

**Title: Harpenden Free School**  
**Author: Department for Education (DfE)**

**Impact Assessment – Section 9 Academies Act Duty**

1. Section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 places a duty upon the Secretary of State to take into account the likely impact of establishing the additional school on maintained schools, Academies, institutions within the further education sector and alternative provision in the area in which the additional school is (or is proposed to be) situated.

**Background**

2. Harpenden Free School (HFS) is a 4 – 11, non-selective, non-faith primary school. It plans to open in September 2012 with an intake of 60 pupils (40 in reception, 10 in year 1 and 10 in year 2), growing year on year until it reaches its capacity of 420 pupils in September 2017.

3. The school will open in temporary accommodation in September 2012 at the Tithe Barn, Dunstable Road, Redbourn, Hertfordshire, AL3 7QA, approximately 1.5 miles from the planned permanent site on Victoria Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 4EN. The school is due to move to the Victoria Road site in September 2014.

4. The proposer group is a partnership of three organisations – youth leadership charity Changemakers, the owner and headteacher of Artisans Montessori Kindergarten and public services provider Isledon Partnership. The group recognise that there are a number of good and outstanding schools in the area and keen to also offer high quality provision but with a unique ethos that combines the Changemakers philosophy of child-led learning with the Montessori approach.

**Catchment Area and Admissions**

5. The school's admissions arrangements will ensure that pupils will be admitted without reference to ability, aptitude or social background. Should the school be over-subscribed, after admitting all children with a statement of SEN, priority will be given in the following order:

- i) Looked after children or pupils who were formerly looked after.
- ii) Up to 25% of the remaining places will be allocated to children who are entitled to Pupil Premium funding and whose permanent home address is within the Harpenden Town parish boundary.
- iii) 50% of the remaining places will be allocated to children, whose permanent home address is within the Harpenden Town parish boundary, including those who were not allocated a place under criterion ii).
- iv) All remaining places to any applicant to Harpenden Free School, including those who were not allocated a place under criteria ii) and iii).
- v) If there are more applications than places within each of criteria ii), iii)

and iv), places will be allocated as follows:

- Applicants whose siblings have a place at the school at the time of entry.
- By random allocation.

6. HFS will operate a waiting list for each year group. Where in any year the school receives more applications for places than there are places available, a waiting list will be determined solely in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. Where places become vacant they will be allocated to children on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. The school will join the Hertfordshire County Council coordinated admissions round from 2013.

7. The school's oversubscription criteria include prioritising children who qualify for the Pupil Premium. This is permitted in the new Admissions Code for admissions in 2013. Ministers agreed following Lindsey Henning's submission of 25 January that HFS could admit on this basis a year before the new code permits. As such, Annex B to the HFS Funding Agreement contains a derogation to allow the school to prioritise children who qualify for the Pupil Premium in their oversubscription criteria in 2012.

8. There have been a total of 34 preferences expressed for the 60 available places at HFS in 2012. Of the 34 pupils, 12 live in Harpenden and the remaining 22 live in neighbouring towns such as Luton and St Albans and villages further afield. One pupil will travel from Essex. These figures represent a geographical spread of pupils that aligns with the school's admissions aim to recruit 50% of pupils from Harpenden and 50% from further afield.

9. The average distance travelled to primary school in Hertfordshire is 0.8 miles. The furthest distance travelled to primary school by a significant majority (80%) of pupils in Hertfordshire is 1.5 miles. For the purpose of the impact assessment, we have assessed the impact on all of the existing primary schools within an approximate 3 mile radius of the school's temporary (Tithe Barn) and permanent (Victoria Road) sites to allow for interest from outside of Harpenden.

10. In St Albans district, where Harpenden is located, there is currently a 1.9% surplus of primary places however the primary school population is projected to grow over the next five years. Any potential negative impact on local schools would be mitigated by the growing population (see table provided by HCC below).

<b>St Albans district primary places (April 2010 forecast)</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
<b>Demand</b>	12024	12483	12744	12849	12880
<b>Surplus/Shortage</b>	241	-218	-479	-584	-615
<b>% Surplus/Shortage</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>-1.7%</b>	<b>-3.9</b>	<b>-4.7%</b>	<b>-5.0%</b>

If no new primary school places were added

there would be a 5.0% shortfall of places across the district by 2015/16.

