Yates, Emily (2013) School Choice: An analysis of parental and primary school perspectives on attracting students to All Saints' School, Mansfield. [Dissertation (University of Nottingham only)] (Unpublished)

University of Nottingham

School Choice: An analysis of parental and primary school perspectives on attracting students to All Saints' School, Mansfield.

Emily Yates

MSc International Business

School Choice: An analysis of parental and primary school perspectives on attracting students to All Saints' School, Mansfield.

by

Emily Yates

2013

A Dissertation presented in part consideration for the degree of "MSc International Business".

Summary

Drawing on key social and educational research, this study considers the factors taken in to account when parents decide on a secondary school on behalf of their children. It centres on research conducted during the final term of the academic year 2012-2013 for All Saints' School in Mansfield, England with the objective of delivering a marketing plan; it strives to identify and outline factors important to parents. Further, the influence of primary school head teachers in the secondary school choice decision is introduced. Research interviews were held with a number of parents and head teachers of local primary schools; key findings are outlined. Existing quantitative data provided by the school was used to validate the impact of location and journey distance on applications over a three year period and to draw conclusions in combination with the qualitative data. The outcomes are reviewed and considered in terms of business and marketing implications for the school. In particular, the concept of market orientation is considered in the context of public sector organisations in general and schools in particular, and the concept of market segmentation is discussed, based on existing theory, with several recommendations for the application of this concept in the context of the study.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due to my supervisor Dr Sally Hibbert for her patience, continued support, guidance and advice.

I would like to sincerely thank the staff at All Saints' school for making this dissertation possible, especially Jon without whom I could not have completed my empirical study.

My warmest thanks go to the interviewees, who made the effort to participate in the research with honesty, good humour and not least, tolerance. I do hope that they found the process as interesting and enjoyable as I did.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Aims

This research aims to examine the competitive position of All Saint's School amongst other measures of performance and identify strengths and weaknesses that can be integrated in to an effective marketing plan for the school. The school is a high achieving voluntary aided Roman Catholic secondary school located in Mansfield, England. In terms of exam results, All Saints' is currently performing above the national UK average (Department for Education, 2013). The school's most recent OFSTED inspection report ranked the school as 'good with outstanding leadership' (OFSTED, 2012). Furthermore, according to the Department of Education statistics (2013), there is no similar school within a 75 mile radius that has statistically better results than All Saints'. The nearest similar school that achieves statistically better results is the Arthur Terry School in Birmingham, which draws its pupils from a significantly different socio-economic and ethnic structure. Currently, All Saint's is thus in a leading position and enjoying a competitive advantage over schools both within the locality and further afield.

All Saints' school is made up of 1050 pupils and seeks to recruit 180 new pupils per year to maintain the school roll. Attracting applications from potential students is an important goal for any school and is of increasing importance since the Education Reform Act of 1988 as the market philosophy and principals of parental (consumer) choice develop and expand within the educational sphere.

This study aims to research and develop discussion of factors impacting secondary school choice in breadth and in depth, and to examine the relevant marketing, segmentation and

targeting implications of the findings. To this end, three strands of investigation have been adopted. Primarily, parental perspectives are important as parents in consultation with their children stand as key decision makers in this process. Current and prospective parents have been interviewed to gain this perspective across as wide a range as possible. In addition, the views of head teachers of primary schools in the All Saints' family of schools and the catchment area of the school have been sought, in depth, in order to explore issues that may be overlooked by parents. Such issues are perceived to be perennial issues, or more complex issues around integration of primary and secondary education requiring expert insight. In several instances, membership of the two groups coincided, which lent some unique individual perspectives and priorities to the debate around parental choice and the practical aspects of children starting at secondary school. The third strand of investigation exploits existing data held by the school regarding the home postcode, and primary school attended by entrants to All Saints' School over the past three academic years. The relative completeness of this data allows for presentation of the data in quantitative form, and for conclusions to be drawn with more confidence of the impact of location and trends during this period of time.

Finally, this study aims to address how to select and apply relevant marketing principles to create a marketing plan for the school; and thus what marketing plan can be created with the potential to deliver improved competitive performance? Further to this, definition of competitive performance in terms of application numbers and the take-up of offers of school places is discussed. Information is sought from key stakeholders identified at the outset of the study as being available for interview, namely parent groups and primary school head teachers from schools within the catchment area of All Saints', concerning their

own interactions with the school's existing marketing material. This data is examined and efforts made to establish a meaningful segmentation approach to support the marketing plan.

A section of the education market which exhibits an even more advanced level of free market practices is UK higher education, which draws students from all over the world. However, there is a more direct link between performance and the willingness of students or their parents to pay the necessary fees within this particular segment of the market. Although the basis of the market segment is quite different, there is also an international aspect of the market performance of secondary schools. This is particularly evident in regions of the UK such as the East Midlands that attract significant net immigration: 'for the East Midlands as a whole, the population increased by 0.8% 2006-7 with net migration contributing greater than 70%.' (Beaumont, 2009: 67). The implications of education for migrant families will be addressed; as All Saints' is a faith school; this aligns well with positive perspectives of faith education from many communities and national groups, in particular those from areas with strong Catholic traditions.

Attracting applications from parents on behalf of students, is an important goal for All Saints' School. As in any market, attracting "customers" and generating demand for a service is reliant upon a coherent and effective marketing strategy, incorporating appropriate communication channels, media, material, and public relations aspects.

According to OFSTED, '[All Saints'] is a good school with a good sixth form.', and in some areas, such as Leadership, the school is rated as outstanding (OFSTED, 2012). In recent years, the school has attracted a sufficient number of applications to oversubscribe the

school roll and necessitate prioritisation of applications according to individual pupil circumstances in line with school policies and education department guidelines. Subscription levels are arguably a suitable measure of market performance, and thus the definition of market performance for a school based upon Gewirtz's (1997) work has been interpreted to include levels of subscription and application numbers, local reputation and staffing levels. While All Saints' appears to be in a desirable position in this regard, provision of secondary education is an increasingly competitive market, and this leading position cannot be taken for granted in to the future.

Moreover, since the year 2000, there is evidence of significant regional increases in education, health and social work stock enterprises within Mansfield, as demonstrated in Figure 1 (Lyne, 2009: 30).

Figure 1: Stock of businesses in Education, Health & Social Work
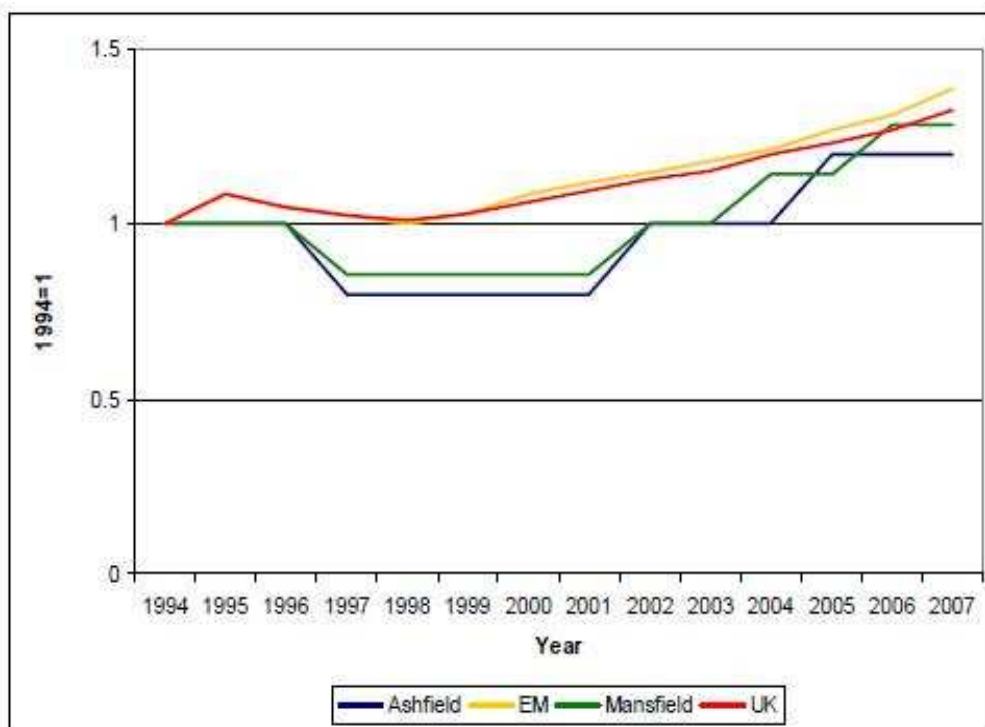
In terms of more direct instances of competition, there is also evidence that competitive marketing tactics are being adopted by other local competitor secondary schools, for example, provision of free school uniforms.

1.2 Effective Marketing

An effective marketing strategy can give further benefits. It is clearly necessary for a good school to be staffed by good teachers, and thus the attraction, recruitment and retention of high performing staff is also pivotal. The fact that the school is consistently marketing effectively to parents would provide the school with a means by which to attract high quality teaching applicants. In addition, awareness of the school's high standing amongst current staff members will help to retain existing staff.

This research will examine the competitive nature of the market for secondary education provision and develop a marketing plan for All Saints' School in this context. Qualitative research and analysis will be used to explore market demands; this will be compared with the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school in order that effective marketing can be developed and implicated. Quantitative data is also employed in the assessment of location.

A further aim of this study is to contribute to the body of research concerned with school selection and choice, which stands as a critical life choice that parents and children are required to make at a relatively early stage in a child's life. This choice can be expected to influence the remainder of a child's academic life and career opportunities, in the context of

subsequent life choices which may include university, where to live and work, career decisions and lifestyle. The importance of making the right choice at the outset is compounded Gorard's (1997) suggestion that 'exit [as a] proposed mechanism of control in a market organisation…is not an option that consumers of education are likely to use very much. The disruption caused by moving school may be too great for it to be very effective.'

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This study draws upon the body of research from two distinct perspectives; school choice and marketing theory, and seeks a combined approach for practical application to marketing the school. Research concerning school choice developed significantly after the 1988 Education Reform Act and remains an area of research which attracts exploration by researchers stemming from a variety of disciplines.

In this section, school choice is first examined from an educational, cultural and social perspective. Wider social and economic considerations that need to be considered in the context of schools are then explored from the body of research. The published work concerning the mechanism of the school choice decision is then reviewed.

A measure of school performance is also needed that is applicable to a marketing approach. This makes up the next topic for review. Marketing theory and research is investigated and topics covered include segmentation, market orientation, branding and the concept of promise and exchange.

It is important to have a clear idea in mind while reviewing the literature, as to precisely what the product represents. Education, while clearly a service also exhibits characteristics more akin to a product, or even an investment fund – this particular theme is notably presented by Kotler and discussed in the section 'Concepts of the Educational Product'.

2.2 School Choice: Educational, Cultural and Social Research

2.2.1 Foundations

There is a wealth of literature examining the importance of school choice from the educational and social perspective including compelling evidence of social factors influencing choice which has been extensively researched. Education and its integration in to society is clearly a rich field that is constantly changing and is one that attracts many researchers from the social disciplines. For example, many researchers examining the question of school choice find strong influence from social background and class.

Bowe, Ball and Gewirtz (1994) suggest the importance of cultural factors and further, the advantageous and enabling aspect of cultural capital: 'those parents who possess the cultural capital which enables them to "read" the signs and images [in the school environment] are clearly better placed to take advantage of the educational market.' Bowe, Ball and Gewirtz (1995) expand on this foundation by later outlining a categorisation of parental choosers; a popular framework that has since been applied in many subsequent studies, for example Ball and Vincent, (1998).

Within this framework, parents are divided in to three subsets: the privileged/skilled chooser, the semi-skilled chooser and the disconnected chooser. (1995:23) Bowe, Ball and Gewirtz subsequently describe this categorisation as being 'strongly class-related: the

disconnected choosers are overwhelmingly working class; the privileged/skilled choosers are overwhelmingly middle class; and the semi-skilled are a mixed-class group.' (1995:24).

2.2.2 Wider Social and Economic Considerations Pertaining to Schools

More recently, Ball and Reay (2006) have commented upon the consequences of class distinction within the new market economy of education: 'it is becoming increasingly acceptable to voice questions involving the measurement and evaluation of people's relative social worth.' (2006: 91). This proposes a controversial link between social class distinction and education. The researchers later emphasise the role of education in definitions of social class boundaries, concluding that: 'The new market economy in education has exacerbated social distinctions of class.' (2006: 98). This conclusion resonates with Bowe, Ball and Gewirtz's (1995) suggestion that 'class selection is revalorized by the market' (1995: 23). This suggestion is further discussed in the context of the contentious issue of increasingly polarized and divisive attitudes within society tending to demonize some minorities, in this case, the working class, which has been voiced in such polemics as 'chavs'. (Jones, 2012).

As a section of the community that can experience challenges from public perception and also from practical issues, migrant families represent a dynamic and economically beneficial contribution to the local and national economy. Furthermore, for newly arrived families, support of community, church and schools are valuable, and this support is likely to be reciprocated in the form of increased levels of participation and engagement with schools. (Carreon, Drake and Barton, 2005:494) Many families originate from cultures where close community and church ties to schools are the norm. Faith schools such as All Saints' School

therefore occupy an influential position, facilitating effective economic migration as a contribution to efficient markets.

How does information, regarding school choice, appear and circulate? Ball and Vincent, (1998) examine the contrasting roles of the grapevine and material produced by schools or official published results and league tables within parental decisions concerning school choice and discuss the consequences of their research findings . They argue that '"immediate" or "hot" knowledge is of particular importance to many parents and is set over and against the "cold" formal knowledge produced by schools themselves or published as examination results or league tables.' (1998: 376). Reproduced in Figure 2, their comparison of aspects from both sources of information provides a helpful consideration of how the two information sources differ, which is useful in this context of examining priorities for parents.

Figure 2. Comparison between official information and grapevine knowledge

Official	**Grapevine**
Logic	Feel/emotion
Abstract information	Direct knowledge
Evidence	Anecdote
Results	Impressions
Proffered	Experiential

Source: Ball and Vincent, (1998:380).

Once more the significance of class forms the main argument of the study; however, the identification of class strata is somewhat vague and ill-defined, although in some instances, the middle classes are defined as "professional middle class"; a somewhat more precise

grouping. The analysis offers a social rather than a business perspective. However, conclusions are drawn that different class groups prioritise different information sources:

> Those who are suspicious of the grapevine are either professional middle-class parents who have the cultural capital to seek out extensive and detailed 'cold' knowledge with which to replace, or at least supplement, the grapevine, or a small group of working-class parents who in their perception that there are few significant differences between schools have little use for it. (1998:392)

Is it perhaps a needless complication and source of error to have to try and categorise a particular potential parent cohort in terms of imperfectly defined categories such as class? The collection and collation of data in order to identify respondent's social economic group/class would arguably distract from the collection of data directly concerning school choice. Thus, this research concentrates on collection of information directly related to school choice from the respondents.

2.2.3 Decision Makers: Key Influences, Factors and Timing

The role of decision maker within this process has been attributed directly to children by some scholars, for example Thomas and Dennison (1991). However, though children are arguably key *influences* in the secondary school choice decision, and in some cases provide the sole drivers for parental choice, the "end-choice" is ultimately made by parents/guardians, who are in fact in a position to begin gathering information on possible secondary school choices from the outset of their child's education. Thus, parents can be interpreted as *instigators* of the choice in this context, despite the level of influence of children, which varies on a case to case basis.

