

Harpenden Free School

**CHANGE
MAKERS/**

NEW PUBLIC SERVICES
isledon
PARTNERSHIP



Proposal to the Department for Education
June 2011

“I have finally taken the time to read through the documents and I was crying! This resonates so deeply with what I want for my children, the opportunity of them benefiting from this in Harpenden is mind blowing!”

Parent response to Harpenden Free School survey

Section 1: Applicant details

Details of Company Limited by Guarantee
Name: Harpenden Free School Ltd
Company address: [REDACTED] Hitchin Herts [REDACTED]
Company registration number: 07649122
Main contact
Name: [REDACTED]
Address: [REDACTED] Hitchin Herts [REDACTED]
Email address: [REDACTED]
Telephone number: [REDACTED]
Members and Directors
There are 3 Company Directors. No members of the permanent Governing Body have yet been appointed, although we plan to establish an Interim Governing Body (see section 6 below). All 3 Company Directors will become Interim Governors, with [REDACTED] as Chair, along with two members of the implementation group.
Name: [REDACTED] Position: Company Director and Chair of the Interim Governing Body
Name: [REDACTED] Position: Company Director and Interim Governor
Name: [REDACTED] Position: Company Director and Interim Governor
Name: [REDACTED] Position: Interim Governor
Name: [REDACTED] Position: Interim Governor

Related organisations
Does the Company Limited by Guarantee have any links (through the members, directors or otherwise) with any other charitable or commercial organisation? Yes
Changemakers (charity 1086178 / company 4143956) – Overall lead partner during the proposal / setup phases. Provision of leadership, management and governance advisory services after opening.
Artisans Kindergarten (registered as Tasty Tales company 05276694) – Curriculum design, local advocacy and marketing during the proposal / pre opening phases. Provision of curriculum advisory services after opening.
Isledon Partnership (company OC356393) – Premises management and logistics during the proposal / pre opening phases. Provision of premises advisory services after opening..
We understand the requirement if our application is approved that commercial organisations working with Harpenden Free School will have to be procured on the basis that they are the best bidder.
If your organisation is an existing independent school, please provide your six digit unique reference number: N/A

Declaration to be signed by a Company Director

I confirm that the information provided in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge and that if the application is successful the Company will operate a Free School in accordance with the requirements outlined above and the requirements of the Independent Schools Standards* and the Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State.

Signed: [REDACTED]

Print Name: [REDACTED]

Date: 26th May 2011

Section 2: Outline of the school

Proposed school name:	Harpenden Free School							
Age range:	4 – 11							
Proposed numbers in each year group at point of opening and explanation of how pupil numbers will expand to fill the school over time. If your application includes nursery provision, please add additional rows as appropriate.		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	Reception	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
	Year 1	40	60	60	60	60	60	60
	Year 2	20	40	60	60	60	60	60
	Year 3	0	20	40	60	60	60	60
	Year 4	0	0	20	40	60	60	60
	Year 5	0	0	0	20	40	60	60
	Year 6	0	0	0	0	20	40	60
	Total	120	180	240	300	360	400	420
	<p>The school will have an annual reception intake of 60 pupils.</p> <p>The desire to enable all children from the same family to attend the school, including those who had already started at different schools, was strongly expressed in our parental consultation. Therefore in 2012 we will make 40 year 1 and 20 year 2 places available. In 2012 these pupils will be organised in 2 mixed year classes. From 2013 when the older group enters Key Stage 2 they will be organised into three separate classes.</p> <p>Artisans Kindergarten will provide a Nursery on the same site but this will be independently managed and funded. However, we will exploit opportunities to integrate the pre-school children with their older peers.</p>							
If an existing independent school, provide details of your latest inspection (including the report), current numbers on roll and total capacity of school.	N/A							
Will your school have a religious character (i.e. be a faith school)? If Y, please specify which faith. Please see notes below (at the end of this table).	No							

Is this an application for a single-sex school? If so, please tick the relevant box.	No
Local authority area in which the school would be situated (and if near to a LA boundary please include names of neighbouring LAs).	Hertfordshire (close to boundaries with Bedfordshire and Luton)

Section 3: Educational vision

A visit to Harpenden Free School in June 2014

As I drive up the approach road to the school, I'm flagged down by a girl who introduces herself as [REDACTED] from year 5. She explains that her group is conducting a survey of drivers in the roads around the school as part of the local campaign they are running to reduce car usage and I ask her a couple of questions. [REDACTED] is very engaging and persuades me to sign the petition on the website they have created, before thanking me and showing me where to park. I resolve to walk to the supermarket later today.

After I park my car I walk up towards the main entrance to the school. Out the front is an elderly gentleman with a group of children ranging in age from what looks like 3 up to 11. He introduces himself as [REDACTED], and explains that he leads a group of retired volunteers from the local area who support the children with running the school allotments. I discover that each class has its own patch, and this term [REDACTED] and the children are growing vegetables on the theme of 'dig for victory' as part of a whole school project about Great Grandparents. [REDACTED], one of the pre-school children, introduces himself and tells me that the Great Grandparents project was his idea, and he had to put it forward at a whole school assembly along with lots of other ideas which all the children then voted on to pick their favourite. [REDACTED] tells me that the children have taken to growing vegetables with such gusto that they are now supplying the school kitchens and have secured a grant from the school enterprise committee to establish a social enterprise and sell to local shops.

I go into the school and the lovely bright and airy entrance hall where [REDACTED] from year 6 welcomes me. He explains that the school reception is run by the year 6 children and introduces me to two other children - [REDACTED], who is sorting the post, and [REDACTED], who is on the phone. In the background is [REDACTED], the school secretary, who is busy on her computer but, I notice, keeping an eye on the children in case they need a hand.

[REDACTED] offers to show me round and takes me first to the hall where I meet [REDACTED], who I discover is [REDACTED]'s wife. She is leading a ballroom dancing class with about 20 children – boys as well as girls (!) – which is also part of the Great Grandparents project. [REDACTED] explains that there is a physical activity every morning before school starts – he himself is doing a football coaching qualification and runs a football training session for the younger children outside once every couple of weeks.

I notice how calm the school seems – none of the manic early morning atmosphere that characterises most schools I visit, and I was able to park with little difficulty! As I go round the school I realise this is because there is a flexible start time meaning that children can arrive any time between 7.30 and 8.30 in the morning. I see some children making breakfast for themselves and each other, another group is watching CBBC (although [REDACTED] assures me the TV is strictly rationed according to rules the children themselves drew up) and a third group is playing table football in the chillout area. [REDACTED] introduces me to [REDACTED], who tells me proudly that she and her friends raised the money for the equipment and comfy sofas. [REDACTED] confides that he sometimes gets in early and uses this time to finish off his homework – he has three brothers and sisters and often finds it easier to concentrate here than at home (and he also tends to leave things to the last minute!).

There are adults around everywhere I go (██████████, an Assistant Teacher, explains that he and his colleagues oversee the breakfast and after school activities) but they are playing a supportive role – ‘standing back closely’ and allowing the children to take a lead, stepping in to help sort out the odd argument and, on one occasion, dealing with the smoke alarm which has been set off by some burnt toast.

It's a Friday, so there's no morning assembly, and we are straight into a morning of project work. ██████████ tells me that they do two projects each term – one chosen by the teachers (something to do with what the government wants the children to learn, he thinks) and one chosen by the children. This term the teachers have chosen the Tudors. As we walk around the school I see that all the classes this morning are focused on this theme and, looking more carefully, there are a variety of activities going on with a mixture of ages participating in each. In the hall, a local theatre company is running a workshop on Shakespeare. In one of the classrooms two of the teachers and one of the assistant teachers are running an art class focusing on painting portraits, inspired by the artists of the Tudor court (one of the teachers studied fine art at university). In another classroom a group is on the internet researching the kings and queens of the period – ██████████ tells me that the Headteacher has this year set all the children a challenge (with a special prize) to be able to name from memory all the kings and queens of England and one interesting fact about each. The boys, in particular, seem to have taken to this with gusto and are spending an infeasible number of extra hours swotting up. Another group left early this morning for a trip to Hampton Court and outside there is an archery tournament going on (the children are clearly aware of the potential dangers of this activity and are participating calmly and sensibly).

All morning I notice a steady stream of children going out to the toilet, to the tuck shop (in reception, run by the year 6 children, and where I pay over the odds for a Twix but am reassured that the extra is going towards a charity project for a twinned school in Tanzania) and for a walk round the field. ██████████ explains that there is no set morning breaktime, and each teacher decides with their class when they should take a break.

I eat lunch with the nursery and Key Stage 1 children. ██████████ has the usual complaints about school dinners but today, perhaps inspired by Heston Blumenthal, the kitchen staff and a group of the children have prepared an Elizabethan banquet themed lunch. I think it's delicious, although ██████████ isn't so sure and cheekily says he'd prefer fish and chips, which is normally on offer on a Friday.

After lunch it's literacy, and I'm interested to see that there are a variety of different sizes and styles of class going on – some very small groups with just one teacher or assistant teacher, and some much larger groups with several staff in the room. ██████████, Head of Key Stage 2, explains that because everyone does literacy and numeracy at the same time, they are able to tailor their approach very closely to the needs of the children. The higher level Assistant Teachers can also teach on their own, which provides an important extra resource. I notice that one of the reception groups is being led by some children by year 6, who are hearing the younger children read. I'm particularly impressed with their ability to coach, encourage and provide insightful feedback – better than many adults I know!

To close the day, and the week, it's a whole school assembly led by the Headteacher. The morning assemblies on every other day of the week are led by the children, but this is very much her event. The Head reminds the school of the theme for the week which had been introduced at the start the week assembly on Monday morning. There is some great sharing of insights as a number of groups of children talk to their peers about what they have learnt during the week. Staff also share some of the things they have learnt. The assembly ends with a round of appreciation where children and staff have the opportunity to recognise the positive support, behaviour, and achievements of other members of the school community. One of the year 3 teachers takes the opportunity to praise her class for their timekeeping throughout the week, which is an area they had agreed they needed to improve. A group of year 5 children thanks the caretaker for staying after school one day in the week to help with a science project. And the gardening and dancing groups thank [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for giving up their time to come and share their special skills as it's the last week of the Great Grandparents project. There are lots of parents at the assembly, as well as some volunteers and supporters of the school from the local community – [REDACTED], tells me afterwards that these assemblies are open for anyone to attend and provide her best and most effective marketing opportunity for the school.

All in all, I had an exciting and inspiring day. I've met a confident and articulate group of children who clearly love being at school. I have no doubt that each of them will reach their potential, and take that strong sense of culture and values which are the hallmark of the school through the rest of their educational career and into their adult lives.

3.1 Rationale

We have three reasons for wanting to set up a Free School in Harpenden, Hertfordshire:

3.1.1 Providing a unique ethos

We believe that the most meaningful and effective education happens when children have the opportunity to lead their own learning.

Our conviction is based on the seventeen year track record of Changemakers in unlocking young people's leadership potential, and the proven success of the Montessori approach around the world for over a century. Both have been proven to raise standards, improve attainment and enhance life outcomes for children and young people.

By bringing together these complimentary child led pedagogies, we will create a truly unique ethos which will instil the joy of learning, discovery and individuality in every child.

There is no other school like this in the country, and parents in Harpenden have signalled in large numbers that they would love their children to have the opportunity to be educated in this way.

3.1.2 Creating a more efficient model of schooling

Our experience tells us that most education professionals know how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of schools, but the current systems and structures often work against positive change.

One of our key motivations for setting up a free school is therefore to draw on an extensive range of professional experience to create a more efficient school operating model based, quite simply, on 'what works'.

Our group brings together teachers, school leaders, school governors and people who have worked in local authorities and government agencies, as well as individuals with wider public service and commercial experience, alongside parents and children.

These various perspectives will enable us to take a fresh and innovative approach to some of the basic organisational systems and processes that every school must have – from the structure of the school day to the role of teachers; from the way the school is funded to the design of its building.

Our approach will drive up the quality of provision, improve standards and create greater value for money.

3.1.3 Meeting local need

There is a shortage of reception school places in Harpenden, which is forecast at 8% for the 2012-13 academic year.

There is also clear evidence that parental preferences in Harpenden are not being fully met. For the 2010 reception intake, 21% of parents did not receive a place for their child in their first choice school. 12% of parents did not receive a place for their child in any of their three ranked schools.

3.2 Vision, mission and ethos

Our vision is that all children leave primary school at the age of 11 as the independent, resilient, curious, problem solving leaders of tomorrow, with a confident and optimistic outlook on life.

Our mission is to deliver an outstanding primary education for children in Harpenden and the surrounding area.

Our ethos will consist of five distinctive characteristics:

3.2.1 Children lead the learning

We believe that children learn best when they are enabled to lead their own educational journey. Harpenden Free School will therefore foster children's active engagement in the design and delivery of their own learning in which they will be their own experts. They will be encouraged to take a lead in the planning and delivery of their learning experiences, as well as helping to shape the way the school is run. Our staff will be coaches and facilitators of this process, supporting and challenging appropriately whilst maintaining a culture of natural collaboration between children and adults in the school.

3.2.2 A broad, balanced and flexible curriculum

Harpenden Free School will follow the national curriculum, which we believe provides an effective, tried and tested framework for learning. There will be a particularly strong focus on numeracy and literacy, mastery of which is the gateway to success in all other subject areas. However, we will adopt a very flexible approach to delivery with a strong emphasis on topic based learning, vertical grouping across different years when appropriate, variable class sizes to suit different needs and the use of external experts delivering curriculum content alongside teachers. In this way we will ensure that all learning styles, and the needs of every child, are met.

3.2.3 Instilling the joy of learning, discovery and individuality in every child

Harpenden Free School will have a very distinctive approach to learning, which will be strongly influenced by Montessori¹ ethos and pedagogy. Our approach has respect for every individual child at its heart and from this vital foundation builds knowledge by concrete experience of concepts through multisensory approaches. There will be a particularly strong focus on enquiry, respect for the individual, grace and courtesy, outside learning and the environment and physical learning. An emphasis on holistic development will allow every child to be independent, happy, confident and successful by understanding the interplay of their own place in the world with the places of others.

¹ See <http://www.montessori.org.uk/> for more information

3.2.4 Community

A commitment to creating a broad and diverse community that extends well beyond the school gates is a key aspect of the Harpenden Free School ethos. Pupils will be encouraged and supported to develop their own community projects, both within and outside the school, thereby helping to build the Big Society. We will run a weekly assembly open to the local community. Volunteering by parents and members of the local community will be an integral aspect of delivering the curriculum and other functions. The school will be a resource for the whole community and we will make the building available to local community organisations.

3.2.5 Everybody learns

All schools are institutions of learning, but we believe that many are not what the business guru [REDACTED] would call 'learning organisations'. In our school everybody will learn. Staff will be role models, valuing their own personal and professional development, thereby strengthening the school's learning ethos. All staff and students will maintain their own personal development portfolio and regular opportunities for reflection and review will be built into the school day. We will also provide opportunities for parental and community learning.

3.3 Meeting the aims of the Free School programme

Harpenden Free School meets the aims of the Free School programme in the following ways:

3.3.1 Drive up quality of provision and standards

Harpenden Free School aims for nothing less than to be an outstanding school, building on the success of Artisans Nursery which is rated outstanding by OFSTED. We will draw on an extensive range of professional experience to create a more efficient school operating model based, quite simply, on 'what works'. We will place a strong emphasis on partnership and collaboration with other education providers, helping to improve quality in other local schools.

3.3.2 Provide parents with greater choice

Harpenden Free School provides a truly unique approach and ethos. Parents in Harpenden have signalled in large numbers that they would like to have their children educated in this way. Our non-geographical admissions policy will extend this extra greater choice to parents across Harpenden and the surrounding areas.

3.3.3 Encourage greater innovation in the education system

Harpenden Free School is highly innovative in both its approach to learning, and the way it is structured and organised. Changemakers has been a significant player in education policy for over seventeen years, and will use the experience gained in Harpenden to shape innovation across the wider education system nationally.

3.3.4 Provide a value for money solution

Our operational expertise, gained within and outside education, will drive efficiency and value for money. Our fundraising and business development experience will enable us to generate a diverse range of income streams, reducing Harpenden Free School's dependency on statutory funding.

3.3.5 Create an increasingly self-sustaining and self-improving system

Our approach will free up education professionals to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education provision through Harpenden Free School, bringing together teachers, school leaders, school governors and a range on external expertise alongside parents and children.