11. For all of the districts within Hertfordshire, including the neighbouring districts, the

population is set to rise over the next five years. For example, the neighbouring districts of Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield and Watford are all projected to see an increase in school population of 22.3%, 12.5% and 15.3% by 2015. The school population is expected to rise in St Albans district by 7.1%.

#### Local Authority View

12. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) is broadly supportive of the Free Schools movement. The local authority is the driving force behind two Free School proposals - Hatfield Community Free School and Alban City School - which are due to open in September 2012.

13. HCC were invited to provide their views on the HFS proposal. They responded to that invitation on 23 July saying that they do not believe the Harpenden Free School will have a detrimental impact on local schools in 2012 as they do not believe that a significant number of pupils will choose to attend HFS over the current local provision. In the long term, HCC are uncertain whether or not there will be pressure on places due to HFS entering the local market. HCC do not know if there will be sufficient local demand for the school's Montessori approach and suggested that pupils may be drawn from less popular local schools or neighbouring towns.

14. HCC's most recent forecast for the town of Harpenden show that there is not an on-going deficit of primary places for the area (see table provided by HCC below).

<b>April 2012 Forecast</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
<b>Number of reception places available</b>	517	412	412	412
<b>Demand</b>	468	433	421	384
<b>Supply/Shortage</b>	49	-21	-9	28
<b>% Surplus/Shortage</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>-5.1%</b>	<b>-2.2%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>
<b>No of FE</b>	1.6	-0.7	-0.3	0.9

15. While forecast data suggests that there is not an on-going deficit of places in Harpenden, HCC reported a significant and unpredicted increase in the pre-school population across Hertfordshire due to an inflow of families moving to the county the year prior to their child needing a reception place. HCC also stated that they are consulting on a proposal to expand provision in Harpenden to meet the shortfall of places in 2013.

#### Representations

16. Harpenden Free School entered the pre-opening stage on 10 October 2011. Shortly thereafter, the Harpenden and District Schools Consortium wrote to the Department to express their concerns about the proposed Free School. The group were primarily concerned that they had not yet been consulted on the opening of HFS and were unclear on how they would plan for September 2012 with uncertainty around pupil allocations due to the new Free School.

17. Free Schools are obliged, under Section 10 of the Academies Act 2010, to consult with those persons they think are appropriate as to whether the Academy Trust should enter into the Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State. The proposer group engaged

with local schools, politicians and officials regularly in the months before the formal consultation began. The formal consultation period ran from 11 June 2012 to 23 July 2012. The Trust asked the following question on its website:

“Do you agree that Harpenden Free School should open in September 2012, which would involve us entering into a funding agreement (FA) with the Secretary of State for Education?”

18. HFS engaged a range of stakeholders - local politicians and executive officers, local primary schools, children’s services providers, parents, businesses and community groups - throughout the pre-opening stage and wrote to these groups during the formal consultation period. In addition to the HFS website, a leaflet campaign, local press coverage and a formal consultation document and survey were published in print and online. HFS also held three events for the local community, attracting a total of 90 attendees.

19. Of the 62 responses received, 73% of respondents were in support of the HFS, 23% were against and 5% were undecided. 79% of respondents agreed with the school’s vision and ethos.

20. The 23% that were against included local schools and governors who expressed their concern over the number of children that may leave existing schools or not take up a reception place that had been allocated to them for September 2012. The Trust responded to this by committing to share application data with HCC once the Funding Agreement is in place and pupil numbers can be confirmed. Another issue presented by local residents and businesses concerned traffic congestion with the permanent site for the school located in the centre of Harpenden. The Trust is addressing this by establishing a drop off point at a local car park outside of the town centre where children will be met by school staff. There was no vocal opposition during the open days and discussions with interested parties. The overall findings of the consultation showed there was strong support for the project amongst the stakeholders questioned.

#### Impact on other schools

21. HFS will have a permanent site on Victoria Road in Harpenden from September 2014. It will open in temporary accommodation at the Tithe Barn in Redbourn for a period of two years. We have considered the impact the Free School may have on all schools within a 3 mile radius of both sites.

22. The table below sets out the likely impact on the nearest primary and infant schools to the proposed temporary and permanent sites. It shows that opening the Free School may have impact on any of the schools in the area but we do not expect the impact to be any greater than minimal in any case.

