

Ark Academy Admissions - Proposal to Change Oversubscription Criterion

Summary

Ark Academy is proposing to change its oversubscription criterion for admission from a dual to a single point of entry.

For applications to Ark Academy based on distance from the school, 25% of the places are currently allocated to children who live closest to the school using straight line measurement from the main entrance of the school to the main entrance to the child's home. The remaining 75% are allocated to children who live closest to Fawood Children's Centre in Harlesden. This second point of entry is 2.8 kilometres from the school and requires a 35-minute bus journey and, for some children, two separate bus journeys.

There are three rationales for the proposed change: (1) there has been a significant change in circumstances in the London Borough of Brent over the past 10 years, reducing the need for the original admissions criterion; (2) the current criterion have considerable downsides, as accepting pupils from a second catchment area 2.8 kilometres from the school gates has led to persistent punctuality issues, disruption to classes each morning and a resulting negative impact on learning; and (3) the area immediately surrounding Ark Academy remains among the most deprived areas in the country and is currently not being served by the school.

The last public consultation on Ark Academy's admissions criteria was in 2013. Ark Schools is submitting the proposed changes to the admissions policy for public consultation, with responses requested by **21 December 2018**. Taking account of the feedback it receives, Ark Schools will then make a decision on the admissions policy. If approved, the proposed changes would take effect for admissions in September 2020.

1. Changes in Brent schools

Schools in the London Borough of Brent have undergone a significant change in circumstances during the last 10 years and the initial justification for the oversubscription criterion is no longer valid. Contrary to the situation in 2009, there is now a surplus of secondary places in the borough and there are several secondary schools with places in the south of the borough.

In 2009, when planning permission was granted for Ark Academy, Brent was facing a chronic shortage of secondary school places, particularly in the south of the borough centred on the Stonebridge/Harlesden area, with 121 secondary-aged pupils identified as being without a school place. At the time, Brent anticipated that 15 additional form entries (FE) would be required by 2017-18. To meet this need, Brent initiated a rapid programme of school expansion by 19FE. It had already expanded both Preston Manor High School and Claremont High School by 1FE each and, over the next seven years, added an additional 17 FE, either through the expansion of existing secondary schools or the creation of new schools, including:

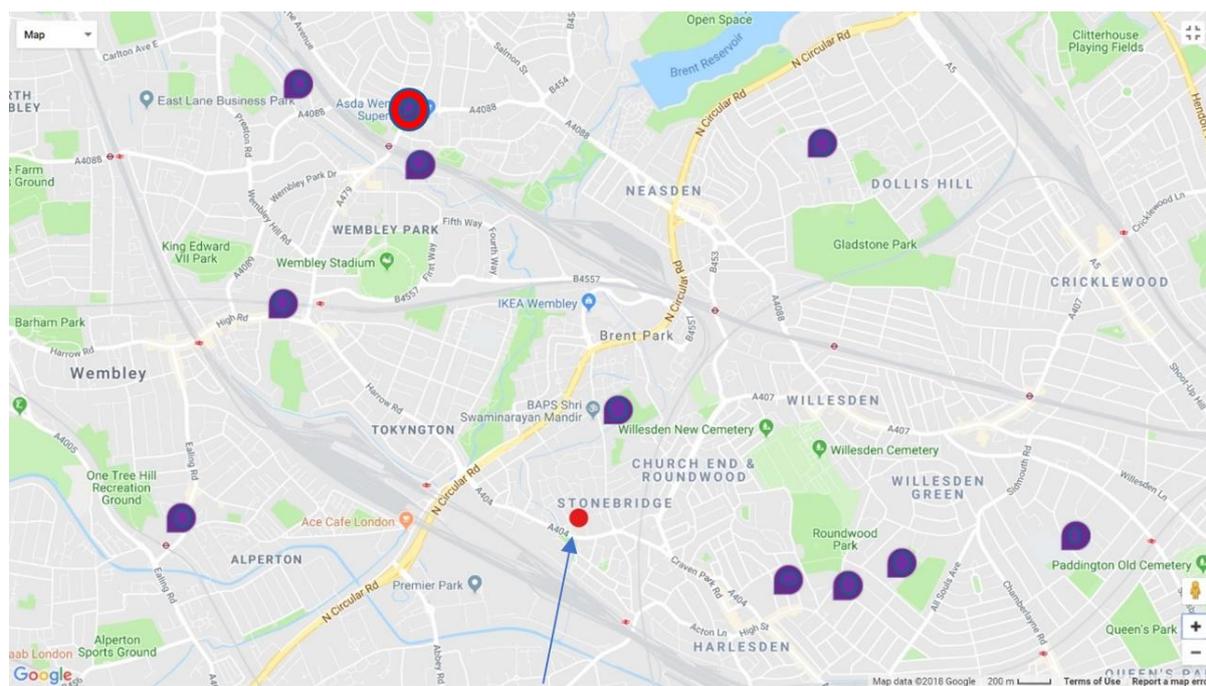
- Alperton Community School – 1FE
- Ark Elvin Academy (formerly Copland Community School) – 1FE
- Capital City Academy – 2FE
- Crest Boys Academy (formerly John Kelly) – 1FE
- Crest Girls Academy (formerly John Kelly) – 1FE
- Michaela Community School – 4FE
- Newman Catholic College – 2FE
- Queen's Park Community School – 2FE

