

SET Admissions Committee

The Admissions committee met to consider the outcomes of the admissions consultations for Harpenden Academy, Robert Barclay Academy and Samuel Ryder Academy.

The amendment concerned “Applications for children adopted but previously looked after abroad will be considered under rule 2 and accepted if the child’s previously looked after status and adoption is confirmed. Hertfordshire’s “Virtual School” will be asked to verify all such applications”.

No responses were received during the consultation process.

Recommendation: The committee noted that the proposed change is unopposed and is in accordance with the Hertfordshire Model Admissions Policy. Accordingly, the committee recommends to the Trust Board that the above change be adopted by each of the schools and will come into effect in September 2020.

The Admissions committee met to consider the outcome of the admissions consultations for Sir John Lawes School.

The first amendment concerned “Applications for children adopted but previously looked after abroad will be considered under rule 2 and accepted if the child’s previously looked after status and adoption is confirmed. Hertfordshire’s “Virtual School” will be asked to verify all such applications”.

A few responses were received and all were in favour of the adoption of this amendment, none raised concern or objection.

Recommendation: The committee noted that the proposed change is unopposed and is in accordance with the Hertfordshire Model Admissions Policy. Accordingly, the committee recommends that the above change be adopted by Sir John Lawes School and will come into force September 2020.

The second amendment concerns the introduction of criteria, listed under Rule 5, whereby priority will be given to “Children who, at the closing date for applications, attend the following priority primary school: Harpenden Academy.”

There were 246 responses, together with responses from local primary schools, other organisations and representatives, to the consultation. The admissions committee considered all the points raised by the consultees for and against the adoption of this criterion. The committee considered all the responses carefully. It noted that the balance of the responses was against the proposed change. It further noted, however, that the quantity and balance of the responses is not necessarily determinative; rather, the test is whether the nomination of a feeder school is transparent and based on reasonable grounds.

The Admissions Committee considered the relevant provisions of the statutory Admissions Code issued by the Department for Education. Section 1, paragraph 1.15 is headed ‘Feeder Schools’ and provides as follows:

*“Admission Authorities may wish to name a primary or middle school as a feeder school. The selection of a feeder school or schools as an oversubscription criterion **must** be transparent and made on reasonable grounds.”*

The committee, having considered the consultation responses, reached the judgement that there were reasonable grounds for making the proposed change.

It recommended that the SET formal response to the consultation should be as follows:

Paragraph 1.15 of the statutory Admissions Code, issued by the Department for Education, is headed ‘Feeder Schools’ and provides as follows:

*“Admission Authorities may wish to name a primary or middle school as a feeder school. The selection of a feeder school or schools as an oversubscription criterion **must** be transparent and made on reasonable grounds.”*

Transparency

The consultation process has been open and transparent with consultation notices being available on both school websites, emailed to all primary and secondary schools in Harpenden and St Albans, available on the Hertfordshire County Council website, and to other interested parties. . The number of responses received is evidence of the transparency of the process. The proposed change clearly identifies the feeder school concerned.

Reasonable Grounds

The change is based on the following reasonable grounds:

- Harpenden Academy joined the Trust because of a desire for it to share the same vision and values and educational philosophy as Sir John Lawes School.
- Among the benefits arising from the multi-academy arrangement are the sharing of values, expertise and resources to the benefit of all schools within such an arrangement and particularly schools which are in difficulty and require improvement.
- Harpenden Academy was directed to the Scholars’ Education Trust by the DfE as a school in difficulties and likely to benefit from close association with an ‘Outstanding’ school and the wider cohort of schools within the Trust.
- Staff from both Harpenden Academy and Sir John Lawes work together to ensure maximum educational impact and the continuity of education. Harpenden Academy students also enjoy specialised opportunities at Sir John Lawes within for example music, student leadership and mentoring opportunities.
- Harpenden Academy uses facilities at Sir John Lawes School, eg PE, Science and Music.
- Harpenden Academy students wear similar school uniform to Sir John Lawes and the other schools in the Trust; introduced to support and promote the educational links between the schools.
- The Trust has expertise in and experience of a ‘all-through’ school environment in the form of Samuel Ryder Academy.
- Harpenden Academy Year 6 children will mirror the same continuity of admission opportunity offered to Samuel Ryder Academy primary children with an opportunity of continued education

within the same Trust at secondary level thus reinforcing the same ethos, vision and values throughout their time in the Trust.

- At the time of its incorporation in the Scholars' Education Trust, in addition to its other difficulties, Harpenden Academy was not financially viable, due largely to its low school roll. Although improving, the school still lacks sufficient numbers in KS1 to currently enable it to be sustainable.

Recommendation: The committee recommends to the Trust Board that the above change be adopted by Sir John Lawes School to come into effect in September 2020.

It also recommends that all participants in the consultation are informed of the decision and thanked for their contribution to helping the committee make its recommendation.

Additional Notes on the decision making process.

The admissions committee identified a number of points that, in its judgement, were worthy of particular weight. In particular:

- Government policy encourages Multi-Academy Trusts to share learning, principles, values and resources. The Scholars' Education Trust also promotes this stance; the change of admissions code is to formally recognise the educational links between the two schools and to spread the ethos of the Trust.
- It was reminded that the DfE approached the Trust to adopt Harpenden Academy (previously Harpenden Free School) when the original school found itself in difficulties, in recognition that with the close proximity of Sir John Lawes School there would be proven improvement and the option for daily support as needed. As a result the ethos, curriculum and learning environments adopted were significantly changed to mirror those enjoyed within Sir John Lawes School and known to be successful.
- The Headteacher appointed was transferred from Head of Primary provision at another school within the Trust to promote the Trust ethos and learning environment.
- The Scholars' Education Trust was asked to ensure that Harpenden Academy improved its educational standards to at least Good and to become financially stable and viable.
- In a recent external visit Harpenden Academy was recognised as having significantly improved to meet the educational standard; and to meet the financial standard the school needs to continue to grow in student number to move to its 420 student capacity.
- Harpenden Academy's new admission code, which comes into force for September 2019, is in line with the admission codes across the Trust and other primary schools within the town. Rule 6: "Distance: Children who live nearest the Academy. (Straight line system of measurement from a child's home address point to the address point of the school will be used for all admission distances)". The original Harpenden Academy admissions code, which included the doughnut rule, has been withdrawn.
- The current roll of Harpenden Academy has 88% of children living within Harpenden and the surrounding Hertfordshire area.
- There is currently a surplus of primary school places within Harpenden; by the admissions code, all schools in Harpenden that are undersubscribed, upon receiving an application for a place at their school, must offer the place to the applicant, irrespective of home address.

- Of the 22 children that transferred from Year 6 at Harpenden Academy in 2018, 5% moved out of the area, 5% moved to a secondary school outside of Harpenden and 90% moved to a Harpenden secondary school. 41% secured places at Sir John Lawes School. The Committee believes that even with this change, not all students will choose to apply to SJL.
- Harpenden Academy will only accept in year admissions within Years 5 and 6 where there is considered to be a proven educational benefit for the child to do so.
- Sir John Lawes will annually review its PAN to ensure that maximum places are made available during the admission process.
- The new Katherine Warrington School, with a PAN of 180, will be open in advance of the change of Sir John Lawes' admissions policy thus addressing the longstanding pressure on secondary places within the greater Harpenden area.
- There is no intention that any primary schools who join SET in the future will necessarily be named as feeder schools for any of the SET secondary schools.