

# Richmond upon Thames Admissions Forum

## Report on Richmond upon Thames's mixed community secondary schools' **Linked Schools Policy**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** This report was commissioned by Richmond upon Thames Admissions Forum at its meeting on 9 February 2011.
- 1.2** The Forum had considered the responses to the consultation on the authority's proposed admission arrangements for the community schools for 2012 entry, and had agreed that as there were only three mixed community schools in the borough, it would be timely for their principal oversubscription criterion to be reviewed.
- 1.3** This report builds upon a November 2003 report by Cambridge Education Associates into the Linked Schools Policy (LSP) and contains much information that was previously included in a previous (May 2006) report to the Forum.
- 1.4** The purpose of the report is to: outline the history of the LSP; consider how recent intakes for the mixed community secondary schools could have looked without the LSP; and present options on its future.
- 1.5** Whilst the author has made every effort to track down relevant documents to ensure the accuracy of this report, some reports and papers have inevitably been destroyed or mislaid during the length of time that the LSP has been in existence.

# 1. The history of the Linked Schools Policy

## 1990-1991

- 2.1 The admissions policy for the borough's community secondary schools for 1990 admissions gave priority firstly to children resident in Richmond upon Thames and then to children resident elsewhere <sup>1</sup>.
- 2.2 By 1990, though, local authorities had absorbed the full ramifications of the High Court Judgement against the London Borough of Greenwich in 1989 <sup>2</sup>. The Greenwich Judgement established that it was unlawful for a local authority to give priority in a school's oversubscription criteria on the basis of a child's residence within the authority's administrative area. In other words, whilst it was – and remains – lawful to use distance from home to school as a criterion, applicants from outside the authority's area should otherwise be considered for admission no less favourably than children living within the area.
- 2.3 Following the judgement, the authority experienced a considerable increase in the number of applications for its secondary schools from out-borough residents. It was feared that the schools' popularity, the elongated shape of the borough and the schools' relative proximity to the borough's boundaries would lead to an excessively large number of children from outside the borough obtaining places in the borough's schools. This would upset the traditional patterns of transfer between primary schools (both within and outside the borough) and the borough's community secondary schools, and could lead to a shortage of places for in-borough residents. The authority therefore established the Linked School Policy (LSP) in order to encourage a fair degree of stability in its admission patterns. The LSP also ensured that a large number of Year 6 pupils would reap the benefits of educational continuity by transferring with their peers. The authority believed that the community at large would be made more cohesive as a result.
- 2.4 The LSP for 1991 designated certain junior and primary schools as being 'linked schools'.

Where a minimum of 10 pupils and/or 25% of the fourth year junior group of a primary school has been admitted to a secondary school in September of any one of the years 1987 to 1990 inclusive, or

Where a primary school falls into a zone determined by placing the secondary school at the centre of two axes running north/south and east/west for as total distance of three miles each. The zone created by this method would be three miles square and cover a total area of nine square miles for each mixed county [community] secondary school. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, *Admission to Secondary School 1990*, p.14.

<sup>2</sup> R v London Borough of Greenwich, ex parte John Ball Primary School, 1989.

<sup>3</sup> LB Richmond upon Thames, *Admission to Secondary School 1991*, pp.13-14.

- 2.5** The total number of links created was 114 of which 71 were from primary schools in Richmond upon Thames, 18 from Hounslow, 13 from Kingston upon Thames, 11 from Wandsworth and one from Surrey (some primary schools were linked to more than one secondary school). Waldegrave School for Girls was linked to all of the primary schools within the six zones outlined in 2.4 above.
- 2.6** The charts in Appendix A (pages 22-27) show the linked primary schools for each of the borough's six mixed community secondary schools from 1991 to 2007.
- 2.7** A footnote to the 1991 criterion regarding linked schools (see paragraph 2.4) stated that: "After 1991 those primary schools that do not fulfil the criteri[on]...for two consecutive years including September 1990 will cease to be regarded as linked schools" <sup>4</sup>. Although it was not stated explicitly within the *Admissions to Secondary School* brochure at that time, a primary school without a link that transferred sufficient children to a particular secondary school could establish a link for the future. That principle – though not the qualifying number – has been in place ever since.

## 1992

- 2.8** For 1992 entry, the authority revised the LSP to enable "a balance of places available for children who attend non-link primary schools after children from link schools have been accommodated" <sup>5</sup>, having undertaken an analysis of the 1991 admissions process which showed that "if the links for 1992 had been applied in 1991, upwards of one in seven places at Richmond secondary schools would have been available for children from non-link primary schools" <sup>6</sup>. All seven community secondary schools had been oversubscribed at some or each part of the 1991 admissions process.
- 2.9** Consequently, the total number of links for 1992 entry was reduced from 114 to 46; of which 27 were from primary schools in Richmond upon Thames, five from Hounslow, five from Kingston upon Thames, eight from Wandsworth and one from Surrey. No primary schools were linked to more than one secondary school. That principle has continued ever since (see paragraph 2.17).
- 2.10** The 'quadrant system' – four geographical areas covering all of Richmond Borough and part of the five neighbouring local authorities, to which places were allocated according to demand from each area – was introduced for admission to Waldegrave School for Girls in 1992. However, priority was still given to "girls attending a link primary school" (after girls with

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<sup>4</sup> LB Richmond upon Thames, *Admission to Secondary School 1991*, p.14.