School name	Distance from temp site AL3 7QA	Distance from permanent site AL5 4EN	Impact rating	Capacity	Pupils on roll	Ofsted rating	% of Y6 pupils attaining Level 4 in English and maths in 2011
Redbourn Infant and Nursery	0.9	2.4	Minimal	180	229 (27% over)	Good	87
Roundwood Primary	1.0	0.8	Minimal	315	346 (10% over)	Outstanding	96
Wood End Primary	1.0	1.4	Minimal	420	469 (11 over)	Outstanding	98
St Nicholas Church of England Primary	1.4	0.2	Minimal	210	154 (27% under)	Good	81
St Dominic Catholic Primary	1.7	0.3	Minimal	236	238 (1% over)	Outstanding	93
Flamstead Village School	2.0	3.6	Minimal	90	104 (15% over)	Satisfactory	64
The Lea Primary School	2.0	1.0	Minimal	116	120 (3% over)	Satisfactory	83
Manland Primary School	2.0	0.6	Minimal	210	222 (6% over)	Satisfactory	84
Crabtree Infant School	2.1	0.5	Minimal	180	280 (55% over)	Outstanding	97
The Grove Junior School	2.3	0.8	Minimal	300	258 (14% under)	Satisfactory	87
High Beeches Primary School	2.3	0.7	Minimal	210	203 (3% under)	Good	90
The Grove Infant and Nursery School	2.4	0.9	Minimal	225	305 (35% over)	Outstanding	No KS2 data available
Saucy Wood Primary	2.6	1.0	Minimal	196	128 (35% under)	Good	62

1 National average for 2011 was 74% and for Hertfordshire was 78%

School							
Brockwood Primary School	2.9	4.3	Minimal	180	116 (25% under)	Satisfactory	38
St Helen's Church of England Primary School	0.9	2.4	Minimal	280	270 (3% under)	Outstanding	89
Beech Hyde Primary	4.4	2.8	Minimal	210	248 (18% over)	Outstanding	74

### Schools where the impact is minimal

23. Impact on all 16 of the schools closest to the two sites is judged to be minimal. 11 are judged by Ofsted as either Good or Outstanding. Only 6 of the 16 are under-subscribed and only two of these have Ofsted judgements below Good (both are satisfactory). Whilst it is possible that these two schools will be marginally more vulnerable to losing pupils than some of the other schools, neither are the closest to either site.

24. HFS offers a distinct ethos that will appeal to some but not all and it is likely that its impact will be evenly spread across a number of schools in the area, rather than be concentrated on a small number. Should HFS be oversubscribed the proposed admission arrangements will also mean that pupils are unlikely all to live in one particular tight area. Again, this is likely to mean that any impact of the establishment of the new school will be spread over a greater number of schools.

### Impact on Secondary Schools, Special Schools, Alternative Provision Schools and FE institutions

25. Harpenden Free School will have no specialist SEN provision but will work to accommodate the needs of pupils where the school is named in their statement of SEN. As such, it is unlikely to have any direct impact on local secondary schools, Special Schools, alternative provision and even less likely to impact post-16 and FE institutions.

26. The introduction of a new primary school may, however, have an indirect impact on local secondary schools in terms of the types of primary feeder schools in the area for local secondary schools. Rising primary rolls of course translate over time to rising rolls in secondary schools. HCC's projections show 2014/15 as the start of a likely long period of sustained growth, but because of the greater degree of predictability of secondary age pupil numbers five or more years in advance, the planning of expansions to meet demand is a more certain process. HCC has already considered the increasing demand in the area for secondary places which the rising population in the area will create. For these reasons the impact on secondary schools and FE institutions is assessed as being negligible.

### Conclusion

27. HFS will create some additional places in the short-term but the impact on existing schools will be minimal. Many are already oversubscribed and high performing and if these

schools lost pupils to the Free School, they should still be able to fill most or all of their places. While the short-term deficit of primary school places may be met by plans to expand an existing primary school, history suggested that new families will continue to move to the area and the school population will increase further. This increase is likely to reduce further any impact of the additional school on existing schools in the area. HFS's admissions arrangements – taking 50% of pupils from outside of Harpenden – should also mitigate the impact of any loss of places at local schools.