

Resource Centre campaigns to cut the cost of schooling in Freeman Ward

Saffron Resource Centre is located on Saffron Lane and has been providing quality services for local people for 35 years. Remember we provide services for the whole of Freeman Ward. Think of us as the Saffron and Freeman Ward Resource Centre! Around half of our service users are Freeman Ward residents. The majority of our enquiries relate to welfare benefits and resulted in awards of just under £500,000 during 2009.

Groups such as the Child Poverty Action Group and The National Union of Teachers have long been concerned about providing help to families with school costs. There is much to be gained, for example there are over 1000 Leicester children where the parent has failed to claim entitlement to free school meals.

Peter Thomson is part of the Resource Centre advice team and he provides information on school choice. He will almost always advise parents to look first at the nearest school but there is evidence that some Freeman Ward families have been pushed or pulled to schooling out of the local area. Local Authorities have certain duties to assist with school transport. And there is a relatively new scheme brought in (September 2008) to promote school choice for low-income families.

- ❑ There is no means test for free school transport if the nearest school with a place available is more than three miles away (two miles for children under 8 years of age).
- ❑ The Local Authority has a duty to provide free transport to those eligible for free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit to attend any of the three secondary schools closest to their home where these schools are more than two and less than six miles away. Alternatively pupils may choose a school between two and fifteen miles away where the nearest suitable school is preferred on the grounds of religion or belief.
- ❑ A child with a Statement of Special Educational Needs may receive transport assistance even if they live within three miles of their school. However this is only granted if there are special reasons included in their Statements.
- ❑ If your child is admitted to primary school since September 2007 and your child is aged between 8 and 11 years and you live more than two miles from the school and they are entitled to free school meals or your family gets the maximum level of Working Tax Credit apply to the City Council for free transport.

Peter Thomson is available to assist Freeman Ward families who may need independent advice to challenge a City Council decision on free school transport. Peter says, "If the parent and the school feel the school transport decision is unfair and there are special circumstances there is a limited amount Saffron Resource Centre can do to help, but if the City Council decision appears to be unlawful there is plenty we can do to assist the parent to take matters further. Leave a message for me on 0116 283 7212"