

Terry Broady
Hammersmith & Fulham Council,
Room 39, Hammersmith Town Hall,
King Street, London W6 9JU

6 October 2013

Dear Mr Broady,

We, the staff of Hurlingham & Chelsea School, write to formally object to Hammersmith & Fulham Council's proposed amalgamation of New King's and Sullivan schools on the New King's Road site.

Whilst we have sympathy regarding (and share) other concerns raised in more detail by other individuals and organisations — such as the impact the proposals would have in terms of increased footfall and traffic in the local community as raised by the Peterborough Road and Area Residents' Association — as educational professionals our objection contends simply that rather than improving the standards, quality, range and diversity of educational provision in the area, the proposals will actually undermine standards and narrow the range and diversity of provision, particularly at the secondary stage. We outline below our elaborations:

1 EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS.

1.1 An amalgamation of New King's and Sullivan primary schools into one school — nominally 'Parson's Green Academy' — would not just not guarantee an educational advantage for primary students (in either Sullivan or New King's schools), but would actually put at very real risk the quality of education (and the gains made in recent years) that are already patently evident.

1.1.1 We would therefore contend that retaining, not closing, Sullivan and New King's as separate schools will support the continued provision of high educational standards and enhance educational opportunities for primary aged children.

1.2 The proposals have not been justified specifically or explicitly in terms of their impact on standards, as they should have been — instead they attempt to justify the removal of surplus places at the expense of rather than in support of the core agenda of raising standards.

- 1.2.1 At the public meeting held at Sullivan Primary school on Tuesday 10th September 2013, the Tri-borough Director of Schools Commissioning, Children's Services cited 'spare places' as 'the main reason' behind these proposals. The inaccuracy of this argument brings into question the adequacy of the proposal in its entirety as in terms of school place planning as there is actually a widely accepted and demonstrable demographic *need* for primary places in the London boroughs, including Hammersmith & Fulham, which we elaborate in the subsequent paragraphs.
- 1.2.2 The London Assembly's own projections indicate that rather than having surplus places in the London boroughs, there will soon be a significant shortage of places, and this will be felt particularly at primary: 'in 2011/12 London had just under 1.1 million children in its education system. This figure is set to grow year on year to approximately 1.25 million by 2016/17. Pupil numbers are growing at a faster rate in London than anywhere else in the country *and the pressure is strongest within primary schools* [my emphasis]. Based on current projections London boroughs are facing a shortage of 118,000 primary and secondary schools places up to 2016/17¹.
- 1.2.2.1 London's Local Authorities have been urged to be 'mindful' of the 'rising number of academies and free schools in London', not from an ideological viewpoint, but from the practical need for careful pupil place planning in the face of such marked demographic change: 'This affects where authorities can expand capacity, as academies are under no obligation to expand as they are outside local authority control. In the case of free schools, the challenge will be to ensure that *their locations* best support areas where there is particular pressure on places.'²
- 1.2.3 The Department for Education's own detailed analyses states that in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham there were 9163 actual primary pupils in 2011/12, and projects that this will rise to 10 918 in 2016/17³.

¹ London Assembly Press Release, 18 September 2013¹, 'London's school place shortage', <https://www.london.gov.uk/media/assembly-press-releases/2013/09/london-s-school-place-shortage>.

² London Councils. (2013). *Do the Maths: Tackling the shortage of school places in London*, London: London Councils, from <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/children/schools/dothemaths2.htm>.

³ DfE. (2013). *Statistical First Release: School Capacity 2012*, table 4. London: DfE, from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-capacity-academic-year-2011-to-2012>.

