

Appendix 10a

**Arrangements for admission to Fortismere Sixth Form**

**The following comments received are in favour of the proposed changes to access to courses in the Fortismere Sixth Form:**

1. 'I would like to register my support for the proposed admissions criteria for Haringey Schools for the 2008/09 year as set out in the consultation paper'.
2. 'As a parent at Fortismere School of one child in year 7 and one in year 12 I support Fortismere's plan to set the admissions boundary for sixth form at 5 Bs. I have two sons in sixth form at the moment, both of whom got mainly As and Bs at GCSE and even with those results one can see that the syllabus is very taxing, and is not suitable for students who just scrape Cs. As it was, all teachers both sons have had for sixth form have strongly recommended that they had at least a B in the subjects to be studied at A level. A levels are not courses for everyone and there are a wide variety of courses on the market which are more appropriate for young people who don't fulfil the criteria for A levels. Also it is expensive and not always practicable to offer as wide as possible variety of courses at one sixth form centre. It would be economically more advantageous for different sixth form centres to make different priorities to maximise use of budget.

I do see that the initiative for 5 Bs has to be part of a borough wide strategy for sixth form so that Fortismere offers a particular kind of sixth form experience and the sixth form college offers another. I think students should be encouraged to look as widely as possible at what's on offer for sixth form and maybe some sort of careers/sixth form "market" should be held at Fortismere to encourage parents and students to examine all possibilities.

Camden have a variety of sixth form experience on offer and I think Haringey is already doing a good job in making accessible a wide variety of sixth form experiences to the young people of Haringey. I think Fortismere should be allowed to specialise, just as Camden School for Girls does'.

3. 'I am a parent of two children at Fortismere and formerly of three children at the school. I completely support the headmaster in his professional judgement that

raising the entrance requirements to A\* - B for 5 subjects for entry to the 6th form will be of benefit to the school, its pupils and the community. The School Governors should have absolute rights to determine the admissions within the constraints of the criteria set down by central government.

I think that your intervention is unreasonable - consultation is not required - and you are indulging in bureaucratic waste with (party) political intent to undermine the rights, educational responsibilities and powers of the school to determine its own future and well-being of its pupils.'

4. 'I am writing to register my support for the proposed changes to admission arrangements for entry to the sixth form at Fortismere School. I believe that the proposals will benefit those children who do achieve the required grades to take A levels at Fortismere, will encourage pupils (like my children) to work a little harder but most importantly it will help those children who perhaps are not academically capable of A level courses and are therefore put under enormous stress by them. Many of these children will be able to find important career advice and a course more suitable for their abilities at the new Haringey Sixth Form college which will apparently have world class facilities. I feel very strongly that those students who apply for university and then fail to achieve the necessary grades at A level have their confidence knocked and this can sometime stay with them into their adult life. I have two nephews to whom this has happened and it is a great shame.'
5. 'I am writing to let you know that I fully support the proposed changes for entry requirements for the Sixth Form at Fortismere. I have two children currently at the school and my husband is also fully supportive of the changes. Provided that the school delivers a good standard of education, I believe that the level of entry should be increased as outlined'.
6. I am a parent of a Year 10 child at Fortismere so will be among the first to be affected by the proposed changes.

I am in favour of the proposal to change the entry requirements to the sixth form. A Level courses are very demanding so I believe it is common sense to have an entry requirement of a minimum of a minimum of 5 A\* - C grades at GCSE. It has always been the case at Fortismere that most subjects have required a minimum B grade at GCSE to study at A Level so this change is not great. I am aware it is already happening in many other schools throughout the country, even if it is not in Haringey.

Haringey Council have chosen to concentrate their financial resources in the east of the borough and are funding a new Sixth Form College which will have facilities and opportunities that are far superior to anything Fortismere has. Surely, in that case, it is logical for Fortismere to specialise in a smaller number of academic courses. Sadly it does not have the resources to offer a wide range of courses catering for all abilities.

**The following comments received are opposed to the changes to sixth form admission arrangements at Fortismere proposed by the governing body:**

1. 'My son is currently in year 10 at Fortismere and will be directly affected by the proposed admission change for entry into the 6<sup>th</sup> Form. I was dismayed to hear of the Governors' proposal to restrict entry into the 6<sup>th</sup> Form to A\* – B grades. My son is not a high achiever and this will be out of his reach, as it will for a large number of students. I feel this is putting league tables ahead of the principles of a good education at a good community school. This is one step away from an admissions policy for the rest of the school.

I chose Fortismere for my son because of its reputation as an inclusive community school with an aim to get the best out of all its pupils. As such I fully expected my son to be able to continue his education there until 18. He is already feeling that this will be unlikely if this proposal goes ahead and feels let down by the school, as do I. Continuity of education is important and the school and

Education Authority has a duty to provide what is best for the students. I feel that this will be the end of Fortismere as the good, inclusive school it has been.

I am very strongly against this proposal and hope it will be rejected.'

2. 'Thank you for consulting us on the proposed change to Fortismere sixth form entry requirements.

Our main concern is that children who have worked hard and wish to continue education at their school are deprived from doing so due to not obtaining 5A\* - B grades. If the grades are raised it would be sad to think that children might be not have the opportunity of studying A/S and A levels and a possible university education. It is our understanding that universities do not require 5A\* to B grades at GCSE and therefore somewhat over demanding of Fortismere to specify such at this age. It is also an easy way of raising sixth form intake and future grades rather than nurturing the long established students. We could understand that certain A A/S levels might have a prerequisite requirement of a particular GCSE with a grade B minimum requirement.'

We appreciate the opportunity to comment

3. ' I am writing to object to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to Fortismere Sixth Form.

The school is trying to make itself exclusive rather inclusive. Fortismere is our local community school. Our child is a student at this school with a SEN statement and we feel that the proposed changes to the admission policy will make it harder for her to get into the 6<sup>th</sup> form and is thereby discriminatory.

We believe that the way to improve the education offered by this school is not to increase admission standards to the 6<sup>th</sup> form but to improve teaching levels across the school so that all students have an equal opportunity to attain the highest results, have the right to attend their

local 6<sup>th</sup> form and to get to university to have a complete education and to achieve their full potential. '

4. ' As a parent and prospective parent at Fortismere School I am wanting to register my concern about the proposal by the school governors to restrict 6th Form entry requirements from 5 A\_C grades at GCSE to 5 A-B grades.

I see this an artificial attempt by the school to boost their A-Level results and as contrary to an aim of encouraging educational attainment in all children Many children flourish late and should be given a chance to do so at their local school and amongst their peer group. I see no benefit to the children at the school to make 6th form entry more restrictive.

I have other concerns about a push within the school to make it more selective. The Head seems obsessed with results and at Public Meetings makes no mention of inclusion and valuing of all children regardless of their ability. He seems supported in these views by the majority of the governing body and I think is out of kilter with views of parents and pupils. Our son has learning difficulties and the school has failed to fulfil their statutory requirement in terms of his stated hours of support since he started at Fortismere last September. I am extremely concerned about the proposed move to becoming a foundation school and feel the Head and governing body need to be monitored and held to their statutory responsibilities very closely.

I am also concerned about the lack of consultation between school and parents. I have been told about the consultation with regards to the 6th form by other parents; the school has not told us.

I am pleased to hear that the LEA is consulting now but this proposal affects all our children, not just those in year 11, and the very ethos of the school. I feel the governing body is trying to force this through in an undemocratic way. I fear they will try to do the same thing with the supposed consultation about foundation status; to date parents have had no opportunity to give their views about this.'

5. 'I would like to express my profound disagreement with the admissions to 6th form proposals from Fortismere governors.

I am a parent of a secondary school student in Haringey and I am opposed to this change in admissions criteria because I believe that 5 A\*-Cs at GCSE is quite sufficient for a student to embark on A level study. Similarly, I think that the benchmark to continue to Y13 is unwarranted and will cause students unnecessary stress.

On what basis do the Fortismere governors think that these higher grades are necessary for their students, when they are not deemed necessary for students attending other sixth forms? Would I be right in assuming that this is about league tables? In making these proposals, the head and governors do not appear to have much concern for the relative success of as many students as possible.

The highest academic success is not always the be all and end all. There are many benefits to studying at an advanced level, and plenty of evidence that students can achieve highly later on even if they do not get the highest grades earlier in their school careers.

At the moment Fortismere is still a community comprehensive. If this policy is allowed, this bodes ill for the future of Fortismere as a comprehensive.

I urge you not to proceed with allowing the school to change their admissions criteria.'

6. 'I am writing to oppose a change in the entry requirements for Fortismere 6th form. By reducing the intake to those who are likely to get the highest A level grades the school would be turning its back on those pupils for whom lower pass grades would be an excellent achievement. As a comprehensive school this would be totally inappropriate.'
7. 'I am writing to formally oppose the proposed changes in admissions arrangements at Fortismere school. I believe they are unnecessary, based on flawed logic and do not act in the spirit of the government's code of admissions "operating in a fair way that promotes social equity and community cohesion." I believe the arrangements should remain as they are currently.'
8. 'I am a parent of a new entrant to Fortismere with two younger children who will be going there in due course. I have just heard about the proposals to narrow the entry criteria for the 6th form. I have spoken to a number of other parents and no one has heard about it. I don't know how the consultation exercise was advertised but I fear that the news has not gotten around.

Many of us have a concern about the current regime at Fortismere the head and the governors who seem to be pursuing an unpopular and elitist agenda.

I have never had cause to protest about anything before but these proposals make me concerned and angry that local children may be denied access to their local sixth form, will be made to feel a failure and will be socially disadvantaged by losing touch with their peers. Many children underperform before reaching their potential. I doubt if I would have got into the sixth form under the new proposals - but I hit my straps in the 6th form and got into medical school.

Please let us keep Fortismere as a good local school serving the needs of the local community. Please do not let us be forced into the elitist and right wing agenda of the current Fortismere regime.'

9. 'I am writing as a parent of a Fortismere pupil to object to the proposed change of admission arrangements to the sixth form.

The former head of the school, Mr Nixon, described Fortismere as a community school, for pupils of all abilities in Muswell Hill. It was on that basis that we decided to send our son, who has a statement of special educational needs, to Fortismere.

I believe strongly in the provision of comprehensive education. It is a core principle of our democracy that every pupil should have equal access to education. To exclude less able pupils from the best educational facilities amounts to unfair discrimination. To cream off the best performing pupils into Fortismere sixth form would also place an unfair burden on other secondary schools in the borough, which would inevitably become 'second rate' sixth forms.

The provision of special needs facilities at Fortismere has already suffered an appalling setback since the new Headteacher was appointed. The one staff member who gave my son considerable support has left, and has not been replaced. The Head of Special needs appears to have resigned in protest at the new culture. The head has openly told parents that Fortismere has 'too many' special needs pupils.

What appears to be in prospect at Fortismere is a selective school, which will betray the needs of much of its local community. I am truly appalled at the proposed changes, which threaten the welfare and prospects of many of Muswell Hill's most needy students'.

10. 'We are writing to you today to express our concerns about the proposals to change the entry criteria for the Sixth Form at Fortismere for 2008-09.

We have two children at Fortismere and we have chosen the school for its comprehensive and inclusive community school ethos, which has, unfortunately, come under severe threat.

The proposed changes will consequently destroy this very ethos even further and turn Fortismere into a "selective" school.

We strongly object to such a move.

Fortismere should continue to serve the needs and aspirations of all young people in its community and it has done this most successfully in the past. Let's keep it that way!'

11. 'I think it is correct to encourage students to be ambitious and aspire to academic success, and for that reason I am opposed to the changes proposed by the governors of Fortismere.  
However, I believe it is important that students and their parents understand the demands of A level courses. As a teacher in a comprehensive school in an inner London borough with well over 20 years experience, I find that students are often accepted on A level courses who don't have the intellectual grasp of the subject or the work ethic that are necessary to do well. I think that students in Year 11 need very careful guidance about appropriate choices post-16 and the school must provide a range of courses at all levels so that everyone can stay on if they want to. This is what we do very successfully at my school.

I dislike the way changes are being implemented at Fortismere without proper consultation or discussion with students and parents.'

12. 'I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with the proposals of prospective students to sixth form having to achieve 5 A\*-B grades for Sept '08 entry and believe it should be kept as it currently is. I think it is unbelievable that a Head to the school, after having only been there one year, can feel he can change things so drastically.

I also believe there could be many reasons why a child could achieve lower grades than expected - teaching methods which tend to vary greatly from year to year, personal circumstances etc.

Please take this as 'no' to the consultation proposals for Fortismere from us.'

13. 'I would like to express, in the strongest terms, my objection to the proposal on the ground that these were not the rules that were extant when our daughter who is now in Y10, applied for and was accepted by the school.

Had this policy been in place when we were originally considering schools, we would not most probably have chosen to send her to Fortismere as she has learning difficulties that would suggest that such grades would be difficult for her to attain.

It is totally unacceptable to change such rules mid-stream during students' lifetimes at a school.

If the governors feel that it is in the interest of the school to make such a change, then it should only affect those entering the school subsequent to that decision.

I trust that the Council will not agree to the change taking place in 2008.'

14. 'My husband and I have both taken care to read the new admission proposal for Fortismere School. We have spoken to both our children. Our older child is currently in year 10 and will be starting his A levels in 2008. Even though both our children are strong academically they both feel that a change in the admission would put them under too much pressure to perform during their exams. We as parents feel the same. Secondly we also feel that there are not any real options on offer for the less academic children to enable them to continue their education. Until strong vocational courses are on offer children should not be given up on at this early state.

Referring to the above point we do not support any change in the admission requirements at Fortismere School.'

15. 'My son is currently in year 10 at Fortismere School, if the proposed changes take place then it will affect him as he intends to continue his studies at his school.

Both his father and myself are strongly against raising the entry levels to accept only A and B grades.

My son is a normal intelligent child who is capable of attaining a combination of A, B and C grades but felt very much under pressure when he heard of the possible changes to the current system. It has been a welcomed relief to both my son and us as parents to hear that hopefully these changes will not take place. Our children are under enough pressure to achieve and for some children like my son the pressure is too much for them and they crumble.

I can relate to how my son is feeling as I too achieved only B and C grades but still managed to continue my education to degree level and now have a successful career.

I am very concerned as to why our new head wants to change entry levels. I can understand that competition is tough and many children from outside the school want to attend our sixth form. This will mean that some children who already attend the school and are from the local area will be excluded to make way for those who may have come from other schools or even further a field!

We have lived in Muswell Hill since my son was a baby, this school is supposed to cater for the local community and surely the children who already are settled in the school should have the right to study and priority over others.'



16. 'I would like to register my opposition to the proposed changes in the sixth form admissions requirements for Fortismere School. I have a child currently in year 10, but my opinions of this issue take into consideration the wider interests of all children in the school. I question whether this change is intended to be in the best interests of the students or whether it is intended to improve the league table performance of the school. I appreciate that these two end points might not necessarily be mutually exclusive, but feel that such a marked change in the admissions criteria, effectively from a minimum of 5 Cs to a minimum of five Bs, may stand to compromise some students with the potential to succeed at A level standard. While the Governors recognize that 'a programme of A levels is highly challenging', they should also recognize that there are students who might be very well able to meet this challenge due to special talent in a small number of subjects, but who may find it a very hard call to gain a B grade or higher in 5 subjects. In the interests of such students, perhaps a less radical change in the criteria could be considered, if it is really felt that some form of change is justified.'

