



Aspire & Achieve Together

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Principal: Mrs J. Diaz BSc (Hons) NPQH

Dear Parent/Carer

7th November 2016

I am sure you will remember that last year we entered into a consultation with you and other stakeholders regarding the possibility of the school becoming co-educational from September 2017. Even if your child was not a student of the school at that time, I am sure you will have known about it. You will also be aware that the application was turned down.

This was a disappointing result for the school directors, governors and staff as we sincerely believed we were doing the right thing to support the interests of both students and the local community. For that reason, the governors have decided to enter into another public consultation this year regarding the possibility of becoming co-educational from **September 2018**.

The reasons for doing this are:

1. At the moment, parents of children deemed selective who live in this part of Medway can only 'choose' a single sex grammar school as there is currently no co-educational option. That is unfair and does not provide full parental choice, particularly as this school has substantially improved its results for three consecutive years whilst not losing its "traditional" warm community feel. Therefore, why should Holcombe's good and improving provision be reserved solely for the boys of Medway?
2. We have the capacity to provide enough places for every boy and girl who wants one.
3. There is substantial research which shows that students who are educated in a co-educational school achieve well academically.
4. There is substantial research which shows that students who attend a co-educational school go on to experience happier and better balanced lives.
5. An increasing number of schools nationally are seeing the advantages of the Thinking School strategies we employ here and are implementing them. This includes a number of Medway primary schools. By opening our doors to girls we provide female students at those primary schools with another Thinking School secondary option. (Please note that the two best grammar schools for GCSE 2016, according to DFE performance tables October 2016, were the two 'Thinking Schools', namely the Rochester Grammar School and Holcombe.)

The proposal therefore is that

- **There is a change of gender composition and consequential changes to admission arrangements from September 2018**

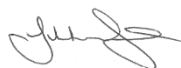
Please note that governors have done no more than decide to enter into consultation with you to gather your views and opinions, and their decision on whether or not to proceed with the application will depend on your feedback.

I therefore strongly urge you to read the attached Proposal document and then return the Response Form with your comments, concerns, questions etc. You are also warmly invited to attend the consultation/drop-in events which are taking place as follows:

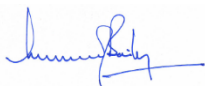
10/11/16	Parental/public consultation meeting	18:30 – 20:00 Holcombe Grammar School Hall
17/11/16	Parental 'drop-in' session	14:00 – 16:00 Principal's office
01/12/16	Parental/public consultation meeting	18:30 – 19:30 Holcombe Grammar School Hall

We look forward to engaging with you in this consultation process. I urge you to please send in your response whether you agree or disagree.

Yours sincerely



Ms J Diaz
Principal



Mr M Bailey
Chair of Governors



Mr S Gardner
CEO



Student Name: _____

Number of people attending: _____

I would like to attend the following public/parent consultation event:

Date	Event	Please tick
10/11/16	Parental/public consultation meeting – 6:30pm-8:00pm Holcombe Grammar School Hall	
17/11/16	Parental drop-in session – 2:00pm-4:00pm Principal's office	
1/12/16	Parental/Public consultation meeting – 6:30pm-7:30pm Holcombe Grammar School Hall	

Please return to the School Office

November 7, 2016

Consultation on the proposal to change Holcombe Grammar School from a single sex school to a co-educational mixed school.

Dear Parent/Carer, Staff Member and other interested persons:

Following a recent meeting of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust Board of Directors which is responsible for running Holcombe Grammar School, and after due consideration of the options, including maintaining the school as a single sex boys school, it has been agreed by the Directors that a consultation be undertaken to consider the proposal to change the status of the school from a single sex boys' school to a co-educational mixed school (co-ed), and to phase in the first co-educational cohort in Year 7 from September 2018 subject to approval from the Secretary of State for Education.

The proposed changes are:

- Change of gender composition and the consequential changes to admission arrangements
- Change in admissions arrangements to allow a mixed cohort for Year 7 from September 2018

You may recall that we ran a consultation last year on a similar proposal, and it was after that, and the support for the proposal, especially from those who wanted the choice of sending their sons and daughters to a co-ed grammar school in the local area, that the Trust applied for the school to become co-educational. Unfortunately the Secretary of State for Education decided to decline our application on that occasion.

Having carefully considered the position again, we believe that it remains the case that Holcombe Grammar School becoming co-ed would serve the needs of all students in the local area, and be in their best interests, and that admitting girls to the school remains an exciting proposition that would be of real benefit to young people in our community. The number of places available for boys is currently under-subscribed, but as the secondary-age population is expected to grow, we will be putting in place strict provision to ensure that the potential number of selective places for boys is not any way reduced, and we would work with other local schools to ensure there is no negative impact on them.

