

**TITLE** **School Admission Arrangements 2014/2015**

**FOR CONSIDERATION BY** Schools Admissions Forum on 13 March 2013

**REPORT PREPARED BY** Sue Riddick, School Admissions Lead Officer

**SUMMARY**

The school admission arrangements address the local authority's statutory duty to ensure that all school places for maintained schools and Academies (excluding special schools) are allocated and offered in an open and fair way and comply with the School Admissions Code and relevant regulations and legislation and support the council's key priorities.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Forum considers the outcome of consultation on proposed 2014/2015 admission arrangements for community and controlled schools and coordinated admissions schemes for the relevant area.

That the Forum offers any advice to the local authority on its final proposals in the light of that consultation.

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

The coordinated scheme applies to all admissions (F2 - reception; year 3 infant to junior transfer and year 7 primary to secondary transfer) to maintained schools within the Borough, and includes the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools. These matters are reviewed and determined annually, following consultation. Policies are also proposed for 6<sup>th</sup> form and F1 – nursery, for completeness.

Proposed changes from the previous year's admission arrangements are summarised in the Analysis of Issues document.

In addition there is a proposed Coordinated Scheme for In-Year Admissions. This Scheme would apply to all Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools. The participation of voluntary aided schools, free schools and Academies is subject to agreement by the individual trust/governing body, as coordination of in-year admissions is no longer mandatory.

For information, at its meeting in December 2012, the Executive recommended that work to review admission arrangements for 2014/15 should include a review of catchment areas in identified hotspots and the priority given to out of catchment area siblings in school admissions oversubscription criteria, with any changes resulting from this exercise to be brought back to the Executive for determination.

### List of Background Papers

Reference is made to paperwork supplied with School Admission Forum Agenda – 11  
December 2012  
School Admissions Code and regulations

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# Consultation on School Admission Arrangements and Co-ordinated Admissions Schemes 2014/15

## 2014/15 ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS:

### OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA

- Q1 Revision of wording for Criterion B - serious medical, physical or psychological grounds for admission (to include Social Need)**
- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| I agree with the proposed change .....    | 88 (76.5%) |
| I disagree with the proposed change ..... | 27 (23.5%) |
- Q2 Removal of Denominational Criterion F**
- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| I agree with the proposed change .....    | 84 (75.7%) |
| I disagree with the proposed change ..... | 27 (24.3%) |
- Q3 Should Criterion C be revised to give priority to all siblings, including out - of - area siblings, ahead of non-sibling designated area applicants?**
- |          |            |
|----------|------------|
| Yes..... | 64 (53.8%) |
| No ..... | 55 (46.2%) |
- Q4 Do you have any comments about changes to the oversubscription criteria?**
- 59 (100.0%)

### SCHOOL DESIGNATED AREAS

- Q5 Do you think the designated areas for The Colleton Primary and Polehampton CE Infant and Junior Schools should be combined as a shared area?**
- |          |            |
|----------|------------|
| Yes..... | 55 (54.5%) |
| No ..... | 46 (45.5%) |
- Q6 Do you think the designated areas for Walter Infant, St Pauls' Junior, Wescott Infant and Westende Junior Schools should be combined as a shared area?**
- |          |            |
|----------|------------|
| Yes..... | 53 (49.1%) |
| No ..... | 55 (50.9%) |
- Q7 DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO SCHOOL DESIGNATED AREAS?**
- 43 (100.0%)

### CO-ORDINATED ADMISSIONS SCHEMES

- Q8 This part of the consultation deals with technical and operational aspects of school admissions and compliance with regulatory requirements. It is primarily directed towards those bodies with a direct involvement in co-ordinating school admissions.**
- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| I agree with the proposed schemes ..... | 60 (73.2%) |
|---|------------|

I disagree with the proposed schemes ..... 22 (26.8%)

**Q9 Please include below any comments you wish to make about the scheme, or any other aspect of the proposed admission arrangements for entry in 2014/15.** 11 (100.0%)

**Q10 I am responding -**

As a parent .....	114
	(92.7%)
other member of the community .....	6 (4.9%)
on behalf of a school/local authority/ other organisation (please give details).....	3 (2.4%)
	2 (100.0%)

