

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MONDAY 23 JUNE 2003 AT 2.00 PM

Agenda item no.

**Other Part 1
business**

LEA RESPONSE TO THE ADJUDICATOR

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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Executive Member: Robert Gordon

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise the Cabinet on a response to the Adjudicator in respect of objections lodged by two community schools about the admission arrangements of the following schools, which are partially selective on the basis of both ability and aptitude:

Dame Alice Owen's
Parmiter's
Queens'
Rickmansworth
St Clement Danes
Watford Grammar School for Boys
Watford Grammar School for Girls

And the admission arrangements of the following schools which select up to 10% of their pupils on the basis of aptitude:

Bishop's Stortford High
Bushey Meads
Chancellor's
Goffs
Hertfordshire & Essex High
Hockerill European College
Leventhorpe

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Admissions Code of Practice which came into effect from 31st January 2003 allowed, for the first time, community schools to object to the Adjudicator about the admission rules of foundation and voluntary aided schools in the relevant area.

- 2.2 The Code of Practice required Local Education Authorities to establish an Admissions Forum. One of the responsibilities of the Forum is to consider the admission rules of all admitting authorities in the relevant area. The Admissions Forum did not raise any concerns about partial selection on ability nor about selection by aptitude.
- 2.3 Objections were received from Westfield Community Technical College and Greenfields JMI & Nursery School. These are set out in Section 3 and comments on the objections are set out in Section 4.
- 2.4 Section 5 of this report sets out an officer response in respect of each school.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 The Adjudicator has asked the County Council to respond to the objections made by Westfield Community Technical College and Greenfields JMI & Nursery School. Cabinet may wish to respond to the Adjudicator separately for each school which is the subject of the objection and to comment on:
- The impact of the school's admission rules on children securing a place in the locality.
 - The impact of the school's admission rules on the intake of neighbouring schools.

1. Background

1.1 The Code of Practice on Admissions was laid before Parliament in November 2002 and came into effect on 31st January 2003. The Code extended objection rights to all schools within a relevant area in respect of the rules of foundation and voluntary aided schools in that area.

1.2 Under the terms of the Code of Practice, objections were made to the Adjudicator by Westfield Community Technology College and Greenfields Junior, Infant and Nursery School about the admission rules of:

Bishop's Stortford High
Bushey Meads
Chancellor's
Dame Alice Owen's
Goffs
Hertfordshire and Essex High School
Hockerill European College
Leventhorpe
Parmiter's
Queens'
Rickmansworth
St Clement Danes
Watford Grammar School for Boys
Watford Grammar School for Girls

1.3 Under the terms of the Code of Practice, a group of 10 or more parents can object to the partially selective arrangements of local schools. A further objection has been received by the Adjudicator about aptitude selection at Chancellor's School. This has not been passed on to the Council for comment.

1.4 The new Code of Practice on Admissions made it mandatory for each Local Education Authority to establish an Admissions Forum. The responsibilities of the Admissions Forum are to:

- Consider existing and proposed admission arrangements for all schools within the area covered by the Forum and how well they serve the interests of local children and parents.
- Consider how admission processes might be improved.
- Ensure that potentially vulnerable children, such as looked after children, are provided for in admission arrangements.
- Consider how all schools can play their part in casual admission arrangements

- 1.5 The Hertfordshire Admissions Forum is representative of the various interest groups and comprises representatives of community, foundation, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools, diocesan and governor representatives and elected members. The Forum met for the first time on 27th February 2003 and amongst other things, considered the admission rules of all admitting authorities in Hertfordshire.
- 1.6 The Admissions Forum noted that most admitting authorities had proposed their admission rules before the new Code of Practice on Admissions had been laid before Parliament. Therefore, it felt that it was understandable that some rules might not comply fully with the Code. The Forum agreed to write to governing bodies where appropriate, drawing attention to those areas of the Code with which there was possible non-compliance.
- 1.7 No member of the Admissions Forum expressed concern about the partial selection criteria on either ability or aptitude of any of the schools which are the subject of the objection.

- 1.8 The Code of Practice (Section 2.3) states that:

In drawing up admission arrangements, admission authorities should aim to ensure that:

- The arrangements enable parents' preferences for the schools of their choice to be met to the maximum extent possible;
 - Admission criteria are clear, fair and objective, for the benefit of all children, including those with special educational needs, disabilities or those in public care;
 - Local admission arrangements contribute to improving standards for all pupils;
 - Local admission authorities consult each other and co-ordinate their arrangements, including over the rapid reintegration wherever sensible of children who have been excluded from other schools;
 - Parents have easy access to helpful admissions information;
 - Local admission arrangements achieve full compliance with all relevant legislation and guidance – including on infant class sizes and on equal opportunities – and take full account of the guidance in this Code.
- 1.9 Section 3.22 confirms that The School Standards and Framework Act 1998:
- Allows new priority on the basis of aptitude in limited circumstances and where the school has a specialism;
 - Allows partial selection by ability or priority by aptitude that existed at the beginning of the school year 1997/98 to continue, but only if certain criteria are met; and

- Enables objections to all partially selective admission arrangements to be made to Adjudicators by LEAs, other admission authorities or, in the case of partially selective arrangements that have existed since 1997/98 and could not now lawfully be introduced (called 'pre-existing partial selection'), by parents. The Education Act 2002 extended this right of objection to the admission arrangements of foundation and voluntary aided schools to include community and voluntary controlled schools.
- 1.10 Section 3.23 explains that the types of partial selection which could not now lawfully be introduced - which parents may object to the Adjudicator about - include any partial selection by ability (below sixth form) and any selection by aptitude other than for up to 10% of places in prescribed subjects.
- 1.11 The County Council introduced new secondary admission rules for 2003, which are based on priority areas. The rules prioritise children for places at their nearest non-faith co-educational school, as calculated by the County Council's definition of 'shortest designated route'. They also enable Community Schools to have the same entitlement to introduce selection by aptitude within the boundaries of existing legislation.
- 1.12 All parents applying for a Hertfordshire school are informed of their allocated school on the same day, as part of co-ordinated admission arrangements. Typically, on that day, about 92% of children are offered a school that was ranked by their parents. By the end of the allocation process in September, following continuing interest and appeals, this figure rises to about 96%.

2. Context

- 2.1 In 1999 the County Council made an objection to the Adjudicator in respect of the rules of a number of Grant Maintained schools in different areas of the county.
- 2.2 In summary, the objection was:
- (a) that partial selection prevented some local children from securing places at local schools.
 - (b) that partial selection caused neighbouring schools to admit a disproportionate number of challenging pupils.
- 2.3 The Adjudicator made a number of adjustments to the rules of the schools which were the subject of the objection. The changes were designed to:
- a) reduce the percentage of places allocated on the basis of aptitude at certain schools in order to make places available to local children.
 - b) reduce the percentage of places allocated on the basis of ability at certain schools in order to make more places available to local children.

3. The Objections

- 3.1 The current objections on which the LEA have been asked to comment are lodged by Westfield Community Technical College (Appendix 1) and Greenfields JMI & Nursery School (Appendix 2). Both objections relate to the following schools:

Bishop's Stortford High
Bushey Meads
Chancellor's
Dame Alice Owen's
Goffs
Hertfordshire and Essex High School
Hockerill European College
Leventhorpe
Parmiter's
Queens'
Rickmansworth
St Clement Danes
Watford Grammar School for Boys
Watford Grammar School for Girls

- 3.2 In response to the Adjudicator's request, the County Council has provided him with details of applications and allocations to each of the schools which select some children on the basis of ability and data relating to CATs scores and free school meals.