We therefore hope that this time we will be able to allay the previous concerns of the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State is also supportive of the Prime Minister's support for the expansion of grammar schools.

The Proposal

The proposal is to change the status of the school from a single sex boys' grammar school to a co-educational grammar school.

If, following consultation, the Directors obtain approval to convert to a co-educational school, the school will need to revise the determined admissions arrangements for 2018. This has a set time-frame and therefore we propose to instigate a simultaneous review of the admission arrangements for the school. This has the advantage that both proposals can be read at the same time and therefore this will improve the consultation process. Should the school be unable to convert to a co-educational school, the admissions consultation would no longer be necessary.

It is proposed that the admissions policy will be in line with the current primary and secondary policies but will also acknowledge that the school is part of a multi-academy trust. The Medway Council website has this under current admissions to secondary schools arrangements.

The earliest the first co-educational cohort could enter Year 7 would be from **September 2018**. Existing year groups of boys would continue to receive their education at the school until they leave at the age of 18.

Background – Opportunity for Change

This opportunity for change and a re-organisation of the school arises from:

- **The desire to offer a new educational choice for parents** of students deemed selective in the local area who are presently only able to choose between single-sex grammar schools.
- **The need to provide flexible additional capacity within the secondary grammar sector** to meet the growing local population over the next five years. A co-ed grammar school is much better placed to work with the Local Authority in meeting the demand for places from both boys and girls rather than a single sex school only able to meet the demand for places of one gender.
- **The evidenced positive impacts on achievement and wellbeing** by moving from a single sex school to a co-ed school.
- **A good time for the change.** Holcombe Grammar School is rated as a “Good” school by Ofsted; there is significant positive momentum at the school; the school has significant staffing with experience of co-ed and girls educational settings; and the school has the opportunity to invest in appropriate facilities to move to co-ed.
- **To fully utilise the expertise within both Holcombe Grammar School and the Thinking Schools Academy Trust** in the teaching of boys and girls.
- **Connection to all TSAT primaries.** The New Horizons Children’s Academy shares a site with Holcombe Grammar School and works in partnership sharing resources and expertise. It is appropriate that all students (boys and girls) are able to attend a grammar school they have worked with in the later years of their KS2, and not just boys. The other TSAT primaries also work within the family of TSAT schools, and parents have committed to the mission statement of TSAT. For those deemed selective and attending TSAT primaries, it would ensure that commitment would be recognised formally in the new admissions arrangements.

- **Connection to The Victory Academy.** The Victory Academy, 0.8 miles away, is a mixed High School which has been supported by the Thinking Schools Academy Trust and Holcombe Grammar School since April 2015, and became part of the Trust in September 2015. There are even greater opportunities for support and sharing of expertise and best practice between a mixed grammar school and a mixed high school rather than support from a single sex school.

Extending Parental Choice for Parents of Students Deemed Selective

This is an opportunity to provide local parents with a new and exciting educational option for their children.

Students in the local area are currently served by five accessible grammar schools, all rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted:

School	Ofsted (date)	Gender
Holcombe Grammar School	Good (2014)	Single sex boys' school with mixed sixth form
Chatham Grammar School for Girls	Good (2012)	Single sex girls' school with mixed sixth form
Fort Pitt Grammar School	Outstanding (2008/9)	Single sex girls' school with mixed sixth form
Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School	Outstanding (2007/8)	Single sex boys' school with mixed sixth form
The Rochester Grammar School	Outstanding (2007/8)	Single sex girls' school with mixed sixth form

There is one other grammar school in Rainham, a heavily over-subscribed mixed grammar school. However, this is not easily accessible by public transport from the local area and so is not currently an option for residents in the Chatham area.

Therefore there is reasonably only provision for single sex grammar school education for selective students within the local area. Within the same locality there is a mix of both single sex and co-ed high schools. Therefore, parents of students attending a high school have greater choice, as they are able to choose between a single sex or a co-educational environment than parents of students attending grammar school, who can only choose a single sex educational establishment.

The proposal to offer a mixed co-ed grammar school in the Chatham area will provide parents with additional choice when choosing the right school for their child. A single sex boys' school is not right for every boy and a single sex girls' school is not the right choice for every girl; parents should have the choice of a local co-ed grammar school option.

Baumeister (2008): "Many boys and girls do fine with co-ed schools. But some do better in same-sex schools. Society can benefit from choice and diversity. Let's offer both co-ed and same-sex schools."

Flexible capacity in the local area:

Demographic analysis indicates that the Medway area will need additional capacity in the coming years, even if currently it has a surplus of Secondary School Places. By becoming a mixed grammar school, Holcombe Grammar School is much better able to flexibly meet the future needs of the local population regardless of gender.

