



Buckinghamshire Admissions Forum

AGENDA ITEM 14

Title: ADMISSIONS FORUM ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Date: Tuesday 8 December 2009

Author: Louise Goll

Contact Officer: Debbie Munday 01296 382217

Areas Affected: All Buckinghamshire

Recommendation

The Forum is invited to note this report and to consider whether they would wish to submit an Annual Report to the Office of the School's Adjudicator at the appropriate time for 2010 admissions.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Following the last Admissions Forum meeting the Council completed and submitted, as required by the Admissions Code, an annual report to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. A copy of this report follows therefore as Appendix 1.
2. Forums are not expected to produce complex reports that duplicate the local authority report on admission arrangements. The DCSF would expect Admission Forums to be included in the production of the local authority report, or at the least to have had sight of it before it is sent to the Schools Adjudicator.
3. There is no standard format for the report from Admission Forums, as the production of the report is itself voluntary. As per Regulation 18 of the School Admissions (Local Authority Reports and Admission Forums) (England) Regulations 2008 ('the Forum Regulations'), Forums should report on how they feel that arrangements in their area contribute to fair access. They could do this with a report on all arrangements in their area, or through a study of one particular aspect of arrangements in their area. This is a matter for the Forum to decide locally.
4. If produced, the Forum report should accompany the local authority report, which must be sent by 30th June each year to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. This will help to inform the Chief Adjudicator's annual report on Fair Access to the Secretary of

State. The Forum's last report was therefore appended to this Council's report when it was submitted.

5. The Forum is invited to consider, as it proceeds with business throughout the year, whether a report should be submitted at the appropriate time to the Office of the School's Adjudicator.

Background Papers

School Admissions Code of Practice: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sacode>

LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORT
TO
THE SCHOOLS ADJUDICATOR
FROM

Buckinghamshire Council

30 JUNE 2009

Report Cleared by – Sue Imbriano, Director of Children’s Services

Date submitted - 2 July 2009

By - Debbie Munday, Admissions and Transport Manager

Contact email address - dmunday@buckscc.gov.uk

Telephone number - 01296 382217

SECTION 1

FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR IN WHICH THE REPORT IS MADE - 2008 -2009

Please complete using data/information for the period 1 September 2008 to date of report

Code 4.9 a) (i) how well the Fair Access Protocol has worked and how many children have been admitted to each school in the area under the protocol;

The Code at 3.44 requires (1) each local authority to have a Fair Access Protocol and (2) all schools and Academies to participate in their LA area's protocol

- a) Please confirm that the LA has a Fair Access Protocol that has been agreed with all the relevant schools in its area.

YES – can be viewed at:

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/schools/adm_fair_access_protocol.pdf

Protocol agreed by all schools and academies?

YES – via Admissions Forum in July 2007

Has been in place for a year in current format.

- b) Give your assessment of how well the Fair Access Protocol has worked since 1 September 2008:
- a. in placing children in schools;

It has given the LA strategies to follow to assist vulnerable children and families in securing school places and a rationale for approaching schools who are at or above admission number, and sets out the assumptions that further children can be admitted other than by appeal. It also constrains the LA by setting parameters that assist schools in ensuring that they do not get overburdened

- b. the co-operation of schools and Academies in implementing the protocol; and

Generally very good, although recently we have had two decisions of the Pupil Placement Panel (headteachers panel making admissions decisions on permanently excluded children) that have been referred to the Office of the School's Adjudicator by the identified school.

Generally schools have been compliant when asked to admit child via Admissions team decision to admit above number where no other local school has places (we set a max of 1/30th of the AN). Indeed that part of the process has become somewhat informal with schools willing to admit above number without the need for formal directions.

c. Any issues you have had in implementing the protocol?

We found that managing the expressed preferences of the parents of permanently excluded children in conjunction with a nearest schools process can set up potentially conflicting outcomes.

c) In Appendix A, please record for each school the number of children directed to (column O) and admitted (column P) to the school under the protocol between 1 September 2008 and date of report.

