

Title: Alban City School
Author: Department for Education (DfE)

Impact Assessment – Section 9 Academies Act Duty

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

Background

2. The Alban City School is a 4 – 11, non-faith primary school. It plans to open with an intake of 2 reception classes admitting 60 pupils, with a subsequent intake of 60 places per year. It aims to be at capacity in 2018. Once it reaches full capacity the school will have 420 places. The school will be open on the site of the former University of Hertfordshire School of Law in the centre of St Albans. The school intends to be a “walk to school” school to minimise any impact the school may have on already high levels of traffic in the centre of St Albans.

3. The proposer group are a mixture of local parents and a leading educationalist; the lead proposer being the former head teacher of the Aboyne Lodge School until January 2010, which under her leadership was rated by Ofsted in 2009 as an outstanding school, and awarded Beacon status by DfE.

Catchment Area, its Characteristics and Admissions

4. The school’s admissions policy is fully compliant with the School Admissions Code and will follow Hertfordshire County Council’s (HCC) admissions criteria. Where fewer applications than the published admission number for the relevant year are received the Alban City Free School Trust will offer places at Alban City School to all those who have applied.

6. When the school is oversubscribed, after the admission of pupils with Special Educational Needs where the school is named in the Statement, priority will be given to those children who meet the following criteria:

- a. Children in public care
- b. Medical or social needs: children for whom it can be demonstrated that they have a particular medical or social need to go to this specific school
- c. Siblings – children who have a sibling on the roll of the school at the time of application
- d. Children who live nearest to the school (based on straight line distance).

7. If in categories b-d above, more children qualify under a particular rule than there are places available, a tiebreak will be used by applying the next rule to those children. For

infant class applications, if the school is oversubscribed, priority will be given to twins/multiple births. For admission into any other year group, priority will be given for students living nearest to the school (closest applicants take priority).

8. Alban City School will operate a waiting list for each year group. Where in any year the school receives more applications for places than there are places available, a waiting list will be determined solely in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. Where places become vacant they will be allocated to children on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria.

9. The school does not have a self-defined catchment area. For the purposes of the impact assessment, we have created a proxy catchment area. The average distance travelled to primary school in Hertfordshire is 0.8 miles. The furthest distance travelled to primary school by a significant majority (80%) of pupils in Hertfordshire is 1.5 miles. Of the 82 pupils who have so far selected the school as one of their choices, the furthest lives 1.3 miles away from the site by straight line distance. We have therefore assessed the impact on all primary schools within a one and a half mile radius of the Free School. It is officials' view that it will be unlikely that schools situated over 1.5 miles away from the Free School will be impacted or will be more than minimally impacted.

10. In the St Albans district there is currently a 4.3% deficit of primary places and the primary school population is projected to grow significantly over the next five years. Any potential negative impact on local schools should be mitigated by the growing population (see table provided by the Local Authority below).

April 2010 Forecast (places)	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Demand	392	429	424	421	437
Surplus/Shortage	-17	-54	-49	-46	-62
% Surplus/Shortage	-4.3%	-12.5%	-11.5%	-10.9%	-14.1%

If no new primary school places were added there would be a 14.1% shortfall of places by 2015/16.

11. St Albans is an area where significant and unpredictable rises in demand have been experienced which have since been reflected in the forecast above. The city is densely populated, and developed, presenting real challenges for the Local Authority in finding suitable school sites to expand, or new sites to develop.

12. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has taken steps to mitigate the impact of the deficit of places including increasing the planned admission number (PAN) at Margaret Wix Primary to 60 places and Bernard's Heath Junior school to 90 places. They have however set out their intention to use the Free School, should it be approved, to assist them in managing the demand for places.

13. For all of the districts within Hertfordshire, including the neighbouring districts, the population is set to rise over the next five years. For example, the neighbouring districts of Hertsmere, Watford and Welwyn Hatfield are all projected to see an increase in school population of 7.5%, 20.4% and 16.7% respectively.

Local Authority View

14. HCC were invited to provide their views on the Free School proposal. They responded to that invitation on the 24 February saying that the Free School should not have an impact on existing schools due to the increasing demand for primary places in the area. The demand figures presented in the original Free School application were supplied to the group by HCC and have risen again in the immediate area since then.

15. HCC's view is that opening the Free School is critical to meeting the demand for places, that the school is well placed to meet localised need and will provide an ideal solution to parental demand for places in the city centre.

16. HCC have purchased the site for the school and agreed to provide £500,000 in capital funding toward refurbishment of the building.

