

Highfield Priory School Ltd : public benefit plans 2010



1. Background

In July 2009 the Charity Commission published the findings from its public benefit assessment of Highfield Priory School Ltd ('the charity'). We found that the charity's aim is capable of being charitable, subject to the public benefit requirement being met. We further found that principles 2b (the opportunity to benefit must not be unreasonably restricted by ability to pay any fees charged), 2c (people in poverty must not be excluded from the opportunity to benefit) and 2d (any private benefits must be incidental) were not fully met. To address these findings, we said that:

'It will be necessary to address sub-principle 2d (any private benefits must be incidental) and we will work with the governors to develop an appropriate framework for the authorisation and management of conflicts of interest. It will also be necessary to produce a plan to show how the organisation will ensure that there is sufficient opportunity to benefit in a material way for those who cannot afford the fees, including people in poverty.'

The governors confirmed within three months of the report's publication their intention to produce a plan for agreement and we have now considered this.

2. Charity Commission's conclusions June 2010

The Commission has now concluded that, based on the totality of benefits and the particular circumstances of the charity, the findings of the public benefit assessment published in July 2009 have been addressed and that the trustees are carrying out their duty to administer the charity for the public benefit.

We set out below the key factors in the charity's plans on which we based our conclusions.

3. Key factors

3a. Changes to means-tested assistance

This table gives the position at the time of our assessment (academic year 2008 /09) and the projected position for academic year 2014/15. The charity's plans covered six years, but we based our conclusions on the projected position after five years in line with our policy on the period we will usually allow for charities to address these issues.

Key feature	Position in 2008 / 09 (actual)	2014 / 15 (planned)
• Advertised value of bursaries	No bursaries	Up to 100% of fees
• Tenure of awards	N/a	From age 5 through to leaving
• Percentage of pupils supported by bursaries	0	6.6% of pupils
• Number of 100% bursaries awarded	0	3.3% of pupils
• Value of means-tested bursaries awarded as a percentage of gross fee income	0	4.9%

The governors have identified several possible sources of funding for the bursary scheme. They include developing a fund-raising strategy, seeking donations and sponsorship. The preferred route is not to draw on the school's resources. The governors will review the proposed bursaries for each year in advance to satisfy themselves that there are adequate resources to meet commitments made that year. We noted that the plans were based on changing economic circumstances, but that in other respects the general circumstances of the charity remained as reported in section B of the original assessment.

3b. Other opportunities to benefit provided by the school

The opportunities to benefit remain materially the same as stated in Annex A of the public benefit assessment report. In summary, these were as follows:

Category of opportunity	Summary of activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of facilities by state and independent schools and groups for young people 	<p>The premises are used by or for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a parent and toddler group; • public speaking examinations for children; • not-for-profit holiday club; • county chess federation (which includes young members); • football training for local children; • junior teams from local cricket clubs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting events with other schools 	<p>The school hosts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • football competitions with local primary schools; • regular sports fixtures with independent and state schools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to lessons and other educational events 	<p>The school supports work experience placements for year 10 pupils from local state schools</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of formalised way of sharing knowledge, skills and experience with other educational providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Years Foundation Stage – lead co-ordinator and good practice modelling. • Teachers mark Key Stage 2 exams. • Placements provided for teacher training and child care trainees.

Although the governors' plans did not develop these further, they remain an important element of the opportunities to benefit related to the aim and were taken into account when assessing the totality of benefits.

3c. Changes to governance

To address principle 2d, four of the ten governors will be individuals who do not have children at the school and they will have the majority voice in deciding matters regarding fee levels, access to services and the provision of other opportunities to benefit. The detailed changes to the governance arrangements and to the charity's articles will be made in November.