Stakeholders' perspectives on the secondary school admissions procedures in Brighton and Hove

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Acknowledgements

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1. Executive summary

Introduction

The transition from primary to secondary school is a social and academic turning point for adolescents and, for some, can be a stressful process. It is, therefore, important to understand stakeholders' perspectives and experiences of the procedures which govern the allocation of secondary schools, and for these perspectives to inform the development of school allocation procedures. This research aims to present an informed account of various stakeholders' experiences of Brighton and Hove's secondary school admissions' procedures. It has been commissioned by Brighton and Hove City Council (B&HCC), and forms part of a broader review of the secondary school admissions' procedures within Brighton and Hove.

The report is based primarily on visits to eight secondary schools from five of the six catchment areas within Brighton and Hove, and to five primary schools from five of the six catchment areas, including one primary school within the catchment area not covered by the participating secondary schools. The secondary schools included in the research comprised of schools within dual school and single school catchment areas, and academies and faith schools. Focus group discussions and interviews were held with a total of 29 students who attended their first choice of secondary school; 24 students who did not attend their first choice secondary school; 13 parents[1] whose children attended their first choice of secondary school; 6 parents whose children did not attend their first choice secondary school; and 10 members of staff from secondary schools with responsibility for the transition of students from primary to secondary school. Interviews were also conducted with members of staff within the five participating primary schools who oversaw the transition of students from primary to secondary school.

The report also includes a review of relevant literature, and the following statistical data were collected to provide contextual information for the report:
- For each year from 2006-2014, the percentage of students within B&H who were: allocated their 'first choice' school; allocated their 'second choice' school; and those not allocated any of their first three choices of schools.
- For each year from 2007-2014, the number of appeals submitted/dismissed/upheld within B&H.

Main findings

Throughout this executive summary and the main report, where words or phrases are written in *italics*, this denotes direct quotes from participating stakeholders.

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[1] The term 'parent' is used throughout the report to denote both parents and carers.

1. An overview of stakeholders' perspectives on and experiences of B&HCC's secondary schools admissions process

- Parents and students considered that being able to state their three most preferred secondary schools was a positive aspect of the school allocation process, however, many considered that they had to wait too long between submitting their school preferences and being informed of their allocated secondary school.
- Most parents found the on-line application system straightforward. However, some parents experienced difficulties with the application process, in particular parents who were not able to read well, and those who did not have Internet access or an email account.
- Within some primary schools, each academic year there were cases where parents had not submitted a secondary school application form, and where this only became apparent once other students were informed of their allocated schools.
- Students, parents and school staff expressed uncertainty about how parental preferences were taken into account by B&HCC when allocating secondary schools.

2. Factors prioritised when choosing secondary schools

- Students and parents considered school open evenings to be of some help when making final choices about preferred secondary schools. However, they felt that the open evenings and other forms of publicity about the school (in the context of the high levels of marketisation to which schools subscribed) provided information on only the positive aspects of schools, making it difficult to gain a realistic understanding of what it would be like to attend particular schools.
- Students and parents prioritised certain factors, as follows, when deciding upon their preferred secondary school.
  - The most significant priority for students was to attend the same school as their close friends; this was also an important factor for parents, but not their prime consideration.
  - Staff in primary schools considered it was particularly important for vulnerable children to remain within their friendship groups when transferring to secondary school.
  - Parents placed the most emphasis on high GCSE grades and an Ofsted report which commented positively on the academic achievement of the school. Students also placed high priority on a school's academic achievements and, where students were not allocated their preferred school, some students and parents worried that they would not achieve their '*academic potential*'.
  - Parents and staff in primary schools raised concerns about children who had been allocated a primary school geographically distant from their home when they moved into B&H, but were then not given priority to attend the same secondary school as their primary school peers.
  - Students and parents also gave some priority to: schools already attended by elder siblings; schools in close proximity to their home - students prioritised reducing travelling, and some students also expressed concerns about journeys to certain schools being 'unsafe'.

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Priority was also given to schools which were considered to have a positive school ethos, 'good' behaviour and low levels of bullying; and schools which have facilities to accommodate students' extra-curricular interests. A small number of parents and students also favoured '*small schools'* as they considered it would be easier for students to '*settle into'* a small school rather than a large school; and a small number of parents prioritised schools which they considered were '*clean and hygienic'*.

- In the majority of cases students and parents made a joint decision about preferred secondary schools. However, in a small number of cases, where there were disagreements between students and their parents, parents' decisions were usually taken forward.

3. Measures taken to secure places in preferred secondary schools

- Several parents took measures to try to secure a place for their child in a particular secondary school. For example, some families/parents:
  - ➢ moved house to live within a particular catchment area, or obtained and submitted an address within a preferred catchment area through renting accommodation, moving in with their parents, or giving their parents' address as their own;
  - ➢ listed schools which they thought they were unlikely to be allocated, as their second and third choice schools;
  - ➢ started attending church to increase their chances of being accepted by one of the faith schools.
- There were also a small number of cases cited in which parents talked of knowing others who had exaggerated their child's medical condition, in an attempt to have their child awarded a statement of Special Educational Needs, and of a parent presenting a forged baptism certificate to try to secure a place for their child in a faith school. Staff in schools also cited cases of parents attempting to persuade the school's transition manager to admit their child to the school, and of parents contacting their 'first choice' school and falsely claiming they had been offered place in the school.

4. The reality of available school choices

- Parents and students who lived in dual-school catchment areas tended to favour the current system of allocating schools, primarily because the most '*sought after'* schools were located within these catchment areas.
- The chances of students living outside of the dual-school catchment areas securing a place in one of these schools is very limited; several parents living outside of these areas objected to their children not having the opportunity to attend one of the '*better performing'* schools.
- House prices within the dual-school catchment areas tend to be higher than in other areas of the city, thus limiting the choice of schools available to many students.
- Most parents to whom we spoke who lived in single-school catchment areas objected to their children not having a 'real choice' of secondary schools. However, where parents' and students' 'first choice' school was the only secondary school within their catchment, it was highly likely that they would be allocated a place in that school, which was seen by some as

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a positive feature of the current admissions' procedure. In such cases, the secondary school allocation process was relatively '*anxious-free*' for these students as they did not experience the worry or uncertainty of not knowing which school they would be allocated.

- Where it was usual for students from particular primary schools to transfer to specific secondary schools, this allowed the primary and secondary schools to work together to plan the transition process, even before students had been informed of their allocated schools.
- Where children from one primary school transferred to several different secondary schools, this created difficulty in building close working relations with relevant staff in secondary schools.
- Despite many negative views being expressed about the perceived '*unfairness*' of the current school allocation process, the vast majority of secondary school students and parents were satisfied with the schools they/their children attended.

5. Perspectives on and experiences of the Appeals Process

- Many students, parents and school staff considered the Appeals Process to be stressful and, for some parents and students, the prospect of the stress likely to be caused through engaging with the process prevented them from pursuing an appeal.
- Students, parents and some school staff considered the Appeals Process lacked transparency and gave preference to those who '*know the right people*' and '*who are articulate and make a fuss*', while families who '*lacked the English language skills necessary to understand the system*' were at a disadvantage.

Recommendations

It should be noted that the findings report only the perspectives of participating students, parents and school staff, and may not be representative of the wider population of students, parents and school staff within Brighton and Hove. Nonetheless, the findings presented, most of which are based upon triangulated accounts from members of more than one participant group, suggest a number recommendations for future policy and practice in secondary school admissions within B&H.

Key recommendations in relation to B&HCC's review of the secondary school's admissions procedures are for B&HCC to consider:

1. Redrawing the current geographical catchment area boundaries to try to ensure all parents/students have a genuine choice of at least two secondary schools, and to consider, within this, the potential site for a proposed 'new' secondary school within the city.

2. Ensuring head teachers of primary schools are aware, immediately after the secondary school application deadline, of which parents have not submitted an application. Staff in primary schools could then work with these parents to support them in submitting their application.

3. Seeking to provide all stakeholders with a greater degree of transparency about the general criteria used for allocating school places, and the specific criteria relating to the allocation of places to students living outside the catchment area.

4. Providing, and making widely available, neutral information for students and parents about schools within B&HCC to supplement the current marketing and recruitment strategies provided by schools in the form of '*glossy brochures*'.

5. Seeking to ensure that parents, students and school staff are aware that the National Offer Day, on which parents and students are informed about students' allocated schools, is a fixed date throughout England and cannot be brought forward.

6. Implementing measures to synchronise, as far as possible, the date on which electronic and postal information about the allocation of school places is received by parents.

7. Providing all stakeholders with a simplified explanation (possibly a flow chart) of how to take forward a secondary school allocation appeal, and seeking to ensure a greater degree of transparency about the appeals process.

8. Prioritising the maintenance of the current partnership and consensus on admissions represented by the locally agreed and centrally controlled admissions criteria. According to research findings (West, 2006; Pennel *et al.*, 2006; Coldron *et al.*, 2008; Gorard *et al.*, 2013), this is more likely to serve the best interests of **all** children in the city.

Evidence provided in this report, as well as evidence from other research (e.g. Allen *et al.*, 2010), suggests that the interaction between catchment and random allocation can lead to some unequal access to 'good' schools and to social segregation. International evidence (OECD, 2012) also suggests a strong correlation between equity and quality in terms of student outcomes and performance and, where education systems are segregated, the overall performance of students declines. However, the Sutton Trust (2007, 6) reports that ballots in school admissions can play a useful role in cases where other criteria, including catchment areas are 'fair', which we would define in terms of the socio-economic make-up of catchments. Given these potentially conflicting findings, a further recommendation is that B&HCC gives consideration to conducting a more substantial and in-depth analysis of whether the use of random allocation impacts positively or negatively on interaction between catchment areas and on levels of social segregation within the schooling system in Brighton and Hove.

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2. Background

2.1 Purpose and aims of the project

This research forms part of a review of the secondary school admissions' procedures in Brighton and Hove. The research, commissioned by Brighton and Hove City Council (B&HCC), aims to develop an informed account of various stakeholders' experiences of Brighton and Hove's secondary school admissions' procedures. In particular, stakeholders' perceptions of the strengths and limitations of the present admissions' procedures have been sought.

2.2. The national context

Various Education Acts and frameworks over the past 35 years have influenced current school admissions' procedures. Since the Education Act of 1980 and the Education Reform Act of 1988, successive governments in England have pursued the concept of parental choice (Allen *et al*., 2010, 2). The 1988 School Standards Framework Act also established a new legal framework for school admissions through the introduction of two key mechanisms: a 'Code of Practice on School Admissions'; and 'The Office of the Schools Adjudicator', with powers to monitor and require compliance with the Code (Allen *et al*., 2010, 3-4). In 2007, the School Admissions Code made mandatory certain provisions that had previously been 'guidance'; it also included a duty to 'promote equity' (*Ibid*., 3). The current School Admissions Code maintains a system of 'equal preference', first introduced in the 2007 Code of Practice (DfES, 2007), whereby all applications are considered equally against the published criteria, regardless of ranking, so that, '*where a place is available for a child at more than one school, the home local authority must ensure, so far as reasonably practical, that the child is offered a place at whichever of these schools is the highest preference*' (DfE, 2012, 19).