- 3.3 The objection from Westfield Community Technical College does not focus on the schools individually. It makes the following points:

- (a) Non-selective schools on average receive far higher numbers of pupils with very low cognitive skills than those who select by ability and aptitude (18% as opposed to 2% in Year 7 Cognitive Ability Tests).
- (b) Overt selection by ability and /or aptitude amounts to covert selection by family income level, based on free school meals data.
- (c) Local children who do not pass the ability or aptitude assessment have little chance of gaining a place unless they have an elder sibling at the school.
- (d) 23% of entrants to selective schools live outside Hertfordshire and many Hertfordshire entrants are not local to the school.
- (e) All tests used for aptitude assessment are also implicit tests of ability.
- (f) Selection by aptitude is not used for Hertfordshire community schools because county officers have been unable to locate any tests or assessment procedures that would satisfy the Code of Practice.
- (g) Selection by ability and aptitude leads to the unequal distribution of students who present a variety of challenges, partly indicated by exclusion rates.

- (h) Westfield experiences a higher number of casual admissions, as do other schools facing challenging circumstances, and these are often associated with attendance and behavioural difficulties.
 - (i) The quality of learning at Westfield is affected by the high number of casual admissions.
 - (j) Concentration of challenging students in a small number of schools impacts on the education and safety of the rest of the school community.
- 3.4 The objection from Greenfields JMI and Nursery School (Appendix 2) does not focus on the schools individually and is very similar to that above. It makes the following additional points:
- (a) There is no secondary school in South Oxhey where Greenfields is situated.
 - (b) Community includes deprivation far above average for the county.
 - (c) Students from South Oxhey suffer great difficulties in obtaining admission to appropriate secondary schools of their choice, which is further jeopardised by selection criteria.

4. Comments on the Objection

- 4.1 The objection from Westfield Community Technology College (Appendix 1) as set out in paragraph 3.3 (a to j) are not entirely correct in respect of the facts presented. There are also some assertions which should be questioned. The following is commentary on each aspect of the objection.

Objection 3.3 (a)

It is correct that non-selective schools on average receive higher levels of pupils with low levels of cognitive skills than schools which select by ability. This is set out in full in Table 1 of the objection letter (see Appendix 1). The data in the table is correct.

Objection 3.3 (b)

It is correct that the data in Table 2 shows that those schools which select by aptitude and/or ability admit fewer children entitled to free school meals, than the average for secondary schools in Hertfordshire. The data in the table is correct for all schools with the exception of Hockerill where it takes 1.8% of pupils, not 6%. It will be noted that there is a range of levels of free school meals which lie between 0% for Parmiter's and 7.5% for John Warner school. It will be appreciated that there will be a number of factors leading to this variation, including the socio-economic make-up of the local area. There are some non-selective schools in the county which also take low numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals. We have not modelled how the allocation of pupils entitled to free school meals would alter if the selective schools were to use the admission rules of community schools.

Objection 3.3 (c) & (d)

It is correct that in 2002, 23% of entrants to selective schools lived outside Hertfordshire. It should be noted that the Greenwich Judgement does not allow

admitting authorities to treat applicants differently if they live outside the LEA area.

Table 1 shows that a number of schools, including a non-selective school, admit a high percentage of pupils who do not live in Hertfordshire. Many schools close to the Hertfordshire border admit a high percentage of non-Hertfordshire residents. It should be noted that for 2003-04, Dame Alice Owen's has introduced a catchment, the effect of which was to take a higher percentage of local pupils. It does not mean, however, apart from some families for whom Rickmansworth and St Clement Danes is their closest school, that they cannot secure a place at a local school.

Objection 3.3 (e) & (f)

It is not correct to suggest that the only reason for Hertfordshire community schools not using aptitude selection is because officers have not been able to locate a test for aptitude that would satisfy the Code of Practice. None of the three community schools eligible to have the rule applied has indicated that it wishes to select on the basis of aptitude and therefore the need to locate or develop such a test has not been pursued.

Objection 3.3 (g - j)

In the selective areas of the County it is true that non-selective schools take more casual admissions and more challenging pupils. This also reflects the fact that selective schools tend to be amongst the more popular in the County and with more open enrolment, popular schools are full. It would be advantageous if these children were shared out more equitably.

It should be noted that a local agreement is being developed in South West Hertfordshire, whereby schools agree to accept pupils excluded permanently from other schools and casual admissions. The County Council has made its Behaviour and Achievement policy a priority for 2003-04 to support schools, including those with a disproportionate number of challenging pupils.

Objection 3.4

It is correct that the South Oxhey area is one of high deprivation and there is no secondary school. It should be noted that for many of the children living in this area, Bushey Hall is their closest school, and this school has been able to offer places to all children in the area. This school is within 3 miles of South Oxhey.

- 4.2 The objection relates to all schools in the county which select by aptitude or ability and aptitude. The schools cluster into a number of priority areas which the County Council uses for admission rule purposes. These are:

Bishop's Stortford
West Hertfordshire
Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Potter's Bar and Brookman's Park
Borehamwood and Bushey
Hoddesdon, Broxbourne, Turnford and Cheshunt

as set out on Page 58 of the Moving On booklet.

- 4.3 The impact of the admission rules of each selective school on non-selective schools will vary depending on the number of selective schools across an area and the level of selection undertaken by each. The profile of children admitted to a school is also, however, affected by the socio-economic profile of an area.
- 4.4 The following section of the report sets out school by school:
- (a) the school's response to the objections
 - (b) the response to the objections by others.
 - (c) an officer comment which assesses the extent to which the rules of the school, when associated with the rules of other schools in the area:
 - impact on the ability of local children to secure places at local schools.
 - may cause some schools to admit a less balanced intake than would otherwise be the case, with the potential for a negative impact on the school.

5. The Schools Subject to the Objections

5.1 *The Bishop's Stortford High School*

(a) The objection

This is about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

Mr Goulding, the Headteacher wrote to the Adjudicator on 16th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- The objection is confusing insofar as the statistical evidence produced refers largely to schools in South Hertfordshire.
- Partial selection by aptitude is allowed under the Admissions Code of Practice and The Bishops Stortford High School meets the necessary criteria.
- The admission rules of schools in East Hertfordshire do not impact on entry to schools in South Hertfordshire.
- Evidence relating to free school meal percentages is selective and does not take account of the fact that different areas of the county have different levels of free school meals which reflect differing social economic mix.
- The objection in respect of selection by aptitude refers only to music. The objection misrepresents how musical ability is assessed.
- The LEA has not objected to the school's testing arrangements and can therefore be viewed as being satisfied with them.

- Other evidence quoted including linkages between partial selection and permanent exclusions, casual admissions, are inconclusive.
- This school has established a reputation and facilities in respect of sport, music and drama. Aptitude is assessed by a panel looking at a range of evidence.
- No schools in the Bishop's Stortford area object to their current rules.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Selection by aptitude has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in the town. All children who live in Bishop's Stortford have been offered places at a school in the town in 2003, unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Bishop's Stortford High School, through partial selection is 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 155. Given the nature of Bishop's Stortford and the data sets available to us, it is not possible to quantify the impact on the intake of Birchwood High (the only non-selective community school in the area).

5.2 Bushey Meads School

(a) The objection

This is about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

Mr Gary Paton, Chair of Governors, and Dr Dena Coleman, Headteacher wrote to the Adjudicator on 15th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Objectors present no hypothesis or evidence to support relationship between free school meals and technological aptitude testing.
- Aptitude testing has only been introduced for admissions in September 2003, therefore data does not relate to impact of aptitude testing at Bushey Meads.
- Free school meal percentage tends to be low because of affluence of Bushey area.
- Not true to say that the county view is that all systems currently in use by foundation and voluntary aided schools for aptitude assessment are not in accordance with the Code.
- Aptitude testing is not used in community schools, only because no individual community school has expressed a wish to use the provision.
- Objectors have not asked to see a sample test nor for an explanation of the testing system. Therefore, it is unreasonable to contend that aptitude assessment is covertly testing for ability at the school.
- Aware of our responsibilities not to test for ability.