The details of the local population in summary are:

- The number of students on roll in Medway increases from 3140 in the current Year 7 to 3441 in current Year 1.
- In addition the birth rate indicates the number of students coming through the system will increase further reaching over 3800.
- The Local Authority expects considerable inward migration to the area will further increase the demand for school places across the system. Although the EU Referendum means Britain will be leaving the EU, and may therefore have greater control over immigration, it will take two years from the time that Article 50 is invoked before Britain leaves, and there is as yet no detail on what future immigration policy will be, and questions over whether inward migration will be reduced.

As a mixed grammar school the school will be able to meet the needs of population growth offering places to boys and girls.

The Trust Directors/Governors are committed to ensuring that there will be no detriment to the number of places offered to boys as a co-educational Grammar school and would also consider allowing an additional form of entry/variation to admit above PAN to assist meeting the demand for places if this were necessary through the appropriate consultation process including early planning work in co-operation with the Local Authority. It should be noted that Holcombe Grammar School has already reduced its PAN to 120. If a new PAN for the co-educational selective school was set at 150 this would not represent an expansion of selective places in Medway.

Academic Impact of a Co-educational Option

There is much debate concerning the advantages and disadvantages of single sex education as opposed to coed education. What is clear is there is no definitive “correct” universally accepted answer. What is important is that parents have choice.

Proponents of single sex education often highlight the apparent success of single sex schools, especially in the UK where highly selective independent girls schools tend to dominate league tables of student outcomes.

However, the case that boys and girls learn and achieve better when taught separately is far from conclusive: “Single-sex education does not educate girls and boys any better than co-ed schools”, according to research published by the American Psychological Association

analyzing 184 studies of more than 1.6 million students from around the world (2014, APA journal *Psychological Bulletin*).

There are currently 42 mixed selective grammar schools in the UK with six in Kent and Medway, but none in the Chatham area. In the 2016 performance tables published in October 2016 the mixed grammar schools in Kent and Medway performed as follows:

Kent and Medway Co-ed grammar schools 2016

School	% EN & MA	Progress 8	Attainment 8
School 1	99%	0.24	66.4
School 2	96%	0.27	64.4
School 3	99%	-	66.3
School 4	100%	0.04	64.4
School 5	99%	0.07	64.2
School 6	98%	0.10	65.8

The Medway single sex grammar schools 2016 data for comparison:

School	% EN & MA	Progress 8	Attainment 8
School 1	100%	0.68	70.8
School 2	96%	0.28	64.8
School 3	88%	0.19	63.3
School 4	100%	0.16	66.1
<i>School 5</i>	96%	0.03	62.3

All data taken from the Department for Education performance tables website

The percentage EN/MA shows the proportion of students achieving at least grade C in both English and mathematics at the end of Year 11.

The Progress 8 figures allow comparison between students with the same academic starting points nationally. A score of 0 represents that the 'expected' progress has been made with anything above that demonstrating that the students have, on average, achieved better than expected according to their starting points. The Attainment 8 score shows the average GCSE grade achieved with a score of 50 meaning average grade C, 60 meaning average grade B and so on.

The variations between the scores of students in single-sex and mixed schools are mainly small but inconsistent which would appear to confirm the hypothesis that there is no "correct" answer to the co-ed vs single sex education debate. Both co-ed grammar schools and single sex grammar schools perform well in national league tables for both attainment and progress.

A decision to move to co-ed would, therefore, not have any negative academic impact on students attending grammar school in Medway. Indeed it could be argued that by providing

students and parents with an alternative choice, performance should rise as students study in their preferred environment rather than in an enforced single sex learning environment.

Non-academic Impact of Moving to Co-ed

Sullivan, Joshi & Leonard (2011) found:

- Students, especially boys, prefer attending a co-ed school.
- When men were assessed for how they felt at age 42 from the private and grammar sectors, Malaise scores were higher if they had been to single-sex schools.

“There appears to be a general consensus that male and female students in coeducational settings are more positive about their schools and about the developmental aspects of their schooling. (Feather 1974; Schneider and Coutts 1982; Schneider, Coutts, and Starr 1988; Stables 1990). For example, Dale (1969, 1971, 1974) found that both boys and girls were more satisfied with coeducation, seeing it as a more “natural” environment and feeling it helped their relationships with the opposite sex. Similarly, Hannan and Shortall (1991) found that male and female ex-students of coeducational schools in Ireland were more positive about the personal and social development aspects of their schooling.” E Smyth (2010)

Therefore, this further supports the case that parents should be allowed to choose the right school for their individual child.