Section 4: Educational plan

4.1 Admissions

Harpenden Free School will have an unbiased admissions policy.

We will participate in the place selection scheme operated by the Hertfordshire County Council, within which we will apply our own criteria, as a VA school or faith school does currently.

In all circumstances we will process applications on the same time frame as the rest of the county schools and we will request a preference order of 3 choices on the forms.

4.1.1 Reception year applications

We will first offer places for Reception year entry on the following criteria:

1. Children looked after
2. Children with siblings in the school at the time of entry. We recognise that family structures play a vital role in the development of a child as an individual and therefore we give second preference to family groupings.

We are acutely aware that Harpenden is a largely affluent area with pockets of greater hardship within it and surrounding it. An application process based on postcode is discriminatory simply because it rests on the cost of housing in the immediate vicinity. We will therefore base our remaining admissions by random selection, based on parental choice of the school. This also reflects the fact that the school offers something different from other local schools and is therefore a facility on which parents may have strong feelings both in favour and potentially against.

The process will work as follows:

- The applications will be sub divided by the preference order expressed by the parents.
- Applications will be taken first by random selection from those who have ranked Harpenden Free School as first choice.
- If places remain a random selection will be made from those placing Harpenden Free School as second choice.
- If places remain a random selection will be made from those placing Harpenden Free School as third choice.

We are aware of Section 1.76 of the School Admissions Code which states that the local authority must not inform the admissions authority of the rank in order of parental choice as admitting on this basis is not lawful. We have therefore devised a system involving unique and anonymous identity numbers which will enable the local authority to help us to sift applications by preference without revealing their identities to us.

4.1.2 In year applications for new year groups

We will follow the same process as above for application for new year groups within Harpenden Free School for children making an in year transfer from a previous school.

The timing for these applications will be approximately the start of the summer term of the preceding academic year.

4.1.3 In year applications for existing year groups

These will be allocated on a chronological basis using the date of the application.

Where two applications are made for a single space on the same date we will use the criteria above to determine the allocation.

4.1.4 Supporting documentation

We will have a settling in policy for all children, whatever their year of entry.

We will have a Behaviour Policy and a Parental Support Policy which makes clear the expectations of the school and the structures in place to support pupils and parents in meeting these. It will also detail the procedures followed should these expectations of behaviour not be met.

4.2 Curriculum

Harpenden Free School will follow the current National Curriculum, which we believe provides an effective, tried and tested framework. We will take the findings of the current curriculum review into account when published.

We will create innovative programs of study with Schemes of Work that are tailored to our pupils and approach but we will also take the best elements from existing National Strategies, QCA and guidance where our provision stands to benefit.

4.2.1 Key areas of focus

Our curriculum content will have a particular focus on two areas:

Literacy and numeracy

We believe that high standards in literacy and numeracy are essential if pupils are to have the tools they need to become self-directed learners. This focus also enjoys strong support from parents and employers. We will therefore dedicate a full day to both literacy and numeracy, with additional discrete daily 'refresher' sessions for numeracy. Because this will be timetabled across the school, there will be opportunities for pupils to move between year groups in these sessions and progress at the most appropriate level to them as part of flexibly sized groups with increased pupil-teacher ratios where necessary. Provision will be adapted to different pupil needs - for example, some small groups may focus on basic phonics so that pupils most in need of this approach can have their needs catered for. Cross curricula application and consolidation will also play a role in literacy and numeracy teaching.

Community

The experience of Changemakers in supporting young people in leading community projects means that we envisage an important role for Active Citizenship in learning. Pupils will all have the opportunity to lead community projects and cross-curricular learning opportunities will be drawn out of these activities in subjects such as numeracy (for example, creating a project budget) and geography (for example, mapping the needs of the local community). We will also encourage initiatives such as a pupil run tuck shop, giving older children some responsibility for younger children at playtimes, charitable fund raising activities and community services such as providing tea afternoons for the local elderly.

4.2.2 A broad and balanced curriculum

Our curriculum will also include the other key areas of the national curriculum:

Science

Including Technology, Engineering and Design. We will devote more time to this subject than the national curriculum requires in recognition of this being an area of weakness in many primary schools and due to the significance of high attainment as an indicator of future economic well-being.

Humanities

Including History, Geography, Religious Studies, Social Sciences and Philosophy.

Arts

Including Cookery, Music, Art, Drama, Movement and Dance and Literature.

Foreign Languages

We aim to provide a very wide range of options, drawing on external language teaching expertise.

Physical Education

We will offer a broad range of physical exercise - from the more spiritual based approach of yoga, through the self defence arts such as Judo and on to competitive and non competitive team sports. We will utilise expert coaches and leaders and external facilities where appropriate.

Enrichment

Our aim is to incorporate what is normally thought of as 'enrichment' throughout the school curriculum. However, we will also offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities including clubs, trips and community activity.

Learning will change as pupils progress through the school. For example, with the younger children we will use the systematic synthetic phonics programme based on the successful "letters and sounds" that combines decoding for blending and learning to read, and encoding for enabling early writers and development of letter formation. Volunteers from throughout the school community will give 1-2-1 individual support to reading and writing daily throughout reception and key stage 1.

4.2.3 Qualifications

Harpenden Free School seeks to instil a strong sense of the value of the self in each and every child and adult within its community.

By following teaching styles which combine the mainstream and Montessori methods and by creating school structures which respect and value and require the input of the views of the children within the school as well as the views of the adults we hope to nourish children who are inquisitive, independent, social, healthy, resilient, happy and positive.

We do not feel that repeated benchmark testing is conducive to children striving to reach their own unique potential. We will therefore use predominantly teacher assessment and pupil reflection as a tool to assessment, especially in the younger end of the school.

As children progress through the junior years we will build in increasing elements of constructive competition and we will engage with the children in understanding how and when competition is constructive and when it can be destructive. By the end of year 6 the children will be prepared to take end of Key Stage National Assessment Tests. We will teach exam technique as well as having prepared the children throughout their schooling to be academically competent for the tests.

4.3 Approach to learning

Harpenden Free School will deliver the national curriculum through a child led ethos and pedagogy, strongly influenced by the Montessori approach.

4.3.1 Influences

Harpenden Free School will have a very distinctive approach to learning, which will be strongly influenced by Montessori ethos and pedagogy, as practiced successfully by Artisans.

The Montessori approach, which has been proven to be successful around the world for more than a hundred years, has respect for every individual child at its heart. From this vital foundation it builds knowledge by concrete experience of concepts through multisensory approaches and seeks to instil the joy of learning, discovery and individuality in every child.

We also aim to build in common sense approaches based on 'what works', drawing on the extensive professional experience and expertise of our implementation group, both those involved in formal education as well as wider learning and development, for example in the workplace.

4.3.2 Aims

We seek to create an educational and spiritual culture which fosters the natural curiosity of a child to make sense of the world they live in and expand their own horizons. To do this the ethos of the school will be built and evolve around the views and interests of the children, guided by the wisdom and experience of the adults.

Children will be trusted to be responsible for themselves from the outset. The journey they have made from a babe in arms to a child able to communicate, move with precision and control, stay clean and support their own well being, before they even step through the doors of our school is testament to the phenomenal ability of a child to learn and to orchestrate their own development.

In a world where we are bombarded by information we will spend the Early Years equipping children with an ability to concentrate their focus, to select relevant information and most importantly to be able to find the positive aspects of all situations. As children grow in their aptitudes and confidence we will continue to encourage curiosity and the asking of questions. We will look at analytical thought structures and how to ask the right question for the information you seek; we will look at perceptual skills and information verification.

We will follow an experienced based learning approach throughout the school enabling children to contextualise their knowledge from the outset and thereby constantly continue into new realms of discovery by being able to identify the next question to ask. This will allow children independence and a sense of ownership in their own learning journey and a genuine freedom which will in turn earn and develop their sense of responsibility from the beginning.

The combination of freedom and responsibility, as well as of a constant sense of discovery, will mean children's spiritual and moral development can be nurtured to produce relaxed and confident individuals who are able to respect others and themselves and be prepared to express emotion and respond appropriately to the emotions of others.

4.3.3 Key principles

The delivery of the curriculum will be underpinned by 8 key principles:

- Topic / experience based learning
- Competencies and behaviours
- Enquiry
- Respect for the individual
- Grace and courtesy
- Outside learning and the environment
- Physical learning
- Holistic development

Topic / experience based learning

Learning is always more successful and fun if it has a purpose. The need for clear handwriting is more intuitive and obvious if you are writing an information leaflet or a letter than it is if it is just a handwriting exercise. This example can be expanded in all areas of learning.

The latest Pearson report² strongly advocates the use of topic based learning describing how “the best results are achieved when schools approach curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and behaviour holistically” and arguing that cross curricula learning can “enhance subject expertise” and “deliver learning in a rigorous and engaging way”.

² J. McCulloch, 2011, Subject to Change - should primary schools structure learning around subjects or themes? Pearson Centre for Policy and Learning

Topic based learning, when carefully guided and structured, also draws out the relationships of educationally discrete subject areas. For example, combining weather in geography, plants in science and report writing on climate in literacy creates greater coherence and understanding. This sows the seed for the notion of transferable skills, a concept and reality the coming generations will need to embrace with greater clarity than has previously been considered necessary. This is one of the many ways in which we will use the school structures as a way of preparing children for the world outside school.

The topic provides purpose to the learning and a vehicle through which to teach core skills of enquiry, analysis and recording. It also provides a stimulus for creativity and imagination.

In alternate half terms the school will follow a whole school topic which will be determined by a child vote. This will allow for lots of interaction within the school community. In the other half terms each class will choose their own discrete topic allowing a more age focused approach.

Topics will be prepared for through mapping by both teachers and pupils about what they already know, what they would like to check, what they want to discover and a space for the surprises they have not encountered yet. These maps will be built on throughout the topic and provide both a structure and a record of learning. They will be working documents - a 'Business Plan of Learning' - and another way in which the structures of the school will teach the children skills that can be taken out into the wider world.

Whole school topics will provide natural opportunities for age groups to mix. In this way the Montessori principles of vertical grouping will be incorporated within the school structure. These opportunities allow more able children to consolidate their learning through presentation to less able children and it allows those less able to learn in a new style through peers. The opportunity to join together in these different grouping structures also builds a sense of community within the school. The need for different groups of children to collaborate in order to achieve a common goal also develops an appreciation of others and an ability to recognise the synergism of group activity. We will be able to address the learning of PSHE education simultaneously with traditional skills and knowledge.

Role play will be used throughout all years of the school and in this vital space children will be able to spontaneously follow and explore topics; the questions and directions this produces will feed into the direction of the topic. In this way teachers and pupils will be able to assess current knowledge and plan for the next step.

Topic based learning will excite and create inquisitive and curious children.

Competencies and behaviours

Knowledge is important, but we believe that children also need to know how to apply this knowledge and develop skills which are transferable, enabling them to be successful as learners. Our teaching methodology will therefore be based around development of the skills, competencies and behaviours that children and young people need "to write their own life stories"³. We will ensure that our pupils are equipped to cope with the society in which they will live but that they also develop the positive values our ethos and culture will represent.

³ 2020 Public Service Trust 2010

■■■■■ talks about a number of 'R's, responsibility, reasoning and resilience are among them. These elements will underpin the curriculum and support core subject based skillsets.

Enquiry

Learning will be based on a collaborative approach between teachers and children in which opportunities for pupils to guide their own learning are maximised. Enquiry based learning will develop Personal Learning and Thinking Skills and there will be significant use of methodologies like Philosophy for Children (P4C) and Assessment for Learning (currently being championed by ■■■■■ and ■■■■■), both modelled and proven in Montessori methodology. Pupils and teachers will collaborate to determine the means and scope of their enquiries - not an unstructured free-for-all but a balanced approach in which teachers provide the guidance that ensures a broad balanced curriculum is covered and a range of skills developed over the course of a year.

Respect for the individual

Harpenden Free School will treat each child as their own expert in their learning journey.

Starting in the Early Years, children will be taught the skills of independence, from pouring their own drink to clearing any spillage, to skills for maintaining and cleaning their environment. They will develop the abilities to be self sufficient in their learning from the very start of their education; how to carry equipment, to cut, to fold etc.

We will build in the Montessori principle of 'control of error', ensuring that learning is structured so that it is possible for the children to self correct from their earliest activities. This ability to self correct will ensure children are unafraid of mistakes and understand that error is an essential part of the learning process. This will create children with intellectual honesty, independent in their learning style and willing to encounter error and overcome it, building respect for themselves and in turn for others.

Respect for the child will be borne out in practice through aspects of delivery such as lunchtimes which will be taken in class groups with the class teacher sat at the table with the children. They will be given crockery and glassware from entry in order to show our trust in the child. There will be a top table with the headteacher and others where children who have displayed exceptional manners can join for lunch. It will be such details of delivery and the manners expected from the children and adults towards one another that set the standard for spiritual, moral and cultural development.

This respect for the individual will instil confidence and independence in each child and prepare them spiritually and personally for their encounters beyond school.

Grace and courtesy

We will emphasise grace and courtesy skills - from requiring pleases and thankyou's to being able to articulate and negotiate through disagreements.

The vertical grouping opportunities within the school will allow for social and team experiences that build an understanding of others' needs and skills.

The strong focus within the curriculum placed on community relations and active contribution to society will also enable children to develop an appreciation both of the role of others and their own place in the community.

Grace and courtesy will provide the foundations for social children, able to conduct themselves with ease and honesty within the community.

Outside learning and the environment

Children's natural affinity to outside space is overwhelming: their curiosity and scale of movement increase whilst their focus and determination also grow. We will take advantage of this.

Every class will have its own allotment with the aim of growing in it fruit and vegetables for their own snacks and flowers for their classrooms. They will also, in the process, learn the names of flora and fauna, they will learn about ecosystems and symbiotic relationships, as well as about crop rotation and water cycles. The possibilities for learning through the external environment are vast, as proven in Forest schools⁴ and a number of Scandinavian countries.

For this reason we will have large external spaces with a variety of landscapes - from trees, to hard standing, to astroturf; some spaces which are undulating and others flat; we will have water too.

The responsibility for a piece of the earth will encourage global awareness. Children will collect and recycle water and become interested in and dependent on weather patterns. They will have a more realistic understanding of food production and waste.

The use of the outside for all curriculum subjects - whether it be finding shapes in plants for Geometry, using spider webs as a stimulus for Engineering, dissecting the parts of a flower in Science, or using nature as a source of metaphor in Literacy - will vicariously develop healthier children who engage in manual labours, such as weeding, as part of everyday living and who breathe fresh air and experience the freedom of space in their movements.

The outdoor learning will also build relations within the wider community as children seek out farmers whose manure they can use to enrich the soil or gardeners with cuttings they can grow. It will build team work and responsibility within the class as they organise who will water and maintain the allotments over the holiday periods.

The outdoor learning environment of the school will develop healthier children, fit for the challenges of life.

Physical learning

The Early Years and Key Stage 1 emphasis on practical learning and the focus throughout on experience based and purposeful learning means that learning will be a physical activity. The Role Play which sits at the heart of the topic based curriculum is a physical activity.

⁴ See <http://www.forestschools.com/>

We will encourage the use of Brain Gym and Calliorobics and other teaching aids and methods which bring out the kinaesthetic aspects of learning and exercise the brain as a muscle, as well as developing strength and tone throughout the body in other exercises.

We will encourage adult participation in classes - both teachers and parents - and demonstrate by example the importance of exercise in a healthy lifestyle.

We will encourage the children to take considered risks. We will teach risk management not risk avoidance.

Outside times will include optional organised games which in turn teach turn taking and co-operation as well as providing another opportunity for vertical grouping and child led learning.

Physical learning will develop children who are resilient; able to take a risk safely, learn from it and go on to greater things through their learning.

Holistic development

We will provide a secure, amazing and appropriate environment in which a child can come to know and respect themselves and others.

We will teach the “skills for living” that form part of a Montessori curriculum; those skills that allow a child to be independent, happy, confident and successful by understanding the interplay of their own place in the world with the places of others.

We will prepare children for the wider world about them. They will be taught how to maximise the phenomenal power of the World Wide Web but also the skills to guard their own safety through a social understanding and through analytical and systematic thought patterns.