Planning documents from 2009 indicate that Ark Academy's unusual dual point of entry admissions criterion was a temporary measure to address the lack of secondary school places in the south of the borough, but one that could be revisited at a later date. Brent specifically noted that the measure would satisfy "at least the short term needs of the students in the south of the borough, *until further provision can be made in this area.*" (Brent Committee Report, p. 52, emphasis added.)

In September 2017, Brent secondary schools had an admission capacity of over 17,000, an increase of 2,855 places in 10 years, (Brent Secondary School Admission Guide (2017) :

	School	Forms of Entry (FE)	Admission Capacity	Change from 2007
1	Alperton Community School	9	1350	+265
2	Ark Academy	6	900	+900
3	Ark Elvin Academy	8	1200	+0
4	Capital City Academy	6.5	980	+84
5	Claremont High School	9	1350	+241
6	Convent of Jesus & Mary Language College	6	900	+0
7	JFS	10	1500	+0
8	Kingsbury High School	11.2	1680	+135
9	Michaela Community School	4	600	+600
10	Newman Catholic College (formerly Cardinal Hinsley)	5	750	+0
11	Preston Manor High School	8.4	1260	+180
12	Queens Park Community School	7.2	1080	+80
13	St. Gregory's Catholic Science College	6.4	960	+80
14	The Crest Academy	11	1650	+290
15	Wembley High Technology College	7	1050	+0
	TOTAL	114.7	17,210	+2,855

Clearly, Brent had achieved its goal of making ‘further provision’ for the south of the borough. Over half the secondary schools in the borough (indicated in red above) were either closer to the Fawood Children’s Centre in Stonebridge or equidistant as compared to Ark Academy (see map below).



Arrow points to Fawood Community Centre. Ark Academy circled in red.

Four of these schools were under roll in September 2017 and in need of additional pupils (Ark Elvin Academy, Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College, Newman Catholic College and The Crest Academy). Low pupil numbers are a significant risk to Ark Elvin’s financial sustainability and its new building means it has capacity to expand a further 2FE.

Given the number and improving quality of available secondary places closer to Stonebridge, Ark Academy’s dual point of entry admission criterion can no longer be justified.

2. Downsides of Current Oversubscription Criterion

The school’s experience over the past seven years has shown the difficulties that arise from a catchment area 2.8 kilometres from the school. The transport challenges for pupils travelling from south of the

borough are stressful for pupils and families and have led to persistent punctuality issues, disruption to classes each morning and a resulting negative impact on learning. The large distance between these families and the school also acts as a major barrier to engagement by parents.