17. 'I am e-mailing you to confirm that I am opposed to the proposal that Fortismere is making, to change its 6th form entry criteria from 5 A-C's to 5 A-Bs as from 2008.

I think it is extremely unfair to suggest that a child who receives a C (which is considered an acceptable pass by an examining board) should be refused entry to the 6th form.

I am very concerned that those children who may be placed in the intermediate level of GCSE and can only achieve a C will become disillusioned at the age of 14, because they know that this grade is not going to make the 6th form accessible to them.

I sent my son to Fortismere because I believe in the system of comprehensive education and inclusion for all children. This move, together with the fact that Fortismere is also considering foundation status, where it will become responsible for its own admission criteria in year 7 suggests that Fortismere wants to become a selective school.'

18. 'I have one child at Fortismere and two others who have already been through the school.

I am much opposed to raising the sixth form entry requirements, not because I think our child will be unable to reach the suggested levels (I'm sure she will), but because I think the change would be divisive and would benefit the school's image rather than the community. A variety of levels of achievement should be catered for in a local school.

Exciting though it may be to have a high-performing school in the area, the fact is that such a school can find itself most benefiting the local estate agents, as ambitious parents try to move into the area, while separating friends and excluding too many good but not 'star' pupils!

I very much hope the proposals will not be passed.'

19. 'I am writing with regard to the proposed entry requirement changes for Fortismere Sixth Form.

I believe the changes would be against the ethos of Fortismere having a 'community' school. It would see local children unable to make the A-B grades sent out of the area only to be replaced by children who may live miles away.

It seems these proposed changes are more about improving the sixth form's achievement figures than thinking of local pupils' needs.

However, if these proposals do go through, I hope the school sets higher standards for its pupils to ensure they get the results they need.'

20. 'As a mother and parent of a child in Year 10 in Fortismere, it will definitely affect my child. And as my child is a special needs student, it will be prejudice against my child. And so I'm protesting against that decision.

It's unfair for the school to propose such changes. I dispute what they have said as a parent. Am very much concern and I hope this letter and other parents' will be taken into consideration and serious. Thank you very much for your time. And we pray for the best result and U turn in this matter.'

21. 'I would like you to register my opposition to Fortismere proposing to change the entry criteria on 6th form entry from 2008.

I believe its an unfair assumption to deduct that, although a young person may not achieve a perfect score of 5 A\* - B minimum, that youngster is not able to undertake 6th form courses in A Level to a satisfactory grade.

What the school fails to understand is the fact, that examinations take time in a youngsters toughest period of growing up, the period of body changing, raging hormones, life friendships forming, etc.

There's also other youngsters that come from a broken family home, have been dealing with illness or disease throughout their young life and putting everyone through this quite strict criteria, will only disadvantage the young and educational needy even further.

This seems like an act of elitism, only the ones who can afford to have private tuition if struggling with school work, will be able to do well, score and grades wise.

Please do not grant this proposal to Fortismere. Keep Fortismere Comprehensive!'

22. 'I am opposed to changing the current criteria since, as they stand, they offer greater opportunities to more students and have anyway produced a successful sixth form.

Please register this opinion appropriately in the consultation exercise.'

23. 'I would like express my concern and opposition to the proposed changes for entry into the sixth form as outlined in the document school\_admissions\_2008-9\_consultation which I have accessed from your website

I was under the impression that Fortismere's sixth form catered for as diverse a range of pupils as possible. These changes will surely change the profile of the sixth form and make it far less representative of the community that the children come from. It will send children away from

the school into other schools with lower admissions criteria and Fortismere will take students from those schools thus making the difference between the schools greater.

Children who have tried hard but have not made the new grade will leave with a lower self esteem and may even decide not to take A levels.

Fortismere is a community school and the pupils should remain with their peer groups and familiar pastoral systems during their secondary education if at all possible. This gives the

students of a slightly lower ability the extra support that they need to gain decent A levels and the potential to attend university.

I would be grateful if you would reconsider this proposal.'

24. We are very concerned about proposed changes to 6<sup>th</sup> Form Admissions at Fortismere School from 2008/9. We believe that these changes would be prejudicial, not only to the educational aspirations of Fortismere students, but also to surrounding secondary schools and indeed to Haringey's new Sixth Form Centre.

The government's Code of Admissions is intended to ensure that admission authorities "operate in a fair way that promotes social equity and community cohesion." At 6<sup>th</sup> Form level, this aim is generally met throughout Haringey by having entry requirements for A/S and A2 Level study which recognise either 4 or 5 GCSE passes at A\*-C grades.

However, Fortismere School now proposes to stop students with fewer than 5 A\*-B GCSE grades from studying A/S and A2 Levels. Fortismere serves a generally affluent area, but the students most likely to be excluded from A level and 6<sup>th</sup> Form study in future will be those from poorer, more disadvantaged backgrounds. The changes will also tend to exclude students from ethnic minority groups which the school itself recognises to be underachieving. This is neither equitable nor inclusive. As an academically successful school, Fortismere should be well equipped to raise attainment for more disadvantaged pupils, not just those who are already achieving their potential.

We agree with Fortismere that a programme of A Levels is highly challenging. However, if every child really does matter, all pupils must be given the opportunity to achieve at the highest level of which they are capable. For this reason, the Highgate Wood / Hornsey 6<sup>th</sup> Form Consortium currently requires 4 GCSE passes at A\*-C grade (rather than five) for A/S and A2 Level study. This does not deter many students who far exceed this requirement from studying and excelling in our 6<sup>th</sup> Form. But it offers precious chances to those who have been disadvantaged earlier in their lives or school careers.

We are extremely concerned that if Fortismere's 6<sup>th</sup> Form admissions are permitted to become more selective, schools such as ours would have disproportionately higher numbers of lower ability pupils post-16. So we would face greater challenges in raising 6<sup>th</sup> Form attainment, whilst Fortismere would be able to

coast along with only the highest achievers. This would promote neither social equity nor community cohesion.

We believe that the proposed changes should be rejected and that schools in Haringey should be working together to raise the aspirations of all our students, not imposing limitations on any child's achievement.

25. We are not happy about the change proposed by Fortismere governors and wish to see a retention of the current arrangements for admission to the sixth form at Fortismere.

Most children who attend this school go on to Fortismere and we believe that it would be unfortunate if the arrangements for sixth form admissions at Fortismere differed sharply from those of other Haringey schools.

Although both this school and Fortismere have achieved excellent results in recent years, there is a very wide range of ability. We would not wish it to be the case that children living in the area around Tetherdown – and therefore also Fortismere – were by reason of their GCSE results denied a sixth form education at their local secondary school, especially when children elsewhere in the borough with the same results would still be able to attend their local sixth form.

We hope the Council's Executive will not approve the changes to the admissions arrangements proposed by Fortismere.

26. We are writing to express our disagreement with the proposed change in admissions requirement to A/S and A2 study at Fortismere sixth form. We are concerned that these proposals will harm the self-esteem and future of many young students who have attended local primary schools.

This school has always had a very good relationship with the local secondary schools. Many of our pupils, with their diverse and varied skills, characters and natures transfer to Fortismere. We know of many pupils who work hard, and who will gain 5 GCSEs with Grades A-C, and who are capable of achieving good A levels, or vocational qualifications. A principle of comprehensive education is allowing them to access courses at their local community comprehensive school.

Whilst there may well be some A-Levels that need a minimum of a B grade this is by no means true of all A-Levels. There will also be pupils who are talented artistically, or musically or in other areas, who could achieve B or A in their required subjects, but only C in some others. The point about the Government's reporting of pupils who achieve 5 GCSEs at Grade A-C is that this is the minimum requirement for A-Level study. Pupils achieving these grades should feel pleased that they have done so. It is unacceptable that they should be told they are ineligible for study at their own local school.

This proposal does nothing to raise achievement -it merely deselects those pupils who do not attain a certain academic level. It is very easy to appear to have raised standards by excluding pupils of a lower academic achievement. The real challenge for a school is to raise standards of achievement with the same cohort of pupils, not to select the cohort.

All the other Haringey Secondary schools have 5 A-Cs as their minimum criteria for 6<sup>th</sup> Form-why should Fortismere choose a different requirement? It is already one

of the most successful schools in Haringey, and indeed in the country. It has no need to set itself apart from other Haringey Community schools.

In their Curriculum Review of 29<sup>th</sup> September, the governors and staff at Fortismere identified groups of pupils who under-attain at GCSE. These were identified as students entitled to FSM and those from ethnic minorities. It set targets to raise the attainment of these pupils. However, bringing in this new criteria for A/S and A2 admission would discriminate against these groups, as well as pupils with special educational needs, and could therefore be seen to be against equal opportunities.

27. I am writing to express my concerns about the above consultation. I feel the governing body of Fortismere, by changing the entry criteria to 6th form, are seeking to make it a selective school and not really considering the local community that it serves. These proposals threaten the very ethos of comprehensive education.

The consultation has also failed to seek advice from parents at the school and prospective parents in the local area. I am hoping that Haringey council will not be supporting this change.

28. We wish to express our very strong opposition to proposed changes to sixth form admissions arrangements at Fortismere School. The proposals are unnecessary, unfair, discriminatory and ill-conceived.

This school is located close to Fortismere. We have a significant number of gifted and talented children, as well as the highest number of statemented children in any Haringey primary school.

Almost all of our pupils transfer to Fortismere at 11 years of age. We are therefore key stake-holders and any future developments at Fortismere will have a significant impact on our pupils, their families and our neighbourhood.

Five GCSE s at grades C and above is the nationally accepted benchmark for progression to AS and A level courses. The A level results at Fortismere are outstanding under the current admissions criteria, and we cannot see any justification for changing them, nor for Fortismere standing apart from all the other schools in Haringey.

Many students who qualify for acceptance onto AS courses on the basis of nationally acknowledged criteria will be rejected. Effectively, the proposals will turn Fortismere from an inclusive community school to a selective school serving only an academic elite. The proposals will remove from some students the option of progressing to university, by denying them the opportunity to take A levels.

Every year, our Head Teacher and her Year Team Leaders carry out detailed assessments of children in all year groups, which are reported to the Governing Body. In general, the children who achieve relatively less well are boys from minority ethnic backgrounds (in particular those from African-Caribbean backgrounds and early stage EAL learners) and those on free school meals. Strategies are in place to help raise the attainment and aspirations of these children, as well as those with special and additional educational needs. With this basic grounding, large numbers of our children have moved on to Fortismere, where they have generally continued to thrive. These are the young people who are most likely to be deselected from Fortismere under the proposed changes. The new criteria, if adopted, will offer the most disadvantaged students nothing but a closed door and the label of failure. We find this deplorable.

We do accept that A levels are challenging, and that not all students of 16 have the intellectual capacity to cope with A level courses. For such young people, it is important that good advice on future options is available the appropriate courses are offered post-16.

We further accept that some A level courses do require a higher level of prior attainment than five C grades at GCSE. We would include mathematics and the three sciences in this category. We accept that in most cases a minimum of grade B at GCSE is an appropriate entry requirement for these subjects.

We also believe that some students who are very gifted in one area, such as art, music, drama or physical education, might not achieve sufficiently good results across the range of subjects to gain a place under the proposed criteria.

Furthermore, we know that young people develop at different rates, and for some the real value and meaning of education does not begin to be appreciated until they are 16, studying subjects of their choice at a reasonably high level. We suspect that many of these students would be refused places at Fortismere sixth form under the proposed changes.

Pastoral care is a strength of Fortismere. Under the proposals, many students will be forced to leave a school in which they have invested five years of their lives, which they feel part of and where they are known. The effects of this will be felt most by those who are least able to deal with it.

The Head Teacher of Fortismere has been quoted in the local press, saying that there is nothing wrong with challenge. We completely agree. We want the students at Fortismere to be challenged, pushed hard to achieve their best and rewarded in the end by excellent results. We

fervently believe that with excellent teaching and good quality coaching, study support and supervision, as well as encouragement from home, there is plenty of evidence both nationally and locally that the overwhelming majority of students who achieve five GCSEs at grade C or above can continue to study A levels and progress to higher education.

Fortismere is a very successful school, which is well regarded locally and has an enviable reputation further afield. We believe that the proposals have dangerous implications, which will damage the ethos of the school and undermine its successes by destroying its unique character. This would be very regrettable.

29. KFC represents approximately 200 parents who have expressed support for the aims of our campaign. The campaign was formed primarily to oppose the move to Foundation status, but has adopted broader aims in its constitution, including:

*'to support Fortismere School as a Comprehensive Community School'*

and

*'to campaign against any change to that status or the introduction of selection'*

We are responding to this consultation with specific reference to the proposals relating to sixth form admissions at Fortismere School.

We do so because we believe the proposals are entirely inimical to the future of the school as a Comprehensive Community School and because the proposals would make the sixth form more selective.

### **Comparison with sixth form admission criteria proposed for other Haringey Schools and Sixth Form Centre**

The consultation document sets out the proposed sixth form admissions criteria for Alexandra Park, Highgate Wood & Hornsey Schools, and the new Sixth Form Centre as well as those for Fortismere.

However, while all the other proposals put forward entry requirements for each of a wide range of courses designed to match a wide range of abilities, the Fortismere proposal is almost entirely focussed on A/S and A2 courses.

Thus Alexandra Park offers those not achieving 5 A\* to C grades at GCSE the possibility of studying a range of intermediate courses. Hornsey/Highgate Wood similarly offer GNVQ Foundation and Intermediate, and the Sixth Form Centre offers vocational courses at Level 1, 2 and 3.



In contrast, the Fortismere proposal refers only to 'One year vocational', 'for a small number of students', and does not even specify what the vocational course might be.

At the same time, the proposal seeks to raise the entry requirement for A2 and A/S courses to 5 GCSE passes at A\* - B in at least five different subjects, including at least grade C in English and Maths.

There are of course two different issues here: the entry requirement for a particular course, and the entry requirement for entrance to the sixth form.

In all the other schools it can be seen that these are distinct. In the case of Fortismere, the effect in practice would be to restrict entrance to the sixth form to only the most able of students. The rest, if they wished to continue in education, would have to go elsewhere.

We would also point out that the statement that 'Individual subjects will also have their own criteria which will be updated annually in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form prospectus' could be used to provide a vehicle for raising the entry requirements to the sixth form by the back door and without consultation. There is a risk that the criteria for each specific course could be set at an unreasonably high level (for example, a GCSE grade B for every single subject) so that the cumulative effect is one of raising the entry requirement to the sixth form as a whole.

It is our view that this is a grotesque proposal. It runs entirely counter to the comprehensive principle. It also runs counter to Government policy which is to raise the school leaving age to 18 and to provide a broad range of opportunities for students to study.

We find it disturbing that the school has not carried out any consultation with parents on this proposal.

### **Non-compliance with the Code of Practice on Admissions**

We also wish to raise three points of non-compliance with the new Code of Practice (which co-incidentally comes into force as of today's date):

#### ***Admission authorities **must** ensure that any member of staff employed at the school has no individual role in the admission process***

It is our understanding that the Fortismere Governing Body has not determined this proposal but that it has been put forward by an *individual* purporting to represent a decision of the Governing Body. As we understand it, the Governing Body minute of 16<sup>th</sup> October 2006 stated:

*"After a lengthy discussion it was agreed that the entry requirement to follow an A Level programme in the sixth form should be 5A\*-B's at GCSE".*

It can be seen that this is not by any means identical to the proposal set out in the Council's consultation document. The admission number (240 to be admitted in total with 80 from outside the school) is not specified in this minute. The requirement for Grade C in English and Maths is not specified. Nor is the 'flexibility within these criteria for students who are very close to, but just below, this benchmark' , or the statement that each A Level course will have its own criteria.