Many strands of research have addressed and outlined factors influencing school choice in different ways. Bowe, Ball and Gewirtz (1994) include a table of choice aspects from Hunter (1991) reproduced in Appendix 1. Similarly, West (1992) also outlines a similar table of factors, reproduced in Appendix 2. Both researchers focus on "unprompted" aspects of the choice which allows for inference of clear ranking of importance to the respondents of the factors listed.

However, it should be noted that these pieces of research are over twenty years old; factors presented as important near the time of significant educational reform may well be different to the priorities of parents present today; especially changes in opinion since the current Government's initiatives regarding changing schools to academies, as well the developments within the socio-cultural landscape of the UK.

Bowe, Ball and Gewirtz (1994) further suggest that:

> "Reasons" such as examination results, discipline, uniform and the child's happiness are not unambiguous. Their precise meaning is contextually specific and most of the research to date has failed to recognise this specificity and explore the multiple meanings parents attach to what this kind of research simply designates as factors or reasons for choice. (1994:71)

Factors thus need to be reviewed in the context of the specific question and answer in which they are discussed by the interviewer and the respondent in order to fully understand the precise meanings; further, grouping of similar factors should be conducted carefully.

When is the decision made, and when should information concerning decision making factors be sought? Scholars researching school choice have differed in opinion of when is the optimal time to gain such insight from parents deciding on a secondary school, leaving

11

the best participant selection methods somewhat open to interpretation. West (1992) highlights that relying on parent's memories or of past events is a major flaw in some research that has previously been conducted on the topic. Her work gathers parental perspectives at the time of making a decision regarding school choice for their children and consequently suggests implications and considerations for marketing.

Her study is also useful in identifying common factors important to parents and subsequently grouping them. (Appendix 2) Once more, class is relevant to the debate, as West has particularly addressed factors impacting upon school choice for middle class parents. However, it could be argued that many parents either identify themselves as 'middle class' or aspire to 'middle class' lifestyles, thus this study may have wider application.

The schools examined by West are a mixture of private and out of borough schools, and would be likely to have a selective intake. Thus, they would be keen 'to attract parents with academically able children.' (1992:220). The inferred perspective of selective schools is reinforced by West's discussion of schools potentially publishing examination results grouped according to pupil's academic ability on entry, implying some form of entrance examination or test. West also asserts that 'streaming… is also likely to encourage parents with academically able children to consider such schools.'(1992:219) Marketing for these schools should also detail special provision for particularly gifted children, and West suggests that the current parent cohort can be utilised in order to influence prospective parents by encouraging them to meet, and active publicity in the local press.

Smedley (1995) has also examined the marketing of secondary schools to parents. His study is set in the context of the 1988 education reform act and the 1991 Parent's Charter and has drawn upon a wealth of educational and social research and published work. He identifies consistency in the studies of why parents avoid particular schools, but remarks upon the lack of consistency for positive aspects. Smedley also discusses the effect of class in terms of the likelihood that parents will override the wishes of their children in the school choice decision, suggesting that middle class parents are more likely to do so. He concludes by suggesting that the parameters for parental choice may be subject to change, and debates whether schools may become disenchanted with the whole process of competitive marketing; a contentious argument.

2.2.4 Measurement of School Performance from a Marketing Perspective

In a further article, Gewirtz (1998) discusses and compares the performance of two schools, one deemed a success and the other deemed problematic. She suggests characteristics or 'key public indicators' as being 'market performance, examination results and OFSTED [ratings]. In respect of 'market performance', Gewirtz progresses to discuss under subscription, poor local reputation and over staffing as indicative of unsuccessful performance. An analogy to the market performance of a company would be market volume and turnover, perceived quality of product or service and cost base. Thus, increasing parental awareness of the school within the local area, as well as maintaining applications from pupils attending feeder primary schools through successful marketing are long-term goals for "successful" schools.

In general, these studies contain considerable detail and are clearly based on sound educational and social theory as the authors review a large body of current research and published material. On occasion, however, the marketing and business opinions expressed are not clearly aligned with current marketing theories. The focus of research and examination of social trends within society relating to school choice fails to address the practical issues of how and to what extent schools should engage in the market for students, and what marketing concepts and models are applicable.

Consideration of how these changes and trends within society can be incorporated in to a practical business plan for a school does not seem to have been adequately addressed; the debate concerning the propriety of public sector schools approaching education as a business is current and contentious. The current economic climate is focussing all public and private institutions on achieving business plans that are sustainable, not least financially sustainable. In the public sector, the focus is on delivering value for money. In this context, there is far less research material published.

This research has sought to address school choice from this alternative viewpoint, and deliver a practical marketing strategy grounded in relevant business theory; with examination of key issues relating to school choice raised by parents and academic staff. With this goal, further examination of the body of research, this time looking into segmentation and marketing theory has been carried out.

2.3 Marketing and Segmentation

2.3.1 Introduction

A rich body of theoretical work exists on the topic of marketing and segmentation, extending back beyond the start of the Twentieth Century, exploring and analysing the art and science of marketing in parallel with new directions and concepts in the fields of human psychology, behavior and business.

Shaw and Jones (2005) trace the development of marketing thought historically through to modern approaches which tend to 'a broader perspective embracing all forms of human activity related to any generic or social exchange' although identifying three main schools, consisting of 'marketing management, exchange, and consumer behavior' (2005:243). It is illuminating to apply the concept of exchange to school choice, especially as modified and developed by researchers such as Calonius (2006) drawing on the work of Kotler (1972) to be defined as the exchange of promises: 'Marketing is the set of human activities directed at facilitating and consummating exchanges of promises'(Calonius: 2006:426).

2.3.2 Concepts of the Educational Product

Kotler and Fox (1995) have addressed the issue of marketing within schools. They suggest that 'the prospective student can only invest in a single "stock," while the school is investing in a diversified and therefore less risky "mutual fund." (1995:249). This is an interesting conceptual way of visualising school marketing that will strike a chord with marketers more familiar with commercial organisations. They also suggest that 'the institution needs to monitor how it is seen…and take concrete steps to improve its public image where it is weak or negative.' The suggestion recognises the importance of public image as part of the stage setting for the 'stock offer' made with production of the school prospectus.

For service providers, particularly those in the public arena, the services that are promised are generally clearly defined, although the promise of future quality of service requires faith on the part of the consumer based upon past performance and any declaration of intention by the provider. The contribution to the exchange process by parents and children is more difficult to define, as later expanded in the discussion section.

2.3.3 Wider Applications of Market Orientation

Marketing management has arguably expanded to become the organisational philosophy of market orientation. The relevance of market orientation to not-for-profit organisations, specifically drawing on the example of charities, has been explored by Chad (2013). He suggests that: "Charities facing increasing competition… for revenue [is] due partly to 'donor fatigue' amongst private donors, [and] increased pressure on corporate donors in the global economic crisis" (2013:303).

Nonetheless, the relevance of market orientation in other not-for-profit organisations such as schools should be considered, as we have seen that competitive pressure does exist (albeit not to the scale of the challenge faced by charities), and promises made by the school to parents and students need to be realised and realise in turn exchange value back to the school. Accepting for argument that market orientation should be implemented in a school, Chad further describes key initiatives to deliver market orientation based on Foucault's (1991) work:

> Criteria for 'detecting changes which affect discursive formations' are utilised, namely,
> 'displacement of boundaries', 'the new position and role' of employees, the 'new mode of
> functioning of language' and the 'circulation' of the new discourse (Chad, 2013:308).

16

In suggesting the use of criteria and metrics to measure the implementation of market orientation in a school, it is key that the entire approach is "right sized" to take account of the available levels of resource to support it. The recent drive to establish educational targets from government, and the resultant workload to prepare, matriculate students and collate results has been controversial.

In Chad's case study, the charity applies displacement of boundaries by loosening the definition of not-for-profit to apply only to the organisation as a whole, and not to its component operations. Contracts competitively tendered to deliver profit for the organisation could be invested in salaries for professional specialists, allowing for higher economic performance of the charity as a whole than could be achieved with volunteer (assumed amateur) staff.

How could this approach be utilised in the school context? In a similar way to the "old" charity, schools traditionally rely on government (and in the case of faith schools, churches) for both direction and funding. Could schools develop a business plan to become more self-reliant? Schools generally occupy buildings and facilities that are under utilised outside of school hours – could this be exploited as a source of revenue? There is clearly some scope for examining and challenging the accepted boundaries of a school's operational and business model to establish the most effective profile; an interesting reversal trend in marketing may identify areas that schools may exploit.

2.3.4 Brands as Educators

Handley (2010) describes how by 'behaving as an authority, just as a teacher does, [commercial] brands can enhance their offer by attracting a loyal following of consumers'

(2010: 14). A variety of benefits are thus generated for the company, from improved public image and perception of corporate citizenship, to identifying additional revenue streams; a successful example of such enhancement is the Land Rover Experience off road driving courses. In addition, it is interesting that many commercial institutions are keen to gain access to the student body to promote themselves, as highlighted by Handley who references National Schools Partnership Chief executive Mark Fawcett:

> Fawcett picks out finance as a sector that is using a teaching strategy in schools particularly well. "A lot of banks have packs for schools, or they visit schools. But to become the one that is known over time is tricky. NatWest has sort of taken the lead by being there consistently and it is using this in its TV advertising," he notes. (2010:18)

As schools may seek to re-draw the traditional boundaries of their role to improve service and be more competitive, so companies are seeking a role within education, which is surely a fertile area for schools to explore within the development of market orientation. It is pertinent to comment that companies are also stakeholders in education as a source of future staff and consumers alike.

2.3.5 Branding of Services in the Public Sector

Can a school, as a public sector organisation, be a brand? The concept of branding has grown from successful examples of corporate promotion and marketing, primarily in terms of tangible products, but notable examples exist too in the field of service provision (airlines in general and particularly Virgin Atlantic, which exhibits a coherent corporate brand as part of the Virgin Group). Notably, the branding that comes to mind in the majority of cases are predominantly corporate brands in the private sector, and it would not be difficult to argue

that in comparison public sector organisations have either chosen not to emphasize the importance of developing their own brand strategy, or have failed to succeed in doing so. Wæraas (2008) identifies a fundamental difference between private and public sector organizations:

> While the corporate branding ideal is to seek a precise and coherent definition of the organizational identity and achieve message consistency in the organization's self-presentation, public organizations are often characterized by contradictory and inconsistent values and multiple identities. This makes the ideal of consistency difficult to achieve. (2008:205)

This model of multiple identities seems more applicable to large organs of the public sector, for example health services and Government departments. In contrast, schools have traditionally been adept at creating and maintaining unique and coherent identities, employing amongst other tools identifiable uniforms, badging and colour schemes and promoting inter-school competition, especially within sport. While Wæraas (2008) discusses dual identity concepts, he references Albert and Whetten (1985) who refer to universities as an example, which are described as being "both like a 'church' and a 'business'". In the modern context, this dichotomy surely serves to challenge educational service providers to provide services which address both traditional academic values and the preparation of students with perspectives relevant to the real world; and thus each facet of identity both supports and challenges the other (2008:211).

The question of ownership in the wider sense, of a brand or a school is also valid. There are instances of brands with strong consumer identification outliving the commercial entity that produced them; by continuing to promote the brand groups of consumers may claim

19

effective ownership (classic car clubs are one example). Who can claim to own a school? Surely the purely financial ownership of Government or trust is not representative of the range of stakeholders, which includes staff, parents and pupils present and to a limited degree, alumni. Laing (2003) describes a model of control and public/private benefit across the spectrum of public services, reproduced in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Spectrum of public services

```
Social benefits                                    Private benefits
Dominant                                                  Dominant
_____

Customs        Criminal       Education    Health     Public      Public
& Excise       justice                     care       transport   housing


_____


Professional judgement                          Consumer judgement
Dominant                                                  Dominant
```

Source: Laing, (2003:438)

In this model education is at the tipping point between professional and consumer judgment and control, and is balanced between providing consumer and wider societal benefit.

2.3.6 Realising Benefits from Promise and Exchange

An important aspect to consider in any analysis is the appropriate timescale. What is the timescale for realising benefit from promise and exchange in this context? It can be argued that this extends past the time when applications and offers are made and accepted. The

positive or negative spiral of reinforcement is explained by Foxall, and is demonstrated

below in Figure 4:

The Intentional Model showing symbolic reinforcement. The central explanatory component of the

[Behavioural Perspective Model], the consumer situation, must be redefined in the context of BPM-

I. Whereas in the extensional model, we could delineate the consumer situation only as the

interaction of the consumer behaviour setting and the learning history, a construction that avoids

intentionality, it is now possible to portray consumer situations in terms of a nexus of beliefs and

desires that reflects the collective intentionality of the consumption experience. Consumer

behaviour is transformed from reactive responses to externally presented stimuli into goal-directed

action: still characterized as Accomplishment, Hedonism, Accumulation, and Maintenance, it is now

defined via symbolic reinforcement. (Foxall, 2013:116).

Figure 4: BPM-I
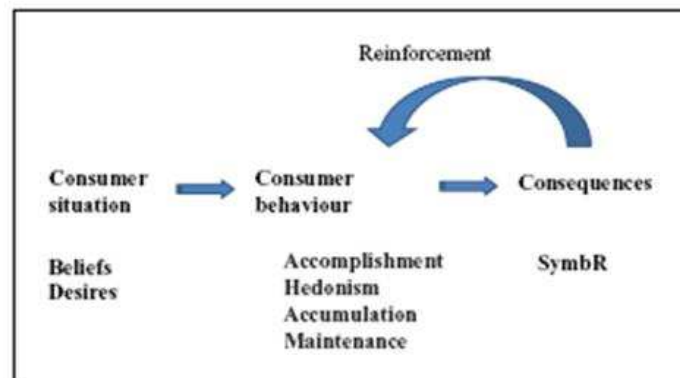
Source: Foxall, (2013:116).

Consumers also perhaps seek reinforcement for the purpose of reassurance, as suggested

by Belch, Belch and Guolla (2011:71). Having made a choice that can be considered as a

major life choice, either in terms of emotional or financial investment, few individuals would

fail to experience various levels of anxiety or doubt. This phenomenon is well understood by

many product brand marketers, and one benefit of promoting brand values is arguably to provide this decision reinforcement to existing customers. Parents perhaps also seek this reinforcement from feedback from their children about school. Thus again we see that the timeframe for marketing and brand reinforcement for a school provides an interesting area of discussion.

2.3.7 Market Segmentation

Segmentation forms a key marketing concept. Yankelovich and Meer (2006) highlight that 'good segmentations identify the groups most worth pursuing – the underserved, the dissatisfied, and those likely to make a first-time purchase, …they recognize that the first-time purchaser may become underserved or dissatisfied if his or her situation changes.' Thus in the context of schools, the highest marginal return on investment of marketing effort is likely to be achieved by identifying groups who most probably will apply for places, might apply and most probably will not apply – and concentrate upon the 'mights'. This is a similar principle to targeted electioneering where political party canvassing is concentrated on key marginal seats. Yankelovich and Meer (2006) also comment on the poor results from traditional demographic discriminators for segmentation: 'traditional demographic traits such as age, sex, education levels, and income no longer [say] enough to serve as a basis for marketing strategy' (2006:124).They also argue that this is the case for newer trends in discriminators; 'psychographics may capture some truth about real people's lifestyles, attitudes, self-image, and aspirations, but it is very weak at predicting what any of these people is likely to purchase in any given product category' (2006:124). Thus, indirect assumptions about membership of the 'mights' group, which are based upon demographics

and psychographics, would appear to be unprofitable. How then to establish group membership? This study's examination of parental needs, wants and desires when making the choice of secondary school will also aim to generate more direct discriminators for the development of marketing segmentation and strategy.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Which Research Methods?

