



**St Philip Westbrook**  
**C of E Aided Primary School**

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

**Mrs J Wightman**  
**Headteacher**

**Tel: 01925 445391**

Dear Mr Wright,

This document represents the formal response of St Philip Westbrook Church of England Aided Primary School's Governing Body to Great Sankey High School's (GSHS) Multi-Academy Trust and Admissions Consultation.

**Proposed Conversion from Single Academy trust to Multi-Academy Trust**

- The Governing Body has no objections to this proposal.

**Proposed changes to Admissions Arrangements**

- It is proposed to increase the Published Admission Number from 315 to 375 from September 2018. The Governing Body agrees to this proposal.
- It is proposed to amend the preference given to students from named primary schools. The Governing Body objects to this for the following reasons:
  1. In line with Liverpool Diocesan policy St Philip's is not able to join OMAT. We believe that your proposed policy discriminates against pupils attending Church of England schools and is therefore, unreasonable. The admissions policy as proposed would be discriminatory and contravenes the Admissions Code which must be inclusive. Your proposals put local pupils at a disadvantage as the clear intention of the Admissions Code is to ensure that admissions policies are inclusive, fair and reasonable.
  2. The 'Office of the Schools Adjudicator Annual Report' which was released 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017 states that "*In a number of cases, the adjudicator upheld an objection to the inclusion of feeder schools on the grounds that the arrangements were not fair to children who had not attended the feeder schools. The choice of feeder schools was found to be unfair in some cases when these schools were at some distance from the secondary school concerned; giving priority to children who had attended these schools meant that children who lived and attended other primary schools closer to the secondary school would be unable to gain a place there and would face an unreasonably longer or more difficult journey to an alternative school.*" This will be the case for many pupils at St Philip's. If you implement the proposal to change your oversubscription criteria we will object to the School Adjudicator and we are confident that they will find in our favour.



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3. The vast majority of St Philip's pupils, if your proposal goes ahead, will be further disadvantaged as they will not be named as a feeder to any high 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 both of these high schools, 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. Why do GSHS feel that they need a different approach and not embrace the family of schools? GSHS's consultation document states 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?
4. GSHS's consultation document states that "*the current admission process is fair and transparent, operated by WBC, however, for some this has not served all parents as well as it may have*".

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

99% of places for Year 7 pupils at GSHS have consistently been allocated to those pupils that have listed the school as their first preference. This clearly implies that current arrangements are actually serving parents well.

5. In September 2016 over a third of pupils admitted to GSHS did not attend a proposed MAT primary school. Pupils from these schools will be disadvantaged which does not fit into the rationale 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*". Two of the proposed primary schools, which are further away than St Philip's, will benefit when distance is no longer a criteria but this will be at the expense of at least four other local primary schools who have clearly been served well by the current arrangements. When asked to clarify how the proposal will lead to an "improved system that better supports local people in gaining access to their high school" the answer at the public meeting by GSHS was "well, six schools will be happy!" It is our understanding that previously eight schools were 'happy'. Clearly, your rationale for this point will not be realised.
6. On page four of the consultation document it states "*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. Innovative and successful practice will be achieved through working collaboratively for the best interests of our children. Omega offers this ability to manage change with like-minded people on our terms at our pace.*"



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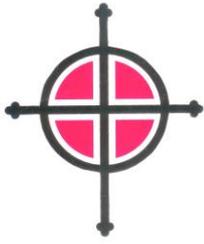
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When asked to clarify this confusing statement at your recent Question and Answer session, GSHS admitted that there is no current evidence whatsoever to support the above rationale. This essentially means that the stress, worry and disruption to our families is based on a 'hope' that has no evidence. The sibling criteria would mean that some pupils would be at a distinct disadvantage, and at risk of isolation in their transition, if they are from a primary school outside OMAT. How would their needs be met? This was not answered by GSHS when asked at the public meeting. Increased collaboration across all schools, and improved transition arrangements, within the local area would readily support this vision without the proposed change in admissions criteria being necessary whatsoever.

7. All schools have a responsibility to consider the environment, the carbon footprint of the local community and the health and safety of pupils. Your current proposals would mean that for many of our pupils their safe walking distance would more than double, and therefore they would no longer be able to walk to their local high school. This would congest major highways and local roads even further especially as children from some OMAT feeder schools would be making the opposite journey by road also. The Schools Adjudicator has upheld objections where "pupils would face an unreasonably longer or more difficult journey to an alternative school."
8. GSHS's consultation document states 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's consultation document then states that "*parents expressing a preference for GSHS from these schools may be disadvantaged by this proposal.*" We do not object to the increase in pupil numbers at GSHS but are concerned that the figures quoted are based on a "*perhaps*" in terms of accommodating St Philip's pupils and do not take account of the inevitable change in preference for high school from the OMAT schools based on the new criteria. GSHS's consultation document states that "*The most likely reality is that not all existing students in the six schools will transfer...*"

What evidence is there to support this? 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?

9. GSHS's consultation document states that "*We do not wish to disadvantage local pupils based on which primary school they attend.*" Your proposal to name an additional 5 feeder schools will clearly disadvantage local pupils based on the primary school they attend. The impact of these proposals will prove detrimental to St Philip's and we refute the above statement.



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10. 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 OMAT primaries they will have a greater chance of gaining a place at GSHS. Even though the proposals are only in 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. We have already received a request to transfer a pupil from our school to a proposed OMAT school even though the family is not relocating home. St Philip's is a wider community than just the school, so your proposals potentially impact upon many members of the local community such as the church, local residents, the preschool, the library, several link clubs, uniformed organisations, community groups and local businesses.

11. In the Department for Education Governance Handbook, which there is a link to on GSHS website it is stated that "*As strategic leaders of their organisations it is vital that boards are connected with, and answerable to, the community they serve, particularly parents/carers.*" St Philip's parents are local community members and need to be considered.

In summary we do not object to GSHS becoming a Multi-Academy Trust and increasing its published admissions number. However, we strongly object to the proposal to amend the preference given to students from named primary schools. We hope the contents of this formal response are given thorough consideration with genuine understanding of the drastic implications to our school and other primary schools, with recognition of your responsibility to the local community.

Yours sincerely

The Governing Body of St Philip Westbrook CEAPS