Throughout their schooling children will be taught how to find the positive in situations and experiences. They will be shown where the benefit lies and how the past can shape our future for the better. This will be both explicitly demonstrated whenever opportunity arises and implicitly conveyed through the example of the teachers and their own approaches and rationales.

We also want to embed a culture of planning, reflection and review – an area on which many schools would like place greater emphasis, but which most find very difficult to achieve. All children will spend Monday morning planning their objectives for the week and Friday afternoon “jigsawing” their learning from the week. Each year group will have developed expertise in an area during the week and will be able to bring together what they have learned before reflecting on it.

We will place a strong emphasis on daily assemblies, which we believe provide an excellent opportunity to reinforce the school culture and ethos. Teachers, parents, pupils and the local community will be encouraged to lead and attend assemblies, and we expect these to be both challenging and thought provoking. These will be linked to the school’s area of focus for the week/day and teachers will be expected to reinforce the assembly message.

Through holistic development, children will grow to have a positive image of themselves and their place in the world and to be able to see the positive in others and in situations and experiences.

4.3.3 Meeting the different needs and interests of all pupils

Our educational ethos, outlined above, has respect for every individual child at its heart. We believe that this approach is uniquely suited to ensuring that the needs and interests of all pupils are met.

Maria Montessori first became interested in education through her work as a doctor, treating what today are known as children with special needs. She went on to establish schools for the disadvantaged children of working parents in Rome before it became apparent that she had developed a highly effective method of teaching which could be used with great success with each and every child.

We recognise that all pupils will have different needs, interests and abilities and that finding out about and responding to these can boost attainment, cohesion, identity and development⁵. A key part of our methodology will therefore be to ensure that teachers enquire into their pupils' biographies and respond to them appropriately.

We also know that different groups may have particular needs that must be addressed if attainment gaps are to be closed. We have outlined our approach to SEND below but have also planned an approach to dealing with English as an Additional Language and the fundamental issue of socio-economic deprivation and its impact on attainment.

English as an additional language

We believe that pupils best develop their language ability through immersion and by interacting with teachers and pupils in mainstream classes. However, we will also provide support in small groups or 1 to 1s for between 1 and 3 hours a week for new arrivals at EAL stages 1 and 2 to help them master the basics.

In whole class sessions teachers will be expected to personalise their teaching through support, resources, tasks and objectives in order to ensure that these pupils achieve whilst integrated in these mixed ability groups.

We are aware that pupils at stages 3, 4 and 5 also have language needs which can form barriers to achievement at higher levels due to problems deploying complex grammatical structures etc. Our approach to continuous formative assessment will mean that teachers are encouraged to identify any such needs early on and that they plan their teaching (particularly in literacy sessions) to address these needs.

Socio-economic disadvantage

We are alarmed that the most reliable predictor of educational attainment is parental income. We are committed to closing this shocking gap.

This issue has been a key driver in designing our admissions procedure to ensure a socio-economic mix which will help close the gap.

⁵ L. Menzies 2010 - What's Your Story? Teaching *for* Diversity, School Leadership Today

We believe that all pupils can and should succeed and appreciate that given the early appearance of the attainment gap⁶, teachers throughout the school will need to help some pupils make much more than the expected two sub-levels of progress per year. This will therefore be a target and objective for all teachers - to ensure equitable attainment outcomes as well as progression. This will be achieved by encouraging such pupils to make the full use of our out of hours provision (breakfast and after school clubs), one to one support where necessary, continuous target setting/progress tracking meetings, aspiration raising events, mentoring by community volunteers and collaboration with parents to support them in creating an home environment which promotes learning.

Half termly assessment data will be analysed to show the progress of socio-economically disadvantaged groups and further interventions planned should the gap not appear to be closing.

4.4 Organisation of learning

4.4.1 Length of the school day, term and year

We will follow the term dates set for other Hertfordshire schools.

Our core day will run from 8.30am to 3.00pm.

There will be a free breakfast club from 7.30 – 8.30am each day. This will allow for flexible arrival times which will have huge positives for the attitudes of the children at the start of the day, creating a calmer and more relaxed atmosphere. This will be further enhanced with a strong focus on exercise before school starts, recognizing that the benefit of exercise (especially in younger children) is its regularity.

We will also offer a flexible departure time between 3.00 – 3.30pm, allowing for parent / child / teacher conversations for half an hour after school.

Logistically we believe it is good to have staggered and flexible start and end times – you cannot have all the children entering or exiting the building through one point at the same time, nor can a parent with more than one child be outside several classrooms at the same time.

There will be an after school club every day from 3.30 – 6.00pm offering a wide range of enrichment activities, clubs and societies, as well as simple relaxation and fun.

There will be a free flow playtime in the morning, to be taken as and when the teacher and children in each class feels this appropriate. This will ensure productive and valuable sessions are not interrupted unnecessarily and helping to build focus and responsibility. There will be the opportunity for Key Stage 1 classes to take an additional break in the afternoon. There will be two sittings of lunch for logistical reasons.

⁶ Feinstein 2001

4.4.2 Curriculum model

Structure of the week

Our curriculum model (see timetable below) operates from the basic premise that each day of the school week will be primarily devoted to a different core or foundation subject area, as follows:

- Monday – Numeracy
- Tuesday – Literacy
- Wednesday – Science
- Thursday – Humanities/Arts (alternate half terms)
- Friday – Humanities/Arts (alternate half terms, morning only)

Each subject will be studied for 4½ hours each day, with a 2½ hour morning session and a 2 hour afternoon session.

Additional curriculum areas will be picked up as follows:

Monday – Planning for the week

Wednesday – PE

Thursday – PE, foreign languages

Friday – Reviewing the week, community

There will be a ½ hour numeracy refresher session on Tuesday – Friday mornings to allow numeracy themes learnt on Monday to be consolidated, recognising that numeracy is harder to teach via a cross curricular approach. Literacy consolidation will be built into the subjects studied on Wednesday – Friday.

We will bring in additional sports coaches on Wednesdays and Thursdays and expert languages teachers on Wednesdays to teach each class for an hour in turn (see section 6 below). Each teacher will get their 3 hours PPA time during these periods.

Rationale and benefits

Our implementation team includes teachers with experience of a wide range of different curriculum models. It is probably safe to say that there is no right or wrong way to structure the school day.

However, we have specifically chosen this approach for Harpenden Free School for the following reasons:

For children:

- Much more straightforward and therefore provides a sense of security, structure and routine
- Enables a strong element of child responsibility in learning
- Research has shown a natural work cycle to be 3 hours for a 7 year old - this model allows them to follow a natural cycle
- Allows a much more flexible approach that follows the pace of individual children - eg some need longer planning, others get straight in but need longer evaluating etc

For teachers:

- Offers immense freedom to planning and allows for far more creative and experiential based teaching and learning
- Gives teachers more autonomy which in turn demonstrates respect and trust in their professional judgement
- Allows teachers a good window in which to engage with every child
- Saves lots of time in the setting up and clearing away between lessons and in the recapping time
- Assessment for Learning is much easier within a longer block session – teaching > reflection > application – this will enhance the quality and depth of conversation and add value to marking
- Works well with topics

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday			Thursday	Friday
7.30 - 8.30	<i>Arrival, breakfast, exercise</i>							
8.30 - 9.00	<i>Registration and assembly</i>	Focus on theme for the week	Year group delivered	Moral, ethical, topical focused (with visitor)			Music, drama focused (with visitor)	Outdoor activity
9.00 - 9.30	<i>Daily focus and refresh</i>	Planning for the week	Numeracy	Numeracy			Numeracy	Numeracy
9.30 - 12.00	<i>Morning session with break taken when appropriate</i>	Numeracy	Literacy	Science	per class through the day	per class through the day	Humanities (half terms 1,3,5) or Arts (half terms 2,4,6)	Humanities (half terms 1,3,5) or Arts (half terms 2,4,6)
12.00 - 1.00	<i>Lunch</i>							
1.00 - 3.00	<i>Afternoon session</i>				1 hour PE scheduled	1 hour languages scheduled		1 hour PE scheduled
3.00 - 3.30	<i>Departure</i>							
3.30 - 6.00	<i>After school club</i>	Gardening	Cookery	Sport			Drama	Music

An example of how whole day teaching can work in practice

This term we have been using different teaching strategies and amongst these I planned an entire day of Literacy today. It was really beneficial in terms of trying out some of the ideas that have been flying backwards and forwards between us.

Here are some of the advantages I found:

A decent amount of time for AfL. This is towards the end of a 3 week unit on pirates. Instead of a quick 2 minute cursory - read the comments I wrote yesterday before you start - we actually had 30 minutes of reflection time - some children had highlighted work to correct or improve, others had been earmarked for a conversation with an adult (which all actually happened) and the rest were asked to read the 6 or 7 pieces of work they had done so far and to complete a word bank of useful 'wow' words and decide a personal target for today's writing.

A proper planning lesson. A whole hour with a modelled session between me and my TA for how the learning partners could support each other with planning followed by 20 minutes each for the children to discuss, challenge and refine their ideas. And, again plenty of time for the adults to get around ALL those that needed support.

Joy of joys - the writing straight after planning. The difference in having the write on the same day instead of the following day after they'd forgotten was enormous even though it was the graveyard session straight after lunch. Children worked quietly and we let them go as long as they were still writing. All children lasted an hour and twenty minutes (which is 20 minutes longer than my normal lesson) and some (6) children were writing for nearly 2 hours. Again, everyone had a full ten minutes after they had finished to review and edit their work (not just the early finishers).

Whilst my TA took the last 6 into the hall to finish off in peace, I was then able to spend 25 minutes showing work on the visualiser and helping the class to evaluate - much better than the cursory 5 minute plenary. Children were able to get recognition and praise and see instant ideas for where to improve. What really pleased me is that they were linking in what they could see in thier work with what they had been focussing on this morning in AfL eg. I realised I didn't use many connectives and I made a real effort this afternoon and I managed five!

■■■■■■■■■■, ■■■■■■■■■■, Hertfordshire and member of the Harpenden Free School Implementation Group

4.4.3 How pupils will be organised

Knowledge of pedagogy and planned flexibility will drive decisions around the grouping of pupils. Group size for optimum learning will regularly be reviewed to ensure that choices are made with pupil learning at the heart of them.

A flexible approach

The basic unit of organisation will be 2 classes per year group of 30 pupils, each class being supported by a teacher and an assistant teacher.

However, beyond this basic model we intend to make use of innovative approaches to class sizing, configuration and resourcing. This will be made possible through our curriculum model outlined above, in which all children are focused on the same subject at the same time, as well as extensive use of external classroom input (explained in more detail in section 6 below), for example through using experienced sports coaches to teach PE, or a local artist volunteering to teach art.

One example of how this will work is with our teaching of literacy and numeracy. We will use differing combinations of class size and staffing, allowing us to tailor the learning experience to the needs of different children. A teacher and two assistant teachers might be teaching numeracy to a class of 60 pupils, whilst at the same time another teacher is working with a small group of 8 pupils who need more intensive support. Phonics may be organised in groups of 10, so that teaching is tailored to the phonic phase different groups of pupils are focusing on. A history focused lesson also developing reasoning skills might be organised in groups of 20 or 30 pupils.

There will also be regularly planned opportunities for vertical groupings across several year groups where pupils come together to share learning experiences - for example, an across school science, design and technology and problem solving project where pupils collaborate in groups from across a range of years, working in teams to design, create, test and evaluate a new product. These opportunities will bring out social and collaboration skills, encourage pupils to see themselves as part of a bigger learning community, foster peer learning and enable pupils to collaborate outside of what might be their 'usual class group'.

We will make use of themed weeks and intend to run one foundation subject focused week per term. These will also involve external visitors and trips outside the school.

Transitions

The transition from year to year and between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is often artificial and disruptive, which can lead to uneven pupil progress because standards and expectations are not consistent in their progression.

We aim to make the entire school journey feel like it is part of a single experience by, for example, encouraging pupils to keep and develop a learning journal throughout. This will include favourite pieces of work, key achievements, work that has been reflected on and improved, photos and media content. It will play an important role in formative assessment and as evidence for levelling. The timetable includes reflection on Fridays and developing the journal will be an important part of this time.

Transitions will be managed effectively, so that managers and teachers ensure that there is a smooth trajectory in expectations and progress and pupils have less learning time 'wasted' at the start and end of years. Vertical groupings will also assist in this process.

We will also place significant emphasis on supporting children coming into the school (especially those with identified SEND issues) and on transition and progression once leaving the school, recognising that there is unlikely to be a secondary school with a similar ethos or style of delivery in the area.

4.4 Special Educational Needs

4.4.1 Approach

It is our view that all children have special educational needs unique to them and to their stage of development. We recognise in some cases these needs require additional support to enable the children to move to the next stage of development. Additional support may be to help children reach the expected norms for their age or because they have progressed beyond expected norms.

We believe that all children should be valued and respected as individuals and nurtured and challenged to obtain their own potential. The dignity of the child and staff will be maintained at all times.

The Montessori approach recognises that children have sensitive periods of learning and that whilst a child is making rapid progress in one area it is possible that other areas of learning will be weaker. Such situations will be closely observed and monitored so that we can use the sensitive learning period to its full advantage but ensure that across a longer times frame, such as a term, other areas of learning are kept in line with expectations.

We believe that although many pupils experience some difficulties whilst at school, it is important to diagnose the problem without permanently labelling the pupil. For example, some pupils occasionally make slow progress with reading, but once the reason(s) for this have been identified and the needs addressed (which may involve the writing of termly IEPs and additional provision for the duration of the need), the pupil could make progress so that they 'catch up' with their peers. Although their progress would continue to be carefully monitored, they might no longer need to come under the heading of SEND.

Our provision will:

- Be tailored to meet the needs of individuals, particularly those with SEND.
- Be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that it is having impact.
- Focus on accurate diagnosis of needs and gaps.
- Involve detailed dialogue between pupils, teachers, parents, other adults in school and external professionals (when relevant).
- Be strategically managed so that pupils receive consistency as they move through the school, but do not become labelled unnecessarily.

4.4.2 Resourcing and processes

We will have a fully trained SENCO, who will be responsible for guiding and supporting both teachers and children. They will liaise with external agencies, complete necessary paperwork and funding applications. They will also be responsible for overseeing the behavioural expectations of the school are met by all children and providing positive approaches for the whole school and individual management of this.

We will follow the Code Of Practice for Special Educational Needs, which recommends gradual changes to the environment and activities for the benefit of the children. The progress of all children is regularly observed, monitored and recorded in accordance with our policies.

We will use Individual Assessments of Early Learning and Development to guide teacher intervention strategies where concerns are held. This progress will be shared with parents both informally and formally. Where concerns are raised and more support is required parents will be consulted about the development of an Individual Education Plan or equivalent. The next step will be to bring in specialist help where necessary, such as speech therapists, specialist teachers or medical professionals. IEP's will be reviewed by staff with parents and other professionals where appropriate every term.

All records will be confidential and shown only to those directly involved in the welfare of the child concerned. Whenever possible the views and opinions of the child will be sought.

4.4.3 Flow chart of action

Initial action

Concerns will be raised and discussed amongst staff and parents of the child. A timescale of monitoring agreed. If concerns continue we will move on to School Action.

School action

An Individual Education Plan will be written detailing strengths of the child, concerns, strategies to help and a review date. This will be agreed in discussion with staff and parents. Targets may be updated if concerns persist. If sufficient progress is made the process will be brought to a close. If concerns continue to grow additional support will be sought from specialists.

School action plus

A new IEP will be written with the guidance of specialist help in consultation with staff and parents.

Statutory assessments and statementing

If a child continues to experience difficulties and insufficient progress is made despite the extra support given the LEA will be asked to assess the child. It is understood that significant and detailed records of assessments, achievements, and interventions will be required and that very few children ever reach this stage.

Full copies of the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs will be kept with staff resources at all times. Harpenden Free School will endeavour to provide specific and specialist training to its staff in relation to any particular needs of individual children on our roll.

We are aware that the forthcoming SEND green paper is likely to revise the guidance and combine School Action and School Action Plus. We will take account of any changes in our approach.

4.4.4 Gifted children

These procedures are equally valid for gifted children and we will always seek to allow such children to make the most of their potential by organising structures and external agencies as appropriate to provide the best possible environment for their gifts to flourish.

