria as used for Whitmore as a community high school. The group assumes that the Council will set the admissions policy for 2015/16 prior to the proposed conversion of Whitefriars to academy status, but the group would welcome confirmation from Whitefriars as to their intentions regarding over-subscription criteria. The schools strongly believe that it is in parents' interests for over-subscription criteria for secular, co-educational provision within the borough to remain as consistent as possible.
5. The group is concerned that a sixth form capacity of 75 is unsustainable, even with inclusion into the Sixth Form Collegiate.