2.2.1 From first-preference-first to equal preference
The operation of equal preference replaced a system of first-preference-first and is designed to maximize the number of children receiving a place from their list of expressed preferences. The first-preference-first system is problematic as in some instances a pupil could be denied a place for not putting a particular school first, thus in reality limiting such parents and pupils to only one choice (Coldron, 2005; Coldron *et al.,* 2008). It is also potentially wasteful in that whilst the system of ranking preferences may accurately reflect some parents' choices, in other cases there may be little to separate a first and second preference. In this way, the equal preference system can be seen to maximize the potential equal and fair distribution of the resource against the admissions criteria, being 'blind' to the ranking of preferences in the initial consideration of an application. Coldron *et al*., however, established that whilst we should be cautious about cause and effect, first-preference-first systems appear to be associated with '*a higher proportion of parents gaining their first expressed preference*' (2008, p.32). They also add the important caveat that this is not necessarily synonymous with greater overall satisfaction as fewer parents and young people may gain their second or third preferences.

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Comparing and contrasting equal preference systems against the now prohibited first-preference-first systems, Coldron *et al.* (2008) identify a number of counter-intuitive effects associated with this shift. For example, in admissions areas with significant numbers of grammar schools operating as their own selective admissions authority, the first-preference-first system appeared to mitigate, to some extent, against segregation as parents uncertain about whether their child would be successful in the 11+ were likely to put greater value on their preferred non-selective comprehensive school. In contrast under the equal preference system parents in such a situation can keep their options open, thus bestowing advantage to those who recognise the implications and exploit this advantage. The net value that parents associate with first, second and third preference schools can also be significantly affected in non-selective admissions authorities where there may be popular and unpopular schools (Coldron *et al.*, 2008). Thus, under the now mandatory equal preference system, it is likely that parents' and young peoples' attitudes, values and satisfaction levels are far more complex than what can be distilled from the data available regarding the percentage of first, second and third preferences met. Indeed, such data may even mask important perceptions and experiences of the current system, an aspect of the admissions debate to which the Children's Commissioner has recently drawn attention (OCC, 2014), and which this pilot project is designed to investigate.

2.2.2 Segregation: drivers and inhibitors

The literature on admissions indicates that there is a strong association between areas where there is a mixed economy of different types of schools, in particular a high number of schools operating autonomously as their own admissions authorities, and sustained levels of social segregation (West, 2006; Pennel *et al.,* 2006; Coldron *et al.*, 2008; Gorard, 2014). Caution needs to be exercised in claiming evidence of cause and effect for social segregation in the school system, and it is likely to be linked to a complex ecology of factors, from inherited historical inequities within the system, to wider socio-cultural drivers such as residential segregation (Coldron *et al.*, 2008; Allen *et al.*, 2010). However, Gorard concludes that the most recent reforms towards a mixed economy of autonomous schools, and in particular the acceleration of the academisation programme, are '*not helping reduce segregation'* and that '*homogenous Maintained schools should be preferred for this purpose'* (2014, p.268).

The introduction of the 'random allocation' procedure has promoted much debate locally, nationally and internationally from the perspectives of social segregation and equity (Lauder and Hughes, 1999; Cullen *et al.*, 2003; Thrupp, 2007; Allen *et al.*, 2010). Within the 2007 School Admissions Code, it was argued that random allocation supported the promotion of equity as it '*can widen access to schools for those unable to afford to buy houses near favoured schools and create greater social equity'* (DfES, 2007, para 2.28). Random allocation can also be considered to be a powerful tool '*to achieve a maximally functioning education market and to focus competition and popularity on the quality of provision rather than the social characteristics of the intake'* (Allen *et al.,* 2010, 23). However, the introduction of catchment areas as part of the random allocation procedure has emerged as a contentious issue with some arguing that in theory, parents have a right to express a preference for schools, whether these are located within their catchment area or not. In practice, however, some parents feel effectively

excluded from the schools they believe are most appropriate for their child (Stiell *et al.*, 2008, 5). Allen *et al.* (2010) point out that if the system of random allocation can be seen in any way to lead to unequal access to 'good' schools, this raises great concerns as there is evidence to suggest that where education systems are segregated, the overall performance of pupils declines (*Ibid.).*

An important feature of ballots is that they are 'blind' to background characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, class, social status, religion, and prior educational achievement. Such neutrality appears to render ballots as useful over-subscription criterion. Allen *et al.* (2010, p.1) identify residential segregation or segregation by house price as '*the most important contributor to secondary school segregation*' particularly in proximity-based admissions systems. They also suggest that random allocation has the potential to neutralize the impact of proximity or residential segregation with the caveat that the retention of catchments in Brighton and Hove does not completely eliminate proximity, adding that '*it is the interaction between the lottery[2] and the boundaries of the catchment areas that is key'* (Allen *et al.,* 2010, p.1). However, it could also be argued that the neutrality of the process of random allocation itself is equally problematic as it can render ballots as ineffective in addressing inherited or historical inequalities where only a positive bias could achieve a more socially and economically balanced intake of students. From this perspective, the use of ballots may be perceived to bring a fairer approach to admissions whilst actually merely sustaining existing inequalities (Eastwood and Turvey, 2008). Ballots are never applied as the sole criteria (Sutton Trust, 2007; Noden et al, 2014), in that they are only one aspect within a range of other admissions criteria, not to mention the range of other client-side drivers that also influence and determine the outcome of the admissions procedure. The Sutton Trust report (2007, p.6) into ballots in school admissions concluded that there could be a useful role for ballots in school admissions but that the '*real debate in many senses should concern how fair the other criteria (such as catchment areas or ability banding) are to begin with – not the lottery process itself.*'

2.3 The local context

2.3.1 Catchments and geography
In line with the latest Department for Education (DfE) School Admissions Code, which came into force on 1st February 2012 (DfE, 2012), parents within B&HCC are able to express a preference for three secondary schools and are encouraged to apply for one or more schools within their catchment area. There are six distinct catchment areas based on postcode (see Appendix A) for which the Local Authority (LA) has overall control of admissions. Eight schools, whose admissions are controlled by the LA fall within these six catchment areas. Six of the schools are maintained by the LA, namely (Appendix A, East to West); Longhill High; Varndean; Dorothy Stringer; Patcham High; Hove Park (Lower and Upper on split sites); and Blatchington Mill. Two of these schools – Brighton Aldridge Community Academy (BACA) and Portslade Aldridge Community

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[2] Random allocation is often referred to as a 'lottery' in the media. We use the terms random allocation and ballots interchangeably in this report.

Academy (PACA) – are sponsored academies and as such could operate their own admissions criteria, but currently follow the same admissions criteria as all maintained schools in the six catchments, determined and controlled by the LA. There are two other state-funded secondary schools in the city: the long established Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School, which is a Voluntary Aided school; and the more recently established King's School, which is a Free School and as such draws its funding directly from central government. Both of these faith-based schools determine and apply their own admissions criteria in accordance with the DfE School Admissions Code (2012), employing supplementary entrance criteria based on the religion of the child (see B&HCC, 2013, 32-37). Whilst these two faith-based schools' intakes cut across the six catchments and also draw pupils from outside of the city they are included in this review as they impact on the admissions system and are state-funded. It is also noteworthy that four of the catchments are served by a single secondary school whereas the two catchments which fall either side of the border of Brighton and Hove, demarcated by the Dyke Road, are served by two schools and are known as dual-school catchments (Appendix A).

There have been some adjustments to the catchment boundaries since their original inception in 2008. The first adjustment to the catchment boundaries was prompted by an appeal to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (2008) raising the issue that Patcham High School, a single school catchment area (Appendix A), did not have a sufficient or sustainable pupil base (See Argus, 20 January, 2009; and B&HCC Consultation Document, 2008). A second adjustment to catchment boundaries was made in 2013 in response to the LA pupil projections (Brighton and Hove School Organisation Plan 2012-2016). The Blatchington Mill and Hove Park dual school catchment area was made smaller and the Varndean/Dorothy Stringer dual catchment extended by moving the boundary between these two catchments from the North/South railway line to the Dyke Road (Appendix A). However, capacity in these two dual catchments is regularly out-paced by demand as, demographically, Brighton and Hove attracts significant flows of inward migration from Greater London and the South East (ONS, 2013). The wards catered for by these dual school catchments contain higher concentrations of people aged 0-14 than many other wards across the City (Brighton and Hove JSNA, 2013). Such fluid and challenging demographics raise particular tensions in balancing, on the one hand, the promotion in national policies of increasing parental choice and marketisation in the education sector and, on the other hand, the need for fair access and equitable distribution of educational resources.

2.3.2 The use of random allocation (lottery)
In 2007, Brighton and Hove City Council (B&HCC) consulted on and proposed a move away from the allocation of secondary school places by giving priority to those living closest to the school, to the introduction of distinct catchment areas based on post codes, and the random allocation of school places in cases where schools are oversubscribed. B&HCC was the first Local Authority in England to introduce an element of 'random allocation' into secondary school admissions, in response to its introduction as a permissible over subscription criterion in the 2007 School Admissions Code (DFES, 2007). The current School Admissions

Code (DfE, 2012) maintains the use of random allocation as an acceptable mechanism for dealing with over-subscription in admissions, but states that:

> "*Local authorities **must not** use random allocation as the principal oversubscription criterion for allocating places at all the schools in the area for which they are the admission authority.*" (DfE, 2012, p.14)

From this perspective, the current arrangements for secondary school admissions in B&HCC remain compliant with respect to the code on the use of random allocation. For example, looked after children and those with exceptional circumstances (e.g. Statement of Special Educational Need) or a sibling link are given priority, followed by those within the identified catchment area. Thus, the procedures are based on the premise that children will attend a secondary school principally within the catchment area in which they live and that where a school is oversubscribed with applicants within the catchment area, *'…a random allocation process will be used to decide which children should be offered the available places'* as a final resort (B&HCC, 2013). Thus, random allocation is not the '*principal over subscription criterion'* (DfE, 2012, p.14). This procedure was first used within Brighton and Hove in September 2008 after objections about the initial proposal were raised with, and subsequently rejected by, the Schools' Adjudicator (Eastwood and Turvey, 2008). Further referrals to the Schools' Adjudicator and the Local Authority's internal review procedures led to some adjustment of the catchment boundaries and the sibling link arrangements but the random allocation within catchments remains the key mechanism for allocating secondary school places in the event of over-subscription and has been used in the two dual-school catchments in successive years since its inception in 2008.

