

Consultation on 'A New Secondary School in North Kingston' – response from the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Our view of the proposal

We acknowledge that there is a growing number of school age children in Kingston, which is similar to our experience in Richmond, and hence there is a need to provide some additional secondary school places across the borough. However, we believe that the case for a new eight-form entry school specifically within the North Kingston area is not proven, especially as the Council already has plans to provide some extra places across the borough under the Building Schools for the Future programme.

We consider a more cautious approach should be adopted, which makes use of the cross-borough arrangements by which a significant intake into Grey Court School comes from North Kingston primary schools. This has the advantage of ensuring that there is not an over-supply of places for North Kingston and for the Ham area of Richmond. From page 4 of the proposal it clear that the long-established patterns of admission of Kingston children to Grey Court would be substantially reduced if an eight-form entry school were to be built. This would then adversely affect the recruitment and retention of children to Grey Court and, by extension, to the three primary schools (Meadlands, The Russell, and St Richard's with St Andrew's) in Ham and Petersham.

Data in the consultation paper

The first, and perhaps most obvious, point to make about the data in the paper is that it consists of *whole-borough* child and pupil numbers. Whereas secondary school place planning is not easy to undertake on the basis of smaller areas, due to the fact that secondary school children (especially within London) travel greater distances than they do at primary level, Kingston Council's area is elongated from north to south over a distance of more than 7 miles, and it is not clear from the data presented that locating a new school in North Kingston, as opposed to any other area of the borough, would actually meet the Council's forecast need. We would have expected to see some data that showed the specific difficulties in North Kingston, i.e. the actual and forecast numbers of children leaving North Kingston primary schools, rather than Kingston schools per se.

We also believe that the data presented in the table (p.3) is unsound because it does not take into account the following uncertainties:

- It does not take into account the Council's plan to provide additional places, through the Building Schools for the Future programme, at other schools within the borough.
- It presupposes that all the primary-age cohorts will continue to grow between Reception and Year 7, whereas experience shows that the tendency is for them to shrink, since a significant proportion of parents opt for private education or move into the countryside when their children are in Key Stage 2. There is no evidence in this paper that, in recent years, cohorts in Kingston have grown in the way that the data is suggesting will happen in the next 10 years. As will be seen in our analysis (below) of the data, there seems to be no good reason as to why any one of the cohorts would grow to such an extent during the seven years of its primary education.

- The projected rise in demand for places between 2014 entry and 2015 entry is disproportionately higher than the rise in live births between the two cohorts, and there is no explanation of why that is the case.
- It takes no account of Kingston children who might attend out-borough maintained or private secondary schools – in 2008, 77% of resident secondary pupils in Kingston attended schools maintained by the LA, which means that 23% of Kingston's pupils either attended out-borough or private schools. (Source: DCSF School Destinations of Secondary School Pupils Resident in London Boroughs, 2008.)

We have expanded the data provided in the document to include the proposed expansions at other secondary schools within the borough, which, even if the unexplained growth in cohort sizes between Reception and Year 7 could be accounted for, shows that the proposed capacity (2,075) in 2018 would be almost the same as the projected number of places required (2,075). Since 23% of secondary-age children resident in the borough currently do not attend Kingston maintained secondary schools, that would constitute a large over-provision.