- Some children from bands b & c are amongst those awarded the technology aptitude places for September 2003.
- This school has admitted additional band b children because there were insufficient candidates to fill the available places in the category above.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Selection by aptitude has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in the town in 2003. Only 5 children for whom Bushey Meads is their closest school measured by the County Council's definition of shortest designated route and who ranked the school, failed to secure a place there or at another school that they ranked on allocation day. The number is now 4. All children who live in Bushey have been offered places at a school in the town, unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Bushey Meads School, through partial selection is 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 170. Given the nature of Bushey Meads and the data sets available to us, it is not possible to quantify the impact on the intake of Bushey Hall.

5.3 Chancellor's School

(a) The objection

This is about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

Mr P Wormleighton, Headteacher wrote to the Adjudicator on 21st May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Tests are not used to select pupils – instead applicants supply supporting evidence.
- Each specialism receives a minimum allocation of 5 candidates.
- An admissions committee of 3 Governors separately read applications and make individual assessments.
- Parents provide a Year 5 school report to help with the assessment of aptitude in the specialisms.
- The procedure followed at Chancellor's is valid fair and in accordance with the Code of Practice.
- Adjudication in 1999 ruled 'not to uphold the objection that the criteria by which selection by aptitude is made is said to be unfair'.
- Clear guidance is given to applicants in the school's admission arrangements.
- The school's aptitude assessments are not covert tests of ability and do not implicitly discriminate by family background.
- Chancellor's admissions policy does not impact on the behaviour, exclusions, casual admissions and attendance of Westfield School.

- Chancellor's admissions policy does not play any part in preventing students from South Oxhey from obtaining admissions to appropriate secondary schools of their choice. There has never been an application from a child attending Greenfields JMI.
- Chancellor's has never received a pupil with a Watford address in the last 8 years.
- Parental objections appear to have come from only one school – Brookman's Park. Therefore unrepresentative.
- No-one informed of criterion met by successful applicants in order to avoid pressure being put on those selected by aptitude.
- Local community is wider than Brookman's Park village – all feeder schools except from Cuffley are within 3 mile radius
- All 21 primary schools are traditional feeders
- High number of successful applicants from Brookman's Park Primary over last 3 years
- Relatively few Brookman's Park pupils have to travel outside the area.
- Administrative error in 2002 was dealt with openly and fairly.

Mr P Wormleighton, Headteacher again wrote to the Adjudicator on 9th and 11th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Chancellor's was built with the intention of serving the 7 local villages which fall within a 3 mile radius. The transport policy of the local authority reflects this intention.
- Chancellor's primarily serves its 20 feeder schools rather than those who happen to live closest to the school.
- If nearest to the school criterion was used, everyone from Brookmans Park might gain a place to the detriment of the other feeder schools.
- In the past, Brookmans Park Primary did have priority over other schools and parents withdrew their children from other schools and sought enrolment at Brookmans Park.
- A reduction of the 3 mile radius would threaten the ethos and character of the school.
- There is a special relationship between Chancellor's and its feeder primaries.
- Criterion 3, proven aptitude in drama, music and sport, on average attracts 450 applications annually.
- Apart from 11 parents connected with Brookmans Park School, and 2 Watford schools, no-one else appears to object as to how it is administered.
- If there is any way that further information or explanation will increase understanding of the criterion, the school is open to suggestions.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 7th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- There is a lack of clarity on what constitutes aptitudes and how aptitudes are judged.
- If chess and ballet are regarded as sports, are tap dancing and synchronised swimming also sports?
- Without published criteria, parents must try to work out for themselves the activities that will be considered and the standards required.
- The school states that the “Admissions Committee exercise their judgement based on all the information available, both from the parents and the primary school” but primary schools will not, as a matter of principle, attest to a pupil’s extra-curricular achievements.
- Does the Admissions Committee use the Year 5 report to decide places under criteria 3. If it does, this contradicts the school’s assertion that the report is only used as proof that a child attends the primary school on her/his application.
- Most of the pupils from Brookmans Primary School qualified as siblings of present or past pupils.
- Brookmans Park parents are concerned that in inviting applicants from no fewer than 21 feeder primaries, including those in two towns each of which has two secondary schools of their own, Chancellor’s has reduced the chances of genuine “local” children gaining admission.
- Criterion 4 results in named primary school pupils whose homes are miles from Chancellor’s being admitted while Brookmans Park children living an easy walk from the school are refused admission on the grounds that they are not close enough.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Selection by aptitude has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in the area, although the allocation of places to a range of feeder schools does mean that some children from Brookman’s Park cannot secure places at the school in 2003. Only 11 children for whom Chancellor’s is their closest school measured by the County Council’s definition of shortest designated route and who ranked the school, failed to secure a place there or at another school that they ranked on allocation day. None of these children have subsequently secured a place at a school that they ranked. All children who live in Brookman’s Park have been offered places at a school in Hatfield or Potters Bar, unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Chancellor’s School, through partial selection is 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 170. Given the nature of Chancellor’s and the data sets available to us, it is not possible to quantify the impact on the intakes of neighbouring community schools.

5.4 **Dame Alice Owen's**

(a) The objection

This is about partial selection on ability and about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the School

The Headteacher, Mrs Williamson. wrote to the Adjudicator on 2nd June in response to the objection, making the following points on behalf of the governing body:

- School founded in 1613 in Islington for education of boys from Islington and Clerkenwell.
- Girls' Grammar School added during 19th Century.
- Both schools move to present site in Potters Bar in 1972 as a mixed comprehensive and the offer of a significant number of places outside Hertfordshire and continuing links with Islington was agreed with the LEA at this time.
- Academic record of excellence, including long tradition of musical excellence and participation.
- Formal partial selection by examination and musical ability testing introduced in 1993.
- Admissions criteria for 2004 take account of all aspects of the Code of Practice as well as relevant legislation.
- Changes in admissions criteria have increased places available to local children who do not obtain offers through examination – 22 this year
- Criteria were amended following comments of the Admissions Forum.
- No concerns raised by local schools.
- No pupil from either Westfield nor Greenfields Schools has been disadvantaged by the admissions criteria of Dame Alice Owen's.
- The LEA is in process of redefining the Relevant Area for the county to create smaller relevant areas. Had the process been completed for this year, then the two schools lodging objections would have been outside the school's relevant area.
- Objections have no relevance to Dame Alice Owen's and are not appropriate.
- 1,200 applications each year demonstrate that parents value the opportunity to apply for a school with a very strong academic ethos.
- Number of children coming from outside the catchment area has been reduced from 35 to 13 in the last year – trend will continue.
- No parent from Greenfields JMI & Nursery School has ever applied for a place at Dame Alice Owen's.

- No applicant for Westfield Community Technology College as ever been offered a place at Dame Alice Owen's.
- It is not proven that pupils who do not obtain places at other schools will necessarily select the nearest school.
- Changes made to admissions criteria have had the effect sought by the previous Adjudicator.
- The music department has a proven record of success and excellence over many years.
- Students have been selected for national youth orchestra of Great Britain.
- School has completed a new performing arts centre. Music aptitude tests requires no previous knowledge of music or music theory.
- Exclusion rates reflect the pastoral systems in school and the positive work done by the school to support the inclusion initiative. No necessarily a measure of the nature of the intake.
- The school admits pupils with statements of special educational needs above the LEA average.
- Widespread ability in school including challenging children.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Partial selection on ability, combined with selection of up to 20 children on the basis of aptitude has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in Potters Bar. In 2003, no children for whom Dame Alice Owen's is their closest school, measured by the County Council's definition of shortest designated route and who ranked the school, failed to secure a place there, or at another school that they ranked on allocation day. All children who live in Potters Bar have been offered places at a school in the town, unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Dame Alice Owen's through partial selection is 35% by ability and 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 200. This means that Mount Grace will have a less balanced intake than would otherwise be the case with the potential for a negative impact on the school.