2.3.3 Trends in preferences and allocations

As discussed in section 2.2, the statutory replacement of the first-preference-first system by equal preference has counter-intuitively been associated nationally with a decrease in the number of pupils being allocated their first preference (Coldron *et al.*, 2008). Although the percentage of parents and students in Brighton and Hove achieving a place in their first preference school has fluctuated over the years, the overall evidence from Brighton and Hove concurs with this finding. For example, between 2006 and 2008, 84% to 86% of students gained a place in their first preference school, however, in the years following the shift to an equal preference system in 2008 and the introduction of the random allocation within catchments system (Table 1 below), the percentage of those gaining their first preference school has fallen to between 78% and 82%. It is important to enter the caveat that it is not possible to determine the cause for this decrease in allocation of first preferences, however, it is noteworthy, and, as noted earlier, points to the need to understand the qualitative experiences underlying this tendency.

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Table 1: Percentage of pupils receiving 1st and 2nd preferences in Brighton and Hove

Year	1st preference allocated	2nd preference allocated
2006-07	86%	7%
2007-08	84%	9%
2008-09	78%	14%
2009-10	82%	11%
2010-11	81%	11%
2011-12	79%	12%
2012-13	81%	13%
2013-14	80%	12%
2014-15	82%	9%
2015-16	80%	11%

2.3.4 Trends in appeals

The data relating to the number of appeals submitted, allowed and dismissed provided by B&HCC cover a nine-year period from 2007-2015 (see Appendix C - it should be noted that in cases where secondary schools within the City are not included in the tables this is because no appeals relating to these schools were submitted). There have been approximately 130-160 appeals cases per year with the exception of the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 academic years where the numbers of appeals relating to these schools rose to 186 and 167 respectively. During these years, there was a sharp increase in the number of appeals submitted in relation to Blatchington Mill and Hove Park Schools (both of which are in one of the dual school catchment areas). It is highly likely that these increases were in direct response to the introduction of catchment areas within Brighton and Hove, which came into effect from September 2008. There was also a sharp decrease in the number of appeals submitted in relation to Dorothy Stringer during the 2008 and 2009 academic years. It is likely that this can be accounted for by the fact that the size of the whole cohort for this catchment decreased from 12,174 in 2008-2009, to 11,357 in 2009-2010, and the creation of additional schools places within the Dorothy Stringer/Varndean catchment area (see report in The Argus, April 2007).

In the 2013-14 academic year there was a sharp decrease in the number of appeals relating to Blatchingon Mill (from 72 to 38), and a sharp increase in the number of appeals relating to Dorothy Stringer (from 55 to 81). It is likely that these changes can be accounted for by changes in the catchment area boundaries in 2013 which moved part of one postcode area out of the Blatchington Mill/Hove Park catchment area and into the Dorothy Stinger/Varndean catchment. Alongside these changes, however, additional school places became available at the newly opened King's School in 2013. The 2014-2015 academic year saw an increase in appeals relating to Varndean (from 18 to 45) and Patcham High (from 2 to 26), which can also be partially accounted for by the catchment boundary changes in 2013. Additionally, the increase in appeals relating to Patcham High may be partially explained by steady changes in the academic and socio-economic profile of the school since 2007 (See Appendix B for details of the socio-economic changes).

2.3.5 Trends in socio-economic segregation

As discussed in section 2.2, in reviewing education reform of admissions, much attention has been given to longitudinal changes in socio-economic segregation. According to international evidence (OECD, 2012), higher levels of overall segregation within education systems are strongly associated with poorer levels of overall performance. Figure 1 below illustrates the application of Gorard's segregation index[3] (Gorard, 2006) using the annual school census eligibility to FSM data in the case of all schools in Brighton and Hove (DfE, 2015). It shows the trend over a period that preceded the admissions reform beginning in 2005-2006 (data point 1) up until 2014-2015 (data point 10). The raw data (DfE, 2015) that this was calculated from is available in Appendix B.

Figure 1: Brighton and Hove segregation 2006-2015

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GSI	0.140960296	0.147911369	0.170713008	0.170809	0.165619186	0.16272883	0.14561475	0.154799912	0.137111405	0.152933776

Annual School Census
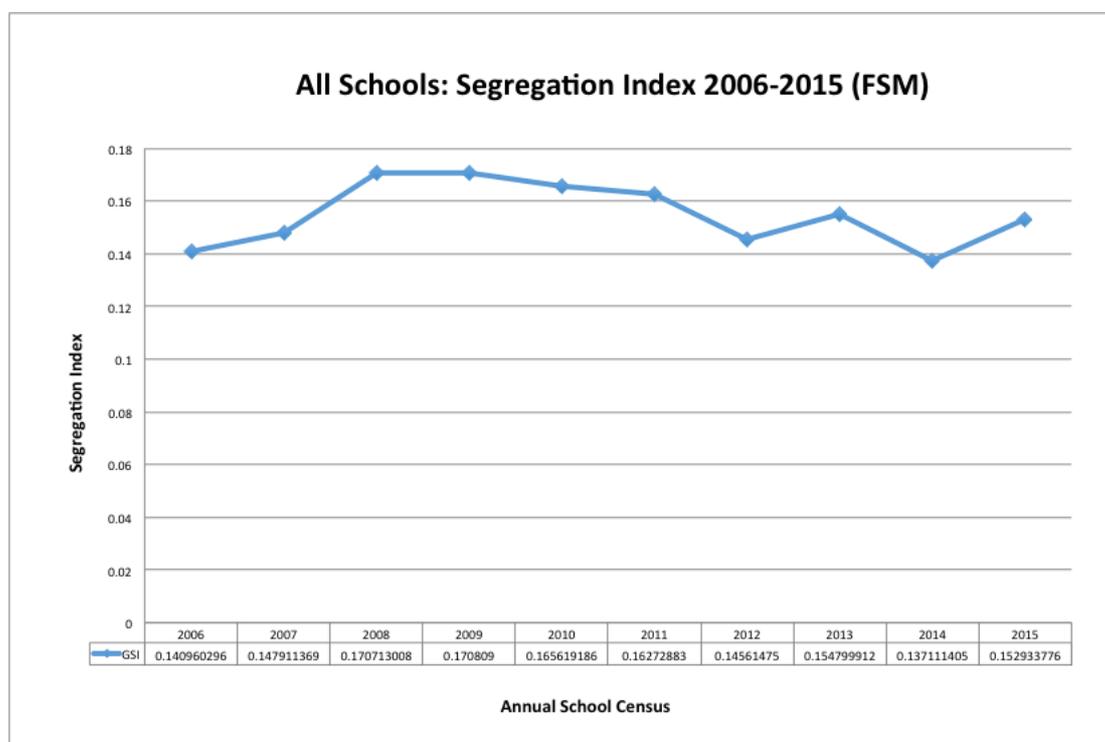
Figure 1 shows that social segregation in school systems is a dynamic and complex phenomenon that cannot easily be reduced to simple accounts of cause and effect. Brighton and Hove is no exception in this matter. For example, in the year immediately preceding the introduction of the new admissions system in the academic year 2007-2008 there was a peak in the segregation index at 0.17 or 17% (Figure 1), which is essentially the percentage of children eligible for FSM who would need to be exchanged with non FSM pupils to achieve an equal distribution throughout the schools (See for example Canning, 2015). This peak in the social segregation index was sustained during the year the new

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[3] $GS = 0.5 * (\Sigma F_i /F - T_i /T\ j)$ Where:

GS = Gorard's segregation

F_i = Number of pupils eligible for free school meals at School i.

F = Number of pupils eligible for free school meals in the region/geographical area as whole.

T_i = Total number of pupils at School i

T = Total number of pupils in the region/ geographical area as a whole.

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admissions system was introduced, 2008-2009 (Figure 1, data point 4). This peak in segregation turns into a downward trend through to the academic year 2011-2012, but then fluctuates between 2012-2015. In other words, despite the admissions criteria remaining fairly constant since 2008 in Brighton and Hove, levels of social segregation continue to fluctuate.

It is not possible to draw any explicit causal links between the introduction of the Brighton and Hove admissions reforms in 2008 and these variations in the segregation index. Changes to an established system are bound to have an impact as they take time for those affected to understand the various nuances involved. The changes were relatively complex with the introduction of new legislation such as equal preference and random allocation (DfES, 2007). Similarly, the period of the Brighton and Hove admissions' reforms presented here spans significant periods of wider economic recession, which are not accounted for within this model. Therefore the impact of any wider or national determinants can only be theorized here. For example, how does the pattern of segregation across this period relate to the wider pattern of school segregation in the country as a whole or in comparison with other Local Authorities? It is noteworthy that with the onset of the 2008 economic recession, Gorard *et al.* (2013), found a sharp decline in school segregation nationally. This differs marginally to the post reform pattern seen in Brighton and Hove, where any impact assigned to the wider economic recession would appear to be more gradual and possibly delayed. In their study of the post reform changes in the composition of schools in Brighton and Hove, Allen *et al.* (2010) carried out a more detailed and in-depth regression analysis and also noted a slight rise in socio-economic segregation when the reforms were first introduced in 2008. They suggest that although not statistically significant, this increase in school segregation could have some basis in '*the design of the catchment areas'* (*Ibid.*, p.17). Taking into account the wide range of potential determinants at play could also suggest that the process of random allocation is a relatively negligible factor in the process of admissions, as already discussed in section 2.2.

This all suggests that closer quantitative analysis of the dual-school catchment areas in which random allocation has been used over a period of time could provide more insight into the interaction between random allocation and catchments, but is beyond the remit of this report. Client-side perceptions, attitudes and values could have the potential to play at least as significant a role in determining admissions' outcomes, such as social segregation, as admissions system factors themselves. This again lends validity to the argument that random allocation, as an over-subscription criterion, is neither inherently fair nor unfair as defined by its potential to achieve a balanced intake of pupils at schools, and that other local or national system and non-system factors are also significantly at play. As Gorard and colleagues note, indicators of potential disadvantage such as FSM can be '*linked to different sets of possible determinants'* (Gorard *et al.*, 2013, p.14).

2.4 The significance of primary to secondary school transition

Much of the literature and the current context relating to admissions in Brighton and Hove points to the importance of understanding children and young people's

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qualitative perceptions in relation to the admissions system. A recent report by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (2014) also supports this. The Children's Commissioner investigated children, young people and parents' qualitative experiences of school admissions, after reports of some schools adopting underhand methods of dissuading some pupils and families from applying to their school, in order to manipulate their intakes. Whilst there is no previous suggestion or evidence that such practices occur in Brighton and Hove, the report cited above (OCC, 2014) highlights the significant impact that children and young people's perceptions can have on their aspirations and preferences at a vital time of transition in their lives. This is also supported by other research and evidence into children and young people's perspectives at this important point of transition.

