

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM  
HELD ON TUESDAY 11 MARCH 2014 FROM 7.00PM TO 7:46PM**

*Present:-*

**Local Education Authority Representatives:**

Ian Pittock and Beth Rowland

**Diocesan Representatives**

David Babb (Chairman)

**Parent Representatives:**

Phiala Mehring

**Representatives from the Local Community**

Patricia Cuss, *Early Years Forum*

*Also present:-*

*Sue Riddick, School Admissions Lead Officer*

*Piers Brunning, Service Manager Children's Services Infrastructure Development*

*David Armstrong, School Place Planning and Support Team Manager*

**18. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 10 February 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**19. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was submitted from Hilary Winter, Celia Thatcher, Elaine Stewart,.

**20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**21. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2015/16 – OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION**

The Committee received and considered a report, set out on Agenda pages 4 to 36, detailing the outcome of the consultation on the proposed 2015/16 Admission Arrangements for the Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools within the Borough and the Co-ordinated Admission Scheme.

The proposed changes from the previous year's arrangements with comments and Officer responses were set out in the Analysis of Issues report on Agenda pages 6 to 20

The proposed Foundation One (F1) Admissions Policy .for 2015/16, set out on Agenda pages 21 to 36.

Sue Riddick explained that the consultation had been from 11 December to 6 February and although various methods were used, such as press release, website, social media via schools and early years with requests to settings to notify parents, with periodic reminders, only five responses were received.

Comments had been made in relation to oversubscription Criterion B – ‘Serious medical physical, psychological or social needs’ and to the F1 admissions policy. The wording for Criterion B has been modified since the consultation, but specific examples cannot be given as in each case it is dependent on the evidence received from the professional. The F1 policy has been amended to remove the section on deferment and amending the deadline for applications for the autumn term to be 28 February (or next working day).

The following revised sections of the Admission Arrangements and Coordinated Admissions Schemes for 2015/16 will be proposed for approval at the meeting of the Executive on 27 March 2014:

### **Oversubscription Criteria**

#### ***Criterion B – Serious, medical, physical or psychological or social needs as grounds for admission (Primary and Secondary Schools)***

*B - Children who have exceptional medical or social needs as the grounds for their admission to a particular school. (See note 2)*

#### *Note 2*

*When submitting applications under criterion B (exceptional medical or social needs as grounds for their admittance to a particular school), this must be supported by written evidence from an independent professional aware of the case relating to the child, parent/carer or other children living at the same address (e.g. doctor, hospital consultant or psychologist for medical grounds or registered social or care worker, housing officer, the police or probation officer for social needs). This evidence must be specific to the school in question; it must show why that school is the most suitable; what facilities will benefit the child, and why no other school can offer the same support.*

*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 2015 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 not be taken into account in the main allocation of places but may if agreed by panel, affect the applicant’s position on a school’s waiting list after offer day.*

*It should be noted that all schools have the resources to work with special educational needs and common childhood complaints such as asthma or allergies.”*

***Criterion C – For junior school applications to transfer to year 3; children who are attending the infant school with close links with the school by the deadline for applications.***

#### **Note 3 to criterion C and D -**

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.

***Criterion D - Children whose permanent home address is inside the school's designated area and who has a sibling at the school; who is expected to be attending the school when the child will enter the school (see notes 3, 4 and 5)***

***Criterion F - Children whose permanent home address is outside the school's designated area and who has a sibling at the school; who is expected to be attending the school when the child enters the school. (see notes 4 and 5)***

**Note 4**

A sibling is a brother or sister (that is, another child of the same parents, whether living at the same address or not), or a half-brother or half-sister, step-brother or step-sister, or adopted or foster children living at the same address.

Siblings attending a school nursery cannot be considered under this criterion.

It includes children who at the time of application have a sibling for whom the offer of a place at the preferred school has been accepted, even if the sibling is not yet attending.

In the case of linked infant and junior schools, the application will be treated as meeting criteria D or F if the child's sibling is expected to be at either of the two schools at the time the child would enter the school. At the initial allocation, when a parent is applying for a Reception place at an infant school that has both a feeder and a sibling link to a junior school and that child has a sibling currently attending Year 2 of the infant school but who will have left by the time the younger child starts, the Reception applicant will be considered under the sibling criterion as part of the initial allocation. This is because, due to the feeder link, they will be expected to still have a sibling at the linked junior school at the time of admission.

**Note 5**

Occasionally a parent with more than one child can express a preference for their designated area school(s) 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 inside the 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.

***Split Living Arrangements (applicable to primary and secondary admissions)***

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).

Where there is an equal split or there is any doubt about residence, the school admissions team will assess and make a judgment about which address to use for the purpose of the allocation of a school place where necessary requesting further information e.g.

- any legal documentation confirming residence
- the pattern of the residence
- the period of time over which the current arrangement has been in place
- confirmation from any previous school or early years setting of the contact details and home address supplied to it by the parents
- where the child is registered with the GP
- any other evidence the parents may supply to verify the position

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 notified to both parents.

