



Academy admissions: leaflet campaign and your letters

By Neil McNaughton

The public consultation over the Archer Academy's new proposals for its admission policy closed at the end of January but the debate continues to rage. This month we print another page of letters from parents whose children are directly affected by the issue.

During January, opponents of the plan to name five feeder primaries to the oversubscribed free school and to exclude neighbouring Holy Trinity Primary from that feeder list distributed leaflets along the High Road.

Headed *N2 Children Need Your Help*, the leaflet questioned the Academy Trust's assertion that the new admissions rules were fair and in accordance with the school's original remit.



Protesting parents hand out leaflets in the High Road. Photo Mike Coles

The Academy has stated that its list of feeder primaries matches its principles as a non-denominational community secondary school. Holy Trinity is a selective Church of England school.

Some question whether the Academy has underestimated the number of places which will be taken up by siblings of existing pupils. The more places taken up by such siblings, say some parents, the fewer the number of

places that will be available on the basis of proximity.

Parents from NW11 and N3, however, argue that the Academy was never set up for N2 children alone, but for all three postcodes which are all suffering from a shortage of secondary places and therefore need a share of feeder places.

The final decision of the Academy's trustees on the admissions rules is now awaited.

than the very biased selection you have chosen to print.

Yours faithfully

Tessa Hackworth, By email.
Editor's note: THE ARCHER did not make a selection of letters. We printed all the letters that arrived with us before our publication deadline, as we did the previous month when the two letters printed both opposed the admissions proposals.

Inaccurate assumptions

Dear Editor,

The Archer Academy's assertion there will still be up to a quarter of places left for local N2 children after the changes is optimistic. Every secondary school for miles has sibling figures between third to half total places. Should they risk such controversial policy changes going ahead on inaccurate assumptions?

Four out of five of the proposed feeder schools are oversubscribed, excluding local families from non-denominational primary places. Local families missing out on these primary places will be disadvantaged a second time in the admissions system through no fault of their own.

No one, including Holy Trinity parents, at the public meeting asked for feeder places. We ALL overwhelmingly agreed they are too DIVISIVE.

Yours faithfully,
Non-faith Holy Trinity parent.

Negative consequences
Dear Editor

The Archer Academy was set up by local parents who wanted to ensure that local children would have places at a local secondary school. The school has its roots in the community and strives to be inclusive.

Faith schools are inherently exclusive and divisive, and undermine community cohesion. It is hypocritical of parents who have chosen to send their children to faith schools – schools that specifically select on the basis of ethos and belief rather than 'locality' or distance from the school – to then object to another school doing *exactly the same thing*. Evidently they want to change the rules to whatever is most advantageous to them.

Secular schools benefit from the diversity that makes Finchley a special place to grow up, and build bridges and understanding between families and communities.

Faith schools, by contrast, segregate children on the basis of their parents' background and beliefs, with only negative consequences for our society as a whole. The sooner that state funding for faith schools is ended, the better for everyone.

I for one am delighted to see a school like the Archer Academy recognising this, and I very much hope that they are able to put these new admissions arrangements in place despite the concerted effort on the part of some parents to undermine them.

Yours faithfully
Jessica Mordsley,
Squires Lane, N3.

What's changed?

Dear Editor

You should be aware that from the beginning of Archer Academy campaign Holy Trinity was named both as a partner school and as one of the intended feeder schools. This was publicly stated by Avis Johns, a founder of the Archer Academy, at the early campaign meetings and also in the media.

You should ask yourself if it was ok then when they needed our support why is it now not in line with their ethos. What has changed apart from the Archer Academy ethos?

The key issue here is that the Archer Academy is now being selective in that it will not accept a religious school as a feeder school.

Yours faithfully,
Father of three, N2.

Deeply upsetting

Dear Editor,

Most parents of N2 have never asked for feeder places. Feeder schools are wrong and they are divisive.

In a letter last month the Chair of the Governing Body at Garden Suburb Infant and Junior Schools unfairly questioned Holy Trinity parents' commitment to the Academy saying only six of their children went there in the second year's intake.

This is not comparable. We are a tiny one-form school with just 30 children per year. Hampstead Garden Suburb is a three-form school with 90 children per year.

This whole consultation has been deeply upsetting for our community and I urge the governors to rethink.

Yours faithfully,
Lucy Kavanagh,
Richmond Road, N2.

Flawed system

Dear Editor,

It is irrelevant what the criteria is; faith, ability or ethos. As long as the Archer Academy have a criteria for selecting feeder schools they are a selective school. They gained funding for a non-selective school. The documents submitted to the Department of Education by the Archer Academy are littered with the close relationship that they will have with Holy Trinity. The Archer Academy have shown their neighbour the utmost disrespect. As well as to the community who they promised "a local school for local children". The fact that they can do this just proves the whole school system in this country is flawed. Every school should be non-selective, non-dominational and every child should go to their local school.

Yours faithfully,
An N2 resident.

No guarantees

Dear Editor,

No one is asking for an East Finchley exclusive school. However, it makes no sense to prioritise children up to 1.5 miles from the Archer Academy over children who could walk to school.

A number of letters in your February 2016 edition suggest that there are reserved geographical places in the new policy. There are none. The only guaranteed places are for feeder school.

Yours faithfully,
An East Finchley parent.

Letters special

For space reasons, we have abridged all letters

Misleading claim

Dear Editor,

We received two leaflets through our door raising the prospect of 'N2 children' being disadvantaged when applying for a place at the Archer Academy. Having looked into the issue myself, they were making a rather misleading claim.

N2 children won't be disadvantaged, children from Holy Trinity school will, which is indeed unfortunate. However, a quick look at the Holy Trinity school website will tell you all you need to know about how restrictive its own admissions policy is, drawn on the basis of attendance at Holy Trinity or All Saints churches and residence in N2.

I live in N2, and only a few

streets away from N3 but I don't see N3 people as living 'over the border' or being less deserving of a school place. Neither do I define the boundaries of a community on the basis of which sorting office handles its mail. In fact, there are parts of NW11 and N3 that are closer to the Archer Academy than some of the outer extremes of the N2 postcode area.

It's a shame that any state school should seek to narrow their entry requirements, either on the basis of faith or ethos, but I can't see that Holy Trinity parents have got much of a case when their own school already has such narrowly defined entry criteria.

Yours faithfully,
Name and address supplied.

No good reason

Dear Editor,

If one accepts the intention to spread the Archer Academy's intake across the three priority postcode areas, this proposal still reduces the opportunities to attend for children living in N2, near the Archer Academy, who listed the proposed N2 feeder schools as first choices but did not obtain places at them.

No good reason is given for deciding on feeder schools as a fair method of spreading the intake across the postcodes. One alternative would be to split the places allocated to the feeder areas across the three postcodes and then apply normal acceptance criteria to these groups.

What is the justification for the child's choice of school at the age of 10 depending so heavily on decisions made at the age of four? The idea that children ought to go to the kind of school they have already gone to is damaging to social integration.

Yours faithfully,
Gerard Kingdon,
Sedgemere Avenue, N2.

Biased selection

Dear Editor,

I read your letters special on the Archer Academy admissions meeting with interest. I wondered why, if you are trying to give as wide a cross section of views as possible, five out of the nine letters you printed were from Brooklands or NW11 parents. And seven out of the nine letters were in support of the new admissions proposals.

That level of support is most certainly not in my opinion representative of the views expressed at the meeting. If the argument is that all three postcodes should be represented at the school, then why not print an equal number of letters from each postcode, rather

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