The transition from primary to secondary school is a social and academic turning point for adolescents and, for some, can be the most difficult aspect of a student's school experience, leading to stress and concern (Coffey, 2013; Hanewald, 2013; Topping, 2011). Research evidence suggests that the majority of students express anxieties prior to transfer about a range of issues associated both with the formal school system, such as the size of the school, the timetable and the volume of work, and the informal systems of peer relations, meeting new friends, coping with 'older teenagers', and bullying (Pratt and Gorge, 2005, West *et al.,* 2010). Ashton (2008) found the informal aspects of school transition, including concerns about not getting their first choice of school, to be more important to students than concerns about academic issues. Students' experiences of the transition process can be made more comfortable when teachers work to create a safe and supportive learning environment, and when pupils feel accepted and part of a group (Coffey, 2013). However, given the significance for students of the move from primary to secondary school, it is important to understand stakeholders' perspectives and experiences of the procedures which govern the allocation of secondary schools, and for these perspectives to inform the development of future procedures.

3. Methodology

3.1 Approach to data collection

The project aims were addressed through the analysis of data generated from different categories of stakeholders within each of the six catchment areas in Brighton and Hove, on their perspective of the current secondary school admissions' procedures.

3.2 Research participants

Research participants comprised of staff responsible for school transition, students and parents from eight secondary schools, and staff responsible for transition in five primary schools within Brighton and Hove. The secondary schools involved were from five of the six catchment areas, and included schools within both dual school and single school catchment areas, academies and faith schools; the primary schools involved were from five of the six catchment areas, including one school from the catchment area not covered by the participating secondary schools.

The stakeholder groups comprised:
- **53 students in Years 7 and 8** comprising 29 students who currently attended their preferred secondary schools, and 24 students who did not attend their preferred secondary schools.
- **19 parents/carers of students in Years 7 and 8** comprising 13 parents whose children attended their preferred secondary school, and six parents whose children did not attend their preferred secondary school
- **15 staff (5 primary and 10 secondary) who had responsibility for overseeing the transition of students from primary to secondary school.** During interviews staff were asked to share their perspectives on the procedures for allocating schools, and the perceived impact these procedures have on students.

Each stakeholder group comprised of participants from single and dual catchment areas, faith schools, and the city's academies. Participating secondary schools were asked to recruit students/parents whose children attended their first choice school, and those who did not attend their first choice school. In most cases the choice of participants was largely determined by those most easily accessible. For example, in some cases the member of staff with responsibility for transition was aware of only a small number of students (and, therefore, parents) who had (or had not) listed the school as their first choice. In other cases, staff invited students to participate if, for example, they knew students were staying late at school on the afternoon the interviews were being conducted and had time to spare between the end of lessons and their extra-curricular activity starting. Similarly, parents were invited to participate if, for example, they had already indicated that they were be attending a school parents' evening on the afternoon the interviews were being conducted.

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3.3 Data collection methods

Data was collected mainly through focus group discussions and interviews. Focus group discussions were held with students and with parents, and individual interviews were held with school staff with responsibility for overseeing the transition of students from primary to secondary school. The focus group discussions and interviews purposefully included 'open' questions to allow participants to voice their opinions about aspects of the transition procedures which were of significance to them, e.g. 'Tell me about your experience of applying for secondary school'. At the end of each focus group and interview, the researchers fed back to participants what they considered to be the salient points raised to ensure that there was a clear and common understanding of participants' perspectives.

The data was then analysed to determine the key points raised by each of the participating groups. It was possible to identify common themes across the participants' responses; these are reflected and discussed within section 4.

3.4 Ethical considerations

British Educational Research Association (BERA) and University of Brighton Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research were followed throughout the research, and ethical approval was sought and secured from the University of Brighton. All participants, and the parents/carers of participants aged 15 or under, received an information sheet about the project and a consent form and gave their consent for their/their child's participation.

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4. Findings

This section will start with an overview of stakeholders' experiences of, and perspectives on, B&HCC's secondary school admission procedures. Consideration will then be given to stakeholders' perspectives in relation to the following four categories:

i) Factors prioritised when choosing secondary schools
ii) Measures taken to secure places in preferred secondary schools
iii) The reality of available school choices
iv) Perspectives on, and experiences of, the Appeals Process

It should be noted that while findings represent the perspectives of participating students, parents and school staff, perhaps inevitably, participants more readily made reference during discussions, to aspects of the admissions' process about which they were they were less satisfied, than to aspects they were happy about. However, participants were also asked specifically about aspects of the process which they considered worked well, and these are reported within the findings.

4.1 An overview of stakeholders' perspectives on and experiences of B&HCC's secondary schools admissions process

For students, choosing a secondary school was perceived as a major decision as they considered that the outcome would impact on how well they achieved at school and, therefore, on their future lives.

> *It's a really big thing choosing the right school, you want one that is good for your education, because it's like your future depends on it. ... It feels like a beginning for the rest of your life.* (Student)

4.1.1 Application processes and procedures
Within the admission timetable for transition to secondary school in September, parents are asked to list on a Common Application Form their first, second and third 'preferred' secondary schools. This is normally returned to B&HCC by a deadline date in October of the year prior to their children starting secondary school. This constitutes an application to each of the three schools and is the beginning of the allocation process co-ordinated by B&HCC. The B&HCC admissions team then inform each school of who has applied for a place at their school. The school's admission authority must then consider each applicant against their admission criteria and list all applicants in order of eligibility. This list is returned to B&HCC, who are required to allocate each child to the school that is the highest ranked of the parent's three preferences and for which the child is eligible. If a parent does not apply for a school, or is not eligible for any of the schools they list, they are allocated to their nearest school for which they are eligible and that has a spare place. This co-ordination process takes some time. The Admissions Code requires all local authorities in England to inform parents of the allocated school on the same day in March (National Offer Day) of the year they start secondary school. Most parents complete and submit the secondary school application form on-line, though, it is also possible for parents to submit paper application forms.

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Parents and students considered that being able to state their three most preferred secondary schools was a positive aspect of the schools' allocation process. Most students, however, described the period immediately after their school preferences form had been submitted, and the weeks leading up to being informed of their allocated school, as both worrying and exciting, while many students and parents considered the time period between submitting their preferences and being informed of their allocated school was too long.

Staff in secondary schools were in favour of the secondary school allocations process being managed and run by the City Council as they considered this made the process *'fairer for all concerned'*. Some parents, however, did not understand the system and contacted their preferred secondary school to enquire how to apply for a school place, while a member of staff in one school reported receiving a secondary school application form which should have been sent to B&HCC.

Staff in primary schools commented that the application process caused difficulties for some parents, in particular those who are not able to read well, and those who do not have Internet access or an email account. In some cases, where parents were known by the primary school staff not to have an email account, schools issued hard copies of the application form; however, some parents still experienced difficulties where they lacked the reading/writing skills necessary to complete the form. Some primary schools invited selected parents into schools and staff helped them to set up email accounts and to complete the secondary school application form. Despite these efforts by staff in primary schools, there continue to be cases where parents do not submit secondary school application forms. However, this does not always become apparent until other students are informed of their allocated school.

> *Because of the on-line application system it means we don't know who has and who hasn't completed the* [admission] *form, we don't see them… It used to be easier when they used to fill in a form and send it to us but now it's done on-line.* (Member of staff from primary school)

> *We've just found out that we have two children this year who haven't been allocated a school as their parents didn't submit the forms, and these are two of our most vulnerable children they don't know which school they are going to; they are so worried about this and it's not their fault, this is one of the great difficulties with the on-line system.* (Member of staff from primary school)

> *We have had in-year applications this year because parents did not realize or did not know how to apply and were only aware of it when their children's colleagues got the allocation results. I really do think the council should be aware of this problem and there should be a team – either in the council or in primary schools – to help parents with difficulties in applying.* (Member of staff from secondary school)

4.1.2 Informing parents of their child's allocated secondary school

Parents who submitted their secondary school application on-line were informed of their child's allocated secondary school by email, and those who submitted the application form by post were informed by letter. Those informed by email, however, tended to receive this one day earlier than those who were informed by letter. Thus, some students knew their allocated schools before others, and this caused stress and anxiety for those students waiting to hear which school they had been allocated.

Several students, parents and staff in primary school also expressed concern over the fact that students are informed about the schools to which they have been allocated during their preparation for Standard Attainment Test (SATs), which is a particularly stressful time for them.

> *…you spend six months wondering if you're going* [to secondary school] *on your own or if you'll be with your peer group, it's a worrying and unsettling time, and at the same time, you've got hormone changes and a lot of stress at school with SATS, it's all a bit too much.* (Student)

4.1.3 Confusions and misconceptions

Many students, parents and school staff found the secondary schools' allocation process to be confusing, and there was uncertainty about how parental preferences were taken into account by B&HCC when allocating schools. Parents, in particular, commented that they did not understand why some students were allocated their first choice of school outside of their catchment area while others were not.

> *It's quite a confusing system; it's not clear how the lottery actually works in practice. You don't know what the chances are of getting your first choice or if your children will be with their friends. People don't understand the system.* (Parent)

> *The process is completely in the hands of the local authority and we do not really know how it operates.* (Member of staff from secondary school)

> *The process seems a bit of a minefield… we know the dates by which each part of the process must be completed but we don't know what happens between these dates. No one knows and no one seems to understand the process.* (Member of staff from secondary school)

There were misconceptions about the schools' allocation process, with a large number of students and some parents believing that schools were allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis. Some students also thought schools were allocated according to which students schools wanted to recruit. One student stated, '*It's really important to make a good impression when you visit the school so that they remember your name and they choose you'.* Additionally, some parents were of the opinion that, where applicants had listed schools outside of their catchment areas as 'preferred' schools, those who lived in areas of owner-occupied housing were more likely than those who lived in areas of social housing, to be allocated a school outside of their catchment area.

Some students and parents were aware of a number of the priorities applied by B&HCC when allocating schools; they were in agreement with some of these and disagreed with others. For example, a small number of parents and some school staff cited the *'rule'* that '*Looked After children are given preference over other students*'. Either despite, or being unaware of, the fact that all admission authorities must by law put this as a first priority, they expressed disagreement with priority being given to these students on the grounds that a child who had been adopted from a very young age, but who has lived in a stable family for several years, is likely to be *less*, not *more* vulnerable than a child from a family in which there has been a recent divorce or separation.

Several parents and students were under the impression that B&HCC continued to give preference to students on the grounds that an elder sibling attends the school, regardless of whether or not they live in the catchment area. This is no longer the situation, however, as siblings who live outside of the school catchment area are now not given preference over other students. Where parents and students were aware of this change, however, they expressed mixed opinions. In most cases, parents and students considered that students should be given preference to attend the same school as siblings, as this would support the younger sibling in settling into the school. Parents, in particular, favoured siblings attending the same school, especially where the journey to school involved walking through wooded areas.