4.4.5 Peer Groups

We recognise that the individual needs of particular children can often overshadow the needs and rights of the majority. We will take account of the impact on the wider group and community of any changes put in place for an individual both physically and in terms of time, finance and resource distribution. We will at all times seek to ensure that the impact of the needs of individual children on the wider community is positive.

4.5 Pupil development and achievement

4.5.1 What is success?

We will look at success criteria for every level of the school community. There are numerous ways of engaging in these but in all cases the criteria employed will be; short, measurable, achievable, recordable and mutually agreed.

We have provided below a sample of possible approaches but we expect that through the wealth of experience and expertise of both the adults and children who will become the school community the suggestions below will be replaced and or supplemented.

4.5.2 Individual child

Progress will be thoroughly monitored and scaffolded by using intelligent professional judgement framed by National Curriculum levels. Assessment of and for learning will be central to the work of all the teachers and regular professional development meeting time will be given to this. Teachers will use a variety of pupil observation and assessment of a range of work across the curriculum to regularly track progress and identify next steps in learning.

Pupil Progress Meetings will be timetabled once per term to discuss progress and agree actions (usually towards the end of a term), with a further mid-term meeting to discuss impact and whether further actions need to be taken. Teachers will work alongside members of the senior management of the school, parents and external staff and the children will be expected to contribute their own thoughts and ideas to this process. Tailored interventions and additional provision will then be planned where necessary to address any additional needs which are not yet being met through high quality Wave 1 provision (as part of class teaching).

Through effective provision mapping Wave 1, 2 and 3 provision will be regularly reviewed to ensure impact. National benchmarks around attainment and progress will be used to ensure that progress for all pupils is at least 'good' and 'outstanding' wherever possible.

Although we feel that high quality Wave 1 provision, catering for the needs of all learners, is our first priority, we will also make extensive use of extra support to ensure that any gaps in attainment are readily identify and are closed. This will be possible due to our collaborative ethos which will encourage the involvement of external partners. These might include secondary school reading mentors, student, parent, retired and business volunteers, specialist support and external agencies (for example in cases of pupils with SEND) and past teachers at the school. The fact that the Local Authority is supporting our bid will make it easier for us to access support for these pupils.

Each child will develop their own learning journal from their point of entry. This may include photographs, pupil comment either scribed or self written, teacher comment, parent comment, pictorial records, graphical, sound recordings, video recordings, power point presentations, copies of work samples of which children are particularly proud or show particular improvement. Time will be allocated within the teaching schedule for children to work on these records as they form a fantastic basis for language, literacy and ICT skill acquirement and practice.

Ultimately, we will judge pupil development and achievement using two key measures:

- Between 90% and 100% of pupils are consistently reaching Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, Maths and Combined.
- 100% of pupils are consistently achieving 2 levels progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.

We will also use the DfE / National Strategies 'Excellence and Enjoyment' pack which defines the skills a pupil leaving Key Stage 2 should have. An example is provided below.

Example of the skill levels a pupil leaving Key Stage 2 should have

Skill: Problem solving:

By the end of Key Stage 2, children working at or above age-related expectations can recognise and explain a problem, and hypothesise about the causes and possible solutions. They can plan and trial possible solutions using appropriate tools. They are able to undertake ongoing monitoring, modification and review of the steps towards a solution, seeking additional and relevant information when necessary. They are able to evaluate their solutions by reflecting on the process undertaken and the outcomes. They can make judgements about the quality of the solution and the processes they undertook, using relevant success criteria.

From DfE / National Strategies 'Excellence and Enjoyment'

4.5.3 Class groups

Comparisons will be made through moderation between classes within a year group. Work samples will be taken and moderated for both improvements across time frames and consistency between classes.

4.5.4 Year groups

At the outset of each year children and teachers will record their ambitions for the year, both for academic learning and for personal development. This record will be referred to each half term as part of the evaluation and planning process. Children and adults will input how far they have come in reaching their goals and in setting measures for the next step.

As an example, these may include being able to explain the 24 hour clock to another pupil, or being able to categorise 6 3d shapes in 4 different ways. They may also involve targets such as being able to work co-operatively as a year group to build a role play area about Vikings, or create a game for a younger age group which teaches them a specific social skill such as turn taking.

4.5.5 Individual teachers

All teachers will have termly performance review meetings with senior management. Prior to these, lesson observations will have been made. We will have a culture of observing each others' lessons so that it is not the sole responsibility of the senior management. Review meetings will look at strengths in current practice and ways of sharing these with others; it will look at areas of administrative difficulty and areas for professional development.

Following the record of Artisans who in the last year have seen their staff successfully complete a range of studies including MAs, Montessori diplomas, Foundation Degrees, EYPS, and SENCO training, we will have a strong emphasis on the role model of teachers as learners and invest heavily in both in house and external professional development.

We will use a range of strategies including Teacher Learning Communities and coaching and mentoring. Our ambition is to eventually become a Teaching School, sharing and building good practice and leadership as well as training the next generation of teachers. This ambition will provide an impetus for our commitment to working collaboratively with other schools in the area.

4.5.6 Key Stage teaching teams

We will have a policy for teaching staff to experience the teaching requirements of different Key Stages. In this way we hope to bring a better understanding and appreciation of the journey the child makes and the expectations they encounter through the school, as well as build mutual respect between staff.

Key Stage teaching teams will have timetabled meetings where they are able to reflect on successful practices and create structures to embed these and reach solutions for areas of difficulty, setting time frames in which to apply and measure the success of these strategies.

The Key Stage teams will be overseen by the head teacher who will participate in some of the Key Stage meetings and will be provided with the agenda and minutes for all meetings.

4.5.7 Individual in management

We will seek to employ external training for all staff in management positions whatever their prior experience and help them build a style which reflects the values of the school. All staff will be given the opportunity to give confidential and anonymous feedback about an individual in management and the individuals will be required to formally reply to this feedback at termly intervals. Individuals will be encouraged to seek out feedback from others.

We also hope to build relations with other schools to enable the sharing of best practice at this level.

Individuals in management will set targets for their own and the school improvement across an academic year and will report back to the governing body about these once a year.

4.5.8 Management as a whole

The whole school management will actively seek feedback from both adults and children in the school which highlights strengths and provides a wish list for new approaches.

We will use the abolition of the standardised SEF as an opportunity to develop our own self evaluation framework which both responds to OFSTED requirements and reflects our school's particular values and methodologies.

At a later point the school may also choose to pursue programmes in self improvement such as those offered by Herts County Council and other non-educational organisations.

4.5.9 Leadership

We recognise that leadership is a different skill from management and we will seek to evaluate each independently as they both have distinct and critical roles in the success of the school.

We will use similar internal and external support and feedback structures for this assessment. However the focus of the questions to be asked will be based around issues of inspiration and support rather than process and structure.

We will also draw on the expertise of Changemakers in the field of leadership development.

4.5.10 Parents

Harpenden Free School recognises that the development of a child is shaped by all the environments and value system within which they are brought up. Chief among these are home and school. For this reason we will seek every opportunity to value, appreciate and involve parents and carers in the life of the school. We understand that to fully nourish a child's academic, spiritual and physical development we need to be partners with the parents and carers. We expect this relationship to be mutually beneficial.

Parents will be actively involved in the school as much as is possible and constructive. We will have parent volunteer groups both sharing their own professional or academic expertise and providing essential support for the more domestic activities of a school. There will also be opportunities for activities outside of school hours such as research on particular topics or plans and care and maintenance issues, as well as the possibility of renting out school space at weekends for children's parties or clubs which may be overseen by parents.

Parents will also be asked to give written feedback to the school about different aspects of its delivery in line with the SEF each term. There will also be a structure of whole school review (see below) to which parents will be asked to contribute.

Parents will also be asked to join in school activities, such as assemblies and exercise classes, and this informal participation will provide a key opportunity for the school management to gather feedback from the parents.

Overall parental support will be measured through the statistics generated by the individual feedback. It will also be measured through parental willingness to contribute to the life of the school. The biggest assessment of overall parental support will be through the demand for school places.

We will aim for 90% of parents to be ‘highly satisfied’ (the top rating out of 5) in our annual survey.

4.5.11 Whole school

We aim for nothing less than to be an outstanding school, building on the national reputation of Changemakers and the local reputation of Artisans. To this end, we will gather data on a variety of metrics to assess our effectiveness. Our team includes people with high level experience of performance measurement in education and a range of other sectors.

We will use the ‘Balanced Business Scorecard’ model, made popular by the Harvard Business Review, to develop a framework of measures.

These will include:

Financial		
Performance against expenditure budget	Monthly	CEO
Achievement of fundraising targets	Monthly	Head of External Relations
Measure of financial value to local community using Social Return on Investment methodology	Annual	Head of External Relations
Customer		
Pupil satisfaction	Termly	Class teacher
Parent satisfaction	Termly	Class teacher
Community perceptions	Annual	Head of External Relations
Pupil test results	Annual	Class teacher
Pupil progress from year 3 to year 6	Annual	Class teacher
Pupil learning objectives achieved	Termly	Class teacher
Internal business processes		
Measure of staff expertise	Termly	Deputy CEO
Staff turnover	Termly	Deputy CEO
Staff satisfaction	Annual	Deputy CEO
Achievement of pupil number targets	Annual	Head of External Relations
Pupil retention	Termly	Head of External Relations
Learning and growth		
Staff development and learning	Annual	Deputy CEO
Year on year improvement across all metrics	Annual	CEO

As a school we will have one area of focused review each term. This may be a curriculum subject, an aspect of delivery or an aspect of organisation and structure. Based on the success of the model used in Artisans the first half of the term will be a time for assessment and reflection and the second half of term a chance to implement improvements and assess their helpfulness.

We will complete a SEF each term. We will also link this to an internal school action plan. We will be subject to the usual external inspection procedures from OFSTED, Environmental Health etc.

4.5.12 Accountability for success

Ultimate accountability for success will lie with the Governing Body and the CEO.

The Governing Body will review termly and annual and consolidated monthly metrics at each of its meetings. The Senior Management Team will review monthly metrics at its monthly meetings.

Individual class teachers will receive regular management information to enable them to continually judge progress.

Progress reports and action plans will be produced as necessary to ensure progress towards targets is being made.

We will regularly share performance information openly and transparently with parents and children and encourage them to share accountability with the staff in the school.

4.6 Behaviour and Attendance

We recognize that children enter Harpenden Free School having been exposed to a variety of behavioural expectations. We will work towards acceptable behaviour based on honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility.

The sort of learning environment we envisage relies on a well ordered, respectful and safe school community. We will therefore take discipline seriously. Our collaborative approach means that pupils will understand this need and be encouraged to become as self-regulating as possible. That said, we recognise the importance of enforcing clear boundaries where necessary and will ensure that teachers are fully supported by each other and the school leadership in creating a positive climate for learning. We believe that high quality teaching, well matched to pupils' learning styles and needs often reduced the need for 'behaviour intervention'.

A draft behaviour policy has been drawn up and is provided in Appendix 1. This will ultimately be further developed with the help of the pupils.

4.6.1 Aims

The aims of our approach towards behaviour are as follows:

- To create a purposeful, attractive environment and atmosphere in which children can develop self-esteem, self-discipline, independence and an awareness of their responsibilities in the community.
- To have clearly defined expectations regarding children's behaviour.
To promote and maintain good behaviour.
- To recognize and praise good behaviour as well as dealing with inappropriate behaviour.
- To ensure that children are aware of the rewards and sanctions in place.
- To foster good relationships between all staff, pupils, parents and the wider community.
- To actively welcome parental involvement and encourage open dialogue at all times.

4.6.2 Overall approach

Staff will have a consistent approach towards behaviour which at its heart holds respect for the child as a sensitive, intelligent individual. They will provide support for one another through discussion and implementation of a common approach. They will make explicit to the children expectations with regard to behaviour and the procedures for rewarding and promoting good behaviour and for dealing with problems. They will be aware of differing developmental stages of the children when dealing with both good and poor behaviour.

Children will be taught to learn respect for themselves, others, belongings and school property. They will be taught to establish orderly patterns of learning and behaviour through independence and the resulting self sufficiency. They will be taught to recognise the advantages of co-operation and friendship.

4.6.3 Teaching and learning

All areas of the curriculum will be actively used to support our behaviour policy. We offer structured opportunities for pupils to reflect on their experiences and develop a growing understanding of how they are developing personally and socially. All subjects and experiences contribute to the process of promoting personal and social development. The specific needs of individual children will be planned for as appropriate.

4.6.4 Unacceptable behaviour

We believe the following behaviours to be unacceptable:

- Repeatedly disobeying instructions
- Aggressive threatening behaviour, e.g. shoving, making rude signs or insults.
- Fighting
- Teasing other children or upsetting others on purpose
- Rough play
- Spitting
- Biting
- Damaging, stealing or hiding other children's or the school's property
- Racial insults
- Name calling
- The use of inappropriate language
- Because of their perceived or actual sexuality

4.6.5 Equal opportunities / racial harassment

We believe that every person is equally important and that no one has the right to harass, insult or cause offence to any other person for any reason.

We particularly reject the way some people abuse others:

- Because they are richer or poorer, older or younger
- Because they are small or tall, thin or fat
- Because of the colour of their skin
- Because they are an adult or a child
- Because of their religion
- Because of disability or personal difficulties
- Because of their looks or what they wear
- Because of their likes or dislikes
- Because they are popular or unpopular
- Because of their ability or lack of ability
- Because of their nationality or accent.

Racial incidents will be reported according to our Equality Policy.

4.6.6 Bullying

Bullying is defined as “deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time.” It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. name calling, racist remarks) or indirect (e.g. spreading rumors, excluding someone from social groups)

No member of staff will tolerate bullying. The children will consistently be made aware of this rule.

A child who is being bullied will be encouraged to speak to an adult in school or at home. We aim to deal with bullying incidents quickly and appropriately.

Our strategies for dealing with a bullying incident:

- Child to report to adult or adult observing behaviours will initiate procedures.
- Senior Teacher to investigate the incidents listening to all children concerned, on the same day as the report if possible, or as soon as practical. Other staff may fill this role if it is thought the children will respond better to them.
- Children reporting bullying will be supported and praised.
- All the children will have it explained to them in an age appropriate manner why the behaviour reported is unacceptable and encouraged to understand its impact on those it is directed towards.
- Any serious report of bullying will be logged in writing on the confidential files of all children involved.

4.6.7 Rewards and sanctions

We believe that praise and time are the most effective way of rewarding effort and appropriate behaviour.

We believe that when sanctions are necessary it is important to be fair and consistent and to explain them to the children involved in language they understand.

We believe that it is important to protect our relationship with the child and to protect the child's self-esteem by criticizing the behaviour and not the child.

Our emphasis is on rewards to reinforce acceptable behaviour. The behaviour and the child are praised.

Children are rewarded for their personal achievements by:

- Immediate praise from staff
- Achievements being shared within the setting and with family
- Structures such as Golden Time and Marble Jars, as well as House Point systems

Sanctions are needed to discourage unacceptable behaviour and to ensure safety of other children and staff. It is made explicit that it is the behaviour that is being disapproved of not the child.

Unacceptable behaviour is sanctioned by:

- Children being told which of their behaviours is inappropriate and why
- Children being told the appropriate way to behave

If children continue to behave unacceptably they will be told the next course of action and why. This will be time out. Children will be sat in an equivalent place with a timer (the number of minutes to correspond to their age in years) and their behaviour and its consequences will be discussed with them when they have completed their time out. This recognizes that staff may have to focus attention on those upset by the behaviour and also that poor behaviour is not a route to time and attention. Consideration will be taken as to the safety of the child and those around them when positioning them - those with a tendency to physically respond will be safest on a carpet square at a distance from others..

We believe that this approach will usually resolve problems. However, should a pupil continue to disrupt the class's learning on return from Time Out they will be removed from the classroom and supervised by an appropriate adult such as a member of senior management for the rest of the lesson or as long as the class teacher feels is appropriate. In such cases we think it is important that parent, pupil and teacher meet at the earliest possible occasion to discuss strategies to avoid the problem re-occurring. Our aim will always be to find a solution which both works for the pupil and which ensures that no pupil is able to disrupt their classmates' learning.

4.6.8 Positive language

We will always use positive language with the children. Children will have the right behaviours reinforced for them and we will explain to them how they can make others feel better. Low level disruptive or persistent aggravation will be dealt with in the same way.

For example if a child constantly finds ways to be at the front when reading stories we will compliment those children who allow others to come forward explaining the generosity of this behaviour to the group and how that contributes to the happiness of all.

