

TITLE Update on Free Schools

FOR CONSIDERATION BY Admissions Forum on 23 November 2011

REPORT PREPARED BY Sue Riddick

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the School Admissions Forum about two Free Schools, given permission by the Department for Education on 10 October 2011 to go forward to the next stage of the applications process, with an anticipated open date of September 2012.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To consider and note this information.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Secretary of State has given approval, following assessment and interview, to the proposal by the West of Wokingham Parent Group, in collaboration with CfBT, to establish a 560 place, secondary 11-16 community mixed Free School to serve the villages to the west of Wokingham. This was an independent application with the intention to open Oakbank School on the former Ryeish Green School site.

Also approved to proceed to the next stage is an application to establish Reading University Technical Academy (UTC) on the basis that it should be a school for 14-19 year olds. Approaches are being made to the DfE to persuade them for the need for the school to be open to younger Key Stage 3 pupils aged 11 to 13, as well as to 14 to 19 year olds. This school will be situated on the Crescent Road site, east of Reading and the new UTC would combine technical and academic studies. This proposal was led by Oxford and Cherwell Valley College, co-sponsored by Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council to meet the need for additional places in Reading.

The Secretary of State has a duty under Section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 to consider the impact of any new school on the existing schools in the area including contextual information prior to entering into a Funding Agreement. Officials from the DfE will be writing to Wokingham Borough Council to seek its view.

Oakbank School (through CfBT) are currently accepting applications to fill 84 places in year 7 to start September 2012 together with applications for years 8 and 9 which will only be taken forward if there is sufficient demand. The future admission number will be 112 places for each year group.

Oakbank School will sit outside the co-ordinated admission scheme for secondary places for September 2012, but will form part of the co-ordinated admission scheme for future years should the school be successful in the later stages of the Free School process. CfBT are currently in discussion with the council regarding the school's proposed admission arrangements including its designated area.

An extract taken from Oakbank's supplementary information is attached including the proposed designated area. Advice has been provided by the School Admissions Team to CfBT to ensure the school's admission information is in accordance with the current School Admissions Code and as a result of that advice; changes have been made to the application forms available through the school's website:

www.oakbankschool.org.uk.

List of Background Papers

Information on Oakbank School available at the school's website

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EXTRACT TAKEN FROM OAKBANK SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

A map of the proposed designated areas is available from the school prospectus at www.oakbankschool.org.uk.

Admissions Policy and Procedure

The provisional Pupil Admission Number (PAN) for Oakbank is 84 Year 7 pupils in 2012 rising to 112 from September 2013 (subject to formal consultation and approval by the DfE). If there is sufficient demand, Oakbank will also run a Year 8 and Year 9 in 2012.

CfBT Schools Trust (CST) will consider all applications for places at Oakbank. Where fewer than the published admission number(s) for the relevant year group are received, CST will offer places at Oakbank to all those who have applied.

Oversubscription criteria

Where the number of applications for admission is greater than the published admissions number (PAN) for any relevant age group, Oakbank will consider applications against the criteria set out below. This does not apply to students with statements of Special Educational Needs, where Oakbank is named in the statement, who will be admitted first.

1. Priority will be given to relevant looked-after students. A relevant looked-after child, as defined by the regulations, means 'a child who is looked after by a local authority in accordance with section 22 of the Students Act 1989 at the time an application for admission to a school is made, and who the local authority has confirmed will still be looked-after at the time when admitted to the school'.
2. Students who have a serious medical, physical or psychological condition which makes it essential that they attend the preferred school rather than any other. These reasons must be fully supported by written confirmation from the professional person involved with the family. Family medical needs will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
3. Students whose permanent home address is in the first designated area, and have a sibling at Oakbank.
4. Students whose permanent home address is in the first designated area.
5. Students who attend any of the following primary schools: Farley Hill Primary School, The Coombes C of E Primary School, Grazeley Parochial Primary School, Lambs Lane Primary School, Shinfield St Mary's CE Junior School; and have a sibling at Oakbank.
6. Students who attend any of the following primary schools: Farley Hill Primary School, The Coombes C of E Primary School, Grazeley Parochial

Primary School, Lambs Lane Primary School, Shinfield St Mary's CE Junior School.