> *My daughter has to walk through some woods to get to school so I walk with her through that part, if I had a child in another school and had to take them some of the way where it might not be safe, I couldn't do it for both children.* (Parent)

One parent cited an example of a family she knew who had moved an elder sibling to the same school to which the younger sibling had been allocated, as the family wanted both siblings to attend the same secondary school, and they were not able to secure a place for the younger sibling in the school attended by her elder sister. A minority of parents, however, agreed that the schools' allocations process should not necessarily prioritise siblings living outside of the catchment area. In particular some parents considered it to be unfair for a sibling to be given preference in attending the same school as their sibling in cases where families have moved out of the catchment area for that school, as '*this would, in effect, be taking up places in the school which would limit places available for those who actually live in the catchment area'*.

There were some individual concerns relating to the allocation of secondary schools. For example, parents and school staff cited examples of a student being allocated one school, and their twin brother/sister being allocated a different school. Additionally, one mother spoke of her child being allocated their preferred school, but then the mother received a telephone call from a different school trying to convince her that their school would the '*best choice'* for her daughter, with the outcome that the student changed schools. Similarly, a student who had been allocated and was attending one secondary school spoke

about their parents receiving a call from another school asking them if they would rather change schools.

4.2 Factors prioritised when choosing secondary schools

Students and parents found school open evenings helped them, to some extent, finalise their choices of preferred secondary schools. However, both students and parents commented that the open evenings and the '*high levels of marketisation*' to which schools subscribed, including the publication of '*glossy prospectuses*', provided information on only the positive aspects of schools. It was, therefore, difficult to gain a realistic understanding of what it would be like to attend particular schools, especially where students and parents did not know, and were unable to consult, former or current students at the school.

All students and parents prioritised certain factors when deciding upon their preferred secondary school. The following priorities broadly reflect the order of significance for the different stakeholders.

i) Attended by friends

For students, the priority to which they gave the most weight was to attend the same school as their close friends.

> *I remember going into school the day after the letter came [to inform parents/students of their allocated school], people wanted to know that they had at least one friend going to the same school as them, and if they didn't they were really down and didn't really talk all that day. We tried to comfort them and tell them that they would make new friends but they were still really upset. …I remember one friend who got allocated a school and she was going on her own and the person just couldn't stop crying.*
> (Student)

Even where students were allocated their first choice of school, where no existing friends from their primary schools had been allocated the same school, they found this extremely upsetting. Several parents also considered that maintaining friendship groups on the transition to secondary school was an important factor.

> *Although my son got into his first choice of school, the majority of children at his primary school didn't, and when others didn't get into the same school that made my son not want to go there, even though it was his first choice!*
> (Parent)

Staff in primary schools also considered that it was important for children, especially the more vulnerable children '*not to sever established friendship groups on the transfer to secondary school*' as it was too unsettling for them to '*have the worry about having to make new friends, as well as having the general worries about moving on to secondary school*'.

There were particular concerns raised by parents and staff in primary schools around priority not being given for students to attend the same secondary school

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as the majority of those in their primary school. This was a particular issue where children who had moved into the city had been allocated a primary school geographically distant from their home and were then not given preference over being allocated a secondary school which would enable them to '*move up with their peers*'.

> *We have a large overseas population coming to Brighton and Hove and they are placed in primary schools with the space and capacity… but this may be a long way from their home, then when it comes to allocating secondary schools it goes back to post codes. But the City Council placed them in this primary school and made them travel to get here, now there're saying that the children have to go to a school in postcode code area, the system varies to suit the Council, not the children.* (Member of staff from primary school)

Moving house to a different catchment area during their time at primary school and then not being allocated the same secondary school as their peers was a particular issues for students who live in social housing, especially students from larger families, who tend to move frequently as and when houses more suited to their family's needs become available.

ii) High levels of academic achievement

The majority of parents and students prioritised schools with high levels of academic achievement. For parents, high GCSE grades and an Ofsted report which comments positively on the academic achievement of the school, were the prime considerations when choosing a secondary school. In some cases, where students were not allocated their preferred school, students and parents worried that the student would not achieve their '*academic potential*'.

> *It was very troubling as I picked three choices, but I didn't get any of these. I got one school and it wasn't a good school so I didn't want to go there, it would badly affect my learning.* (Student)

One parent also spoke about a family who home-schooled their child for almost one year as they were strongly against their child attending the school she had been allocated due to the perceived low academic standards of the school. Another parent spoke of parents applying for schools up to 30 miles away from their home in another county, in an attempt to avoid being allocated one particular school. One student also commented that, in order to avoid being allocated the school in his catchment area, he applied to an undersubscribed school outside of the catchment area which his family perceived achieved relatively higher GCSE results. He was successful in securing a place in this school, however, his journey to school takes 45 minutes and involves two bus connections.

iii) Attended by siblings

For most students and parents it was important to be allocated the same school as elder siblings as students were already familiar with these school and, as a result, considered that they would settle into the school more readily.

iv) Close proximity to home

Some parents and students prioritised schools located in close proximity to the student's home. Parents considered that their children would be most likely to *'stay safe on their way to and from school'* if they attended a school relatively close to their home. Some students expressed concerns over particular walking routes to certain schools in the city, especially where this involved walking near a park where there had been reports of '*attacks by paedophiles'*. For most students, however, they favoured attending a school near to their home in order to minimise the time taken to travel to and from school. Some students worried that if they attended a school geographically distant from their home this may prevent them from participating in after-school activities, and that they may need to travel home in the dark and would not feel safe doing so. Students also commented that they would not feel safe if they had to travel to and from school by bus where none of the other passengers were students from their school, and a minority of students worried that if they needed to travel to school by bus, the cost of the bus journey would be a financial burden for their families.

v) Positive school ethos

Parents prioritized, *'friendly schools'*, schools where they considered their children would be *'cared for'*, schools where '*teachers seem approachable'*, and schools with a '*positive ethos'*. However, only a small number of students made reference to the school ethos, mentioning the '*quality of care'* teachers had for students as being a significant factor when choosing a school.

vi) 'Good' behaviour and low levels of bullying

Parents favoured schools where Ofsted reports commented positively on 'good behaviour' and 'good discipline', and where the school was reputed not to have many 'rough' students. For students, it was important that the school had a reputation for managing and dealing effectively with bullying incidents.

vii) School facilities which accommodate the extra-curricular needs of students

School facilities were mentioned as an important factor by only a small number of parents and students. This tended to be in relation to particular interests of the students, for example, where students excelled in performing arts, they/their parents wanted a school which would accommodate and develop this interest.

viii) Size of school

A small number of parents and students favoured relatively '*small schools'.* They considered that it would be easier for students to '*settle into'* a small school rather than a larger school, and that students would receive '*more attention from staff'.*

ix) Cleanliness of school

A minority of parents prioritised schools which they considered to be '*clean'* and where the '*standard of hygiene is high'*.

In addition to the above priorities, staff in primary and secondary schools were of the opinion that parents also prioritised schools which '*provide a range of after school activities and school trips'*, and where '*students look smart in their uniform'.*

Students and parents also commented that their perspectives, particularly in relation to a school's ethos and the behaviour within a school, were partially based on the reputation of the school and on '*playground gossip'.* Parents also acknowledged that the local media amplified positive and negative incidents within schools, and that local journalists portrayed some schools more favourably than others and this *'coloured peoples' views of schools'* . As stated by one parent, '*the press doesn't help with the snobbery that exists around schools*'.

It was common for most students and their parent to visit open evenings at two or three secondary schools, including the school(s) within their catchment area. A small number of families did not attend any of the school open evenings as they considered they already had sufficient knowledge about their preferred school(s). In the majority of cases students and parents made a joint decision about preferred secondary schools. However, in a small number of cases, where there were disagreements between students and their parents, parents' decisions were taken forward.

4.3 Measures taken to secure places in preferred secondary schools

Parents, students and staff in schools all cited examples of where parents had taken measures to try to secure a place for their child in a particular secondary school. The most common examples were of parents moving house to be within a particular catchment area, or obtaining and submitting an address within a particular catchment area through renting accommodation, moving in with their parents, or giving their parents' address as their own. One parent talked of a family who *'gave up their council house and moved into a tiny rented flat in the catchment area of the school they wanted their child to go to, because they were so against their child going to the one school that was in their catchment area'.* Staff from one primary school also cited examples of '*split*' families '*being creative about the amount of time spent with each parent'*, for example by claiming that the child lived with one particular parent more than was the case.

A minority of parents listed their second and third choice schools as schools which they thought they were unlikely to be allocated. For example, parents listed schools geographically distant from their home, or a faith school, knowing that they did not fit the admission criteria for the school. Examples were also given of parents who started attending church in the hope of increasing their chances of being accepted by one of the faith schools.

More extreme measures taken by parents to increase the chances of being allocated their preferred school were also cited. For example parents talked of cases where others they knew had exaggerated their child's medical condition in an attempt to have their child awarded a statement of Special Educational Needs, and of a parent presenting a forged baptism certificate to try to secure a place in a faith school. Staff in one secondary school also cited cases of parents attempting to persuade the school transition manager to admit their child to the school, and staff in other schools spoke of parents contacting their 'first choice' school and falsely claiming they had been offered place in the school.

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4.4 The reality of available school choices

Parents are required to list three secondary schools, in order of preference, which they would like their child(ren) to attend. Students, parents and school staff all expressed views on the practical realities of obtaining a place in particular 'preferred' secondary schools. They considered the '*real*' choice of schools available was '*dependent on where you live, in some areas there is more choice and more likelihood of accessing a place in a school you want, and in other areas, there is less choice and less likelihood of getting into certain schools*'.

There was a strong sense from many parents that they were dissatisfied with the overall lack of '*real*' choice of available secondary schools, however, many were unable to offer ideas of how to improve the current allocation procedures, maintaining, '*it's just not fair, but I can't see a better way to do it, given the location of the schools across the city*'.

4.4.1 The reality of choices available for those living in dual-school catchment areas

Parents and students living in the dual-school catchment areas tended to favour B&HCC's current schools' allocation system. This was primarily due to the fact that these parents and students, along with the majority of all students, parents and school staff, considered the most '*sought after*' schools to be those in the dual-school catchment areas. These schools are commonly fully/over-subscribed with students from within their catchment area, thus, there is a very limited chance of students living outside of these catchment areas securing a place in one of these schools. Parents considered that the admissions system influenced the housing market, with house prices within the dual-school catchment areas being higher than in other areas of the city.

> *the most sought after schools are in the catchment areas with two schools...the choice of going to one of these schools only exists for people with money who can afford to move and live in certain areas... houses in these catchment areas can be up to £100,000 more than similar houses in other catchment areas.* (Parent)

Parents living outside of the dual-school catchment areas felt strongly that their children were excluded from having the opportunity of attending schools reputed to be the '*better performing*' schools, and that this reflected the social segregation within the city, especially given that there is a lack of social housing within these catchment areas.

