

**AN EXPLANATION OF THE PROPOSALS TO CHANGE ADMISSIONS
ARRANGEMENTS FOR WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMUNITY AND
VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS AND THE COUNCIL'S
PROPOSED CO-ORDINATED ADMISSIONS SCHEMES FOR 2013/2014**

This document explains the proposed changes highlighted in the consultation response form.

It should be noted that the government has consulted on a new School Admissions Code and School Admissions Appeals Codes and has also consulted on the changes to the regulations that will underpin the Codes. It is expected that the Code will come into force on 1 February 2012 and will apply to admissions to all maintained schools in England and our arrangements are required to reflect any changes. There is no requirement to consult on the mandatory changes

OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA

1. Criterion A – Looked after Children

The new School Admissions Code requires that this criterion is extended to include previous looked-after children and our policies will be changed to reflect the new wording:

'Looked after children and children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted or became subject to a residence order or special guardianship order' (previous looked-after children).

The proposed definition is taken from the new Code:

A 'looked after child' is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see definition in section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989). Previous 'looked after children' include those children under the terms of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (section 46 relating to adoption orders), Children Act 1989, section 8 which defines a 'residence order' as an order settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live and section 14A which defines a 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).

The following is the proposed supplementary information required to support applications made under this criterion:

Applications received under the Criterion A must be made by the person with parental responsibility for the child (e.g. the child's social worker, acting on behalf of the local authority for a looked after child) and will need to be supported by the following official documentation, as applicable:

- confirmation by the home local authority that the child is looked after or
- confirmation by the local authority that last looked after the child confirming that the child was looked after immediately prior to the issuing of one of the following orders:
 - (i) adoption order
 - (ii) residence order
 - (iii) special guardianship order

There were no objections by the School Admissions Forum to the proposed supplementary information.

2. Criterion B – serious medical, physical or psychological grounds for admission

An adjudication was made against Bracknell Forest Borough Council regarding the use of 'only school' in its medical and social criterion. This authority uses similar wording and although the draft code uses less prescriptive text (1.16); it is proposed to revise the wording used for this criterion including a change to the deadline for information for secondary applications and it is not proposed to take family medical needs into account.

Children who have medical, physical or psychological grounds for admission to a particular school. This must be supported by written evidence, relating specifically to the school you are applying to under this criterion, from an independent professional aware of the child's case (e.g. doctor, hospital consultant or psychologist) which must explain the reason why the school question is the most suitable and the difficulties caused if the child had to attend another school.

When submitting applications under category B (serious medical, physical or psychological grounds for admission) your application cannot be considered if you do not declare that you are applying under this criterion and you do not provide written independent professional evidence. All supporting documentation must be received by 15 January for consideration prior to the main allocation of places. An admissions panel will consider the supporting evidence provided and will advise the applicant of its decision; the panel's decision is final. Any evidence received by the school admissions team after 15 January, will if agreed by panel, and affects the position on the waiting list.

There were no objections to this proposal by the School Admissions Forum.

3. Single sex criterion – current Criterion F

It is proposed that the single sex criterion (Criterion F) is removed (applicable to The Forest School only).

This criterion now has limited value in real terms. The increase in the size of the designated area will mean that more boys will qualify for entry under higher criteria and it is considered that the inclusion of this criterion can disadvantage families who do not indicate that they prefer single sex education and are therefore considered in the lower criterion.

The Council does not want to be perceived as being unfair in its oversubscription criteria and this criterion is about the ability of a parent to understand and tick a box rather than necessarily having a preference for single sex education. It is noted that, in many instances, parents express preferences for co-educational schools too. Where a parent indicates that they are applying on single sex grounds and no higher criterion applies; then that criterion is applied even if preferences are expressed for higher ranked co-educational schools.

Applicants will be asked to declare that the address used will be their place of residence beyond the date of the pupil starting school. The local authority reserves its right to carry out further investigation and require additional evidence and to reject applications or withdraw offers of places, if it believes it has the grounds to do so. In such cases, the applicant will have recourse to putting their application through the independent appeals process.

It is important to declare if there is to be a change of address prior to the child starting school. If the applicant already own a property which is in the process of being sold, we are able to accept the address of the new property only on submission of the appropriate evidence in support e.g. exchange of contracts letter on both the new property and, where possible, disposal of their current property. The latest date for submission of evidence to support a move is January 15, 2013. If the move takes place later or evidence is submitted later, the local authority will only be able to consider this information after the initial allocation of places has taken place and treat the new address for waiting list purposes.