7. Students whose permanent home address is in the second designated area, and have a sibling at Oakbank.

8. Students whose permanent home address is in the second designated area.

9. Students whose permanent home address is not in the designated area of the school but have a sibling(s) who will still be attending Oakbank the following September.

10. Other applicants.

Admissions timetable

All applications for places at Oakbank for September 2012 will be administered by the school itself. In subsequent years they will be managed as part of the wider Wokingham Authority admissions process.

- The deadline for the first round of application for 2012 places will be 31 October 2011. Priority will be given to applications received by this date.
- A second round of application will take place between 1 November 2011 and 10 February 2012. All applicants will be placed on a waiting list and places will be offered as available once places have been allocated to the first group of applicants.
- A final application round will run from 1 March 2012 until 1 June 2012. All applicants will be placed on a waiting list and places will be offered as available once places have been allocated to the previous groups of applicants.

For those children who will be going into year 7 in September 2012 and are interested in gaining a place at Oakbank we recommend that you apply to other Wokingham Schools via the standard admissions process, in parallel to applying for a place at Oakbank.

Assuming you gain a place both at Oakbank and another Wokingham school you will then need to make a decision as to which one you will accept by the 15th March 2012.

Reading's University Technical College

Oxford & Cherwell Valley College (OCVC) is helping drive a partnership that will create a new technical college in Reading.

It will welcome students aged 14-19, have specialisms in computer science and software engineering, and see a leading role being played by world-class, locally-based businesses.

Spearheaded by local MP Rob Wilson, the technical college plan is already being backed by Microsoft, Cisco, Research in Motion (BlackBerry), BT, Peter Brett Associates and Network Rail. It will also draw on the expertise and resources of its education partners, OCVC, Reading College, the University of Reading, and Reading School.

A major commitment in the proposal is to focus on the needs of local employers in the globally competitive high technology market. To deliver on this, the new college will encourage girls and boys to excel in the core curriculum subjects, science, maths and English. It will develop the specialisms in computer science and software engineering, to give students career potential through advanced level sixth form studies and on to university degrees. It will also promote apprenticeships to help supply the strong demand locally for technically competent sales and support staff. In addition, students will have options to take foreign languages and humanities subjects, to help equip them for flexible careers in a fast moving jobs market.

Employers will play a major role in developing the curriculum and establishing strong two-way connections with the college.

It is planned that the college will open in phases, starting with Years 10 and 12 in September 2012. At capacity, student numbers could be expected to reach 550.

(The above information is taken from Press release from Oxford & Cherwell Valley College - 20 October 2011)

This proposal was supported by Wokingham Borough Council as Reading Borough Council do not have sufficient school places for their young people (the seven schools within their borough boundary only accommodate 60% of their pupil numbers and an increased demand of 500 places at secondary level is expected by 2013/14) and as a general principle of being supportive of diversity of education provision.

An information session was held on Friday 11 November, 2011 from 4-5pm at Reading College, Kings Road, Reading.

TITLE	Future role of the Admission Forum
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Admissions Forum on 23 November 2011
REPORT PREPARED BY	David Armstrong

SUMMARY

The Schools Admissions Forum was set up by the Local Authority as a statutory requirement introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 2002. This requirement superseded an earlier, non-statutory Forum established by the Council as part of its consultation arrangements for school admissions. The purpose, powers and membership of the Forum are set out in subsidiary Regulations and the School Admissions Code.

The Education Bill, currently before Parliament, proposes to abolish these statutory requirements. Accordingly, there is no reference to Admission Forums within the draft School Admissions Code, which together with new admissions regulations is due to be laid before Parliament in December 2011.