5.5 Goffs School

(a) The objection

This is about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

Dr J Versey, Headteacher, wrote to the Adjudicator on 15th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- No interview takes place with parents in the selection process.

- The aptitude test is marked by members of the modern languages department and moderated by them to ensure fairness is achieved.
- Governors scrutinising panel checks the criteria and moderating procedures.
- No applications for places have ever been received from a student living in Watford.
- The admissions procedure at Goffs does not affect Westfield Community Technology College.
- The aptitude test used at Goffs is a recognised test of aptitude.
- The test of aptitude does not necessarily mean high ability in languages.
- Aptitude in languages does not necessarily run in a family.
- Aptitude testing does not have an impact on free school meal entitlement at the school.
- Free school meal entitlement reflects the affluent area in which Goffs School is situated.
- Goffs School, like Westfield Community Technology College, takes very large numbers of casual admissions.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Selection by aptitude has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in the area in 2003. Furthermore, it was not the key reason why 48 children for whom Goffs is their closest school measured by the County Council's definition of shortest designated route and who ranked the school, failed to secure a place there or at another school that they ranked on allocation day. This number has now fallen to 44. This is related more to the feeder school criterion, which ensures a wider distribution of places at the school. It should also be noted that there is a shortage of places in Cheshunt which exacerbates this situation. The LEA is planning to increase the number of places at schools in the area, including Goffs. All children who live in Cheshunt have been offered places at a school in the town or in Hoddesdon, unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Goffs School, through partial selection is 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 205. Given the nature of Goffs and the data sets available to us, it is not possible to quantify the impact on the intake of Cheshunt and Turnford Schools.

5.6 Hertfordshire & Essex High School

(a) The objection

This is about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

Paula Harding, Chair of the Admissions Committee, wrote to the Adjudicator on 15th and 19th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- No aptitude tests are used and testing is for aptitude not ability
- Written submissions are requested and parents are given an information sheet to help them see what kind of information is sought.
- Admissions Committee ranks applications
- Objection is not about the way in which children are selected by aptitude, but to the fact it is happening. It is permitted under the Act
- Admissions criteria only affect Hertfordshire schools within consortium area
- Free school meals percentage reflects affluence of area – compares with averages for primary schools in area.
- Not reasonable to compare free school meals with county average
- Areas of aptitude are representative of local activities
- Determined arrangements have taken due not of the views of the Admissions Forum
- Selection by aptitude both legal and in line with the requirements of the Code.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Selection by aptitude has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in the town in 2003. All children who live in Bishop's Stortford have been offered places at a school in the town, unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Hertfordshire and Essex High School, through partial selection is 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 160. Given the nature of Hertfordshire & Essex and the data sets available to us, it is not possible to quantify the impact on the intake of Birchwood High (the only non-selective community school in the area).

5.7 Hockerill Anglo-European College

(a) The objection

This is about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

Dr Robert Guthrie, Principal, wrote to the Adjudicator on 15th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- The Department of Education at the University of Nottingham has validated the language test as one of aptitude rather than ability provided that this does not guarantee entry on to any particular course.
- Criteria accepted by local schools, by Hertfordshire and by Essex
- Relatively few free school meals in the area – misleading to compare with county average
- Co-operate with local schools in respect of exclusions
- Admissions have no effect on Westfield
- Objection is not about the way in which children are selected by aptitude, but to the fact it is happening. It is permitted under the Act

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Selection by aptitude has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in Bishop's Stortford in 2003. However, 22 children for whom Hockerill Anglo-European College is their closest school measured by the County Council's definition of shortest designated route and who ranked the school, failed to secure a place there or at another school that they ranked, on allocation day. This number has now fallen to 16. This is more a result of prioritising feeder schools, than offering 10 places on the basis of aptitude. All children who live in the area have been offered places at a school in Bishop's Stortford, unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Hockerill European College, through partial selection is 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 107. Given the nature of Hockerill and the data sets available to us, it is not possible to quantify the impact on the intake of Birchwood High (the only non-selective community school in the area).

5.8 The Leventhorpe School

(a) The objection

This is about the selection of 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

Roger Beeching, Chair of Governors, wrote to the Adjudicator on 16th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Criteria accepted by local schools, by Hertfordshire and by Essex
- Relatively few free school meals in the area – misleading to compare with county average
- Co-operate with local schools in respect of exclusions
- Admissions have no effect on Westfield
- Objection is not about the way in which children are selected by aptitude, but to the fact it is happening. It is permitted under the Act
- Administrative error in 2002 was dealt with openly and fairly.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Selection by aptitude at Leventhorpe has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in the priority area in 2003. Only 11 children for whom Leventhorpe is their closest school measured by the County Council's definition of shortest designated route and who ranked the school, failed to secure a place there or at another school that they ranked on allocation day. This number has since dropped to 9. This is more to do with the priority given to CM21 which means that some children for whom it is the closest school are unable to secure places. All children who live in the area have been offered places at Birchwood High (4.5 miles away) unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Leventhorpe School, through partial selection is 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 168. Given the nature of Leventhorpe and the data sets available to us, it is not possible to quantify the impact on the intake of other schools in the area.

5.9 Parmiter's School

(a) The Objection

This is about partial selection on ability and about the selection of up to 10 of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 3rd June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- The current criteria provide parents and students with greater choice in their applications for secondary schools.
- Important that parents can choose the most appropriate secondary school.
- School has strong supportive family ethos.
- Environment not available to other schools in the area.
- Criteria comply with the law.
- Adjudication in 1999 said there should be no need for criteria to be reviewed again.
- No objections by Hertfordshire LEA or other schools to the current criteria.
- Westfield's is too distant from Parmiter's for its intake to be affected by admissions criteria. Greatest factor affecting intake at Westfield is low number of parents applying and this is related to reputation in the community.
- Current criteria offer parents of students at Greenfields a greater choice of secondary school for their children.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 2nd June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Parmiter's provides excellent grounding.
- High academic expectations combined with broad social and cultural provision.
- Parmiter's attracts record numbers of applications.
- Admissions criteria representative of wishes of families in the area.

Jackie Glossop, Chair of Governors, wrote to the Adjudicator on 4th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- The admissions criteria of Parmiter's School make no impact on the objectors' schools because they are geographically remote. Only 24 applications were made to Parmiter's School from the WD18 postcode in 2002.
- No accepted allocations were made to families in the vicinity of the two objecting schools.
- The two criteria of Parmiter's School which are subject to the objection are entirely lawful.

- The 1999 Adjudication reduced selection of academic ability from 50% to 35% and asked the school to consider the use of external assessors irrespective of selection by aptitude. This has since been implemented.
- The current objections are the same as those for 2000 and the Adjudicator's determination then has set a precedence to be followed.
- There has been no objection from Hertfordshire LEA to the current determined admissions criteria for Parmiter's School.
- The governors responded positively to the request of their Hertfordshire admissions forum that the governors should consider the possibility of including children in public care within the admissions criteria.
- The LEA does not object to and therefore approves the determined admissions criteria for the school.
- Current admissions criteria of the school are popular with a majority of families who would consider expressing a preference and applying to the school.
- There is no housing within safe walking distance of the school – only 50 out of 1173 applicants in 2002 for whom Parmiter's is their closest school.
- St Michael's Catholic High School and Francis Combe School are both within half a mile of the school.
- It is not true that Parmiter's do not administer CATS – used for diagnostic purposes in May each year.
- Free school meals data is irrelevant since nothing prevents families eligible for free meals from applying to the school.
- Currently 71 students on SEN register at the school – school is partially selective, all ability.
- Criterion for academic ability has been deliberately placed low in the criteria ranks to ensure full spread of academic ability.
- Priority area for Westfield School is extremely extensive.
- Changing the admissions criteria for this school would not change the profile of the intake of Westfield.
- The school has selected 10% of its intake based on proven aptitude in music or sports since 1995.
- The criterion under its application complies with the Code of Practice.
- Specialism is based on specialist equipment and facilities provided, out of school activities and clubs, emphasis on music and sport in the curriculum

and the school's tradition in having a particular strength in music and sport.