Temporary address cannot be used to obtain school places. Where an applicant has two or more properties, evidence will be required showing the rental or disposal of the previous property. Temporary addresses will only be considered where evidence is provided of a genuine reason for the move e.g. flooding or subsidence.

If an applicant owns a property which they do not occupy and/or rent out and then move into another property within, or nearer to the designated area of the preferred school; the address of the property they own will be the address used for determining their designated area, unless the owned house has been rented out for 12 months prior to the closing date for applications.

Applicants are required to advise of any change of circumstance at any time prior to the child starting school. If you do not declare such arrangements, or a different address is used on the application where the child does not usually live; it will be considered that a false declaration has been made and it may be decided to decline to offer a place at a particular school, or withdraw the offer of a place.

Split living arrangements

Where a family claims to be resident at more than one address, justification and evidence of the family's circumstances will be required e.g. split residence order or legal separation documentation. The application must be completed by the parent, at an address which is owned, leased or rented, where the child lives for the majority of the school week. This is based on the number of school nights a child spends at the home (Sunday night 1800hrs to Friday 0900hrs). The School Admissions Team will assess to apply the appropriate single home address for the allocation of a school place. The information provided will be considered by an admissions panel of at least two officers and their decision is final. It is recommended that consensus is reached by both parents and child on the school preferences to be expressed and it should be noted that only one offer letter will be sent to the main applicant unless otherwise requested and agreed by both parents.

Applicants from abroad

An application for a school place can be made from applicants applying for a school place for their child from abroad, provided that they can provide evidence of their right of abode. The address used will be the address where the child is living at the closing date for applications unless evidence is provided that the family is returning to

It is the Council's view that it would be fairer and more transparent to apply the final criterion (any other applicants) to those living outside the designated area or having siblings at the school and allocate on the basis of radial distance to the school.

There were mixed views from the School Admission Forum in relation this proposal.

4. Proposed amendment to the sibling criteria (note 5 primary and note 3 secondary)

A representation was made by a parent for the council to consider an amendment to the notes relating to criteria C and E (siblings resident in designated area and outside designated area) to permit priority for siblings of children who, having applied originally for the designated area school, were subsequently allocated to another preferred school due to pressure of places at the designated area school.

The adoption of this proposal would alleviate the anxiety of those parents for subsequent siblings who would, under current arrangements, be considered category E (sibling outside designated area) and therefore at increased risk of not being allocated to the same school as the sibling after having made an appropriate original application for their local school.

The proposed wording is:

Occasionally a parent with more than one child can express a preference for their designated area school for the older child, but the local authority is unable to meet this preference. The local authority will then allocate a place at a lower ranked preferred school or the closest available school with places. In this case, the parent may then prefer to send younger sibling(s) to the same school as the older child attends. In such instances, the allocated school may be regarded as if it were the designated area school for subsequent siblings and would be treated as meeting criterion C (sibling resident within designated area). Parents must notify the school admissions team at the time of application that they consider this exception applies. Where there is an application for the actual designated area school(s), designated area status would still be applied.

There were no objections to this proposal by the School Admissions Forum.

5. Residential requirements

It is proposed to amend the residential requirements to show that evidence of a move can be provided by 15 January (applicable to all co-ordinated admissions schemes) and to remove reference to child benefit payments which may no longer be applicable to a number of families. The opportunity has also been taken to clarify the wording under this heading as follows:

Home address

Applications are processed on the basis of the child's single permanent home address living with parent(s) or a carer/legal guardian at the closing date for applications. Reference to council tax records will be made to determine a single address for consideration of a place under criteria C or D. It is for the applicant to satisfy the local authority that they live at the address stated.

The Colleton Primary School increase from 35 to 60
Winnersh Primary School increase from 60 to 90
Hawkedon Primary School increase from 70 to 90

It should be clear that the proposals are associated with schemes for school expansion which require separate statutory determination. These expansions are subject to separate consultation in parallel with the admissions consultation. If the school expansions are not approved prior to the determination of the local authority's admission arrangements; the original admission number will be determined, on condition that this may be amended at a later stage (as a permitted variation) to implement the school expansion proposals, if approved:

The Council is proposing a decrease by one to the admission number of Bearwood Primary School to 40. This decrease in number is proposed to regularise the admission number for this school to enable the school to meet infant class size legislation. There are proposals to move and increase to a two form entry school, should the development of Hatch Farm Dairy proceed.

