

Appendix 5 – Free School Presumption

1.0 What are free schools?

- 1.1 Free schools are the government's vehicle for new schools.
- 1.2 When they were announced they were expected to enhance choice of schools, however over time they have become the government's method of helping to address need for places.
- 1.3 All new maintained schools must be opened under the free school presumption, whereby if a local authority builds a new school, they must run a competition for sponsors to run that school, the resultant schools will operated in the same way as an academy. The Secretary of State is the decision maker as to which sponsor is successful, however they will take into account local authorities recommendations.
- 1.4 Alternatively, sponsors can apply to the Regional Schools Commissioner to set up a free school, provided they can demonstrate the need and the ability to deliver. In this instance, the Education Funding Agency will be tasked with finding a site and building the school before it is then handed over the sponsor. Again, the Secretary of State is the decision maker as to which sponsor is successful.

2.0 How many have been established?

- 2.1 The first free schools opened in 2010. Since then a total of 429 have opened, and there are a further 239 that have been pre-approved (whereby the Secretary of State has approved them, but the EFA have not yet completed the site acquisition and/or capital delivery).
- 2.2 In Lewisham we have 1 free school, the Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham Temple Grove Free School which opened in 2013.
- 2.3 We also have 2 pre-approved free schools, the Citizen School (a 4 form of entry all through school) and the Harris Lewisham Academy (a 3 form of entry primary school). To date we do not know where or when these will open as the EFA has not yet acquired any sites in the borough.