

Response from Morpeth School to the consultation to change the admissions procedures to Bow School

Since the abolition of the ILEA all Tower Hamlets Schools have adhered to the same admissions criteria. This has been a major contributory factor in the massive improvement in the borough's achievement levels. All the secondary schools have recognised that the banding system that ensures even the most successful schools cannot "skew" their admissions by taking in more than 25% of the Band D pupils.

Throughout this period there has always been an imbalance in the mixed schools with more boys than girls. (This is largely due to two factors – the existence of three large girls' schools as against three, now two, smaller boys' schools and secondly the preference of many parents for a single-sex school for their daughters). Gender has never been admissible as a selection criterion. Many of the mixed schools could have taken in a completely balanced (50/50) intake, but this was not allowed. It seems quite unfair therefore to allow the new Bow School the "privilege" of a balanced intake, something denied to all other mixed schools. We therefore object to this proposal.

In addition, for those four years when there will be 135 new places for girls, the mixed schools will find it even harder to recruit girls, i.e. they will be discriminated against in order to give Bow an opportunity that none of them have ever had. This seems grossly unfair, if not illegal, given that we have always been told that gender cannot be used as a criterion.

If Bow becomes a mixed school there will be 20/21 forms of entry in single sex girls' schools compared with 10 forms of entry in boys' schools. This will inevitably result in imbalanced mixed schools. Worryingly, this could prove a very negative experience for the girls in the mixed schools. Parents wanting a mixed school have the same entitlement as those wanting a single sex school and, in this context, a school that is 80% boys is not genuinely mixed. It would appear that it may be too late to object to the proposal to go mixed, but we do have major concerns about the overall strategic planning and the impact on mixed schools.

Morpeth School Governing Body