

Agenda Item 7.

TITLE	Consultation On 2017/2018 Admission Arrangements For Voluntary Controlled And Community Schools And Co-ordinated Admission Schemes
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	School Admissions Forum on 1 December 2015
REPORT PREPARED BY	Sue Riddick
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR	Judith Ramsden, Director of Children's Services

SUMMARY

The School Admissions Forum is invited to comment on the proposal to consult on amendments to the local authority's annual admissions arrangements.

The School Admissions Code only requires consultation where there are changes proposed; where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement that admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least once every seven years, even if there have been no changes during that period. The local authority did not make changes for 2016/2017 and therefore did not undertake consultation.

Admissions authorities are required to make changes where the School Admissions Code and/or relevant legislation are changed.

It is understood that the government is expecting to consult on new Admissions Code although the timing has not yet been announced. Following consultation, once the draft becomes statute, any further statutory changes will be incorporated into our admission arrangements without consultation. Changes may also be required to the F1 Nursery policy when clarification is received on the proposed 30 hours free childcare available to working parents including resultant adjustment to the number of places available to support this change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Forum notes that the proposed changes to the previous year's arrangements below, and:

- a) comments on the proposed items to be included and
- b) advises the local authority of any other issues which it feels should be addressed within the admission arrangements for the 2017/2018 admission year

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The following are proposed changes to the previous year's arrangements, all of which are not subject to consultation:

1. An amendment to Criterion B to make clear that it applies to the medical and social needs of families
2. Amendment to the residency requirements
3. Clarification following the issuing of guidance by the Department for Education relating to applications from Crown Servants
4. Clarification that parents will be asked to confirm annually, at the end of each academic year, whether they wish their child to remain on the waiting list for the following year
5. Proposal to increase the designated area of Nine Mile Ride Primary School to address an anomaly that a small area of the borough is not currently included in the designated area of any other school
6. The inclusion of further information relating to places for two year olds into the F1 policy

List of Background Papers	
Current School Admissions Code, School Admissions Appeals Code, and relevant Regulations	
Approved co-ordinated admissions schemes for previous years.	
Held by Sue Riddick	Service Children's Services
Telephone No 974 6113	Email sue.riddick@wokingham.gov.uk
Date 19 November 2015	Version No. 1.1

DRAFT (FOR CONSIDERATION BY ADMISSIONS FORUM)
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**CONSULTATION ON ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS FOR WOKINGHAM BOROUGH
COUNCIL COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS AND THE
COUNCIL'S
PROPOSED CO-ORDINATED ADMISSIONS SCHEMES FOR 2015/2016**

AN EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGES ON WHICH VIEWS ARE INVITED

Consultation is on the whole of the admission arrangements and draft schemes; the issues highlighted in this document are those where significant changes are proposed or on which further views are particularly sought. Responses are also welcome on any other aspect of the admission arrangements and coordinated schemes.

The consultation runs from 9 December 2013 to 3 February 2014. Responses should be returned by 3 February 2014 to:

Sue Riddick
School Admissions Lead Officer
Children's Services
Wokingham Borough Council
Shute End
Wokingham RG41 1WN

Email: admissions.review@wokingham.gov.uk

OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA

1. Criterion B – serious medical, physical, psychological or social needs as grounds for admission (Primary and Secondary School Admissions)

It is proposed to revise the wording used for this criterion together with the note to provide greater emphasis and clarity. There is no substantive change as social need was included in the last consultation. The revised wording is proposed below.

“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 child's case (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."

2. Criterion C – In the case of a junior school; children who have attended an infant school with close links with the school. (applicable to primary admissions only)

It is proposed to amend this oversubscription criterion to show the requirement for a child to currently attend the infant school by the closing date for applications as the current wording could be misinterpreted by a parent of a child who previously attended the school. The revised wording is as follows:

"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."

3. Note 3 to criterion C and D - For schools where changes to designated areas were made from 2010/11, children who will have siblings attending the school in September 2014, but resided in what was the former designated area (or former shared area) when these places were allocated, will be treated as living within the school's designated area (Criterion D). This clause will no longer be applied after August 31, 2015. (Applicable to primary admissions only)

<i>Bearwood Primary School and Winnersh Primary School</i>
<i>Farley Hill Primary School, Lambs Lane Primary School, Shinfield Infant & Nursery School</i>
<i>Lambs Lane Primary School and Shinfield Infant & Nursery School</i>
<i>The Colleton Primary School, Polehampton CE Infant & Junior Schools & Sonning CE Aided Primary School</i>

It is proposed to remove this section of note 3 which applied to the criteria – siblings living in the designated area and children living in the designated area as this has now time expired.

4. F Children whose parents have a preference for single sex education (applicable to secondary admissions)

It is proposed to remove this criterion and all other references to The Forest School as there are no community schools requiring this criterion. Also removed are the specific tiebreaker and sibling protection which applied to this school.

5. 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). 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.

It is proposed to amend the above wording to provide more detail relating to children who equally split their time between parents as follows:

“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 agreed by both parents.

6. Inclusion of a new section relating to the inclusion of proposed new schools within the co-ordinated arrangements (applicable to the co-ordinated admissions scheme)

As new schools come on-stream in the borough; it is proposed to include arrangements on how such schools can be included in the co-ordinated schemes when there is initial approval to open, if they wish to do so. This follows guidance issued by the Department for Education. See Annex C to the proposed co-ordinated admissions scheme.

