

DEPUTATION FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(i) Deputation: School Allocation

We are a group of parents from the Varndean/Stringer catchment area, parents of some of the 16% of year 6 pupils across Brighton and Hove **shocked** and **devastated** that we did not achieve a school allocation from any of our three preferences. Instead we have had a life changing decision made about our children's education beyond our control and in a school that has been deemed as **'requires improvement' in all five effectiveness areas of Ofsted**; an educational and social environment that we know our children would not thrive in. This is in direct contrast to the recent quote by Head Teachers in their joint letter to parents, pupils and the public this week.

'...standards in secondary schools in our city are high and this truth continues to be validated by a succession of Ofsted inspections'.

Our children have been given an LEA allocation;

- **That is in a community that they have no knowledge or experience of, or social connections with**
- **Which requires them to travel miles away from the city on their own on public transport.**
- **Where 'School leaders have not improved the quality of teaching and outcomes consistently since the previous inspection'. Ofsted 2016**
- **Where 'Teaching does not consistently provide work that is well matched to the range of attainment of pupils in the class' Ofsted 2016**

To quote Councillor Daniel Chapman, Head of Children's, Young people and Skills Committee; 'We have always tried our best to ensure parents are offered a place in their catchment area if they apply for one'

There are 147 families throughout the city that disagree with you, an increase of 28% on last year's figure, where 106 preferences were not offered. These 'unlucky' families are now to be placed in a re-allocation pool with all other families who may have already received one of their preferences.

This is an unfair system and does not honour your statement in ensuring these catchment area preferences for parents. Our children are being penalised for entering secondary school in a year where the council has failed to adequately plan a new school or offer additional places, in time for an

overburdened catchment area. The council knew this was going to be a problem as far back as 2014. In 2014 Councillor Sue Shanks said 'At present there are enough secondary places city-wide for the numbers of students requiring them, but we are acutely aware that secondary school numbers will be going up significantly in the next few years'.

Our children are the now victims of this failure.

In 2015-16 and 2016-17 the council was given specific government funds totalling £24 million to provide extra places. eg:

- 2014 - 22 extra children were divided between Varndean and Dorothy Stringer.
- 2016- 28 extra children were divided between Varndean and Dorothy Stringer.

Whilst the random allocation system seems fair, it is utterly devastating for the unlucky minority. In the last three years, the council have made a commitment to placing all children in a catchment school or one of their preferences. **Why is there no commitment for our children?**

We are demanding the following:

1. That you commit to providing additional places for all children in their catchment area if they apply for one, as you have in previous years. **We would like the same equality of opportunity.** We ask that the council and the Head Teachers work together to make this possible. To quote Andrew Stevenson, Business manager of Varndean School, 'The school is happy to take part in regular reviews of admissions arrangements to respond to demographic changes and needs of families'.
2. Following the school registration deadline of March 15th, these 57 children must be given priority before the reallocation pool is opened to everybody. Under the current system, a child who has already been allocated a catchment place has the same priority as a child who has not been allocated any of their preferences. **This seems wholly unjust and unfair.**
3. To meet with councillors of the Children, Young Peoples and Skills Committee as a matter of urgency (this week) to seek solutions to the points raised above.

As a result of your failure to provide our children with one of their preferences, they are already suffering emotional distress, feeling socially isolated and feel treated unfairly compared to their peers. In a highly pressurised year, with imminent SATS exam, the end of their primary school years and pre-existing worries about starting a new school, this additional anxiety of moving to a school far from their community is making them fearful about their futures. Sending children to schools which are deemed by Ofsted to require improvement could limit the educational opportunities and attainment of our children, impacting on their future prospects.

This is totally unacceptable.

These children have been placed in a very vulnerable position by a department that is responsible for the welfare and wellbeing for children across the city

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