



8Th February 2010

Dear Kevin,

Re: Consultation on Admissions Arrangements for 2011/12

We are writing to inform you of the position of the Upper Shirley Learning Community (USLC) schools to the consultation on Admissions Arrangements for 2011/12. This is in response to the letter you sent to the head teacher of Wordsworth Infant School on 21st January 2010.

Whilst we accept that the proposal to increase the Published Admission Number for Wordsworth from 60 to 90 is appropriate in principle, we need to raise our concerns with regard to the provision of the physical space at Wordsworth and the number of junior school places within the Shirley cluster.

One of the prime tenets of the USLC is the provision of a clear educational pathway for local children. We want to guarantee that any child entering the USLC schools can remain at one of the schools until they have completed their learning journey. There is already a shortfall of 30 junior school places relative to infant places within the USLC. This leads to many disappointed parents and appeals at Shirley Junior School. This problem is set to worsen as surrounding schools, such as St Marks and Freemantle, convert to primaries and would become intolerable if the PAN at Wordsworth is increased without a clear strategy for junior provision. Infant parents need to know where their children will go after year 2 and plan this before their child begins in Year R.

As the existing USLC junior schools do not have any spare capacity or potential for expansion, we propose the additional spaces are provided by constructing a two-form entry junior school within the Wordsworth grounds, which we believe has the capacity for this development. We would like the Local Authority to explain how this could be financed in a time of tight financial constraints and yet maintain its moral and legal responsibility to provide places for all children to attend a school.

Construction of a new school would also address the problem of disability access that we currently have within our existing junior buildings, leading to the effective exclusion of some children with Special Education Needs. Wordsworth and the USLC are fully committed to inclusion but it is not always possible to accommodate children with additional difficulties and or disabilities within the current buildings. We are keen to maintain the individuality and ethos of Wordsworth Infant School, and of all schools within the USLC, and would like to ensure that the additional junior school maintains this.

The head teachers and governing bodies of the USLC would like to retain the infant and junior model for our schools as we believe it provides a better focus on the early years. This ensures that our children's education starts off on the right footing and leads to a better education in the long term.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our concerns with what we perceive as a lack of strategic vision by the Local Authority in this exercise. The impact on the wider learning community does not seem to have been considered and the application of a short-time fix could ultimately damage the longer term services that we offer.

In addition, we have concerns over the manner and timescales in which this consultation has been conducted. The head teacher of Wordsworth was first informed of the proposed changes the day before the Christmas break, for a consultation that started on first day of the New Year. The consultation has apparently been open for a month, but the Wordsworth governing body has not received any correspondence relating to it and neither have any of the other schools in the USLC. We believe that major changes to the learning community of this nature need to be properly thought through to avoid a negative impact on the standard of education provided.

We look forward to hearing your response to our proposals.

Yours sincerely,

The head teachers and principals of:

Wordsworth Infant, Hollybrook Infant, Shirley Infant, Hollybrook Junior, Shirley Junior, Great Oak, and Upper Shirley High

cc: Clive Webster

cc: Paul Holmes