The Forum is invited to consider and give its view on what future arrangements, if any, the Local Authority might make to deal with matters currently within the Forum's remit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Forum considers the options and issues set out in the remainder of this report and any advice it wishes to offer the Local Authority.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Members of the Forum may wish to consider this report in the context of the purposes currently assigned to the Admissions Forum, which are set out in **annex 1** to this report.

Options for discussion**A To retain the Admissions Forum, on a non-statutory basis**

As a non-statutory body, the Forum might continue to meet some of its existing purposes, although no longer having any formal powers.

As a non-statutory body, the Local Authority and individual schools would no longer have any formal duty to provide information directly to the Forum, nor be required to have due regard to its advice.

The Forum would no longer have any of its existing - albeit very limited - decision-making powers. Responsibility for Annual Reports on School Admissions, and the establishment and operation of Fair Access Protocols, would rest entirely with the Local Authority.

At present the Forum's membership and role is defined in the Code and regulations. As a non statutory body, there would be flexibility over future membership, aligned to the purposes established as the terms of reference for the new body (see also B below).

B To re-establish the Admissions Forum as above, but covering broader matters affecting access to school places.

In the past Local Authorities were required to establish a School Organisation Committee (SOC), separate from Admissions Forums but constituted on very similar principles. In the period since SOCs were abolished, the Admissions Forum has been consulted on a number of matters which would previously have been referred to SOC, such as school organisation changes affecting admissions, and reports and presentations dealing with overall school capacity and roll projections. Changes to either admissions arrangements, or school organisation, have an impact on the suitability of each to meet the needs of the community. Together they determine the availability of and access to suitable school places.

The Bill proposes that Local Authorities will retain strategic responsibilities for the coordination of school admissions and the strategic commissioning of school places. A non-statutory replacement for the Forum might be given a remit to consider both aspects.

C Not to replace the Forum, allocating residual purposes to alternative existing bodies

With the removal of its specific statutory functions, it may be that the residual purposes of the Forum can be met just as effectively by other means, such as allocating discussions to existing bodies.

The Government has indicated that the duties on Local Authorities and school admission authorities to consult stakeholders, and for the Local Authority to publish an annual report on school admissions for their area, will be retained in the new School Admissions Code.

The Local Authority has established channels for consultation with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors which could possibly encompass admissions matters, particularly issues of coordination and seeking consensus where necessary.

Statutory Overview and Scrutiny Committees offer a public accountability mechanism for examining the suitability and effectiveness of admission arrangements to meet the needs of the local community, which is one of the principle purposes of Admissions Forums.

List of Background Papers	
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Purpose of the forum

The statutory purpose of the forum is to consider and advise on the fairness of admission arrangements for schools in the relevant area, and in particular

- the extent to which the current admission arrangements in the relevant area serve the interests of looked after children, children with disabilities and children with special educational needs;
- the effectiveness of any fair access protocol in place in the relevant area
- the effectiveness of any scheme for coordinating admission arrangements for the relevant area and, where relevant, any adjoining area, and
- details of any other matters which affect the fair operation of admission arrangements for schools in the area.

The role of the Forum (as further elaborated in the School Admissions Code)

The forum should

- consider how well existing and proposed admission arrangements serve the interests of local parents and children within the forum area;
- promote agreement on admission arrangements;
- review the comprehensiveness, effectiveness within the local context, and accessibility of advice and guidance for parents by the local authority, both through the published composite prospectus and the delivery of Choice Advice within the area of the Forum;
- consider the effectiveness of the authority's proposed coordinated admission arrangements and advise on whether the authority's proposed coordinated admission arrangements differ substantially from the previous year;
- consider the means by which admissions processes might be improved and how actual admissions relate to the admission numbers published;
- monitor the admission of children who arrive in the authority outside a normal admission round with a view to promoting arrangements for the fair distribution of such children among local schools taking account of any preference expressed in accordance with arrangements made under section 86(1) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and in accordance with the School Admissions Code,
- promote the arrangements for children with special educational needs, children in care and children who have been excluded from school;
- consider any other admission issues that arise.
- review the impact of local admission policies on achieving fair access to educational opportunities.