Research into the choice of school has previously adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches. As suggested by Gorard (2003), initial quantitative studies may suffer weakness as any list of potential questions presented to respondents for them to tick or rate is based upon assumptions by the researchers and can be incomplete by failing to contain some key aspects; or concentrating on the wrong emphasis for the study (2003:104). As a means of fully exploring significance, quantitative methods that are structured to examine the full range of the research field without bias and with a carefully chosen sample size would be the gold standard. However, such pre-requisites are not available for this study and the design of a robust quantitative and contextualised study was not judged to be feasible at this stage of research. An additional challenge, effectively ruling out comprehensive quantitative statistical analysis and sampling methods was the time period identified and the availability of study subjects.

A qualitative approach was thus judged to be more productive in the requirement of identifying a range of key drivers. Qualitative approaches can offer key, in-depth insights in to contextually significant issues and give an indication of the scope and definition relevant

to a particular context, without risk of incorrect assumptions made on the basis of out of context evidence. Researchers reviewed in the literature survey have suggested that the factors impacting upon school choice are extremely contextual, based upon social groupings and demographic factors.

The interplay of factors can be an enlightening outcome of a qualitative study, which are arguably more accessible when participants are actively talking through their decision within a semi-structured interview environment, as opposed to answering via questionnaire or survey. Quantitative studies aiming to examine interaction between factors need to be explicitly designed to allow accurate analysis.

A qualitative study, employing a limited sample size should not be used to authoritatively rank these drivers. However, factors that are referred to by several different respondents are collated according to the frequency of observation in order to draw general conclusions for this particular group of respondents. It should be noted that the sample size achievable within the time available was not large enough to attempt a meaningful sampling strategy with representative demographic profiles. Thus, the conclusions drawn for this particular group should not be extrapolated to be representative of the views of all groups of parents.

Therefore, as a general research methodology for this study, qualitative methods were selected as most appropriate for gaining in depth in sight in to the key drivers of school choice. However, some existing data was available allowing some quantitative analysis to be carried out. The data consisted of home postcode, and primary school information for the All Saints' intake for the years 2011 – 2013, further described in Work Package 3. It must be

24

noted that the data and subsequent conclusions are quite specific to address the importance of location and travel distance on application trends.

During the latter half of the final school term of the 2012-2013 academic year, interviews were conducted in the Mansfield area of key respondents identified in the following work packages: a representative parental group, and an academic staff group. It was correctly predicted that respondents would be in short supply due to the limited time window available and thus all available respondents were interviewed. Research and subsequent delivery of academic and marketing conclusions have been organised in to work packages, including specific methodology, results and analysis, as detailed below.

3.2 Work Package 1: Understanding Parent's Perspectives: Primary Research

3.2.1 Introduction

Guided by the literature survey, we can identify that a key requirement for exploring the process of school choice is to gain understanding of parental perspectives, as parents research information and drive the process through to a decision. Children have a key role as influencers and reviewers, however in the majority of cases the final decision arguably still lies with parents. Consequently, this research focusses on the school choice decision as one of parental choice and as such has sought to interview parents in order to obtain contextualised and in-depth insight in to their decision.

3.2.2 Objectives

The detailed objectives for this aspect of the research are to identify key factors for parents facing the important secondary school selection decision with their children, as well as

ranking or grouping these factors according to perceived significance and importance. As examined in the review of literature, debate exists concerning the optimum timing of interviews in order to gain best quality data and relevance. For the purpose of this research and to facilitate development of a marketing strategy for the school, a decision was made to interview parents who had made the choice relatively recently (within the last two years), or parents who were due to make the choice within two years; utilising the experience of those who had made the decision, as well as the key, current insights of prospective choosers from a marketing perspective.

3.2.3 Methods

Three school play nights were identified as ideal opportunities on which to conduct or arrange to interview parents who were attending the play. In the weeks leading up to the play nights, the target group of parents were contacted by email and by letters taken home by school pupils. Thus, on the nights of the school play, interviews were carried out with Participant A and Participant B. Subsequently, interviews were carried out with participants C to K from contacts made on school play nights, and leads provided by academic staff. Interviews were recorded on an audio-recording device, transcribed, analysed and coded for themes. Extracts are presented below in the results section.

The operating principle for conducting the interviews centred upon giving interviewees the opportunity to introduce factors, issues and concerns that mattered to them; the manner and context of their comments giving further insight into the relative importance of the factors. Prompting was maintained at a low level conducive to maintaining the flow of

conversation; however interviewees were encouraged to expand upon salient points as necessary.

However, a particular aspect of school choice that was prompted during the interviews was the topic of diversity and the cultural make-up of the school. This is because the contribution that the provision of suitable education for migrant families can make to global competiveness of the local economy is a topic liable to be of increasing importance. As cultural and national diversity of the UK population increases and the global nature of business and markets continue to increase in importance for mid-size and small firms as well as larger enterprises, global competitiveness in terms of attracting skilled workers at competitive rates will also increase.

In terms of analysis, each of the interview transcripts were reviewed, with the aim of identifying the three most important factors contributing to each interviewee's decision, and also what their decision ultimately was. Factors were ranked and assigned a score of either three points for the most important factor, two for the second most important factor, or one for semi-important factors.

Factors and their subsequent ranking scores were then collated together in order to be able to draw some broad conclusions and identify differences that may exist between parents who choose the school and those that do not, in terms of decision factors. The prompted responses concerning cultural diversity were excluded from this part of the review, as the prompted nature renders them inconsistent with the other responses.

A significant challenge of this research was timeframe. A limited amount of information was expected to be available from parents during the specific time period leading up to the main

school holidays. Moreover, the initial sampling technique had to be rectified after levels of parental recruitment for the study struggled to reach projected numbers. Though not applicable to those who had previously made their school choice decision due to the school's existing communication channels with this set of parents, access to prospective choosers also posed a significant challenge.

The particular focus of fieldwork and research has been to concentrate upon parental perspectives concerning school choice; the focus has been established after consultation with the school. In terms of selecting candidates for interview the aim has been to target parents who have recently made their choice and where possible, parents who are currently considering (or not considering) All Saints' as a prospective school for their child; in school year terms parents from Years 4 to 8 were identified as the main target groups for this study. A qualitative data collection and analysis employing interviews has therefore been designed and carried out to gain insight in to the motives and influences acting upon parents in the decision making process, with a view both to identifying factors relevant to All Saints' future recruitment as well as furthering understanding of the school choice consumer decision making process.

3.3 Work Package 2: Understanding Primary School's Perspectives: Supplementary Research

3.3.1 Introduction

Primary school head teachers have a unique perspective on the school choice process, as they can relate more objectively to the competing merits promoted by each secondary school. Interviewing head teachers aimed to deliver insight in to the experience of professionals who witness the decision making process many times over, year after year.

Obtaining this insight was once more achieved through qualitative interviews, designed to address key issues, to which the head teacher's own experiences would be relevant.

3.3.2 Objectives

A supplementary qualitative study has been carried out to ascertain primary school head teacher's perceptions of their influence on parent's choice of secondary school. Insight in to the head teacher's perceptions of the engagement of parents and children in this decision was also sought. It was also intended to find out more about the cultural diversity of the schools and the effect of this. Furthermore, the key priorities of primary school head teachers in terms of their desired provider of secondary education for the children at their school were discussed, as well as insight in to their own individual experiences with All Saints' School. This was conducted in order to understand how All Saints' currently engages with primary schools within the area and more specifically what perceptions of the school's current marketing activities exist across the schools.

3.3.3 Methods

In line with the methodology outlined in Work Package 1, qualitative interviewing was used throughout this section of the research. Interviews were once more recorded using a dictaphone and subsequently transcribed, reviewed and coded for themes. Prompting was again used particularly to stimulate discussion of the impact of culture.

However, in this supplementary set of interviews, results gained were understood as providing key insights in to the particular context of these schools; not as being widely representative.

A significant challenge of this research strand was participation; once more, approaching the end of term, target head teacher's schedules did not always allow enough free time to participate in the research.

3.4 Work Package 3: Understanding All Saints' Catchment Area

3.4.1 Introduction

A relatively complete set of data exists for the last three years intake of students at All Saints'. While limited in content, the virtue of each student being represented by the data enables analysis to be carried out and conclusions drawn with greater certainty than can be achieved with the qualitative information from the other work packages.

3.4.2 Objectives

The objective of this work package was to utilise existing school data which details the postcode and the primary school attended by pupils inducted 2011 to 2013, not only in order to identify which schools and which areas All Saints' is succeeding in recruiting from, but also how this market is changing with time. This information contributes to the targeting of the marketing plan in terms of geographic areas and specific primary schools.

3.4.3 Methods

Data was supplied by the school which detailed postcodes and primary schools of the entire 2011 to 2013 pupil intake. The distance between each home and the school was derived from the postcode data using Google Maps. Four profile groups were created that described greater than 85% of the schools attended and the home address postcodes of all pupils.

(The remaining pupils were assigned to "Other"). Each pupil for all of the three years of data was assigned to a profile group. The membership count of the groups was visualised with a pie chart for each year.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Parental Perspectives: Work Package 1 Results

The results and salient remarks made during the interview data collection process are presented here, with some analysis and grouping for descriptive and illustrative purposes, as appropriate to the qualitative nature of the research design. The following section presents verbatim quotations grouped according to factors which came up frequently in interviews, or appeared particularly important to the interviewee. The factors are presented in the approximate order of importance or frequency, after which, any factors which were viewed by participants as particularly unimportant are addressed. Further, individual factors of a highly contextual nature that mentioned during some interviews are presented as illustrative of the highly individual nature of school choice. Responses to the prompted questions concerning cultural diversity are also presented.

4.1.1 Catholic Heritage

The single most frequent and important factor for all parents interviewed was the school's Catholic heritage. In several cases, this was highlighted by parents as the number one most important factor in their decision to select the school for their child. Many of the respondents clearly valued this aspect of the school:

> ***Respondent J:*** *...Well, I mean if the school had a really bad OFSTED report, I would have looked at a different Catholic school, but I definitely wanted her to go to a Catholic school.*

Interviewer: Why's that?

Respondent J: Just my preference, really.

_____

Respondent F: [The catholic aspect] is important. It's the only reason why I would encourage my child to travel so far, you know, to get to school. That's the only reason, really the ethos, and there are lots of really, really nice things about [the school].

Other respondents, while valuing the Catholic aspect qualified this with other important requirements typically, Respondents B, E and F commented particularly about the relative importance of their child attending a faith school in comparison with academic performance or other aspects of the school package.

Respondent B: We are both Catholic, so if there was a good Catholic school that would have been our preference, but we were neither of us of the opinion that if the Catholic school wasn't the best school, we wouldn't have had a problem going to another school. It was simply the all-round package that was offered by All Saints'.

Respondent E: I'd probably say it came down to 50/50. 50 Catholic, 50 academic. Would I have sent them if I felt that the school wasn't achieving academically? No, I wouldn't have done.

Respondent F: I wouldn't send him to a Catholic school if I felt that the academic achievement was really, really poor. No, no, I would put the academic achievement above the fact that it is a Catholic school really. But I'd just want it to have a nice balance.

In some cases, the school's Catholic status was not regarded as important at all. Interestingly, the respondent expressed this opinion despite, or perhaps because of their own experience of a Catholic education:

Respondent K: I'd be looking at academics. I went to a Catholic school… [But] it's funny, just times change, and we do have the Catholic faith, but I don't feel that I desperately need to have my daughter go somewhere where they do follow a specific Catholic faith.

4.1.2 Academic Standards and Performance

One of the major reasons children attend school is to become equipped with the skills and knowledge they will need in future life. Typically, this includes academic learning, which is

measured, standardised and published. As well as being a key metric for schools and Government to drive educational standards and performance, this information is accessible to and may be used by parents considering the school choice decision.

Of the parents who finally decided to send their children to All Saints', the school's record of academic performance ranked second only to the Catholic heritage. Interestingly, for those parents who did not intend to choose to send their child to All Saints', the academic performance was not remarked upon to the same extent. These parents tended to focus upon negative factors, reinforcing their decision not to pursue application to All Saints'. Featuring significantly in some parental responses were needs and wants relating to the child's desired academic achievement and the school's academic performance.

> **Respondent B:** *This school has always had a good strong academic background and I had no qualms on that score.*
>
> **Respondent K:** *We would look at achievements, rather than, you know [the religious side].*
>
> **Respondent B:** *I saw [elsewhere] that the brighter students were bored rigid by BTECs. So the fact that this school was offering for the best students, you will not be doing any BTECs, was something that, yes that is what I want, because as is say, I taught BTEC, and yes it's an interesting qualification, but it's a qualification you can phone in. It's not particularly academically challenging. I want my son to be doing the most academically challenging subjects he can do.*
>
> **Respondent H:** *Also I guess how well the school achieves academically is another key reason.*

4.1.3 Atmosphere

As many parents who commented about the importance of academic factors also remarked upon the importance of a good atmosphere, conducive to learning and how this was present at All Saints'. There were many interpretations of what constituted the school atmosphere. Atmosphere was commented upon by parents intending to send their children to the school and also those without this intention:

Respondent E: It just feels different, and that's quite a hard thing to put in to words. I don't know if you could say it's almost a spiritual thing. It feels, erm, like a very caring environment, I know schools aren't always calm, that might be a silly thing to say, but it does feel, just a warmth there, I think that's probably the best way to put it.

Respondent D: The mathematics were just amazing, because the children, when we went round, and the staff themselves, were just so enthused by finding problems, and setting problems on the board for the next lot to get involved, trying to compete with each other in a friendly way. There was a nice friendly competition atmosphere between them all.

4.1.4 OFSTED

OFSTED is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, the official body for inspecting schools within the UK. Annual reports for each school are published and are publicly accessible, and All Saints' (in common with many schools with good reports) draws upon OFSTED reports for favourable quotations within their own promotional literature. Parents were aware of the existence of these reports, although the importance was not frequently commented upon and was not prioritised highly. The impression gained was of good OFSTED reports forming a 'basic hygiene' for a school – a strong reason for avoiding a school with a poor report, but otherwise of lower importance. Comments included:

Respondent G: And the OFSTED reports I looked at as well and things have improved, so that sort of just cemented in my mind that that's where I wanted him to go.

Respondent J: We visited the schools and heard from the teachers at the open days. We looked at the OFSTED reports and looked at things that had happened in the school, changes in the school leadership and that sort of thing.

One respondent notably required prompting to discuss OFSTED, and clearly attached little importance to the report, perhaps because extracts were widely published and circulated.

Interviewer: And did you look at the OFSTED results of the school at all when you were deciding?

Respondent D: Erm, no. (Laughs.) We did look at the past marks from their exams, but that was plastered all over the place anyway, because they do so well, and they were better than last year and things like that.

