

Dear Councillor,

I am contacting you today as Chair of Governors at St Philip Westbrook to ask for your support for our school and the families of our school regarding the Great Sankey High School (GSHS) Consultation on Change of Admissions Criteria.

There has been some sentiment that a solution is imminent or that this school - both the Head Teacher and I, could be engaging more to find a solution and that causes us much concern as both suggestions are incorrect. As a Church of England school we are unable to join the OMAT that is being formed and no amount of dialogue can change the Diocesan Policy. We have held discussions with the Diocese and GSHS, and the Diocese too are in dialogue with GSHS. The fact remains that **we cannot join the OMAT and that the proposed changes in Admissions Criteria disadvantages our pupils**. Other MATs are being formed, such as the Challenger Trust and they are not making changing in Admissions criteria.

When the Consultation was released, just a day before close of business for Christmas, we had been given sight of the document just one day prior. This has caused much worry and anxiety for our parents and for us as a school over what should have been a peaceful family time. This was then exacerbated by the GSHS server not functioning and the Consultation document and the ability to email GSHS, not being accessible for over a week during that time.

We welcome links with GSHS, in fact it is only a few years ago that GSHS had a presence on our own Governing Body helping to shape the strategy and direction of our school, this link was not ended by ourselves. We also very much value our links with the other primary schools in the local area. We support the increase in PAN being suggested by GSHS and the formation of the OMAT is not our direct concern. What we fundamentally object to is the change in Admission criteria. The change does not meet the Admissions Code which states that any change "**must** be transparent and made on reasonable grounds". This is not the case when:

- St Philip's historically provides the second largest cohort to GSHS and this section of the local community, families in your wards, are being disadvantaged by the proposals in gaining access to their local outstanding high school. This is despite the Consultation document stating "We do not wish to disadvantage local pupils based on which primary school they attend".

- Children from St Philip's who live within walking distance of GSHS will be disadvantaged whereas children from as far away as Orford and St Helens will be given prioritised places. This is unreasonable.

- The pupils of St Philip's, should the change in Admission Criteria be formalised, may have to attend another high school double the distance away. This does not allow for a safe and reasonable walking distance for our pupils and will incur transport costs and in turn safeguarding issues. All this when we are encouraging our parents and pupils to walk and cycle!

- The recent ruling that Rivers Academy admission arrangements need to be amended because they disadvantage two local schools is exactly the same as GSHS. GSHS's own consultation document accepts that "parents expressing a preference for GSHS from these schools (not MAT including St Philip's) may be disadvantaged by this proposal". This is not reasonable.
- The Consultation document states that "hopefully" there will be places left for St Philip's pupils. This is unreasonable and unsubstantiated. It could well be the case that many more from the named primary schools will be apply in the full knowledge that a place will be available whereas in the past they may not have wanted to waste a preference knowing that they do not live as locally as other children.
- The feeder school system was dropped a few years ago to make access to high schools fairer. The proposals are a return to this, however now disadvantaging local children. The proposal does not represent "an improved system that better supports local people in gaining access to their high school" as the consultation document suggests.
- The GSHS consultation states that the proposal "promotes continuity of education". This is not correct. Firstly there is no evidence to support this and then secondly how can this then be achieved when on average, over the last 3 years, 40 children have gained places at GSHS from schools outside of the OMAT based on sibling criteria. Will these pupils not be assured a continuity of education if they are from outside the proposed MAT?

Please support the school and our children and their families in objecting to the proposed changes in Admission Criteria before the closing date of 31/1/17. We cannot 'sit back' and wait for a solution to be found, which is in fact beyond the remit and possibilities of the school and Governing Body. We must object to these unreasonable proposals that disadvantage many families within your wards. **Please support us with your objections.**

Should you wish to meet with me to discuss this further then I would be happy to do so and I remain hopeful of your support for our local families.

**Kate Strickland-Wright**  
Chair of Governors, St Philip Westbrook