

London Borough of Bromley

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Briefing for Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee 19 March 2013

DEVELOPMENT OF FREE SCHOOLS - UPDATE

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This briefing provides an update on the development of the Free School programme nationally and information on current applications for Free School provision in Bromley.

2. **THE BRIEFING**

Context

- 2.1 The Free School programme was introduced by the Government in 2010. The Department for Education defines Free Schools as all-ability state-funded schools, independent of local authorities, set up in response to what local people say they want and need in order to improve education for children in their community.
- 2.2 Free Schools can be run by various groups, including charities, parents and businesses. They cannot be run for profit.
- 2.3 Government Ministers were concerned that the programme was being held back because groups coming forward to set up Free Schools could not find suitable premises where there was permission to have a school.
- 2.4 The Government wants to remove barriers to the opening of Free Schools and has, therefore, recently announced its intention to change planning rules in England to make it easier for Free Schools to open in buildings such as offices, hotels and shops from this summer. This will mean Free Schools will be able to operate in buildings for a year without having permission to change their use.
- 2.5 There are about 80 Free Schools open in England now, with another 100 planned to open in September.
- 2.6 There are currently no Free Schools in our Borough. One bid by a group of parents in 2011 to establish a Free School in Bromley under the title "Paxton Academy" was turned down by the Department for Education.

2.7 The window to submit an application to open a mainstream Free School in 2014 closed on Friday 4 January 2013 and the local authority is aware of three Free School applications in the current round. All three applicants will be informed of the outcomes of their applications in May 2013.

2.8 The three applications are outlined below:

Proposer	Details	Proposed location
The Harris Federation	Two forms of entry (60 place per year) Age 5-11 All through Primary Free School	Beckenham area (possibly on the Harris Academy Beckenham site)
The Harris Federation	Two forms of entry (60 place per year) Age 5-11 All through Primary Free School	Central Bromley area (considering several sites including Kingswood House, Shortlands)
Bromley Bilingual Primary School in partnership with the Council for British Teachers (CfBT)	Two forms of entry, opening with two Reception classes, one Year 1 class and one Year 2 class in September 2014 Age 5-7 Bilingual (French) Free School	(Site not known)

2.9 Harris Federation has submitted a successful bid to open an 'alternative provision' Free School in September 2013. It will have 20 places for Key Stage 3 pupils; 30 places for Key Stage 4 pupils and will have 30 sixth form places. It will serve the Bromley, Croydon and Lewisham areas and is proposed to be located in central Bromley, providing education for students who are not succeeding in mainstream schools. Places will be commissioned by local schools or local authorities.