- 1.2.3.1 The proposal makes little sense when framed by these conditions as it is clear that an amalgamation between Sullivan and New King's Schools would serve to actually reduce the amount of primary places available from those available now, and hence remove the capacity that is built in to the current system (i.e. so-called 'surplus' places) to cope with the coming increase in numbers.
- 1.2.4 The same Department for Education analyses states that in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham there were 6735 secondary pupils in 2011/12 secondary rising to 9795 in 2016/17⁴, with the capacity already existing in the system to cope with up to 9099 pupils⁵.
- 1.2.4.1 So there is a projected shortfall of around 700 places in the secondary system for the Hammersmith & Fulham in 2016 — which is why we are not in principle initially unsympathetic to the establishment of another secondary school in the borough. Its location, however, on the Sullivan site is simply illogical, both in terms of place and time, as it would a) be at the expense of what will come to be priceless primary places, and b) serve a community that is already being served by Hurlingham & Chelsea.
- 1.3 As the school to be effectively closed should this proposal go ahead, the probable impacts of closing Sullivan School and the destabilisation that will inevitably occur in children's education and achievement must be considered.
- 1.3.1 The school was judged to be a good school (with outstanding features) by OfSTED in May 2010. Its capacity for sustained improvement was also judged good and an interim assessment from OfSTED in January 2013 confirmed that 'that the school's performance has been sustained'.
- 1.3.2 Indeed, since 2010 the proportion of students reaching the national expectations of level 4 or above in English and mathematics by the end of KS2 increased markedly to 83% in 2012, whilst the proportions of students reaching the national expectations of level 4 or above in reading and mathematics by the end of KS2 in 2013 were 90% and 86% respectively. Similarly, end of KS1 results in 2013 were very high and represented the best in the school's history.

⁴ Ibid., table 5.

⁵ Ibid, table 2.

1.4 We object to the proposal on these grounds not just because there is no guarantee that the proposed 'Parson's Green Academy', and its sponsor Thomas' Day Schools, will provide a better educational experience for its children than that the children of Sullivan (or New King's) are already receiving and experiencing, but also because the proposed amalgamation will indubitably put these standards at risk. In addition, by not focusing on standards, these proposals will inadvertently and actually risk seriously intensifying the very real problem of providing adequate pupil places in the near future, both at primary and secondary stages. The proposal will, in short and at best, be a proverbial 'punt'. And this simply does not provide sufficiently sound educational grounds from which we could support the proposal.

2 DIVERSITY OF PROVISION.

2.1 Locating the Fulham Boys' Church of England free school on the Sullivan site, in such close geographic proximity to Hurlingham & Chelsea Secondary School, has the undeniable potential to have a profoundly damaging impact on admissions at Hurlingham & Chelsea, both in terms of numbers and/or in terms of the profile of students admitted, and on local community cohesion.

2.1.1 We would argue that any impact on admissions at Hurlingham & Chelsea as a result of the establishment of Fulham Boys' free school would not be a simple outcome of school competition; would not be a true reflection of parental choice in action; would not merely represent the 'market' functioning as a 'market' should.

2.1.2 We would also argue strongly that in the light of 'the shortage of school places in London [that] does not appear to be short-lived and will continue to be an issue that will grow and intensify'⁶, the location of the Fulham Boys' free school *in such close proximity to Hurlingham & Chelsea* does not support effective school place planning for this area of the capital. It would, in short, be counter-productive considering the DfE projected demographic need for around 700 more places in the borough 2016.

2.1.3 In short, whilst we appreciate the longer term need for another secondary age school in the borough⁷, the location of the Sullivan School site for such a school is strategically, simply, wrong.

⁶ London Councils. (2013). *Do the Maths: Tackling the shortage of school places in London*, London: London Councils, p9, from <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/children/schools/dothemaths2.htm>.

⁷ See paragraph 1.2.4.