7. Amendment to existing wording relating to upper school admissions (applicable to secondary admissions)

An Academy in the borough will be proposing to introduce a new relevant year. The previous wording specifically related to applying for schools outside the borough. It is therefore proposed to amend this to read as follows:

“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 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 it would for the normal admissions round. Co-ordination will be held with other local authorities where preferences are expressed for schools in their area. The maintaining local authority will inform Wokingham Borough Council if a place is to be offered in one of its schools and Wokingham Borough Council will inform the parent of the outcome of the application.”

8. Waiting lists (applicable to primary and secondary admissions)

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. Positions on the list will be determined by applying the oversubscription criteria outlined above. Positions on waiting lists may go up or down due to pupil withdrawals or new or revised applications and no account is taken of the length of time spent on a waiting list.

Waiting lists will be retained by Children's Services to fill places that may become available during the school year until September 30, of year 10. 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. If academy, voluntary aided or foundation schools have stated that they operate waiting lists in their policies, the waiting list will transfer to the school on December 31, 2014, unless the governing body indicates that they want the local authority to hold their lists.

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.

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

It is proposed to amend the wording to provide greater clarity for parents as follows:

“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) or year 6 (primary 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.”

9. 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, the Council has adopted a Primary School Strategy setting out its aims to increase school places during the period 2013-2016, either by expanding existing schools or by commissioning new schools. Further information about individual proposals, with opportunity to comment on them, will be available through separate consultation processes.

The planned admission numbers, to be set out in the draft co-ordinated scheme, will be updated in the light of any decision taken to consult on statutory proposals for implementation in 2015/2016, or any changes determined and notified to the Local Authority by own-admission authority schools.

10. DESIGNATED AREAS

No changes are proposed in the Borough. However, there are likely to be statutory proposals to expand primary school provision in Shinfield / Spencers Wood. If approved, these may lead to modifications to the current designated area arrangements, if changes are necessary in order to implement the proposals.

11. CO-ORDINATED SCHEMES

There are no major changes to the timetable for the co-ordinated schemes. Proposed elements of the scheme are set out below for comment.

Key dates

PROPOSED TIMETABLE CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEMES 2015/16	
Date	Action
July 8, 2014	Maintained schools to provide school information to enable composite prospectus to be compiled
By September 12, 2014	Application packs for secondary transfer to be distributed via primary schools and on request
By September 12, 2014	Composite prospectus published on council's website
September 12, 2014	Online admissions open for applications for transfer to secondary school
October 31, 2014	National closing date for secondary transfer applications
November 25, 2014	Secondary transfer applications to be forwarded to Wokingham Borough own admission authority schools for consideration
November 2014	Application packs to be posted for entry to primary to parents who are either attending Wokingham borough early years' settings or who have registered with the school admissions team or who are transferring to junior school to be distributed via infant schools or on request,
November 12, 2014	Online admissions open for applications for entry to primary and transfer to junior school

January 15, 2015	National closing date for evidence to be provided to meet Wokingham Borough Council criteria for those transferring to secondary school; transferring to junior school; or starting school
January 15, 2015	Ranked lists to be submitted to the local authority by own admission authority schools for secondary transfer
January 15, 2015	Closing date for entry to primary and transfer to junior school applications, together with aided schools' supplementary information forms, if applicable.
February 10, 2015	Entry to primary and junior transfer applications to be forwarded to Wokingham Borough own admission authority schools for consideration
February 16, 2015	SEN Team to inform parents of pupils transferring to secondary school or to junior school with statements of special education need of their allocated school
February 28, 2015	Appeals timetable published to website (own admission authority schools will publish details on the school's website)
March 2, 2015	National secondary offer day – letters posted by first class post (the next working day after 1 March)
March 16, 2015	Secondary transfer: Deadline for accepting the offer of a place Late applications to be processed Waiting list information available
March 16, 2015	Ranked lists to be submitted to the local authority by own admission authority schools for the entry to primary and junior transfer
March 31, 2015	Final co-ordination with other local authorities for entry to primary and junior school transfer
March 31, 2015	closing date for notification of a secondary appeal to be heard together
April 16, 2015	National offer day for primary applications for those starting school and transfer to junior school offer day – letters posted by first class post
April 30, 2015	Entry to primary and junior transfer: Deadline for accepting the offer of a place Late applications to be processed Waiting list information available
May 19, 2015	Closing date for notification of an entry to primary or junior transfer appeal to be heard together
End May/early June 2015	Local authority to advise schools of final allocation details
May/June 2015	Secondary appeals to be heard in accordance with published timetable
June/July 2015	Starting school and junior transfer appeals to be heard in

12. In-Year Co-ordinated Scheme

The School Admissions Code no longer requires in-year applications to be co-ordinated. The Council is proposing to continue to maintain a local co-ordinated in-year scheme for community and voluntary controlled schools and for this to include own admission authority schools where there is agreement to do so. This will be similar to the 2015/2016 scheme with two exceptions; the timeline for applications to be processed is extended from 15 to 20 school days to allow for appropriated consideration under the Fair Access Protocol for some applications and parents may apply direct to Wokingham Borough Council regardless of whether the home authority is co-ordinating.

It is also proposed to provide greater clarity to parents regarding the process for appealing for a subsequent year group.

“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 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.”

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

7 Foundation Stage One

It is proposed to amend to criteria within this policy to prioritise children attending a school nursery or Ambleside receiving the free entitlement for two year olds and also to indicate 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

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