<sup>5</sup> LB Richmond upon Thames, *Admission to Secondary School 1992*, p.15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

a sister in attendance at the school at the time of entry and girls who were daughters of teachers employed at the school, but before girls on distance from home to school within the quadrants).<sup>7</sup>

## 1993

**2.11** A review of the LSP in May 1992 involved consultation with all schools within the borough and, after considering a policy based solely on where children lived, reached the conclusion that “the link school policy was one which, in giving recognition to the strongest aspects of the pattern of previous application from primary schools for secondary school places, was likely to benefit the greatest possible number of parents”.<sup>8</sup>

**2.12** The consultation document for that review made it clear that:

The linked school policy was NOT intended to tie pupils to their linked secondary school. On the contrary, the detail of the policy was devised (on the basis of past enrolment patterns) in a way which it was hoped would ensure that a proportion of places would remain available for children transferring from non-linked schools.<sup>9</sup>

It also noted that the ‘difficulties’ of implementing the LSP had “been greater than anticipated, especially in the Teddington area where, few places [had] been left for non-linked pupils”.<sup>10</sup> The report went on to note that:

There seems only a limited prospect of primary schools changing or gaining new link status. (Some borough primary schools do not presently qualify for link status because insufficient pupils transfer from them to any one secondary school and there seems little possibility that such a link can be established on the basis of historical patterns of transfer alone.)<sup>11</sup>

Another trend was reported:

There have been instances of parents transferring children between schools in the final primary year in order to gain linked status with their preferred secondary school. Apart from the adverse effects on children and schools, such

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>8</sup> LB Richmond upon Thames, *Admission to Secondary School 1993*, p.14.

<sup>9</sup> Report to governing bodies of all borough schools regarding criteria for admission to oversubscribed secondary schools in September 1993, May 1992, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

transfers have caused complaints that their chances of gaining places on a non-linked status have been reduced as a result.<sup>12</sup>

Despite those problems and evidence from appeals in 1992 that some parents had misunderstood the LSP, its “significant drawbacks” were considered to be much less serious than the “difficulties of operating a policy based purely on proximity across the borough when the Council cannot give priority to borough residents”.<sup>13</sup>

- 2.13** Although five primary schools gained links for 1993 entry, the basic principles underlying the LSP did not change between 1992 and 1993. A footnote to the criteria was introduced to state that: “Children attending a link school who move away for a temporary period and who move back within two years to the same or to a nearby address after the transfer deadline will be treated as still attending the link school concerned.”<sup>14</sup>
- 2.14** A letter from the then Chairman of Governors of Rectory School (now Hampton Community College) stated the governing body’s concerns regarding the LSP; namely that it made it “impossible actively to recruit pupils from a wider area, as for example from Stanley Road Junior school, even when it [Rectory] is the nearest school to the children’s homes”.<sup>15</sup> The letter also stated governors’ concern at the comparatively small number of primary schools linked to Rectory. (That concern is still evident today, from very similar comments made by the school’s current headteacher at the last admissions Forum meeting<sup>16</sup>.)

## **1994-1996**

- 2.15** The criteria for the establishment of linked primary schools were amended from those outlined in the 1991 brochure (see paragraph 2.4) to the following “Link schools are formed when 25% of top juniors, or 15 children (whichever is the lower), transfer from a primary to a secondary school.”<sup>17</sup> The change did not have a significantly large effect upon the number or pattern of the linked primary schools for 1994 entry.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Report to governing bodies of all borough schools regarding criteria for admission to oversubscribed secondary schools in September 1993, May 1992, p.3

<sup>14</sup> LB Richmond upon Thames, *Admission to Secondary School 1993*, p.29.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from David Cornwell to Lynda Wilson, 16 July 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of Richmond upon Thames Admissions Forum, 9 February 2006.

<sup>17</sup> LB Richmond upon Thames, *Admission to Secondary School 1994*, p.32.