> *It's the people with the economic power who have a realistic choice. If you can afford to live in a certain area then your kids can get into the better performing schools.... As always, it's unfair for people in deprived areas... the poor people come out worse...you won't get into one of the good schools, you haven't really got a choice.* (Parent)

A minority of parents living outside of the dual-school catchment areas, however, were of the opinion that the current schools allocation system may lead to

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the '*less popular schools improving their standard otherwise no-one will choose them*', and that this will eventually '*even out the standard of all schools which is better for the kids.*'

4.4.2 The reality of choices available for those living in single-school catchment areas

Most parents living in single-school catchment areas considered that the current process of allocating secondary schools deprived their children of having a choice of school. As one parent stated, '*you are manifesting a preference and that should be made clear on the form'.* Many parents and students felt they were '*victims*' of the system, as the geographical location of where they lived determined whether they had a choice of schools and, if so, which schools they were able to choose from.

Where students and parents lived in single-school catchment areas and favoured the one secondary school within the catchment, it was highly likely that they would be allocated a place in that school, particularly as schools in single school catchment areas tend not to be over-subscribed. In such cases, the secondary school allocation process was a relatively 'anxious-free' time for these students, as they did not experience the worry or uncertainty of not knowing which school they would be allocated.

> *If you apply to an undersubscribed school, especially if it's in your catchment area, you're pretty certain of getting it.* (Parent)

> *The majority of our children feed into one main secondary school so we can plan for transition and they don't have the anxiety and worry during year 6 of not knowing where they are going.* (Member of staff from primary school)

4.4.3 The perspectives of staff in primary and secondary schools

Several staff in primary schools also commented that where there is only one school in a catchment area and students/parents list this school as their first preference, this can be beneficial as they '*know they will be allocated this school so will be aware of the school to which they will be transferring*', thus making the transition process relatively straightforward. However, staff from primary schools also acknowledged the difficulties associated with living in a single-school catchment area, especially where the school's academic performance is in decline, as they '*more or less have to go to the school in their catchment area.*'

From the perspective of staff in primary schools, knowing that the majority of their students will be transferring to one or two specific secondary schools was helpful in planning the transition process. In such cases, staff had established positive links and working relationships with the transition managers and Special Educational Need Co-coordinators (SENCOs) in secondary schools.

> *95% go to one school, so that works well, and links with the school are very good. We are able to let staff know about children who need additional support, ...we have been able to increase the transition work we do and that helps the children.* (Member of staff from primary school)

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> *There's a lot of work goes on behind the scenes, especially for the more vulnerable pupils, the SEN children and the emotionally vulnerable children, we know most children will go to one particular school so we start preparing them for that from the beginning of year 6... We have good contacts with the school and are able to transfer a lot of information about the children to the Inclusion Manager.* (Member of staff from primary school)

Staff from secondary school perceived similar benefits to knowing that the majority of children from particular primary schools would transfer to their school. In such cases, staff at the secondary school worked to build links with the primary school students and staff even before students had been officially informed of their allocated secondary school through, for example, contributing to primary school assemblies and working with year 6 class teachers.

Where children from a particular primary school transfer to several different secondary schools, this caused difficulty in terms of staff from primary schools building close working relations with staff in secondary schools to support students through the transition process.

> *We deal with so many secondary schools, they don't listen to us as well as they could do, we can't build proper working relationship with the secondary schools as we deal with so many of them... they all want different information in different formats and at different times, and they all have different SENCOs, it's a case of form-filling but we don't have personal contact. ...you might know the transition managers in the schools but you don't know who the best person is to go to to get things moving for a particular child.* (Member of staff from secondary school)

It is important to note that, despite many negative views being expressed about the '*unfairness*' of the current school allocation process, the majority of secondary school students and parents were satisfied with the schools they/their children were attending. Of the participants to whom we spoke, only two year 7 students who had not been allocated any of their three 'preferred' schools were particularly unhappy with the secondary school they attended, and intended to move to one of their preferred secondary schools if a place became available.

4.5 Perspectives on, and experiences of, the Appeals Process

Where students are not allocated their first preference school, parents have the opportunity to appeal against this decision. Students, parents and staff from schools all considered the Appeals Process to be particularly stressful due to parents having to present a case for appeal and, as a result, delaying confirmation of which school their child will attend. Many students and parents, and some school staff also felt that the Appeals Process lacked transparency and was unjust because it was perceived to give preference either to students with '*special needs or issues*' or to parents who '*know the right people*' and '*who are*

articulate and make a fuss', while families who '*lacked the English language skills necessary to understand the system'* were at a disadvantage.

> *The pushy and articulate win their appeals and if you're not, you don't… they can see their way through the system and often get the outcome they want…. but the system doesn't work for those who aren't articulate.*
> (Member of staff from primary school)

It should be noted that the above quotation represents the opinion of a small number of parents and the evidence suggests that it is rare for anyone to be legally represented during the Appeals Process, with approximately five instances of legal representation out of the 300-400 appeals cases which have taken place within the past 4-5 years.

One head of a primary school and the school transition manager also spoke of the unfairness about the system and asserted that, in their experiences, those from their school who won appeals cases were most likely to be families with English sounding names.

In a small number of cases, parents talked of successful appeals and of the positive impact this had on the happiness of their children, for example, one parents commented:

> *My son was so upset, he cried a lot as he thought he wasn't going to get one of his choices, but luckily we did through the appeals system…it made such a difference to his outlook, he then started to look forward to secondary school, rather than being very down about the move.*

More often, however, parents and students talked negatively about the process. Some students expressed feelings of anger and depression on learning that their appeal had been unsuccessful:

> *After the appeals I felt annoyed, as I didn't even get one of my choices. I was angry. You do the appeal, and that's really stressful; it took about a month to get the information we needed, but we still didn't get our first choice, I was depressed after that, we'd wasted all that time.* (Student)

One parent complained that she did not receive a response to the appeal she submitted, and others spoke generally of how their own and others' experiences of the Appeals Process, whether successful or not, had been very stressful experience.

For some parents and students the prospect of the stress likely to be caused through engaging with the Appeals Process prevented them from taking forward an appeal, and parents were particularly concerned about the stress that it may cause for their children.

> *The trauma of not getting any of the schools we'd put down - she [the student] saw me stressed and unhappy about it and that made her unhappy,*

that's why we didn't appeal as it was affecting us too much, and I know I'd get really stressed and that would stress her out. (Parent)

I didn't do the appeals, what really worried me was all the uncertainty… I wanted to, but it was stressful as it meant you still didn't know which school you were going to…it would have been too stressful for my son. (Parent)

Staff in one of the primary schools commented that for some families, cultural beliefs prevented them from engaging with the Appeals Process to try to secure a place in their preferred secondary school.

Even if they know the appeals system exists, it goes against their culture to question authority and what you've been told to do, so for some cultures, appealing just isn't an option. (Member of staff from primary school)

From the perspective of staff in secondary schools, one outcome of the Appeals Process is that the final number of students allocated to a school is not known until late in the summer term. This can create difficulties in knowing the exact number of staff to employ. Staff in secondary schools also commented that the appeals process *'isn't a smooth process, we're always chasing up paperwork'.*

Conclusion and Recommendations

The following points are intended as conclusion to findings from the fieldwork and as recommendations for consideration by B&HCC in their broader review of the current secondary schools' allocations process.

1. An overview of stakeholders' perspectives on and experiences of B&HCC's secondary schools admissions process

- Parents and students considered that being able to state their three most preferred secondary schools was a positive aspect of the school allocation process, however, many considered that they had to wait too long between submitting their school preferences and being informed of their allocated secondary school.
- Most parents found the on-line application system straightforward. However, some parents experienced difficulties with the application process, in particular parents who were not able to read well, and those who did not have Internet access or an email account.
- Within some primary schools, each academic year there were cases where parents had not submitted a secondary school application form, and where this only became apparent once other students were informed of their allocated schools.
- Students, parents and school staff expressed uncertainty about how parental preferences were taken into account by B&HCC when allocating secondary schools.

2. Factors prioritised when choosing secondary schools

- Students and parents considered school open evenings to be of some help when making final choices about preferred secondary schools. However, they felt that the open evenings and other forms of publicity about the school (in the context of the high levels of marketisation to which schools subscribed) provided information on only the positive aspects of schools, making it difficult to gain a realistic understanding of what it would be like to attend particular schools.
- Students and parents prioritised certain factors, as follows, when deciding upon their preferred secondary school.
  - ➢ The most significant priority for students was to attend the same school as their close friends; this was also an important factor for parents, but not their prime consideration.
  - ➢ Staff in primary schools considered it was particularly important for vulnerable children to remain within their friendship groups when transferring to secondary school.
  - ➢ Parents placed the most emphasis on high GCSE grades and an Ofsted report which commented positively on the academic achievement of the school. Students also placed high priority on a school's academic achievements and, where students were not allocated their preferred school, some students and parents worried that they would not achieve their '*academic potential*'.
  - ➢ Parents and staff in primary schools raised concerns about children who had been allocated a primary school geographically distant from their home when they moved into B&H, but were then not given

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priority to attend the same secondary school as their primary school peers.

> Students and parents also gave some priority to: schools already attended by elder siblings; schools in close proximity to their home - students prioritised reducing travelling, and some students also expressed concerns about journeys to certain schools being 'unsafe'. Priority was also given to schools which were considered to have a positive school ethos, 'good' behaviour and low levels of bullying; and schools which have facilities to accommodate students' extra-curricular interests. A small number of parents and students also favoured *'small schools'* as they considered it would be easier for students to *'settle into'* a small school rather than a large school; and a small number of parents prioritised schools which they considered were *'clean and hygienic'*.

- In the majority of cases students and parents made a joint decision about preferred secondary schools. However, in a small number of cases, where there were disagreements between students and their parents, parents' decisions were usually taken forward.

3. Measures taken to secure places in preferred secondary schools

- Several parents took measures to try to secure a place for their child in a particular secondary school. For example, some families/parents:
  > moved house to live within a particular catchment area, or obtained and submitted an address within a preferred catchment area through renting accommodation, moving in with their parents, or giving their parents' address as their own;
  > listed schools which they thought they were unlikely to be allocated, as their second and third choice schools;
  > started attending church to increase their chances of being accepted by one of the faith schools.
- There were also a small number of cases cited in which parents talked of knowing others who had exaggerated their child's medical condition, in an attempt to have their child awarded a statement of Special Educational Needs, and of a parent presenting a forged baptism certificate to try to secure a place for their child in a faith school. Staff in schools also cited cases of parents attempting to persuade the school's transition manager to admit their child to the school, and of parents contacting their 'first choice' school and falsely claiming they had been offered place in the school.