**NOTE: After the admission arrangements have been decided, following this consultation, there will be a further opportunity for any person to make an objection to admission arrangements to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. An objection can be considered by the Adjudicator on the grounds that the arrangements, as determined, do not comply with the statutory requirements of the School Admissions Code.**

# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL PROPOSED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2014/2015**

## **Analysis of Issues**

The following changes are proposed from the previous 2013/14 arrangements provided to the Forum with the Agenda for its meeting on Tuesday 11 December 2012:

### **Oversubscription Criteria**

#### **1. Criterion B – serious medical, physical or psychological grounds for admission (primary, secondary and in-year school admissions)**

It is proposed to add social needs to criterion B, to allow cases to be considered where there are social needs but the child does not meet the legal definition of a looked-after (or previously looked-after) children. (It is mandatory for looked-after or previously looked-after children to have highest priority for school admissions (Criterion A).

For example, children adopted from overseas, or subject to a child protection court order.

The number of children admitted under this criterion is, and would continue to be, very small, as it is only used in exceptional cases.

#### **2. Denominational criterion – current Criterion G (primary and in-year admissions)**

It is proposed to delete this oversubscription criterion, which only applies to applications for Voluntary Controlled schools. It is the view of the Diocese and individual school governing bodies that the ethos of these schools is to serve the whole of their local community ('children from families of any faith and of no faith').

This criterion has the lowest priority apart from 'any other children', and in practice the children admitted under this criterion are very few, and for a number of schools last year, none at all.

Of the 9 voluntary controlled schools, so far two have written to oppose the change and one school has confirmed its support. The Diocese of Oxford is supportive of this change, which is in line with its own recommendation to voluntary aided schools about the use of denominational criteria in their admissions policies.

The proposed change is specific to admissions policy, and does not itself represent any change to the ethos or designated religious character of the individual schools concerned.

#### **3 Sibling criterion: primary and in-year admissions**

A change to the wording is proposed for the sibling criterion as it applies to infant to junior transfer together with in-year and entry to primary, to avoid ambiguity in the definition of siblings as it applies across the two schools should the infant school have a nursery.

#### **4 Designated areas**

In the light of the Executive's recommendation that designated areas in identified hotspots should be reviewed, the following change is proposed to be adopted:

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

The proposed change is that the current designated areas for these schools become a single shared area. This is supported by the schools and will enable parental preferences within the Twyford area to be met and mitigate the risk of siblings being split within this area. Within the shared area the tiebreak arrangements would operate as before, i.e. radial distance to the school site concerned.

**7 Change of preference (will apply to primary, secondary and in-year schemes)**

In order to comply with a recent schools adjudicator decision (relating to another local authority area) it is proposed to revise the wording of the coordinated scheme in respect of changes of preference.

**Online acceptance of school places (will apply to primary and secondary schemes)**

An amendment to the scheme is proposed, to allow for parents to accept offers of school places online. This facility is expected to be available from 2014-15.

**Options that were included for consultation but are not being taken forward as changes for 2014-15**

**1 Sibling criteria for primary and in-year admissions (Criterion C and E)**

Earlier consultation was undertaken during August to November 2012 which, as in previous consultations, produced no clear consensus on this issue although there were strong views both for and against this change.

As recommended by the Executive in December 2012, the question has been further reviewed and was included in the statutory consultation. Responses so far have not provided clear evidence for change. There are counterbalancing arguments for and against, and no change is proposed. The situation will be reviewed alongside the implementation of the Primary School Strategy, as the supply of additional places under the strategy should also mitigate this concern.

Consideration of this change has so far been limited to primary admissions, as it appears to have less impact on families for secondary age children who will usually travel more independently to school.

**2 Shared designated area**

Walter Infant, St Pauls' CE Junior, Wescott Infant and Westende Junior Schools

A proposal to provide a shared area solution in the Wokingham Town area, similar to that in the North, was included for consultation. It is not being included as a recommendation for change in 2014-15. The consultation and further analysis has not provided sufficient evidence that this change would in practice provide significant benefit, balanced against any disadvantage, for families within the two areas.