The Right Time

When considering moving from a single educational environment, there is always the concern that the gender being introduced to the school will be at a disadvantage. However, due to the circumstances at Holcombe Grammar School, this is not the case:

- A large proportion of the staff have experience of teaching in a co-ed or girls’ setting as well as at a single sex boys’ school, and so will have the necessary expertise and skills to effectively teach and develop girls in the school.
- The school has significant experience of incorporating and educating girls in the sixth form.
- The school has recently acquired new PE facilities with built-in existing provision for girls – PE education, changing rooms, toilets etc.
- The school is expanding into a New Build which will include further expansion of the provision of facilities for girls at the school.

Expertise in the Teaching of Boys and Girls

The Trust has significant expertise in all educational settings, mixed, co-ed, Grammar, High School and Comprehensive. Therefore, we are in a good position to support the school during this transition.

The current Principal, Ms. Diaz, has taught at a number of mixed schools prior to joining Holcombe.

Mr. Bassan, an Executive Principal within the Trust, taught at a mixed school before joining The Rochester Grammar School and is currently overseeing the conversion of Portsmouth Academy for Girls into a mixed school.

The CEO of the Trust, Mr. Gardner, has four years' headship experience at an Outstanding Girls' Grammar School, led Chatham Grammar School for Boys from "Special Measures" to "Good" in 12 months and was Executive Principal at a mixed High School – The Victory – which saw its results improve dramatically from summer 2014 to summer 2016.

There is clear capacity and expertise to deliver a highly effective mixed grammar school provision within both the school and the Trust.

School Improvement Benefits: Support for The Victory Academy

Holcombe Grammar School, as part of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, is currently supporting The Victory Academy's improvement, reflected in the provisional GCSE results, and the schools share the same Executive Principal. The support for The Victory Academy, a mixed school, would be enhanced if Holcombe Grammar School developed expertise in a mixed teaching and learning environment.

Equality of Access for Students Deemed Selective from TSAT Academies

New Horizons pupils and, increasingly, pupils from other local TSAT primaries will be using the facilities of the co-sited Holcombe Grammar School during KS2. The sharing of facilities and teachers is planned for PE, Science and Mathematics so that students can experience the highest quality specialist resources and teaching.

The transition from Year 6 to Year 7 is hugely important. There is a shared vision and ethos of Thinking Schools to improve the transition from Primary to Secondary and SEN support. But currently only the boys attending New Horizons who are deemed selective have the opportunity to continue their education on a site with staff they are already familiar and comfortable with.

FAQs:

Q. Why are you suggesting the school moves from being a single sex boys' school with a mixed sixth form to a co-ed school?

We believe this proposal is in the best interests of the whole community:

Students:

- Achieve academically as well in co-educational as in single sex schools.

- Boys, and girls, often prefer attending mixed schools and should have that option, currently unavailable in the local area on a selective basis.
- Students have enhanced life outcomes.
- Benefit from a campus approach to the school experience.

Parents /Carers:

- Have the choice of choosing the right type of school for their child – co-ed or single sex.
- Co-ed schools are popular with parents, and it is right that parents have that choice, currently unavailable to them in the local area.
- The school will prioritise sibling links in its over-admissions criteria to support parents who wish to send their children to the same school.

Local Authority:

- As the demand for secondary school places for both sexes rises over the coming years, a mixed grammar school is best able to meet the growing needs for places.

Local High Schools:

- As entry to the school reaches the PAN, there will be much greater stability in student places across the local area.

Q. How will you meet the needs of girls?

Facilities:

- The school already has a co-ed sixth form so girls' toilets for Sixth Form students are already in place
- The school has converted the unused toilet area in the A block to new girls' toilets.
- In the refurbishment of the existing buildings we plan to put in new female toilets.
- The newly acquired School gym already has female changing and toilet facilities.

Curriculum:

- The school intends to review the curriculum offer to ensure all students have an appropriate curriculum – this includes PE provision.
- The Trust has significant curriculum experiences in meeting the needs of both boys and girls. Indeed, comparing the current curriculum at Holcombe Grammar School with that of local girls' grammar schools it is clear that provision is linked more closely to ability than gender.

Pastoral Care:

- The school will continue to use a House System to provide pastoral care, each House has an assigned Head of House. Currently, three out of four of the Heads of House are female.
- All Heads of House will receive training in meeting the pastoral needs of all children especially girls.
- The school already meets the pastoral needs of girls in the Sixth Form.

Protected introduction:

- Female students will be assigned to form groups in groups to ensure they feel they have female friendship groups and we already have a number of female staff that work within the pastoral and SEN team. Therefore, any female pupil who did have SEN would have access to appropriate educational as well as emotional and social support.
- We will ensure there are appropriate opportunities for girls to work with pupils from The Rochester Grammar School. There will be curriculum and extra-curriculum opportunities. In this way they will feel part of a wider “co-educational family” of schools.

Q. Will the proposed change mean that the council may not be able to meet the demand for grammar school places for boys?

No, we do not believe that will be the case.