Directions and Admissions are recorded. Please also see note above, in many cases schools accede to requests from the Admissions Team without the need for anything more than an email at most. Therefore the recorded figures are those that have required formal notes or requests or directions.

Code 4.9 a) (ii) whether primary schools are complying with infant class size legislation

Generally in the time between the admission and the end of the academic year the necessity of taking qualifying measures ceases as children leave the year group.

Please include in your comments the number of schools where qualifying measures are being taken.

In the January PLASC data, two schools were identified as having class sizes contravening key stage 1 legislation. These have now been resolved. In addition, Newton Longville is in the process of taking qualifying measures following the admission of a looked after child during the 2008/9 academic year.

At this moment, partway through the 2009 admissions round three schools are currently standing above number as a result of successful key stage 1 appeals. Qualifying measures will be taken, where necessary at the appropriate point. Schools can request exceptional support from School's Forum.

Code 4.9 a) (iii) the number of admissions appeals held for each and every school in the area, and the number of appeals that were upheld.

Please insert the data covering the period 1 September 2008 to the date of the report in Appendix A to show for each school:

- column Q - the number of appeals held;
- column R - the number of appeals upheld; and
- column S - the number of appeals pending from the date of the report onwards.

Enclosed. The LA data is for the period 1.9.08 to 24 June 2009 and includes all known transfer appeals to be heard within this academic year. The figures include casual and late admission requests.

In addition to these transfer appeals the LA hears over 900 Selection appeals for grammar school qualification in the period January to February 2009.

We are in the middle of the appeal process and still waiting for both outcomes of hearings already held, and for hearings already scheduled.

In Buckinghamshire no foundation or Catholic schools hear their own appeals –all have used the LA service this year. Church of England VA schools are served by the Oxford Diocese. Their data is also included.

Code 4.9 a) iv the extent to which the local authority and appeal panels in the area complied with the requirements of the Appeals Code, with reference to ensuring the timeliness and transparency of appeals, effective communications with parents and any other relevant matter.

This year has been a very difficult appeals year with a significant increase in the number of appeals triggered by parents both to the LA and the diocese. However, all timely appeals will be heard by the end of the academic year. Difficulties this year with sufficiency of panel members and rooms along with an increase in foundation schools seeking in-house appeals has meant the schedule has been particularly difficult to achieve.

In the LA's view, the Democratic Services clerking arrangements exemplify best practice.

4.9 d) iii any other matters which affect the fairness of admission arrangements for schools for schools in the area.

Please complete with reference to Choice Advice provided to parents applying for a secondary school place for the 2009/2010 school year.

Appendix 5 of the Code requires local authorities to provide an independent Choice Advice service that is focused on supporting the families who most need support in navigating the secondary school admissions process (paragraph 5). Choice Advice must be independent and free from any potential conflict of interest between the need of the local authority to allocate places and the advice that parents receive (paragraph 8). As a minimum, local authorities must ensure that Choice Advisers are not in the same management chain or reporting lines as the local authority's admissions staff (paragraph 9).

- a) Please confirm that your local authority has an independent Choice Advice service in place.

YES

- b) Please explain how you ensure the independence of the Choice Advice provided (for example, the Choice Advice service may be situated in the Parent Partnership service or Family Information Service).

Managed alongside Parent Partnership by the Educational Psychology service, and located at the Amersham Area offices of the authority (Admissions located at County Hall Aylesbury)

- c) Please confirm that your Choice Adviser(s) are in not in the same line management chain or reporting lines as staff on the admissions team.

Choice Advisors do not report to the Admissions Team, although they are also managed within Access and Inclusion it is through a separate line management structure

Choice Advice must be targeted at those parents who most need support with the secondary school admissions process (paragraph 10). Local authorities and Choice Advisers should market their service to ensure that they reach the families most in need of their support and that other relevant agencies and professionals are aware of the service they provide (paragraph 11). Choice Advisers should be proactive in reaching 'hard to reach' parents and should develop good links with organisations that may be able to refer parents to them (paragraph 12).

- d) Please explain how you ensure Choice Advice reaches those parents who are most in need of it.