The minute does not refer to the issue of Year 12 to Y13 progression and the proposal for 3 D's at AS to be a minimum criterion for progression to A2.

We must therefore ask on whose authority the proposal in the consultation document has been made. If it has been made by a member of staff, that would clearly be contrary to the code of practice and the proposal must fall. If it has been made by some other person, the Authority must surely investigate to ascertain whether that individual had any authority to vary the decision of the Governing Body.

The proposal states that where the criterion for progression from AS to A2 is not met, but that "students are very close to or just below this benchmark", the cases will be considered on an individual basis. Similarly it refers to "some flexibility" regarding criteria for A/S and A2. This begs

the question of who will consider these cases. Clearly, under the code of practice, it cannot be any member of staff at the school. Is it really the intention for these cases to be considered by committees of the Governing Body?

***' If admission authorities are to set criteria for transfer or admission to the sixth form based on ability, they **should** take into account the needs of the children and the provision of suitable post-compulsory education available in the area that a child would have access to if they failed to meet the criteria.'***

There is no evidence that any consideration has been given to this issue by either the Governing Body or the Local Authority. The reality is that there is not a wide range of alternative provision available in the local area.

***'Section 88A of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (as inserted by section 44 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) prohibits the interviewing of parents and/or children as a method for deciding whether a child is to be offered a place at a school. Admission authorities **must not** use either face-to-face interviews or interviews by telephone or other means. Open days, meetings to discuss options, and other events for prospective parents and children are not affected (see guidelines in paragraph 1.70).'***

We again refer to the issue of progression from Year 12 to Year 13. We fear that interviews of the type banned by the code of practice are envisaged to determine the results of individual cases.

***Admission authorities and governing bodies **must** ensure that their admission arrangements and other school policies are fair and do not disadvantage, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational needs. Local authorities and schools have duties under Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 not to discriminate against disabled children and this is an important principle that should underpin all schools' policies, not just admissions. Admission authorities **must** also ensure that their admission arrangements comply with all other relevant equalities legislation (see Appendix 1). Admission authorities and governing bodies **should** develop and implement admission arrangements, practices and oversubscription criteria that actively promote equity, and thus go further than simply ensuring that unfair practices and criteria are excluded.***

We believe that the proposal is entirely inconsistent with the duty on the school and the Local Authority to promote race equality. A considerable number of Fortismere school students will

have acquired English as their second language. Research shows that such students can be relatively late achievers in specific subjects as their proficiency of English develops.

Setting unnecessarily high criteria therefore disadvantages such students. We do not believe that a race equality impact assessment has been carried out regarding these proposals.

**Conclusion**

We call on Haringey Council not to agree to any change to the current arrangements for sixth form admissions at Fortismere School.

### 30. Fortismere Sixth Form Admissions Proposals for Change 2008

#### Response of the Haringey Teachers' Association

We are responding to the proposal to change the entry requirements for the Fortismere Sixth Form from the current requirement of five A\*-C grades at GCSE in at least five subjects, to five A\*-B from September 2008. We note that it is also proposed to operate a formal review after AS so that pupils who do not achieve above D grades at AS would leave the school at that point rather than progress to complete the A level course.

Attempts were previously made to introduce a similar change to the requirements, illegally, from September 2007. We understand that the changes were introduced prior to any discussion or decision by the Governing Body, and without the statutory consultation required. There were allegedly examples at that time of pupils being required to leave the school because their results at AS were not considered adequate to continue to A2. A considerable number of complaints from parents were received by the Secretary of State who informed the Governing Body that he was 'minded' to issue a direction to the school that the admissions requirements must not be changed. Apparently the Governing Body ignored that highly unusual warning, and the Secretary of State did in fact issue the direction.

We note that despite the high profile press publicity that this previous debacle attracted, a similar proposal has been put forward, again without any consultation with parents at the school.

Haringey Teachers' Association is opposed to changes in the admissions criteria for Fortismere Sixth Form for the following reasons:

Haringey schools educate a large number of pupils for whom English is a second or additional language. Language acquisition takes place at different rates and the acquisition and improvement of 'academic' English is, for many students, a relatively late development. There will be students whose English language skills at the age of sixteen are still improving. These students may achieve C grades at GCSE but because of continued improvement in their language skills, they will go on to do well at AS and degree level.

We would make a similar argument about the proposed requirement for students to have a C grade in English. Fortismere is not a monolingual, monocultural school. The proposals are restrictive and potentially discriminatory. There is no evidence that the governors of Fortismere have considered this issue. Bilingual pupils may have a different, faster, rate of improvement in a subject, as their language skills develop. In many schools across London, these students resit GCSE English during their time in the sixth form and improve their grades. At Fortismere they would be barred from entry.

Late arrivals to the education system may also take time to settle in their chosen school. There is evidence that there is greater take up of sixth form provision in Haringey among these pupils since the upheaval of transferring to sixth form college or FE college often proves daunting. We

support the rights of such pupils to continue at school on a course of study appropriate to their needs.

All good schools monitor students' progress in subjects they are studying. There is scope for counselling students to change or move courses where progress is insufficient or where courses chosen are beyond the capacity of the student. This is part of good pastoral care in any successful sixth form.

We are suspicious of the motives for the changes proposed by the Fortismere governors. No reason is given for these changes other than that 'a programme of A levels is highly challenging.

Students who commit themselves to a programme of study for a two year A level course should be able to complete the course unless there are very good reasons for them to drop out. We believe there is considerable scope for any good school to exercise intervention strategies after disappointing AS results. Indeed, we believe the school has a duty to consider intervention rather than, in effect, permanent exclusion.

Fortismere governors seem to have embarked upon a programme of change for their school which goes beyond their duty to seek, and bring about, improvement. Their role is to challenge the school to do better. These proposals challenge the children and their families.

The school has a history of offering almost exclusively A level courses in the sixth form. This means that only the more academically able students stay on. This is a very outdated and traditional approach. With Government proposing a raising of the school leaving age, the school needs to start offering a wider range of courses, catering for the whole ability range.

The change imposed unlawfully this year was distressing for some young people and has sparked a great debate in education circles in Haringey. The views expressed overwhelmingly are in support of inclusive, non-selective, comprehensive provision. It is not clear where the Fortismere governors believe they are getting their mandate from.

There is absolutely no evidence that parents or teachers support the proposed changes. What evidence we do have suggests that they oppose it vigorously.

31. 'I am writing to object strongly to the proposal to change the admission criteria to Fortismere Sixth Form.

I have been consulted in respect of my daughter who is currently in year 10. My decision to send her to Fortismere was based on Fortismere being a comprehensive school and that she would be able to stay in the same school for seven years, alongside many of the children that she was with at primary school. To change the entry criteria for the Sixth Form at this stage of her school career is blatantly unfair. Indeed the possibility of changing the entry requirements for the Sixth Form was not mentioned to parents of the current year 6 when viewing the school last autumn. So again parents have made their decision on school for next September's year

7 on the basis that Fortismere is comprehensive throughout.

In addition to changing the character of the Sixth Form, I am also concerned about the message that such a change would give lower down the school. How can a school be comprehensive only in part? Is there a hidden agenda to introduce selection for year 7?

Have the Governors considered the implications for other schools in the area and the community more generally?

It is not clear to me who is being consulted about this change. I have been sent a letter as the parent of a child in year 10. But I am not aware that other parents in the school have been alerted to the consultation; I have not seen any press releases. The proposed change would affect a wide audience, not just the current year 10.

It is not clear to me why the change is being proposed. Are the Governors suggesting that A Levels are more challenging at Fortismere than elsewhere? This would seem odd! I can see that a change to the entry requirements

for the Sixth Form might well improve the exam results at A level for the school, and performance in league tables. But I do not understand how it would help individual children in the school. And I am very concerned about the children who would not meet the new criteria and the effect on them, labelling them as "failures".

Similarly, I am concerned about the proposed tightening of the requirements for year 13, A2. How can children feel confident and secure in their education with this uncertainty? How does this help with Haringey's stated aim that "We want all children and young people to be happy, healthy and safe, with a bright future"?

There may well be children at Fortismere who do not thrive in the Sixth Form studying A levels. But my view is that there should be a constructive conversation, not under tight time pressure, with these children and their parents about the best options for the child. This can be done without any change in the Sixth Form admission criteria.

To summarise, I am against any change to the admission criteria to the Fortismere Sixth form and would urge the school to make no change here.'

32. 'I am writing to object to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to Fortismere Sixth Form.

Fortismere School Governing Body is now seeking to change entry criteria to 6<sup>th</sup> form from 5 A-Cs to 5 A-Bs as from 2008, and to make it harder to continue into Year 13. They have been prevented from doing this before 2008 by a Direction from the Secretary of State .

These proposals threaten the very ethos of comprehensive education. I believe that far from promoting equity and fair access, the changes will reduce choice and diminish the life chances of students by unfairly excluding them. I fear that the current governor and the school administrators are trying to make Fortismere an elitist school and this will be to the detriment to future pupils' ability to get a fair opportunity to attend this school, which is currently the most successful school in the Borough. This is not required at Fortismere- that success is achieved by selection of superior pupils - rather what is needed is raising standards from within.

Recent proposals to make it a Foundation School are further indication of this move.

**I submit that the entry criteria to 6<sup>th</sup> form should remain 5 A-Cs henceforth.**



I look forward to your response in due course.

My wife and I are parents with three children studying at Fortismere.'

33. Further to your letter of 6th February asking parents to send written comments on the proposals to raise the entry requirements for Fortismere 6th form entry, commencing 2008, as a family we strongly oppose this move.

We have had 4 children at Fortismere school since 1996, with one son still in Year 10, all decided to go on to 6th form. The school is such an integral part of the local community (most of our son's friends all having attended Rhodes Avenue too), that the children benefit enormously from a continuation of education in their local community, with recognised peers and sibling groups. If Fortismere were to narrow the range of intake further, this would disadvantage many of the children who are on the cusp of achieving B's and C's.

When my son was advised of these changes by the school on the first day of term in Year 10 (Sept 2007), this caused him severe anxiety and worry that he would not be able to continue in

full-time education. Many children will be lost from full-time education under these proposals, the support of their peer groups, familiar teachers and facilities is crucial during their teenage years. Continuity in education and a feeling of "belonging" to an educational establishment should be cherished and fostered, not discarded in an attempt to meet statistics and targets. Fortismere already has outstanding results, trying to raise the bar to 99%-100% could come at the cost of many local children dropping full-time education.

What has already been affected at the school, is the involvement of parents and carers and students in the decision-making process, we were ignored. As parents we have been heavily involved in fundraising for the school, I have organised the school fair for 2 years, parents in the Muswell Hill Area have a working relationship with the school in many ways, but the recent proposals have ignored parents, students and others, we feel disenfranchised.

Fortismere should not become an elitist school with a narrow admissions policy, this school should continue to serve the community which supports it, The new proposals will increase the fight for a decent level of education and put further pressure on other schools in the area. All children should have the right to education in their community and not be threatened with exclusion for being a C level student.

34. I am writing to object to the change in the entry arrangements for Fortismere Sixth Form. I am a member and supporter of Keep Fortismere Comprehensive and a parent of two children at Fortismere. Neither of my children will be affected by next year's admissions policy as my elder child is finishing her education this year and my younger child is entering the sixth form this year under the current admissions arrangements. But I think it is still important for me to express my view as I am concerned about the future of the school.

The change in admissions arrangements is motivated by a desire of the new Head and the Governing Body to raise standards at Fortismere: excluding weaker students will directly raise the level of attainment at A level: also they believe that the threat of not achieving the higher level of attainment will motivate some students to higher achievement.

In my view the whole approach is misguided. Raising standards by excluding students has nothing to do with education - unless we are referring to excluding

students who are wholly unsuited to the courses - which is not the case here. I understand that in his previous job as Head of a Grammar School he achieved 100% A level passes for which he was very much praised by local parents and local press etc. No doubt he would like to repeat that achievement. I am personally not impressed by a 100% pass rate because it clearly can only be achieved by a high level of selection and probably preventing certain students from taking exams. That is not being proposed at Fortismere but the same philosophy is being applied. What the school should be doing is aiming to get the best out of all of the students and crude league tables should be ignored. A value add measure is more important - this is what the school should be looking to improve.

It may be that raising the entrance bar will cause some children to higher attainment but in my view at an unacceptable cost as it will damage the education of other children. For most children what is in their best interests is the possibility to continue their education through the Sixth Form in the school of their choice and that will often be their current school where there is least disruption to their schooling. This will be particularly important with the weaker children. It will be tragedy if, due to the change in admissions policy, less confident children who could have attended a Sixth form lose confidence and decide not to continue their education.

I think that it is also divisive for Fortismere to set its entrance criteria higher than other schools in the Borough. What message is that intended to give other local schools? Is the intention to lure away the best children from other schools in the Borough?

If this Head really wanted to make a difference to education in London why did he not attempt to improve a failing school. His policy of exclusion is only possible because of the existing reputation of an already successful school - of course it would not be possible in a different context. It is a mystery to me how he has such control over the Governing Body which seems to be so unrepresentative of the views of the parents.

Everyone wants higher standards for their children but what he must do is to find ways of improving standards without resorting to this change he is proposing - attainment must be increased without exclusions and threats of exclusions.

I sense that there is a lot of anger amongst parents at the current Head's approach and apprehension at the possibility of Fortismere becoming a Foundation School which will then be outside the control of parents and the Borough.'

35. We would like to comment on the proposals concerning admission arrangements for Fortismere School, Sixth Form.

We have a daughter who left the school in July 2006 at the end of the first year of her sixth form and a daughter in Year 10.

The new requirements were announced in the first assembly at the beginning of Year 10. No written information was sent home. Our daughter was upset and confused. Since then various contradictory statements have been put forward.

This causes particular concern in relation to the two science subjects and Maths GCSEs. At the beginning of January teachers in these subjects had to decide whether to put students in for the Foundation or Higher level in these courses. If a student is entered for the Foundation level the highest grade attainable is a C. Being entered for this level therefore makes it extremely difficult for a student to obtain the five B grades required for sixth form entry.

Children on the borderline who have been entered for the Foundation level have suffered a double blow. Firstly, although Foundation may be appropriate for them at this they will not be able to achieve better than a C. Secondly, it reduces their chances of achieving 5 Bs by limiting the maximum grade available in three subjects.

It does not seem fair to make it almost impossible to enter the sixth form at the end of the first term of the two year GCSE course.

We accept that a good grade at GCSE in the subject (or related subject) being taken at A level is very important. Our elder daughter was allowed to take up art A level with a C at GCSE. She found it too difficult almost from the outset. This was a bad start and whilst not the sole reason certainly contributed to her giving up school at the end of the lower sixth.

We suggest there is a middle way with a minimum requirement at GCSE for five good passes two or three Cs or two or three Bs including Maths and English. A B grade should be required in relevant subjects i.e. where there is a direct correspondence between the GCSE and A level subjects and in English when sociology is chosen. This would give maximum flexibility whilst maintaining proper standards but not misleading pupils as to their prospects at A level.