4.1.5 Location

A factor presenting equal importance for parents choosing to send children to the school and those not intending to apply was the practical issue of geographical location and the related issues of transport to and from school and travel time. Uncertainty was expressed by several parents as to the availability of subsidised public transport. Notably, one parent who expressed concerns over the lack of adult supervision on busses. Parents identified location as a major factor thus:

> *Respondent G: Well, my hands were tied with location, because there wasn't anything local. I don't really want her getting on the school bus and having to be tired. Because if you think, she's got to get the school bus at 7.45 in the morning, and she doesn't get home until quarter to five in the evening, so that's a long day for someone… I think one of the major things is that there is no responsible adult on the buses. I mean there is someone driving the bus but he has to focus on driving. The kids seem to be able to do whatever they want, and there's no supervision. If she has [things] thrown at her, then we report it to the school and nothing is ever done.*

> *Respondent D: Well location was quite important, because I had to go back to work, so she needed to be able to get there on her own steam. But after all these times, my eldest daughter is 21 now, and after all these years, it was only when we started looking at All Saints' and finding out how she would get there, that I realised that the bus actually picks up outside my front door.*

> *Respondent K: Second bit would be looking at location. That's key because I don't want my daughter having to travel sort of an hour, or anything like that.*

For other parents, location and transport were issues that could be managed effectively and though the issue came up in discussion, it did not appear to strongly or negatively influence choice:

> *Respondent A: Would you say, would that change my mind about it, because I suppose we live within the locality, in the Mansfield area to drive in to here, would that change my mind? No. If it was in Newark she could get the bus to Newark and that is what she would do. I don't think that makes a huge difference.*

35

_____

Respondent F: Really, [location] was the major reason that we discounted it in the first place to be honest. I just thought, I don't want them travelling for an hour and a half each day, before they even get to school. But actually, they enjoy it. On the way there it's quite calming, and you know, it's a nice way to wake up. And on the way back they have chance to reflect. Like my son said, it's his bit of "me-time". (Laughs) He'll wish I haven't said that.

Interviewer: How do you manage with the provisions for travel, are they adequate?

Respondent F: No, not really, but that's not the schools fault, that's the council. When the council got rid of the Catholic secondary school in Newark, they always said they would provide transport to school, and it would be free of charge, and obviously that was a few years ago now, but they can change their mind, and even today, I just received an email saying that they are now again looking at withdrawing the subsidised travel. Yeah, it irritates me, to be quite fair, because there is a genuine reason why the kids go there, because we are Catholic and everything.

4.1.6 Child's friendship groups

This aspect of school choice might reasonably be expected to influence decisions made by children comparatively more than decisions made by parents. The majority of parents in this study fully accepted the responsibility of making the final decision. 2 respondents recorded that their children in fact made the final call, and 2 respondents that they made the final decision together with their child or as a family.

Teenage years and adolescence are marked by strong social and peer group influences, experiences and needs for most children. The importance of friendship groups is reflected in some of the responses. This is especially true of the initial settling in period; this can be a period of considerable anxiety and apprehension as well as an exciting time for both pupils and parents. Pupils might be expected to require reassurance, perhaps based upon existing friendship groups to a greater or lesser degree at different times throughout the initial settling in period. Responses identifying friendship groups as important included:

Respondent H: Where his friends go [is important], because I feel that that would help him settle, and I have to be honest…so I guess friends is a big thing, because it's obviously quite daunting going,

36

you probably remember as well, going to a big secondary school when you've been to a small primary school.

Respondent G: *I mean, the vast majority in my son's class were going up to All Saints' as well, and he did know kids from some of the other feeder schools, so that was important that he was with people that he knew.*

———————————————————

Interviewer: *Why did you choose All Saints?*

Respondent A: *Because her friends were coming here. The majority from primary school were coming here… I think you realise people will succeed where ever they want, and it is better that they are with their friendship group and grow up with those. I never had that type of thing.*

4.1.7 Moral/religious ethos

For a faith school, parental expectations of standards of moral behaviour and instruction are

perhaps higher than for other schools. It is a common perception that faith schools are

particularly strong in the provision of guidance for pupils in this area. For those parents

intending to send their children to All Saints', the school's moral and religious ethos was

often mentioned. This was not apparent in interviews with parents who did not intend to

take pursue application or take up places:

> **Respondent B:** *So I knew for my kids, it would give them a good, well-rounded education. It's not a dogmatic school. It has a catholic ethos behind it, and I know that a lot of families value that, whether they're Catholic background, C of E background, Muslim background, the ethos and the discipline that you get in a catholic school is good.*
>
> **Respondent G:** *Obviously, the religious ethos, that's important to me, that they're fairly strict discipline wise with the detention. And when my son's been cheeky or snotty, they've acted on it and have kept me informed when his behaviour hasn't been up to scratch.*

4.1.8 Staff

The quality of the teaching staff as agents of delivery of education and as examples to the

students might be expected to be a highly important factor for any parent contemplating

the decision of school choice. However, this factor was mentioned comparatively few times by parents intending to send their children to the school, and not at all by those respondents who did not intend to pursue application for a place for their child at the school. The below responses were recorded:

> *Respondent C: Well, we looked at [the facilities] on the tour of the school, but it was the teachers really that we looked at and considered rather than the physical side of the school, and that's just improving really… I would say the teaching staff and the care of pupils is second to none, really. Their, you know, attitude towards bullying, that's all very positive.*

> *Respondent G: I think everything comes from the head teacher really, and she's very strong. And I've known parents who have had children there for a while and things have really improved [while] she's been there.*

> *Respondent I: The staff seem brilliant at All Saints', and that's a tick in the box for me.*

4.1.9 Facilities

All Saints' prospectus and literature places little emphasis upon the physical facilities of the school, with a notable exception of the excellent Performing Arts amenities. That is perhaps reflected by the relative infrequency and low relative importance attached in the main by respondents recorded below.

> *Respondent H: Facilities aren't the highest priority of my list to be honest, because I think every school has facilities and every school will teach the curriculum in whatever way it sees fit. So yeah, it would be lovely if it was a brand new [building] and they had lots of new facilities, but that's not key for us.*

> *Respondent I: For me personally, it doesn't matter where you're being taught outside or inside, you know, it's what they're being taught is a big big thing. Environment isn't a big thing.*

_____

However, some of the physical features and facilities offered by the school struck a particular chord with some pupils. Perhaps surprisingly, one respondent singled out the importance of the school's chapel in her son's overall impression of the school itself, above all of the other facilities available at the school:

> *Interviewer: Ok, why did you like All Saints'?*
>
> *Respondent F: Well, my son actually liked the chapel. (Laughs).*

Disconcertingly, one parent highlighted facilities as an important factor, influencing their decision not to pursue application:

> *Respondent K: School buildings are not necessarily important. Obviously if it was falling down then that would be a problem. But certainly facilities would be key to our decision I think, just if she's there though 11 – 16, I want her to have as much opportunity as possible to do as many things as possible. Some schools have more than others, so facilities are definitely important to our decision.*

4.1.10 Personal reasons

When considering any major decision of which school choice is but one, there will be as many individual needs and priorities as there are applicants. Some respondents clearly had their perceptions strongly influenced by negative experiences in the past. One particularly interesting response concerned the situation faced by teaching staff contemplating school choice for their own children:

> *Respondent A: I'm not going to work in the same school as my children, because I don't think that's healthy for them. So it was quite a good thing to have a good secondary school she could go to, but one that I would have a distance from. So that helped, because if [she came] to my school, I don't think she would grow up as much. She wouldn't be her own person. She would be "the daughter of". And I think that would have been difficult for her.*
>
> *Respondent I: My daughter has been bullied before, and it was horrendous. They deal with bullying really well, so that's a major thing.*

4.1.11 Additional Factors:

Other factors were commented upon as being completely irrelevant to the decision and presented interesting insight in to the parent's decisions. On the topic of uniform, one parent suggested:

> *Respondent K: Uniform doesn't matter at all. She wears one now and is happy enough, so I really don't mind. It's a funny old thing, but as far as I'm concerned, school means uniform.*

Another interesting aspect present in the data was the aspect of "fore-knowledge" of the specific school, or how schools are perceived to work more generally. One parent reminisced about their experience as a pupil and the effect this had on their decision; another parent, who is a teacher, had a particularly interesting perspective and had some unique issues to address. The issue of having a teacher for a parent caused anxiety concerning potential targeting for bullying if the child was a student at the same school. This was seen to be much less of an issue if the child attended a different school.

An aspect of school choice and how provision of education can potentially facilitate economic performance of a community as a whole is the issue of support available for migrant families. Mobility of labour internationally is a crucial contributor to efficiency in the global labour market; it directly influences the profitability of companies. The ability to attract skilled labour from other countries is significantly reduced if migrants are not happy to bring their families with them. The one aspect of school choice that was deliberately prompted during the interviews was to elicit comment and opinions regarding diversity and the cultural make-up of the school. Encouragingly, without fail, all parents interviewed expressed positive attitudes and clearly appreciated the benefits of cultural diversity. Comments included:

> *Respondent F: Well, it's got quite a diverse student intake, hasn't it? They come from all over really. So I think it's good that the kids…they get exposure to people from different cultures and things like that.*

> _____

Respondent K: [The] range of nationalities, from Poland, Lithuania, Pakistan...doesn't make any difference whatsoever. It's about the school and how they bring the pupils on, that's more important. And actually it's good to have lots of different cultures around.

Interviewer: Why's it good?

Respondent K: Well just because, certainly at the moment for my daughter, she can learn more about other areas, and how people do things, and they have been learning different languages too, which I hope will continue. I don't know. It just widens their experience of life really.

_____

Respondent C: I think for our children [the cultural mix] has been a great advantage really. Something that didn't put us off, knowing that there were going to be a great amount of different sorts of people really. I would say that has been a positive aspect of their upbringing.

Interviewer: Why positive, what do you mean by that?

Respondent C: Because when they go out in to society, their life, and their circle from the workplace is not going to be specific to one type of person, they're going to come across all types of people. I think it helps them to grow as a person and understand other people's point of view.

4.2 Key Factor Analysis

Those factors interpreted as key factors have been summarised and tabulated. Clearly, the frequency that factors are remarked upon is important, as is the relative importance assigned by the interviewee. To illustrate this the most important three factors for each interview were ranked and scored (simply, most important scored 3 and least important scored 1). The frequency count demonstrates the number of respondents who appeared to rank this factor amongst their top three important considerations. For each factor the frequency count and score total is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. All Respondents: Frequency Count and Scoring of School Choice Factors

Factor	Count	Total
Catholic School	9	20
Academic Results / Performance	5	12
Atmosphere	4	8
OFSTED	3	6
Location	4	6
Child's Existing Friendship Group	2	6
Moral/religious ethics	3	4
Quality of Staff	2	2
Facilities	1	3
Personal Reasons	1	2

In order to understand the potentially different priorities of parents intending to send their children to the school, and those opting not to pursue application, the results were broken down into two further tables:

Table 2. Parents Intending to Send Their Children to All Saints': Frequency Count and Scoring of School Choice Factors

Factor	Count	Total
Catholic School	7	16
Academic Results / Performance	4	11
Atmosphere	3	6
Moral/religious ethics	3	4
Location	2	3
Quality of Staff	2	2
OFSTED	1	1
Child's Existing Friendship Group	1	3
Personal Reasons	1	2

Table 3. Parents Not Intending to Send Their Children to All Saints': Frequency Count and Scoring of School Choice Factors

Factor	Count	Total
OFSTED	2	5
Catholic School	2	4
Facilities	1	3
Location	2	3
Child's Existing Friendship Group	1	3
Atmosphere	1	2
Academic Results / Performance	1	1

4.3 Head Teachers: Work Package 2 Results

4.3.1 Introduction

Head teachers interviewed expressed different interpretations of their own role in contributing to school choice decisions, as well as differing levels of engagement with and perceptions of All Saints' School, including how effectively they have been engaged and communicated with by All Saints'. Notable comments from the interviews that took place are presented to illustrate the views expressed.

4.3.2 Roles and Responsibilities: Engagement of Parents.

A range of involvement in school choice was present throughout discussions with primary school head teachers, Respondent L displayed substantial involvement in discussions with parents regarding school choice:

Interviewer: Ok. And do parents come and talk to you about this?

Respondent L: They will do, yes, and they have meetings with the Year 7 teachers from All Saints'… And they come in for it, to talk to me and talk to staff as well.

Interviewer: About what percentage of parents do you talk to?

Respondent L: I'd say through the course of the year virtually all. For example, it would be a case of Year 6 parents have to get their application forms of their choice in by the 31st October, so from September to October, I make sure I talk to all parents.

Interviewer: Is that part of your role?

Respondent L: Definitely.

Interviewer: Maybe you could say a little more about what you feel your responsibilities are during this time.

Respondent L: It is making sure really that you know, parents have as much information as they possibly can do. It's making sure that all families have in on time their applications for the secondary school, by the 31ty of October, because if they're late they don't have the opportunity to choose and they're given a school. Whereas if they get the form in by 31st October, they have it on the first day back in September. If they choose the school, 9 times out of 10 they will get it. If they're late, they won't because they go to the bottom of the pile. But, so the responsibility for us is to make sure that the forms are in on time and we like to make sure that parents know what the expectations of the secondary school are, like uniform, you know, hair, wearing a tie, because come secondary school they can get after school detentions. And so, in year 6 we have a good disciplinary code, but in year 6 we do also try and make sure it's not far off what happens in senior school.

Interviewer: How do you make sure?

Respondent L: Letters, verbal communication, emails as well and we do constantly emphasise the fact that, you know, children are going up to secondary school, make sure, don't just always walk them to school every day, if you walk your child to school let them go for the final part of the journey, because they're not going to love you if you're going to walk them to school every day, you know, they need that bit of independence and parents need to let them have it.

———————————————————

However, for other head teachers, direct involvement in the school choice decision was more problematic on a personal level, and providing advice on the process of making a decision regarding school choice was the extent of their interpretation of their responsibilities:

Interviewer: How would you describe your roles and responsibilities in recommending schools to parents and children?

Respondent M: I knew you were going to ask that, from what you wrote in the outline. (Laughs). I never recommend a school, that's not for me. Politically that would quite difficult, and I think secondary schools, quite rightly, would say, you know "on what basis are you recommending schools?" So I don't recommend schools. I certainly, when parents come in, and frequently they will be popping in to see me around about the time that they're making their choices and say "Well I'm really not sure, you know, I remember the school as being like this twenty years ago." And that is as I was saying, where my role is to say [to parents], go and see for yourself, make an appointment to go

and see the school in action, don't go after school, go when the school is in action. And my experience of secondary schools is that they're delighted to do that. Because they have got a lot to be pleased with, and they like showing what they have got on offer, in exactly the same way as I really enjoy showing parents around here.

…I think that's what my role is; it is certainly not to say, I think this child should. I don't know enough about the individual secondary schools to say that anyway and I don't think it would be right. But it certainly is to challenge misunderstanding, because that isn't in the interest of children anyway, because it's how the schools are now, not how they were twenty odd years ago.

Interviewer: So you may advise on process but not on outcome?

Respondent M: Yes, I think so. I think my role is to help parents make the best decisions for their child. There are differences between the secondary schools; some of them have gone down a specific route, some have got a focus on sports, art or more technical subjects. But it's not for me to say, you know, at age eleven that a child should be going down an arts route, because clearly they are very, very young, and I would want them to keep all of their options open. But I certainly see that as my role.

_____

Respondent N: Well obviously we are within the Catholic family of schools. If a parent asks me directly where they should send their child, my first answer is always, you know, All Saints'. It's the Catholic school from here, guaranteed a place there, it's a good school the results are good, OFSTED is good, it would be more most like the children are used to here in terms of the care guidance. That would be my recommendation, and I think that would be a kind of party line across the whole family of schools, that you would be advising them to go to.

The response of some head teachers in respect of the level of parental engagement in the school choice decision was far from optimistic:

Interviewer: Would parents actively come and talk to you or other teachers about which secondary schools to go to?