Birth year	Reception year	Year of entry into Secondary School	Number of live births	Current year 2009/2010	Actual/Projected Year R number for this year group	Actual / proposed capacity in Year 7 *	Projected number of Year 7 places required **	Year 7 - reception	Reception/ live births	Year 7/ live births	Year 7/ reception
1999	2003/04	2010/11	1,914	Yr 6	1,512	1,615	1,549	+37	79.0%	80.9%	102.4%
2000	2004/05	2011/12	1,869	Yr 5	1,499	1,615	1,536	+37	80.2%	82.2%	102.5%
2001	2005/06	2012/13	1,818	Yr 4	1,477	1,615	1,513	+36	81.2%	83.2%	102.4%
2002	2006/07	2013/14	1,787	Yr 3	1,478	1,615	1,514	+36	82.7%	84.7%	102.4%
2003	2007/08	2014/15	1,794	Yr 2	1,534	1,645	1,577	+43	85.5%	87.9%	102.8%
2004	2008/09	2015/16	1,945	Yr 1	1,721	1,895	1,853	+132	88.5%	95.3%	107.7%
2005	2009/10	2016/17	2,036	Rec	1,811	1,955	1,966	+155	88.9%	96.6%	108.6%
2006	2010/11	2017/18	2,024	estimate	1,801	2,015	1,953	+152	89.0%	96.5%	108.4%
2007	2011/12	2018/19	2,140	estimate	1,905	2,075	2,083	+178	89.0%	97.3%	109.3%

* 2014: Coombe Boys expanded by 1form of entry (FE); 2015: New school 8FE; 2016: 1FE each at The Hollyfield and Southborough; 2017: 1FE each at Holy Cross and Tolworth Girls; 2018: 1FE each at Coombe Girls and Richard Challoner.

** Source: RBK consultation document.

Grey Court

Since Kingston Council closed Tudor School in the mid-1980s, Grey Court has consistently educated large numbers of children living both sides of the Kingston/Richmond boundary, with the consequence that Kingston Council has not needed to have a non-selective secondary school in North Kingston. The table below shows the numbers of Kingston-resident children attending Grey Court, and those numbers as a percentage of the total roll, in the last five years.

	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Total	Total school roll	Kingston residents as % of roll
January 2009	69	44	50	49	61	273	779	35%
January 2008	46	51	46	70	48	261	815	32%
January 2007	56	47	66	51	55	275	872	32%
January 2006	52	74	49	58	55	288	917	31%
January 2005	75	45	54	51	65	290	955	30%

As is evident from the table, the number of Kingston-resident children has steadily increased as a percentage of the total roll of the school in recent years, so that Kingston-resident children now represent more than a third of the school's population. As the school, whose capacity is 200 per year-group, is not full, there are currently enough places for North Kingston residents at the school. The assertion (p.3) of the consultation paper that there is an "increasing lack of spare secondary places in neighbouring Local Authority schools" is therefore incorrect. Clearly, a new, eight-form entry secondary school in North Kingston would have a considerable effect upon Grey Court's roll. The current proposal is therefore erroneous, as it fails to consider the provision provided by Richmond Borough schools, the levels of cross-border movement of pupils at all key stages, and the school place planning that we are and will be undertaking in Richmond.

Three Kingston primary schools (Fern Hill, Latchmere and St Luke's) are formally linked through Grey Court's oversubscription criteria so that children attending those schools have priority for admission ahead of any children under the 'home to school distance'. In Latchmere's case, the link to Grey Court has been in place since 1991, when the 'linked schools system' of allocation was established, and has been consistently maintained by at least 15 children or 25% of previous Year 6 cohorts having transferred to Grey Court each year. In the case of Fern Hill, Kingston made an unsuccessful referral to the Schools Adjudicator in 2000 to try to establish a link between that school and Grey Court. A link was, though, formally established between the two schools for 2006 entry and has been maintained since then. The link between St Luke's and Grey Court was established for 2010 entry, after more than 25% of the St Luke's Year 6 cohort transferred to Grey Court in 2008. In recent years, Kingston have made strong representations to Richmond to maintain the linked schools system, but the

proposal for the new school would mean that those traditional patterns of transfer, which have worked well for all concerned, would be very quickly, and unnecessarily, ended.

Conclusion

We do not believe that the data in Kingston's paper is consistent with the assertions that more places are required, that they are required specifically within North Kingston, and to such a large extent. We therefore feel that Kingston should re-consider its data very carefully before taking any further steps in regard to this proposal. We would be grateful if this response could be included in its entirety within the consultation response summary that the Executive will consider.