There was no objection from the School Admissions Forum to these proposed changes.

DESIGNATED AREAS

Comments are invited on school designated area arrangements, arising from issues arising from an internal review of primary school designated areas. Further explanation is included in separate documentation associated with this consultation. The designated areas of other community or voluntary controlled schools remain unchanged. The following specific changes are being put forward for consideration:

(a) Highwood and Beechwood Primary Schools

To create a shared designated area to accommodate any children living in the area identified which currently has no school designated area allocated to it.

There were no objections from the School Admissions Forum to this proposal.

(b) The Colleton Primary and Polehampton CE Infant and Junior Schools

Allied with the proposal to increase the PAN for The Colleton School subject to the proposed enlargement of the school; it is proposed to remove the shared designated area on the left-hand side of the Hurst Road as the school will be better able to accommodate pupils living in this area.

There were no objections from the School Admissions Forum to this proposal.

(c) The Colleton Primary and St Nicholas CE Primary Schools

Allied with the proposal to increase the PAN for The Colleton Primary School subject to the proposed enlargement of the school; it is proposed to increase the school's designated area to the river boundary (no properties) and incorporate the few properties just outside of its current southern boundary.

There were no objections from the School Admissions Forum to this proposal.

a property that they own in the Borough by January 15, 2013. Third party written evidence confirming the details and timing of the relocation will be required. Adjustments will be made to any waiting lists, if the family returns later, prior to the start of school. Further advice on the documentation required can be obtained from the School Admissions Team.

Service Families

Families of UK service personnel (and other Crown Servants) who are not yet living in the area will be able to make an application if it is accompanied by an assignment order declaring a relocation date and intended address. In the absence of a new home postal address, the authority will use Hazebrouck Barracks as the postal address to determine distance to a preferred school. A letter from the Commanding Officer will be required confirming the living arrangements for families who are being housed at Arborfield Garrison but are assigned to another base.

The School Admissions Forum supported the revised wording with one exception which has been amended.

6. Revision to the wording used to explain the tiebreaker arrangements

It is proposed to revise the wording relating to how measurements are applied to provide a more comprehensive explanation as follows:

Priority will be given within any of the above oversubscription criteria to the applicant whose permanent home address is nearest to the preferred school in terms of radial (straight line) distance. Distances will be measured consistently and will be measured as a straight line between the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) address points for the respective home address and school, using the Easting and Northing for each address point. These are then used to calculate the distance between the two address points using a 'direct distance mathematical routine' within the Capita ONE system used by the Council's School Admissions Team into which the LLPG address points are imported. This calculates the distance from the values created through this process using Pythagoras' Theorem by measuring the distance in metres between the Easting and Northing for each end address point then divide by 0.000621317 to convert to miles. It should be noted that this calculation may not be exactly the same as that created by a Geographical Information System (GIS) product as the GIS product may build in a formula to allow for the curvature of the earth. This curvature does not begin to affect distance values until the distance is least 10 miles.

This proposal was not considered by the School Admissions Forum.

ADMISSION NUMBERS

The new School Admissions Code no longer requires consultation on increase to school admission numbers and comments are not invited on these proposals as part of this consultation. However, for information, a number of changes are proposed with further information available through a separate consultation process at: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/council/consultations/current-consultations/proposed-expansion-of-primary-schools-consultation/>

Applicable to (b) and (c). In consulting on an amendment to the designated area of The Colleton Primary School, it should be clear that the proposals are associated with schemes for school expansion which require separate statutory determination. These expansions are subject to separate consultation in parallel with the admissions consultation. If the school expansions are not approved prior to the determination of the local authority's admission arrangements; the original designated area will be determined, on condition that this may be amended at a later stage (as a permitted variation) to implement the school expansion proposals, if approved.

(d) The Coombes CE Primary School

To give additional protection to Farley Hill Primary School single designated area residents by making this an area of second priority for The Coombes CE Primary School. In this way those that were unsuccessful in gaining a place at Farley Hill Primary School would still have priority for an alternative local school. Further explanation is included in separate documentation associated with this consultation.