Respondent N: (Sighs). No. Again, a minority, I think. I was on the playground there, just talking to a parent who had been [to another school] for an information evening. Her family would be one of a minority who are going to [a variety of schools], looking at OFSTED reports, looking at kind of results and then making a judgement on the whole package. But they're in the minority. I get one or two a year, that say "What do you think?", or "Can I have your advice?".

The engagement of parents within the process attracted positive and negative comments, and one head teacher suggested that children are becoming more adept at influencing the school choice decision:

> *Respondent M: But I don't know, increasingly these days, I think that children are much more, are much cleverer than we perhaps give them credit for sometimes. They are very interested and take their education very seriously, children, and make choices in keeping with that sort of idea.*

4.3.2 Perception of All Saints'

Participants were also asked about their own engagement with and perceptions of All Saints' School, in order to draw on their professional perspective and wide experience of many other schools. Comments included:

> *Respondent N: I've only got other secondary schools to compare them to, but the marketing side of things, I don't think they market themselves very well. I think they've made a bit of an effort to improve things. [But other schools which are not as successful academically] somehow manage to promote themselves, glossy magazines, big posters… And as I say we don't promote any of [the other school's] stuff as they are not part of the family of schools, but I know they do, glossy posters and pamphlets and booklets. [They're] the sort of things that catch parent's eyes, and the quality of that marketing.*

> *Respondent M: As things are going, certainly it would be very nice to be invited to have a tour around the school, with the other head teachers, not particularly on my own, but it would be handy to have a look around. Because as I said, I mean I know where it is, but I've never really been there to have a look around, I don't know how its organised, I don't know what its pastoral system is, I don't know what modern languages are available, I don't know whether the children are taught in mixed ability groups to start with and then are set. All those sort of things, I just don't know.*

4.3.3 Other Notable Comments

In common with Work Package 1, the interviewer prompted respondents to comment upon their experience of cultural diversity. The respondents expressed positive responses from a different perspective to those expressed by parents. One head teacher commented upon the "impressive drive and resolve" of migrant parents when it comes to their children's education.

Head teachers also assigned more significance to the location of a potential school than the comments recorded by parents, and furthermore cited location as a major factor for many

parents. When asked regarding why parents usually chose a school over other options, a

typical answer would be of the form: "because it is close and easy to get to."

One can speculate, perhaps parents were embarrassed to say they did not, or did not wish

to send their children to a school because it is far away. This corroborates with the concern

of several participants of coming across in a negative light to the interviewer:

Respondent F: *Even with money, it's a lot extra for a few round trips. Do I sound really tight?*
(Laughs).

However, it must be remembered that the sample size for parental interviews was only

applicable for qualitative analysis.

4.4 Visualisation of All Saint' Current Market Catchment Area by Geographic Distance and by Primary School: Work Package 3 Results.

The comprehensive data available for Work Package 3, however, where all students'

distance from home to school could be analysed for the last three years, allows examination

of the effect of location and journey distance on trends for applications to the school. The

resultant data is presented below in the form of pie charts describing the membership

following geographic and school attendance profile groups (Table 4) for All Saints' intake for

the years 2011-2013.

Table 4: Definition of Geographic and School Attendance Profile Groups

Profile	Schools			Postcodes					Distance
Profile A	St Philip Neri with St Bede Primary & Nursery	St Patrick's Catholic Primary (Mansfield)	Rosebrook Primary and Nursery School	NG17	NG18	NG19	NG20	NG21	6 miles or less
Profile B	Any local			NG17	NG18	NG19			2.5 miles or less
Profile C	Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Worksop			S80	S81				13 miles or greater
Profile D	Any local								Greater than 2.5 miles but less than 6 miles

Table 5: Membership Counts of Profile Groups

Profile Group	Intake Count		
	2011	2012	2013*
Profile A	89	82	72
Profile B	30	42	65
Profile C	26	15	8
Profile D	19	19	18
Other	21	27	22

* Primary school data for the current year was not complete at the time of analysis.

2011 Intake Profiles

Profile A
49%

Profile B
16%

Profile C
14%

Profile D
10%

Other
11%

2012 Intake Profiles

Profile A
44%

Profile B
23%

Profile C
8%

Profile D
10%

Other
15%

2013 Intake Profiles

Profile A
39%

Profile B (Includes
Rosebrook Primary)
35%

Profile C
4%

Profile D
10%

Other
12%
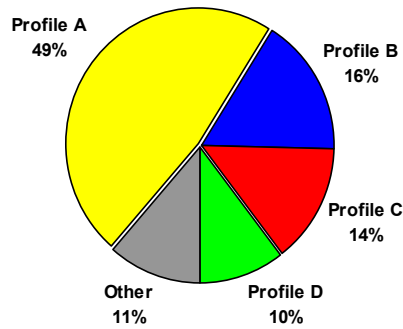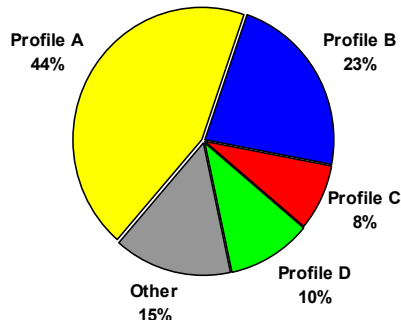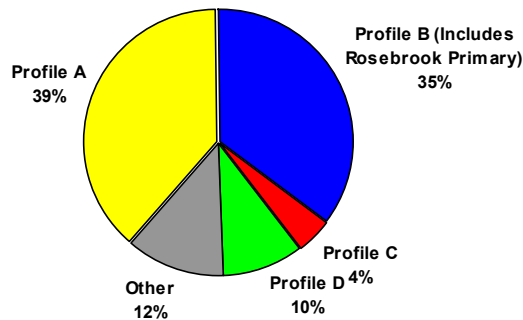
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Interviews:

Despite the limited number of interviews of parents and head teachers carried out, the

variety of factors identified and the individual nature of circumstances, needs, aspirations

and preferences expressed by the interviewees justified the decision to pursue a qualitative

study. The limited ranking and scoring analysis of parental perspectives should not be

interpreted as any form of meaningful statistic; it is intended to capture the broadest of trends within the interview data. Of particular interest are factors that parents who do not subsequently pursue applications to the school rate as important; however, any major differences in ranking allow us to postulate why this may be.

An aspect of both sets of interviews that was deliberately prompted was investigation in to the attitudes towards migrant families and issues they might face concerning school choice. Further to Carreon's (2005) discussion, support of migrant families and removal of barriers to the international skills market will benefit firms in the area by addressing skill shortages, bringing down the cost of labour and thereby improving their economic efficiency. Increased profitability of local firms has a direct impact on the local community and both local and national economy. Thus, identification of barriers experienced by migrant families is a direct investment in future economic performance.

We are specifically addressing the needs of "migrant families" as distinct from "migrant workers". Migrant workers represent a short term correction to fluctuations in the labour market, who can appear and disappear at relatively short notice. Migrant families, however, are making a commitment to settle in the local community, and this commitment can reasonably be expected to be longer term, but require more comprehensive support to be successful. The long term nature of this form of migration brings key skills in to the local economy, with a better chance that these skills can be retained.

In terms of general factors identified by parents, and looking at the similarities and differences between the tables, the only similar high ranking agreed upon by the 'intending' and 'not intending' groups was that of the school's obvious Catholic identity, almost

50

exclusively perceived to be of benefit. The issues surrounding location were mid-ranked in each of the tables, often remarked upon but not usually serious enough to dictate choice. Of the lower ranking factors, the importance of maintaining existing friendship groups (children attending the same school as their primary school friends) featured in the bottom half of all the tables.

5.2 Parental Profiling

The 'intending' group ranked academic results, atmosphere and moral and religious ethics provided by the school highly; in contrast the 'not intending' group ranked school facilities in the top half of the table. This may give insight in to a different value system between the two groups. A school offering particularly good facilities to its students may be imagined to appeal to parents with a practical background. The more intangible concepts and academic prioritisation may appeal more to parents with academic backgrounds.

Interestingly, OFSTED rating was ranked top in the 'not intending' group, but in the bottom half of the table for the 'intending' group. The quality of the staff was mid ranked by the 'intending' group' but not ranked at all by the 'not intending' group.

How do we interpret these broad findings? In terms of the ranking tables, many theories could be proposed to explain the observations, not least that that the small sample size allows for little confidence in statistical significance. Guided by these approximations, however, we can explore the responses of the interviewees, and begin to describe some credible profiles for parents who populate three groups of interest to the marketer; parents who most probably will send children to the school, parents who most probably will not, and the 'in-betweens' the 'may/ may nots': in parliamentary terms the 'marginals'. It is

within this group that the marketer succeeds or fails to improve market performance (in this instance increased numbers of applications and increased percentage take up of offers of school places); this group offers the best potential return on investment of marketing effort and resource.

5.2 Profile 1:
"High probability" to "buy – in" to the school

These families enjoy one or more advantages from amongst these circumstances; their children already attend a Catholic primary school closely connected with All Saints'; the family lives in the locality of All Saints'. The family is likely to follow the Catholic faith, and the parents and children value academic achievement and moral and religious ethics. The parents may value academic Atmosphere, moral and religious ethics. Mid – quality of staff

5.3 Profile 2:
"Low probability" expected to "walk away" from the school

These parents rely upon references to OFSTED reports, reproduced in the school literature. It is not clear to what extent these parents research the OFSTED reports themselves. These parents live outside of the immediate locale of the school and they express unwillingness to address the transportation issue. The children within this group may not attend a school which is closely connected to All Saints'. This group seek a school that offers excellent facilities and thus range of opportunities for children to engage in practical activities throughout their education.

5.4 Profile 3:
"Key marginal" parents offering potential to generate incremental applications

These parents either live outside the immediate locale of the school, appreciate that transport is an issue but do not necessarily discount a longer commute for their children as long as this delivers significant benefit. The children of these families are unlikely to attend a Catholic primary school. These families are likely to have distinct beliefs and a value system; however, this may not be aligned to Catholicism. This group may not have strong opinions as to the particular direction their children's education will take in terms of academic, practical activities or particular specialisation; however they are interested and concerned to place their children where they will be happy and enjoy the school experience.

5.5 Work Package 2: Head Teacher Perspectives

There are a range of professional judgements that head teachers make concerning the propriety by which they can make recommendation or advise parents concerning school choice. Engagement with All Saints' School also varies considerably; key insights presented demonstrate that improvement of communication with both feeder and non-feeder primary schools could benefit the school.

The current level of communication between All Saints' and its primary schools is not adequate for the purpose of enabling primary head teachers to offer informed advice to parents. The marketing material that All Saints' produces is not perceived to be competitive in comparison with some other secondary schools in the area.

The primary head teachers displayed willingness to engage with All Saints' which represents a key opportunity to develop relationships and utilise these head teachers as a channel for information concerning the school to prospective parents.

Application of these research aspects directly relevant to the school's marketing will be addressed in the Marketing Plan section of this work.

5.6 Work Package 3: Trends for All Saints' Catchment Area: Profile Membership Analysis

Referring to the pie charts presented in the results section, it can be seen that over the three years, membership of Profile C is falling, while membership of Profiles A and B is rising as a percentage of the school's annual intake.

Profiles A represent pupils attending one of the three local Catholic primary schools in the All Saints' family inducted from home addresses within 6.5 miles of the school, Profile B represents pupils from any primary that live within 2.5 miles of the school. Profile C represents pupils inducted specifically from The Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Worksop and living over 13 miles away. Applications from Holy Family in 2011 provided 14% of the intake, by 2012 that had reduced to 8%. For the current year the data recorded is 4% however, primary school information is not yet complete for the current year. By comparison, pupil recruitment from Holy Trinity RC Primary School in Newark (a further distance from All Saints' School) actually increased from 11 to 15 pupils from 2011 to 2012.

Thus, while there is clearly an increasing trend for parents to favour secondary schools in the immediate local area, the school has been successful in retaining the level of application from the Holy Trinity school in Newark, with which they have a special relationship. Clearly, in the case of the Holy Family School in Worksop, the relationship may not be strong enough to maintain the level of applications. All Saints' School therefore faces a choice whether to

invest effort rebuilding or enhancing links between themselves and Holy Family School in order to halt or reverse this trend.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Project Conclusions

Many of the conclusions drawn from research over twenty years ago concerning factors affecting school choice have been reinforced by observations during this study consistent with the restriction of examining a single school. Marketing concepts have been adopted and adapted from the literature from leading marketing authorities to be applicable to this case study of marketing challenges facing All Saints' School. In particular, the initial steps necessary to begin the transformation to a market oriented organisation have been identified and form part of the marketing plan and recommendations. Further specific issues have been identified from the interview and pupil intake data. Actions and recommendations to address these issues have been discussed and proposed.

6.2 Limitations of the Current Study

The major limitations faced during this research included a limited pool of interviewees and challenging time constraints. The rationale for choosing mainly qualitative methods has already been discussed. The qualitative methods also allowed for broader and less constrained investigation of the issues and concerns of parents facing the school choice decision and gave free rein to head teachers to express issues including parental attitudes, professional ethics and communication with All Saints', but clearly the number of interviews conducted did not provide representation of the population of parents and head teachers

connected with All Saints' school. The results obtained can only be viewed as examples of the perceptions of these groups and not as a statistically significant representation. The quantitative data from the school data was complete for the years 2011 and 2012, but had some omissions for the current year data in terms of the primary schools previously attended by the intake, which was not always recorded. However, the data was complete enough to be able to draw conclusions with reasonable certainty.

In comparison with other studies that have been conducted, this study is limited to a single school that is a co-educational faith school. Therefore, factors regarding same sex, co-educational or denominational schools are not addressed in this study.

In addition to the primary research, quantitative data was available from the schools records which allowed further conclusions to be drawn.

6.3 Theoretical Implications of the Application of Marketing Orientation to School Choice

Broadly, in terms of school choice, the approximate ranking of factors impacting upon school choice confirm the rankings published in Hunter (1991) and West (1992). The current study is of value as these rankings were published over twenty years ago and this study, although limited in size confirms that school choice factors remain remarkably similar over time. Differences occur due to the limitations of the current study in relation to a single school being studied; the older studies did not have this limitation.

This study is original as it applies marketing theory including branding to the choice of school, which has received only superficial attention to promotion, labelled as "marketing" and no real in depth development of market orientation appropriate to a school. market

orientation has developed from application within commercial companies, and although there is discussion of application to not-for-profit organisations, there has been little attempt to practically describe application of market orientation to a single school.

From the published work concerning marketing best practice, we can conclude that the most effective use of effort and resource in a marketing campaign is to target the key marginal consumers. However, current thinking around marketing and brand image recognises that the initial marketing campaign leading to a "sale" is not the end of the process. Consumers seek reinforcement and reassurance of the validity of their purchase decision. Also Marketing Orientation is a continual process, akin to continual improvement where the emphasis is placed upon involving, in this case, pupils, staff and parents in the "brand identity" of the school; encouraging them to be aware of and focus upon the positive aspects of belonging to the school, encouraging them to take ownership of the essence of the school, talk about it, to express themselves as appropriate on social media; or more succinctly, to be enthusiastic about the school. For their part, school needs to fulfil their side of the implicit contract. They need to give pupils, teachers and parents positive experiences and identifying the needs, wants, desires and aspirations of all of these groups is key to providing this quality of experience. It is suggested that progress in this respect can be measured by the amount of positive content that can be found by reviewing social media and local media coverage concerning the school. Every opportunity should be seized to engage local media in coverage of positive and interesting events which the school promotes or takes part in; an example of this is the class that supported their classmate in

fundraising activities for Cancer Research UK, which appeared in the local *High Life*

magazine, in June 2013.