## 1997-2000

- 2.16** For 1997 entry, an ad hoc sub-committee of the authority's Education Committee recommended that the criterion regarding the LSP should be removed from the oversubscription criteria for Waldegrave.
- 2.17** That sub-committee also looked at the issue of a 'double link' and decided that:

An existing link always takes priority *except* where the number of pupils transferring from Year 6 to the new link school for two years running (a) is more than 15 or 25% of the cohort (whichever is the lower) and (b) is greater than the number transferring to the existing link school. Only where both of these criteria are met would a change to the existing link occur.<sup>18</sup>

This 'double link' rule has been invoked just once, when Chase Bridge Primary gained a link to Orleans Park and lost its link to Whitton for 2005 entry, following the fulfilment of the criteria set out by the sub-committee.

## 2001-2002

- 2.18** In 2000, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames formally objected to Richmond Borough's determined admission arrangements for 2001 entry, on the grounds that Kingston's new primary school, Fern Hill, had been refused 'link school status' to Grey Court. Kingston argued that as a new school Fern Hill could not, at that point, use historical patterns of transfer to form a link. The authority defended its position by stating that Fern Hill's problem had been caused not by being a new school but by Grey Court's oversubscription. It was not discriminating against Fern Hill as an out-borough school as there were four in-borough schools without links, and its statutory responsibility was to find sufficient places for its own residents.
- 2.19** The Schools Adjudicator concluded that Richmond's position was reasonable, given that it was "treating applications from Kingston under the same arrangements as it applie[d] to applications from its own residents"<sup>19</sup>. He also believed that by not upholding the objection there would "be no disruption to the existing pattern of links in Richmond and stability [would be] preserved for the parents of children at other schools linked to Grey Court, especially the more distant schools in Richmond – The Queen's, Darell and Holy Trinity"<sup>20</sup>. He noted that there were sufficient spare places within other schools in Richmond and Kingston to cater for the Fern Hill children. He also noted that Kingston had not negotiated with Richmond about future

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<sup>18</sup> Minutes of the Education Ad Hoc Sub-Committee, 24 July 1996.

<sup>19</sup> [Determination of the Schools Adjudicator](#), 23 June 2000, p.5.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

secondary transfer arrangements prior to Fern Hill being opened and that the problem was in part due to the school having been built so near to the Richmond Borough boundary. The Adjudicator therefore upheld Richmond's position.

**2.20** Fern Hill subsequently met the criterion, outlined in paragraph 2.14, in order to gain a link to Grey Court for 2006 entry.

## **2003**

**2.21** The authority commissioned Cambridge Education Associates to review the LSP. The author of the report <sup>21</sup> interviewed a selection of elected members, headteachers, school governors, Admissions Forum members and interest group members, but drew no startling conclusions.

On the whole the current linked schools arrangement is seen as relatively successful, with few complaints being received for example by officers and Councillors, and relatively few taken to appeal for all but a few popular schools. The exceptions are either in relation to the quadrant system for Waldegrave [ ] or where parents are dissatisfied with the allocation of a place at the linked secondary school if it is perceived as less popular or underachieving. <sup>22</sup>

**2.22** The review also considered the proposal which the London Borough of Camden consulted upon in 2003 for 2005 entry, whereby all Camden's primary schools would be linked to all its secondary schools, with no out-borough primary schools having such links. Brent, Haringey and Islington referred Camden's proposal to the Schools Adjudicator, who definitively concluded in 2004 that the arrangements would not "work for the benefit of all parents and children in the area" <sup>23</sup>.

## **2004**

**2.23** A co-ordinated secondary admissions scheme was piloted in Richmond, a year ahead of the pan-London scheme, by co-ordinating the applications not just for the seven community secondary schools within the borough but also for Christ's School. The scheme gave parents up to three preferences, using an 'equal preference' system, i.e. each preference would be looked at equally, in accordance with the particular school's admissions criteria and only if more than one preference could theoretically be offered would the ranked order come into play.

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<sup>21</sup> Cambridge Education Associates, *Review of the Linked School Admissions System*, November 2003.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>23</sup> [Determination of the Schools Adjudicator](#), 23 April 2004.

**2.24** For the first time ever, one of the borough's community secondary schools – Teddington – initially had more applicants from linked primary schools than places. By September 2004, all linked school applicants who had been refused a place in the initial allocations made in February had been offered a place from the waiting list.

**2.25** The authority consulted upon three models for admissions to its mixed community secondary schools for 2005 entry: (1) no change; (2) an LSP like that proposed by Camden (see paragraph 2.22); and (3) with the LSP abolished. The consultation responses showed no clear consensus for abolition at that time. The minutes of the Admissions Forum recorded that

...respondents seemed, by and large, to prefer Model 1 to Model 3, but that views were so mixed that it was difficult for the Forum to gauge any particularly strong support for any of the proposed models. That being the case, and bearing in mind the likely legal challenges that would result from adopting Model 2, the Forum was unable to reach a consensus to recommend that the LA change its current oversubscription criteria for community secondary schools for 2005.<sup>24</sup>

## **2005**

**2.25** The pan-London scheme, which enabled parents to state preferences for up to six state schools anywhere, was established. However, the scheme did not work as well as it should have, due to insufficiently robust software used by eight local authorities, including three that border Richmond.