The Choice Advisors provided the Admissions Forum with a summary of their year's work and it can be accessed here – pages 13-44 of the following pack:

[http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/moderngov/Published/C00000161/M00003118/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/moderngov/Published/C00000161/M00003118/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

- e) Describe how has Choice Advice contributed to the fairness of the admissions process.

One of the main areas of unfairness is the disproportionate impact of late applications on the children whose parents do not get an application in by the closing date. Anything that can be done to ensure that an application is timely and that it expresses realistic preferences according to location of the family makes the admissions process fairer for children – especially the more vulnerable children. Choice Advisors aim to support families who find dealing with paperwork is a challenge.

Local authorities may provide Choice Advice at the primary school admission stage and for in-year applications (paragraph 5).

- f) Choice Advice is offered at the primary admissions stage?

NO

- g) Choice Advice is offered for in-year applications?

NO

It is good practice for Choice Advisers to provide support during the appeals process, particularly to those parents who accessed Choice Advice at the application stage.

- h) The Choice Adviser provides support during the appeals process?

YES – in principle although in practice they have not felt the need to attend with a parent yet.

- i) We plan to provide support during the appeals process in future?

YES - if judged appropriate by the Choice Advisors

SECTION 2

FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR WHICH STARTS AFTER THE REPORT IS MADE – 2009-2010:

Code 4.9 b) (i) the extent to which admission arrangements for schools in the authority's area serve the interests of children in care, children with disabilities, children with special educational needs and service children.

Note: You may wish to point out if specialist staff from within the Council has contributed to this report.

In all cases, in all schools, LAC children have the priority accorded to them by the admissions code. They are included as a priority group in the Fair Access Process and in the authority's transport procedures. Admissions at all schools including VA and F schools have been enforced for LAC applications according to the Code.

In the 11+ selection process children with disabilities and with statements of special educational need who may require adapted tests are accommodated according to the professional advice in their case and in conjunction with a decision of a Special Access Panel. The authority has a transport process that can ensure children with disabilities can access schools, and will consider the appropriateness of the accessibility of school sites within the 'nearest available' decisions on non catchment transport.

The authority adheres to the requirements for making a special case when considering applications for service children as set out in the code. The Admissions Forum has service representation and we aim to work closely with services welfare officers to identify and place service children appropriately.

Code 4.9 b) (ii) the effectiveness of co-ordination.

Note: You may wish to report on the authority's assessment of the effectiveness of any scheme for co-ordinating:

- a) the admission of pupils to relevant schools in the authority's area in the next academic year to begin after the date of the report, and
- b) the admission of pupils in the authority's area to other relevant schools in that academic year.

The authority's schemes have worked well over the last 5 years, with clear admission arrangements and as a result once 11+ qualification is taken into account, for our residents, 82% upper qualified and 90% grammar qualified children were allocated their highest preference school (i.e. for upper children this is ignoring higher grammar school preferences for which they are not qualified) At primary allocation, in the initial allocation, 86% of reception and 93% of junior children were offered a place at their first preference school.

We use catchment areas as a way of prioritising childrens' applications to their local school and as a result 95.5% upper qualified and 92.5% grammar qualified children who expressed a preference for their catchment school were offered a place. We remain concerned about those children not able to access a catchment school, particularly at secondary transfer, and will be holding an independent review of the way the process is working at the moment.

SECTION 3

FOR ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN DETERMINED IN THE APRIL IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE DATE OF THE REPORT IS MADE (determined by 15 April 2009 for admission in September 2010):

Code 4.9 c) (i) a statement of whether or not admission arrangements for maintained schools in the area complied with the mandatory requirements of this Code and admissions law.

Are you satisfied that the admission arrangements for all maintained schools in your area are fully compliant with the Code?

YES – in key matters, there are a few inadvertent errors that we will discuss with them and agree without the need for a referral to the adjudicator

If NO, please specify what action you are taking – please see paragraph “Referring objections to the Schools Adjudicator” on page 10.

