

Responses to questions raised at open meeting on 10 November 2014



The group discussions regarding the vision for Pinner High School at the open meeting on 10 November raised a series of questions where groups sought further information. This document provides answers as far as currently possible.

Ethos

1. *How will the ethos of the school be decided? – eg a focus on academic excellence etc, or a more balanced approach to personal development?*

The Governing Body will determine the ethos. It is expected that this will reflect the need for academic excellence *and* personal development.

2. *Is it a secular ethos?*

Yes, Pinner High will be a secular school, welcoming and valuing children and families of all faiths and none.

3. *What is the long-term vision for Pinner High's place within the education system?*

To be an outstanding school for the whole of the local community, and a school that works in collaboration with other primary and high schools to continually improve the opportunities and outcomes for its students.

Curriculum and educational provision

4. *How will Pinner High ensure a breadth of subjects given that it will be relatively small? Which languages would be taught? What GCSE options would there be?*

Pinner High will be the same size as some of the local high schools. The detail of the subjects available in Key Stage 3, for GCSE, and for A level will be developed by the Headteacher and staff to reflect the needs and interests of the students. The Headteacher will be aware of the feedback from the open meeting regarding the need for a broad and balanced curriculum, and will of course be engaging with the community while developing the detailed proposals.

5. *Will there be a specialism / focus (i.e. arts or science)?*

National educational policy has moved away from schools having 'specialisms' (and has removed the previous additional funding that there was for those). Pinner High would expect to have strong provision across the breadth of its curriculum.

6. *What year would GCSEs start – we like the Year 9 start of other high schools?*

The Headteacher will recommend when GCSE studies should start, but the positive impact of the Year 9 start at other local high schools is recognised. Given the intention to work collaboratively with those schools, there may be collaboration advantages to a Year 9 start.

7. *Would the curriculum include the IB?*

The sixth form would admit its first Year 12 students in 2021/22, and in planning for that the Governors and Headteacher will ensure a sixth form curriculum that is attractive and relevant to students within the local community. The curriculum and qualifications for post 16 study are undergoing significant change at the moment, and the Governors and Headteacher will consider the IB alongside other options at the appropriate time.

Staff

8. *Will staff be dedicated to Pinner High or shared with other schools in the early years? How many teachers will be recruited for 2016? How to recruit high quality staff in the first years when they do not have GCSE/A level students at Pinner High?*

It may well be a mixture of both. The focus is on ensuring that there is sufficient subject expertise available to students at Pinner High in the early years when there may not be the curriculum need for full-time staff at the school in all subjects due to only having some year groups present. Sharing staff effectively could overcome this. Similarly, staff employed at Pinner High might do some teaching in other high schools in order to retain their current knowledge of, for instance, the GCSE or A level curriculums at a time when Pinner High does not have students studying those courses – this may be a recruitment advantage for the school compared to many new schools. The number of teachers recruited depends on the detail of any sharing arrangements with other schools.

Class sizes and setting

9. *Will there be mixed ability classes and / or sets?*

The application anticipated that there may be ability banding in Maths and English, but mixed ability classes in other groups. The Headteacher will make recommendations to the Governing Body as part of preparing the curriculum.

10. *Will the ASD provision be 12 places in total, or 12 annually?*

The provision for students with autism would be for 12 places in total, not 12 places annually. It would therefore be anticipated to be approximately 2 or 3 students in each year group.

Pastoral care

11. How will pastoral care be organised so that every student is known and supported?

Learning is most effective when students are ready to learn. It is of paramount importance that the school knows its students and supports them on their journey from 11 year old children to 18 year old young adults, including through any issues or challenges that emerge and obviously from a safeguarding perspective. The sponsoring high schools have a range of strategies and structures in place to support students. The Headteacher will develop the detailed proposals for Pinner High, including ensuring that those structures and strategies evolve as the school grows in size.

School day / year

12. Will the school operate in evenings and at weekends?

High schools are often open to students from early in the morning until early evening, and sometimes library facilities are open for a period at the weekend (such as Saturday morning) to enable students to complete school work and access printed and digital / internet resources. There may also be community use of facilities, such as the sports facilities, in evenings and at weekends.

Site / facilities

13. Will the buildings be expanded?

It is expected that there will be some internal refurbishment and remodelling. This is required because Pinner High will be a co-educational school for 11-18 year olds (whereas Heathfield was a school for girls aged 3-18), and to reflect its curriculum needs (for instance, there is currently no Design and Technology or Food Technology provision).

There is not expected to be any new buildings or extensions.

14. Is there sufficient car parking for staff on site?

There are approximately 65 parking spaces on site, including marked disabled spaces.

15. Can the site / buildings cope with a school of 1,150 students?

According to the latest Government guidance for secondary schools, the overall floor area of the Pinner High building is very close to the size that Government would provide if it was constructing buildings for Pinner High on a different site. This is why there is not expected to be any additional buildings / extensions. We are currently analysing the layout and types of spaces provided to understand the extent of refurbishment required, but the overall size is sufficient.

16. Is the swimming pool being retained?

We are currently seeking usage and financial information from the Girls' Day School Trust to understand the running costs of the pool and the implications of this. Everyone recognises what an excellent facility it is, and the community desire to be able to use it again as soon as possible.

17. Will there be an all-weather pitch?

We would love to have one! All we can say is that we will ask for one as part of the capital project, but we do not know if Government will agree to fund one.

18. Is the field being kept? Or sold?

The field is being kept. The school will be occupying the whole of the current site. There will be no land sales.

Admissions

19. What will the admissions criteria be? Will local children get places? Will Harrow residents get admissions preference? Will admission be available to Hillingdon residents? Will there be feeder schools?