4.6.9 Partnership

Parents and carers will be informed if their child has behaved consistently unacceptably or if they have hurt another child, who will not be identified. They will also be informed if their child has been the recipient of unacceptable behaviour without the perpetrator being named.

Where behaviour is causing concern, parents and carers will be consulted at an early stage and their support will be sought in devising and implementing any plan of action.

Volunteers, students and visitors to the school will be made aware of behavioural expectations.

We will seek advice from and work with external bodies as and when necessary.

4.6.10 Health and safety

Staff and children will be kept safe according to government guidelines about physical restraint. Staff will be offered training in this as necessary through Herts County Council. A draft physical contact policy has been drawn up and is provided in Appendix 2.

Everyone employed by Harpenden Free School will have a responsibility in relation to child protection and safeguarding children. Draft Safeguarding and Allegations of Abuse policies have been developed and are provided in Appendices 3 and 4.

4.6.11 Records

We will have an incident book and an accident book. All accidents will be recorded in the accident book. All incidents will be reported in incident book and this will be used as a behaviour log in order to help recognize patterns of behaviours. Incidents that involve physical harm will be recorded in both.

Serious accidents and incidents will be reported to the Headteacher as soon as possible. Where necessary they will also be reported to Ofsted by the Headteacher or Senior Staff. These communications will be noted in the incident and/or accident record book, with dates and times. We will keep a record of any incidents that have equal opportunities / prejudicial implications.

When necessary an internal risk assessment will be carried out and recorded, and as appropriate made available to all parents.

4.6.12 Attendance

Our aim is for attendance to be around or above 98%, based on a 190 day school year with the average child missing 2 days per year.

However, we expect there to be no persistent absence, or unauthorised absence, due to our good relationships with families and our engaging and motivating curriculum.

4.7 Community Engagement

A commitment to creating a broad and diverse community that extends well beyond the school gates is a key aspect of the Harpenden Free School ethos, and one of the main reasons why we are so passionate about wanting to set up a new school.

Changemakers has been instrumental in the development of the extended services and community action agendas at a national level over the past decade or more. We intend to utilise this experience to make the Harpenden Free School a true community hub.

4.7.1 How our curriculum will be enriched by the local community

School curriculum

As outlined above, Community will be a strong theme running through the entire school curriculum. There will be a focused Community session on Friday afternoons, as well as cross curricular approaches.

Pupils will be encouraged and supported to develop their own community projects, both within and outside the school. Wherever possible, these will engage the local community, through securing resources and participation, and policy and decision makers.

Volunteering

Volunteering will be a strong feature of the school. Volunteering by parents and members of the local community will be built into our resourcing model and will be an integral aspect of delivering the curriculum and other functions. We believe this offers fantastic opportunities for a broad and rich curriculum with a wide variety of perspectives.

Changemakers has placed over 12,000 people into volunteering opportunities over the past year and has unrivalled expertise in this area.

Parent and carer interests and expertise will be identified at pupil admission and they will be encouraged to contribute at some point in the year. The school will operate a timebanking system – the first in the country to do this. Pupils, teachers, parents and members of the community will be able to earn credits towards school competitions, products and services for each hour they give, for example the hire of the school hall for a child's party or produce from an allotment.

4.7.2 How our curriculum and school will enrich the local community

Community assembly

We will run a weekly community assembly. As well as providing pupils and staff with the opportunity to review the week, we will also open this event up to the local community.

A group of Changemakers recently visited Bangladesh where such community gatherings are commonplace. They suggested that we should try to incorporate this idea in this country as a mechanism to promote community cohesion.

Community learning

A central tenet of the school's ethos will be 'Everybody Learns' and this won't be limited to pupils and staff.

We want the school to be a learning resource for the whole community and will provide opportunities for training, education and workshops in the evenings and at weekends. We will also create opportunities for members of the local community to come and take part in lessons where this is appropriate and feasible.

We see this as a great opportunity to foster intergenerational understanding and will encourage pupils to be the teachers in these sessions.

The school building as a community resource

Harpenden has an active and local community sector, from theatre and music to the Women's Institute. As is often the case, there is a scarcity of places for these groups to meet.

We will make the school building available and encourage these groups to engage with pupils and staff at the school.

We will also promote the school as a optician and dentist drop in once a term

Taking the school out into the local community

We will take the school out into the local community, for example by actively engaging in local events such as Harpenden Carnival, Harpenden Common Discovery Day, the St Albans Festival and the Herts County Show.

Pupil led community projects will also give the school a strong presence in the local community.

4.7.2 Equal opportunities and diversity

Within our overall commitment to community, we are committed to promoting understanding of the principles and practices of equality and justice. We do not feel that any individual should receive disproportionate amounts of time, equipment or space in relation to others in Harpenden Free School.

We will at all times uphold the Equalities Act 2010.

Aims

To equip all children with an awareness of our diverse society and an appreciation of the value of difference. This is achieved by adherence to the following principles:

- Discrimination on the basis of colour, culture, origin, sex, sexuality or ability is not acceptable.
- We nurture, develop, educate and prepare all the children for life whatever their sex, colour, origin, culture, sexuality or ability.
- Staff further this objective by contributing towards a happy and caring environment and by showing respect for, and appreciation of, one another as individuals.
- Positive experiences about the importance of differences are part of the curriculum, for example how a group with different skills can work together to create something the individuals couldn't make alone.
- Staff model an appreciation of each others' differences and skills openly in front of the children.
- Staff ensure that they do not use gendered or heteronormative language and contribute to breaking down stereotypes and normative behaviour wherever possible (e.g. encouraging both boys and girls to play in the kitchen, portraying males and females in jobs such as nursing or building).

Admissions

We do not permit sex, race, colour or disability to be used as criteria for or against admission. Parents are made aware of the school's commitment to equal opportunities within their introductory packs.

Names

Children and staff names are accurately recorded and correctly pronounced. Children are encouraged to accept and respect names from other cultures. Both children and staff are addressed using first names so as not to create hierarchies based on age.

Language

The school views linguistic diversity positively. Children and staff must feel that their natural language is valued. We will endeavour to have books and environmental language in several languages. Where language may form a barrier in communications with parents or children we will seek help from the LEA or other appropriate organizations.

Resources

Our aim is to provide for all children appropriately to their needs, irrespective of sex, ability or ethnic origin. We aim to build resources and displays that reflect the variety of the world in a positive light. Equality of opportunity permeates the whole curriculum and will be reviewed regularly. Harpenden Free School takes account of the Lawrence Report and the LEA documents.

Recruitment

In all staff appointments the best candidate is appointed based on strict professional criteria and their ability to do the job required and form part of the School community.

Discrimination

All forms of discrimination by any person within the school's responsibility are treated seriously, as such behaviour is unacceptable. Racist symbols badges and insignia on clothing and equipment are forbidden. Staff are aware of possible cultural and gender assumptions and bias within their own attitudes.

Dealing with issues

Any behaviours deemed to be discriminatory should be reported to a senior member of staff immediately. These will be formally recorded. All such complaints will be shared with the person in question and parents as appropriate. Ultimately serious discrimination will lead to dismissal or the withdrawal of a place for the child.

A positive approach

Harpenden Free School aims to prevent discrimination by ensuring all members of its community (all staff, children, parents) feel valued for their own unique contributions. This is through praise and active inclusion. The sharing of views and experiences is also recognized as critical in developing an understanding and respect for differences. We welcome input from a variety of backgrounds to reinforce the celebration of differences and similarities.

Section 5: Evidence of demand and marketing

5.1 Evidence of parental demand

5.1.1 Our approach

Our survey was conducted via email and a paper based form through a range of early years providers and parent networks in Harpenden.

Early years providers included:

- Artisans Kindergarten – current, former and future parents
- URC Playgroup
- Noah's Ark Playgroup
- River Banks Nursery

Networks included:

- Toddler Network
- Ladies Circle
- Several NCT groups

We were also delighted that the survey went viral and was being promoted and distributed by other people via social networks including Facebook.

These groups are drawn from a wide and diverse demographic constituency in terms of ethnicity and social class. Having analysed the postcodes of the people who responded, we are also confident that our supporters are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds.

We intend to carry out wider publicity and promotional activity as part of the statutory consultation, when we expect to generate even more demand.

5.2.2 The survey

Our survey was prefaced with the following introduction:

There is an application being made at the end of May for a Free School in Harpenden which will combine Montessori and mainstream teaching approaches throughout the Primary years.

We need your reply to make this successful.

It only needs to include a "yes" to say you are interested, your postcode and the academic year of your child in September 2012.

All this information will be kept confidential in line with the Information Commissioner's Office.

Please pass this on to anyone else you know who may be interested.

If you would like to know more...

The application is being made by Changemakers, a charity working with young people throughout the country. Artisans Montessori Kindergarten is advising on Montessori and teaching aspects.

If successful, the Free School will open in September 2012 and will be within 1 mile of Harpenden town centre. The final location and premises are set at the next round.

The school aim is:

We seek to create an educational and spiritual culture which fosters the natural curiosity of a child to make sense of the world they live in and expand their own horizons. To do this the ethos of the school will be built and evolve around the views and interests of the children, guided by the wisdom and experience of the adults.

We will deliver this through:

Topic or Experience based learning - to encourage an inquisitive child.

Respect for individuals - to build independence.

Citizenship, grace and courtesy curriculum - to instil a sense of ease in social situations.

Outdoor learning - to develop healthy children.

Physical learning - to foster resilience.

Holistic and cultural development - to nurture happy and positive children.

You will find attached more detail about teaching and learning in the school, Admissions policy and a 10 question survey about local interest which we would be extremely grateful if you had time to answer.

THANK YOU for replying.

The Harpenden Free School Team

The survey itself asked ten questions:

1. Are you happy with the way primary school places are allocated in Harpenden?
2. Do you feel you have a genuine choice of school?
3. What qualities would you like a primary school to nourish in your child?
4. Does the principle of a Free School appeal to you? A school which is free to you but has remit to set its own teaching and learning styles, it is still inspected by OFSTED.
5. A free school is able to respond directly to parental and local requests about its provisions and philosophies; do you have any specific requests?
6. Harpenden Free School will combine the Montessori approach of respect for each individual child and of teachers being a guide to help a child discover knowledge through structured experiences rather than a coach to impart knowledge; with more mainstream approaches and teaching styles. Does this appeal to you?
7. Harpenden Free School will have mixed teaching groups, using traditional age groups, mixed age groups, ability groups, gender groups etc. We feel that this represents real life better and that it allows children to learn from each other and consolidate their own learning, as well as allowing teaching to be more focused. Does this appeal to you?
8. Harpenden Free School would like to nourish children who have positive outlooks and strong independence. We will give the children responsibility for increasingly important and influential tasks within the school as they progress through. Does this appeal to you?
9. Do you have any suggestions or ideas we could build on?
10. Would you like to be actively involved in the application for a Free School and if so what skills could you offer?

5.1.3 Parental response

The following parents have indicated that they would like to send their children to Harpenden Free School:

	2012 intake			2013 intake
	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Reception
	AL5	AL5	LU1	AL3
	AL5	AL5	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL3	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5	AL5	AL5
	LU1	AL5	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5	AL5	AL3
	AL5	AL5	SG4	AL2
	AL5	AL5	AL3	AL4
	AL5	AL5	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5	AL2	AL5
	AL5	AL5		AL5
	AL5	AL3		AL1
	AL5	AL5		AL5
	AL5	AL5		AL5
	AL5	AL1		AL5
	AL5	AL5		AL5
	AL5	AL2		AL5
	AL5	AL5		AL5
	LU2	AL5		AL5
	AL5	AL4		AL5
	AL5	LU1		AL5
	AL5	SG5		AL5
	AL5	AL5		AL5
	AL5			AL5
	AL5			AL5
	LU4			AL5
	AL5			AL4
	AL5			AL5
	AL5			
	AL5			
	AL5			
Total commitment	34	27	13	31
Forecast intake	60	40	20	60
%	57	68	65	52

We have comfortably met and exceeded the minimum demand requirements for 2012 and 2013.

In addition, although we are not required to demonstrate demand for the 2014 and 2015 intake, we have already generated significant interest, as follows:

	2014 intake	2015 intake
	Reception	Reception
	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL5
	AL5	AL4
	AL5	
	AL5	
	AL5	
	AL5	
	AL5	
	AL5	
	AL5	
	AL1	
	AL5	
	AL5	
	AL3	
Total commitment	19	8
Forecast intake	60	60

5.1.4 Feedback

We received some insightful and stimulating feedback from parents which we have incorporated into our proposal. Some key highlights were as follows:

A free school is able to respond directly to parental and local requests about its provisions and philosophies; do you have any specific requests?

Debating is a very good skill to have.

Teach good manners and community responsibility.

I think involving the children in charity work will give them a positive outlook. Helping others is a good way to find happiness yourself and see how lucky you are.

As well as the basic 3Rs, I would like a school to help develop personal confidence and social skills, encourage creativity and exploration of new experiences and ideas, and a curious mind.

Confidence, independence, to feel relaxed, to enjoy learning for learning's sake and not for rewards, physical health, an awareness of the environment, to learn at their own pace, that learning is not just about reading and writing.

Focus on individual development but within the framework of where that child should be relative to peers.

Respect for self and others. Manners.

Foster a sense of self-confidence and self-worth.

A love for learning.

An understanding of the importance of trying your hardest at each task, whatever the outcome. It's the process that matters rather than the result.

A holistic approach to nurture and expand a child's talents. Healthy living, reduced pressure and global appreciation of the community's strength and contribution.

Suitable spacious, healthy indoor and outdoor environments.

To provide good quality teaching, in a nurturing environment, build confidence, educational and social growth.

Harpenden Free School will combine the Montessori approach of respect for each individual child and of teachers being a guide to help a child discover knowledge through structured experiences rather than a coach to impart knowledge; with more mainstream approaches and teaching styles. Does this appeal to you?

It was not until I was shown around the nursery and told about the child led learning and the immense respect given to the child that I fully appreciated how wonderful this system is. It is certainly these principles that I would like both my younger children to grow up within and be educated within. It is such a huge part of their young lives and I have never found the state education system sat very easily with my philosophies and the way I live my life. The Montessori principles mirror them harmoniously.

Yes. Views on education have changed markedly with experience. I have learnt that primary education is not about imparting knowledge or being the first to read but about acquiring skills and a desire to do things well. I would also want my child to love reading and read widely, be able to spell and write neatly and express themselves coherently verbally and when writing.

At infant level in particular, I would like to see not too much focus on achieving academic targets but more about learning through play and other practical experiences, and to create an interest and enjoyment in discovering things for themselves

Absolutely. I think the way children are taught in the mainstream schools is not conducive to a holistic experience and realise that the Montessori ethos gives greater respect and responsibility to the child, therefore equipping the child with a much more powerful and profound experience of their world as they prepare to enter into it as a young adult.

Harpenden Free School will have mixed teaching groups, using traditional age groups, mixed age groups, ability groups, gender groups etc. We feel that this represents real life better and that it allows children to learn from each other and consolidate their own learning, as well as allowing teaching to be more focused. Does this appeal to you?

Yes. This very much appeals to me. Our youngest son was premature and therefore will most likely be in the 'wrong' academic year. This is a huge worry for me. I now can see that all children develop at their own pace and the imposition of year groups can be destructive. My middle son is at a mixed year school and I think this is hugely helpful – not to be at the top of the class because you were born in September, or feel last because you were born in August. I am also aware of the very different learning styles and interests of boys and girls.

Yes. I feel very strongly that the move to a single intake must cause difficulties in the first few years of school as children who are a whole year apart in age, with varying levels of ability are being taught together. A mixed teaching group which takes account of individual's progress would be far better.

I think this part is a good idea as I think mixing with different children at this age is appealing.

Yes, yes and yes. My 3 year old loves to cook and garden. I do not believe in age restrictions at all and believe that each child is very different and will achieve levels of competence and confidence at differing ages.

Harpenden Free School would like to nourish children who have positive outlooks and strong independence. We will give the children responsibility for increasingly important and influential tasks within the school as they progress through. Does this appeal to you?

Yes, I believe school is about more than teaching academic subjects and children respond well to being exposed to and involved with other aspects of life.

I would like to see learning through practical experience as much as possible reflected in the teaching approach.

Fantastic – mirrors how you learn and develop at home so mutually reinforcing.