Representations

17. No direct representations have been received by the Department but a public consultation has been carried out by the proposer group. As part of their consultation, Alban City Trust sent copies of their consultation questions to all of the local primary schools and nurseries within a 5 mile radius of the site. No responses were received from these schools. The consultation closed on 23 December 2011 before the new 2012 model Free School Funding Agreement was published. The group consulted with local community groups such as the Polish Association, Islamic Centre and the local MP. The findings of the consultation showed there was strong support for the project amongst the stakeholders questioned; at no stage during the open days and liaison with interested parties did the proposers encounter direct criticism or opposition to the Alban School proposal.

18. Of the 177 responses to the consultation 169 were in favour of the school and 8 were against. Of the 8 against, the majority were concerned about increased traffic in an already congested area. The proposers have carried out a traffic survey to gauge the extent of the problem and developed a travel plan to address these concerns. There will be no parking on or around the school site and all children will be expected to walk to school. Walking buses and secure bike stores will be arranged.

Impact on other schools

19. We have considered the impact the Free School may have on all schools within a 1.5 mile radius of the proposed Free School. Below is a discussion of the likely impact on the nearest primary schools to the proposed site. The table below shows that opening the Free School will have a minimal impact on 17 schools and a moderate impact on three schools.

School name	Distance from Free School	Impact rating	Capacity	Pupils on roll	% of Y6 pupils attaining Level 4 in English and maths in 2011 ¹
Schools where the impact has been assessed as being minimal					
Aboyne Lodge Junior Mixed and Infant School	0.13 miles	Minimal	210	282	83
Maple Primary School	0.26 miles	Minimal	210	245	97
The Abbey Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, St Albans	0.47 miles	Minimal	210	211	97
St Peter's School	0.5 miles	Minimal	210	270	89
Bernards Heath infant School	0.7 miles	Minimal	240	315	N/A
St Alban and St Stephen Roman Catholic Infant and Nursery School	0.72 miles	Minimal	180	233	N/A
Garden Fields Junior Mixed and Infant School	0.75 miles	Minimal	420	413	79
Saint Alban and St Stephen Catholic Junior School	0.76 miles	Minimal	236	238	78
Bernards Heath Junior School	0.86 miles	Minimal	240	209	90
Fleetville Junior School	0.96 miles	Minimal	360	350	80
Fleetville Infant and Nursery School	1.06 miles	Minimal	270	351	N/A
Prae Wood Primary School	1.1 miles	Minimal	210	217	78
St Adrian Roman Catholic Primary School	1.13 miles	Minimal	210	244	N/A
Cunningham Hill Junior School	1.14 miles	Minimal	240	236	97
Cunningham Hill Infant School	1.14 miles	Minimal	180	210	N/A
Mandeville Primary School	1.15 miles	Minimal	270	276	54
Camp Primary and Nursery School	1.27 miles	Minimal	210	251	79

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

Schools where the impact has been assessed as being moderate					
St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, St Albans	0.81 miles	Moderate	149	141	71
Margaret Wix Primary School	1.23 miles	Moderate	248	180	86
Windermere Primary School	1.39 miles	Moderate	210	170	66

Schools where the impact is moderate

21. The impact of the Free School on the three schools below has been assessed as moderate, based on the fact that they all have surplus places in a Local Authority which has an overall deficit of places.

(a) St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

22. St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is 0.81 miles from proposed site. It has capacity for 149 pupils, around 22 per year group. There was a surplus capacity in this school of around 4% in 2010/11. However, it was oversubscribed for entry in 2011/12 with 58 preferences for 22 places. The school was rated as satisfactory by Ofsted in its last inspection in 2010.

23. The school has average attainment at Key Stage 2, with 71% of pupils achieving the expected level in English and maths in 2011 – below the national average of 74%.

24. The school is located less than a mile from the proposed Free School, but is rated only as satisfactory by Ofsted, so parents may be attracted to an alternative. Given the school was oversubscribed for entry in 2011/12 it should still be able to fill its places even if it lost some potential pupils to the new Free School. Additionally it is a faith school, so some parents wanting to send their children to this school may not be interested in the Free School that does not share the same faith ethos. As a result, the opening of the Free School should not affect the long term financial viability of the school. The impact of the opening of the Free School has therefore been assessed as moderate.

(b) Margaret Wix Primary School

25. Margaret Wix is a Community Primary School that is 1.23 miles from proposed site. The school has capacity for 240 pupils, around 30 pupils per year group and had a relatively large surplus capacity of around 36% in 2010/11. It was significantly undersubscribed for entry in 2011/12 which was in part due to in the increase in their PAN which is part of HCC's strategy to meet the shortage of primary places. The school was rated as good by Ofsted in its last inspection in 2011.