6.4 Practical Implications of Deploying Market Orientation to All Saints' School

This study is of value not only as a contribution to academic research, but as a case study for

market research applied to a small organisation that is not typical in terms of the application

of market orientation and represents challenges to correctly size the marketing strategy to

suit the size of the organisation. A key deliverable of this study is the marketing strategy for

the school and considerable effort has been made to identify practical objectives and

suggestions that can employed by the school to improve its marketing in the short term, and

also, in a structured way, in to the future.

6.5 Future Research

This study, by virtue of its limitations, does not fully address the requirement to carry out a

full qualitative investigation of the factors influencing school choice. Therefore, this

requirements still exists. Many of the existing studies apply quantitative approaches,

however, the range of responses generated even in this small study suggest strongly that

there is scope for further qualitative research on this topic.

A neglected area of current academic research is to fully understand the economic cost of

failing to address the needs of migrant families, as they contribute to the global skills

market. This failure constitutes a barrier to an efficient labour market and thus impacts

upon the economic performance of companies, local communities and the UK. It is

recommended that further research is carried out, looking at the economic impact and also what barriers need to be identified and removed.

Clearly, the thrust of research and development of new theories in Marketing will be based upon commercial organisations, generally large and complex organisations. However, there would appear to be scope for further studies in to the interpretation and application of the theoretical basis of marketing and market orientation to smaller enterprises and other enterprises which do not fit the mould of a commercial company. While the predominance of large multinational companies continues to make up a large section of enterprise, there is increasing awareness of market orientation amongst smaller organisations and small-medium sized organisations form a key element of all economies, communities and societies.

Chapter 7: Marketing Plan and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The process for generating a marketing plan will be made up of four stages: an identification of key factors arising from the work packages, generating a marketing requirement and strategy based upon current marketing thinking and particular application to All Saints' school. Secondly examining the current marketing actions being pursued by the school, leading to the third stage of identifying gaps between the desired strategy and the current actions. Finally, a plan for implementing the marketing strategy will be recommended.

7.2 Current Marketing Material

Promotional material for the school currently includes a school website, a relatively new presence on social media (Facebook and Twitter), a school prospectus, a banner at the school gates, posters for display at feeder schools, and print advertisements in local press as well as engagement with local radio. In the following section, these elements will be considered.

Despite a common look and feel of the current school prospectus and local press advertisement in terms of colour scheme, the advertisement and prospectus emphasise and de-emphasise a range of the school's selling points.

The advertisement circulating amongst local press consists of a single page spread emphasising the school's league tables position, OFSTED rating and report. The school's inclusive atmosphere, dedicated team of staff and disciplined learning environment are described. The accompanying photographs emphasise the school's ICT and library facilities, school trips and Christmas play. In contrast, the school prospectus leads with the school's status as a specialist performing arts college. In common with the advertising material, the school's 2012 OFSTED inspection is central to the prospectus; many direct quotations are used throughout.

A common aspect between the print advertisement and prospectus is the lack of emphasis placed on the school facilities; no photographs of the school are used in the advertisement except as a backdrop. In the prospectus, a small photograph of the building is to be found at the back. The current reliance upon temporary buildings during refurbishment may account for this reticence to display classrooms and building style; however the school has a lot to

offer in terms of facilities, and invests constantly in refurbishment. In particular, parents have remarked upon the chapel and how this contributes to the atmosphere and supports the moral and religious ethos of the school; however the chapel does not feature in the schools marketing material. The development of the school's buildings are being reported on social media, which is an encouraging sign and demonstrates marketing staff's awareness of the different advantages of new channels of communication. This should be considered if and when initiatives are put in place to consolidate and improve upon the school's provision of science teaching; especially in regard to the impressive new facilities.

The school is not currently using radio adverts (however, the head teacher did take part in a local radio interview recently). Other opportunities that have not been realised are advertising hoardings or advertising spaces available on local transport. By comparison, a leading competitor school has recently succeeded in placing an advert outside of a local supermarket, which has caused some comment.

7.3 Products

The requirement for educational services is defined by Government in terms of the national curriculum, but the school also has considerable scope for offering additional curriculum subjects and for specialisation. As a faith school, there is an expectation and requirement from the patron church organisation that the school will devote significant emphasis upon moral and ethical education guidance and will also fully support the religious curriculum, appropriate to complement the national curriculum.

Academic education is clearly only one component of the service provided by a good secondary school. The school provides opportunity and a safe environment for young people to develop socialisation skills. The school also provides key role models and supports students to develop their holistic intellectual, spiritual and physical identities. In addition to the curriculum activities, a good secondary school will offer opportunity for students to pursue extra-curricular activities in both formal structured and informal events.

A key role for secondary schools is to prepare students for their next steps in life. In the past this has engendered a choice between further education and employment. More recently, the emphasis has moved significantly towards the majority, if not all of students pursuing further education.

7.4 Markets

The operating models that secondary schools in the UK may adopt are the subject of continual review by Government and the Department for Education. Recently, schools have been encouraged to structure themselves as academies. Other initiatives have encouraged schools to concentrate on a particular area of excellence.

The requirements of students who make up the market for the school depend upon their aspirations and how they perceive their opportunities for further education or employment. These requirements may be expected to change according to shifting job markets and changes in the provision of higher education and the financial commitment that it requires.

7.5 Previous Results

The school under its current leadership and with its current structure recently has succeeded in many aspects of its performance. External metrics such as OFSTED rating, league tables and academic results are all very positive in the context of the type of school and other schools within the area; a major selling point of the current marketing focus.

In terms of the viability of the school, it attracts applications generally more than sufficient to maintain the school roll at its current level.

7.6 Competitors

Of similar good quality schools in the area, two are worthy of note as potential strong competitors. The Brunts Academy is a similar sized school which also specializes in the Performing Arts. A key advantage of All Saints' over The Brunts Academy is All Saints' status as a faith school. While it has not quite achieved the performance of All Saints' in league tables and in respect of academic results, there are clear indications that the academy is enthusiastically managed and marketed.

Samworth Church Academy offers excellent facilities and is a specialist Business and Enterprise academy. It lacks All Saints' good OFSTED rating and proven academic results, but incentivises applications and may attract parents and students for whom Performing Arts do not appeal as a specialisation.

7.7 Other environmental forces

The increasingly global nature of business, the economy and UK society requires education to adapt accordingly. The East Midlands in general and Mansfield in particular attract families and individuals from diverse cultures and nationalities. Other areas that have experienced diversity, especially those in central London and inner-cities have struggled to adapt appropriately to the needs of the students. There is no evidence that All Saints' or its peer group of schools are experiencing difficulties currently.

7.8 SWOT Analysis

7.8.1 Introduction

SWOT analysis as a measure has been suggested by Piercy and Giles (1989) as being 'the most common and widely-recognised tool for conducting a strategic marketing audit.' which explains the routine deployment of the tool in marketing analysis and demonstrates the need for cautious consideration in the construction of any SWOT analysis. Below, All Saints' internal strengths and weaknesses; and external threats and opportunities are summarised. Discussion of each aspect and the individual points are expanded upon in Appendix 3.

7.8.2 SWOT Summary

Internal Factors – Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	
High standards of behaviour and pupil discipline.	Strong provision of religious education, moral guidance and seamless integration with church activities.
Strong leadership from the teaching staff.	Policies of inclusion.
High academic achievement.	Policies of student empowerment and engagement.

Provision of an enjoyable learning environment.	Broad appeal irrespective of pupil faith.
Aims consistent with all pupils' best interest.	Attracts adequate application numbers.
Staff quality.	Performing Arts specialisation and facilities.
Quality of leadership.	High standard of Mathematics and English.
League table position.	Continued investment in school facilities.
Strong identity as a Catholic school.	Good sixth form.
Strong links with a family of Catholic Primary Schools, with effective continuity of education.	Well established catchment areas.
Established links with the Nottinghamshire Diocese.	Lack of superior competitors in the locality.
Support from the local community, in particular the Church community.	

Weaknesses
High expectations of academic performance
Pupil reliance on transport from outlying areas.
Quality and appearance of existing school buildings
Science
Miss-match between school and intake academic levels
Level of homework
Current promotional material and marketing
Levels of communication with some primary schools
Staff turnover levels

External Factors – Opportunities and Threats

Opportunities
More control and responsibility for school management.

Migrant communities
Lack of competition within the market segment of Catholic secondary schools.
Local non-feeder school's attitude towards engagement with All Saints'.
Modern opportunities for marketing including social media such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, etc.
Modern data handling and collaborative working solutions.

Threats
1. Subsidised bus services vulnerable to public service cuts.
2. Presence of competitors within the market.
3. Competitor actions
4. General academic ability of pupils is falling.
5. Consistency of key stage metrics from primary schools.
6. Aging population

7.9 Marketing Objectives and Issues

7.9.1 Introduction

The over-arching objective is to devise a marketing plan that leverages the unique strengths of the school, identifies the target market segment and describes them in terms of needs, wants and aspirations, and propose how the relevant strengths of the school can be communicated effectively to the target market segments.

Marketing objectives will be related to organisational objectives which are derived from the desire to improve upon league table position and OFSTED rating. However, there are

objectives which relate purely to All Saints' marketing performance in terms the number of primary school from which All Saints' attracts pupils, and maintaining or improving recruitment from key primaries.

7.9.2 Organisational Objectives

The organisational objectives suggested as examples would be to address any weaknesses and maintain strengths. Clearly, it is appropriate that organisational objectives should be set by the head teacher in consultation with the school governors, staff and parents. The following objectives are suggested as worthy of consideration as deliverable over the next five academic years. The precise timing and planning of delivery will require assessment of the available resources. The objectives are listed in order of priority.

- Establish key performance metrics for measuring delivery of Science and propose targets consistent with delivering an OFSTED rating of "good" for the provision of Science education.

- Establish the competitive position of the school relating to its strengths in the provision of Mathematics and English, and its specialisation in the Performing Arts relative to similar schools with similar if not better performance. Monitor this position in order to identify any issues that may arise.

- Perform a risk analysis for the key strengths of the school. Identify and plan contingency for any organisational or operational risks that may negatively impact upon such organisational strengths as strong leadership and strong Mathematics and English standards. Other risks could be loss of key academic staff, (department

heads, for example), or emergence of a strong or superior competitor amongst local secondary schools.

- In consultation with Church authorities, local education authority, governors, staff and parents, review the current facilities of the school. It is suggested that the competitive position of the school's facilities should be established in comparison with other schools, whether locally or nationally, who enjoy particularly good or effective facilities. The school should then endeavour to prioritise which facilities they seek to improve consistent with other organisational objectives.

7.9.3 Marketing Objectives

Marketing objectives comprise of objectives focussed upon the desired end state and objectives designed to put in place a structure to review and revise marketing as a key function of the school's management and to deliver these objectives. Structural objectives recommended are as follows:

- Identification of a governance committee empowered to make decisions upon the direction of the marketing strategy, in the context of the wider organisational strategy. The head teacher should be a key participant in this regard.

- All direct activities aimed at delivering the marketing strategy need to be co-ordinated by a dedicated marketing team. The marketing manager should report directly to the governance committee.

- The marketing team needs to establish a project management structure to establish key requirements and projects to deliver these requirements, identify resources

available and produce detailed project plans and project tracking to report progress to the marketing manager and the governance committee. All projects should specify regular progress gateways at which the marketing manager or a delegate can assess delivery of the project against schedule.

Marketing objectives focussed upon the desired end state for All Saints' suggested to be in place over the next five academic years are compiled on the basis of the organisational objectives above, and relate to the absolute performance of the school in terms of attracting applications and the relative performance of the school relating to past performance and to current competitors.

The following objectives are recommended:

- Within the next 12 months identify any issues that may relate to the recent fall in applications from Holy Family Catholic Primary School and agree a plan to address these issues, given a target of returning applications to 2011 levels by academic year 2016-17.

- Engage in dialogue with the head teachers of each of the primary schools who have provided applicants to All Saints' in the period between 2012 and 2013, by the end of the current academic year. Initiate a monthly initiative to invite head teachers to informal discussion and tours of the school, individually or in small groups. This objective is to be completed within the next five academic years and all head teachers of primary schools within three miles of All Saints' should be targeted this year. All head teachers should be personally provided with a pack of promotional material, including an up to date prospectus.

- All primary school head teachers detailed above to be given the option of subscribing to a mailing list for All Saints' information and promotional material. Delivery of this material is to be notified personally in advance as part of the routine dialogue.

- A feasibility study to be carried out with the objective of identifying joint projects and activities between All Saints' and the primary schools identified in the previous objectives. In the case of Catholic primary schools that are remote from All Saints', there exists for head teachers a dilemma that while seeking to build relationships with All Saints', it is more feasible to build relationships with local schools. Therefore, relationships should be identified and pursued with secondary schools in those areas that attract students from the locale of All Saints' and establish a *quid pro quo* informal system by which they support All Saints' target primaries in their area, while All Saints' supports their target primaries in the All Saints' area.

- A feasibility study to be carried out identifying ways to utilise school facilities outside of school hours amongst the wider community. The deliverables for this objective are primarily to promote the school's public image in the local community, but the policy should be cost effective and generate revenue. Increased depreciation of equipment, buildings and all incremental running costs are to be accounted for.

- The marketing team are to engage with the chaplaincy to identify joint projects with the objective of more effectively supporting chaplaincy actions engaging with charities and organisations such as Fair Trade. A key deliverable of such projects will

be appropriate communication and promotion of these activities via the marketing team, to the general public.

- Further, the marketing team are to engage with Dance, Drama and Music departments on that make up the specialist Performing Arts faculty on a regular basis to identify activities, performances or individual achievements that the marketing team can publicise.

- The marketing team are to hold a regular monthly or quarterly meeting with all heads of department with the objective of identifying those projects, field trips or extracurricular activities supported by the school departments that may yield promotional material. The marketing team are to facilitate and where necessary, participate in activities and collection of such material.

- The marketing team are to investigate the feasibility of allowing select members of the student body, for example, Head Boy and Head Girl or members of the student council to initially submit articles for publication on the school website, and potentially to have monitored access to the school's social media account with the aim of posting appropriate, personal perspectives of school activities. The school's responsible IT manager is to be included in the investigation and a full risk analysis is to be carried out prior to any action being taken.

- The school prospectus and all official promotional material and the school website are to be redesigned based on the marketing strategy in time for the next academic year. Subsequently, a redesign or freshening exercise is to be carried out bi-annually. The school website is to be reviewed by the marketing team on a monthly basis and

activities identified in the previous objectives are to be scheduled for publication as soon as possible after the events have taken place in all respects within seven days.

- The school needs to publish photographs of the school buildings and facilities in its promotional material. The marketing team should consider the impressive new science facilities, for example.

- The marketing team are to gather data as demonstrated by this report and develop their own analysis capability, to generate updated marketing plans commencing academic year 2015 and then annually or bi-annually as appropriate and as agreed with the governance committee.

7.9.4 Issues

A key marketing issue will be identifying effective means of getting the marketing message to the target audience and the frequency and level of reinforcement of the message required to maintain a good public image. Frequency is a suitable analogy as there is an optimum frequency that resonates with the target audience. Too low a frequency allows for the audience to forget key points or become distracted. Conversely, too high a frequency risks irritation or boredom from over-familiarity with the marketing material.