**2.26** Both Teddington and Orleans Park were oversubscribed within the 'linked school' criterion at initial allocations in March 2005. However, as per 2004, all children who were initially refused eventually obtained places in time for September.

## **2006**

**2.27** Christ's School, which is voluntary-aided and therefore sets its own admission arrangements, introduced its own LSP for the 2006 admissions round. Children attending the three Church of England primary schools within the Deanery of Richmond and Barnes – Holy Trinity, The Queen's and St Richmond's with St Andrew's – were given priority within the school's oversubscription criteria ahead of children on distance.

**2.28** The pan-London scheme worked much better than it had in 2005, with the result that far more parents received an offer of one of their preferences. All the linked primary applicants for Teddington and all bar one (who lived a considerable distance away from the borough) for Orleans Park were offered places at those – or higher preference – schools.

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<sup>24</sup> Minutes of Richmond upon Thames Admissions Forum, 10 February 2004.

## 2007

**2.29** Sacred Heart Primary School made an objection to the Schools Adjudicator <sup>25</sup> in respect of the oversubscription criteria for the borough's mixed community schools, with particular regard to Teddington, on the grounds that:

- a. Since Sacred Heart Primary School is a Catholic school, a significant proportion of its pupils' parents seek secondary school places for their children at Catholic secondary schools, making it unlikely that the school will establish and maintain a link (as defined in the arrangements) with its geographical neighbour, Teddington School.
- b. There being no Catholic secondary school in the borough, a number of Catholic parents need the option of an accessible alternative to the more distant Catholic schools in other boroughs.
- c. A small but significant minority of the pupils at Sacred Heart Primary School are not Catholic, and do not seek places in Catholic secondary schools. For them, Teddington School is an obvious choice of local school. In practice, they are prevented from attending their neighbourhood secondary school because of the higher priority attached to pupils from linked primary schools.
- d. The arrangements are inconsistent with the code in that they have the effect of disadvantaging a particular social group and discouraging parents from seeking a place at Teddington School for their children.
- e. The arrangements are disruptive of children's primary education as, in some cases, parents feel constrained to transfer their children to neighbouring primary schools which are designated linked primary schools to Teddington School.
- f. When the pupils currently in Key Stage 2 first joined the school, it was one of Teddington School's linked primary schools, and this may have been a factor in the choice made.

**2.30** Although the Adjudicator did not rule that the LSP should be overturned, either in its entirety or by simply giving Sacred Heart a link to Teddington, he agreed with Sacred Heart's suggestion (which the LA and the Forum had previously considered) that there should be "[an] amendment to the definition of a linked primary school creating a link between a primary school and any secondary school in the same electoral ward". The effect of this change was to bestow a link not just between Sacred Heart and Teddington, but also between Sheen Mount and Shene, from 2008 entry onwards.

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<sup>25</sup> [Determination of the Schools Adjudicator](#), 22 June 2007.

**2.31** In his determination, the Adjudicator also stated that:

In general it is unfortunate that the outcome of applications are [sic] in part determined by choices and decisions made by the parents of previous cohorts of pupils. More particularly, the system as operated has the effect of preventing the admission of small number of children to a school serving the community in which they live.

**2008-2011**

**2.32** Throughout this period, both Teddington and Orleans Park have been oversubscribed within the 'linked school' criterion at initial allocations, but also by September. For each of the other mixed community schools/academies in the borough, there have been, after the many iterations of the pan-London co-ordinated process, sufficient places to accommodate each applicant who had expressed a preference for the school and who either did not express a higher preference or did not have a higher preference met.

**2.33** Three (Hampton Community College, Shene and Whitton) of the six mixed community secondary schools closed on 31 August 2010 and were replaced by academies the following day. Each academy has retained the oversubscription criteria, including the 'linked schools' criterion, of its predecessor school.

### 3. How recent admissions could have looked without the Linked Schools Policy

- 3.1 It is difficult to compute *exactly* what difference would have been made to recent admissions patterns for the borough's mixed community schools had the LSP not been in place, as the results are skewed by the facts that: it is impossible to know in every instance (i.e. if they are out-borough residents) whether they would have been offered a higher preference; and more parents, especially those whose children attend non-linked primary schools, may have applied for the schools if 'distance' had been the main criterion.
- 3.2 However, by looking at all the non-sibling applicants in a ranked list down to the point at which the last offer was made on National Offer Day, 1 March, a fair picture can be gauged of the in-borough/out-borough split.
- 3.3 As can be seen from paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 below, the initial allocations for Grey Court, Orleans Park and Teddington in 2010 and 2011 would have been considerably different without the links. In 2010, there would have been a net gain of one place for Richmond residents across the three schools, but with a large gain of 26 places at Orleans Park. In 2011, the net gain for Richmond residents would have been 33 places, with large gains of 29 places at Orleans Park and 16 places at Teddington. In each year, more Kingston residents would have been admitted to Grey Court without the links than with.
- 3.4 This exercise had previously been undertaken for the 2006 allocations for Orleans Park and Teddington. The numbers of non-sibling applicants for each school who could have been offered places or higher preferences were, at that point, as follows:

School	With links		Without links	
	In-borough	Out-borough	In-borough	Out-borough
Orleans Park	167	75	209	33
Teddington	195	48	153	90

### 3.5 2010/2011 entry offers:

Grey Court – 240 offers

Criterion	With links			Without links		
	Richmond	Kingston	Other LAs	Richmond	Kingston	Other LAs
Special circs	0	0	0	0	0	0
SEN	2	0	0	2	0	0
Siblings	21	27	5	21	27	5
Links	42	81	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Distance	50	22	0	67	128	0
Total	115	130	5	90	155	5

Orleans Park – 215 offers

Criterion	With links			Without links		
	Richmond	Hounslow	Other LAs	Richmond	Hounslow	Other LAs
Special circs	3	0	0	3	0	0
SEN	15	2	0	15	2	0
Siblings	55	29	0	55	29	0
Links	83	28	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Distance	0	0	0	109	2	0
Total	156	59	0	182	33	0

Teddington – 240 offers

Criterion	With links			Without links		
	Richmond	Kingston	Other LAs	Richmond	Kingston	Other LAs
Special circs	3	0	0	3	0	0
SEN	6	1	0	6	1	0
Siblings	77	11	4	77	11	4
Links	128	10	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Distance	0	0	0	128	10	0
Total	214	22	4	214	22	4

### 3.6 2011/2012 entry offers:

Grey Court – 263 offers

Criterion	With links			Without links		
	Richmond	Kingston	Other LAs	Richmond	Kingston	Other LAs
Special circs	1	1	0	1	1	0
SEN	1	0	0	1	0	0
Siblings	23	35	3	23	35	3
Links	52	85	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Distance	47	13	0	85	114	0
Total	122	135	4	110	150	3

Orleans Park – 210 offers

Criterion	With links			Without links		
	Richmond	Hounslow	Other LAs	Richmond	Hounslow	Other LAs
LAC	0	1	0	0	1	0
Special circs	4	2	0	4	2	0
SEN	9	1	0	9	1	0
Siblings	49	5	0	49	5	0
Links	109	30	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Distance	0	0	0	138	1	0
Total	171	39	0	200	10	0

Teddington – 244 offers

Criterion	With links			Without links		
	Richmond	Kingston	Other LAs	Richmond	Kingston	Other LAs
LAC	0	0	0	0	0	0
Special circs	6	0	0	6	0	0
SEN	4	0	0	4	0	0
Siblings	59	7	3	59	7	3
Links	140	25	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Distance	0	0	0	156	9	0
Total	209	32	3	225	16	3

## **4. Factors that affect the future of the Linked Schools Policy**

### **4.1 Some primary schools do not have links**

10 in-borough primary schools (three community and seven VA) do not have a link to a secondary school or academy within the borough, Holy Trinity, Kew Riverside, Marshgate, St Edmund's, St Elizabeth's, St James's, St Mary Magdalen's, St Osmund's, The Queen's, and The Vineyard.

Kew Riverside and Marshgate were both opened in 2002 and soon expressed concerns that their first cohorts to transfer to secondary school, in 2009, could have difficulties obtaining local secondary places and would be less likely than children at other primary schools to be transferring with their peer group. Kew Riverside's comments to that effect in response to the consultation on the 2006 admission arrangements were considered by Richmond upon Thames Admissions Forum at its meeting in February 2006: the Forum had "sympathy with the school's position"<sup>26</sup>, but did not feel inclined to recommend any changes to the method by which links were established. The Secretary to the Forum (and author of this report) subsequently attended governing body meetings of both schools to explain the LSP and consider the way forward. Both schools were asked to bear in mind that:

- being incorporated into the LSP would not be straightforward, since Fern Hill Primary had only been allowed to join the LSP once they had transferred sufficient numbers from a previous Year 6 cohort (see paragraphs 2.18-2.20 above), and that there were several other Richmond Borough primary schools who had either never had a link (St James's) or who had had one but subsequently lost it (St Elizabeth's, Sacred Heart);
- even if they were somehow to be incorporated into the LSP, that would have to be done on a fair and objective basis, for example, to be linked to the nearest mixed community secondary school or to one which the majority of the primary school's cohort lived closest to;
- the LSP was not necessarily regarded as beneficial by primary schools which were linked to less popular secondary schools;
- the purpose of the LSP was not just to ensure that in-borough children had the chance to transfer with their peers to a particular secondary school, but also that it helped cement a sense of community; and that

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<sup>26</sup> Minutes of Richmond upon Thames Admissions Forum, 9 February 2006

- the LSP has never guaranteed admission to the particular secondary school to which a primary school is linked.

