



ALBANY
SOLICITORS

Attn of M Hutchings
Clerk to the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee

MHutchings@cardiff.gov.uk

Partners:
Misha Slough LL.M., LL.B.
Sara Poontaub LL.B.
Adam Sinfield LL.B. PGDiplaw (BVC) FCILEx

Case Workers:
Sarah Barwick LL.B.
Kate Hawkes BA PGDiplaw
Jennifer Jimenez Young JD
Sin Mei Lam BA GDL LPC

Your ref:

Our ref:

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Dear Sirs

Draft Cabinet Report – School Admissions Arrangements 2019/2020

We understand that the Council are currently giving consideration to amending the schools admissions arrangements for the academic year 2019/2020, with specific consideration to be given to a feeder school system for admission to Secondary education. We believe that this is to address over subscription in some particular schools in the Local Authority area.

We write as the largest legal firm representing asylum seekers, refugees and members of the BME communities across Cardiff. We wish to raise concerns about this proposal as we do not believe that it addresses the issue of over subscription and is in fact detrimental to particular communities. It is acknowledged that oversubscription in the Local Authority area is an issue, and has indeed been an issue for a number of years. It is noted that the Local Authority previously maintained a feeder school system but that this was changed over 15 years ago to the current system, in line with many local authorities across Wales and the rest of the UK. It is submitted that the re-introduction of the feeder system in Cardiff actively discriminates against sections of the community which are more mobile and hence are less likely to be on the school roll throughout the primary phase or move into catchment later in the primary phase. This may include BME communities, children of asylum seekers and refugees, and the traveller community.

Cardiff Office
16 Park Grove - Cardiff - CF10 3BN
Tel: 02920 472728
Fax: 02920 495096



Bristol Office
10 Park Street - Bristol - BS1 5HX
Tel: 0117 915 4541
Fax: 0117 915 4542



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✉ info@albansolicitors.co.uk
🌐 www.albansolicitors.co.uk
📘 facebook.com/albansolicitors

The Local Authority may not be aware that children of Asylum Seekers are accommodated by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and as such have no choice in their accommodation location. Families are given little notice of a change of accommodation and that accommodation could be located in any catchment area in the city. There is no consideration by NASS as to the impact this would have on a child in accessing education in a Local Authority where a feeder school system has been implemented.

The proposed system prejudices vulnerable, low income families who do not maintain permanent, secure accommodation and as such yet seems to benefit wealthier parents who are able to move into a permanent home in a "desirable" catchment area whilst their children are pre-primary age. The feeder system clearly places BME communities, children of asylum seekers and refugees, and the traveller community at a significant disadvantage when seeking admission.

Given the fact that the above groups are more "mobile" then this is likely to lead to significant transport issues in both congestion on the city network, and the Local Authority having to fund the transportation of these pupils across the city to the specified Secondary School. The Local Authority encourages children to walk or cycle to school or use sustainable transport for the purposes of healthy living and mind-set but this would not be encouraged by the suggested proposals.

It is acknowledged that the oversubscription of some schools is problematic in the Local Authority area but it seems illogical to seek to introduce a feeder school system at this stage, without giving more detailed consideration to the implications of the size and locations of catchment boundaries. It would be unreasonable to implement a policy which appears to benefit a small section of the Local Authority area, and place other groups, in particular those from a less fortunate socio-economic background across the Local Authority area at significant disadvantage.

In addition, given the significant implications of the admissions policy change, should the cabinet seek to implement the proposed feeder school system it is submitted that children currently in the primary school system are not prejudiced by the change.

Finally, we confirm that we are happy to contribute any further information as might be needed by the cabinet on the impact of admissions arrangements changes on Asylum Seeker, Refugee and Immigrant families if required.

Yours faithfully



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