The whole saga has been badly handled and has been very unsettling and discouraging for our younger daughter. We would have expected to hear about developments of this kind from the headteacher via a letter to parents rather than at second hand through our daughter. She did not understand it and this is not surprising as the adults concerned do not seem to have thought it through properly.

This saga does not bode well for any change to Foundation status which would give the headteacher and governing body much greater scope to make fundamental changes.

36. I just wanted to add my name to the list of Fortismere parents who feel strongly that sixth form entry requirements should NOT be allowed to change in Sept 2008, nor indeed at any time. I believe that any child who is committed to staying at school for full-time study in the sixth form should be positively encouraged to do so. Putting up barriers, such as this one currently being proposed by the Fortismere head and governors, will only succeed in certain children being excluded. These children will begin their early adult life feeling social failures when, in actual fact, their willingness to stay on at school and attempt A levels should only be applauded.

37. I would like to register my concern over the proposals to the changes to the entry requirements to sixth form and to staying on after AS levels.

My son is in his first year of GCSEs. He is very anxious that he will not be allowed to stay on at sixth form. He feels that he has made friends, got to know the routines and feels part of the learning community.

He has been working hard but now feels demoralised as he knows that getting 5 Bs is really beyond his reach. Surely children should be encouraged to stay on rather than being told that they can go to a local college. More flexible provision should be made to accommodate children who are motivated but not necessarily as academically able.

Where will all the children who do not get into the sixth form go? Are there enough college places available? Who will fill up the sixth form places instead?

Fortismere is meant to be a comprehensive school and should act accordingly right up to sixth form.

Results at AS levels must be looked at carefully. Why couldn't a pupil retake rather than being told to leave? By the time the results are out it is generally too late to find alternate education. This could ruin a pupil's life chances and most definitely their self-esteem.

I really am appalled by these proposals and the way in which they are being carried out. As a parent I feel I am being left in the dark.

38. I am writing to you concerning the consultation over sixth form entry requirements at Fortismere School in 2008. I am opposed to any change in the entry requirements. Fortismere is a hugely successful local school, (I believe The Telegraph rated it one of the top comprehensive schools in the country), and I hope that it can remain just that – a **local** school.

I have already written to the Chair of Governors and the Head asking for the numbers of students who would have been excluded over the last five years if the new criteria had been in place. I also asked for the number of who went on to get A levels and places at University. I have not been given these statistics but I know several young people to whom this would apply. I also asked what the impact would be on arts students who may not get good grades in the more academic subjects. Again I received no reply. It is easy to conceive of a situation in which a creative arts student gets 4 A\*s at GCSE and the rest of the subjects are grade Cs. This student could go on to be very successful but would be excluded from Fortismere. Saying that borderline students will be considered on a case by case basis is no guarantee that this will happen and does not help students when thinking about applying for sixth form places.

There are also special needs students, maybe those with dyslexia, who are unable to get the top grades but are still able to contribute to the school and grow and develop their skills and education. These too would be excluded from their local school. I think that Jane Farrell's quote in the local press, 'We don't want pupils who are not capable of succeeding', is very telling in this instance; Fortismere wants to turn their backs on those students who maybe need a bit more support and who will not be able to achieve the highest grades.

I would also like to point out that this year selected students in year 11 were sent letters inviting them to apply to Fortismere sixth form. I understand that only certain students were sent these

letters; again Fortismere is sending a message to their young people that some are more important than others and that their local school is maybe not for them.

Finally I would like to raise the subject of other schools in the borough; it seems from the consultation document that only Fortismere will have such high entry criteria. This immediately disadvantages neighbouring schools creating in effect a grammar school situation in the sixth form. Again Fortismere is not thinking about the local community.

39. I am a parent of two children at Fortismere and wish to object in the strongest possible terms to the proposed changes to 6th form admissions policy at Fortismere. These changes are part of a multi-pronged strategy to make Fortismere a selective school in all but name.

The nature of the school has already changed alarmingly from an inclusive comprehensive to a school where those who cannot 'succeed' have become undesirables. In the process it has become a much less happy school and unhappy schools are rarely successful schools.

Prospective parents of special needs children have been put off from sending their children to the school as they have been told by the head: 'we can't cater for your child here'. As a result there are fewer statemented children who will be entering year 7 in September than in many previous years. One of my children is statemented and at a meeting of special needs parents the head told us that there are too many statemented children at the school, that they are damaging the image and profile of the school and dragging down exam results.

The head has boasted about the exam results he wants to achieve at the school - on a par with selective schools. These results are simply not achievable in a mixed ability comprehensive and can only be achieved with a selective intake. If the head and the governors are successful in weeding out the academically weaker children by fair means or foul they will be able to claim (disingenuously) that they have managed to achieve results never achieved before at this kind of school. Is that about the pupils, many of whom already perform strongly academically, or about enhancing the reputations of the architects of the dramatic changes at Fortismere?

We have complained repeatedly to the head, to teachers and to the governors but few of our concerns have been addressed. The law is being broken at Fortismere in relation to equality legislation and several parents are exploring taking legal action because repeated complaints have resulted in no change at all to matters like the mismatch between hours of support specified on statements and actual number of hours delivered. Repeated enquiries to the head have failed to elicit a response about where ring fenced LEA money for statemented children has vanished to.

I and many other concerned parents hope that the LEA will take robust stand against Fortismere's inexorable slide towards becoming a selective school and ensure that it returns to the comprehensive ethos it is supposed to have as part of the community of state schools in Haringey.

40. I understand, from word of mouth from another parent, that Haringey is undertaking a consultation about the proposed changes to admission into the sixth form at Fortismere School which I most strongly disagree with.

Can you please advise me how this consultation process is being managed, as I am a parent at the School and have not seen any information about this consultation.

How can this be consultation if parents are unaware that it is happening.

41. I am writing concerning the proposed changes to the sixth form entry at Fortismere.

By way of background I have written to the Head and Chair of Governors concerning the changes, their replies were very brief and did not address the questions I raised or provide me with the information I requested to help me understand why the new criteria was proposed. I have been completely unable to obtain any information that would help me assess the changes in the light of past figures and results.

The changes to sixth form entry were already being discussed by students, staff and parents before it was even discussed and voted on by the governors which seems untoward. Apart from one letter informing us of the changes, we have had no notification of any other changes or developments as yet. There has been no consultation. Many parents are unaware of what is happening unless they read about it in the papers, which many do not.

Fortismere is an extremely successful *local community comprehensive school*, rated I believe in The Daily Telegraph recently as one of the top comprehensive school in the country. This is how it should stay; local and comprehensive and striving to, as the government's new initiative "Every Child Matters" outlines, meet each child's needs and foster their potential. These new proposals I believe jeopardise this.

By changing the criteria of access Fortismere retains the most talented students (and attracts them away from other schools) and those less able academically have to find places elsewhere. This means that all local secondary schools are affected by this and it changes the intake of each school which would have overall long term effects on the make up of all the schools in the area. Fortismere is effectively introducing a grammar school system into Haringey and disadvantaging other local schools.

One of the attributes of Fortismere was that its students were very loyal and proud of their school. Under the new proposals the school selects the students it want and gets rid of the others. This is already happening. I believe 17 students were told they could not come back into the sixth form as their AS level results were too low in Sept 2006. They had to find new schools a week before term and it seems were not given the chance to retake. As far as I am aware some of these students did not know there was a risk of them losing their place. Some selected students in Year 11 have received letters inviting them to apply for the sixth form as their projected grades for their GCSE's are high. How does this make the young people who did not receive a letter feel but who want to continue their education at the school and how does it affect their performance? Now with the criteria returning to those of 2006 I doubt other young people in year 11 have

received letters whose predicted grades are C's. This may have a detrimental affect on some students who feel abandoned and rejected by their school that they have held in high esteem not to mention the parents who have supported the school. I think this divisive approach will ultimately serve to erode the strengths of the school, its inclusivity, its ability to embrace difference and its strong community. It divides the student body more clearly than before into those that succeed in the schools now very narrow terms, and those that do not. The telling quote from Jane Farrell "We do not want students who are not capable of succeeding" rather sums up the new approach of the school.

This new proposal discourages students with special needs, dyslexic pupils for example, unable to achieve 5 A to B's but having valuable contributions to make would be discriminated against. Though the Head wrote in a letter that each pupil would be considered on a case by case basis, in reality this cannot be monitored and it does not help students when considering their future. It creates much more anxiety around the time of their GCSE's and pressure too.

Young people blossom at different times and GCSE results do not reflect what a young person is necessarily capable of. Under the new proposals countless past students who achieved brilliant A levels results would be barred from the sixth form now. (David Hockney would have been denied a place and the nominated academic of the year, a maths professor at Birkbeck, would not have been able to enter the Fortismere sixth form- just to give two examples.) Students who are

particularly good at a specialist subject such as Art but who have not achieved highly in more academic subjects are now not able to enter the sixth form.

In order to assess the impact of the new proposals I asked for information regarding how many students over the past five years were accepted into the sixth form with grades lower than is now accepted and indicate what grades they attained at A level. Also how many art and or music students over the past five years would have been excluded under the new policy and what they achieved in their specialist subjects at A level. I have not received this information.

The new proposals sends the message that anything lower than a B is not an achievement and not worthy of the school. Research has shown that young people have a much better chance of employment if they achieve even one A level, students who achieve grades C and below in GCSE or A levels may not be the top of the pile academically but they obviously have something to offer society and the school and should be equally valued and supported.

Lastly I am not opposed to raising the standards of the school and helping students to obtain the best results they can. I am not against a B being required in some subjects such as Maths but I do not agree with every single subject requiring a B along with other connected subjects requiring Bs. The previous criteria still produced excellent results and students were still going to top universities including Cambridge and Oxford. I do not see any reason to change the criteria and hope that the local authority will oppose this extremely selective and narrow approach.

42. It appears that, as with many matters as Fortismere recently, even the consultation process is a selective one.....

I have many issues about the WAY in which Fortismere (via the Governing body and the head) are seeking to make changes, although I do agree that some of the changes are right/needed.

However, I have a major concern about the proposed (was it ever actually proposed?!) change to admissions criteria for Sixth Form Entry.

The move to 5 A/B grades at GCSE for entry to 6th Form at Fortismere goes against the ethos of a community school.

Fortismere pupils can achieve strong results, with motivated pupils stretching themselves to the maximum of their ability, while enjoying the all-round benefits of a sixth form education - without needing to limit the intake to those who've performed even better than previously required at GSCE level.

Many young people don't fulfil their potential in their mid teens (especially boys). The opportunity to focus on their areas of interest, coupled with increasing maturity, means that many of these young people can go on to develop in sixth form.

While their grades may not help Fortismere sit on top of the league tables, the learning process adds immense value to these young people's future.

Those who don't have the potential to reach Fortismere's new academic standards can both contribute to and benefit from the culture and environment of the school.

Parents who are totally focussed on academic achievement have several options: tutoring, selective or fee-paying schools, or just letting their child get on with it and doing their best at Fortismere. There are many, many examples of pupils who benefit from the last option every year, who go on to good universities and achieve great results.

Fortismere in it's current (past?) guise did not hold these pupils back, and played a major role in building their all round life and study skills for the future.

Would these pupils have done any better in a hot-house academic environment? Probably not. They would have achieved the same exam results, but without the benefit of local community education, and with lower self-esteem.

Pupils at Fortismere can, and do, achieve high standards.

A and AS Level Exam results can be improved - because, like it or not, they matter.

However, they can be improved by helping pupils select the right subjects, enhancing teaching standards, offering additional support with exam technique and study skills (already happening).

To take moderately achieving pupils out of Fortismere will only put pressure on other schools in the borough - or put pressure on parents to pay for alternatives.

Why should Haringey schools have divided Top and Bottom achieving schools?

Why aren't we looking to increase achievement among all pupils and all schools in Haringey?

Fortismere is trying to pull out of the Haringey system and select only the best for their Sixth Form.



There are plenty of private providers who offer the intense academic hot-housing that this involves: we want Fortismere to be part of Haringey, and to have the benefits that a culturally and academically diverse student population provides.

Fortismere must continue to take pupils of more mixed achievement into their sixth form: if they don't, it's not just the students who fail to clear the bar who will suffer. Other schools in Haringey will too - and so will those who DO get into Fortismere Sixth Form.

I am strongly opposed to the proposed change in admission for Fortismere Sixth Form, from 5 A-Cs at GCSE level, to 5 A-Bs.

I would like to be kept informed of any other proposed changes to the admission requirements at Fortismere.

43. As a parent of a child at Fortismere, I would like to register my concern at the school's proposal to alter its sixth form admissions criteria. Fortismere should remain an inclusive community school serving its local area, including those children who, despite working diligently, may not achieve top grades in their GCSEs. I have seen no evidence that in the majority of subjects GCSE grades are an accurate indicator of grades achieved at A Level. A move towards more elitist entry criteria appears to be in opposition to the school meeting its Every Child Matters outcome for ALL children and young people.

44. I have been emailed a copy of your letter to parents of Fortismere students and I do hope that you are posting these letters to all Fortismere parents, otherwise they will not be able to give their views and I feel certain that many others will feel, as I do, that the entry requirements for sixth form at Fortismere should not be changed.

I'm extremely concerned that the online sixth form prospectus for 2007 has, until this week, asked for a B in English for almost every subject studied (including art, music and photography) and I believe many students will have been discouraged from applying for 2007 already.

I see no value whatever in changing the entry requirements for Fortismere, which is an excellent community comprehensive in a struggling borough. Its results last year at A level were very good and I believe the desire to change can only be driven by what the governors declare is their aim to make Fortismere a 'world class school'. This means, as far as I can see, a school that has top results rather than a school which is doing the best by all its pupils.

I have written to the governors and been told that 'most sixth forms outside Haringey' require five A-Bs. Please can you tell me if this is true? As far as I can see, it is not. Such criteria, which plainly legislate against late developers and many teenagers who reach their potential at 'A' level and beyond, will exclude many local children from benefitting from Fortismere's excellent -and till now- collegiate and inclusive education. Many students from private schools will take their place...

My husband, who gained a first in English, would have been excluded from sixth form had such demands been placed upon him. And certainly the talented musician, or physicist, or artist, who is not so capable at English, will have no place at Fortismere under the new criteria. As for those who will never do brilliantly in terms of their results, but who would benefit from further education, they too, will be left out. As you know, most of the academic subjects require a B already, so why exclude even more students?

I'm so glad you have decided to consult on this very important issue and do hope

to hear that you are consulting as widely as possible.

45. I am writing to you about Fortismere's governing body proposal to change the admissions policy in 2008 from A-C to A-B. I am opposed to such a change and am requesting that you take account of my views meaningfully.

I am a parent of a pupil at Fortismere. Please can you advise as to the outcome of the consultation.

46. As a parent of a former Fortismere student, I strongly disagree with the proposals to restrict access to the 6th form.
47. Our son is in Year 10 at Fortismere School. He does not have any special needs, and we chose Fortismere because we wanted him to benefit from a mixed environment.

We object to this latest move by the governors to introduce selection for the sixth form. We would prefer the school to commit itself to raising standards for all students. We have seen no evidence of improving standards, and introducing selection and moving towards Foundation Status seems to be taking time and resources which could be better spent improving standards for all. Then maybe more students might get the sought-after 5 A\*-B grades.

