

## Proposal 5

The final oversubscription criterion for grammar schools should be replaced with:

Once places have been allocated under criteria 1- 6, the remaining places will be awarded according to the distance between the family's normal home address and the school's nearest entrance gate; closest first. The shortest designated route is a public route with a proper made up surface, such as tarmac or concrete. If it is a road it does not have to have a separate pavement.

Question 5 on the Questionnaire at the end of this document seeks your view on this proposal.

## Proposed Changes to Secondary School Catchment Areas

### Why are we proposing changes?

Over a number of years, changes such as population density, have led to changes in the number of children wanting school places. Some schools have been unable to admit all of the children in their catchment area who want a place.

Many parents and Headteachers have told us that they are unhappy with the fact that there are differences in the options available to parents between the grammar and upper school sectors. Others are unhappy that there are differences between some geographical areas in the grammar school sector.

The complexities of the geography of Buckinghamshire and the location of our schools are such that no area can be considered in isolation. Changes in one area have a domino effect across the county.

We have been aware of these factors and for the last 18 months have been considering the need for changes. Since then the need has been reinforced by legislative changes arising from the Education Act 2002.

The coordinated admission arrangements will work better for parents and children if each secondary school can admit those catchment area children who name the school as a preference.

Schools are at the heart of their communities and children should be able to attend their local school if that is their preference. They can then fully participate in extra curricular activities.

We would also seek to reduce, where possible, travel times and distances for children.

### How were the proposed changes designed?

Extensive work has been undertaken examining future pupil numbers, qualification rates for grammar / upper schools, patterns of transfer, travel and environmental issues and numbers of boys and girls in each postcode sector. Meetings have been held with Headteachers in groups and individually and as work developed it has been shared with those Headteachers involved.

In working with Headteachers we have proposed that the following principles should be applied in the drawing up of catchment areas, as far as possible. Where there is an exception to these principles it should be for sound, justifiable reasons.

What were the principles to be used to draw up the secondary school catchment areas?

1. All schools should be able to admit the children who live in the catchment area and name the school as a preference.

- This is in line with the principle, 'Local Schools for Local Children'.
- The Coordinated Scheme we are proposing would work better for parents and children.

2. Once children in the catchment area have been accommodated, there should, if possible, be a few additional places available to allow for parental preference and flexibility.

3. Each pupil could have access to a maximum of 2 catchment area schools.

- ✎ The majority of Buckinghamshire secondary children only have one catchment school. This already applies to most upper school children (70% of the secondary population), all grammar school pupils in the north and very south of the county and to girls in the Wycombe area.
- ✎ Many parents perceive it as unfair that some children have several options whilst others have only one.
- ✎ If there are more catchment area schools, travel has to be provided in more than one direction. This leads to more complex travel arrangements.
- ✎ With too many options it is difficult to predict numbers and therefore produce areas that will benefit the maximum number of parents and children.

4. Where sensible, public transport links would be a criterion but this would be balanced against the cost and flexibility of different modes of transport, especially where a coach has to be provided to serve the children attending a nearby school.

5. There should be flexibility to allow for future population changes without the need to make major changes to all areas.

6. Where possible postcodes will be used to help parents identify the catchment area schools for their child.

Where possible, in designing proposed changes, we have tried to keep communities together.

### Proposal 6

The principles listed in this section are accepted as the basis for designing the proposed changes to secondary school catchment areas.

**Question 6 on the Questionnaire at the end of this document seeks your view on this proposal.**

**Parents will still be able to express a preference for a school that is not one of their catchment schools.**

SOURCE: LEA