4. The reality of available school choices

- Parents and students who lived in dual-school catchment areas tended to favour the current system of allocating schools, primarily because the most *'sought after'* schools were located within these catchment areas.
- The chances of students living outside of the dual-school catchment areas securing a place in one of these schools is very limited; several parents living outside of these areas objected to their children not having the opportunity to attend one of the *'better performing'* schools.

- House prices within the dual-school catchment areas tend to be higher than in other areas of the city, thus limiting the choice of schools available to many students.
- Most parents to whom we spoke who lived in single-school catchment areas objected to their children not having a 'real choice' of secondary schools. However, where parents' and students' 'first choice' school was the only secondary school within their catchment, it was highly likely that they would be allocated a place in that school, which was seen by some as a positive feature of the current admissions' procedure. In such cases, the secondary school allocation process was relatively '*anxious-free*' for these students as they did not experience the worry or uncertainty of not knowing which school they would be allocated.
- Where it was usual for students from particular primary schools to transfer to specific secondary schools, this allowed the primary and secondary schools to work together to plan the transition process, even before students had been informed of their allocated schools.
- Where children from one primary school transferred to several different secondary schools, this created difficulty in building close working relations with relevant staff in secondary schools.
- Despite many negative views being expressed about the perceived '*unfairness*' of the current school allocation process, the vast majority of secondary school students and parents were satisfied with the schools they/their children attended.

5. Perspectives on, and experiences of, the Appeals Process

- Many students, parents and school staff considered the Appeals Process to be stressful and, for some parents and students, the prospect of the stress likely to be caused through engaging with the process prevented them from pursuing an appeal.
- Students, parents and some school staff considered the Appeals Process lacked transparency and gave preference to those who '*know the right people*' and '*who are articulate and make a fuss*', while families who '*lacked the English language skills necessary to understand the system*' were at a disadvantage.

Recommendations

It should be noted that the findings report only the perspectives of participating students, parents and school staff, and may not be representative of the wider population of students, parents and school staff within Brighton and Hove. Nonetheless, the findings presented, most of which are based upon triangulated accounts from members of more than one participant group, suggest a number recommendations for future policy and practice in secondary school admissions within B&H.

Key recommendations in relation to B&HCC's review of the secondary school's admissions procedures are for B&HCC to consider:
1. Redrawing the current geographical catchment area boundaries to try to ensure all parents/students have a genuine choice of at least two

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secondary schools, and to consider, within this, the potential site for a proposed 'new' secondary school within the city.

2. Ensuring head teachers of primary schools are aware, immediately after the secondary school application deadline, of which parents have not submitted an application. Staff in primary schools could then work with these parents to support them in submitting their application.

3. Seeking to provide all stakeholders with a greater degree of transparency about the general criteria used for allocating school places, and the specific criteria relating to the allocation of places to students living outside the catchment area.

4. Providing, and making widely available, neutral information for students and parents about schools within B&HCC to supplement the current marketing and recruitment strategies provided by schools in the form of '*glossy brochures*'.

5. Seeking to ensure that parents, students and school staff are aware that the National Offer Day, on which parents and students are informed about students' allocated schools, is a fixed date throughout England and cannot be brought forward.

6. Implementing measures to synchronise, as far as possible, the date on which electronic and postal information about the allocation of school places is received by parents.

7. Providing all stakeholders with a simplified explanation (possibly a flow chart) of how to take forward a secondary school allocation appeal, and seeking to ensure a greater degree of transparency about the appeals process.

8. Prioritising the maintenance of the current partnership and consensus on admissions represented by the locally agreed and centrally controlled admissions criteria. According to research findings (West, 2006; Pennel *et al.*, 2006; Coldron *et al.*, 2008; Gorard *et al.*, 2013), this is more likely to serve the best interests of **all** children in the city.

Evidence provided in this report, as well as evidence from other research (e.g. Allen *et al.*, 2010), suggests that the interaction between catchment and random allocation can lead to some unequal access to 'good' schools and to social segregation. International evidence (OECD, 2012) also suggests a strong correlation between equity and quality in terms of student outcomes and performance and, where education systems are segregated, the overall performance of students declines. However, the Sutton Trust (2007, 6) reports that ballots in school admissions can play a useful role in cases where other criteria, including catchment areas are 'fair', which we would define in terms of the socio-economic make-up of catchments. Given these potentially conflicting findings, a further recommendation is that B&HCC gives consideration to conducting a more substantial and in-depth analysis of whether the use of

random allocation impacts positively or negatively on interaction between catchment areas and on levels of social segregation within the schooling system in Brighton and Hove.

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Appendix A: Map of catchment areas, illustrating secondary schools within each catchment

Secondary Schools and Catchments: Brighton and Hove
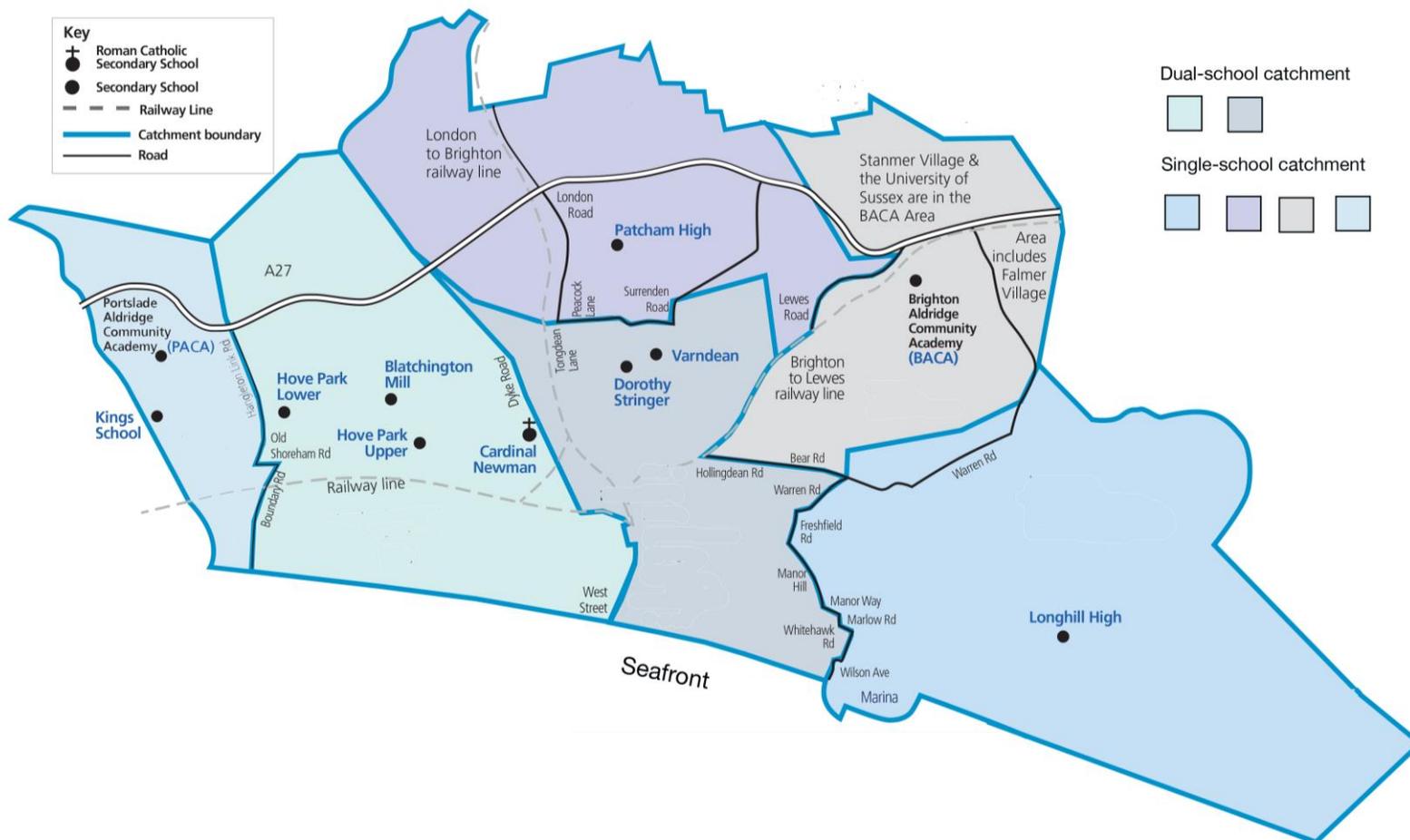
Appendix B: Dataset used to calculate Gorard's Segregation Index (GSI)

January 2006*

School	Type	Total pupils	Eligible FSM	% Eligible FSM	F	F_i/F	T_i/T	(F_i/F-T_i/T)	
V	Community	1240	150	11.8	1,830	0.081967213	0.101722724	-0.01975551	
DS	Community	1550	160	10.2	1,830	0.087431694	0.127153404	-0.03972171	
LH	Community	1230	130	10.6	1,830	0.071038251	0.100902379	-0.029864128	
FH	Community	660	220	33.9	1,830	0.120218579	0.05414274	0.066075839	
PCC	Community	1020	180	17.5	1,830	0.098360656	0.083675144	0.014685512	
BM	Community	1720	240	13.7	1,830	0.131147541	0.141099262	-0.009951721	
HP	Community	1720	320	18.6	1,830	0.174863388	0.141099262	0.033764126	
PH	Community	1010	200	19.6	1,830	0.109289617	0.082854799	0.026434818	
CN	Voluntary aided	2040	230	11.4	1,830	0.12568306	0.167350287	-0.041667227	
		12190	1830					0.281920591	0.140960296

January 2007*

School	Type	Total pupils	Eligible FSM	% Eligible FSM	F	F_i/F	T_i/t	(F_i/F-T_i/T)	
V	Community	1210	160	13.2	1820	0.087912088	0.09893704	-0.011024952	
DS	Community	1610	160	9.8	1820	0.087912088	0.1316435	-0.043731412	
LH	Community	1220	190	15.5	1820	0.104395604	0.099754702	0.004640903	
FH	Community	660	190	28.4	1820	0.104395604	0.053965658	0.050429946	
PCC	Community	1040	220	21.1	1820	0.120879121	0.085036795	0.035842326	
BM	Community	1720	200	11.4	1820	0.10989011	0.140637776	-0.030747666	
HP	Community	1740	320	18.1	1820	0.175824176	0.142273099	0.033551077	
PH	Community	990	190	19.7	1820	0.104395604	0.080948487	0.023447117	
CN	Voluntary aided	2040	190	9.5	1820	0.104395604	0.166802944	-0.062407339	
		12230	1820					0.295822738	0.147911369