Fortismere is a comprehensive school, which to us should mean that it provides education for every child in its catchment area, not just the most able. There are numerous selective schools in north London already. Comprehensive schools should provide for everyone else.

48. I am writing to voice my concerns regarding the proposed changes to the admissions policy of the Sixth Form at Fortismere. I have one child currently studying at Fortismere for GCSE's and another attending their sixth form. Although I understand Haringey LEA are not in favour of such a change you have asked for opinions of interested parties. Please feel free to forward these concerns to the relevant parties.

Firstly whilst appreciating that there is quite an intellectual leap from GCSE to AS and then A Level I am not completely convinced that only A\*-B grades at GCSE are capable of achieving appropriate success, certainly other schools within Haringey do not see fit to limit access to AS and A Levels to only the high academic achievers.

Secondly, particularly in relation to boys, some children do not achieve their potential academically until they are older than 16 and it seems this policy is somewhat elitist.

Thirdly, there appears to be little flexibility ... if a good, interested, conscientious and well behaved student falls short by a few grades to achieve the required 5 A\*-B with C in English and maths, it seems that under the new proposals that student would not be allowed to continue **their** education in **their** school despite

their best efforts. Whereas that conscientious student would probably be an asset to the sixth form where their learning is more focussed on their strong subjects.

I am fully aware that a large number of students are also privately tutored, particularly in Maths within Fortismere school community, so when I said earlier that this policy appears elitist, it seems to me that only students whose parents can afford private tutoring will be able to continue their higher education at their local school.

Finally although I agree that Fortismere Sixth Form has in previous years failed to achieve academically what it should do considering its location and intake of students, I can't help but think this is to do with some of the teaching and some elements of the culture within the school. Both of which are merely reflections of the society we live in.

There have been a number of changes in recent years at Fortismere and people in general don't like changes and take time to adapt to changes etc. and whilst I can appreciate that; I do find this proposal concerning the sixth form admissions to be somewhat elitist along with other various proposals that the Governing body have put forward recently. Fortismere's appeal to me has always been that it is a **local comprehensive** school and despite its problems generally a very good one. I fear that Fortismere is beginning to move away from an inclusive policy concerning admissions to an exclusive one, starting first with sixth form and then to its general admissions policy.

For the reasons stated I do not agree with the proposed changes to the Fortismere Sixth form.

49. As parents of a year 10 Fortismere pupil we are writing to express our opposition to the proposal to raise entry requirements for the Fortismere 6th form.

We do so because we feel it is very important that Fortismere continues to be an inclusive school which serves the best interests of the widest number of local pupils.

Our own son is not expected to have any difficulty in attaining at least B grades, but many of his friends may struggle to do so and the whole ethos of the school will be eroded by increased selectivity.

We are very much in favour of improving academic performance at Fortismere but not by means of excluding less able pupils

50. We are replying to your invitation to comment on the proposed changes to the admission criteria for the 6<sup>th</sup> form at Fortismere School.

We are totally opposed to this and have not been impressed with the headmaster's methods of trying to introduce it – nor his plans to change the school to Foundation status. Fortismere is an excellent comprehensive which services its more able pupils as well as those who are less able. We always thought that was the governing principle of comprehensive education and we feel that the appointment of the new headteacher was a mistake – as evidenced by the strength of feeling against him voiced by parents and students alike.

51. I am in receipt of the letter from Haringey detailing proposed changes to admission to sixth form at Fortismere. I have also looked at the consultation on line.

I am horrified at the prospect of limiting access to Fortismere VIth form via the proposed entry requirements. My daughter is currently in year 10 and is one who may well find herself facing the impact of this change.

My reasons for objecting are as follows:

Fortismere is a comprehensive school which supposedly values the learning and personal achievements of all its pupils, I am concerned that this new requirement sends the wrong message to students - that being that if you do not achieve these higher grades that somehow you are not worthy of a continued place at your school. Significantly this will have the impact of demotivating students, splitting up peer groups and contributing to youth disaffection.

Furthermore, additional motivation can be found by individuals engaging upon the range of options available at A level, that perhaps they did not have at GCSE level. In any case, promoting learning and education as something that is valuable to all - without forcing them to leave and attend elsewhere, is something that Fortismere should be proud to support.

In addition, lower achievement at GCSE is not necessarily an indicator of inability to study and achieve at A level. Had this ruling been in place when I was at school/college my grades would have prevented me from staying on to do A levels. Significantly I went on to achieve both A levels and a degree - surely a path that will be closed to many should this change be accepted.

Working within children's mental health I am aware of the significant impact that this transition period can have on the emotional wellbeing of young people and am also aware of how the behaviour of those in authority can cause great levels of anxiety and indeed depression on this age group. I would be concerned that these proposals could in turn affect not just the students' right to an education but their right to a supportive environment that values individuals and promotes mental well being.

I would value further information about the proposals as it becomes available.

Do contact me should you need to clarify any matters.

52. I am concerned about changes to entry requirements for Fortismere sixth form. To demand A\* - B seems to contradict aims stated elsewhere, ie. for all pupils to reach their potential.

The current head seems to be narrowly defining 'potential' as potential to reach the top grades. I am concerned about the shift in emphasis from individuals and their potential towards, grades and league tables.

For example, if a student was gifted in art, but in other subjects fulfilled his/her potential by getting C grades at GCSE, that student would not be able to study Art, Photography etc at Fortismere. I would argue that is a loss to the school as well as the pupil.

I had a son in the sixth form under the Nixon headship. He was identified as gifted in maths. He was encouraged to develop his love of Mathematics and is now studying for a degree in the subject at Bristol University.

My daughter, currently in year 12 is also a high academic achiever, and has been told she is in a cohort of 'Gifted and Talented'. Rather worryingly, to date, all this seems to amount to being under huge pressure to get A grades and apply for

Oxbridge. There is little evidence of her being encouraged to love her subjects and engage deeply with that love of learning. If she does that, surely A grades will follow.

So, though both my children would get into the sixth form under the new rules I am concerned that the new scheme puts pressure on all. It will make many pupils even more anxious about

GCSE exams. Meanwhile, many in the current year 12 are over anxious about the demand for A grades.

As someone involved in Education myself, I am a great believer in aiming higher. But that is achieved by facilitating a love of learning, directing young people to believe in themselves and so have the confidence to become independent thinkers and learners.

Fortismere aims to be a world class school [whatever that means?] I would suggest this means working to identify and develop the potential of all pupils, not simply demanding A grades.

53. We are parents of a child in year 10 at Fortismere School and are writing to you to protest most strongly about the proposals to restrict the admission criteria for entry to the school's 6th Form.

The only justification for this proposal, as far as we understand it, is that 'A' level study is extremely challenging and consequently only pupils with GCSE grades A\*-B are able to successfully complete these courses. This is, of course, not true. Or, if it is true, then all the other schools and colleges in Haringey and around the country who retain the admission criteria of A\*-C need to be informed. We also need to find an explanation for how Fortismere 6th Form has previously been so successful, as evidenced by its academic results, the general high regard of parents and pupils attending it and its permanent oversubscription.

Another motive behind the proposals, in our opinion, is the desire to improve the academic results of the school at 'A' level, which has been expressed by the new headteacher, Mr Onac, both in documents and in meetings with parents. While this is a proper and laudable ambition for any headteacher, the more usual approach is to concentrate on ways of improving teaching, learning and pupil support within the 6th form. In this case we are being offered the alternative method of selecting only those pupils who are most likely to achieve higher results. This issue is not simply one of abstract educational theory. The proposed changes would have

detrimental effects on the education of individual children. Our elder son finished Fortismere 6th Form last summer. Had the proposed admission criteria been in force he would not have gained entry. However, we believe that the support of an institution, staff and friendship-network where he was established was vital to him achieving his eventual 'A' level results. While the school may regard his low grades as a concern - they will no doubt affect the school's higher grade percentage - for the child concerned, achieving the results he did was crucial for developing his career.

In addition, the proposed changes would have very real results in the local Muswell Hill community. At present, the school re-inforces the local spirit of community by bringing together almost all local children, of all levels of ability, at

the age of 11. In future, however, parents who have concerns about the ability of their child to meet an excessively high standard of 6th form entry, but naturally hope for their children to stay in full-time education until at least the age of 18, may well begin to apply elsewhere rather than risk the prematurely truncated educational experience being offered at Fortismere. (Cynics might argue that this knock-on effect of self-selection by less able pupils at the point of first entry to the school would actually be welcome to the present school administration. I prefer to feel that they have been concentrating too hard on internal matters and not fully thought through the implications outside the school gates.)

We originally chose to send our children to Fortismere as we wanted a local inclusive comprehensive that aimed to serve its local community. We now object to what amounts to an attempt by the school to choose the community it wishes to serve. We call upon Haringey to reject these proposals and the school to withdraw them.

54. I am writing to object to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to Fortismere Sixth Form. This is a comprehensive school and I believe it should not be selecting students. Additionally, if the entry requirements to Fortismere Sixth Form change then this will affect the intake at surrounding schools with Fortismere effectively 'creaming off' the more academically achieving students. This will have an adverse affect on other schools in the Borough.

My son is at Fortismere currently and is doing extremely well and I believe he will attain more than five Bs at GCSE – so I am not just concerned for his future at Fortismere. However I sent him to Fortismere because it was a comprehensive school and part of that ethos is to accept all students who wish to continue into the Sixth Form.

Please register my objections to this proposal.

55. We write in response to your letter about possible changes to admission to Fortismere sixth form.

We are the parents of two daughters at Fortismere and a son of primary school age whom we hope will also attend the school.

We strongly oppose the proposed changes which we consider unnecessary and divisive. We feel it would be better if the school continued to offer education to a wide range of young people. We also believe that the changes may be a way of producing an appearance of artificial success, as they may improve overall results without actually improving teaching or individual progress.

Please consider our views seriously – they are shared by most parents we have spoken to about the issue.

56. I disagree with the change from 3 a-c to 3 a-b GCSE levels. Please keep the 6th. form entry requirements as they are, so as to keep the school truly comprehensive.

57. I am writing to you regarding the proposed change on the admissions criteria for Fortismere School. Fortismere is a local community school, serving the needs of the children in the local area however diverse their needs. If the school chooses to change its admissions criteria to 5 A\*-B at GCSE level in order to be able to gain entry to the 6th form, then a lot of current Fortismere students and students from other secondary schools will automatically have their choice reduced. There does not seem to be any logical reasoning behind the change in criteria and so I can only assume that the headteacher and the governing body are seeking to raise the performance in examination results which until then reflect well on them.

I am very much against this proposed change and I am also very concerned about the lack of consultation from the headteacher of the school. In the last newsletter, he did mention that there was some consultation taking place about admissions procedures in the borough, but he didn't actually say that it was about admissions criteria for the 6th form at Fortismere. If you hadn't written to the parents at Fortismere, then we would have been none the wiser. Is it not possible to write to all parents in the borough to inform them of this very important change and to delay the deadline for consultation? This change is going to have ramifications for all secondary school students in the borough and it needs to be discussed at length.

Many thanks for having made Fortismere parents aware of this consultation and for giving us the chance to air our views.

58. I am writing to object to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to Fortismere Sixth Form.

### **Summary**

The Government's Code of Admissions is intended to ensure that admission authorities "operate in a fair way that promotes social equity and community cohesion." It is intended to support choice and diversity.

*As outlined below, far from promoting equity and fair access, the changes will reduce choice and diminish the life chances of students by unfairly excluding them. If every child matters then these changes should be rejected and the school should work with the LEA, parents, and the community, to raise the achievement of all students regardless of their background.*

#### **1. The balance of provision in Haringey**

**The current arrangements provide for a comprehensive admissions policy throughout the Borough. Fortismere is the most successful school academically and should, therefore, be best equipped to raise attainment and achievement for all pupils whatever their stage of learning.**

**If the admission arrangements were to be changed then surrounding schools would have disproportionately higher numbers of pupils of lower ability and the requirement to raise attainment will become more challenging.**

## **2. Government policy is changing**

*The government has signalled its intention to raise the school leaving age to 18. Such a move will increase the pressure on schools in the Borough that have a more open admissions policy than that being proposed by Fortismere.*



### **3. The reason for the change is flawed**

**The proposals claim that the reason for the change is that a programme of A levels is highly challenging. Whilst it is true that A levels are challenging, the point surely is to raise attainment and achievement of pupils so as to meet that challenge. To fail to do so is to be educationally complacent and lacking in ambition.**

*Regrettably, it appears that the issue at Fortismere, which is a decline in attainment at A/AS level over the past three years,<sup>1</sup> is to be addressed by excluding pupils rather than raising achievement.*

*Further, it appears that some of the reasons behind the changes owe more to how the media reports the results rather than what may be in the best interests of the students. The reasons provided by the Headteacher for the change include how GCSE results are reported: "...the manner in which results are now published – many tables show only the % of students achieving 5 A\*s or As."<sup>2</sup>*

*It is very easy to move up the league tables by excluding students. The challenge is to raise standards of achievement for all students.*

### **4. The proposed requirement for 5 A\*-B's to undertake an AS programme**

*Extensive data exists<sup>3</sup> showing the relationship between pupils' point scores at GCSE and the grades they achieve at AS and A2 in different subjects. This relationship is expressed in terms of the "chances" of a student with an average GCSE score within a particular range of gaining a particular grade, from A to U. For students with an average GCSE score of C, for the majority of subjects the chance of a U grade nationally is in the order of 10%.*

*However, given that other factors also influence results, a good school with good teaching ought to be able to significantly reduce this chance of failure. Even so, this means that 9 out of 10 students will pass A level's on the basis of a C Grade.*

### **5. The proposed requirement for at least Grade C at English and Maths**

*There is a case for requiring a grade of at least C in Maths for student proposing to study sciences and other subjects with a strong numerate component – e.g. Psychology and Economics. There appears little justification to require this for students proposing to study Languages, Arts or the majority of Humanities subjects. The latter group may need to be offered the option of re-taking Maths during year 12, as a Grade C may be a requirement for HE entry or their intended profession. Anecdotal evidence from other institutions suggest that students can*

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<sup>1</sup> Average points per exam entry 2006 – 216, 2005 – 274, 2004 – 277 (DFES)

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of Fortismere Curriculum Committee 29 September 2006.

<sup>3</sup> The best known of these is ALIS (A Level Information Service) run by the University of Durham, and subscribed to by the majority of School Sixth Forms and Sixth Form Colleges

*typically improve by one grade with further maths tuition in year 12, which suggests that a requirement of a minimum of grade D would be justifiable for this latter group.*

**6.     *The proposed requirement for 3 D's to progress to A2***

Since a grade E is a pass grade I can see no justification for this requirement. The final A level grade consists of points earned in both the AS modules and the A2 modules. Even if some students do not further improve their performance, an outcome of two or three full A levels, albeit

at low grades has the potential to significantly improve the student's life chances. On the other hand, such results may not "look good" in the league tables.

**7.     *The proposal for "That there will be some flexibility within these criteria for students who are very close to, but just below, this benchmark."***

This contradicts the core argument that the requirement for A-levels should be 5 GCSEs A\*-B. It falls outside the statutory requirement of the admissions code for objective and fair entry criteria as the notion of "flexibility" cannot be objective nor is there a definition of what criteria constitutes "close to, but just below, this benchmark."