- Evidence disproves statement that aptitude and assessment are covert tests of ability.
- Material facts and statistics presented by Westfield and Greenfield schools in their objection are mainly irrelevant and contain a number of inaccuracies.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 2nd June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- School's selection criteria is transparent, objective and fair.
- Pupils can apply and be accepted on their own merits.
- If selection on a geographical basis, her/his children would not have been able to apply.
- Present system gives a degree of choice and equality of opportunity.
- Parmiter's culture has developed over three hundred years and contributes to an educational diversity in the Watford area.
- The current selection criterion means that those who aspire to send their children to the school know that, irrespective of socio-economic status, they have a reasonable chance to do so through a transparent process.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Partial selection on ability, combined with selection of up to 18 children on the basis of aptitude has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in the town. In 2003 only 4 children for whom Parmiter's is their closest school measured by the County Council's definition of shortest designated route and who ranked the school, failed to secure a place there or at another school that they ranked on allocation day. This figure has not changed since allocation day. All children who live in Garston have been offered places at Parmiter's or Francis Combe, unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Parmiter's School through partial selection is 35% by ability and 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 185. This, in combination with the rules of other schools, means that non-selective schools will have a less balanced intake than would otherwise be the case with the potential for a negative impact.

5.10 Queens' School

(a) The objection

This is about partial selection on ability and about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

Terence James, Headteacher, wrote to the Adjudicator on 16th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Partial selection on the basis of ability / aptitude is not contrary to the Code of Practice.
- The system was in place at the beginning of the 1997-1998 school year.
- No objections to partial selection on ability / aptitude were raised at the Admissions Forum.
- The admissions criteria are designed to maintain the situation that Queens' is an all ability comprehensive school.
- The LEA boundary is irrelevant.
- Less than 1% of admissions are from out of county.
- The Code of Practice 2003 allows for up to 10% of pupils to be selected on the basis of aptitude.
- The Free School Meal percentage for Queens' is at the average for schools in the locality.
- The school's internal procedures and systems keep exclusion to low levels.
- The school's attendance figure is 92.1%, only 0.1% above OFSTED's required minimum for secondary schools.
- There are few casual admissions as the school is over-subscribed and has been since before partial selection was introduced.
- Many pupils from Greenfields School go to schools in Hillingdon because these schools are closer to their homes.
- It is the fact that there is no local school in South Oxhey that is a problem not the admission criteria of Queens' School.
- Approximately 8% of Queens' School pupils come from South Oxhey.
- Queens' School has an excellent working relationship with other local schools.
- No local child could have been disadvantaged by having to travel more than the statutory walking distance, in recent years, given the under subscription of some neighbouring schools.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Partial selection on ability, combined with selection of up to 26 children on the basis of aptitude has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in the town in 2003. Only 19 children for whom Queens' is their closest school measured by the County Council's definition of shortest designated route and who ranked the school, failed to secure a place there or at another school that they ranked on allocation day. This figure has since dropped to 10. All children who live in Bushey have been offered places at a school in the town, unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Queens' School through partial selection is 35% by ability and 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 262. This means that Bushey Hall will have a less balanced intake than would otherwise be the case with the potential for a negative impact on the school.

5.11 Rickmansworth School

(a) The objection

This is about partial selection on ability and about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

Dr J Anderson, Chairman of Governors and Dr S Burton, Headteacher, at Rickmansworth School wrote to the Adjudicator on 4th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Third time there has been an objection to admissions criteria of Rickmansworth School. Motivation of admissions policies is to allow parental choice through a system that is fair and objective.
- Children living near Rickmansworth School also live near Westfield, Watford Girls and Watford Boys schools.
- Some children in South West Herts do not live near any school so any criteria favouring local children is unfair to them. 50 children allocated places on nearness to the school in 2002 following reduction of admissions by ability criterion to 25% in 2001. Children living in Rickmansworth, Mill End and Maple Cross have equal opportunity under criteria 1 – 4. 2001 objection by parents at St Mary's School resulted in nineteen fewer children being admitted on ability – none were from St Mary's.
- The facts concerning SATs and CATs are broadly correct.
- Reject the argument that the value of what is done at Westfield School is less because of the absolute academic level of the pupils involved.

- Governors felt the balance of fairness was right when 35% were selected by ability. Reduction in admission by ability would aggravate unfair treatment of pupils from extreme South West of the county.
- Admission by aptitude is not unfair.
- School has been appointed a specialist school for performing arts from September 2003.
- Increasing dissatisfaction with outcome recently – 76 appeals this June.
- Demographic increase in 11 year olds with no increase in places at popular schools. Almost impossible to operate criterion based on distance from school in the area because of uneven geographical location, mixture of single-sex and co-educational schools, wide range of admitting authorities and large areas of green belt separating urban areas.
- Many children nearest Rickmansworth are also near alternative schools. Distance criterion almost inevitably militates against parental choice.
- The school has an academic tradition and ethos which is the basis of the school's overwhelming popularity. To compromise this academic emphasis is to threaten the principal attraction of the school.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) There is a shortage of places in this area and many children living in this part of Hertfordshire also apply to schools in Buckinghamshire. Buckinghamshire County Council allocates places on a later date than Hertfordshire, at which stage there is a reduction in the number of non-ranked allocations for Hertfordshire children. These factors contribute to the fact that 66 children for whom Rickmansworth is their closest Hertfordshire school (measured by the County Council's definition of shortest designated route) and who ranked the school, were unable to secure a place at any school that they ranked on allocation day in 2003. This figure has since dropped to 37. Children in this position have been offered places at Francis Combe School in Garston.

Given that 90 places were allocated to children for whom it was not their closest school, the current rules do not help children to secure a place at a local school. The situation could be alleviated if the school were to prioritise children for whom the school is their closest in Hertfordshire. For a small number in the south west tip of the county, their closest maintained school is John Penrose in Hillingdon. Although the admission rules of Rickmansworth School do not help local children to secure places at the school, this is not necessarily just the result of selection by ability. The County Council is looking to address the issue of shortage of places.

- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Rickmansworth through partial selection is 10% by aptitude and 25% on ability with a cohort of 185. This, in combination with the rules of other schools, means that non-selective schools have a less balanced intake than would otherwise be the case with the potential for negative impact.

5.12 St Clement Danes School

(a) The objection

This is about partial selection on ability and about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

John Heyward, Chairman of Governors at Christ Church C of E School, Chorleywood, wrote to the Adjudicator on 5th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- St Clement Danes allocates 10% of places on academic ability judged by submission of primary school reports and other evidence.
- Only school in the area which does not require the children to sit an 11+ test. Many parents would be disappointed if academically able children could not be accepted into a local school without taking a test.
- Truly an all-ability school and 10% selection on academic ability ensures comprehensive intake.
- Parental choice would be decreased if percentage of places given on academic ability were reduced.
- Children from Christ Church would not have gained places at the school if it had not been for criterion of aptitude in art and sport. Headteacher and governors of St Clement Danes always listen to a good case.
- Other schools in the area have admissions criteria on the grounds of “proven aptitude for music and measured by the highest grade and mark attained”.
- Aptitude provides an opportunity for a child from a poor family to have equal rank with others of a similar aptitude.
- Transition from primary to secondary school is smooth by existing admissions criteria.