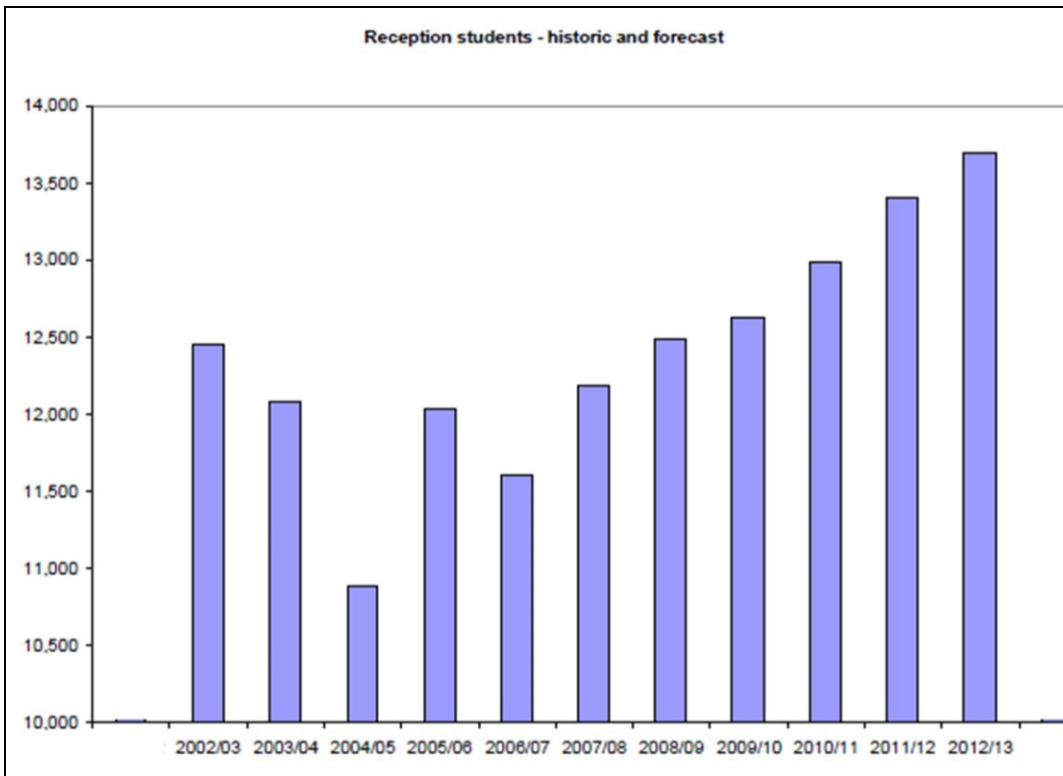
Personally, one of the best gifts I believe you can give a child is self-confidence and self-belief and I believe appropriate levels of these can lead a child in a very positive direction throughout life.

5.2 The wider context

We are clear that the primary motivation for establishing the Harpenden Free School is the demand from local parents for the particular type of educational approach we will be offering, as evidenced by the information above.

However, Harpenden Free School will also be meeting a clear local requirement for more school places.

In its April 2010 report *Meeting the Rising Demand for School Places*, Hertfordshire County Council states: "We forecast that demand for Reception places will rise by 8% county-wide over the next three years." This is illustrated in the graph below:



Hertfordshire County Council goes on to identify particular 'hot spots' across the county, where the shortage of places is particularly acute. As illustrated in the map below, Harpenden is one of the areas of greatest need:

Detailed analysis carried out by the county's school planning team concludes that the specific needs in Harpenden are as follows:

Harpenden

Total number of permanent reception places currently available = 412

April 2010 Forecast	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Demand	423	445	443
Surplus/Shortage	-11	-33	-31
% Surplus/Shortage	-2.7%	-8.0%	-7.5%

A shortage of places is forecast from 2010/11 of around 11 places with over 1 f.e. required for 2011/12 and 2012/13.

New figures given to us by the local authority just the day before we submitted our application, based on a recently completed (and as yet unpublished) school planning exercise, indicate that the position in Harpenden has worsened, with a 12% shortfall in places in 2011/12 and a forecast 15% shortfall in 2012-13.

In addition, there is clear evidence that parental preferences in Harpenden are not being fully met. For the 2010 reception intake, 21% of parents did not receive a place for their child in their first choice school. 12% of parents did not receive a place for their child in any of their three ranked schools (*source Hertfordshire County Council Primary Allocations Outturn Report, published 29th April 2010*).

5.2 Statutory consultation

Although we are required to carry out a statutory consultation, as set out under Section 10 of the Academies Act 2010, we view this as an opportunity rather than an obligation. Community engagement and collaboration is one of our founding principles, so we intend to use the consultation as an opportunity to further develop our relationships with the widest possible range of local stakeholders.

We will consult widely throughout Harpenden and beyond in order to answer the question “should we set up the proposed Free School?”.

We will publish an overview of the Harpenden Free School proposal, including:

- Our vision, mission and values
- Our offer in terms of curriculum and teaching methods
- School structure
- Admissions policy
- Proposed timetable including pre-opening and opening dates
- How long groups have to respond

This information will be published on the Harpenden Free School website. It will also be circulated via the local media (we already have close links with the Herts Advertiser), through a series of press releases and interviews. We will utilise the many publications and venues with whom Artisans already has strong working relationships.

We will hold consult with the general public through an open meeting and stalls in the town centre on a Saturday and at Harpenden railway station at morning and evening rush hour.

Information will also be made available in a variety of formats to ensure compliance with equal opportunities legislation.

We will send this information proactively to all the groups listed below, with whom we will also discuss a number of specific areas as follows:

Who	How	What
Parents and carers	Briefing meeting for parents and carers of children in Harpenden	Further information about the benefits of the school and admissions.
Prospective pupils	Separate briefing meeting to coincide with parents and carers meeting	Generate feedback and ideas on our approach
Hertfordshire County Council	Face to face meetings	Continuing to develop our existing relationship with the local authority and building relationships beyond the education department – for example with children’s and youth services, leisure services and arts and culture.
Local nurseries	Briefing meeting for local nursery managers	Specific information about progression from local nurseries to our school, discussion of collaboration opportunities at Foundation stage
Existing local primary schools	Briefing meeting for local headteachers, one to one meetings if required	Discussion of collaboration opportunities
Secondary schools	Briefing meeting for local headteachers	Discussion of collaboration opportunities, greater insight into progression from year 6 to year 7
University of Hertfordshire, University of Bedfordshire	Face to face meetings	Developing links with education departments in order to facilitate teaching student placements and employment opportunities
Community groups	Briefing meeting for community groups publicised through local networks such as St Albans Volunteer Centre and Harpenden Children’s Centre and surrounding villages	Opportunities for collaboration, promoting our principle of putting community action and learning at the heart of our pupils’ learning
Local businesses	Briefing meeting via local Chamber of Commerce	Opportunities for sponsorship and in kind support

Feedback will be collated via a simple questionnaire which will be available on paper and electronically. We will analyse the feedback and publish a response to all points raised.

We have already consulted with a number of the groups outlined above as part of putting together this proposal.

5.4 Marketing strategy

5.4.1 What do we need to do?

Harpenden Free School builds on the successful and highly regarded Artisans Kindergarten. For this reason, we are confident that we could fill the required number of places in the school almost entirely from children transferring from the nursery provision. As demonstrated above, there is significant excitement from existing parents at Artisans for the opportunity to continue with this style of education for their children throughout their primary years. Artisans is already oversubscribed and based on our research we believe that the addition of a primary school which follows a similar ethos to the existing nursery provision will only create greater popularity and demand.

Nonetheless, we will continue to actively market more widely to local parents, not least because we are determined to ensure that the school draws in a diverse intake, avoiding any danger of demographic 'self selection' through the nursery. Our admissions process (see section 4 above) is specifically designed to address this issue.

5.4.2 Elements

Our marketing strategy will include the following elements:

- An excellent website with regularly updated and lively content. This is an area we believe is underutilised by many current schools.
- Use of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, to build a broader school community that includes prospective parents, providing regular information and updates.
- Regular opportunities for prospective parents to get involved in the school, not just through the usual programme of meetings and open days but also through, for example, bringing their pre-school children along to participate in learning activities with children at the school.
- An extensive programme of community outreach, in line with our community focused ethos, through which the school can be promoted in live and practical ways beyond the gates, for example through volunteering projects in which prospective parents can get involved.
- More conventional marketing techniques such as leaflet drops (which have proved extremely successful for Artisans in the past), editorial and advertising in the local media and presence and local events such as the annual Hertfordshire County Show which takes place just outside Harpenden.
- Targeted marketing to and support for parents from more disadvantaged backgrounds, working closely with local agencies such as children's services, other local nurseries, GP's practices, health visitors and sports centres.

In line with our youth led approach, we envisage young people at the school playing a prominent role in our marketing strategy. They are, after all, our most effective (and honest!) ambassadors.

5.4.3 Combating disadvantage

We will target our marketing at the more challenging areas of the town, including through the location of our school, although we hope to attract a diverse range of pupils from a wide range of backgrounds.

We aim to develop a reputation for outstanding provision for pupils who might struggle in other schools. This will be achieved by using a plethora of community volunteers and through our strategy of small group cross year teaching in Literacy and Numeracy. We will work with other schools and offer our support in these areas so that pupils they feel would benefit from this approach can make use of our services in exchange for any specialist support that they may be able to offer.

Much research has shown the importance of early years provision in children's development and future attainment (Feinstein 2001, pp.13). We therefore believe that our commitment to challenging educational disadvantage should begin before pupils arrive in reception class. We will therefore provide high quality early years provision on our site through Artisans.

5.4.4 Education sector

Our school will work with other local schools, children's centres and nurseries in a spirit of partnership rather than competition, thereby enriching provision in Harpenden. We are keen to work across phases by drawing in early years, infant, secondary, FE and HE partners. Partnership will be driven by joint projects and sharing of expertise in our differing areas of strength. We are keen to see staff moving between schools where appropriate to contribute and develop their particular skills.

We are committed to reaching out beyond our school and are highly ambitious about this. We therefore hope to become a National College accredited "Teaching School" at the earliest possible opportunity. We recognise that this will require us to be judged outstanding for Teaching and Learning, Partnerships and Leadership and Management but aspire to no less than this. We look forward to the opportunity to work with a range of primary and secondary schools in our community as well as HEIs in order to model good practice in school based ITT, CPD and leadership development. This is one of the reasons our team includes a tutor in school based initial teacher training from an HEI who is also already involved in a teaching school bid.

Changemakers is highly influential in national policy and practice and we aim to use the experiences of Harpenden Free School to shape the national educational debate.

5.5 Local authority

We have maintained a close dialogue with Hertfordshire County Council as we have developed our Free School proposal, and they are very supportive of our plans.

The local authority has provided the following statement in support of our proposal:

“The strong ethical lead and principles of your group alongside a clear agenda for social cohesion, aspiration and inclusion are closely aligned with that of the local authority.

I also note with thanks your willingness to consider working with the local authority on a school location which aligns with Hertfordshire’s priorities for school places.

I hope we can continue to work together.”

[REDACTED], [REDACTED]

Section 6: Organisational capacity and capability

6.1 The Partnership

This proposal is underpinned by three organisations with extensive experience of and an outstanding reputation in education and public service delivery.

We will create a fantastic new school for Harpenden by bringing together one of the country's leading education and youth charities (Changemakers), an outstanding local education provider (Artisans Kindergarten) and an experienced manager of major public facilities (Isledon Partnership).

These three partners have come together as the founding corporate members of Harpenden Free School Ltd.

6.1.1 Changemakers

Changemakers has over seventeen years' experience of working with schools to support organisational development, build the capacity of teachers and deliver curriculum content directly to young people. Changemakers has worked with many hundreds of schools in every conceivable setting - primary and secondary, urban and rural, state schools in special measures and elite independent schools, special schools and pupil referral units, in the north, south, east and west of the country. Changemakers was instrumental in the introduction of enterprise and citizenship education in schools, and has advised the Rose Review of the Primary Curriculum, the Tomlinson Review of 14-19 Education and the development of the government's new National Citizen Service programme for school leavers.

6.1.2 Artisans

Artisans Kindergarten is a thriving and over subscribed nursery provision in Harpenden. Set up in 2007 it is one of the top 5% of provisions in the country based on its latest Ofsted report. Artisans uniquely combines the best of Montessori principles with the best of mainstream education, preparing children for a successful and happy journey in education and for a positive and fulfilling outlook in life. At its heart is the belief that during the highly impressionable and early experiences of education, children develop attitudes which last a lifetime and should therefore be given the highest quality and most professional foundation for future growth. Artisans has supported and continues to support teachers in their own development having seen staff successfully through Masters qualifications, EYPS, Montessori Diplomas, Foundation Degrees and Ofsted SPIs.

6.1.3 Isledon Partnership

Isledon Partnership, through Aquaterra Leisure, manages eight public leisure facilities in Islington and seven in Bath & North East Somerset in partnership with the two local authorities. It also works beyond the leisure centres, in partnership with primary care trusts, housing associations, other not-for-profit organisations and councils, to bring the benefits and fun to be had from physical activity to as many community venues, parks and play areas as possible. Isledon was recently awarded the contract to manage the new Hornsey Road Baths youth arts centre in Islington. It holds ISO9002, Investors in People and Charter Mark accreditations.

6.2 People

Our team brings together a diverse range of individuals with extensive expertise and experience from the education sector and other fields.

██████████ has ██████████. ██████████ will work on school governance, finance and marketing and PR.

██████████ has ██████████. ██████████ will work on curriculum and learning and school governance.

██████████. ██████████ will work on premises management and wider issues around governance, leadership and service delivery.

██████████ is ██████████. ██████████ will work on curriculum and learning.

██████████ is ██████████. ██████████ will work on the development of the school building.

██████████ is ██████████. ██████████ will work on the development of the school building.

██████████ is ██████████. ██████████ will work on curriculum and learning.

██████████ is ██████████. ██████████ will work on curriculum and learning.

██████████ is ██████████. ██████████ will work on curriculum and learning and staff development, along with wider issues around leadership and service delivery.

██████████ has ██████████. ██████████ will have overall responsibility for leading the setup of Harpenden Free School.

[REDACTED] is [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] will work on curriculum and learning, staff development and leadership.

[REDACTED] (participating in this initiative in a personal capacity) is [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] will work on curriculum and learning.

[REDACTED] had [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] will work on curriculum and learning and school leadership.

[REDACTED] holds [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] will work on curriculum and learning.

[REDACTED] was [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] will work on finance.

[REDACTED] was [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] will work on finance.

[REDACTED] has [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] will work on curriculum and learning and school governance.

[REDACTED] is [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] will work on curriculum and learning in relation to IT.

[REDACTED]. [REDACTED] will be the evaluator of Harpenden Free School and provide input on curriculum and learning.

6.3 Educational expertise

6.3.1 Knowledge and experience of working in schools

Clearly, the number one core competence for any group wishing to set up a Free School is first hand classroom experience and expertise in school leadership. Our team includes nine teachers with nearly 100 years of combined classroom experience, from veterans of the profession to an NQT. Our team also includes current and former Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers and senior managers.

Key people:

- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

6.3.2 Wider knowledge of education policy and practice

We believe that to achieve excellence, any school must seek out the widest possible range of external stimulus and best practice. Many members of our team have wider experience of educational policy and pedagogy and have been involved with a diverse range of organisations including local authority school improvement teams and national infrastructure bodies, advising government policy initiatives and working within university education faculties

Key people:

- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED] – [REDACTED]

6.3.3 School governance

We recognise that focused and effective school governance can often mean the difference between success and failure, or indeed ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’. Several members of our team have school governance experience.

Key people:

- [REDACTED] – [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] – [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] – [REDACTED]

6.4 Financial expertise

We recognise that, putting aside the core functions of teaching and learning, running a school is a significant financial challenge.

Members of our team bring practical experience of running complex multi-million pound operations in the media, sports and leisure, retail, local government, voluntary and education sectors.

All three partners have robust financial systems and processes in place and are financially stable.

We envisage undertaking a significant ongoing income generation programme to supplement the school's statutory income. Changemakers has an established and highly successful fundraising team which has raised over £10m over the past three years from statutory, trust and foundation and private sector sources for educational projects.