Pinner High will be a school for the whole of the local community. All schools are required by law to admit students with statements of special educational needs and give highest priority to children who are or were previously looked after. After those, Pinner High proposes to adopt the following criteria for entry in September 2016:

- Medical or social needs of the child – Children for whom it is essential to be admitted to Pinner High School because of special circumstances to do with significant medical needs and or social needs;
- Medical reasons relevant to parent(s) - Parent(s) where there are special medical reasons for seeking a place for their child at Pinner High School; and
- Distance from home to school - Places are allocated to applicants who live closest to the school. This must be the address where parent and child normally live and they must be living there on the closing date for receipt of applications.

In practice, for Year 7 entry in September 2016, this will mean that almost all places will be prioritised and allocated based on distance from the site, with those closest receiving highest priority. The measurement of distance is not affected by which borough students live in – so a student who lives 0.4 miles away from the site in Hillingdon would have higher priority than a student living 0.5 miles away in Harrow. Given that the site is on the boundary between Harrow and Hillingdon, we anticipate that roughly half of the cohort will come from each borough.

For entry in 2017, we will include a priority for siblings (there is obviously no need for this for the September 2016 entry), and the criteria will then match those for community high schools in Harrow.

20. Can we prevent people renting temporarily to 'cheat' the system?

This is an issue for the admission system as a whole, rather than Pinner High. Harrow Council, as the co-ordinating admissions body for all high schools in Harrow, will verify addresses, including requiring proof of address, to the extent that is permitted by admissions practice.

Ensuring an effective launch

21. Why will people apply with no proven school record?

Pinner High is being sponsored by the high schools in Harrow, who have track records of success and are committed to ensuring that Pinner High is equally successful. The two-year pre-opening phase enables parents to shape and understand the vision and ethos of the school, and to meet the Headteacher, before making their application choices.

22. Will there be enough depth of teaching expertise and a broad enough range of activities in year 1 when there are only 180 children? How will the first cohorts learn from older students / have effective role models and are not mollycoddled?

The breadth of teaching expertise will be addressed by working in partnership with other high schools to, where appropriate, share staff in the first years when Pinner High may not have sufficient student numbers to justify full-time specialists in all subjects. Similarly, Pinner High will work with other high schools to ensure that there are role models for the first cohorts of Pinner High students, and that there are opportunities for cross-school activities.

23. How will PHS overcome teething problems?

Ideally, by avoiding them! We are trying to do that in three ways: firstly, learning lessons from the high schools previous experience; secondly, learning lessons from other new schools that we know of and have contacts in; and thirdly, by utilising a two-year lead in and having the Headteacher in post for the whole year before opening. This approach should mean that we avoid many of the likely teething problems, and we are further advantaged by having a site already purchased that requires little work – so the most common teething problems of building projects running late etc should not affect us.

24. How do we ensure that the first cohorts are not guinea pigs? How will performance be checked in the first few years when there's no exam data? When would the first Ofsted inspection be?

Exam data only shows the end result of students' and a school's effort – all schools track student progress from the day they start until the day they leave to ensure that they have done everything they can to maximise exam success. So we will ensure that Pinner High is properly established, and has proper systems for student support and tracking their progress that build on the good practice in other local high schools. That way students, parents, staff and governors will be able to understand performance from day one, and assess the effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching strategies. That all sets the school up well for its first Ofsted, which would probably be in autumn 2017 or spring 2018 (i.e. autumn or spring term of the second year of opening).

25. When will we receive further updates? Will there be regular Q&A sessions up to September 2016 for parents / community, and especially up to the point of application in October 2015?

We will continue to update via the website and emails to those who have signed up for the email updates (and if you have not yet signed up, please do so at www.pinnerhighschool.org.uk and the click on the 'updates' tab and complete the form).

We anticipate running further events from late spring 2015 as part of supporting parents who will be making applications in autumn 2015 for Year 7 entry in September 2016. This timing would enable prospective parents to hopefully meet the new Headteacher both in the spring / summer before they officially start in post, and in September / October once they have started in post and before admissions forms have to be completed.

26. When are other key members of staff being appointed / starting (besides the Headteacher)?

The Headteacher will lead the recruitment of the rest of the school staff, with support from the local high schools to provide subject expertise, opportunities to watch applicants teach a lesson as part of their assessment and so forth. The majority of teacher recruitment for a September start happens in the spring / early summer and we will ensure that we are ready for this.

27. What support will other high schools offer?

Lots! They will be responsible to the DfE for the successful set up and launch of Pinner High through their role as the sponsors. To ensure that they fulfil that role successfully, they will provide approximately half of the Governing Body from senior staff at local schools, support the induction and work of the Headteacher once they are appointed (and lead the recruitment of that Headteacher), ensure staffing expertise and resource from the current schools is available to help the set up of Pinner High (such as ICT strategy, curriculum planning, systems, policies and procedures), help in the recruitment and induction of staff and so forth. They are committed to Pinner High's success.

The support will not end at opening. It is very likely that there will be staff sharing arrangements for some subjects for the first few years; staff at Pinner High will be supported by colleagues in other high schools so that they have a professional network of (for instance) science teachers to work and learn with as Pinner High grows.

28. Will parents be involved in the Headteacher recruitment?

The Governing Body will lead the recruitment, and that will include approximately half of its membership from the community – some of whom may be parents of children either in other high schools or in local primary schools.

29. How will the school be funded?

The majority of school funding is based on their number of students. For Pinner High as a new school, the Government methodology provides for some additional funding in the first few years to reflect the start up of the school and its growth. For instance, the 'fixed costs' of the school (such as site and buildings, Headteacher, ICT licenses etc) in the first year would only be spread across the funding generated by 180 students, rather than the approximately 1,150 that Pinner High will have once it is full – so Government provides some start up funding to allow these more fixed costs to be met.