Firstly, the School has been consistently under-subscribed for several years and the numbers of applications have been consistently lower than Medway forecasts.

Entry point	Council forecast	Actual	Difference
Sept 2014	106	81	-25
Sept 2015	106	86	-20
Sept 2016	108	84	-24

The council forecasts that Holcombe will be allocated 115 students in 2017 and 116 in 2018. Based on experience, these figures are more likely to be between 90 and 100. As it is likely that in the first few years the proportion of girls entering Year 7 is likely to be between 15% and 20% this means that sufficient places will be available.

Secondly, the school is committed to admitting over its PAN if required, and in the short term is able to accommodate up to 180 students to meet the need for places if required. Having taken over a large number of the ‘old’ BORA buildings and having embarked on a project of major renovation and improvement, Holcombe will have the space to do so. This expansion is not part of the proposed plan, but should the need arise to accommodate greater numbers of students, Holcombe will ensure that there is sufficient provision for all boys and girls in the authority requiring places.

Providing enough places for Boys:

1. The school is committed to admitting over PAN in 2018/19 up from 120 to 180 to meet the need for places for Boys if necessary.
2. If necessary, and in partnership with the Local Authority, the school is prepared to consult on raising its PAN to 180 in the future.
3. As schools move from single-sex provision to co-ed the proportion of Girls in the school usually rises over time from a smaller number proportion e.g. 15%-25% rising to around 40% after a period of several years as the school establishes the co-ed provision at the school. This is a much more realistic scenario and provides ample places for Boys. Please see figures below.
4. Using the Council's own projections for student numbers to schools a 60:40 ratio between Boys and Girls admissions to Holcombe Grammar School still allows for enough Boys places to meet the forecasted need.

Data using Council's own forecast figures for actual student intake:

The Council's own forecast figures state that the other local Boys Grammar School will take significant numbers above PAN:

	2017 /2018	2018 /2019
Other local Boys Grammar School	197	198

For efficiency reasons the school will take a whole extra form rather than half an extra form – this is possible because the school is heavily over-subscribed. This means the other local Grammar School will have an intake of 205-210.

When this data is included a ratio of 60:40 can be accommodated:

	Total number students at CGSB	Total number of Boys at CGSB	Total number of Girls at CGSB	2018 /2019
No change (120)	120	120	0	+16
CGSB (180) 85/15 Boys/Girls	180	153	27	+45
CGSB (180) 80/20 Boys/Girls	180	144	36	+36
CGSB (180) 75/25 Boys/Girls	180	135	45	+27
CGSB (180) 70/30 Boys/Girls	180	126	54	+18
CGSB (180) 65/35 Boys/Girls	180	117	63	+9
CGSB (180) 60/40 Boys/Girls	180	113	67	0

Therefore, the council's own figures suggest that by agreeing to take over-PAN as demand necessitates and the additional provision at the other Boys Grammar School the Council has already

identified, the Council is able to meet the demand for places for Boys deemed selective in the local area.

Q. Would a move to being a co-ed school reduce choice for parents of boys as girls would have more choices of schools?

No, this would have the effect of increasing choice as currently students and parents in this part of Medway can only, realistically, choose a single sex Grammar School to attend. This change will mean that students and parents will be able to choose between a single sex school and a co-ed school – a choice they do not currently have.

Equity:

A move to a co-ed school does not change the number of schools that boys deemed selective can apply for. Yes, it will increase choice for girls but this is not to the detriment of choice for Boys.

Q. What will the impact be on local girls' schools?

1. Non-selective schools:

As only students deemed selective could gain a Grammar School place we cannot see how a change to becoming a Co-Ed Grammar Schools would impact on a non-selective school as it would not change the proportion of students being deemed selective.

2. Selective schools:

We initially made contact with Chatham Grammar School for Girls in December 2014 to discuss possible proposals for closer collaboration between the two schools. The Chair of Governors of Chatham Grammar School for Girls, Dr C Johnson, confirmed in April 2015 that after consideration "The clear outcome for our governing body was an emphasis on retaining the current status of Chatham grammar School for Girls as a single-sex grammar school."

Chatham Grammar School for Girls appears to have since made its own positive decision regarding its future and future admissions even though the Trust has continued to be open to possible collaboration with them.

Q. Will girls only be allowed into Year 7 in 2018?

We would be concerned about meeting the needs of an individual or small group of female students in year groups that are currently all male.

However, we would consider any application to other Year groups on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that this was a fully informed decision by the student and parents and allow this to happen only where it was clearly in the student's best interest, and if it out-weighed the

difficulty of being a single female student, or part of a very small group of female students, in an historically male year group.

Q. How will this change impact on the ethos of the school?

We do not intend to change the ethos and mission of the school. “Aspire & Achieve, Together” will remain the core values of the school and we have committed to our existing parents that the single sex education and ethos that they opted for will be maintained in their year groups.