7.10 Gap Analysis

No overall gap exists in total applications, as the school has sufficient applications each year to meet its school roll. However, one specific school has displayed a falloff in applications over the last three academic years, namely Holy Family School. While the current year's application numbers may be due to incomplete primary school data, there is still a clear

issue to address as the desired end state would be to maintain applications from all schools at least at their current level. In terms of the relationship between the school and primary head teachers, the current state represents lack of communication of key benefits of All Saints' School to these professionals. The desired end state would be for all of these head teachers to have first-hand knowledge of the school's unique selling points, and to have visited the school to have seen for themselves.

Of more importance is the current approach to marketing which the school, in common with many schools, has fallen in to. The desired end-state would be for a marketing structure to be in place, generating marketing plans and objectives and managing the implementation of market orientation within the organisation. Such a structure would deliver not only high quality marketing material, but would engage with the wider community to deliver high public esteem and public relations. Achievement of this is discussed further in the Marketing Strategy section, and actions to achieve it are detailed in Marketing Objectives.

7.11 Market Segmentation and Target Market

Traditional segmentation concerns either demographics or psychographics. However, the purpose of segmentation is to identify the group of potential consumers that represent the best opportunity to deliver incremental "sales" dependent upon the level of investment in marketing effort. To this end, profiles have been drawn up, within the Discussion section of this work that group parents according to similarities and differences evident in the qualitative data collected from parents who are intending to send their children to the school, or who are not intending to pursue application to the school. In a similar way, a key

group has been identified, who are referred to as "Key Marginal Parents". It is this group that represents the best marketing opportunity.

Key Marginal Parent Profile

One or more of the following circumstances will be applicable to parents that form the group exhibiting the Key Marginal Parent Profile:

- Live outside the direct vicinity of All Saints'.

- Are not completely deterred by a lengthier commute for their children.

- Do not currently send their children to a Catholic primary school.

- Have a distinct beliefs and a value system, not necessarily Catholicism.

- May not have strong opinions concerning the specific direction their children's education in terms of academic, practical or particular specialisation.

- Are concerned to place their children where they will enjoy school life.

Segmentation based upon specific targeted primary schools and catchment zones has been carried out based upon applications over the previous three academic years. Interpretation of the segmentation due to distance from the school in terms of targeting specific areas according to market trends suggests that applications are increasing for children living closer to the school, and generally falling for children living remotely. However, this trend is effectively countered at schools where there is a strong relationship, for example, Holy Trinity School in Newark. This indicates that a marketing strategy of engagement with

primary schools will be effective in maintaining or increasing applications from these

schools.

Therefore, the target market for the marketing strategy to concentrate upon is that

described by the Key Marginal Parent Profile. In terms of geographical targeting, the

emphasis should be upon employing the currently effective model of engagement

demonstrated by the relationship of the school with Holy Trinity School and applying similar

models of engagement where possible. There is an overriding market trend for parents to

favour schools close to their homes, and it would be unwise to challenge this overall market

trend. Therefore, with the exception of Holy Family School where there is a clear need to re-

establish the level of application previously enjoyed in 2011, schools should therefore be

prioritised for targeting on the basis of proximity to All Saints'. This conclusion contradicts

the location profile characteristics of the Key Marginal Profile; however as it is based upon

quantitative data it should override the profile in this respect.

7.12 Marketing Strategy

Usually, a key first step in developing a marketing strategy for a school is to make decisions

such as exactly what kind of educational establishment the school wants to be and decide

on aims, goals and objectives. Clearly, All Saints' has a strong identity and an effective

brand, and is already the school it wants to be in many respects. Organisational objectives

have been suggested that may already been conceived and planned independently by the strong leadership in effect at the school.

There is a clear need to address the target market segment and achieve the direct marketing objectives detailed above. However, creating a structure to deliver market orientation in to the school is a key organisational objective, and a strategy of actions to set this structure in place has been suggested in the organisational objectives. This is based upon typical initiatives that take place in industry to govern and deliver programmes or major projects and addresses governance, risk analysis and project management. Key enablers for delivery of market orientation are the establishment of a governance committee with executive powers, and a dedicated marketing team and marketing manager.

7.13 Marketing Mix: Product, Price, Place, People, Promotion, Positioning.

The educational service that makes up the product of any school is made up of the specific interpretation of the national curriculum and the additional curriculum subjects that are offered. All Saints' is a Performing Arts specialist academy and supports this with extra-curricular activities which are also offered in many subjects across the curriculum. Beyond this basic product, the school delivers a coherent means of supporting and developing student's personality, beliefs and value systems in a holistic and inclusive manner. As a faith school, moral, ethical and religious guidance is provided as appropriate to the diverse student body.

Price as a concept may be difficult to interpret in the public sector in general and in non-fee paying schools in particular. However, there is an economic aspect to all public service

provision, and schools are funded according to criteria based upon student numbers and needs. It is therefore critical for All Saints' to continue to attract applications in order to maintain its roll in accordance with its organisational objectives.

The physical location of the school and condition of its buildings are a key aspect of the marketing mix. All Saints' does employ temporary buildings; however, the school is clearly investing in improving its facilities. The school's single location in respect of the applications which it enjoys from outside of the area is a potential issue should transport become more difficult for parents. Other educational establishments, notably those in Higher Education, often enjoy multiple locations and campuses usually as a result of mergers that have taken place when the establishment moved from a lower level of provision, for example, a college becoming a university.

The quality of the staff in any organisation depends upon strong leadership, which has been recognised by OFSTED to be very much in effect at All Saints'. The school's strengths in Mathematics and English and the favourable comments by OFSTED in many other departments including Performing Arts imply that high quality staff are in place. However, it is a continuing challenge for all organisations to attract quality applicants for positions made vacant in the normal course of events, and to retain key staff. A key challenge exists to deliver a marketing strategy to engage with, empower and enthuse staff to deliver market orientation within the school.

In terms of promotional activities, All Saints' is conventional by producing prospectuses and leaflets with a small amount of physical advertising material on display at the school. There is a website and more recently, the school is beginning to engage with social media. This is

compounded by existing initiatives engaging with feeder primary schools, such as taster days for pupils.

All Saints' market positioning enjoys considerable advantages from the excellent reputation it holds amongst the local community and through OFSTED and Government league tables. Parents interviewed obviously valued its traditions and the values which it displays and encourages within the student body, including caring and helping others and self-discipline. As a faith school, it enjoys considerable support delivering high quality moral, religious and ethical education. The school also evidences many extra-curricular activities in its promotional material.

7.14 Financial Plans

Clearly, the establishment of a marketing team and the effort required to deliver the marketing plan will incur cost. In order to potentially offset some of this cost, the objectives for the marketing team suggested in this report include feasibility studies to investigate whether the school facilities can be utilised as a source of revenue outside of school hours. This will also engage with the local community and give public relations benefits.

7.15 Implementation Controls

Delivery of market orientation in the school is a programme that is not a one-off programme. It is a continual process which requires strong governance and process management. Objectives have been designed to establish governance, management

structure as well as monitoring and improvement processes as detailed in the marketing

objectives section.

Word count: 20, 619.

References

Ball, S. J. (1987), *The Micro-Politics of the School,* Methuen, London.

Ball, S. J. and Reay, D. (2006), 'Spoilt for Choice: the working classes and educational markets', *Oxford Review of Education,* vol.23:1, pp. 89 -101.

Ball, S. J. and Vincent, C. (1998) 'I Heard It on the Grapevine: 'Hot' Knowledge and School Choice', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol.19:3, pp.377-400.

Bass, F.M. Tigert, D.J. & Lonsdale, R.T. (1968), "Market Segmentation: Group Versus Individual Behavior," *Journal of Marketing Research,* Volume 5: 264-70.

Beaumont, J. (2009), 'Portrait of the East Midlands', *Office for National Statistics,* available at: *http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/regional-trends/region-and-country-profiles/economy---may-2012/economy---east-midlands--may-2012.html,* accessed 20th August, 2013.

Belch, G. Belch, M. and Guolla, M, (2011) 'Consumer Behaviour and Target Audience Decisions' in *Advertising & Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective*, McGraw-Hill Irwin, London, pp. 60 -91.

Bowe, R. Ball, S. and Gewirtz, S. (1994) 'Parental Choice, Consumption and Social Theory: The Operation of Micro-markets in Education', *British Journal of Educational Studies,* vol 42:1, pp.38 -51.

Bowe, R. Ball, S. and Gewirtz, S. (1995), *Markets, Choice and Equity in Education,* Open University Press, Buckingham.

Burgess, S. Greaves, E., Vignoles, A. and Wilson, D. (2009), 'Working Paper No. 09/224: Parental choice of primary school in England: what 'type' of school do parents choose?' *Centre for Market and Public Organisation,* available at: *http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmpo/publications/papers/2009/wp224.pdf,* accessed 25th August, 2013.

Burk Wood, M. (2005), *The Marketing Plan Handbook,* Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

Calonius, H. (2006), 'Contemporary Research in Marketing: A Market Behaviour Framework', *Journal of Marketing Theory,* vol.6:4, pp.419 -428.

Carreon, G.P. Drake, C. & Barton, A.C. (2005) 'The Importance of Presence: Immigrant Parents' School Engagement Experiences', *American Educational Research Journal,* vol. 42:3, pp. 465–498.

Chad, P. (2013), 'Implementing market orientation in charities: A necessity for survival', *Journal of Marketing Theory,* vol. 13:3, pp.303-322.

Cova, B. and Dalli, D. (2009), 'Working Consumers: the next step in marketing theory?', *Journal of Marketing Theory,* vol.9:3, pp.315 -339.

David, M. E. West, A. and Ribbens, J. (1994), *Mother's Intuition?: Choosing Secondary Schools.* Falmer, London.

Department of Education, (2013), 'School and Local Statistics', available at: *http://www.education.gov.uk/cgi-bin/schools/performance/school.pl?urn=122900&superview=sec*, accessed 2nd July 2013.

Edwards, T. and Whitty, G. (1997) 'Marketing Quality', in Glatter, R, Woods, P and

Bagley, C (eds.) *Choice & Diversity in Schooling: Perspectives and Prospects,* Routledge,

London.

Foxall, G. R. (2010), 'Accounting for consumer choice: Inter-temporal decision making in

behavioural perspective', *Journal of Marketing Theory,* vol. 10: 4, pp. 315-345.

Foxall, G.R. (2013), 'Intentionality, symbol, and situation in the interpretation of

consumer choice', *Journal of Marketing Theory,* vol. 13: 1, pp.105 -127.

Galton, M. J. and Willcocks, J. (1983), *Moving from the Primary Classroom*, Routledge,

London.

Garapich, M. (2008), 'The Migration Industry and Civil Society: Polish Immigrants in the

United Kingdom Before and After EU Enlargement', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration

Studies*, vol.34:5, pp.735-752.

Gewirtz, S. (1998), 'Can All Schools be Successful? An exploration of the determinants of

school "success"', *Oxford Review of Education*, vol. 24:4, pp. 439-457.

Glatter, R. Woods, P. and Bagley, C (1997), *Choice & Diversity in Schooling: Perspectives

and Prospects,* Routledge, London.

Glenn, C. L. (2011), *Contrasting Models of State and School: A Comparative Historical

Study of Parental Choice and State Control*. Continuum, New York.

Gorard, S. (1997), 'Market Forces, Choice and Diversity in Education: The Early Impact'

Sociological Research Online, vol. 2:3, available at:

http://www.socresonline.org.uk/2/3/8.html, accessed 4th July 2013.

Gorard, S. (2003), *Quantitative Methods in Social Science*. Continuum, New York.

Gorard, S. Taylor, C. and Fitz, J. (2003), *Schools, Markets and Choice Policies,* Routledge Falmer, London.

Gray, L. (1991), *Marketing Education*. Open University Press, Milton Keynes.

Hammond, T. and Dennsion, B. (1995), 'School Choice in Less Populated Areas', *Journal of Educational Management and Administration,* vol. 23:2, pp. 104 - 113.

Handley, L. (2010), 'Branducation: Meet the Teachers', *Marketing Week,* vol. 5:4, pp.14 - 18.

Halstead, J. M. (1994), *Parental Choice and Education: Principles, Policy, and Practice*. Kogan Page, London.

Henry, J. (2013), 'The Parents Who Cheat At School', *The Telegraph.* Available at: *http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education*/9904282/The-parents-who-cheat-at-school.html, accessed 20th August, 2013.

Henry, M. (1999), 'Working with/against globalization in education', *Journal of Education Policy*, vol. 14:1, pp. 85-97.

Hirsch, D. (1997), 'Policies for School Choice: What can Britain learn from abroad?', in Glatter, R., Woods, P. and Bagley, C. (eds.), *Choice & Diversity in Schooling: Perspectives and Prospects,* Routledge, London.

Holstein, J.A. & Gubrium, J.F. (2004), The Active Interview. In Silverman, D. (eds.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice.* Sage Publications, London, 140-161.

Kirk, J. & Miller, M. L. (1986), 'Reliability and Validity' in *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research.* Sage Publications, London, 13-21.

Kotler, P. and Fox, K. (1995), *Strategic Marketing for Educational Institutions,* Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews.* Sage Publications, London.

Jones, O. (2011), *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class,* Verso, London.

Laing, A. (2003), 'Marketing in the public sector: Towards a typology of public services', *Journal of Marketing Theory*, vol. 3:4, pp. 427-445.

Lankford, H. and Wyckoff, J. (1992), 'Primary and Secondary School Choice Among Public and Religious Alternatives', *Economics of Education Review,* vol. 11: 4, pp. 3 17-337.

Lauder, H. and Hughes, D. (1999), *Trading in Futures: Why Markets in Education Don't Work,* Open University Press, Buckingham.

Lyne, T. (2009), *Ashfield and Mansfield: Economic Analysis*, Experian, Nottingham.

Mitchell, A. (2005), 'How marketers can play a vital role in setting the state straight', *Marketing Week,* vol. 12: 1, pp. 24-25.

Morgan, Y.J. Baron, S. and Harris, K. (1999), 'Decision Making Behaviour of Potential Higher Education Students, *Higher Education Quarterly,* vol. 53, pp. 211-228.

Morris, E. (2013), 'Competition will do very little to improve schools', *The Guardian.* Available at:

http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/apr/01/competition-wont-improve-schools-choice, accessed 21st August, 2013.

Mottner, S. (2008), 'Marketing Religion', in Sargeant, A. & Wymer, W. (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Nonprofit Marketing.* London: Routledge. pp. 97 – 114.

Mumsnet.com, (2013), 'Choosing a Secondary School', available at:

http://www.mumsnet.com/education/secondary/choosing-a-school, accessed 1st August 2013.

Munn, P. (1993), *Parents and Schools: Customers, Managers or Partners?* Routledge, London.

Murakami- Wood, D. and Ball, K. (2013), 'Brandscapes of control?' *Journal of Marketing Theory,* vol.13:1, pp. 47-67.

Netmums.com, (2013), 'How to Choose Secondary School', available at:

http://www.netmums.com/coffeehouse/children-parenting-190/tweens-813/860856-how-choose-secondary-school-all.html, accessed 29th July, 2013.

OFSTED (2012), *All Saints RC Comprehensive Inspection Report: 122900.* Available at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspectionreport/provider/ELS/122900, accessed 10th July 2013.

Parsons, E. Chalkley, B. and Jones, A. (2000), 'School Catchments and Pupil Movements: A case study in parental choice', *Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 26:1, pp. 33-48.

