

Consultation responses & commentary

2018/2019 ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS:

General

Seventeen responses were received. All proposals had a majority of respondents in favour, with one objection relating to the proposal on changes to designated areas, one objection to the proposals relating to greater on electronic processes and two responses that only expressed views on the first two items that were the subject of consultation.

[Q1] OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA

That the definition of temporary and permanent address be clarified to ensure that families cannot make short term moves to the designated areas of popular schools simply to gain admission to those schools.

Response	Member of the community	Parent	School	Grand Total
Agree	1	15	1	17
Grand Total	1	15	1	17

Comments made:

“Whilst I agree with the proposed changes, it does not tell parents how a rental address will be used e.g. the rental address will be used but designated area status will not be applied or if the rental address is not used, what address will be applied e.g. the council’s Shute End office for the calculation of distance to a school.”

Officer comment

In practise it is likely the proposal could only be used if the tenant had another address (for example a long term rental they intended to return to) that could be deemed to be a permanent address and this would be used as the address for admissions purposes.

[Q3] DESIGNATED AREAS

Specific proposed changes include:

- That the designated area of Loddon Primary School be extended to include that of Aldryngton primary school.
- That the designated area of Whiteknights Primary School be extended to include that of Radstock Primary School

Response	Member of the community	Parent	School	Grand Total
Agree		15	1	16
Disagree	1			1
Grand Total	1	15	1	17

Comments made:

- 1) Supported on the basis that this is not a reciprocal arrangement.
- 2) "If the council goes ahead with these proposed changes, the wording should be amended to state "that the designated area of Loddon Primary School be extended to include that of Radstock Primary School, to create a shared designated area for both schools" and likewise for Whiteknights/Radstock.

The current wording is ambiguous and will not be clear to parents. The map provided does not make this clear either. Therefore respondents to this consultation may not have a clear idea of the proposed changes to decide on its appropriateness especially as the council has not included an impact assessment on the proposed changes to identify the winners and losers in such an arrangement. I can appreciate that the intended outcome of these proposals is to encourage parents to apply for both schools.

Admittance to Radstock in particular will be fundamentally changed as a result of this proposal as it is sited to one corner of its designated area, resulting in more children currently living in the designated area of Whiteknights being offered places on the basis of radial distance than those in its current designated area. This will result in those living in the extremities of the current Radstock designated area unlikely to be offered a place at the school leading to those families being severely disadvantaged and having to travel a greater distance to school."

Officer comment

The proposal gives residents in the current designated areas of Radstock and Aldryngton Primary Schools priority for Whiteknights and Loddon Primary Schools respectively (as well as maintaining their priority for their current designated area schools). It does not give residents in the current designated areas of Whiteknights and Loddon Primary Schools priority for Radstock and Aldryngton Primary Schools, so does not impact on the priority for admissions to these schools.

[Q4] CO-ORDINATED ADMISSIONS SCHEMES

Specific proposals include:

- A proposal for the adoption of a local co-ordinated in-year admissions scheme for the Wokingham Borough
- The adoption of the co-ordinated scheme for the three transfer groups

Response	Member of the community	Parent	School	Grand Total
Agree	1	13		14
N/R		2	1	3
Grand Total	1	15	1	17

[Q5] ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR ENTRY IN 2018/2019 (INCLUDING F1 OR SIXTH FORM POLICIES)

That where processes are referred to these are made fully electronic (removing any formal reliance on paper systems) in accordance with the Lean principles underpinning the transfer of admissions arrangements to Customer Services.

Response	Member of the community	Parent	School	Grand Total
Agree		12		12
Disagree	1	1		2
N/R		2	1	3
Grand Total	1	15	1	17

Comments made:

“Whilst I appreciate that the council is seeking to move to a fully electronic admissions system rather than a mixture of paper and online which currently enables parents to decide how they wish to apply, this proposal will directly impact Wokingham’s most vulnerable families. Not every family within the Wokingham borough has the facility to make online applications and this proposal is solely reliant on the customer centre staff being available to assist. Vulnerable families may not be able to visit Shute End within office hours to take advantage of such assistance and therefore their ability to apply is severely curtailed by the removal of a paper based form. No proposals are seemingly in place to use more local venues and support to enable an electronic application, such as early years’ settings, schools, children’s centres or libraries, which are far more accessible and a great deal less expensive to get to. Neither is there a proposal to use their key worker if applicable. The move to electronic offer notification and acceptance for the primary phase is again problematical for those families without electronic access as they will not hear the outcome of their application, and if schools or early years’ settings are willing to assist, the offer date will commonly fall within the school holiday when access is not available.

If this proposal proceeds, independent appeal panels may take the view that the council has been unreasonable in its arrangements to not allow paper based applications, offer notification and acceptance to such families, and therefore allow appeals on the basis of this; negatively impacting schools and class sizes.

Whilst the School Admissions Code does not explicitly preclude online admissions systems, it does in 1.51 expressly state that the composite prospectus must be made available to parents in hard copy without access to the internet. It would seem reasonable that the same natural justice must apply to applying for a school place.

It is unclear within the proposed scheme how parents apply if their application is made late: paper or online. It also does not indicate how parents notify if they wish to accept the offered place on a part-time basis or defer until later in the school year.

Is Loddon Primary School increasing its admission number to 90 with the current expansion of the school? Bohunt requires an asterisk against its name as it is an own admission authority school.”

Officer comment

The points about support for families without internet access are well made. It will be necessary to ensure that families in this position are supported. However, this support lies outside the scope of the formal admissions arrangements themselves and will be developed further before the arrangements are implemented.

It is intended to make all applications on line.

The composite prospectus will be available where necessary in hard copy.

Deferral is a statutory right and the arrangements will be clarified in on line documentation.

The Loddon school expansion is subject to a separate statutory process and it is proposed that permanent expansion will be agreed through this process.

General comments

“I note that the council has indicated in its paperwork that the consultation period is from 19 December 2016 to 31 January 2017. However the consultation paperwork was not available to view on the council’s website until the week between the Christmas and New Year period. I was able to view it on 30 December 2017. The consultation is listed on the school admissions section of the website, not easily found by the general public; it does not link to the council’s ‘current consultations’ section, it has not been notified through the council’s social media and not notified via Children’s Services Education News to school staff.”

Officer comment

The proposed arrangements were published on line on 19 December 2016, at the time that notification was sent to schools and other consultees.