Transportation Challenges

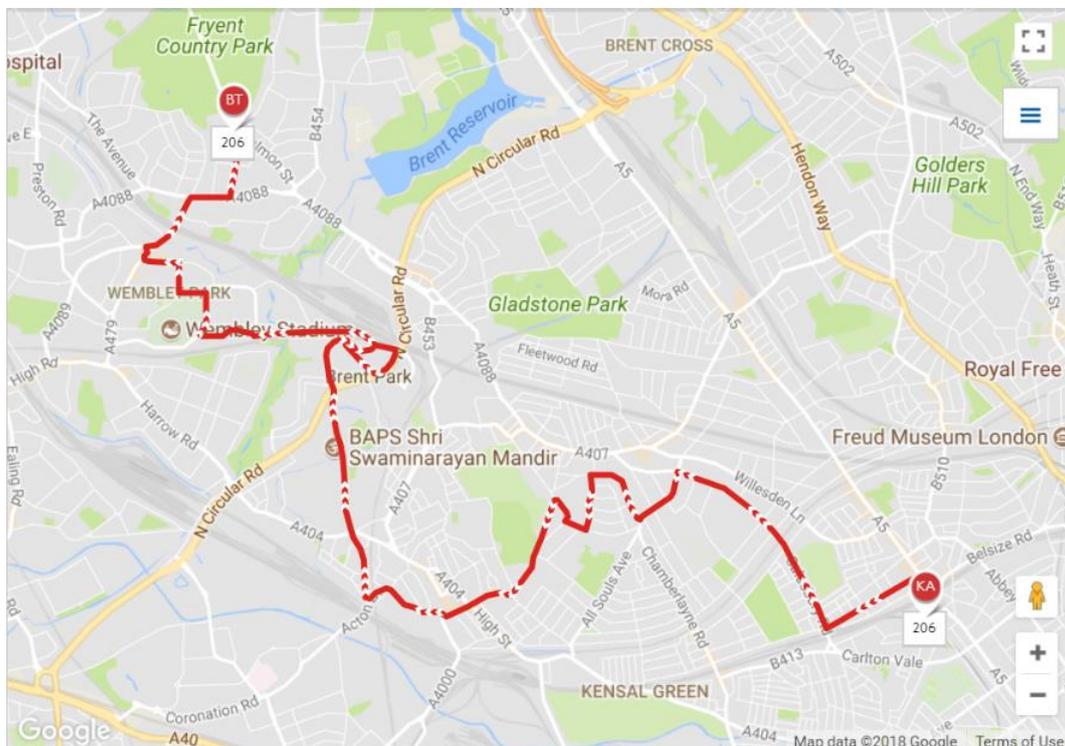
The considerable transport challenges for the Stonebridge cohort were highlighted during the planning process in 2008-9. A transport assessment in March 2009 noted that based on the percentage of pupils originating from Stonebridge, a total of 641 pupils would be travelling on buses to Ark Academy every day, and this did not include any siblings attending the primary school. (Transport Assessment, p. 35.) Transport for London (TfL) also admitted that bus access to the school would only be sufficient if the starting and finishing times for pupils were staggered. (Brent Committee Report, p. 61.) The assessment specifically highlighted the insufficient bus services from the Stonebridge area to Ark Academy:

“At the meeting with the GLA [Greater London Authority] on 5 March 2009 the technical note had been reviewed by TfL officers and their view was that the existing [bus] route to the school from the Stonebridge area was not attractive and convoluted with limited additional capacity at present. However there is adequate existing bus capacity from the Stonebridge direction *until the fourth year after implementation of the secondary school (2013)* [...]

After 2013, the existing capacities already identified will no longer be sufficient for trips originating from the Stonebridge locality. TfL at that time will review the existing services and consider a means...of providing necessary bus services to meet demand. (Transport Assessment, pp. 10-11, emphasis added.)

Planning permission was nevertheless granted based on TfL’s pledge to increase transport provision to meet the demand after 2013. However, this increase failed to materialise.

Currently, the only direct public transport from the Stonebridge area is the 206 bus route. This circuitous journey takes over 30 minutes (longer with heavy traffic) and bypasses several other secondary schools en route to Ark Academy, including Ark Elvin, Capital City Academy and Newman Catholic College:



To further exacerbate matters, the 206 is a single decker bus with limited capacity:



As a result, the 206 bus line is completely overwhelmed every school day. With hundreds of pupils taking the 206 route to school each morning, over-full buses mean pupils often cannot board and must wait for the next available bus, delaying an already lengthy journey to school. Through no fault of their own, pupils from Stonebridge routinely arrive late to school, which causes them and their family's daily stress and anxiety. Their late entry into class causes them to miss the beginning of class and places them at a disadvantage as compared to other pupils. It is also disruptive to the class as a whole and negatively impacts the learning of all pupils. Congestion on the bus route is also inconvenient for other travellers.

Parental engagement

The 2.8-kilometre distance between Ark Academy and Stonebridge creates an obstacle to arranging meetings with parents and inviting them to parent evenings at the school. Sadly, the parents from Stonebridge are among the most disengaged from the school, which in turn negatively impacts on their children's progress.

3. Local Community Children Not Being Served

Ark Academy is currently underserving its immediate local community whose children are some of the most deprived in the country.

The oversubscription criterion in the secondary allocates only 25% of the distance-based applications to pupils within the natural catchment area of the school. The 2015 Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) confirmed that Ark Academy's natural catchment area in the Barn Hill and Preston wards of Brent encompasses some of the most deprived areas in the country.

Of the 173 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), Barn Hill ranks among the 22 LSOAs in the 2nd decile of deprivation, meaning it is among the 20% most deprived areas in the country on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Similarly, the relevant area of the Preston ward is in the 3rd IMD decile. (IDACI 2015 Brent.)

Conclusion

A change in Ark Academy's oversubscription admission criterion to a single point of entry would allow the school to serve its local community and continue to fulfil Ark Schools' mission to educate children in areas where it can make the most difference and ensure its students are able to attend university or follow a career of their choice.

Pupils from Stonebridge would be better served by admission to closer secondary schools. Ark Schools' view is that the proposed change will benefit children, parents and residents of Brent.

Ark Schools welcomes feedback on the proposed changes to the admissions policy, with responses requested by **21 December 2018**.