*Further, it implies that students will be interviewed which is expressly forbidden under the admissions code.*

*This is also proposed for progression to A2 and the same arguments against it apply in relation to objective criteria and the implication that students would be interviewed.*

**8.     *The proposal that " Individual subjects will also have their own criteria which will be updated annually in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form prospectus."***

*This implies that the school can change the admissions policy without due consultation as required by the regulations. It would allow the school to set much higher criteria for entry than that being consulted upon and it is not clear to what subjects it would be applied. It would allow the school to set an admission criteria*

of 5 A's if it wished, making it highly selective and increasing the level of exclusion. The proposal is not objective. I would argue for objective criteria as indicated in my sections above.

## **9. Equal Opportunities**

The changed admissions arrangements would lead to the exclusion of a significant number of students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities. The evidence for this is clearly identified in a report to the Governing Body<sup>4</sup>. Even though the school has identified a plan to raise achievement of these groups, it is quite clear that, even if the plan is appropriate, it will take some time to implement and be effective.

This means that, should the admissions policy be changed, then as students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities come through to Year 12, they will be excluded.

### **Key Stage 3:**

English      "90.7% of White British students achieved L5+. There is a significant discrepancy between the achievement of the 31 Black African and Caribbean Students (80.6%). 43% of EAL students did not achieve L5+ in English."

"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is very significant and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."

Maths      "93.6% of White British students achieved L5+ in Maths. This compares to 67.7% of 31 Black African Caribbean students, a very significant discrepancy. 64.3% of EAL students achieved Level 5+ in Maths."

"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is also very significant in Maths and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."

Science      "92.1% of White British Students achieved L5+ in Maths. This compares to 74.1% of 31 Black African Caribbean Students, a very significant discrepancy. 75.1% of EAL students achieved L5+ in Science."

"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is also very significant in Science's attainment and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."

### **Key Stage 4**

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<sup>4</sup> Minutes of Fortismere Curriculum Committee 29 September 2006.

*Ethnicity      White British students achieved an average total of 431.8 points.  
Asian/Mixed Asian groups an average total of 380.7 points.  
The Black Mixed group an average total of 351.0 points.*

*FSM              Students on free school meals an average total of 352.3 points.*

## **AS/A Levels**

*Ethnicity      “What is most obviously noticeable is that Black African and Caribbean students (and those of mixed heritage) are performing less well than White British students as both AS and A level. This can partly be explained by the levels of prior attainment of the two groups.”*

59. I am writing to object to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to Fortismere Sixth Form.

## **Summary**

The Government's Code of Admissions is intended to ensure that admission authorities “operate in a fair way that promotes social equity and community cohesion.” It is intended to support choice and diversity.

*As outlined below, far from promoting equity and fair access, the changes will reduce choice and diminish the life chances of students by unfairly excluding them. If every child matters then these changes should be rejected and the school should work with the LEA, parents, and the community, to raise the achievement of all students regardless of their background.*

### **1.      The balance of provision in Haringey**

**The current arrangements provide for a comprehensive admissions policy throughout the Borough. Fortismere is the most successful school academically and should, therefore, be best equipped to raise attainment and achievement for all pupils whatever their stage of learning.**

**If the admission arrangements were to be changed then surrounding schools would have disproportionately higher numbers of pupils of lower ability and the requirement to raise attainment will become more challenging.**

### **2.      Government policy is changing**

*The government has signalled its intention to raise the school leaving age to 18. Such a move will increase the pressure on schools in the Borough that have a more open admissions policy than that being proposed by Fortismere.*

### **3. The reason for the change is flawed**

**The proposals claim that the reason for the change is that a programme of A levels is highly challenging. Whilst it is true that A levels are challenging, the point surely is to raise attainment and achievement of pupils so as to meet that challenge. To fail to do so is to be educationally complacent and lacking in ambition.**

*Regrettably, it appears that the issue at Fortismere, which is a decline in attainment at A/AS level over the past three years,<sup>5</sup> is to be addressed by excluding pupils rather than raising achievement.*

*Further, it appears that some of the reasons behind the changes owe more to how the media reports the results rather than what may be in the best interests of the students. The reasons provided by the*

*Headteacher for the change include how GCSE results are reported: "...the manner in which results are now published – many tables show only the % of students achieving 5 A\*s or As."<sup>6</sup>*

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*However, given that other factors also influence results, a good school with good teaching ought to be able to significantly reduce this chance of failure. Even so, this means that 9 out of 10 students will pass A level's on the basis of a C Grade.*

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subjects. The latter group may need to be offered the option of re-taking Maths during year 12, as a Grade C may be a requirement for HE entry or their intended profession. Anecdotal evidence from other institutions suggest that students can typically improve by one grade with further maths tuition in year 12, which suggests that a requirement of a minimum of grade D would be justifiable for this latter group.

#### **6. The proposed requirement for 3 D's to progress to A2**

Since a grade E is a pass grade I can see no justification for this requirement. The final A level grade consists of points earned in both the AS modules and the A2 modules. Even if some students do not further improve their performance, an outcome of two or three full A levels, albeit at low grades has the potential to significantly improve the student's life chances. On the other hand, such results may not "look good" in the league tables.

#### **7. The proposal for "That there will be some flexibility within these criteria for students who are very close to, but just below, this benchmark."**

This contradicts the core argument that the requirement for A-levels should be 5 GCSEs A\*-B. It falls outside the statutory requirement of the admissions code for objective and fair entry criteria

as the notion of "flexibility" cannot be objective nor is there a definition of what criteria constitutes "close to, but just below, this benchmark."

*Further, it implies that students will be interviewed which is expressly forbidden under the admissions code.*

*This is also proposed for progression to A2 and the same arguments against it apply in relation to objective criteria and the implication that students would be interviewed.*

#### **8. The proposal that " Individual subjects will also have their own criteria which will be updated annually in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form prospectus."**

*This implies that the school can change the admissions policy without due consultation as required by the regulations. It would allow the school to set much higher criteria for entry than that being consulted upon and it is not clear to what subjects it would be applied. It would allow the school to set an admission criteria of 5 A's if it wished, making it highly selective and increasing the level of exclusion. The proposal is not objective. I would argue for objective criteria as indicated in my sections above.*

## 9. Equal Opportunities

The changed admissions arrangements would lead to the exclusion of a significant number of students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities. The evidence for this is clearly identified in a report to the Governing Body<sup>8</sup>. Even though the school has identified a plan to raise achievement of these groups, it is quite clear that, even if the plan is appropriate, it will take some time to implement and be effective.

This means that, should the admissions policy be changed, then as students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities come through to Year 12, they will be excluded.

### Key Stage 3:

**English** "90.7% of White British students achieved L5+. There is a significant discrepancy between the achievement of the 31 Black African and Caribbean Students (80.6%). 43% of EAL students did not achieve L5+ in English."

"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is very significant and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."

**Maths** "93.6% of White British students achieved L5+ in Maths. This compares to 67.7% of 31 Black African Caribbean students, a very significant discrepancy. 64.3% of EAL students achieved Level 5+ in Maths."

"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is also very significant in Maths and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."

**Science** "92.1% of White British Students achieved L5+ in Maths. This compares to 74.1% of 31 Black African Caribbean Students, a very significant discrepancy. 75.1% of EAL students achieved L5+ in Science."

"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is also very significant in Science's attainment and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."

### Key Stage 4

**Ethnicity** White British students achieved an average total of 431.8 points.  
Asian/Mixed Asian groups an average total of 380.7 points.  
The Black Mixed group an average total of 351.0 points.

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<sup>8</sup> Minutes of Fortismere Curriculum Committee 29 September 2006.

FSM

*Students on free school meals an average total of 352.3 points.*

### **AS/A Levels**

*Ethnicity*

*“What is most obviously noticeable is that Black African and Caribbean students (and those of mixed heritage) are performing less well than White British students as both AS and A level. This can partly be explained by the levels of prior attainment of the two groups.”*



60. We are writing to register our strong opposition to the proposals for changes to sixth form admissions criteria at Fortismere School.

They seem likely to breach the National Code on Admissions and are based on the unethical-and educationally unsound- idea that excluding some pupils from A level work will improve 'standards' in the sixth form.

The idea is unethical because it will remove the possibility of success at A levels for a substantial group of pupils with a good chance of prospering in the examination skew admissions policies to sixth forms across Haringey -probably affect pupils from minorities disproportionately, including those on free school meals and minority ethnic groups

The idea is educationally unsound because it is built on the belief that to improve attainment at A level all you have to do is to exclude pupils who have not achieved well above the average in an earlier phase of their education. It suggests that the Fortismere governors and school leaders do not feel that the teachers they have are competent to add value to the attainment of such pupils in the sixth form.

If the proposal is accepted, they will presumably wish to implement the policy further. If, for example, GCSE scores go down at any time, their logic suggests that they should then try for some restrictions on admissions at 11.

We have an affection for Fortismere School. Both our daughters were educated there, from 11 to 18. They are as shocked as we are about the proposal which they feel will alter the character of what has been very much a community school. They have seen good teaching there dramatically improve results for pupils who had not prospered elsewhere.

The governors will have a far more serious problem than the drop in A level scores if they persist in this policy. The good teachers, who care very much about equity, will leave and they will have a hard job replacing them.

Please forward our comments to those deciding on Fortismere School's proposal.

61. I currently have 2 children at Fortismere, one in Yr 12 and one in Yr 10. I am writing to object to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to Fortismere Sixth Form.

### **Summary**

The Government's Code of Admissions is intended to ensure that admission authorities "operate in a fair way that promotes social equity and community cohesion." It is intended to support choice and diversity.

*As outlined below, far from promoting equity and fair access, the changes will reduce choice and diminish the life chances of students by unfairly excluding them. If every child matters then these changes should be rejected and the school should work with the LEA, parents, and the community, to raise the achievement of all students regardless of their background.*

### **1. The balance of provision in Haringey**

**The current arrangements provide for a comprehensive admissions policy throughout the Borough. Fortismere is the most successful school academically and**

**should, therefore, be best equipped to raise attainment and achievement for all pupils whatever their stage of learning.**

**If the admission arrangements were to be changed then surrounding schools would have disproportionately higher numbers of pupils of lower ability and the requirement to raise attainment will become more challenging.**

### **2. The reason for the change is flawed**

**The proposals claim that the reason for the change is that a programme of A levels is highly challenging. Whilst it is true that A levels are challenging, the point is to raise attainment and achievement of pupils so as to meet that challenge. To fail to do so is to be educationally complacent and lacking in ambition.**

*It is very easy to move up the league tables by excluding students. The challenge is to raise standards of achievement for all students.*

### **3. The proposed requirement for 5 A\*-B's to undertake an AS programme**

*Data exists showing the relationship between pupils' point scores at GCSE and the grades they achieve at AS and A2 in different subjects. This relationship is expressed in terms of the "chances" of a student with an average GCSE score within a particular range of gaining a particular grade, from A to U. For students with an average GCSE score of C, for the majority of subjects the chance of a U grade nationally is in the order of 10%.*

*However, given that other factors also influence results, a good school with good teaching ought to be able to significantly reduce this chance of failure. Even so, this means that 9 out of 10 students will pass A level's on the basis of a C Grade.*

### **4. The proposed requirement for at least Grade C at English and Maths**

*There is a case for requiring a grade of at least C in Maths for student proposing to study sciences and other subjects with a strong numerate component – e.g.*

*Psychology and Economics. There appears little justification to require this for students proposing to study Languages, Arts of the majority of Humanities subjects. The latter group may need to be offered the option of re-taking Maths during year 12, as a Grade C may be a requirement for HE entry or their intended profession. Anecdotal evidence from other institutions suggest that students can typically improve by one grade with further maths tuition in year 12, which suggests that a requirement of a minimum of grade D would be justifiable for this latter group.*

**5. The proposed requirement for 3 D's to progress to A2**

Since a grade E is a pass grade I can see no justification for this requirement. The final A level grade consists of points earned in both the AS modules and the A2 modules. Even if some students do not further improve their performance, an outcome of two or three full A levels,

albeit at low grades has the potential to significantly improve the student's life chances. On the other hand, such results may not "look good" in the league tables.

**6. The proposal for "That there will be some flexibility within these criteria for students who are very close to, but just below, this benchmark."**

This contradicts the core argument that the requirement for A-levels should be 5 GCSEs A\*-B. It falls outside the statutory requirement of the admissions code for objective and fair entry criteria

as the notion of "flexibility" cannot be objective nor is there a definition of what criteria constitutes "close to, but just below, this benchmark."

*Further, it implies that students will be interviewed which is expressly forbidden under the admissions code.*

*This is also proposed for progression to A2 and the same arguments against it apply in relation to objective criteria and the implication that students would be interviewed.*

**7. The proposal that " Individual subjects will also have their own criteria which will be updated annually in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form prospectus."**

*This implies that the school can change the admissions policy without due consultation as required by the regulations. It would allow the school to set much higher criteria for entry than that being consulted upon and it is not clear to what subjects it would be applied. It would allow the school to set an admission criteria of 5 A's if it wished, making it highly selective and increasing the level of exclusion. The proposal is not objective. I would argue for objective criteria as indicated in my sections above.*

## **8. Equal Opportunities**

*The changed admissions arrangements would lead to the exclusion of a significant number of students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities. The evidence for this is clearly identified in a report to the Governing Body<sup>9</sup>. Even though the school has identified a plan to raise achievement of these groups, it is quite clear that, even if the plan is appropriate, it will take some time to implement and be effective.*

*This means that, should the admissions policy be changed, then as students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities come through to Year 12, they will be excluded.*

*I trust these factors will be considered.*

## **62. Below is my objection to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to Fortismere Sixth Form.**

## **Summary**

The Government's Code of Admissions is intended to ensure that admission authorities "operate in a fair way that promotes social equity and community cohesion." It is intended to support choice and diversity.

As outlined below, far from promoting equity and fair access, the changes will reduce choice and diminish the life chances of students by unfairly excluding them. If every child matters then these

changes should be rejected and the school should work with the LEA, parents, and the community, to raise the achievement of all students regardless of their background.

### **1. The balance of provision in Haringey**

The current arrangements provide for a comprehensive admissions policy throughout the Borough. Fortismere is the most successful school academically and should, therefore, be best equipped to raise attainment and achievement for all pupils whatever their stage of learning.

If the admission arrangements were to be changed then surrounding schools would have disproportionately higher numbers of pupils of lower ability and the requirement to raise attainment will become more challenging.

### **2. Government policy is changing**

The government has signalled its intention to raise the school leaving age to 18. Such a move will increase the pressure on schools in the Borough that have a more open admissions policy than that being proposed by Fortismere.

### **3. The reason for the change is flawed**

The proposals claim that the reason for the change is that a programme of A levels is highly challenging. Whilst it is true that A levels are challenging, the point surely is to raise attainment and achievement of pupils so as to meet that challenge. To fail to do so is to be educationally complacent and lacking in ambition.

Regrettably, it appears that the issue at Fortismere, which is a decline in attainment at A/AS level over the past three years, is to be addressed by excluding pupils rather than raising achievement.

Further, it appears that some of the reasons behind the changes owe more to how the media reports the results rather than what may be in the best interests of the students. The reasons provided by the Headteacher for the change include how GCSE results are reported: "...the manner in which results are now published – many tables show only the % of students achieving 5 A\*s or As."