J. Valentine, the Headteacher, wrote to the adjudicator on 10th June 2003 in response to the objection, making the following points:

- The school has followed the statutory rules with regard to consultation and determination of admission rules.

- Hertfordshire's Admission Forum lodged no objection to the schools selective criteria either on ability or aptitude.
- It is because the school wishes to remain a local school for local children of all abilities that it only selects 10% on ability and 10% on aptitude.
- The school believes that selection by ability of 10% does not skew the distribution in favour of the more academic student and therefore disadvantage the objecting schools.
- The 2002 Ofsted report said "Pupils of all levels of attainment enter the school at age 11. Overall their attainment is broadly average, as shown in testing conducted by the school and externally assessed"
- If selection by ability was skewing the distribution of intake it would follow that by 1998 when the first students taken in by the school under the selection criteria reached year 11 that the GCSE%A*-C grade would be higher, in fact the result was 59% which was lower than previous years.
- The improvements in the school's examination results are due to improved teaching, leadership and use of assessment data and not selection of 10% of students by academic ability.
- The value-added data for the last three years has shown high gradings. The high gradings for those who achieve 1A*-G is a reflection of the success of this truly comprehensive school.
- The student academic profile on entry continues to be average as the CAT scores show.
- The school caters for academic high fliers as well as approximately 100 students on the special education needs register. From September 2003 there will be 8 students with statements. The 2002 Ofsted said "The achievement of pupils with special educational needs in gaining one or more GCSE grades is very high and the school's performance is among the top 5% of schools in the country in attaining this standard".
- St Clement Danes selects 10% of students with an aptitude in Music, Art, Drama or Sport.
- The governors and trustees grant substantial finances to assist students who could not otherwise afford to buy instruments or have lessons, attend national and international Drama and Art tours and take part in Athletics warm weather training in Lanzarote.
- The school has the Arts Mark Silver Award and the Sports Mark Award.
- Excellence, as well as high levels of participation, is at the heart of Music, Sport, Art, and Drama at St Clements Danes.

- In selecting 10% by aptitude the governors did not want to lose sight of the comprehensive nature of the school. They did not want to test for proven aptitude as measured by a minimum grade or audition.
- The number of children receiving free school meals reflects the socio-economic geography of the area around the school which has some of the most expensive housing in the country outside London.
- The low level of excluded children is not a result of partial selection on ability and aptitude but on high expectations for behaviour, training received by the school's pastoral managers, the structure of the pastoral system and the high level of communication with parents.
- Given that the school is on the Hertfordshire/Buckinghamshire border and being mindful of the Greenwich judgement there are bound to be some out-of county children at the school.
- As Chorleywood in Hertfordshire is a "reserved catchment area" for Buckinghamshire grammar schools rather than the school receiving large numbers of talented out-of-county children does in fact "lose" a number of academically able students from Chorleywood to Buckinghamshire.
- The distance between St Clement Danes and Westfield is 10.1km and Greenfields 12.4km.
- Within South West Hertfordshire St Clement Danes is the furthest school from Westfield or Greenfields and cannot be said to be hindering the intakes of those schools.
- The casual admissions criteria take no account of ability or aptitude.
- 4% of the September 2002 entry scored below 80 in the CATs.
- 16.3% of the September 2002 cohort came from out-of-county.
- The selective proportion is the lowest of the selective schools in the area.
- The school is oversubscribed. It is inevitable in this era of parental choice, where a school is popular and oversubscribed that there will be disappointed families.
- St Clement Danes wishes to serve its local community and has extensive curriculum links with its local primary schools.
- The school is conscious of its responsibility to admit as many of the local children to the school as would want to come. The school is currently in consultation with Hertfordshire Children, Schools and Families to utilise a DfES Basic Need grant to facilitate an extra form of entry.
- Mr John Heyward, Chairman of Governors, of Christ Church Church Of England School, wrote to the Adjudicator on 5 June 2003 in response to the objection, making the following points:

- St Clement Danes allocate 10% of places on academic ability.
- It is the only school in the area that does not require children to sit an 11+ test.
- Many parents value the fact that there is no test.
- Parents of Christ Church School would feel that their parental choice was decreased if the percentage of places given on academic ability were reduced.
- Children from this school who had aptitude in art or sport gained a place that would not have done so under any other criteria.
- Other schools in the area require Grade 3 in music to show proven aptitude. Parents are having their children tutored from the age of 5 to achieve the grade.
- It is in keeping with the ethos of St Clement Danes that aptitude rather than proven aptitude is required. This gives an opportunity for a child from a poor family to have equal rank with others of a similar aptitude.
- St Clement Danes is our nearest secondary school.
- The existing admissions criteria enable places to be given to most children from our school who apply for a place.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) There is a shortage of places in this area and many children living in this part of Hertfordshire also apply to schools in Buckinghamshire. Buckinghamshire County Council allocates places on a later date than Hertfordshire, at which stage there is a reduction in the number of non-ranked allocations for Hertfordshire children. These factors contribute to the fact that 14 children for whom St Clement Danes is their closest school measured by the County Council's definition of shortest designated route and who ranked the school, failed to secure a place there or at another school that they ranked on allocation day. This figure has since dropped to 9. Children in this position have been offered places at Francis Combe School in Garston. It is possible that partial selection on ability, combined with selection of up to 17 children on the basis of aptitude may have prevented local children from being offered a local secondary school.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to St Clement Danes School through partial selection is 10% by ability and 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 178. Given the nature of St Clement Danes and the data sets available to us, it is not possible to quantify the impact on the intake of other schools.

5.13 Watford Grammar School for Boys

(a) The objection

This is about partial selection on ability and about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 27th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Lives outside immediate catchment area.
- Sons flourishing because of balanced school body, as a result of current admission rules.
- School acclaimed nationally
- Shame to tamper with a system which works remarkably well in its current form.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator, and received on 9th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Have chosen the boys Grammar School due to its academic ethos, single-sex and accessibility from Radlett.
- Parental choice of school greatly reduced if rules are changed.
- Radlett does not have a secondary school.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 22nd May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Academic, sporting and pastoral excellence.
- Should not dilute academic ethos.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 29th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Criteria offers large number of boys a chance of an excellent education.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 22nd May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Change would have negative effect on the ethos.
- Excellent, well run school – highest standards of teaching for boys in area.
- Change would be for the worst.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 2nd June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Current admissions criteria are perfectly adequate.

- History of producing men of great all-round skills/stature.
- Very sound academic education.
- Reputation of achieving amongst best academic results nationally.
- Selection process must be continued in order to maintain academic ethos.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 4th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Do not wish to see academic ethos change.
- Current criteria are objective and fair.
- Long standing and nationally recognised academic ethos.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 2nd June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Concerned if places allocated on geography at expense of academic and musical ability.
- Changes to criteria would severely limit choice of secondary schools for some parents.
- Changes would lower present excellent academic ethos.
- Already shortage of truly excellent state schools.
- Living in Pinner, Watford Grammar School for Boys is only viable option of an excellent state school.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 1st June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Present criteria very fair way of admittance.
- Gives parent opportunity to choose appropriate educational establishment.
- Changes would deprive children from a very wide area of the right to choose.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 27th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Changes will destroy quality and excellence and make these values and associated ethos unavailable to everyone.
- Produces excellence – will be lost with change.