#### **4.2 Primary school expansions**

By September 2011, the authority will have expanded the borough's annual primary school intake by 480 places since 2000. Those expansions have, and will continue to, put increased pressure on the LSP for the more popular secondary schools.

#### **4.3 The method of establishing and losing a link**

As per the comments made by the Schools Adjudicator in response to Sacred Heart's objection in 2007 (see paragraph 2.31), it is questionable whether predicating admission criteria upon historical transfer patterns is fair and equitable. Parents of children at unlinked primary schools who cannot obtain places at Grey Court, Orleans Park or Teddington often, understandably, feel that it is unfair that their chances had effectively been determined by previous cohorts which were otherwise of no relevance to their own children. That sense of unfairness is compounded if the family home is located very close to the family home.

#### **4.4 The effect upon recruitment, retention and transition**

One school, HCC, remarked in 2006 that: "secondary schools which only had a few links had a difficult job explaining to parents why that was the case when other schools had six or seven and that that fact affected recruitment."<sup>27</sup> (See also paragraph 2.14). However, at no point has there been any discernible correlation between numbers of links and numbers of applications, since the secondary schools with the most linked primary schools have not necessarily been the most popular secondary schools in the borough.

In 2003, one primary school (Hampton Hill Junior) unequivocally stated its dissatisfaction with the LSP's effect upon recruitment and retention, not just of pupils but also of staff:

As parental perception of any one of the borough's secondary schools continues to decline, so its linked primaries will be affected for at least three years because it takes that long to lose a link. The particular primary schools in this position will probably have to lose staff as a consequence of parents transferring or withdrawing their children prior to secondary transfer, and this will rapidly create a 'downward spiral' through absolutely no fault of the primary school. The secondary school's rolls will also fall as parents begin to favour other schools and move their children from the

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<sup>27</sup> Minutes of Richmond upon Thames Admissions Forum, 9 February 2006

link primary schools or move house to obtain a greater chance of gaining admission to a more highly regarded secondary school.<sup>28</sup>

However, it could be argued that if the parental perception of those secondary schools, especially now that they have become academies (see paragraph 4.5 below), significantly improves, then the primary schools that have links with them would presumably reap the ensuing recruitment and retention benefits. The conclusion to be drawn from those arguments, perhaps, is that it is not the LSP itself which is causing the problem but the performance, perception among the community and, hence, the popularity of the currently less popular secondary schools. It could, perhaps, be argued that that process is a 'vicious circle'.

After an invitation, in March 2006, to comment upon the LSP, relatively few headteachers responded. The then headteacher of Chase Bridge Primary School stated: "The linked system is one of those things which when it works for your school is a good thing but when it doesn't it's an irritation."<sup>29</sup> The headteacher of Archdeacon Cambridge's C/E Primary commented:

The governors feel that the present system enables transition to be dealt with in a supportive way. Parents are offered some choice (as is promoted by the Government) and are able to send their children to schools which are geographically close. Our children move to a nearby secondary school and retain many friendships which support their confidence. Any changes to the system would cause parents and pupils more anxiety than they currently feel during the transfer process.<sup>30</sup>

#### **4.5 Academy status**

As HCC, Shene and Whitton closed on 31 August 2010 and were replaced the following day by Hampton Academy, Richmond Park Academy and Twickenham Academy, the future of the LSP is now partially out of the Council's hands, as each academy is free, within the parameters of relevant legislation and the School Admissions Code, to determine its own admission arrangements. Although each academy has continued to use the oversubscription criteria of its predecessor school, that situation will be less tenable if, as seems likely, the other five schools in the borough, convert to academy status. If that were to happen, there would be no longer be any overarching LSP and each academy could, theoretically at least, simply set its own linked primary schools without any reference to historical transfer patterns. It is possible that that could happen in time for the 2013/2014 entry admissions round.

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<sup>28</sup> Cambridge Education Associates, *Review of the Linked School Admissions System*, November 2003, p.12

<sup>29</sup> E-mail from Bryan Neville to author, 6 March 2006.

<sup>30</sup> E-mail from Janet Foster to author, 20 March 2006.

#### **4.6 Sixth form provision within Richmond upon Thames secondary schools**

It is proposed that sixth form provision will be established in the eight secondary schools and academies in the borough, most probably in September 2013. Such provision may well make those schools more popular with parents, and produce consequent effects upon the LSP.