- 2.2 We are concerned that there has been an obvious lack of consideration given to the ‘indirect’ impact of these proposals on Hurlingham & Chelsea, and thus worry that such a possible impact may not be an unwelcome bi-product of these proposals in the eyes of some in the administration.
- 2.2.1 We believe that there should have been a formal consultation about the proposed location for the free school, not to mention its establishment, and the fact that there has been none raises some fundamental questions.
- 2.2.2 There is no doubt that locating the free school on the Sullivan site would threaten the provision of co-educational, non-denominational, non-selective and hence inclusive community education for secondary aged children in this area of London. And this plainly repudiates the suggestion that the proposal is being put forward in the name of school choice.
- 2.3 The proposal erroneously asserts the presumption that there is a demand for denominational, single-sex, secondary schooling (with restricted admissions) that outweighs the demand for non-denominational, co-educational, non-selective community primary education. And this, by implication, appears to rubbish the existence of the last remaining provision of non-denominational, co-educational, non-selective community secondary education in the area.
- 2.4 Should this proposal go ahead, the voices of parents — both existing and in the future — who have made or would make a definite choice of non-denominational, co-educational, non-selective community secondary education for their children, will have been either ignored, overlooked or discounted. The ‘possible’ actions of parents that ‘may’ wish to express a preference for the free school when it comes down to it, are being openly preferred over the ‘actual’ actions of parents that have already and explicitly made the choice to send their children to a non-denominational, co-educational, non-selective community primary school.
- 2.5 At the public meeting held at Sullivan Primary school on Tuesday 10th September 2013, it was stated that there had been ‘500 parents’ that had expressed a wish for the establishment of a Church of England Free school in Fulham. Whilst this statement exposed the paucity of reasoned and evidenced argument in favour of the proposed amalgamation, it more importantly emphasized that the only strategic impact of the proposal is clearly to create a site for the Fulham Boys’ free school.

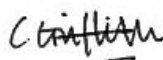
- 2.5.1 It is clear that if there was no free school, or if the free school already had a site, the amalgamation of Sullivan and New King's primary schools would likely not have been proposed. We are concerned that the proposal is more an opportunistic response to rather than genuine response from local educational strategizing. And this brings into very real question a) the efficacy of argumentation in favour of the amalgamation, and b) the restricted focus of the consultation.
- 2.5.2 As such, and to reiterate the fundamental point outlined in paragraph 2.2 and sub-paragraphs 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, there should be a formal consultation about the proposed location for the free school.
- 2.5.3 There is no doubt that locating the free school on the Sullivan site would threaten the provision of co-educational, non-denominational, non-selective and hence inclusive community education for secondary aged children in this area of London.
- 2.5.4 We also note that at the time of writing, over 2000 people have signed an online petition in support of Sullivan school remaining open, and would ask two obvious questions: if '500 parents' have expressed a wish for the establishment of a Church of England free school in Fulham, how many parents have *not* expressed such a wish, and how many (and which) parents were not asked for their opinion?
- 2.5.5 There was no indication that these '500 parents' had expressed the wish for the Free School *knowing* that it would mean — by implication — the closure of a successful primary school, nor, crucially, that the free school be located on the site now occupied by Sullivan primary school.
- 2.5.6 As a parent considering options for your child's secondary education, expressing a wish for a Church of England Free School to be established is clearly not the same as making a firm decision to choose to send your child to such a school over other alternatives.
- 2.5.6.1 Who are these '500 parents'? Are they parents of boys who would express the school as their first choice from their six? Are they parents of boys who would not express a preference for a non-denominational co-educational community school? And what about parents who would not wish for their boy to go to a Church of England free school?

- 2.5.7 This 'expression of a wish' from '500 parents' for a Church of England free school is an illegitimate and ambiguous argument to underpin these proposals because there is no indication of whether the parents in question would also express a preference for a different school. In short, these parents may have merely been 'keeping their options open' for when the time comes to make the exceptionally difficult choice of where they would like their child to go to secondary school.
- 2.5.8 There was no indication that these '500 parents' had expressed the wish for the Free School *knowing* that by very fact of its location the long-term provision of co-educational, non-denominational, non-selective community education would be put at risk.
- 2.6 Again at the public meeting held at Sullivan Primary school on Tuesday 10th September 2013, the Headteacher of New King's Primary School explicitly suggested to the audience that they may wish to suggest that the 'Parson' Green Academy' become a feeder school for the Fulham Boys' free school.
- 2.6.1 Not only was this was a direct and very public illustration of the lack of consideration or concern the proposals and its principal agents have given to the impact on Hurlingham and Chelsea School's admissions, it also betrayed a cavalier approach towards the school admissions code issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (DfE, 1 February 2012).
- 2.6.2 Whilst this may very well have been an error on the Headteacher of New King's Primary School's part, it is illustrative of the fact that there has been little (or at best perfunctory) consideration given to the impact of the location of the Fulham Boys' free school on Hurlingham & Chelsea school.
- 2.7 The probable impacts of locating the Fulham Boys' free school will in all probability be felt most profoundly at Hurlingham & Chelsea secondary school. As such these impacts must be understood before a decision is made to proceed with the proposals or not:

