

A letter from Headteachers in the East Hunsbury Area regarding the proposal for Wootton Free School.

May 2014

As Headteachers of schools in the East Hunsbury and Wootton area, we are writing this letter to express our concerns about the proposed free school at Wootton Park.

Whilst we recognise that there is a demand for more primary and secondary school places in Northampton town, currently the Hunsbury community is served well by its existing schools and there is capacity within these schools to extend and accommodate any further capacity that is required. Already, three schools are in the process of increasing their intake numbers and others have, and will, accommodate 'bulge' years as and when they occur. Therefore, we do not see that there is a requirement for an additional school in our locality.

Although a statement on the website says that 'Wootton Park will be a school created by the community for the community', we have not received any communication, or been approached as schools for discussions around the proposal which we find concerning. We would expect any potential new school provider in our area to engage with us to understand more about our educational context, needs and challenges.

We also have concerns about the reported practice witnessed outside our school gates where representatives of the Wootton Free School have been marketing their proposal and taking down contact details of our parents and using these as the numbers required for their proposal. This has taken place without permission or notification and we consider it unprincipled and not in keeping with the ethics of professional practice that we expect from schools.

Schools, teachers and parents in the Hunsbury area have worked incredibly hard since the reorganisation in 2008 to improve the way that schools run so that the quality of education is high across all our organisations and the community is now rightly proud to boast good and improving schools. All our schools work closely together, sharing common curriculum areas, staffing and resources. A new, unplanned school would be a disruptive element within this cluster and present a real risk of upsetting the balance of a currently successful schools' partnership.

In summary, there is not a need for an additional 4-18 school in this area and the current proposal is being marketed in a manner which is ethically questionable, with a potential outcome that risks damaging the progressive and collaborative work being carried out by existing schools in the area. We therefore call upon those decision makers to explore alternative options for school expansion in Northampton and engage in discussions with the local school communities around this.

Signed on behalf of the following schools

Renuka Poppat – Headteacher, Abbey Primary School

Clare Morrell – Headteacher, Abbeyfield School

Harry Portrey – Delapre Primary School

Rita Arundel – Headteacher, East Hunsbury Primary School

Gail Barnshaw – Headteacher, Hunsbury Park Primary School

Anne Kershaw – Queen Eleanor Primary School

Tom Rees – Headteacher, Simon de Senlis Primary School