- Children brought up to have personal discipline, a sense of objective and an academic outlook.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 4th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- School achieves excellent results.
- Delivers well-balanced, well-educated youngsters.
- Excellence derived from admissions criteria.
- Route for children from Pinner through selection – change will close route.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 1st June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Strong support for existing criteria.
- Children benefit from a strongly academic education.
- Academic excellence.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 30th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Very popular, due to being centre of musical and academic excellence.
- Right environment and stimulation to stretch bright children.
- Criteria are fair and objective.
- Criteria maintain traditional geographical composition.
- Criteria help to maintain long-standing and nationally recognised academic ethos.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 20th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Do not change academic ethos.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 9th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- 10% of places on grounds of musical aptitude is permitted under current legislation. The school gives excellent teaching and support in this field.
- 35% of places on grounds of academic ability strikes at what the school stands for - a single-sex academic school.

- The school has never been a “local” school. The Governors have always sought to admit children from a wide catchment area.
- The school’s natural catchment area should be any place from which the school is the closest or most convenient single-sex school.
- An adverse effect of using proximity to the school as a significant admissions criteria is that move in with friends, rent properties or even commit fraud.
- The fairest way to select the right children for this school is to test them for academic ability.
- Any school that turns away 70-80% of applicants will inevitably disappoint a large number of pupils and parents, some of whom will be “local”.
- Changing the admissions criteria will simply replace one group of disappointed people with another, unless the character of the school is destroyed in the process.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 9th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Changing the current admissions criteria will lower academic standards.
- Boys come from a wide area and integrate with different ethnical and social environments.
- Changing the criteria will bring a more elites society, as rich families will send their children to independent schools.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Partial selection on ability has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in the town in 2003. All children who live in Watford have been offered places at a school in Watford, unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Watford Grammar School for Boys through partial selection is 35% by ability and 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 180. This, in combination with the rules of other schools, means that non-selective schools have a less balanced intake than would otherwise be the case with the potential for negative impact

5.14 Watford Grammar School for Girls

(a) The objection

This is about partial selection on ability and about the selection of up to 10% of places by aptitude.

(b) Response by the school

Mrs Helen Hyde, the Headmistress, wrote to the Adjudicator on 2nd June 2003 in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Selection by ability is not contrary to the Code of Practice.
- If the school did not select by ability there is no evidence that pupils who would have gone to Watford Grammar School for Girls would select Westfield. Many would choose the private sector.
- Virtually no Watford based pupil is more than 3 miles from any of the secondary schools in the area.
- There are spare places in schools in the Watford area.
- Admission appeals are seldom based, either largely or solely, on issues of proximity to the school.
- Very few students at Watford Grammar School for Girls live more than 5 miles from the centre of Watford. Single sex schools have to be able to serve a wider area than co-educational schools to enable parents to exercise choice.
- The low number of pupils entitled to Free School Meals is an accidental consequence of the admission policy as is the fact that a high proportion of students are from ethnic minority backgrounds – 18 to 25%.
- The claim that assessments for musical aptitude is implicit selection by family background is untrue and irrelevant. Family background is not known.
- Casual admissions are not necessarily pupils with behavioural problems.
- The fact that Watford Grammar School for Girls does not permanently exclude pupils is not a result of its admission rules but of the school's inclusion policy.
- Westfield's points seem to refer to the 1999 Code of Practice not that of 2003.
- Watford Grammar School for Girls has worked closely with Westfield School to the mutual benefit of students.
- Westfield's case is not endorsed by the Local Admissions Forum and there were no complaints from parents.
- Some pupils in Watford choose to attend Hillingdon Schools as they are nearer to their homes than Greenfields School.
- The LEA boundary is irrelevant.

A parent from Radlett wrote to the Adjudicator on 22nd May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Change of entrance criteria would greatly lower standards.

- No other girls school in admissions area

A parent from Radlett wrote to the Adjudicator on 23rd May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Limited opportunities to attend single sex school – change would reduce opportunities further.
- Watford Grammar School has important role as a local school – links should be maintained.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 23rd May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Criteria are objective and fair and maintain geographical composition of school population.
- Change would deprive girls from benefitting from type of education Watford Grammar School for Girls is skilled at providing.
- Change would limit right of parents to choose.
- Do not want academic ethos to change.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 21st May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Present system gives opportunities regardless of social background.
- Provides right environment for academically able.
- Change would adversely affect what the school does well.
- Change would remove meritocratic ladder.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 22nd May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Tests are appreciated by the local population.
- Selection at 35% does not preclude those with a real local reason (many are local children).
- 35% is too low.

A member of staff of the school wrote to the Adjudicator on 4th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Watford Grammar School for Girls is in the heart of a vibrant multi-cultural town.

- Large percentage of pupils come from ethnic minorities and from low income families.
- Provides first class education for those who cannot afford to pay.
- Government's recommendations and educational policies are said to celebrate diversity.
- Unique positive learning environment.
- Social justice is the founding principle of the school.
- Able to prepare and send out young women with confidence gained by high academic achievement and strong personal support to take their place in positions of responsibility.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 5th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Percentage of girls entering WGSG by academic ability should not be cut.
- Tradition of aiming for academic excellence should be encouraged.
- Not all children academically inclined and need to be encouraged to develop diversibilities but not in the same schools.
- School has proven long record of achieving high academic standards and scores very highly on added value, reducing the percentage of girls entering with academic ability would undermine the ethos of the school. The school has not changed the objective assessment for assessing aptitude for music since the previous Adjudication. Selection by aptitude is not contrary to the DfES' Code of Practice on Admissions.
- Girls with proven aptitude for music will encourage others at the school to follow them. The school has achieved national recognition for its work and is a beacon school.
- School has now gained visual arts college status.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 9th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- For the high academic record to be maintained, the admissions criteria must not change.
- A change in admissions criteria would deprive parents in the locality of a much sort after type of secondary school and would limit parental choice.
- There is a waiting list of approximately 50 for each year group.
- Academically able girls refused a place at Watford Girls would not automatically go to other local schools.

- The tests are administered by an outside agency and are objective and fair.
- The school has no knowledge of the girl's background and selects on results alone.
- The percentage admitted from the tests helps to maintain the geographical composition of the school and academic ethos.
- I wish my third daughter to follow the first two to Watford Girls.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 7th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- I have one daughter at Watford Girls and hope my second daughter will also go there.
- The academic excellent the school produces should be valued by the community.
- Grammar schools cater for a section of pupils that value their academic ethos.
- A change in admissions criteria would reduce choice for parents and pupils to select a certain type of education that would benefit their child.
- A school with a national reputation for its academic ethos may decline in its standards.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 6th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- As a parent of two Watford Girls object to the selection process being changed.
- Girls achieve their highest potential.
- Girls know they are privileged and perform.
- Girls from a wide area benefit from the education provided.

(c) Officer Comment

- (i) Partial selection on ability has not prevented local children from being offered a secondary school place in the town. All children who live in Watford have been offered places at a school in Watford, unless they secured a higher ranked school elsewhere.
- (ii) The percentage of children admitted to Watford Grammar School for Girls through partial selection is 35% by ability and 10% by aptitude with a cohort of 180. This, in combination with the rules of other schools, means that non-selective schools have a less balanced intake

than would otherwise be the case with the potential for negative impact.

5.15 Responses to the objection against the admission rules of Watford Grammar School for Boys & Watford Grammar School for Girls made by primary schools and by parents.

The Headteacher of Fair Field Junior School, wrote to the Adjudicator on 22nd May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- The present use of post codes to allocate places could be discriminatory to Radlett parents
- Testing is the only means by which parents in Radlett stand some chance of getting a secondary school place for their child.
- If the objection by Westfield and Greenfield schools is upheld, then fewer places would be available to children from Radlett.
- Urge the Adjudicator to reject the objection.

The Headteacher of Christ Church C of E School, Chorleywood, wrote to the Adjudicator on 15th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Alarmed at suggestion that partial selection might be decreased from 35%.
- Would lead to a decrease in parental choice for many parents.
- Watford Grammar Schools are only choice of single-sex school for Chorleywood parents.

