



Hayesfield Girls' School

Achieving Ambitions

21st April 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian

The Local Authority has published its proposals for Secondary school provision in Bath, following the detailed consultation period after the publication of its original strategy document of 2007. These proposals indicated that there would be no new post-16 provision. You will have received a copy of the recently published full proposal document via your son or daughter. The proposal gives some context for the recommendations, describing the particular circumstances of each school which will be affected by the proposals made.

The key proposals are that:-

- Beechen Cliff will remain as an 11-18 boys' school with a co-educational Sixth Form. The admission number would be 160.
- Hayesfield Girls' School will remain as a girls' 11-18 school with co-educational Sixth Form, again with an admission number of 160.
- St Gregory's Catholic College is retained as a co-educational Catholic School with a planned admission number of 160. It is proposed to provide a Sixth Form.
- Ralph Allen is retained as a co-educational 11-18 school with a planned admissions number of 175.
- St Mark's, Oldfield and Culverhay schools will close and one new 11-18 school will be opened in the north of the city and a linked proposal to open one new 11-18 co-educational school with a planned admission number of 160 to open in the south of the city.

The position of Beechen Cliff School and Hayesfield Girls' School is that we broadly welcome the proposals, giving an opportunity to create a viable 11-16 provision in schools with places which will hopefully be filled. The result will reduce the huge inefficiency which currently exists by maintaining schools which have too few students rendering them unviable.

We do, however, have a significant level of concern related to the provision of Sixth Form places within the city, as proposed in the document. The Bath Education Trust (BET) offers a very strong level of Sixth Form provision for boys and girls across the City, which includes a huge range of A level, International Baccalaureate and vocational courses at various levels. The numbers moving into this provision make the courses cost effective and the achievements of the BET schools and college, in relation to results, underpins our view that this is an exceptional model for post 16 provision in the City.



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The proposal to provide three new Sixth Forms in the City appears to create a dilution of this provision. Beechen Cliff and Hayesfield, in conjunction with City of Bath College, have run very successful Sixth Forms without any investment being made in the infrastructure – either in terms of building or resources. To see that the new proposal now includes investment of many millions of pounds in new provision seems at odds with the obvious needs which exist in our own schools. Given that the number of potential future Sixth Form students can be accommodated within the BET schools, Ralph Allen and the City of Bath College, it would seem to be more helpful to Bath's post 16 leavers to provide investment into the current provision rather than create new places that risk being under subscribed. Given the strengths of staffing infrastructure, proven examination results and huge breadth of courses available within this provision it is, in our view, a better solution to invest in the current schools and college, allowing them to provide the best possible 'service' to children into the future.

Experience elsewhere shows that creating too many Sixth Form places leads to the 'closing down' of some courses and can mean that students choosing a Sixth Form 'venue' are obliged to make compromises which can have a detrimental effect upon their longer term success. The proposals appear to create three new Sixth Forms, each with a capacity for 200 students. Current demand would indicate that only 120 places would be needed in total (Oldfield and Culverhay) and there is no obvious demand for "significant" increase in post 16 places to fill the additional 480 places.

With your booklets you will find a form which asks for your viewpoint to be made known. We would ask that you consider the points made in the proposals and to make your own views known. For our part we will write to the Local Authority broadly welcoming the proposed changes, but also making a recommendation that the excellent post 16 provision within the Trust is a focus for future investment.

Yours sincerely,

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