The recent developments such as House Nights and the school’s reward system will remain in place and be expanded to ensure that both gender’s needs are met.

The school is committed to retaining the engagement exercises with the school community through such events as the termly Parent Council and Student Forum.

The school is committed to becoming a Thinking School (Exeter University) and continuing to develop a cognitive approach to Teaching & Learning.

Q. Why are you proposing this now?

The school has significant positive forward momentum at the moment:

- Ofsted moved the school out of Special Measures and designated the school as “Good” in September 2014.
- The school achieved its best GCSE and A Level results in the summer of 2014, 2015 and 2016 since joining the Thinking Schools Academy Trust.
- The school has an experienced Principal who is able to effectively implement the proposed change and with significant experience in leading both boys and girls schools.
- The school is part of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust and can call on a wide range of expertise across the network to support the school through this transition.
- The school needs to be ready to provide pupils from New Horizons Children’s Academy with the opportunity of remaining on the Holcombe Campus at the end of Year 6.
- The school needs to be ready to meet the local needs of an expanding school population.

Q. How will this affect students currently in the school?

The current year groups are all male in Years 7-11 and co-ed in the sixth form.

For those in Years 7-11 there will be very little or no effect on their school experience. The expectation is that the co-educational transition will be from Year 7 2018 with very limited impact on other year groups.

Q. How will this affect Sport and Extra-Curricular opportunities?

As part of the curriculum review we will assess the sporting opportunities for girls. The school currently has one female PE teacher. Further, the new sports facilities (state of the art gym and sports hall will equally suit the needs of girls and boys).

The school is constantly reviewing extracurricular provision to ensure students have a wide variety of opportunities. This Academic Year we have launched: the debating society, the creative writing society; the Horse & Water society; an American Football club; the Chatham Town Football Academy and an air rifle club. This is in addition to all the extracurricular provision we were already engaged in.

Q. Will there be a change in logo / uniform?

The new boys' uniform which displays the iconic Holcombe House on the uniform badge has already been shared with parents and will be the uniform for new male students joining the school from September 2017.

A new girls' uniform would be similar in tone and complement the new boys' uniform.

Q. What will the over-subscription criteria be for the school?

A separate admissions consultation document with the new proposed determined arrangements will be provided as part of the consultation process.

Q. What will the balance between girls and boys be in a Year group?

We cannot select by gender to artificially determine the proportion of boys to girls.

We anticipate that the balance between boys and girls will evolve.

Initially we expect there to be a higher proportion of boys than girls in a year group, however, over time we anticipate that the proportion of boys and girls will become much more even.

It should be noted that the experience of other mixed grammar schools in Kent and Medway is that they have a slightly higher proportion of boys than girls.

Q. Is this proposal a Local Governing Body decision?

Yes, the Thinking Schools Academy Trust board of directors delegated the decision making on the consultation regarding a move to co-educational to the relevant Governing Body.

The relevant Governing Body has met to discuss the proposal and voted unanimously to engage in the consultation process regarding the proposed change in admissions procedures.

Q. What will happen if the school decides not to proceed with the proposal to go co-ed?

In this case the school will continue as a single sex grammar school for boys.

The school has already conducted the necessary financial planning over the next five years to ensure that if the school does remain a single sex school it will be sustainable. This will require some fundamental decisions on the curriculum offered to recognise that schools pupil numbers are likely to remain lower than those should the school become co-educational. Links with other Trust schools are likely to become a more significant part of the structural changes required to maintain sustainability.

What happens next?

No decision, other than to consult, has been made at this stage.

We are consulting widely from 7th November 2016 to 3rd January 2017 in order to hear and collect your views. As well as complying with DfE advice and admissions law on consultation timescales, we are keen to give all interested parties as much time as possible to give us their views. The School and Trust Governing Bodies will then assess these views and a number of other factors and decide whether to proceed to submit a formal business case (including the proposed new admissions arrangements) to the Secretary of State for Education.

TSAT would also be required to enter into updated agreements with the Secretary of State to reflect the co-educational status of the academy in the event that the application proceeds and receives the Secretary of State's approval.

Key dates in the consultation and decision making process:

07/11/16	Begin consultation with all appropriate stakeholders including Holcombe parents and students.
04/11/16 & 07/11/16	Holcombe students' drop in surgery available to give feedback / ask questions at lunch times.
10/11/16	Parental/public consultation meeting – 6:30pm-8pm
17/11/16	Holcombe Parental/Carer "drop in " session – 2:00pm-4:00pm
01/12/16	Parental/Public consultation meeting – 6:30pm-7:30pm
03/01/2017	Consultation ends
03/1/2017	Deadline for return of "comments" form
January 2017	Responses to consultation published
January 2017	Academy Trust consider the responses to the consultation and whether to submit a formal business case and proposed admissions arrangements to the EFA for approval by the Secretary of State.