Following the compliance exercise in 2008, the Chief Adjudicator wrote to all local authorities with details of where the admission arrangements for schools in their area may not be compliant with the Code. Subsequently, local authorities were asked to report on the action that had been taken to amend the arrangements.

Are you satisfied that all the necessary action that was said to be needed has been taken for the arrangements determined by 15 April 2009?

YES

If you are not completely satisfied, what further action are you taking?

The Schools Adjudicator and local authority reports

*Code 4.10 local authority reports play an important part in monitoring schools' compliance with this Code and ensuring an open and fair admissions system. The Schools Adjudicator **must** ensure that admission arrangements which come to his attention via local authority reports, and any Admission Forum reports that he receives comply with this Code and admissions legislation. This will form the basis of an annual report to the Secretary of State which will also include how fair access is being achieved locally. The Schools Adjudicator's annual report to the Secretary of State on fair access replaces the biennial report of the Schools Commissioner.*

*Code 4.11 where a local authority report, under section 88P of the SSFA 1998, states that admission arrangements for maintained schools do not or may not conform with statutory requirements or the mandatory requirements of this Code, the Schools Adjudicator **must** decide whether the arrangements are compliant. In the case of Academies he may advise the Secretary of State on whether he considers the arrangements are compliant and the Secretary of State will reach a decision on any changes that are necessary.*

Referring objections to the Schools Adjudicator

*Code 4.12 local authorities **must** refer an objection to the Schools Adjudicator if they consider, or are made aware of any admission arrangements proposed by any other admission authority that are unlawful, that do not comply with the mandatory requirements or guidelines in this Code, or that appear to be unfair, unclear and subjective or encouraged social segregation. Local authorities **must** refer the objection as soon as such admission arrangements come to their attention. Local authorities may refer such an objection with their report or separately.*

*Code 4.13 local authorities **must** also consider carefully any representations they receive from parents about the admission arrangements for schools for which they are not the admission authority and whether they will use their power to make an objection to the Authority.*

Using Appendix A, please identify any schools (column U) that you have referred to the OSA, or may be referring to the OSA by the 31 July 2009.

SECTION 4

OTHER MATTERS:

Code 4.9 d) (i) details about the current membership of the Admission Forum for the area

Please list the bodies represented and the number of representatives in each category. Do **NOT** give the names of members.

Group	Set out in Regulations	Buckinghamshire Membership	Alternate Member
Local Authority	2	2	Alternate county councillor
Schools – Community and Voluntary Controlled	At least 1 of each (headteacher or non-LA governor –nominated by governing body)	5	Headteacher or non-LA governor of same category of school
Schools – Foundation	At least 1 (headteacher or non-LA governor –nominated by governing body)	3	Headteacher or non-LA governor of same category of school
Schools – Voluntary Aided	At least 1 (headteacher or non-LA governor –nominated by governing body)	2	Headteacher or non-LA governor of same category of school
Schools - Academies	1 per Academy (headteacher or non-LA governor –nominated by governing body)	1	Headteacher or non-LA governor of same category of school
Diocesan Board of Church of England	1 (nominated & appointed by relevant body)	1	Appointing body must agree the alternate member
Roman Catholic Diocese	1 (nominated & appointed by relevant body)	1	Appointing body must agree the alternate member
Parent Members	At least 1 (Live in relevant area with child over 2 receiving primary education or compulsory school age child)	3	Alternate must be another eligible parent
Local Community	At least 1 (agreed by members above to represent local community)	2	Local authority must agree the alternate member
Total	Maximum of 20	20	

Please add any comments on the transition from the previous to the new constitution of the Forum; the effectiveness of the Forum in challenging non-compliant admission arrangements; the contribution of the Forum in promoting fair access.

We have had one meeting of the Admissions Forum on the basis of the new membership and mapped the previous members onto the new membership structure . All regular attendees, including those school members who have attended regularly were invited to identify roles that they could fulfil in the new structure and in this way we populated the new structure and retained the knowledge and skills the Forum had already built up. We found few schools had been interested in sending school members so welcomed the changed structure.