### **Scheme for New School Inclusion in Co-ordinated Schemes**

New schools may be included as part of the co-ordinated scheme where requested by the sponsor and with the agreement of the local authority. Parents will have the opportunity of applying for new schools as part of the co-ordinated admissions scheme where initial approval is given by the Secretary of State for Education prior to the production and publication of the Parent's Guide (summer term in the year prior to entry).

Parents must apply to Wokingham Borough Council, by including the schools as a preference on the application form as part of the co-ordinated admissions scheme. The application must be returned, or submitted online, to Wokingham Borough Council by the national closing dates: January 15 (primary) or October 31 (secondary).

Parents living in the Wokingham borough applying online will be able to select the schools from the list of names. It will not be possible to select the school by the school number as this is only issued after the signing of the Funding Agreement.

Parents applying for the school living outside the borough, will be able to do so outside the co-ordinated admissions scheme by completing a Wokingham Borough Council paper application and only listing the school as a preference. Preferences for other maintained Wokingham borough schools must be included on the application form available from the home authority.

Applications will be forwarded to the sponsor for ranking purposes in line with the dates within the scheme.

When final approval to open has been given by the Secretary of State for Education made by the issuing of the Funding Agreement prior to March 24, 2015 (primary) or January 30, 2015 (secondary); offers for the schools will be made by Wokingham Borough Council on behalf of the academy trust board of each school on national offer day and parents will be asked to confirm acceptance within 14 days.

If the Funding Agreement is not signed by the above date, the application for any proposed school will then be considered outside the co-ordinated admissions scheme. Preferences expressed for the proposed new schools will not impact on the application to existing schools as part of the application process, other than by using a preference. Parents will receive an offer of an existing established school on the national offer day, taking into account the other school preferences listed on the application form, and parents will be notified separately regarding their application for proposed new schools on the

same date. As a result, parents may receive at least two school place offers and parents will be asked to accept or decline the offer for the existing established school place within 14 days. Letters will also be written by Wokingham Borough Council on behalf of the schools to those parents who applied living outside the borough.

Two school place offers may be held until final approval has been given to open. The school admissions team will notify parents holding a provisional place when a final offer can be made and it is at that point that parents will be asked to confirm which school place will be accepted; whether the child is to remain on any other preferred school waiting lists or what alternative arrangements are being made for the child's education. If accepting a place at a new school, the original school allocation will be cancelled and the waiting list will be used to allocate to the vacancy.

Parents living outside the borough will be notified when a final school place offer can be made and if accepted, the local authority will then notify the home local authority of the acceptance.

If unsuccessful, parents will be notified of their right of appeal and given details on how to do so.

### **Admission to upper schools (with an entry age after 11) e.g. year 9 or year 10 transfer**

These arrangements will be managed centrally by Children's Services. A separate application form will be available for parents wishing to apply for a place for schools which have a separate admissions number in year 9 or year 10. Applications will be accepted in the same way as for the normal secondary admissions round and co-ordination will be held with other local authorities where preferences are expressed for schools in their area. Wokingham Borough Council will inform parents, living in the borough, of the outcome of their application.

### **Waiting Lists**

Waiting lists will be maintained by the local authority for all schools where necessary for children not offered a school place at their preferred school until the end of year 2 (infant schools), year 6 (primary and junior schools) or September 30 of year 10 (secondary schools) to fill places that may become available during the school year. No account is taken of the length of time spent on a waiting list.

Positions on waiting lists may go up or down due to pupil withdrawals or new or revised applications received; therefore waiting lists will be reviewed and revised:

- Each time a child is added to, or removed from, the waiting list
- When a child's changed circumstances will affect their priority
- When parents respond to periodic requests to see if they wish to remain on the waiting list
- At the end of a school year; should there be a change in the determined oversubscription criteria

Children who are the subject of a direction by the local authority to admit or who are allocated to a school in accordance with a Fair Access Protocol will take precedence over those on a waiting list.

Parents will be asked to inform Children's Services if they wish to remain on waiting lists and will receive periodic requests to see if they wish to remain on the list. Where no

response is received, the child's name will be removed from the waiting list. If own admission authority schools have stated that they operate waiting lists in their policies, the waiting list will transfer to the school on 31 December 2015, unless the governing body indicates that they want the local authority to hold their lists.

Waiting list information will be available in accordance with the published timeline.

### **Admission Numbers**

There is no longer a requirement to consult on any proposed increase in admission numbers. None are currently proposed, but separate consultations on any proposals within the Primary and Secondary School Strategies to expand or commission new schools will be carried out. Planned admission numbers listed in the Coordinated Scheme will be updated if necessary.

### **Designated Areas**

No changes proposed in the Borough.

### **Co-ordinated Schemes**

The Key Dates for the timetable of the Scheme will be as set out on Agenda pages 17 and 18.

