



Sir William Romney's School

Mr M McShane
Headteacher
Stroud High School
Beards Lane
Cainscross Road
Stroud
Gloucestershire
GL5 4HF

25th February 2015
CoG/SM/jac

Dear Mr McShane,

Response to the Consultation on the Published Admission Number from September 2016 for Stroud High School

We are writing on behalf of the Governors of Sir William Romney's School in response to your planned 25% increase in the PAN for Stroud High School from September 2016. We are asking that you reconsider this proposal and we will be writing to the Governors at Marling School to ask that they also reconsider the similar planned increase in their PAN.

We very strongly feel that your proposal will have a damaging effect on Sir William Romney's School and also on other schools in the Cotswolds and Stroud. The combined increase in PAN for both Stroud High School and Marling will mean an additional 300 11-16 school places in the local area by 2021. The impact on the roll of Sir William Romney's School could be significant and this will affect both our funding and the profile of our intake.

It is clear from your letter to parents of 15th December that while you do make reference to increased demand for places the main reason for this increase is to secure additional funding for the school at a time of increasing uncertainty and difficulty around school budgets. You will be aware that the school places forecasts from the Local Authority clearly show that there will continue to be surplus places in both Stroud and the Cotswolds until 2021/22 and that the number of surplus places will increase in both areas in the short term. The latest forecast figures show a reduction in 11-16 children of 8% in the Cotswolds by 2017 from what is already a very low base. Therefore your justification for increasing your PAN because of increased demand for places is not based on additional numbers of children but purely on preferences and the demand from parents for places in selective schools.

All Gloucestershire schools are poorly funded as a consequence of Gloucestershire being one of the lowest funded local authorities. Given that there will be no additional 11-16 age children in the area in the medium or long term (and certainly not over the period in which the PAN increase will evolve) then you will, in effect, be robbing Peter to pay Paul. In monetary terms this would equate to the transfer of £3.6 million in school funding from the comprehensive schools by 2021 and then £1.2 million each year thereafter. This will create significant financial difficulties for the comprehensive schools in the area. Unlike the grammar schools, at SWR, we do not have the luxury of being able to plan for a consistent student entry each year as a consequence of there being surplus school places. We are already faced with a difficult financial situation, as are other schools locally and this will exacerbate this. We strongly believe that your actions could bring the financial viability of schools into question and you need to understand that this will be one of the consequences of the increase in PAN that Stroud High School and Marling School are proposing.

Lowfield Road, Tetbury, Gloucestershire GL8 8AE

T: 01666 502378 | F: 01666 505864 | E: admin@swr.gloucs.sch.uk | www.swr.gloucs.sch.uk

Sir William Romney's School, a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales under number 7694641, registered office: Lowfield Road, Tetbury, Gloucestershire GL8 8AE

One of the greatest challenges faced by Gloucestershire schools is the underachievement of disadvantaged children and comprehensive schools have a much higher proportion and numbers of these students than do selective schools. These are the very schools that will be placed in a more challenging financial position as a consequence of this action and this will further disadvantage these children. It is no exaggeration to say that the comprehensive schools in the closest proximity to Stroud will increasingly take on a social and attainment profile more akin to secondary modern schools rather than comprehensives. The academic profile of our intake on entry is already significantly below average based on KS2 prior attainment as a consequence of the already high proportion of selection at age 11 in the area and this will inevitably decline further. An increase in grammar school places will be educationally and socially divisive as, inevitably, the additional children at the two grammar schools will come from more advantaged and affluent backgrounds.

You will be aware from the letter from Jo Grills and Paul McLain that the Local Authority has reservations about an increase in school places in areas where there are surplus places. This letter makes reference to the inefficient use of resources and the challenge this would present for schools in managing their budgets because of a reduction in pupil numbers. It ends by asking schools that are increasing their PAN to consider the impact on the school system as a whole and on other schools.

To conclude we would ask that you reconsider this proposal as we believe that it will have an extremely damaging effect on other schools in Stroud and the Cotswolds and therefore on the educational chances and opportunities for all of the children in these schools.

Yours sincerely

Steven Mackay
Headteacher

Stephen Hirst
Chair of Governors

Copy to: Mrs J Grills, Director Education, Learning and Libraries
Cllr Paul McLain, Children & Young People and Strategic Commissioning
Governors of Stroud High School