Mrs S M Taylor, Headteacher of Newberries Primary School, wrote on behalf of the governing body to the Adjudicator on 4th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Changing current admission policies would have serious impact on secondary transfer opportunities in Radlett.
- Radlett does not have a secondary school.
- About a quarter of the pupils from Newberries transfer to the Watford Grammar Schools and have done so for many years. Secondary transfer is problematic in South West Herts with the number of children receiving their first preference far below county norms.
- Many parents wish to send their children to a single-sex school.
- Parental concerns about the difficulties of secondary transfer already impacting on numbers on roll at Newberries. If the objection by Westfield and Greenfields were to be upheld, logically they would then object to the

admission criteria of Parmiter's, Bushey Meads and Queens' – this would be disastrous for Radlett pupils.

- Keep the status quo which would at least not decrease opportunities.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 29th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Changing criteria would substantially reduce the number of places available to Radlett children in single-sex schools.
- Important that there is an element of parental choice as to secondary schooling.
- Radlett does not have its own secondary school within its own locality. Changing criteria could well lead to parents sending children out of the area for primary schooling or even not moving into Radlett.

The parent of a child at Newberries Primary School wrote to the Adjudicator, which was received on 9th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Academic ethos and reputation of Watford Grammar Schools are excellent and nationally recognised to be so.
- Criteria allow for objective and highly successful selection.
- Strong traditional connections with neighbouring areas.
- Problems for parents in Radlett at secondary transfer will be appreciably worsened should the objection be upheld.

The parent of a child at Newberries Primary School wrote to the Adjudicator on 29th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Newberries School and Radlett have long standing connection with the Watford Grammar Schools.
- Radlett has no local secondary school.
- Reduction in the limited choice of secondary opportunities would have a major impact on local children.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 5th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Disagree with proposed changes to the entrance criteria for the Watford Grammar Schools.
- Would reduce the long-term standards at the schools.

- Would penalise children living slightly further away from the schools outside the Watford post codes, despite the Watford Grammar Schools being the closest schools to our home.
- Other schools in the area do not have the same standards.
- The schools allow academically bright children an opportunity to gain a high standard of education.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 27th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- No quality secondary school which acts as a feeder for children from Newberries School.
- No justifiable reason to terminate method of selection.
- Already extremely difficult for children to gain admission on grounds of academic ability and musical aptitude.
- The Grammar Schools have a proven track record making them desirable as a place for quality education.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator, and received on 9th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Grammar Schools recognised as schools of excellence and rewarded with beacon status.
- Very serious implications for Radlett children.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 6th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Grammar Schools have a tradition of achieving the highest academic excellence and producing exceptionally self-possessed and able young adults.
- Select pupils who can cope with the rigours of the curriculum and bring their own particular qualities.
- The schools have sense of community derived from desire by pupils, staff and parents to reach the highest levels of achievement.
- Children with ability have the right to enter a learning environment of this quality.
- Not every child would be suited to an education at the Grammar Schools.
- Unfair for a child to enter the schools simply because it is geographically closest, only to find that she/he cannot cope.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 4th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Change in admissions criteria would greatly reduce or remove the number of places available to Radlett children in single-sex schools.
- Would be a knock-on effect on other schools in St Albans and Watford areas.
- No secondary school in Radlett.
- Newberries Primary has traditional links with Watford Grammar Schools.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 4th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Removing partial selection by ability and aptitude would deprive a lot of children from all backgrounds and nationalities from having the opportunity of being educated at Beacon Schools.
- Produced some of the best results in the country.
- Allows state school children to go to the finest universities.
- Parents like the freedom to choose a school with good academic results and also single-sex education.
- Schools are the nearest single-sex high schools to Radlett.
- Would put more pressure on St Albans schools.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator, and received on 9th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- No secondary schools in Radlett.
- Historical ties with Watford Grammar Schools in Radlett.
- Very few single-sex schools in the area.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 22nd May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Schools are in urban areas with rich ethnic mix, surrounded by white middle class suburbs.
- Allows parents to send children to more racially and socially balanced schools.
- Common thread is desire to learn.
- Pupils will suffer if balance is altered.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 22nd May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- If entrance criteria is changed, then the standards of the schools will be lowered.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 3rd June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Criteria which are more based on geographical location and admit more children of mixed ability, then the schools cease to be of high academic standards.
- Grammar schools have excellent academic standards to cater for children with high academic ability.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 2nd June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Very many people are extremely satisfied with the way the schools currently select. Watford Grammar School for Boys has been the right school for bright son.
- May apply for a community place for daughter at Watford Grammar School for Girls.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 3rd June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Son due to join boys school in September and Year 2 daughter hopes to go to girls school in the future.
- Academic ethos of school should not change.
- Schools are exceptionally good at providing appropriate education environment for local children.
- Criteria allows school to select fairly from a great many applicants.
- Schools recognised nationally for academic ethos.
- Changes to criteria would limit parents right to choose from different types of secondary schools.
- Changes to criteria would stop local children from benefiting from this type and quality of education.
- Would not be right to deprive local children with academic and musical abilities the chance to receive the kind of education tailored to their abilities.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 2nd June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Criteria seem to be the most objective and fair means of selecting from a very large number of applicants.
- Academic standards largely the result of selecting proportion of pupils on academic ability.
- Change in admissions criteria would change the nature of the schools and it would not be possible to maintain the current standards.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 6th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Both my wife and I deliberately moved to Radlett so that if our child had an academic bias there would be a chance of their attending the Watford Grammar Schools.
- Both my wife and I feel that our daughter would fare better in a single-sex school.
- Radlett children will suffer if the admissions criteria are changed.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 6th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- A change to the admission rules would be to the detriment of Radlett children.
- Would like daughters to have the chance to attend a single-sex state school with academic ethos.
- The historic links between Radlett and Watford Grammar schools should be allowed to continue.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 9th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Children from Newberries Primary School should be able to continue to apply for the Watford Grammar Schools.
- Friends have been delighted with the Watford Grammar Schools positive ethos and high academic standards.
- There is no secondary school in Radlett.
- The choice of single-sex secondary schools further afield is already very limited.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 7th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Any change in admission policy would have a detrimental effect on Radlett children.

- We moved to be near good schools.
- Radlett has no secondary school.
- We feel it is important to maintain a high academic environment within the local state system.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 6th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Radlett children would be severely disadvantaged if there was a change to admissions criteria.
- There is a lack of a secondary school within Radlett and very few single-sex schools in the area.
- There is a long standing and traditional link between Radlett and Watford Grammar Schools.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 9th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- We need more single-sex grammar schools.
- I read that teachers find it hard to teach mixed ability classes.
- I went to grammar school and do not feel that I would have done as well at a comprehensive.
- Why is selection allowed on grounds of faith but not ability?

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 9th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- If the admissions criteria were changed, pupils from Newberries Primary School in Radlett would be disadvantaged.
- Radlett has no secondary school.
- There would be a diminished choice of schools for Radlett children.
- The options for single-sex schools would be reduced.
- Wish children to attend grammar school as I did.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 8th May in response to the objection, making the following points:

- Pupils thrive in a caring atmosphere with high expectations.
- The schools attract a very high calibre of staff.

- The way forward is to encourage schools to have subject specialisms.
- The comprehensive system has failed.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 6th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- It is right to select on academic ability.
- It is easier and more financially viable.
- More able children are held back by less able children.
- The current system gives a reasonable chance for schools to provide the education required by individual pupils.

A parent wrote to the Adjudicator on 4th June in response to the objection, making the following points:

- We believe the admission criteria are right.
- Have a son at Watford Grammar and wish two younger sons to go there and daughter to go to Watford Girls for a highly academic education.
- Current system allows children from local and traditional areas to attend the school.
- Negative effect if intake diluted.