#### **4.7 The purpose of the LSP**

At the heart of the matter is the question of what purpose the LSP serves. In its comments on the LSP to the Schools Adjudicator in the Fern Hill adjudication (see paragraphs 2.18-2.20), the authority declared that it had been introduced to:

- provide a system that is felt to be fair by primary and secondary schools and parents;
- encourage stability in link arrangements avoiding annual fluctuations but allowing the system to be responsive to trends;
- enable parents to have a reasonable choice of secondary school; and
- be simple to apply and easily understood by parents.<sup>31</sup>

It should also be remembered that, as per paragraph 2.12, the intention was not that primary schools would be tied in to unpopular schools. Underlying those aims was, as we have seen (paragraphs 2.2-2.3), the authority's desire to minimise the effects of the Greenwich Judgement upon the authority's ability to meet its statutory requirement<sup>32</sup> to provide sufficient places for its residents. Now, 22 years after the High Court judgement against Greenwich, it is pertinent to consider the wider admissions picture, in which the political will on all sides has moved in favour of clearer and simpler admissions policies and of inter-authority coordinated admissions.

#### **4.8 The DfE's view of linked schools**

The School Admissions Code 2010 states that:

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<sup>31</sup> [Determination of the Schools Adjudicator](#), 23 June 2000, p.2.

<sup>32</sup> [Education Act 1996, Section 14\(1\)](#).

The use of named feeder schools can support good curriculum and geographical links and local continuity between phases in an area but feeder schools must be selected on an objective and consistent basis. Admission authorities must ensure that such arrangements do not unfairly disadvantage children from more deprived areas near the school and must not include independent schools as named feeder schools.<sup>33</sup>

The draft revised School Admissions Code, currently being consulted upon, states, not dissimilarly, that:

Junior and secondary schools may wish to name a primary or infant school as a feeder school. The selection of a feeder school or schools as part of oversubscription criteria must be made on reasonable grounds.<sup>34</sup>

#### **4.10 Linked schools elsewhere**

Linked schools do not appear to be a widespread phenomenon, although some schools in Brent, Oxfordshire and Worcestershire have 'partner' feeder schools, for example, Queens Park Community School<sup>35</sup> and others elsewhere, for example, Bolingbroke Academy, due to open in Wandsworth in 2012. In each case, the linked schools are not subject to any qualification or historical patterns. Officers in Brent have previously reported some difficulty with parents who move into the area in Year 6, then cannot obtain a place in their local primary school and so end up being doubly disadvantaged by having their children squeezed out of places at their local secondary school by the feeder school criterion children.

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<sup>33</sup> [School Admissions Code 2010](#), paragraph 2.72.

<sup>34</sup> [Proposed School Admissions Code 2011](#), paragraph 1.13.

<sup>35</sup> See [http://www.brent.gov.uk/education.nsf/Files/LBBA-24/\\$FILE/AC\\_Queens\\_current.pdf](http://www.brent.gov.uk/education.nsf/Files/LBBA-24/$FILE/AC_Queens_current.pdf).

## **5. Options for the future of the Linked Schools Policy**

**5.1** The two options outlined below are presented to the Admissions Forum, without any comment as to the advantages and disadvantages of each and without any recommendation for adoption.

1. Retain the LSP in its current form.
2. Abolish the LSP and use 'home to school distance' as the criterion for allocating non-sibling places

**5.2** The Forum considered other possibilities, listed below, in the 2006 review, but they would arguably add to the complexity of the LSP and are therefore not suggested as options in the 2011 review.

- Amend the LSP by abolishing the set percentages for the establishment and loss of a link and by introducing a rule whereby each mixed community secondary school in Richmond upon Thames will be linked to each primary school, whether in the borough or outside, within a set radius of, say, five kilometres. Where a primary school would have more than one potential linked secondary school, they would be linked to the nearer one only.
- Amend the LSP by allocating a set percentage of non-sibling places to 'link' applicants (using distance as a sub-criterion) and to 'distance' applicants – say 50% each or 85% and 15% respectively.
- Amend the LSP by linking each in-borough primary school with its nearest community secondary school, along the lines of the 'Camden model' (see paragraph 2.22). It should be noted that the Adjudicator's decision in the Camden Judgement was not based upon an opinion as to the model's possible illegality, but upon to what degree it would affect the prevailing local (including inter-authority) admission arrangements.