It is very easy to move up the league tables by excluding students. The challenge is to raise standards of achievement for all students.

### **4. The proposed requirement for 5 A\*-B's to undertake an AS programme**

Extensive data exists showing the relationship between pupils' point scores at GCSE and the grades they achieve at AS and A2 in different subjects. This relationship is expressed in terms of

the "chances" of a student with an average GCSE score within a particular range of gaining a particular grade, from A to U. For students with an average GCSE score of C, for the majority of subjects the chance of a U grade nationally is in the order of 10%.

However, given that other factors also influence results, a good school with good teaching ought to be able to significantly reduce this chance of failure. Even so, this means that 9 out of 10 students will pass A level's on the basis of a C Grade.

## **5. The proposed requirement for at least Grade C at English and Maths**

There is a case for requiring a grade of at least C in Maths for student proposing to study

sciences and other subjects with a strong numerate component – e.g. Psychology and Economics. There appears little justification to require this for students proposing to study Languages, Arts of the majority of Humanities subjects. The latter group may need to be offered the option of re-taking Maths during year 12, as a Grade C may be a requirement for HE entry or their intended profession. Anecdotal evidence from other institutions suggest that students can typically improve by one grade with further maths tuition in year 12, which suggests that a requirement of a minimum of grade D would be justifiable for this latter group.

## **6. The proposed requirement for 3 D's to progress to A2**

Since a grade E is a pass grade I can see no justification for this requirement. The final A level grade consists of points earned in both the AS modules and the A2 modules. Even if some students do not further improve their performance, an outcome of two or three full A levels, albeit at low grades has the potential to significantly improve the student's life chances. On the other hand, such results may not "look good" in the league tables.

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This is also proposed for progression to A2 and the same arguments against it apply in relation to objective criteria and the implication that students would be interviewed.

**8. The proposal that “ Individual subjects will also have their own criteria which will be updated annually in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form prospectus.”**

This implies that the school can change the admissions policy without due consultation as required by the regulations. It would allow the school to set much higher criteria for entry than that being consulted upon and it is not clear to what subjects it would be applied. It would allow the school to set an admission criteria of 5 A's if it wished, making it highly selective and increasing the level of exclusion. The proposal is not objective. I would argue for objective criteria as indicated in my sections above.

63. I am writing to object to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to Fortismere Sixth Form.

**Summary**

The Government's Code of Admissions is intended to ensure that admission authorities “operate in a fair way that promotes social equity and community cohesion.” It is intended to support choice and diversity.

As outlined below, far from promoting equity and fair access, the changes will reduce choice and diminish the life chances of students by unfairly excluding them. If every child matters then these

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and achievement of pupils so as to meet that challenge. To fail to do so is to be educationally complacent and lacking in ambition.

Regrettably, it appears that the issue at Fortismere, which is a decline in attainment at A/AS level over the past three years,[1] <#\_ftn1> is to be addressed by excluding pupils rather than raising achievement.

Further, it appears that some of the reasons behind the changes owe more to how the media reports the results rather than what may be in the best interests of the students. The reasons

provided by the Headteacher for the change include how GCSE results are reported: "...the manner in which results are now published – many tables show only the % of students achieving 5 A\*s or As." [2] <#\_ftn2>

It is very easy to move up the league tables by excluding students. The challenge is to raise standards of achievement for all students.

### **4. The proposed requirement for 5 A\*-B's to undertake an AS programme**

Extensive data exists[3] <#\_ftn3> showing the relationship between pupils' point scores at GCSE and the grades they achieve at AS and A2 in different subjects.

This relationship is expressed in terms of the "chances" of a student with an average GCSE score within a particular range of gaining a particular grade, from A to U. For students with an average GCSE score of C, for the majority of subjects the chance of a U grade nationally is in the order of 10%.

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#### **9. Equal Opportunities**

The changed admissions arrangements would lead to the exclusion of a significant number of students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities. The evidence for this is clearly identified in a report to the Governing Body[4] <#\_ftn4> . Even though the school has identified a plan to raise achievement of these groups, it is quite clear that, even if the plan is appropriate, it will take some time to implement and be effective.

This means that, should the admissions policy be changed, then as students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities come through to Year 12, they will be excluded.

#### **Key Stage 3:**

English “90.7% of White British students achieved L5+. There is a significant discrepancy between the achievement of the 31 Black African and Caribbean Students (80.6%). 43% of EAL students did not achieve L5+ in English.”

“The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is very significant and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement.”

Maths “93.6% of White British students achieved L5+ in Maths. This compares to 67.7% of 31 Black African Caribbean students, a very significant discrepancy. 64.3% of EAL students achieved Level 5+ in Maths.”

“The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is also very significant in Maths and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement.”

Science “92.1% of White British Students achieved L5+ in Maths. This compares to 74.1% of 31 Black African Caribbean Students, a very significant discrepancy. 75.1% of EAL students achieved L5+ in Science.”

“The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is also very significant in Science’s attainment and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement.”

## **Key Stage 4**

Ethnicity            White British students achieved an average total of 431.8 points.  
Asian/Mixed Asian groups an average total of 380.7 points.  
The Black Mixed group an average total of 351.0 points.

FSM                   Students on free school meals an average total of 352.3 points.

## **AS/A Levels**

Ethnicity            “What is most obviously noticeable is that Black African and Caribbean students (and those of mixed heritage) are performing less well than White British students as both AS and A level. This can partly be explained by the levels of prior attainment of the two groups.”

64. I am the mother of two boys attending Fortismere School and I am writing to object to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to Fortismere Sixth Form.

## **Summary**

The Government's Code of Admissions is intended to ensure that admission authorities “operate in a fair way that promotes social equity and community cohesion.” It is intended to support choice and diversity.

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### **2.     *Government policy is changing***

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**The proposals claim that the reason for the change is that a programme of A levels is highly challenging. Whilst it is true that A levels are challenging, the point surely is to raise attainment and achievement of pupils so as to meet that challenge. To fail to do so is to be educationally complacent and lacking in ambition.**

*Regrettably, it appears that the issue at Fortismere, which is a decline in attainment at A/AS level over the past three years,<sup>10</sup> is to be addressed by excluding pupils rather than raising achievement.*

*Further, it appears that some of the reasons behind the changes owe more to how the media reports the results rather than what may be in the best interests of the students. The reasons provided by the Headteacher for the change include how GCSE results are reported: "...the manner in which results are now published – many tables show only the % of students achieving 5 A\*s or As."<sup>11</sup>*

*It is very easy to move up the league tables by excluding students. The challenge is to raise standards of achievement for all students.*

### **4. The proposed requirement for 5 A\*-B's to undertake an AS programme**

*Extensive data exists<sup>12</sup> showing the relationship between pupils' point scores at GCSE and the grades they achieve at AS and A2 in different subjects. This relationship is expressed in terms of the "chances" of a student with an average GCSE score within a particular range of gaining a particular grade, from A to U. For students with an average GCSE score of C, for the majority of subjects the chance of a U grade nationally is in the order of 10%.*

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<sup>10</sup> Average points per exam entry 2006 – 216, 2005 – 274, 2004 – 277 (DFES)

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of Fortismere Curriculum Committee 29 September 2006.

<sup>12</sup> The best known of these is ALIS (A Level Information Service) run by the University of Durham, and subscribed to by the majority of School Sixth Forms and Sixth Form Colleges

*suggests that a requirement of a minimum of grade D would be justifiable for this latter group.*

#### **6.     *The proposed requirement for 3 D's to progress to A2***

Since a grade E is a pass grade I can see no justification for this requirement. The final A level grade consists of points earned in both the AS modules and the A2 modules. Even if some

students do not further improve their performance, an outcome of two or three full A levels, albeit at low grades has the potential to significantly improve the student's life chances. On the other hand, such results may not "look good" in the league tables.

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*Further, it implies that students will be interviewed which is expressly forbidden under the admissions code.*

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#### **8.     *The proposal that " Individual subjects will also have their own criteria which will be updated annually in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form prospectus."***

*This implies that the school can change the admissions policy without due consultation as required by the regulations. It would allow the school to set much higher criteria for entry than that being consulted upon and it is not clear to what subjects it would be applied. It would allow the school to set an admission criteria of 5 A's if it wished, making it highly selective and increasing the level of exclusion. The proposal is not objective. I would argue for objective criteria as indicated in my sections above.*

#### **9.     *Equal Opportunities***

*The changed admissions arrangements would lead to the exclusion of a significant number of students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities. The evidence for this is clearly identified in a report to the Governing Body<sup>13</sup>. Even though the school has identified a plan to raise achievement of these groups, it is quite clear that, even if the plan is appropriate, it will take some time to implement and be effective.*

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### **Key Stage 3:**

English	<p><i>"90.7% of White British students achieved L5+. There is a significant discrepancy between the achievement of the 31 Black African and Caribbean Students (80.6%). 43% of EAL students did not achieve L5+ in English."</i></p> <p><i>"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is very significant and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."</i></p>
Maths	<p><i>"93.6% of White British students achieved L5+ in Maths. This compares to 67.7% of 31 Black African Caribbean students, a very significant discrepancy. 64.3% of EAL students achieved Level 5+ in Maths."</i></p> <p><i>"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is also very significant in Maths and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."</i></p>
Science	<p><i>"92.1% of White British Students achieved L5+ in Maths. This compares to 74.1% of 31 Black African Caribbean Students, a very significant discrepancy. 75.1% of EAL students achieved L5+ in Science."</i></p> <p><i>"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is also very significant in Science's attainment and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."</i></p>

### **Key Stage 4**

Ethnicity	<p><i>White British students achieved an average total of 431.8 points. Asian/Mixed Asian groups an average total of 380.7 points. The Black Mixed group an average total of 351.0 points.</i></p>
FSM	<p><i>Students on free school meals an average total of 352.3 points.</i></p>

### **AS/A Levels**

Ethnicity	<p><i>"What is most obviously noticeable is that Black African and Caribbean students (and those of mixed heritage) are performing less well than White British students as both AS and A level. This can partly be explained by the levels of prior attainment of the two groups."</i></p>
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65. We are against the proposals in admission criteria for the following reasons:

1. This would create undue pressure on other local 6th forms which have a more open admissions policy.

2. If these changes were implemented Fortismere would fail in its role as a comprehensive school for local children who did not achieve 5 ABs at GCSE and who would have to travel further from home. Furthermore statistics show that 90% of students who achieve a grade C at GCSE go on to achieve an A level in the subject.

3. Individual students develop at different rates and the proposed admissions policy makes no allowance for this. Personally, I failed to achieve 5 C's at GCSE but gained 3 A's at A level. This opportunity should be open to all. Rather than operate such an exclusion policy surely it would be better to focus on raising levels of attainment for all students to enable them to achieve their full potential

66. In reply to your letter of Feb 6<sup>th</sup> I wish to object to the proposals to change the entry requirements for A level courses for September 2008. My son is at present in year 10 so due to take his GCSEs in 2008 and apply for the sixth form for 2008. The reasons for my objections are as follows:

**1. It is unfair to the present students in Year 10 as not sufficient time has been allowed for them to adapt to these stringent requirements.**

Year 10 students have already commenced the run in to their GCSEs and will sit them in 15 months time. Year 10 students and their teachers should know in advance that when year 9 students enter year 10 there will expect to raise standards for entry to the 6<sup>th</sup> form. They should not have to do so half way through year 10.

**2. It is particularly unfair to boys as compared with girls.**

Research shows that girls obtain higher grades than boys in GCSEs.

The nature of many adolescent boys is that they do not apply themselves to schoolwork and achieve the same standards as girls.

It may be predicted therefore that many capable boys will achieve lower grades than the girls and these will include C grades.

**3. Many boys are late academic developers** and once in the sixth form in their 17<sup>th</sup> year they are more inclined to focus on their chosen subjects and work harder.

**4. Where is the evidence to show that these proposals will guarantee higher standards in the 6<sup>th</sup> form.** There is no evidence to suggest that students who obtain C grades do not go on to obtain attain A-C grades in their A levels. Whereas I am sure that there is evidence to show that students can get a A-B grades at GCSE and then get D grades and below at A level

**4. What will happen to those boys** who are predicted to obtain A to B grades and for some reason, e.g. exam nerves, only get Cs. They have spent 5 years at Fortismere and will now be prevented from entering the 6<sup>th</sup> form. What provision is made for them? Where do they go to gain access to A levels and then higher education.

**5. Have the school taken action to ensure that more boys obtain higher grades?**

As a parent who has his seen his three boys studying at Fortismere I think more can be done in this area before these proposals are considered.. For example:

(a) Has Fortismere reduced the class sizes from the current 30 students in a class; a number which mitigates against better teaching and learning as teachers cannot spend time with individual pupils in their rush to complete the national curriculum.

(b) Has Fortismere ensured that all their teachers are specialists in their subjects, graduates with a PGCE ?

(c). Does Fortismere have a planned mentoring programme for its new young teachers?

In my experience it has none of these things.

6. **It seems contrary to future government policy** in which Alan Johnson, the Education Secretary, has put forward proposals to raise the school leaving age to 18. What will happen then

to all the 16 olds then with their GCSE C grades ? Will the entry level to 6<sup>th</sup> forms be lowered to E grades? It is something to consider.

7. This proposal seems to be more designed to attain a higher position in the League tables than to encourage the further and higher education of the students.

8. At the present time I think it is an **unfair exclusion policy** that the school is trying to bring in.

9. Though I would support the intention of Fortismere to raise standards there is no reason why the school cannot do so without excluding pupils from entry to the Sixth form by this means. In which case leave things as they are and try to improve the learning environment and the quality of the teaching.

**If the proposals are approved** then I would argue they should not be implemented until **2009** – it would be unfair to the present year 10 students not to do so - and only then if the school can re-assure parents and pupils that they can provide a learning environment which will ensure that all its students can attain higher standards.

67. As parents of two students at Fortismere School we are writing to object to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to the Sixth Form.

Having read the proposals and accompanying arguments on the *Keep Fortismere Comprehensive* website, we believe that the following points sum up why we are against the proposed change.

1. The proposals will change the ethos of the school from an all inclusive to a selective one. We specifically chose Fortismere as our local community school as we wanted our children to be educated with their friends from primary school irrespective of their academic ability.
2. The proposed change will discriminate against those who develop their academic abilities after age 16. (One of us only passed two O levels the first time round but then subsequently went on to get A levels, a BSc, MSc and ultimately a PhD. Having to leave a local school and
3. go to a college with no familiar faces was a scary experience and involved separation unnecessarily from friends made at an early age.)

4. It seems upside down to change the intake of a school to raise its achievement rather than to help all the students to achieve to the best of their ability thereby raising achievement overall.
5. It is fundamentally beyond us why a local community school would put itself in a position to exclude students who wish to continue their learning. There is a national move to encourage young people to continue studying and an emphasis on personalised learning so, automatically excluding them from their local school in our view, is not in their best interests. Furthermore such a move is likely to discriminate against those who most need the local community's support to continue their education.

We feel that our children have benefited from the diverse communities served by the two Haringey primary schools they attended and want the same from their secondary school. While this change of admission arrangements would probably not prevent either of them from continuing into the Sixth Form at Fortismere, we think it would adversely affect the quality of their broader educational experience and discriminate totally unnecessarily against the life chances of some of their peers.