If the consultation process results in a decision to apply for co-educational status the following timeline will apply:

January, 2017	Business case submitted to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and proposed admissions arrangements submitted to EFA covering;
February, 2017	Business case considered by RSC and EFA.
March 2017 – August 2017	Decision made by Secretary of State

If the application is successful:

1 September – 31 October, 2017	Applications for secondary school places for September 2018 open.
1 September, 2018	1 st co-educational Y7 cohort.

How you can have your say?

Please come along and ask us any questions you may have about what this means for the school and the community at any of the consultation meetings or drop-ins.

If you prefer, you can telephone the school on 01634 830083, or email the information to Mrs W Tanner at wendy.tanner@cgsb.co.uk

There is also a consultation form attached to this letter.

Signed



Peter Martin

Chairman
The Thinking Schools Academy Trust



Michael Bailey

Chairman
Holcombe Grammar School
Local Governing Body

**ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR:
HOLCOMBE GRAMMAR SCHOOL– September 2018
Consultation Response Form**

School Name/Name of Body (if applicable)	
Your Name:	
Your Designation: (e.g. Parent/Headteacher etc)	

Consultation period – 7th November 2016 to 3rd January 2017

Responses must be received before 3rd January, 2017

ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR HOLCOMBE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

**Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the proposed admission
arrangements**

(Please circle your response)

AGREE

DISAGREE

NO PREFERENCE

General comments:

Please return this form to:

CONSULTATION RESPONSES
Holcombe Grammar School
Holcombe
Maidstone Road
Chatham ME4 6JB



2018/19 Admissions Cover Sheet

School Name	Holcombe Grammar School (formerly Chatham Grammar School for Boys)
Address	Holcombe Maidstone Road Chatham Kent ME4 6JB
Telephone number	01634 830083
Status	Academy

Have you any comments to make about the proposed admission arrangements for 2018/19?

YES/NO

If Yes, please write your comments below:

.....

.....

Signed

On behalf of (school name)

Closing date for return: 3rd January 2017

*Please return to Mrs W Tanner, Holcombe Grammar School, Maidstone Road, Chatham,
Kent ME4 6JB*



Holcombe Grammar School Admissions Policy 2018/19

Year 7 Admissions Arrangements

The arrangements for coordinated admissions in Medway will be set out in detail in the Medway LA booklet for parents 'Admission to Secondary School', a copy of which will be available with the Principal or from the admissions team at the Education Office. The main points are summarised below:

- Parents complete the Medway common application form (CAF) in accordance with the Medway Co-ordinated Admission Scheme.
- The Local Authority will administer the test (Kent or Medway) on behalf of the governors of Holcombe Grammar School.
- The Local Authority will then act as clearing house for the administration of pupils' preferences.
- Following the tests, selective and non-selective decisions are posted to parents by the Local Authority. Offers and refusals of places will be posted to parents by the Local Authority, on behalf of the school.
- The school will also post to parents decisions of the governors on admission and details of the right of appeal against the governors' decision.

The school's published admission number is 120.

Where the Academy is named on a student's Statement of Special Educational Needs or Statutory Education, Health and Care Plan, and the student has fulfilled the entry requirements, the student will be admitted by the Academy.

If the number of applications for admission to the Academy is greater than the Published Admissions Number (PAN) of 120, places will be allocated in the following priority order:

- (a) Looked After Children and all children who have been previously looked after, but following being looked after became subject to an adoption order, child arrangement order or special guardianship order**. ¹
- (b) Children who, at the time of the admission, have a sibling who attends the Academy or any other TSAT secondary academy in Medway, i.e. The Rochester Grammar School and The Victory Academy. For this purpose, "sibling" means a

¹ in the care of the Local Authority or provided with accommodation by the authority for a continuous period of more than 24 hours

whole, half or step-sister or brother, or an adopted child resident at the same address. The Academy will also include in this criterion children whose parents are married or cohabiting and live together within the same household. In the case of multiple births or siblings in the same year group, where there is only one place available in the Academy, the other child/children will be offered place above PAN.

- (c) Children who attend any Trust primary school.
- (d) Children of staff employed by the Trust: following the criteria above, priority will be given to the child of a person (1) who has been employed by the Academy for two or more years at the time the application was made and/or (2) where the person was employed by the Trust to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skills shortage.”.
- (e) Child’s health reasons. Written medical evidence from a General Practitioner or hospital consultant must be provided which demonstrates a specific health reason which requires the child to attend “Holcombe Grammar School”.
- (f) Children who live closest to the school. Distance will be based on the shortest distance from home to school, using the LA Geographical Information System. Should there be two or more identical distances requiring prioritisation, places will be allocated to both students over PAN.

