

Essex County Council
Cabinet, Leader & Chief Executive's Office
PO Box 11, County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1LX



Dr Philip Gibbs
phil@royalgenes.com

Date: 3 March 2010

Ref: SC/SN/lsg

Dear Dr Gibbs

Thank you for your e-mail.

The law requires that local authorities make arrangements for parents to express a minimum of three preferences when applying for secondary school places. In Essex, as you are aware, parents can apply for up to four secondary schools, in rank order.

The situation in London is somewhat unique when considering the national picture. Other similar shire authorities, like Essex, also provide for either 3 or 4 preferences to be expressed. In London, all of the London local authorities (and Thurrock) are part of a single co-ordinated Pan-London admissions scheme under which all of those authorities allow up to six preferences. This is in recognition of the very significant cross border movement across local authority boundaries in London, and the fact that in many areas, there will be perhaps up to six (or even more) secondary schools within a relatively short distance of each other.

The arrangements in Essex, allowing for up to four preferences to be expressed exceed the minimum legal requirement and have worked successfully now for several years and we do not believe that it is necessary to amend the number of preferences that can be expressed. In the past two admission rounds, approximately 97% of parents have actually been offered a place at one of their preferred schools. It is therefore the case that the overwhelming majority of parents in Essex get an offer of a place at a school of their preference. I am aware that in the case of your applications for secondary school places, a place was offered at one of your preferred schools for both of your children.

Increasing the number of preferences allowed does not necessarily mean that more parents will get a choice of school since that is dependent on other factors, such as the admission arrangements for the schools applied for and how realistic parents are when making their applications. It is true to say that parents who elect not to express a preference for their local school (which, of course, they have every right to do) do reduce their chances of being offered a preference and I understand that a number of parents in the Langdon Hills area do decide not to express a preference for the local school, The James Hornsby High.



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Olympic Games and Paralympics Games legacy

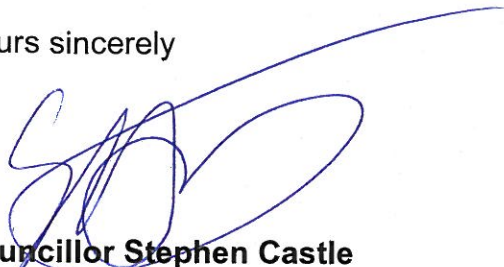
EssexWorks.

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I am aware that you have written to our Planning and Admissions team for some additional information and Shamsun Noor, the Planning and Admissions Manager will reply to you separately to address those queries.

I hope that this reply helps clarify the position.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'S. Castle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Councillor Stephen Castle
Cabinet Member for Education and the 2012 Games