Key people:

- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

6.5 Other expertise

6.5.1 Local credibility

Whilst drawing on a range of national and international expertise, our proposal is rooted firmly in the local community of Harpenden. The school builds on the outstanding OFSTED rated Artisans which has a hugely successful reputation and excellent local networks. Seven members of the team live in Hertfordshire and several have children of primary age being educated locally. One member of the team has worked in the county's schools as a Local Authority consultant, providing a thorough knowledge of the local school systems and ways of working. Changemakers has operated in Hertfordshire for four years and has a long standing and successful working relationship with the local authority.

6.5.2 Organisational development and sustainability

A new Free School is like any other startup – it requires careful nurturing and support in the early years in order to ensure it becomes stable and sustainable. One of the strengths of our proposal is our ability to 'incubate' the new school within the wider partner organisations. This will enable it to grow and develop alongside an established infrastructure, and draw down support and expertise as required. Our team possesses substantial expertise in organisational development and growth - from larger organisations through to small businesses, which five members of our team have set up and run.

6.5.3 Marketing and communications

Establishing a new school as credible and desirable in the minds of local parents and wider stakeholders will be one of our biggest challenges. Therefore a high quality PR and marketing campaign will be crucially important. Our team includes director level expertise from a number of blue chip companies. Artisans has an established and successful local marketing operation in place and its current facility is heavily oversubscribed.

6.5.4 Premises

Getting the design of our building right, and ensuring it operates efficiently and effectively, is a very important task. [REDACTED] has [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], a Chartered Surveyor, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] brings significant expertise in facilities management, having [REDACTED].

6.6 Roles and responsibilities in the setup phase

6.6.1 How the setup team will work

The individuals described above will form the Harpenden Free School Implementation group. There will be three levels of involvement:

Company Directors

██████████, ██████████ and ██████████ are the Company Directors of Harpenden Free School. They will form the executive team and each will contribute around 2 days per week from September 2011 to August 2012. They will have ultimate responsibility for ensuring every aspect of the school is developed and implemented on time and to the appropriate level of quality.

Interim Governors

An Interim Governing Body will be formed, consisting of the three company directors along with two other members of the Implementation group - ██████████ and ██████████. ██████████ and ██████████ will contribute around 1 day per week from September 2011 to August 2012. The Interim Governing Body will have a wider set of responsibilities and include a number of other members who are not part of the implementation group (see below).

Other members

The other members of the Implementation Group will work on all aspects of setting up the school according to their particular skills and expertise. Other members will contribute around 2 days per month.

Implementation Group members have contributed to this initial proposal and will be employed as consultants during the setup phase.

The Implementation Group will also incorporate children who will be attending the school from September 2012, and their parents, who will have a role in shaping every area of activity, from curriculum to the layout of the building in the run up to opening. These additional members will join the team after the conclusion of the admissions process in April 2012.

When the school opens, some members of the Implementation Group may continue to be involved, either as paid consultants, employed staff, unpaid advisors or school governors. All appointments, whether as employed staff or governors, will follow the normal Changemakers recruitment processes to ensure fairness, equality and safeguarding and avoid any potential conflicts of interest.

In preparing our proposal we have conducted a comprehensive skills analysis to ensure that we have all relevant experience and expertise required to set up and run our school. We do not believe there are any significant skills gaps within our team at present, although we have no doubt that we will need to bring in additional expertise as set up and implementation begins in earnest. Through the extensive networks of the three core partners, and the wider advisory group, we are confident both that we will recognise these additional needs, and be able to fill them with high quality people and partners.

6.7 The Governing Body

6.7.1 Our experience

Our group includes extensive school governance experience, including two current Chairs of school governing bodies, each with over 25 years' experience. Members of our group also bring experience of governance in charities, public bodies, and private companies from small businesses to multinational blue chip corporations.

When designing the governing body for Harpenden Free School, we have therefore attempted to draw from this wide range of experience and bring the best from each setting.

6.7.2 Current challenges

We believe that most current school governing bodies face two main challenges:

Firstly, they tend to be too large. It is not uncommon for governing bodies to include 15-20 members. This often leads to an unwieldy group of people where it is difficult to build cohesion and consensus, decision making is too slow and individual accountability is diluted.

Secondly, they normally consist of a series of 'representatives' of various interests – staff, parents, local authority, local interest groups, faith groups in the case of a faith school. Whilst these various interested parties will bring valuable expertise in particular areas relevant to the school's activities, governors often find themselves in a position where their loyalties are split between the interests of the school, and the interests of their constituency.

Our approach to governance is therefore designed to overcome these challenges.

6.7.3 Our approach

We want to create a dynamic, responsive, strategic and bold governing body, and we will therefore limit the number of governors to a maximum of 10 at any one time. Our experience of charity and commercial governance is that 7-9 people is the optimum number. Our memorandum of association allows for a greater number of governors, but these powers will be reserved only for special circumstances when, for whatever reason, we may need to temporarily increase the size of the group.

We want to create a group of experts – what we think of as ‘unpaid management consultants’ - to support the running of the school. We will therefore be focusing on skills and expertise, rather than a ‘representative’ mode, to appoint members of the governing body. We want to ensure that members of the governing body are focused on the needs of the school as a whole, rather than any particular stakeholder or interest group – a principle which has been long established in charity governance.

We will conduct a regular skills analysis to ascertain the specific needs of the school at any moment in time, taking into account the issues it is facing and the strengths and weaknesses of the senior management team. The sorts of expertise we are likely to want governors to bring will include finance, legal, HR and leadership. Given that the staff team will be providing the educational expertise, we will be particularly interested in appointing governors from non-educational settings to provide different and diverse perspectives and insights.

Outside the statutory requirement for the Principal and 2 parent governors, we will not be prescriptive about membership. We will aim to achieve a balance between strong representation from the local community, and people from outside the area, perhaps with particular skills and expertise that are not readily available locally.

Governor recruitment will be conducted through school networks, local media and also national recruitment initiatives such as ‘Getting on Board’ and ‘Trustee Bank’, with whom Changemakers already has a relationship for its own Board recruitment. We will also consider national recruitment strategies where we feel we need specific expertise on the governing body.

We have existing relationships with the School Governors’ One-Stop Shop and the National Governors Association, as well as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations Governance team, and we will draw on their expertise to ensure our governing body is as efficient and effective as possible. We will aim to follow ‘Good Governance: a Code for the Voluntary and Community sector’ and the Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life.

6.7.4 Interim and transitional arrangements

We will establish an Interim Governing Body to oversee the setup phase of the school, chaired by [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

This body will include the other company directors ([REDACTED] and [REDACTED]), two members of the implementation group ([REDACTED] and [REDACTED]), two parents from our supporters group (names TBC, a number have already expressed an interest) and up to three more co-opted members.

The Interim Governing Body will remain in place for the first year of the school’s operation, to ensure continuity at this critical time. However, the recruitment process for the permanent Governing Body will commence from September 2012, to enable a long transition and handover between the two groups.

6.8 Leadership and staffing

6.8.1 Our experience

We recognise that, as in any organisation, the people employed by Harpenden Free School will make the difference between success and failure. We therefore intend to place a very strong focus on people issues, both during the setup phase and after the school has opened.

Our team brings extensive senior level HR and people development experience, both within schools, in the wider education sector (including a former Director of the Training and Development Agency for Schools) and other settings (including major blue chip companies).

This experience gives us confidence that we can be ruthless about what's needed to add best value.

6.8.2 Our principles

In section 3 above we identified one of the three reasons we want to set up a Free School as being to create a more efficient model of schooling. Key to this is the effective design and deployment of staff within the school.

We have identified three principles which will underpin our staffing methodology:

Commitment to our vision and ethos

Harpenden Free School will have a very distinctive vision and ethos. We recognise that not everyone will share our vision, be comfortable with our ethos, or be able to work within the culture we intend to create. Therefore, we will first and foremost be looking for people who share our vision and ethos. A good teacher who is open to development will be more appropriate than a more developed teacher with less commitment to the vision. And the same principle applies to staff in non-teaching roles, who we expect to be no less committed to our ideals.

Flexible resourcing model

Our wide experience of education has taught us that the 'one size fits all' approach of 1 teacher and 30 children is far from optimal in all situations. We therefore envisage a much more flexible resourcing model to take account of different subjects and needs with, for example, varying class sizes, vertical grouping to allow mixed year teaching and team teaching with a number of staff working with a larger group of children.

Teachers and “teachers”

Our teachers will be expert coaches and facilitators, and their main role will be to support the overall learning journey and personal development of the young people in their care. However, we do not believe that it is necessary, or even desirable, for teachers to deliver every aspect of curriculum content. Whilst qualified teachers will lead the core curriculum subjects, we intend to make extensive use of other inputs. ‘Assistant Teachers’ – a role we envisage being somewhere between a Teaching Assistant and a Teacher. External experts will be employed to deliver a range of foundation subjects – in particular PE and the arts, where many teachers currently report they lack depth of expertise. And our commitment to volunteering will bring parents and members of the local community into the classroom to share their knowledge and expertise.

6.8.3 Principal Designate

We recognise that school leadership is one of the most important factors determining pupil achievement. We have witnessed the critical role leadership plays in a range of different education settings, as well as in other sectors. It therefore follows that the appointment of the Principal Designate (who we will call the Chief Executive or CEO) is the biggest decision we will make in setting up Harpenden Free School.

What qualities are we looking for?

We will use the National Standards for Headteachers and Future Leaders Competencies as a basis for defining the qualities we are looking for in our CEO. These are tried and tested frameworks, which provide an excellent basis from which to work.

However, in addition to these areas, we will be looking to ensure that our CEO has a passionate commitment to and can truly live the values of Harpenden Free School as follows:

Facilitative rather than directive: Fostering children’s active engagement in the design and delivery of their own learning and the way the school is run, creating a culture of natural collaboration between children and adults in the school.

Innovative and agile operator: Implementing a very flexible approach to delivery.

Open to a range of approaches to learning: Understanding of and commitment to the Montessori, Reggio, Steiner and Forest school models in order to instil the joy of learning, discovery and individuality in every child.

A Community Organiser: Creating a broad and diverse community that extends well beyond the school gates.

Self aware and committed to personal learning and development: Making Harpenden Free School a true ‘learning organisation’ in which everybody will learn.

How will we attract the right candidates?

Despite the recent efforts of organisations such as Future Leaders, Teaching Leaders and Teach First to create a more diverse leadership cadre within education, the overwhelming majority of school leaders have come ‘through the ranks’ and will typically have served a long apprenticeship in the classroom.

It is highly unusual to find Headteachers who have transferred their leadership expertise from outside education, yet the National Standards for Headteachers and Future Leaders Competencies could be applied to almost any leadership role in any context. Being a good teacher is no guarantee of being a successful school leader; on the other hand, to be a successful school leader we believe you need to understand education, but not necessarily through direct teaching experience.

We are therefore keen to cast our net as wide as possible, both within and outside education. We are very open to candidates from teaching backgrounds, but we will also be looking to attract candidates who have demonstrated outstanding leadership capability in other settings – perhaps through running a charity or a small business.

We believe this will be a very attractive role. We are offering the CEO the opportunity to shape the creation of a new school with a lot of autonomy over the big decisions. This will be a high profile role, both locally and nationally, offering excellent career advancement opportunities. And our rewards and remuneration package will be better than the norm.

What recruitment process will we use?

Changemakers has extensive experience of recruiting to senior leadership roles and will lead on the recruitment process.

We are likely to employ the services of a headhunting agency to unearth candidates from a range of different backgrounds. We will use our own networks, especially within the voluntary sector where we are already aware of a number of interesting potential candidates. We will target programmes such as Future Leaders, Teaching Leaders and Teach First where, again, we are already aware of a number of interesting potential candidates.

We will start the recruitment process as soon as we are given the go ahead by the DfE, with the intention of having the CEO in post from January 2012. We are aware of the potential slippage to February half term if we employ a current teacher / Headteacher. We intend to put interim arrangements in place from September 2011 until the CEO is in place.

Changemakers has developed a set of values based recruitment tools which we will use in our recruitment process to ensure that candidates can demonstrate their commitment to the vision and ethos of Harpenden Free School. The recruitment process will also involve a range of interviews with key stakeholders including parents, children and local community representatives.

What role will the Principal Designate play in setting up the school?

We envisage a very prominent role for the CEO in setting up the school. As in any small business, strong leadership is crucial, and our intention is to let the CEO have significant autonomy within the vision and ethos we have defined.

6.8.4 Deputy CEO

We believe it is important that the CEO has a strong and supportive Deputy. We want this person to be complimentary to the CEO, ideally bringing a different set of skills and expertise.

If we appoint a CEO from a teaching background, we will seek a Deputy CEO from a non-teaching background who will take a lead responsibility for finance, business management, community relations, marketing and communications. Conversely, if we appoint a CEO from a non-teaching background we will seek a Deputy CEO from a teaching background who will lead the teaching and learning functions of the school. They will be non-teaching, but will be expected to spend a couple of days each week in the classroom.

We feel it is important that the CEO has responsibility for the appointment of their Deputy. We will approach recruitment in a similar way to the CEO.

6.8.5 Teaching staff

What qualities are we looking for?

We are looking for the brightest and best teachers around. As stated above, their commitment to our vision and ethos will be just as important as their experience.

We are looking for teachers who are outstanding in the core subjects of literacy and numeracy, reflecting our curriculum focus on these areas. We will also expect each teacher to bring a passion for and expertise in at least one foundation subject, which may have been gained outside teaching – for example, sport or the arts. Because we will be bringing in external expertise across the curriculum, we will not expect teachers to be masters of every area of the curriculum. This will also build staff morale by using their skills and passions and enabling in house training.

Perhaps most importantly we are looking for teachers who can be coaches and facilitators, since their main role will be to support the overall learning journey and personal development of the young people in their care.

Numbers and organisation

For overall budgeting and resourcing purposes, we have used the standard model of 1 teacher for every 30 children.

The Year 1 and 2 children who start in 2012 will be taught in two mixed year group classes of 30 pupils. Thereafter, as they make their way up the school, they will be taught in three classes of 20 pupils. This provides us with some additional capacity to take in year transfers.

Notwithstanding this basic model, we will deploy staff flexibly according to the needs of the pupils and the different curriculum areas as outlined above.

Teacher numbers will increase over the build up in pupil numbers as follows:

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
Rec	60	2	60	2	60	2	60	2	60	2	60	2	60	2
Year 1	60	2	60	2	60	2	60	2	60	2	60	2	60	2
Year 2			40	2	60	2	60	2	60	2	60	2	60	2
Year 3			20	1	40	2	60	2	60	2	60	2	60	2
Year 4					20	1	40	2	60	2	60	2	60	2
Year 5							20	1	40	2	60	2	60	2
Year 6									20	1	40	2	60	2
Cover		0.5		1		1		1		1		1		1
Total	120	4.5	180	8	240	10	300	12	360	14	400	15	420	15

Other teaching staff

We will employ a Head of Early Years and Key Stage 1 (from 2012) and a Head of Key Stage 2 (from 2013). These two posts will line manage all the teachers within their Key Stage. They will have a teaching responsibility themselves for three days per week, but will be covered by additional resource for two days per week to enable them to fulfil their leadership and management responsibilities.

We will employ a SENCO for three days per week.

We will employ a full time cover teacher (half time in 2012), primarily to cover the Heads of Key Stage but also to provide an additional day of cover each week. Other supply cover will be provided by agency staff and has not been incorporated into our core staffing model or numbers.

Recruitment

Posts will be advertised through the usual channels – TES, local authority website, etc. However, we will also target innovative programmes such as Teach First, and we intend to proactively approach excellent teachers we know for the initial staff cohort.

6.8.6 Assistant Teachers

What is the role?

Teaching Assistants have become an established part of most schools. However, our experience suggests that, whilst they have been invaluable in relieving the administrative burden on teachers, and providing an 'extra pair of hands' in the classroom, they do not command the same status as teachers and do not contribute to planning and assessment.

We therefore plan to create a more advanced role, more akin to a Higher Level Teaching Assistant or Graduate Teaching Programme role, which we will call an Assistant Teacher.

Our Assistant Teachers will fulfil the normal responsibilities of a Teaching Assistant, including lesson preparation and classroom administration. However, unlike most Teaching Assistants they will fulfil unaccompanied teaching responsibilities under the guidance of a qualified teacher. This may include leading small groups in literacy and numeracy, working with gifted and talented or taking a lead in the delivery of a foundation subject for which they may bring a subject specialism from a non-education context.