An additional note will be written into oversubscription criteria C and D to alert parents that this arrangement would apply. The proposed clause will read:

'The designated area for The Coombes CE Primary School has been revised to include a second priority designated area (currently the single designated area for Farley Hill Primary School). Applicants from the first priority designated area and the shared area will be allocated places before those living in the second priority designated area. The tiebreaker will be applied to each area to determine who is allocated a place should there be more applicants than places in either priority areas or the shared area.'

This proposal did not receive consideration by the School Admissions Forum.

CO-ORDINATED SCHEMES

There are no specific changes to the timetable for the co-ordinated schemes other than those required by the new School Admissions Code. It is proposed to adopt the offer date for primary (16 April 2013) a year earlier than required by the new Code and amendments have been made to appeal dates as required.

The following is also proposed:

1. In-Year Co-ordinated Scheme

The new School Admissions Code also removes the requirement for in-year applications to be co-ordinated. The Council is proposing to maintain a local co-ordinated in-year scheme for community and voluntary controlled schools and for own admission authority schools where there is agreement to do so. This will be a similar scheme to that adopted prior to the requirement to do so. It is also proposed to increase the number of preferences that can be expressed from three to four in line with the other transfer groups.

Own admission authority schools outside the local co-ordinated scheme must, on receipt of an in-year application, notify the local authority of both the application, and its outcome, to allow the local authority to keep up to date figures on the availability of places in the area. The admission authority must

also inform parents of their right to appeal the refusal of a place. A single preference application form will be made available for schools outside of the scheme.

A local in-year co-ordinated scheme would require:

- o Parents to apply to Wokingham Borough Council for schools included within the scheme on a common application form allowing four preferences providing a 'single application route' for the majority of schools in the Borough
- o Applications will only be considered a maximum half-a-term in advance of the required place
- o Decisions would still be taken by own admission authority schools within the scheme but letters would be written on their behalf by the local authority including right of appeal, where appropriate
- o Start dates would be agreed with each school
- o Applications would still be received and processed during school holidays
- o Only one school place is offered by the local authority (to minimise multiple places being held)
- o Enable early identification of children without a school place and prompt placement at an alternative school
- o Enable the Fair Access Protocol to be applied more consistently

The School Admissions Forum did not give a definitive view of which of three options should be considered.

2. Information provided for transfer to junior school in year 3

The draft Code (1.51) states that composite prospectuses must be published online with hard copies available for those who do not have access to the internet. It is proposed not to issue hard copies of the Parent's Guide to those parents whose children will be transferring to junior school. For the majority; parents will wish to apply to the linked junior school and may not require a full guide to assist them in the completion of their application forms.

It is proposed to issue parents with an application form; school information; the timetable and procedure map together with a letter explaining where the guide, which will include the oversubscription criteria, can be viewed or downloaded and contact details should parents require a hard copy.

There were no objections to this proposal by the School Admissions Forum.

3. Multiple birth or children with birth dates in the same academic year in the family policy

The new Code indicates that 'twins and children from multiple births when one of the siblings is the 30th child admitted' will be considered as an exception to infant class size legislation for the time they are in an infant class or until the class numbers fall back to the current infant class size limit. It does not include children with birth dates in the same academic year in the family; therefore subject to further checking of the draft regulations when issued, it is proposed to amend the wording as follows:

'Where the application of oversubscription criteria results in splitting children with the same birth dates in the same academic year from the same family;

places will be offered even if this will result in the school going above admission number.

Where the application of oversubscription criteria results in splitting children with dates of birth in the same academic year in the same family, places will be offered even if this will result in the school going above the admission number with one exception; where to do so will result in the school breaching infant class size legislation at Key Stage 1 (e.g. class size must not break 30 children to 1 qualified teacher). In this instance, the places will be allocated by the drawing of lots carried out by at least two Children's Services staff members. In such instances, parents will be offered the place and will need to decide whether they wish their children to be split or consider placement together at an alternative school after allocation.

The School Admissions Forum noted this proposed change.

4. Waiting lists

It is proposed not to hold waiting lists beyond 30 September of year 10. It is considered that encouragement to move schools during year 10 and 11 is not in a young person's best interest. Currently if a place can be allocated from the waiting list; there is no guarantee that courses can be offered or matched and where courses can be matched, schools complete modules at different times to one another.

There were no objections to this proposal by the School Admissions Forum.

Minor adjustments were made to the F1 and Sixth Form policies to reflect the changes in the new Code, adjustments made within this document or to clarify existing practice. There was one amendment to the timing when handling applications for F1 for the summer term.