

# St Philip Westbrook

C of E Aided Primary School

St Philip's Centre  
District Centre  
Westbrook  
Warrington  
WA5 8UE

Tel: 01925 445391

Mrs J Wightman  
Headteacher

Dear Parents,

We write to you today regarding the Great Sankey High School Admissions Consultation which can be found at <http://www.greatsankey.org/consultation/> as we know this is causing much concern. However, GSHS have assured us that this is a genuine consultation, not a 'done deal', and therefore it is important that you respond to the consultation document and contact your local MP in order to protect our pupil's rights and our school. We recommend that you request a read receipt to your email or use a 'signed for' delivery if by post.

In the interests of transparency with our parents we want to make you aware of our discussions so far, so you can understand the background:

- There has been a growing concern amongst Church schools in Warrington about Multi Academy Trusts (MAT). For this reason a meeting had been called with the Liverpool Diocese to highlight our concerns and hear their response.
- The Liverpool Diocesan policy does not currently allow us as a school to join a MAT, other than a Diocesan MAT. You can find this policy on our website.
- Last week we both met with Mrs Hilary Smith, Children and Young People's Services Director to discuss our concerns.
- Early this week a meeting was held with Mr Jon Wright, Executive Head GSHS and Mr Andrew Bent Chair of Governors (COG) GSHS to discuss the imminent Consultation, although we did not know its content at that time.
- We received first sight of the Consultation papers on Wednesday afternoon (14/12/16) only two days before school closes for Christmas break.

Our position is currently that even if the Governing Body (GB) wished to join the Multi Academy Trust (MAT) we cannot as Diocesan Policy will not allow it. We do not accept that even with formation of the MAT to include six primaries that this should mean a change to GSHS Admissions Criteria.

Over the last two days we have:

- Spoken with the majority of the Governing Body (GB) at St Philip's who strongly oppose the proposed changes to the Admissions Criteria by GSHS.
- Contacted Father Richard Peers (Director of Education at Liverpool Diocese).
- Called an Extraordinary Meeting of our Full Governing Body in January 2017 after which we will formulate our response to the consultation. We will be inviting the LA, Diocese and GSHS representatives.
- Our response will be further informed by additional meetings with the Local Authority (LA) and the Diocese before the close of the Consultation date - 31/1/17.

- We have contacted the LA to ask for further details from Admissions regarding the cohorts of the proposed six MAT primary schools.

We are very concerned to learn that prospective parents at the proposed MAT primaries are under the impression that applying for their children to attend those schools will ensure them a place at GSHS, as this is at Consultation stage and is yet to be agreed or otherwise. We have been made aware of prospective parents altering their applications away from St Philip's based upon something that is not yet confirmed. We do not think this is acceptable.

Having met with the LA and the Diocese we have been given confirmation that they will strongly disagree with the proposals. If the proposals were to go ahead unchanged then the Governors, the Diocese, and the LA would legally challenge the change in the Admissions Criteria as it is felt that they breach the Admissions Code.

On the attached page we highlight our concerns and the reasons why we will be objecting to the proposals made by GSHS.

We remain totally committed and focused on the well-being, education and future of our pupils despite now being in this untenable position.

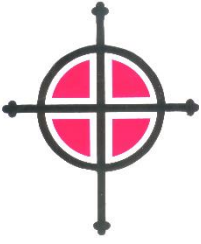
As parents, please consider this letter, the attachment, and the Consultation Papers and submit your concerns and objections to Great Sankey High School accordingly.

Using the Christian values of our school, we will uphold them in this difficult situation that affects our pupils, our parents, our community, our school, our staff and our Governing Body, many of whom are also personally affected by the proposals.

We need to seek **fairness**, we need to show **perseverance** and particularly at this time of year we need to have **hope** that our objections count.

Wishing you a peaceful and blessed Christmas.

Mrs Kate Strickland-Wright (COG) and Mrs Jacqui Wightman (Headteacher)



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## Concerns and Reasons for Objection to the Great Sankey High School Proposed Admissions Criteria

The following points are made in reference to the pages of the Consultation Document

### Page 1

- GSHS state that “We are very genuine in our commitment to our wider local community and wish to focus on improving the current arrangements where possible.”

How is GSHS improving the arrangements for families of St Philip's who live closer to GSHS than some pupils in the schools that are to be given preference?

Why can't St Philip's be named as a feeder school given that we provide the second biggest number of pupils feeding into the school?

Other secondary schools such as Beamont Collegiate Academy and Lymm High School name all their local community and Church of England primary schools as partner schools. In the case of Beamont, this includes Aided schools who, under current Diocesan guidance, will not be able to join their MAT even if they wish to in the future.

### Page 2

- GSHS state that “The Trust can change the criteria, provided the new criteria meet the requirements of the Admissions Code.”

How are the proposed changes to the Admissions Criteria meeting the requirements of the Admissions Code given that naming feeder schools must be 'reasonable'?

It is not reasonable to put pupils from St Philip's at a disadvantage when we provide GSHS with the second largest group of pupils each year, and many of whom live locally to GSHS.