26. This is an improving school which achieved above average attainment at Key Stage 2 in 2011 (86%) This is significantly higher than the previous year's attainment where 57% of pupils achieved the expected level in English and Maths. Given the marked improvement in performance, the school is arguably likely to be more attractive to parents going forward.

27. Nevertheless, the opening of the Free School could further exacerbate the existing

surplus issue in this school. However, the school is located 1.23 miles from the Free School, beyond the average distance travelled in Hertfordshire (0.8 miles) so we would not expect the school to lose a significant number of potential pupils. We would therefore not expect the opening of the Free School to affect the long term financial viability of the school. Additionally, any loss of pupils to the new Free School may be mitigated by the increased demand for primary places in the area over the next few years, indeed the PAN of this school has been increased for this very reason. The impact of the opening of the Free School has therefore been assessed as moderate.

(c) Windermere Primary School

28. Windermere Primary School is a Community School and is 1.39 miles from proposed site. The school has capacity for 210 pupils (around 30 pupils per year group) and had a relatively large surplus of around 21% in 2010/11. It was oversubscribed for entry in 2011/12 with 54 applications for 30 places.

The school was rated as satisfactory by Ofsted in its last inspection in 2008.

29. The school has below average attainment at Key Stage 2, with 66% of pupils achieving the expected level in English and Maths in 2011 compared with 74% nationally. The school was rated only as satisfactory by Ofsted in its last inspection in 2008 and has attainment well below the national level, so parents may be attracted to an alternative. However, the school is located beyond the average distance travelled in Hertfordshire (0.8 miles) so we would not expect the school to lose a significant number of potential pupils.

30. Even if it does lose some potential pupils to the new Free School, it was oversubscribed for entry in 2011/12 so should still be able to fill its places. Additionally, any loss of pupils to the new Free School may be mitigated by the increased demand for primary places over the next few years. The impact of the Free School on Windermere Primary School has therefore been assessed as moderate.

Other Schools where the impact is minimal

31. Of the 17 other schools considered, all have been assessed as being minimally affected by the opening of the Free School. All but three currently have more pupils on their roll than their capacity, thus highlighting the basic need for primary school places in the St Albans area. All are unlikely to lose a significant number of pupils to the Free School. Four of the 17 schools are also faith schools so are unlikely to lose pupils to the non-faith Free School. All of these schools have above national average attainment at Key Stage 2 in English and Maths in 2011 (with attainment ranging from 78% to 97%).

32. The exception is Mandeville Primary School which has below average Key Stage 2 attainment, with only 54% of pupils achieving the expected levels at Key Stage 2 in Maths and English in 2011. The school has a large proportion of children for whom English is not a first language (53.6%). However, the school was rated as 'outstanding' the last time it was inspected by Ofsted in 2009. An interim assessment was carried out in 2011 and indicated that performance had been sustained.

33. Mandeville Primary is also outside of the average distance travelled to school in the area. Officials are of the view that it is unlikely to lose many pupils to the Free School. Additionally, any loss of pupils to the new Free School may be mitigated by the increased

demand for primary places over the next few years. The impact for Mandeville Primary has, therefore, assessed as minimal.

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

34. The Alban City School will be a school admitting children of primary age. It will begin with an intake of 2 reception classes and will build up over subsequent years admitting two new Reception classes (60 pupils) each year. It will have no specialist SEN provision but will work to accommodate the needs of pupils where the school is named in their statement of SEN. As such, it is unlikely to have any direct impact on local secondary schools, Special Schools, alternative provision and even less likely to impact post-16 and FE institutions.

35. The introduction of a new primary school may, however, have an indirect impact on local secondary schools in terms of the types of primary feeder schools in the area for local secondary schools. HCC have already considered the increasing demand in the area for secondary places which the rising population in the area will create.

36. After a time-lag, rising rolls in primary schools translate to rising rolls in secondary school. HCC's projections show 2014/15 as the start of a likely long period of sustained growth, but because of the greater degree of predictability of secondary age pupil numbers five or more years in advance, the planning of expansions to meet demand is a more certain process. For these reasons the impact on secondary schools and FE institutions is assessed as being negligible.

Conclusion

37. The impact on the majority of primary schools should be minimal as there is a significant deficit of primary school places in the area and any impact will be spread across a large number of schools. Many of these schools are significantly oversubscribed so even if they did lose pupils to the Free School, they should still be able to fill most or all of their places. It should also be noted that as the school wishes to open with only a 2 form reception intake, while some schools may experience a moderate impact their long-term viability would not be affected.

39. Additionally, the primary population is set to increase over the next few years in the district by 10% so any loss of pupils to the Free School should also be mitigated by the increased demand in the area. The LA is fully supportive of the school for these reasons and plans to use the proposed school to help it manage this increase.