Piercy, N. and Giles, W. (1989), 'Making SWOT Analysis Work', *Marketing Intelligence & Planning,* Volume. 7 Issue: 5/6: pp. 5 – 7.

Reay, D. and Ball, S. J. (1997), 'Spoilt for Choice: the working classes and educational markets', *Oxford Review of Education,* vol. 23:1, pp.89-101.

Rutherford, T. (2010), 'Population Ageing: Statistics', *Parliament UK.* Available at:

http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn03228, accessed 1st August 2013.

Shaw, E.H. (2011), 'A comment on the relationship between the history of marketing thought and the development of marketing theory', *Journal of Marketing Theory,* vol. 11:4, pp. 491 -494.

Shaw, E.H. and Jones, D.G.B. (2005), 'A history of schools of marketing thought', *Journal of Marketing Theory,* vol. 5:3, pp. 239 -281.

Silverman, D. (2007). *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book About Qualitative Research.* Sage Publications, London.

Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing Qualitative Research,* Sage Publications, London.

Sliwka, A. & Istance, D. (2006),'Parental and Stakeholder 'Voice' in Schools and Systems', *European Journal of Education*, vol. 41:1. pp.29-42.

Smedley, D. (1995), 'Marketing Secondary Schools to Parents – Some Lessons from the Research on Parental Choice', *Journal of Educational Management and Administration,* vol. 23:2, pp. 96 -103.

The Economist, (2009), 'So Long, School Choice', available at:

*http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2009/05/so_long_school_choi*ce, accessed 10th August, 2013.

The Economist, (2011), 'Admission impossible', available at:

http://www.economist.com/node/18651086, accessed 10th August, 2013.

The Guardian, (2013), 'Free school offering cross-subject learning approved by Michael Gove', available at: *http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/may/22/free-school-learning-michael-gove*, accessed 5th August 2013.

The Guardian, (2013), 'It's time Michael Gove came clean about his real agenda', available at: *http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/aug/02/michael-gove-came-clean-real-agenda,* accessed 13th August 2013.

The Guardian, (2013), 'Swedish free school operator to close, leaving hundreds of pupils stranded', available at: *http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/may/31/free-schools-education,* accessed 29th July 2013.

Thomas, A. and Dennison, B. (1991), 'Parental or Pupil Choice – Who Really Decides in Urban Schools', *Journal of Educational Management and Administration,* vol. 19:4, pp. 243 -249.

Thorpe, R. & Holt, R. (2008). *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Management Research.* Sage Publications, London.

Wæraas, A. (2008), 'Can public sector organizations be coherent corporate brands?' *Journal of Marketing Theory,* vol. 8:2, pp.205 -221.

West, A. (1992), 'Factors Affecting Choice of School for Middle Class Parents: Implications for Marketing', *Journal of Educational Management and Administration,* vol. 20:4, pp. 212-221.

West, A. (1994), 'Choosing Schools – The Consumers' Perspective', in Halstead, M (ed.) *Parental Choice and Education,* Kogan Page, London.

Willie, C.V. Edwards, R. and Alves, M. J. (2002), *Student Diversity, Choice and School Improvement*, Bergin & Garvey, Westport.

Woods, P. (1992), 'Empowerment through Choice? Towards an Understanding of Parental Choice and School Responsiveness', *Journal of Educational Management and Administration,* vol. 20:4, pp. 204 -211.

Yankelovich, D. and Meer, D. (2006), 'Rediscovering Market Segmentation', *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 122-131.

Zeithaml, V. Parasuraman, A. and Berry, L.L. (1985), 'Problems and Strategies in Services Marketing', *Journal of Marketing,* vol. 49, pp. 33-46.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Aspects of secondary school mentioned by parents without prompting as important

Aspect	n	%age of parents
Discipline good /children well behaved	133	46.5
Proximity to home/ nearness	121	42.3
Emphasis on good examination results	111	38.8
Easy travel/ accessible	96	33.6
Single sex (boys only or girls only) or mixed	92	32.2
Well-managed school/ head has good reputation	61	21.3
Church school (denominational)	53	18.5
Caring/ understanding/ friendly teachers	52	18.2
Good choice of subjects	50	17.5
Special emphasis on practical areas of the curriculum (eg sports, art, music, science)	48	16.8
Total number of valid cases	286	
Missing cases	3	

Source: Hunter (1991) as reproduced in Bowe, Ball and Gewirtz (1994:73).

Appendix 2: Aspects mentioned spontaneously as important in choice of senior/secondary school

Aspect	N =27 Percentage of parents
Suits child's needs	48
Good discipline/well behaved children	48
Good exam results	44
Pleasant buildings and environment	37
Pleasant atmosphere	30
Good choice of subjects	30
Easy to get to	26
Pupils stretched/reach potential	26
Good extra-curricular activities	26
Child wants to go	22
Good music facilities	22
Good competent teachers	22

Source: West, (1992: 217).

Appendix 3: Swot Discussion

<u>Strengths</u>

The school currently markets its own strengths as being the promotion of high standards of

behaviour and pupil discipline with strong leadership from the teaching staff, high academic

achievement, and provision of an enjoyable learning environment aiming to achieve the full

potential of each and every student. The quality of All Saints' personnel is perceived to be strength of the school, as evidenced by OFSTED commendation. Throughout this research, several parents mentioned the quality of staff; parental attitudes thus confirmed the school's view of their strengths in this regard. A good environment for learning is also perceived to be present at the school, and students show every sign of enjoying coming to school.

The leadership of the school is also a key strength, which has been acknowledged in the most recent OFSTED report. The current head teacher is clearly an important asset to the school and provides leadership and excels in the role of directing day to day school operations in line with an overall strategy of developing outstanding performance across the school.

Furthermore, the school has an excellent position in the Department for Education League Tables, and in this respect is the leading school in Mansfield, which stands as a key message utilised in the school's current marketing. Thus, the performance of the school providing a strong academic educational basis for its students is a key strength.

All Saints' has a strong identity as a school, particularly it's Roman Catholic heritage; it is linked to six Catholic primary schools within the East Midlands by a long-standing agreement with the Roman Catholic diocese of Nottinghamshire and Nottinghamshire councils. Pupils from the linked primary schools are expected to progress to attend All Saints', and benefit from continuity of education approach, especially in respect of the religious basis of the provision of education. Nevertheless, the school promotes an inclusive policy with regard to other religions and beliefs of its pupils and their families and

communities, and thus retains considerable appeal to schools which are not part of the All Saints' family of schools.

The school employs a democratic stance towards students and encourages extracurricular activities.

The school tends to be over-subscribed with applications for places: 'Over the last few years the number of applications received for places in Year 7 far exceeds the number of places available.' (Nottingham Diocesan Centre, 2012) which suggests that there does not seem to be immediate issues in maintaining the school roll at its present level.

The school specialises in Performing Arts with many extracurricular activities, facilities and initiatives to enrich the Performing Arts curriculum. The Performing Arts are also used as a context to highlight learning objectives from the curriculum and wider moral and social issues: 'In one outstanding lesson students discussed in depth gender stereotypes in the context of studying Matthew Bourne's contemporary dance *Nutcracker*.' (OFSTED, 2012).

The school and its supporting diocese have continued to invest and improve facilities and the fabric of the school over last few years: 'Two additional buildings have been added to the original school accommodation, a purpose Science block with nine laboratories and an Arts block which provides specialist facilities for music, dance and drama… an all-weather pitch and tennis courts provides further opportunities for students and the local community.' (Nottingham Diocesan Centre, 2012). The school thus has an opportunity to engage with the Church authorities and develop improvement plans with more consistency and covering a longer time span than non-faith schools. Improvement plans could be co-ordinated with the Church and with the objectives of the primary schools within the Diocese

closely linked to All Saints'. The school also has the opportunity to engage with church organisations in joint fund-raising activities that are more likely to be effective than events that the school could organise in isolation.

The most recent OFSTED report was very positive and rated the school as "good", and in places "excellent". Teaching of Maths and English was singled out as being especially effective.

All Saints' also has a strong Sixth-Form and encourages responsibility in its Sixth-Form students who assist in mentoring other pupils.

The relatively high proportion of Catholic families with children at the school, or local Catholics who either aspire to send their children to All Saints' or whose children have attended in the past provide a sympathetic section of the local community whose support and goodwill could be valuable to the school.

The school has a well-established catchment area outside of its locale in Newark and Worksop and is successful in attracting students from outside of the immediate area. As previously highlighted, the nearest 'similar' school identified by the Department of Education (2013), the nearest similar school achieving statistically better results is the Arthur Terry School in Birmingham. All Saints' currently has a commanding competitive position over schools within a wide area.

Weaknesses

The school is a potential victim of its own success, and has raised expectations of academic achievement in its promotional material. By labelling itself as "The Best (School) in

Mansfield" it has created a self-imposed pressure and a priority to maintain this competitive position. Maintenance of this position may require additional focus from the head teacher and her staff than may otherwise be appropriate.

The geographical catchment area of the school is relatively large compared with other non-selective secondary schools, with a correspondingly significant proportion of students commuting eighteen miles or more. These students and their parents are faced with time and expense challenges not only for the normal daily commute to and from school, but also when participating in extracurricular activities, as frequently highlighted by interview respondents living over 10 miles from the school.

Some of the buildings in use are perceived to be of a relatively poor standard in comparison with other schools in the area. The overall physical appearance of the school is arguably compromised by the age of some of the existing school buildings, and the continued need to use the 19 temporary buildings on site as classrooms.

The most recent OFSTED report, while generally good or excellent, is described only as "satisfactory" in Science. The inspectors did not identify any weakness in the provision of science facilities, but concentrated upon recommendations for improving teaching and feedback to students.

A potential weakness as a result of any miss-match between the high academic standards of the school and the general standard of academic ability of primary school children can be identified. This is discussed in detail in the "Threats" section.

There was an account from one parent complaining that their child did not receive enough homework in their opinion to progress their studies. It is recognised that any level of

homework will be regarded on a scale from "too much" to "too little" across a sample of parents or students, however, it would be relatively simple for the school to create a routine feedback mechanism to establish this distribution of opinion and provide guidelines by subject for teachers.

The school's promotional material is not as competitive as other schools in the area. One of the primary school head teachers especially remarked upon the strength of material produced by another school in the area and how effective it was in engaging the attention of parents. It was the head teacher's opinion that although All Saints' offered a better package, this did not come across from comparing the promotional material to that of other schools. Another (non-feeder school) head teacher stated clearly that they did not know what the strengths of the school were, in terms of provisions for any particular subjects or more generally.

The promotional material that exists for the school is not currently finding its way to all head teachers who may be in a position to advise and guide parents on their choice. It is quite possible that the promotional material has been sent out with good intention, however, it may be being lost within the general volume of material received by primary schools from many different and diverse sources which does not necessarily receive attention.

Head teachers of some primary schools that have expressed interest in All Saints' have also expressed frustration at the lack of information and contact. Further, some head teachers expressed dissatisfaction that contact with All Saints' was on a somewhat impersonal level,

although parents were generally satisfied with the level and channels of communication with the school.

Parents have also commented upon staff turnover which is perceived to be high, affecting the stability of pupil-teacher relationships. This is at odds with the aim of the school to maintain the same form tutor for each child throughout their time at the school.

Opportunities

Opportunities are those presented by the external environment within which the school operates. For example, these could include advantageous changes in Government policies, local Government schemes to attract young families to the area, improved transport provision or schemes by local Government, the existence of grants or material support from commercial companies or individuals either on a local, national or competitive basis.

Opportunities currently in evidence from the political stance of the current Government include initiatives aimed towards encouraging schools to take more control and responsibility for their own management. This clearly presents an opportunity for schools seeking to establish the structural changes required to implement market orientation.

Further, the area of Mansfield is successful in attracting younger and economically active migrant individuals, a trend which could potentially result in more school age potential students in the future.

A lack of competition within the niche market segment of Catholic secondary schools' within Mansfield and surrounding areas exists, as many rival schools lack any association with the Catholic element.

The appetite for engagement with All Saints expressed by head teachers at local non-feeder schools is encouraging because these are precisely the schools which can provide All Saints' with local applicants who are not vulnerable to changes in the provision of transport from, for example, the area of Newark.

The recent and continuing explosion in information connectivity and immediacy of access and communication is well commented and documented. The school can benefit from this as can any individual or organisation with a message to disseminate as widely as possible. New channels of information can be broadly grouped as "Social Media", and mobile accessible information, expanding upon the current web presence of the school. The school has recognised this and is starting to use Twitter and Facebook amongst other initiatives.

Furthermore, the availability, zero of low cost of modern data handling and collaborative working solutions for example, Microsoft Share Point, allows for efficiency in maintaining a contact data base for primary schools. Maintaining contact information up to date and allowing it to be accessible to staff who need it is a key enabler for efficient communications.

Threats

During recent years subsidised bus services have been provided with council support, however several parents have expressed concern that these services are vulnerable to public service cuts. The presence of competitors is also indisputable within the market. Competition for All Saints' is manifest in other faith schools, as highlighted by several parents, other faith schools hold some appeal.

Other local comprehensive and private schools also provide direct competition. An important rival is The Brunts Academy, from which there is competitive pressure to attract parents and their children keen to pursue the Performing Arts. There is evidence that apart from close contact and links between feeder primary and secondary schools, competitor schools are investing effort in engaging with other primary schools to build relationships through other means than direct marketing. Competitor schools are reported to be engaging in joint projects with primary schools, not necessarily those which are identified as their particular feeder schools. There is some reticence to overtly market to primary schools which are identified to be particular feeder schools to competitor secondary schools, (the term "poaching" has occurred in conversation on this subject).

A point raised in the "Weaknesses" section regarding the high academic standards at the school requires further explanation as this will compound with external factors to produce a threat in these circumstances. There has been concern expressed in many quarters that the general academic ability of pupils is falling. Teaching staff can become accustomed to engaging with students of high ability or a particular ability level. Notwithstanding any change in the general academic standard of primary school children, as a non-selective school, and assuming the school is successful in attracting applicants from a wider range of primaries, there will be a corresponding widening in the range of abilities of pupils starting at the school. This results in the need for additional flexibility of approach and a wider range of teaching plans and teaching aids to address the needs of all students. Conversely, if the teaching provision fails to be flexible, academic standards will fail to be maintained and improved across the intake adequately. It has been expressed that metrics of performance for primary school children starting at secondary school are an unreliable guide to their

needs, perhaps because of the "dip" due to new surroundings and learning environment, or it is even possible that there are inconsistencies in generating these metrics.

The recorded population growth of Mansfield from 1998-2008 was less than half the UK average, and less than one third of other similar East Midland areas (see Figure 5 below.)

Figure 5: Population Trends

Comparison of historical total population trends					
Region	Total population ('000)				per annum % growth (1998 - 2008)
	2005	2006	2007	2008	
Ashfield	115	116	116	117	0.7
Mansfield	100	100	100	101	0.2
East Midlands	4,328	4,364	4,401	4,443	0.7
UK	60,288	60,646	61,040	61,477	0.5

Source: Lyne, T. (2009).

This trend is also reflected in the working age population which implies similar comparative stagnation of child population, as in general the UK population is aging (Rutherford, 2010). Thus demand for school places would be expected to be static at best.

So, based on the conflicting trends of an aging population and increased migration to the area, can we predict whether the pool of potential students will grow over the next few years? While these are liable to attenuate to some degree, the overall demographic trend, it is likely that the pool of students available for the secondary schools in the area to compete for will fall.