Proposed Omega MAT Schools						
Primary School	PAN in Y6	NOR in Y6 as at Jan 2016	No. of Y6 allocated GSHS	No. of Y6 listed GSHS as pref but not allocated a place	No. of Y6 expressed pref for other school (not GSHS)	% "eligible" and therefore successful in entry
Barrow Hall	75	75	71	1	3	95%
Burtonwood	30	30	27	0	3	90%
Callands	60	58	26	16	16	45%
Chapelford Village	60	59	40	7	12	68%
Park Road	30	30	27	1	2	90%
Westbrook Old Hall	60	60	24	4	32	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>88% of Y6 children attending one of the proposed partners whose preference was to attend GSHS from Sept 2016 were allocated a place there.</b>						

**31% of GSHS intake in September 2016 did not attend one of the proposed MAT primary school.**

Other Local Schools						
Primary School	PAN in Y6	NOR in Y6 as at Jan 2016	No. of Y6 allocated GSHS	No. of Y6 listed GSHS as pref but not allocated a place	No. of Y6 expressed pref for other school (not GSHS)	
Great Sankey	45	48	11	1	36	23%
St Philip CE	60	59	54	3	2	92%
Penketh	30	30	9	2	19	30%
Sankey Valley St James' CE	30	26	9	5	12	35%
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>69</b>	
<b>88% of Y6 children attending one of the four local schools which are not included in the proposed MAT whose preference was to attend GSHS from Sept 2016 were allocated a place there.</b>						

These figures do not take account of any further expansion in capacity of the MAT primaries and the increase in the pupil numbers based on the existing expansion program from two form to three form, of our own school, and others.

- GSHS state that due to “rapid growth in our town ... Warrington Borough Council... has responded extremely well in managing the demand for school places.”

How will the changes to Admissions improve this situation given that there will be ninety pupils at Barrow Hall, Chapelford and St Philip’s?

Page 3

- GSHS state that “The current admissions process is fair and transparent, operated by the WBC, however, for some this has not served all parents as well as it might have.”

There will be significantly more complaints and appeals once GSHS’s second major provider of pupils will be disadvantaged and are no longer given the same opportunity to gain a place, even though they live very close to the school.

- GSHS state that “It is hoped that this Proposal will lead to an improved system that better supports local people in gaining access to their high school.”

This is ridiculous. Many of our pupils live within short walking distance of GSHS and under the proposals pupils from as far afield as Orford and St Helen’s will have higher priority in gaining a place over our local pupils.

#### Page 4

- GSHS state that “It will serve its local community through institutional continuity beyond individual personalities to ensure schools can retain their individual character and ethos to support parents and their children.”

If that is so, then why can't St Philip's be named as a feeder primary as although we are working outside of the MAT, we still work in collaboration with West Warrington primary schools.

In the interest of all West Warrington pupils how will the above be achieved?

How will continuity be achieved when siblings gain a place at GSHS from non-MAT primaries via sibling criteria?

#### Page 5

- GSHS quote the Admissions Code from point “1.15 stating ‘Admissions authorities may wish to name a primary or middle school as a feeder school. The selection of a feeder school or schools as an oversubscription criterion **must** be transparent and made on reasonable grounds.’”

We do not believe that the proposals are reasonable and they in fact demonstrate a breach in the Admissions Code, which is unlawful.

#### Page 7/8

- GSHS state that “Historically, the majority of St Philip's C of E Primary School Y6 students have transferred to the school, alongside approx. a dozen pupils from Great Sankey Community Primary School. Our links with these schools are very important to us.....there is capacity to accommodate the traditional numbers from these schools, who remain outside of the MAT.”
- However GSHS then state that “parents expressing a preference for GSHS from these schools (non MAT including St Philip's) may be disadvantaged by this proposal.”

We support the increase in pupil numbers at GSHS but are concerned that the figures quoted are based on a ‘perhaps’ (page 8) in terms of accommodating St Philip's pupils and do not take account of the inevitable change in preference for high school from the MAT schools based on the new criteria.

We have welcomed links with GSHS and for some time had a presence on our own Governing Body through a GSHS Deputy Headteacher.

#### Page 8

- GSHS state that “The most likely reality is that not all existing students in the six schools will transfer....”

What evidence is there to support this unsubstantiated opinion in a formal consultation document?

Why change Admissions Criteria based on figures which demonstrate that not all parents from the six MAT primary schools want their child to transfer, when the vast majority of St Philip's parents do?

- GSHS states that “We do not wish to disadvantage local pupils based on which primary school they attend.”

The impact of these proposals will prove detrimental to St Philip's and we refute the above statement. Prospective parents have already told us that although they wish to send their child to our Reception classes in 2017, they are under the impression that by applying for one of the six MAT primaries they will have a greater chance of gaining a place at GSHS. Even though the proposals are only consultation, it has already negatively impacted upon our future going forward as a three form entry school. Recent LA

investment in our school building expansion using public money has cost around two million pounds and its benefit will be diminished by the GSHS proposal.

- GSHS state that “We are committed, therefore, to listening to all views and where the Proposal may be improved further, to do so through amendment.”

We suggest, and would be delighted, for St Philip’s to be named as a feeder school on an equal basis with the other named primary school, like other high schools have done. This would make the proposal equitable and “better supports local people in gaining access to their high school.” (Page 3)