January 2008*

School	Type	Total pupils	Eligible FSM	% Eligible FSM	F	F_i/F	T_i/t	(F_i/F-T_i/T)	
V	Community	1210	160	13.2	1820	0.087912088	0.100498339	-0.012586251	
DS	Community	1640	140	8.2	1820	0.076923077	0.136212625	-0.059289548	
LH	Community	1190	190	15.7	1820	0.104395604	0.098837209	0.005558395	
FH	Community	650	240	37.7	1820	0.131868132	0.053986711	0.077881421	
PCC	Community	970	180	18.4	1820	0.098901099	0.080564784	0.018336315	
BM	Community	1700	200	12.0	1820	0.10989011	0.141196013	-0.031305903	
HP	Community	1680	320	18.8	1820	0.175824176	0.139534884	0.036289292	
PH	Community	930	200	21.3	1820	0.10989011	0.077242525	0.032647585	
CN	Voluntary aided	2070	190	9.4	1820	0.104395604	0.17192691	-0.067531306	
		12040	1820					0.341426016	0.170713008

January 2009

School	Type	Total pupils	Eligible FSM	% Eligible FSM	F	F_i/F	T_i/t	(F_i/F-T_i/T)	
V	Community	1277	224	17.5	1866	0.120042872	0.104895679	0.015147193	
DS	Community	1657	140	8.4	1866	0.075026795	0.136109742	-0.061082947	
LH	Community	1187	190	16.0	1866	0.101822079	0.097502875	0.004319204	
FH	Community	667	269	40.3	1866	0.144158628	0.054788894	0.089369734	
PCC	Community	982	196	20.0	1866	0.105037513	0.08066371	0.024373804	
BM	Community	1716	215	12.5	1866	0.115219721	0.140956136	-0.025736415	
HP	Community	1676	294	17.5	1866	0.15755627	0.137670445	0.019885825	
PH	Community	900	171	19.0	1866	0.091639871	0.073928043	0.017711828	
CN	Voluntary aided	2112	167	7.9	1866	0.089496249	0.173484475	-0.083988226	
		12174	1866					0.341618	0.170809

January 2010

School	Type	Total pupils	Eligible FSM	% Eligible FSM	F	F_i/F	T_i/t	(F_i/F-T_i/T)	
V	Community	1310	249	19	1924	0.129417879	0.106582052	0.022835828	
DS	Community	1654	144	8.7	1924	0.074844075	0.134570011	-0.059725936	
LH	Community	1202	235	19.6	1924	0.122141372	0.097795135	0.024346237	
FH	Community	688	263	38.2	1924	0.136694387	0.055975917	0.080718469	
PCC	Community	939	187	19.9	1924	0.097193347	0.076397364	0.020795983	
BM	Community	1777	209	11.8	1924	0.108627859	0.144577333	-0.035949474	
HP	Community	1713	281	16.4	1924	0.146049896	0.139370271	0.006679625	
PH	Community	915	174	19	1924	0.09043659	0.074444716	0.015991875	
CN	Voluntary aided	2093	182	8.7	1924	0.094594595	0.170287202	-0.075692607	
		12291	1924					0.342738	0.171369

January 2011

School	Type	Total pupils	Eligible FSM	% Eligible FSM	F	F_i/F	T_i/t	(F_i/F-T_i/T)	
V	Community	1335	258	19.3	1921	0.134305049	0.109462119	0.024842931	
DS	Community	1633	149	6.5	1921	0.077563769	0.133896359	-0.056332591	
LH	Community	1198	244	20.4	1921	0.127017179	0.098228928	0.028788251	
BACA	Academy	670	264	39.4	1921	0.137428423	0.054936045	0.082492378	
PCC	Community	908	182	20	1921	0.094742322	0.07445064	0.020291682	
BM	Community	1736	204	11.8	1921	0.10619469	0.142341751	-0.036147061	
HP	Community	1669	264	15.8	1921	0.137428423	0.136848147	0.000580276	
PH	Community	947	173	18.3	1921	0.090057262	0.077648409	0.012408853	
CN	Voluntary aided	2100	183	8.7	1921	0.095262884	0.172187602	-0.076924719	
		12196	1921					0.338804	0.169402

January 2012

School	Type	Total pupils	Eligible FSM	% Eligible FSM	F	F_i/F	T_i/t	(F_i/F-T_i/T)	
V	Community	1345	249	18.5	1871	0.133083912	0.113569197	0.019514715	
DS	Community	1644	160	9.7	1871	0.085515767	0.138816178	-0.053300411	
LH	Community	1196	256	21.4	1871	0.136825227	0.100987925	0.035837302	
BACA	Academy	624	245	39.3	1871	0.130946018	0.052689352	0.078256666	
PACA	Academy	683	142	18.1	1871	0.075895243	0.057671198	0.018224045	
BM	Community	1668	210	12.6	1871	0.112239444	0.140842692	-0.028603248	
HP	Community	1608	256	15.9	1871	0.136825227	0.135776408	0.001048819	
PH	Community	963	157	16.3	1871	0.083912346	0.081313856	0.00259849	
CN	Voluntary aided	2112	196	9.3	1871	0.104756815	0.178333193	-0.073576378	
		11843	1871					0.310959	0.1554795

January 2013

School	Type	Total pupils	Eligible FSM	% Eligible FSM	F	F_i/F	T_i/t	(F_i/F-T_i/T)	
V	Community	1368	251	18.3	1901	0.132035771	0.114257078	0.017778692	
DS	Community	1640	169	10.3	1901	0.088900579	0.13697486	-0.048074281	
LH	Community	1172	270	23	1901	0.14203051	0.097886912	0.044143598	
BACA	Academy	618	255	41.3	1901	0.134139926	0.051616136	0.08252379	
PACA	Academy	755	145	19.2	1901	0.076275644	0.063058548	0.013217096	
BM	Community	1653	203	12.3	1901	0.106785902	0.138060636	-0.031274734	
HP	Community	1576	250	15.9	1901	0.131509732	0.1316295	-0.000119768	
PH	Community	1000	148	14.8	1901	0.077853761	0.083521256	-0.005667495	
CN	Voluntary aided	2191	210	9.6	1901	0.110468175	0.182995072	-0.072526898	
		11973	1901					0.315338	0.157669

January 2014

School	Type	Total pupils	Eligible FSM	% Eligible FSM	F	F_i/F	T_i/t	(F_i/F-T_i/T)	
V	Community	1334	208	15.6	1708	0.121779859	0.124777851	-0.002997991	
DS	Community	1325	144	8.8	1708	0.084309133	0.123936021	-0.039626887	
LH	Community	1145	248	21.6	1708	0.145199063	0.107099429	0.038099634	
BACA	Academy	522	211	37.9	1708	0.1235363	0.048826115	0.074710184	
PACA	Academy	581	112	17.3	1708	0.06557377	0.054344776	0.011228995	
BM	Community	1488	205	12.4	1708	0.120023419	0.13918249	-0.019159071	
HP	Community	1424	237	14.5	1708	0.138758782	0.133196146	0.005562636	
PH	Community	1026	129	12.6	1708	0.075526932	0.095968572	-0.02044164	
CN	Voluntary aided	1776	202	9.1	1708	0.118266979	0.166121036	-0.047854057	
KS	Free School	70	12	17.1	1708	0.007025761	0.006547563	0.000478198	
		10691	1708					0.26016	0.13008

January 2015

School	Type	Total pupils	Eligible FSM	% Eligible FSM	F	F_i/F	T_i/t	(F_i/F-T_i/T)	
V	Community	1350	181	13.4	1499	0.120747165	0.12254902	-0.001801855	
DS	Community	1640	142	8.7	1499	0.09472982	0.148874365	-0.054144545	
LH	Community	1088	226	20.8	1499	0.150767178	0.098765432	0.052001746	
BACA	Academy	523	185	35.4	1499	0.12341561	0.047476398	0.075939212	
PACA	Academy	526	80	15.2	1499	0.053368913	0.047748729	0.005620183	
BM	Community	1502	166	11.1	1499	0.110740494	0.136347131	-0.025606638	
HP	Community	1396	219	15.7	1499	0.146097398	0.126724764	0.019372634	
PH	Community	1024	121	11.8	1499	0.08072048	0.092955701	-0.01223522	
CN	Voluntary aided	1788	157	8.8	1499	0.104736491	0.162309368	-0.057572877	
KS	Free School	179	22	12.3	1499	0.014676451	0.016249092	-0.001572641	
		11016	1499					0.305867552	0.152933776

* Total number of children was provided by the DfES rounded to the nearest 10 up until 2009.

Appendix C: To illustrate available data for the number of appeals submitted, allowed, dismissed and settled before hearing from 2007 - 2008 to 2014 - 2015 academic years

2007-2008

	Appeals submitted	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed	Appeals settled before hearing
Blatchington Mill School	57	19	30	8
Dorothy Stringer School	71	33	30	8
Hove Park School	4	0	0	4
Longhill School	29	9	13	7
Patcham High School	1	0	0	1
Varndean School	20	7	9	4
Total	182	68	82	32

2008-2009

	Appeals submitted	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed	Appeals settled before hearing
Blatchington Mill School	89	13	65	11
Dorothy Stringer School	42	11	25	6
Hove Park School	29	8	11	10
Longhill School	9	3	3	3
Portslade Community College	4	0	0	4
Varndean School	22	4	8	10
Total	195	39	112	44

2009-2010

	Appeals submitted	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed	Appeals settled before hearing
Blatchington Mill School	76	10	61	5
Dorothy Stringer School	29	10	13	6
Hove Park School	31	4	11	16
Longhill School	7	2	2	3
Portslade Community College	1			1
Varndean School	30	18	7	5
Total	174	44	94	36

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2010-2011

	Appeals submitted	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed	Appeals settled before hearing
Blatchington Mill School	76	13	50	13
Dorothy Stringer School	29	7	17	5
Hove Park School	15	0	0	15
Patcham High School	6	0	1	5
Varndean School	22	6	7	9
Total	148	26	75	47

2011-2012

	Appeals submitted	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed	Appeals settled before hearing
Blatchington Mill School	57	13	34	10
Dorothy Stringer School	44	38	0	6
Hove Park School	2	0	0	2
Patcham High School	4	0	0	4
Varndean School	20	3	7	10
Total	127	54	41	32

2012-2013

	Appeals submitted	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed	Appeals settled before hearing
Blatchington Mill School	72	25	35	8
Dorothy Stringer School	55	30	18	3
Hove Park School	6	0	0	4
Patcham High School	6	0	0	4
Varndean School	20	0	0	16
Total	159	55	53	35

2013-2014

	Appeals submitted	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed	Appeals settled before hearing
Blatchington Mill School	38	5	24	8
Dorothy Stringer School	81	20	55	2
Hove Park School	0	0	0	0
Patcham High School	2	0	0	2
Varndean School	18	6	6	4
Total	139	31	85	16

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2014-2015

	Appeals submitted	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed	Appeals settled before hearing
Blatchington Mill School	19	1	0	18
Dorothy Stringer School	66	9	52	2
Hove Park School	0	0	0	0
Patcham High School	26	5	19	1
Varndean School	45	11	29	2
Total	156	26	100	23

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