### ***In-Year Co-ordinated Scheme***

Although there is no longer a requirement for in-year application to be co-ordinate, it is proposed to continue to maintain a co-ordinated in-year scheme for community and voluntary controlled schools, and own admission authority schools if there is an agreement to do so. This will be similar to the 2014/15 scheme apart from:

- the timeline for applications to be processed is extended from 15 to 20 days to allow for consideration of some applications under the Fair Access Protocol;
- parents may apply direct to Wokingham Borough Council regardless of whether the home authority is co-ordinating;
- a revised paragraph to provide greater clarity regarding the process for appealing for a subsequent year group as follows:

Appeals are normally heard for the year group applied for, to start in that year group. If a parent wishes to appeal for the next year group (applicable after the May half-term prior to a September start), a parent will be asked to submit a new application for form for that year group. The later application will supersede the previous application. Children's Services can then ensure that there are no new circumstances to take into consideration prior to the issuing of a letter refusing the school place.

The changes proposed to criteria and schemes above will also be applied to the in-year co-ordinated scheme.

### **Foundation Stage One Admissions Policy**

Amended criteria within this policy to prioritise children attending a school nursery or Ambleside receiving the free entitlement for two year olds: and also to set the designated area of Ambleside Nursery as follows:

- C Children who are attending the school nursery or foundation stage unit or who attend the linked day care setting – The Pastures – for The Ambleside Centre under the free entitlement for two year olds

- E Children whose permanent home address is in the designated area for the linked school or in the RG5 post code area for The Ambleside Centre

In response to the consultation; it is proposed to remove the section on deferment and to amend the timetable to read as follows:

Parents should apply direct to their chosen setting by:

- 31 May (or nearest working day) for admission in the following January – notification first week of July
- 31 October (or nearest working day) for admission in the following April – notification first week of December
- 28 February (or nearest working day) for admission in the following September – notification first week of April (or nearest school day if it falls in spring holidays)

Changes proposed to criteria and schemes above will also be applied to the F1 and Sixth Form policies if applicable.

**RESOLVED** That the proposed changes as set out on Agenda pages 6 to 36 be agreed for inclusion in the Admission Arrangements for Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools, and the Co-ordinated Schemes for 2015/16, which will be forwarded to the meeting of the Executive on 27 March 2014 for approval.

## **22. SECONDARY TRANSFER ADMISSIONS FOR SEPTEMBER 2014**

The Forum received a verbal report giving an update on the current situation regarding the transfer process for admission to secondary schools in September 2014.

Sue Riddick circulated copies of the statements which are sent to Wokingham Borough parents with their decision letters giving detailed information about the allocations, which are also available on the website. The information listed is based on the situation on 3 March after the initial allocation had been completed for applications received by the deadline.

Sue reported that of the 1,771 applications received, an increase from 1713 last year, and 72% had been submitted on-line. In their application parents are allowed to list four preferences and:

- 84% of the parents had been given their first preferences,
- 97% got one of their listed preferences;
- 85% of the applications were allocated to Wokingham Borough Schools
- 29% listed four preferences
- 22% listed only one;
- 22% listed two preferences;
- 27% listed three preferences

This year there has been the facility to accept or decline places on-line, and so far just over 900 parents have used this facility.

After the initial allocation there were 62 places available: 39 at Bulmershe and 23 at Emmbrook. Although no allocations have yet been made for the late applications, it is hoped that there will still be some places available.

There was a dramatic increase in the number of preferences for St Crispin's, which meant that not all those living in designated area or 'siblings living outside designated area' had

spaces allocated. Most with siblings outside designated area live outside the Borough. The Piggott was not able to allocate places to all those in the designated area; the School had increased its Admission Number, but also increased its Designated Area. The Holt had agreed to allocate an additional 10 places.

In response to a question about the availability of Year 7 places for September 2015, Piers Brunning pointed out that the surplus this year was low, and indicated the expectation was that demand would continue to rise, and capacity would potentially have to increase for 2015.

There were unknown numbers from the new residential developments in the Borough, with the freeing up of the housing market meaning movements into the Borough. He pointed out that Maiden Erlegh were planning to open a new secondary school for 2015/16, which would likely give some headroom in number of places available. Also there was a proposal from a group of parents to open a new free school in the Arborfield area. Officers are actively engaged in consultation with them and the community.

Members asked if for the next round, they could have a copy of guidance on admissions when the application round starts, so that they are more able to answer queries from their residents.

**RESOLVED:** That the report on the Secondary Transfer Admissions for September 2015 be noted.

### **23. DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS AND FORWARD PROGRAMME**

It was noted that the dates for the future meetings were incorrect in the Agenda. The dates are:

- 24 June, 2 December 2014, 10 February, 10 March 2015

Items for the 24 June meeting would include:

- Update on Secondary Admissions
- Primary Admissions
- Annual report to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator
- Changes to the Home to School Transport Policy
- Update on the new structure in Children's Services

*These are the Minutes of a meeting of the School Admissions Forum*

*If you need help in understanding this document or if you would like a copy of it in large print please contact one of our Team Support Officers.*