If the school is over-subscribed from within any of the above categories then a system of random selection will be used to prioritise applications.

Waiting List

All parents who have been refused a place at the school will have the option to indicate their wish to remain on the waiting list.

Children will be held on the waiting list by order of the criteria in the Admissions Policy. No account can be taken of the length of time a pupil is on the list. A pupil's position can change on the list as new applicants join or other applicants come off the waiting list.

Medway Council will be responsible for holding a waiting list for parents who request their child’s name be added until 31 December.

Applications for admission outside the normal admissions round – in-year applications (all year groups).

Any application for admission to the academy which is outside the normal admissions round should be made direct to the school and the school will administer its own entrance testing arrangements and assessment for admission which will be age- related. No other selection process will be valid. * 11+ testing is only valid for entry to Year 7 within the co-ordinated scheme dates.

If more applications are received than there are places available, the oversubscription criteria in (a) to (f) above will apply.

However, within exceptional circumstances as set out in the Admissions Code of Practice, the Academy may refuse to admit a challenging child where there are places available on the grounds that admission would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources. Children with statements of special educational needs, where the Academy is named, will be offered a place over PAN. The Academy reserves the right to discuss this with relevant agencies.

Application for admission outside the normal age range

Any parent wishing to place a child in the school in a year group different to their chronological age should first contact the school to explain the situation and the rationale underpinning the decision. The school will, in accordance with the School Admissions Code, consider all such requests and will respond to the parent on whether such an application would be accepted. If an application was submitted, it would be processed in line with the admission arrangements and the relevant test and, if applicable, oversubscription criteria applied.

Post 16 Admission Arrangements

Specific criteria in relation to minimum entrance requirements for Year 12 based on GCSE grades or other measures of prior attainment will be published in our prospectus and on our website.

The Holcombe Grammar School will also publish academic entry requirements for each course available based upon GCSE grades or other measures of prior attainment. These criteria will be the same for internal and external transfers and will be published in its prospectus and on its website. Students failing to meet the grades for their preferred course option will be offered alternative courses if available. Students already on Holcombe Grammar School roll are entitled to transfer to Year 12 if they meet the published academic standards of entry.

Post 16 Oversubscription Criteria

If Year 12 is oversubscribed (PAN for Year 12 is 200) then, after the admission of students with Special Educational Needs who meet the entrance criteria and where the Holcombe Grammar School is named on the statement, the criteria will be applied in the order in which they are set out below:

- (a) Looked After Children and all children who have been previously looked after, but following being looked after became subject to an adoption order, child arrangement order or special guardianship order**.
- (b) Children who have attended any other TSAT secondary academy in Medway, i.e. The Victory Academy or The Rochester Grammar School.
- (c) Children who, at the time of the admission, have a sibling who attends the Academy or any other TSAT secondary academy in Medway, i.e. The Rochester Grammar School and The Victory Academy. For this purpose, "sibling" means a whole, half or step-sister or brother, or an adopted child resident at the same address. The Academy will also include in this criterion children whose parents are married or cohabiting and live together within the same household. In the

case of multiple births or siblings in the same year group, where there is only one place available in the Academy, the other child/children will be offered place above PAN.

- (d) Children of staff employed by the Trust: following the criteria above, priority will be given to the child of a person (1) who has been employed by the Academy for two or more years at the time the application was made and/or (2) where the person was employed by the Trust to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skills shortage.”
- (e) Child’s health reasons. Written medical evidence from a General Practitioner or hospital consultant must be provided which demonstrates a specific health reason which requires the child to attend “Holcombe Grammar School”.
- (f) Children who live closest to the school. Distance will be based on the shortest distance from home to school, using the LA Geographical Information System. Should there be two or more identical distances requiring prioritisation, places will be allocated to both students over PAN.

If the school is over-subscribed from within any of the above categories then a system of random selection will be used to prioritise applications.

Right of Appeal

Parents have the right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel. The Appeal Panel will be independent of the Academy. The arrangements for appeals will be in line with the Appeals Code. The determination of the Appeal panel will be made in accordance with the Code and the outcome of the appeal hearing will be binding on all parties.

Distance criterion

Where it is necessary to prioritise applications the criterion will be prioritised based on the shortest distance from the child’s home to school. Distances will be measured using the council’s Geographical Information System (GIS). Only distances measured by GIS will be taken into account for the purposes of the distance criterion.

Child's Home Address

A child’s home will be the address at which the child normally resides and which has been notified to the Academy and other relevant agencies as being the child’s normal place of residence. If a child resides between split parents for different parts of the week the parents must agree and nominate one of their addresses to be used for the application.