## Appendix A: charts showing the links from 1991 to 2012 for the mixed community secondary schools and academies

Key: **Green** = Richmond school; **Orange** = Hounslow school; **Plum** = Kingston school; **Pink** = Wandsworth school; **Red** = Hammersmith & Fulham school; **Sky blue** = Surrey school

Grey Court	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Archdeacon Cambridge's	•																					
Chase Bridge Primary	•																					
Collis Primary	•																					
Darell Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Fern Hill Primary																•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Holy Trinity CE Primary	•	•	•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Ivybridge Primary	•																					
Latchmere Junior	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Meadlands Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
The Queen's CE Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•								
The Russell Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Sacred Heart RC Primary	•																					
St Agatha's RC Primary	•																					
St Elizabeth's RC Primary	•																					
St John the Baptist Jnr	•																					
St Mary's CE Primary	•																					
St Mary's & St Peter's	•																					
St Paul's CE Junior	•																					
St Richard's	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
St Stephen's Junior	•																					
Stanley Junior/Primary	•																					
The Vineyard Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				

Rectory/HCC/ Hampton Academy	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Archdeacon Cambridge's	•																					
Bishop Perrin CE Primary	•																					
Buckingham Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Crane Primary	•																					
Forge Lane Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Hampton Hill Junior	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Hampton Junior	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Heathfield Junior	•																					
Oriel Primary	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
St James's RC Primary	•																					
St Mary's & St Peter's	•																					
St Richard's	•																					
Stanley Junior/Primary	•																					
Trafalgar Junior	•																					

Orleans Park	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Archdeacon Cambridge's	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					
Bishop Perrin CE Primary	•																					
The Blue CE Primary	•					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Chatsworth Junior	•																					
Chase Bridge Primary	•														•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Darell Primary	•																					
Holy Trinity CE Primary	•																					
Isleworth Town Primary	•																					
Ivybridge Primary	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Lowther Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•												
Meadlands Primary	•																					
The Russell Primary	•																					
St Elizabeth's RC Primary	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•										
St James's RC Primary	•																					
St Mary's CE Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
St Mary's & St Peter's	•																					
St Richard's	•																					
St Stephen's Junior	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Stanley Junior/Primary	•																					
Trafalgar Junior	•																					
The Vineyard Primary	•																					
Worple Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Shene/Richmond Park Academy	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Albemarle Primary												•	•	•	•							
All Saints CE Primary	•	•	•	•																		
Alton Primary *					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Brackenbury Primary																	•	•	•	•	•	
Cavendish Primary	•																					
Danebury Primary	•	•	•																			
Darell Primary	•																					
East Sheen Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Granard Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•														
Grove Park Primary	•																					
Heathmere Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•												
Holy Trinity CE Primary	•			•	•	•		•														
Hotham Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•												
Huntingfield Primary	•	•	•																			
John Betts Primary							•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•							
Lowther Primary	•										•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Melcombe Primary							•	•	•	•												
The Queen's CE Primary	•																					
Queen's Manor Primary					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•										
Roehampton Church Pry	•						•	•	•	•	•											
Roehampton Gate Primary	•	•	•	•																		
Sacred Heart RC Primary	•																					
St Elizabeth's RC Primary	•																					
St Faith's CE Pimary							•	•	•	•	•	•					•	•				
St John's Walham Green																			•	•	•	
St Mary's CE Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•												
St Mary Magdalen's RC Pry	•		•	•						•	•	•		•	•	•	•					
St Michael's CE Primary	•		•	•																		
St Osmund's RC Primary	•	•	•	•	•						•	•	•	•	•							
St Paul's CE Primary																	•	•	•	•	•	
Sheen Mount Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•	•	•	•	•
Sheringdale Primary							•	•	•													
Strand on the Green Junior	•																					
Westfields/Barnes Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

\* Formerly Danebury and Roehampton Gate Primary Schools.

Teddington	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Archdeacon Cambridge's	•																					
Chase Bridge Primary	•																					
Collis Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Coombe Hill Primary	•	•	•																			
King Athelstan Primary	•																					
Latchmere Primary	•																					
Meadlands Primary	•																					
The Russell Primary	•																					
Sacred Heart RC Primary	•		•	•	•								•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•
St Agatha's RC Primary	•																					
St Andrew's & St Mark's	•																					
St John the Baptist Jnr	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
St John's CE Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•										
St Joseph's RC Primary	•																					
St Lawrence's CE Pry	•	•																				
St Luke's CE Primary	•	•							•	•	•											
St Mary's CE Primary	•																					
St Mary's & St Peter's	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
St Paul's CE Junior	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
St Richard's	•																					
Stanley Junior/Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
The Mount Primary	•																					
Trafalgar Junior	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Whitton/ Twickenham Academy	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Archdeacon Cambridge's	•																					
Bishop Perrin CE Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•	•	•	•	•	•
The Blue CE Primary			•	•																		
Buckingham Primary	•																					
Chase Bridge Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•								
Chatsworth Junior	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•												
Crane Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					•	•	•	
Forge Lane Primary	•																					
Grove Road Primary	•																					
Hampton Hill Junior	•																					
Heathfield Junior	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ivybridge Primary	•																					
Nelson Primary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Orchard Junior	•																					
Oriel Primary	•																					
St Edmund's RC Primary	•																					
St James's RC Primary	•																					
St Mary's CE Primary	•																					
St Mary's & St Peter's	•																					
Stanley Junior/Primary	•																					
Trafalgar Junior	•																					