Our Assistant Teachers will also run our extended services programme of breakfast, after school and holiday clubs and provide lunchtime cover.

Assistant Teacher numbers will follow the same pattern as for teachers (see above).

Who are we looking for?

We are looking for people who are interested in a career in teaching, but perhaps didn't go to college or university or previously chose a different career path. They will be expected to show a significant aptitude in the classroom, but will not require a formal teaching qualification.

We will make a significant investment in training and career development, in the expectation that our Assistant Teachers will progress to becoming teachers either within our school or elsewhere.

Although more expensive than a Teaching Assistant, we believe these posts will offer a much better return on the investment of having an additional member of staff in each classroom due to the higher level skills they can bring. They will also provide significant benefits in terms of succession planning.

Recruitment

We will recruit via local media, local authority website and existing programmes such as GTP. We will also run a local recruitment campaign aimed at career switchers who may have thought about going into teaching.

6.8.7 Non-teaching staff

We will employ four non-teaching staff as follows:

Head of External Relations

Responsible for community relations and managing the volunteering programme, marketing and communications and fundraising including external hires of the building.

Administration Manager

Responsible for overseeing the school's administration processes, including liaising with the external finance function (see below) and personnel. Day to day first point of contact for parents and visitors to the school. Provides PA support to the senior management team. Clerk to the governors.

Administrator (from 2015)

Works alongside the Administration Manager.

Premises Manager

Responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the building, including liaising with external contractors for cleaning, gardening, security, etc.

We will employ Lunchtime Supervisors to look after the children at lunchtime. We ultimately expect to use volunteers for this role but have costed it in as a paid post initially.

We will outsource our finance and bookkeeping function to JS2 Ltd. The Administration Manager will be the main day to day point of contact.

We will outsource building maintenance and associated services such as cleaning.

We will outsource the school's catering function.

We will recruit primarily via local media and the local authority website, but the Head of External Relations post will be advertised in national media as we believe this has the potential to be a very attractive role.

6.8.8 Other inputs

As outlined above, we intend to make extensive use of external support to deliver various aspects of the curriculum.

We will employ part time sports coaches to take PE and part time languages tutors to run foreign languages lessons. These individuals may or may not be qualified teachers, but will have extensive professional experience and expertise in their areas of specialism. We have also allowed for other freelance staff to be brought in to assist with curriculum delivery in a similar way.

In line with our commitment to community we will make extensive use of parent and community volunteers to assist with the delivery of the curriculum. We will run a comprehensive volunteer recruitment and training programme to ensure that these individuals are well supported and capable of delivering effective inputs for the children.

6.8.9 Management and accountability

Our staffing structure will ensure strong and efficient accountability. Every individual will be held accountable for achieving some part of the school's success.

Key to this will be a clear team and line management structure. We offer two slight variations below depending on whether the CEO is from a teaching or non-teaching background.

In each case the CEO will have only 4 direct reports. We have observed that in many primary schools the Headteacher has far too many direct reports which is unmanageable and means that they are unable to provide proper support to each member of staff.

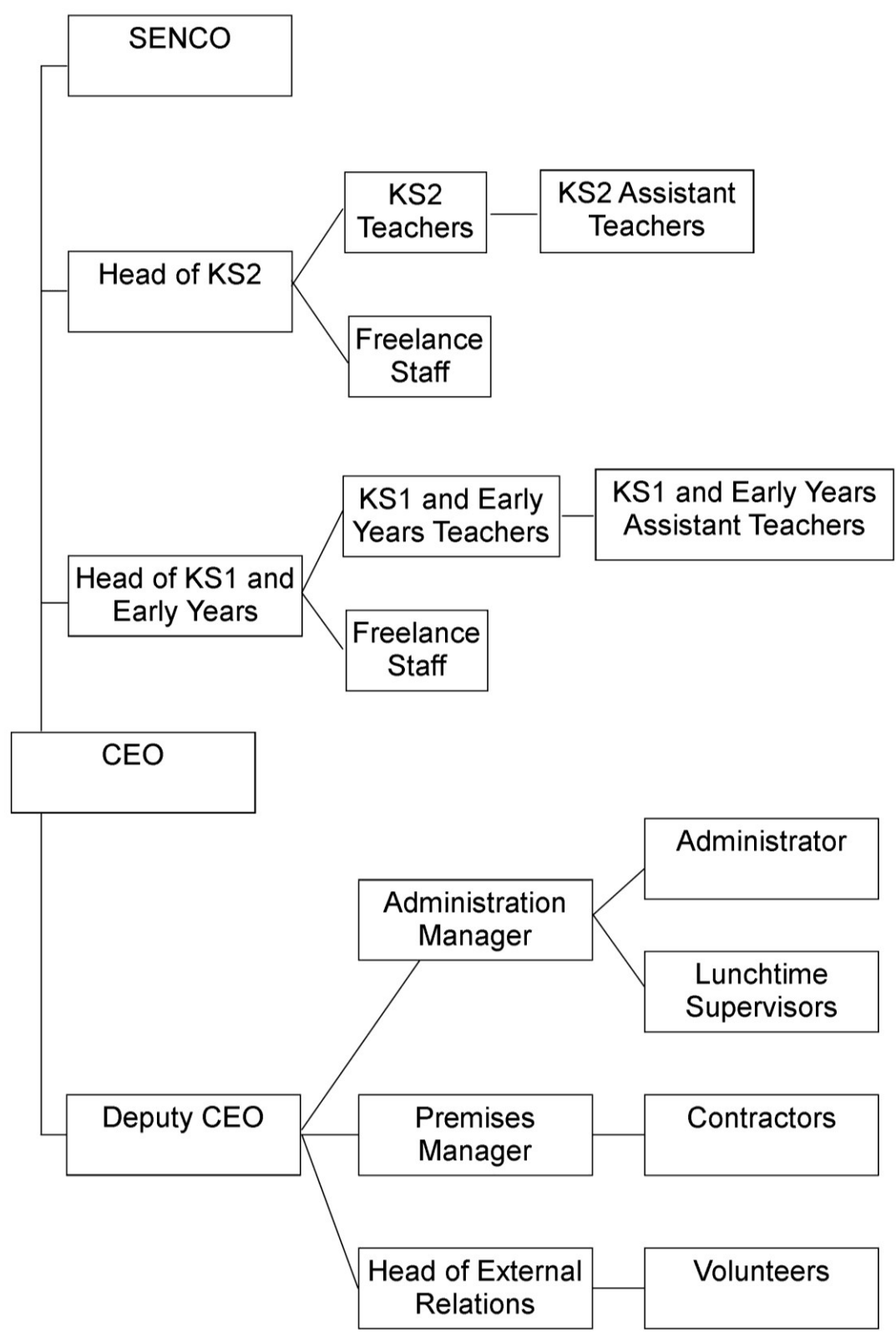
Line management responsibilities will be spread widely through the staff team. All staff will be provided with extensive training and development around their responsibilities as line managers.

Each Teacher and Assistant Teacher will work in a pair with the teacher line managing the Assistant Teacher. We believe this will make for more coherent joint working. Despite our plans for flexible resourcing, each Teacher and Assistant Teacher will be accountable for 30 children – educational attainment, pastoral care and liaison with parents and carers.

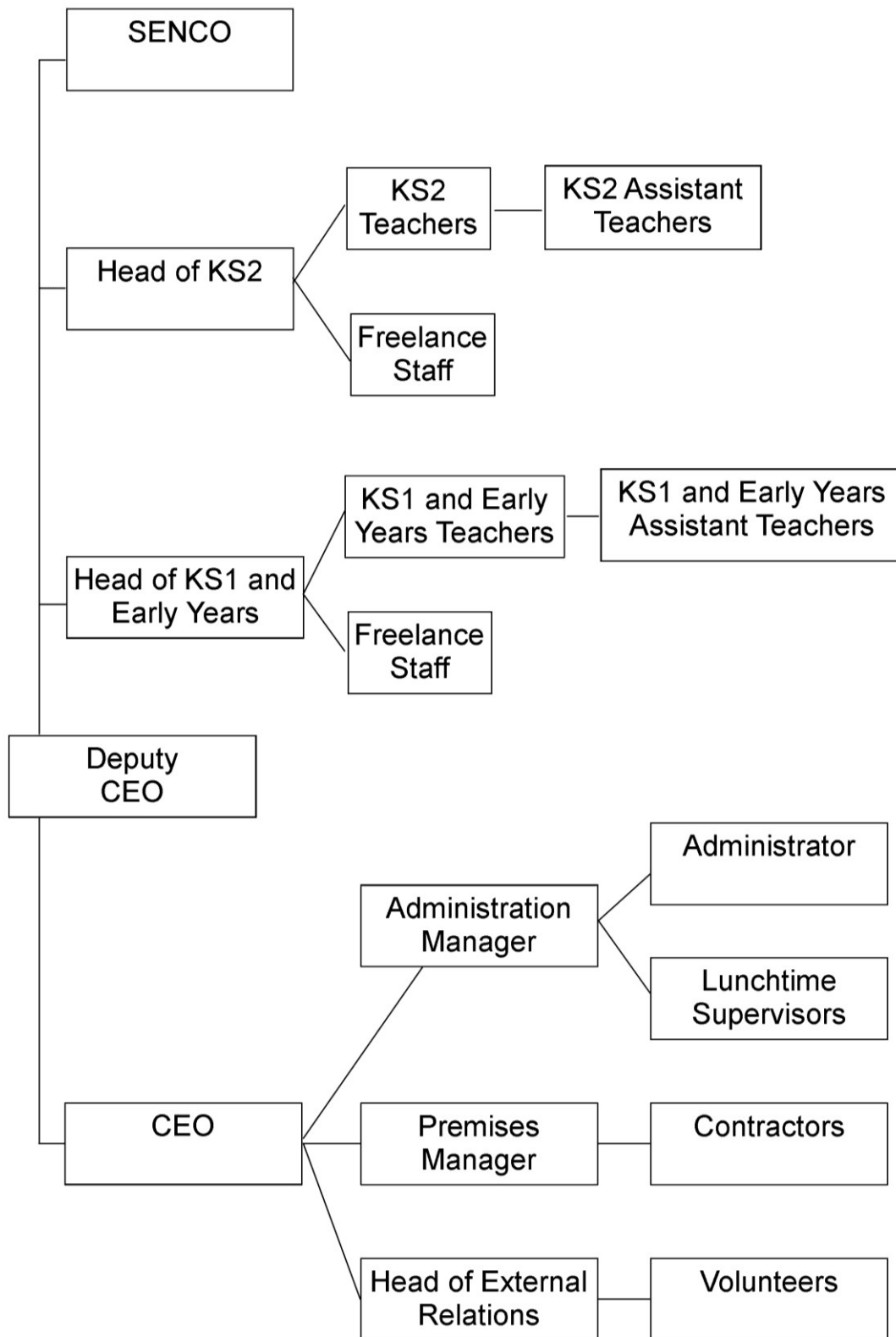
The Senior Management Team will consist of the CEO, Deputy CEO, Head of External Relations and the two Heads of Key Stage.

There will be weekly staff meetings for all staff and monthly Senior Management Team meetings.

Model 1: CEO from teaching background



Model 2: CEO from non-teaching background



6.8.10 Terms and conditions

We do not intend to follow the national agreements on pay and conditions as we believe they are restrictive and inflexible for both staff and the school.

Pay

We will use broad bands for pay as follows:

██████████

6.8.11 Planning, training and development

██████████

6.9 The relationship between the Governing Body and members of the Academy Trust

The founder Members of the Harpenden Free School Academy Trust (Changemakers, Artisans and Isledon Partnership) will clearly play a major role in the setup phase and the first year of the school's operation. This will be in terms of both governance and executive functions.

Once the school is open, we envisage the Members playing a lesser role, in much the same way as if they were corporate members of registered charities. Governance functions will be taken on by the school's Governing body (on which the Members will be represented). Executive functions will be taken on by the CEO and their staff team.

The main practical function of the Members after the school opens will be to appoint Governors (except those co-opted by the Governors themselves). However, we also envisage that the founder Members will continue to play an important role in ensuring that the school's original vision and ethos are maintained and developed over time.

Section 7: Premises

7.1 Considerations

One of the overriding motivations for setting up a Free School in the Harpenden area is the predicted shortfall in primary places in the coming years. Alongside this are the notion of parental and the failure of the current system to provide a) genuine choice for parents in the school of their child and b) clear variety of types of provisions to accommodate the boundless variety of children and the individuals they become.

Our Admissions policy is deliberately not based on postcodes because we recognise that Harpenden is a largely affluent area surrounding by pockets of significant hardship and that good and outstanding resources and particularly schools are not equally available.

There is also a high population of parents who work, both travelling and commuting to other local areas and to London. Therefore the provision of a more flexible approach to a school day and the importance of easy parking and station proximity are issues which feature largely in the impact on lifestyle of the children in the area.

7.2 Possible site options

We have identified 3 possible sites of which the first is our preferred option.

7.2.1. [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

Freeholder: Hertfordshire County Council

This site is currently scrubland with an unused football pitch.

Advantages:

- We would be able to create a purpose built building.
- It is in the heart of a residential area but sufficiently on a side road not to affect the local residence quality of living.
- There is plenty of space for outdoor areas and car parking.
- It is on the side of Harpenden closest to the areas of most hardship.
- The land is unused currently due to difficulties in the process of developing as football fields.
- It is county council owned land and is therefore more likely to be available for a Free School which will meet some of the county's own predicted shortfall in primary places.
- There is sufficient land here that public access for dog walking etc could be retained.
- It is a 10 minute brisk walk from the station and city centre.
- It is very close to the current location of Artisans.

7.2.2. [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

Freeholder: [REDACTED]

It is known that [REDACTED] has been downsizing its operations for a number of years. For this reason they have empty buildings in the heart of Harpenden.

However, it is privately owned land on a site with limited access to external spaces and its actual availability for rental or purchase is unclear. Further, the conversion costs of the building are likely to be greater than the cost of a new build to create a school of a lesser quality due to necessary compromises of conversion.

Advantages

- Has history and character.
- Possible links to the research centre could yield fascinating educational avenues.
- It is central but not in a residential area and therefore has limited impact on the surrounding community (however it is closest to the most affluent areas).
- It offers refurbishment opportunity which the DfE has said is its preferred option.

7.2.3 Unused old school building, [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

Freeholder: Hertfordshire County Council

This is an old school site, more recently used as a library, which has become gradually more derelict over several years. Its configuration is therefore ideal, but for a single stream school.

Its planning restrictions have not previously allowed for business use and therefore its potential uses are limited and could offer an opportunity. However, it has no external ground and is bounded by roads and railway. There are no opportunities for car access but it is only 2 minutes from the station and in the heart of the town centre.

Advantages

- It was originally a school.
- It has limited possible uses and is therefore more likely to be available at a lower cost.
- It is central.

7.3 Capital investment

We are acutely aware of the limited capital funding that the DfE has available for Free Schools. We also understand that the DfE has said it is unlikely to fund the costs of entirely new build schools.

However, we have proposed a new build school as our preferred option above because the professional advisors on our implementation group, including an architect and a quantity surveyor, have assured us that in the current market refurbishing an existing building is likely to be as, if not more, expensive than a new build. It is also the case that there is a significant shortage of school places in Harpenden, and the local authority has indicated that it may be in a position to assist with capital costs.

We are committed to buying a school because we believe that, no matter how the school premises are funded, it will be a much better long term investment and the school will eventually own its own building providing long term security and stability and an valuable fixed asset.

We have consulted a number of investment specialists and have in mind a model whereby Changemakers, Artisans and Isledon Partnership will set up a separate Community Interest Company (CIC) to provide the up front financing costs (purchase of land / building and fit out / refurbishment costs). The CIC will then lease the building back to the school, which will pay rent over an agreed period. An asset lock within the CIC memorandum and articles will protect the school's long term usage of the building in perpetuity.

Changemakers, Artisans and Isledon Partnership anticipate being able to capitalise the CIC and pay for the school building from a range of sources:

- Commercial borrowing
- Our own reserves
- A social investment bond purchased by wealthy individual investors
- A bond scheme for parents, local businesses and supporters
- Funding from local government
- Funding from the DfE

A number of discussions with potential investors have already taken place, and we are confident that we would be able to meet the substantial majority of the up front capital costs from non-DfE sources.