- 2.7.1 Hurlingham & Chelsea School has been on a remarkable journey, from 'Special Measures' in March 2004, through a statutory notice to close in September 2006, to being deemed to 'provide its students with an outstanding quality of education' in July 2011, when OfSTED stated that 'students entering the school embark on a journey which secures outstanding achievement for them, because of the remarkable progress they make along the way'. It is a school that has a track record of improvement in the most challenging of circumstances.
- 2.7.2 Despite the challenges faced by the school through reforms to the GCSE examination system in recent years, the school has posted two of its three best ever sets of results in the last three years. KS2-4 Value Added scores increased from the 92nd percentile for all schools in 2003 to the 3rd percentile in 2008, and have remained high in the upper quartile for all schools nationally since then.
- 2.7.3 The school was identified in January 2008 as the most improved school in London and 2nd nationally; in October 2011 as one of just twenty secondary schools in the country serving students from the most socio-economically deprived communities judged to be Outstanding; and again by the DfE in January 2012 as one of the 'top performing secondary schools based on sustained improvement in each year from 2008 to 2011'.
- 2.7.4 Hurlingham & Chelsea is a success story you would imagine Hammersmith & Fulham Council would be proud enough of to want to protect from — and not expose to — any risks incurred through its wider local organisation of schools, and particularly in light of imminent demographic demands.

In short, to reiterate and to close, we object to the proposal because it would actually undermine educational standards, narrow the range and diversity of educational provision in the area, threaten local community cohesion, and weaken pupil place planning in the context of projected increased need for places both at primary and secondary level across the borough.

Yours Sincerely,



Craig Griffiths

(Deputy Headteacher, Hurlingham & Chelsea School, written on behalf of the staff of Hurlingham & Chelsea School — see signatories overleaf).

Formal objection to Hammersmith and Fulham council on the proposed amalgamation of New King's and Sullivan schools on the New King's Road site.

Made by the staff of Hurlingham & Chelsea School, 7 October 2013.

Member of Staff (Print name)	Member of Staff (Signature)
DEBORAH DE SILVA	
IAN D'ANGELO	
Catherine Sargent	
RAYMOND ROBERTSON	
FRANCINE PARKINSON	
PAUL McDONNELL	
SUREETA WALKER	
Kelly Brown	
Jacob Taylor	
Sarah Meer	
Sophie Horn	
Eiretel Brown	
Clare Borrell	
CHRIS AGA	
Paul Barrett	
Jayna Sultana	
Jane Oladogba	
Lizze Maxwell	
Sinead Merin	
VIKAAS PATEL	
Jocasta Opton	
ALAN ABDI	
Dan Scallan	
Philip Netherton	
KATH. FRANKLIN	
JEREMY TOWELL	
Rojan Zarrabi	

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Member of Staff (Print name)	Member of Staff (Signature)
CRAIG GRIFFITHS	C Griffiths
Ull Moroney	Ull Moroney
MICHELE BENNETT	Michele Bennett
Tam Pudney	Tam Pudney
CLAIRE DOYLE	Claire Doyle
CLAIRE MURDOEN	C. Murdoen
Micheal Daly	Michael Daly
Deana James	Deana James
TERRI ROACH	Terri Roach
Kabe Long	Kabe Long
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KATH MATTHEWS	Kath Matthews
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Kate Gurd	Kate Gurd
Sibylla Parkhill	Sibylla Parkhill
Ciaran Keighan	Ciaran Keighan
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