Over the last three years the Forum has been key in identifying and addressing bad practice in admission arrangements, and the LA has found the support of the Forum invaluable in ensuring schools focus on the inappropriate rules they were intending to use. Attendees regularly review the information sent to parents.

The Admission Forum may make a report to the Schools Adjudicator. If the Forum wishes to make such a report it would be helpful to include the report with the report from the local authority. Please indicate:

The Admission Forum wishes to make a report to the Schools Adjudicator and has attached their most recent report with this report

Whether or not the Admission Forum is making/submitting a report, please confirm that the Forum has seen, or will see, this LA report.

The Forum will see this report at their next meeting in December 2009.

Code 4.9 d) (ii) the proportion of children currently on free school meals at each school in the area.

The data provided by the Local Authority to the DCSF in January 2008 has been “cleaned” and is included in Appendix A at the end of this template.

If the data for 2009 is significantly different please state how it differs.

There are some differences, but it is not considered to be significantly different.

Using and interpreting the data, please comment on any features associated with Fair Access to allocation of school places and meeting parental preferences.

It is not easy to interpret this dataset as it does not highlight which schools serve the areas of deprivation sufficiently clearly, and FSM is not the most accurate proxy indicator to use. In Buckinghamshire there are small pockets of deprivation and therefore the FSM data could not show an equal spread across all schools. Equal numbers of children with FSM would not be expected because the children could not travel to many schools especially in the rural areas.

Our own analysis is on the basis of numbers of preferences and whether those can be met, with reference to the Admission Number of the school – which is not in the dataset. Appended is a summary to show the number of applicants and the number of places offered in the 2009 initial allocation.

Code 4.9 d) (iii) any other matters which affect the fairness of admission arrangements for schools in the area.

Please provide evidence about or any information, that in your view affect the fairness of admission arrangements by improving or reducing the fairness for schools in your area.

None known

SECTION 5

RANDOM ALLOCATION OF SCHOOL PLACES

1. Was random allocation being used in any way by the local authority in allocating places at community and/or voluntary controlled schools for September 2009:

(a) infant/primary/middle deemed primary schools?

NO

If yes, please specify how?

(b) in secondary/middle deemed secondary schools?

NO

If yes, please specify how?

2. Do the determined admission arrangements for admission in 2010 use random allocation in the same way as 2009 arrangements?

NO

If no, please specify the changes that have been made.

2010 has included random allocation in order to differentiate between twins for all VC and C schools and the LA is currently addressing those schools still using alphabetic allocations for this purposes. We do not view this as requiring referral to the OSA. .

3. What are your views on whether the outcomes of random allocation as used by the local authority result in fair outcomes for parents?

Limited knowledge – only one school currently uses, and even then it is after catchment and siblings in their rules – it is just used as the final differentiator instead of distance.

4. What evidence do you have of parental reaction to the use of random allocation and parental understanding of how the system works?

Limited knowledge – have had one case that found it difficult to accept who was refused whereas others further away were not.

5. For all foundation and voluntary aided schools in your area, please indicate in Appendix A (column T), those schools that use random allocation in any part of its admission arrangements.

Hamilton School

SECTION 6

ADMISSION OF TWINS TO THE SAME SCHOOL

1a). What is your policy on the admission of twins (and multiple births) to primary schools?

Where KS1 not impacting we will go over number to admit the second twin(or rest of multiple birth group) , but for 2009 in KS1 cases we have used alphabetical order to make final decision and only admitted those children for whom we have a place.

b). What is your policy when the last place of the admission number is allocated to one twin (or fewer than all born in a multiple birth)?

See above

2a). What is your policy on the admission of twins (and multiple births) to secondary school?

We will go over number to admit the second twin(or rest of multiple birth group).

b) What is your policy when the last place of the admission number is allocated to one twin (or fewer than all born in a multiple birth)?

See above

3) Please indicate below, those Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools within your area, that do not have a policy on admission of twins (and multiple births).

Danesfield – but the school has an AN of 56 so could exceed that for a twin either voluntarily or on appeal. The absence is being brought to their attention.