We hope that these comments are taken on board and that the admissions arrangements for Fortismere Sixth Form remain the same as for all of Haringey's community schools.

68. I am writing as a parent in reply to your letter regarding the change of entry level for Fortismere School.

There are a few points I would like the Authority to take into consideration:-

Firstly:- there have been indications that there are forces at work which point to Fortismere becoming more selective. Of course raising the entry level for the sixth form is a form of selectivity. I feel this only serves as a means of raising the schools place in the league tables. It seems that the interests of the school have become more important than the interests of its pupils. Surely education's purpose is to educate the pupils. To get better results at the school should the school therefore not concentrate on better education in order to improve its standard rather than weeding out the so called 'weaker' students and make it appear that the school is doing well? This to me seems to be the exact opposite of what education should be about.

My children went to Fortismere because it is their local school and we chose it because it provided a continuity right from year 7 to year 13. To change the rules halfway through a child's education seems unjust. Surely the new rule should only be brought in for new students to Fortismere.

Lastly I would like to point out that I know many pupils who are having private tuition in order to get themselves up to the desired level of entry. I feel this discriminates against children who come from backgrounds where people can not afford private tuition. This makes a mockery of the whole idea of equal education for all. A child who has managed to achieve A-C levels on their own will be asked to leave whereas students who have achieved A-B with help of private tutors will be allowed to continue their education at Fortismere. This seems to be very unfair.

69. I am writing to object to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to Fortismere Sixth Form.

I agree with the concerns below raised by the Keep Fortismere Comprehensive Group and as the parent of a black child, who achieved all level 5's at key stage 2 SATs and subsequently when on to achieve only level 5 in English following three years at Fortismere, my concerns with regard to achievement in relation to ethnic groups at GCSE as raised in point 9 are obviously heightened.

I think that the proposed changes are not in the best interest of Fortismere pupils.

Please keep me informed.

## **Summary**

The Government's Code of Admissions is intended to ensure that admission authorities "operate in a fair way that promotes social equity and community cohesion." It is intended to support choice and diversity.

*As outlined below, far from promoting equity and fair access, the changes will reduce choice and diminish the life chances of students by unfairly excluding them. If every child matters then these changes should be rejected and the school should work with the LEA, parents, and the community, to raise the achievement of all students regardless of their background.*

### **1. The balance of provision in Haringey**

**The current arrangements provide for a comprehensive admissions policy throughout the Borough. Fortismere is the most successful school academically and should, therefore, be best equipped to raise attainment and achievement for all pupils whatever their stage of learning.**

**If the admission arrangements were to be changed then surrounding schools would have disproportionately higher numbers of pupils of lower ability and the requirement to raise attainment will become more challenging.**

### **2. Government policy is changing**

*The government has signalled its intention to raise the school leaving age to 18. Such a move will increase the pressure on schools in the Borough that have a more open admissions policy than that being proposed by Fortismere.*

### **3. The reason for the change is flawed**

**The proposals claim that the reason for the change is that a programme of A levels is highly challenging. Whilst it is true that A levels are challenging, the point surely is to raise attainment and achievement of pupils so as to meet that challenge. To fail to do so is to be educationally complacent and lacking in ambition.**

*Regrettably, it appears that the issue at Fortismere, which is a decline in attainment at A/AS level over the past three years,<sup>14</sup> is to be addressed by excluding pupils rather than raising achievement.*

*Further, it appears that some of the reasons behind the changes owe more to how the media reports the results rather than what may be in the best interests of the students. The reasons provided by the*

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<sup>14</sup> Average points per exam entry 2006 – 216, 2005 – 274, 2004 – 277 (DFES)

Headteacher for the change include how GCSE results are reported: "...the manner in which results are now published – many tables show only the % of students achieving 5 A\*s or As."<sup>15</sup>

It is very easy to move up the league tables by excluding students. The challenge is to raise standards of achievement for all students.

#### **4. The proposed requirement for 5 A\*-B's to undertake an AS programme**

Extensive data exists<sup>16</sup> showing the relationship between pupils' point scores at GCSE and the grades they achieve at AS and A2 in different subjects. This relationship is expressed in terms of the "chances" of a student with an average GCSE score within a particular range of gaining a particular grade, from A to U.

For students with an average GCSE score of C, for the majority of subjects the chance of a U grade nationally is in the order of 10%.

However, given that other factors also influence results, a good school with good teaching ought to be able to significantly reduce this chance of failure. Even so, this means that 9 out of 10 students will pass A level's on the basis of a C Grade.

#### **5. The proposed requirement for at least Grade C at English and Maths**

There is a case for requiring a grade of at least C in Maths for student proposing to study sciences and other subjects with a strong numerate component – e.g. Psychology and Economics. There appears little justification to require this for students proposing to study Languages, Arts or the majority of Humanities subjects. The latter group may need to be offered the option of re-taking Maths during year 12, as a Grade C may be a requirement for HE entry or their intended profession. Anecdotal evidence from other institutions suggest that students can typically improve by one grade with further maths tuition in year 12, which suggests that a requirement of a minimum of grade D would be justifiable for this latter group.

#### **6. The proposed requirement for 3 D's to progress to A2**

Since a grade E is a pass grade I can see no justification for this requirement. The final A level grade consists of points earned in both the AS modules and the A2 modules. Even if some students do not further improve their performance, an outcome of two or three full A levels,

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<sup>15</sup> Minutes of Fortismere Curriculum Committee 29 September 2006.

<sup>16</sup> The best known of these is ALIS (A Level Information Service) run by the University of Durham, and subscribed to by the majority of School Sixth Forms and Sixth Form Colleges



albeit at low grades has the potential to significantly improve the student's life chances. On the other hand, such results may not "look good" in the league tables.

**7.     *The proposal for "That there will be some flexibility within these criteria for students who are very close to, but just below, this benchmark."***

This contradicts the core argument that the requirement for A-levels should be 5 GCSEs A\*-B. It falls outside the statutory requirement of the admissions code for objective and fair entry criteria

as the notion of "flexibility" cannot be objective nor is there a definition of what criteria constitutes "close to, but just below, this benchmark."

Further, it implies that students will be interviewed which is expressly forbidden under the admissions code.

This is also proposed for progression to A2 and the same arguments against it apply in relation to objective criteria and the implication that students would be interviewed.

**8. The proposal that “ Individual subjects will also have their own criteria which will be updated annually in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form prospectus.”**

This implies that the school can change the admissions policy without due consultation as required by the regulations. It would allow the school to set much higher criteria for entry than that being consulted upon and it is not clear to what subjects it would be applied. It would allow the school to set an admission criteria of 5 A's if it wished, making it highly selective and increasing the level of exclusion. The proposal is not objective. I would argue for objective criteria as indicated in my sections above.

**9. Equal Opportunities**

The changed admissions arrangements would lead to the exclusion of a significant number of students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities. The evidence for this is clearly identified in a report to the Governing Body<sup>17</sup>. Even though the school has identified a plan to raise achievement of these groups, it is quite clear that, even if the plan is appropriate, it will take some time to implement and be effective.

This means that, should the admissions policy be changed, then as students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities come through to Year 12, they will be excluded.

**Key Stage 3:**

English      “90.7% of White British students achieved L5+. There is a significant discrepancy between the achievement of the 31 Black African and Caribbean Students (80.6%). 43% of EAL students did not achieve L5+ in English.”

“The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is very significant and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement.”

Maths      “93.6% of White British students achieved L5+ in Maths. This compares to 67.7% of 31 Black African Caribbean students, a very significant discrepancy. 64.3% of EAL students achieved Level 5+ in Maths.”

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<sup>17</sup> Minutes of Fortismere Curriculum Committee 29 September 2006.

*"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is also very significant in Maths and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."*

Science      *"92.1% of White British Students achieved L5+ in Maths. This compares to 74.1% of 31 Black African Caribbean Students, a very significant discrepancy. 75.1% of EAL students achieved L5+ in Science."*

*"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is also very significant in Science's attainment and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."*

#### **Key Stage 4**

Ethnicity      *White British students achieved an average total of 431.8 points. Asian/Mixed Asian groups an average total of 380.7 points. The Black Mixed group an average total of 351.0 points.*

FSM              *Students on free school meals an average total of 352.3 points.*

#### **AS/A Levels**

Ethnicity      *"What is most obviously noticeable is that Black African and Caribbean students (and those of mixed heritage) are performing less well than White British students as both AS and A level. This can partly be explained by the levels of prior attainment of the two groups."*

70. As a parent of 2 children at Fortismere I feel strongly that the sixth form admission criteria should remain as 5 A\*-C grades (with B as a required pass grade for specific subjects). This would keep the school in line with the other secondary schools in the borough.

Whilst I am broadly in agreement that a pupil should not be encouraged to take on a course that is beyond their capabilities, I believe that a blanket proposal of 5A\*-B grades would unfairly discriminate against some children already within the school and would favour external candidates who may have been in independent or selective education in years 7-11.

71. Further to our conversation over a week ago, I was alarmed to find that no one of my acquaintance had any idea that there was a consultation process going on. Whose job was it to inform us?

I would like to register my concern over the proposals to the changes to the entry requirements to sixth form and to staying on after AS levels.

My son is in his first year of GCSEs. He is very anxious that he will not be allowed to stay on at sixth form. He feels that he has made friends, got to know the routines and feels part of the learning community.

He has been working hard but now feels demoralised as he knows that getting 5 Bs is really beyond his reach. Surely children should be encouraged to stay on rather than being told that they can go to a local college. More flexible provision should be made to accommodate children who are motivated but not necessarily as academically able.

Where will all the children who do not get into the sixth form go? Are there enough college places available? Who will fill up the sixth form places instead?

Fortismere is meant to be a comprehensive school and should act accordingly right up to sixth form.

Results at AS levels must be looked at carefully. Why couldn't a pupil retake rather than being told to leave? By the time the results are out it is generally too late to find alternate education. This could ruin a pupil's life chances and most definitely their self-esteem.

I really am appalled by these proposals and the way in which they are being carried out. As a parent I feel I am being left in the dark.

72. I am a parent of two children at Fortismere school and have been attentive to the initiatives of the Governors and the new Head Teacher. I am completely opposed to their ill considered and poorly presented proposals and have little faith in their abilities.

Having been present at a meeting conducted by the Head Teacher I find myself shocked at his appointment and dismayed at his poor record of consulting with parents, staff or students. It appears that his desire to establish stricter entrance requirements for the Sixth Form arise from his own personal ambitions for the School and his desire to establish a reputation for high performance, or as he puts it 'a very unique reputation'.

I strongly believe that Fortismere's policy should be coherent with other schools in Haringey.

This kind of careerist elitism is not appropriate and I do not believe that it is in the interests of the staff (whom he likes to refer to as a 'workforce') or the students.

73. I am writing to object to the proposed change to admissions arrangements to Fortismere Sixth Form.

## **Summary**

The Government's code of Admissions is intended to ensure that admission authorities "operate in a fair way that promotes social equality and community cohesion". It is intended to support choice and diversity.

As outlined below, far from promoting equity and fair access, the changes will reduce choice and diminish the life chances of students by unfairly excluding them. If every child matters then these changes should be rejected and the school should work with the LEA, parents, and the community, to raise the achievement of all students regardless of their background.

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Regrettably, it appears that the issue at Fortismere, which is a decline in attainment at A/AS level over the past three years,<sup>1</sup> is to be addressed by excluding pupils rather than raising achievement.

Further, it appears that some of the reasons behind the changes owe more to how the media reports the results rather than what may be in the best interests of the students. The reasons provided by the Headteacher for the change include how GCSE results are reported: "...the manner in which results are now published – many tables show only the % of students achieving 5 A\*s or As"<sup>2</sup>

It is very easy to move up the league by excluding students. The challenge is to raise standards of achievement for all students.

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The changed admissions arrangements would lead to the exclusion of a significant number of students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities. The evidence for this is clearly identified in a report to the Governing Body<sup>4</sup> Even though the school has identified a plan to raise achievement of these groups, it is quite clear that , even if the plan is appropriate, it will take some time to implement and be effective .

This means that, should the admissions policy be changed, then as students on free school meals and from ethnic minorities come through to Year 12, they will be excluded.

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## Key Stage 3

### English

"90.7% of White British students achieved L5+. There is a significant discrepancy between the achievement of the 31 Black African and Caribbean Students (80.6%). 43% of EAL students did not achieve L5+ in English."

"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is very significant and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."

### Maths

"93.6% of White British students achieved L5+ in Maths. This compares to 67.7% of 31 Black African Caribbean students, a very significant discrepancy. 64.3% of EAL students achieved Level A 5+ in Maths."

"The discrepancy between those who are not eligible for FSM is also very significant in Maths and would suggest that social class has a continued impact on achievement."

### Science

"92.1% of White British students achieved L5+ in Science. This compares to 74.1% of 31 Black African Caribbean students, a very significant discrepancy. 75.1% of EAL students achieved L5+ in Science."

## Key Stage 4

### Ethnicity

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### FSM

Students on free meals an average total of 352.3 points.

## AS/A Levels

### Ethnicity

"What is most obvious noticeable is that Black African and Caribbean students (and those of mixed heritage) are performing less well than White British students as both AS and A level. This can partly be explained by the levels of prior attainment of the two groups."

74. Further to your letter of 6<sup>th</sup> February 2001 I would like to comment on the proposed change to Fortismere Sixth Form admission criteria September 2008. I did hear about it previously but was under the impression that it had already been rejected.

My younger daughter will be entering the Sixth Form next year (she is currently at Fortismere) and both myself and my partner would like to object to the proposed admission criteria on the below grounds:

- It would be a step towards a selective school which I am against in principle as I believe that every child should have the same opportunity to go to a good local school
- Grace Cs are adequate and do not represent an obstacle to succeed at 'A' levels
- There will be increased pressure on other local schools to absorb the children who fail to get into Fortismere Sixth Form
- If a child wants to do 'A' levels they should be encouraged to do so as much as possible.

Please let me know if there is anything else I can do to prevent the school from pushing the proposed admission change through.

75. I am writing to protest in the strongest possible terms about the Fortismere Governing Body's proposals to change the entry criteria to the 6<sup>th</sup> Form from a minimum of 5 grade C and above GCSEs to a minimum of 5 grade Bs.

Here are my reasons:

- The proposal will exclude students who are not able to achieve academically in the highest ability range, but who nevertheless can pass some A levels
- Fortismere is a comprehensive school and this change will make it more selective than is necessary at 6<sup>th</sup> Form level
- The proposal, if accepted, will mark out the school as non-inclusive, at least at 6<sup>th</sup> Form level
- It will discriminate against children with any significant level of academic disability. This is wrong, and goes against national policies designed to prevent such discrimination
- Children who fail to reach these raised entry thresholds would have to seek their ongoing education at other establishments. I believe it would be wrong for Fortismere to abrogate its responsibility to students who have to struggle hard to make progress academically.

These proposals have emerged at the same time as the Governing Body and Head are seeking Foundation Status for the school and taking steps to reduce the school's capacity for and focus on children with special educational needs. In my opinion, the leaders of the school are trying to take it in a direction that smacks of elitism and educational and social selectivity.

This change in the direction of the school is not wanted by all parents with whom I am in contact and is a sinister development in a borough which prides itself on the principles of equality and inclusivity in its educational provision.