



School Organisation Committee

AGENDA ITEM 8

Title: Admissions consultations: outcome of summer 2003 and proposals for spring 2004 consultation

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Electoral Divisions Affected: All

Summary

1. This report outlines the decisions of the County Council following the public consultation on admission arrangements and secondary school catchment area during 2003 and the proposals for the statutory consultation to take place in the spring term 2004.

Recommendation

The committee is asked to note the outcome of the consultation with schools and parents during the summer and autumn of 2003 and to comment on the proposals for the spring term consultation 2004.

Background

2. Members received details of the arrangements for the consultation with schools and parents about new admission arrangements (including revised secondary school catchment areas) for 2005 at its meeting of 25 June 2003. Full details of the arrangements, reasons for the changes and responses to the consultation are contained in the Report to Cabinet of 10 November 2003 (attached as Appendix 1).

Outcome of the consultation

3. Following this consultation, the County Council has considered the responses from parents and schools and agreed the following at its meeting of 27 November:
 - The linking, for admission purposes, of infant schools with the named junior or combined school to which children from the infant school generally progress.

- The retention of the sibling priority in the oversubscription criteria for both primary and secondary schools together with a clarification of the definition to be used for siblings.
- The final oversubscription criterion for grammar schools will be the distance between the child's normal home address and the school.
- The principles to be used for determination of secondary school catchment areas will be as published in the consultation document 'Getting a School Place'.
- The secondary school catchment areas will be as in the 'Getting a School Place' consultation booklet with some amendments. These amendments are contained in the Report to County Council of 27 November.
- The primary school coordinated admissions scheme will be an equal preference scheme.
- The secondary school coordinated admissions scheme will be an equal preference scheme.
- There will be a review at the end of one, two and five years after the introduction of the new arrangements.

Full details of the decisions and the coordinated schemes are contained in Appendix1.

Spring term consultation 2004

4. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended by the Education Act 2002, requires all admission authorities to undertake a formal consultation during the spring of 2004. This consultation must be completed by 1 March 2004. Final arrangements must then be determined by 15 April and notified to the required consultees. The Buckinghamshire Schools Admissions Forum must receive details of proposals at its meeting of 29 January.
5. The LEA must consult with all the community and voluntary aided schools, about their admission arrangements, with other admission authorities in Buckinghamshire and with neighbouring LEAs.
6. The governing bodies of foundation and voluntary aided schools must consult:
 - The LEA.
 - Every other admission authority in Buckinghamshire. Governing bodies of primary schools need only consult with primary school admission authorities.
 - Every community and voluntary controlled school in Buckinghamshire. Governing bodies of primary schools need only consult with primary schools.
 - Every LEA within 8km (secondary schools) or 3.2km (primary schools).
7. Other requirements include:
 - For the first time the LEA has to monitor all admission arrangements within Buckinghamshire and report to the Secretary of State.
 - The governing bodies of CE voluntary aided schools must consult the diocese before the rest of the statutory consultees.

- All admission authorities must consider the views of parents.
- All admission authorities must assess the impact of decisions on ethnic minority pupils and promote racial equality.
- Children in public care must be given a high priority.
- Interviews may not form part of the admission process.
- A list of the details to be included in the consultation material. These include admission numbers, application processes and timelines, oversubscription criteria (and details of evidence required), details of tests for ability, tests for aptitude, nursery arrangements, sixth form arrangements and administrative arrangements.

There are also new regulations regarding sixth form and early years admissions.

Managing the spring term consultation

8. As this will be a major exercise and could be difficult for small schools in particular, we are proposing to manage the consultation in the following way:
 - A website will be available specifically for the spring term admissions consultation.
 - The LEA admissions arrangements and oversubscription criteria will be available on this website.
 - An email will be sent to all schools on 5 January 2004 advising the full website address. This will be on the school extranet, <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/extranet/schools> , and will have a direct link from the home page.
 - Voluntary aided and foundation **secondary** schools **must** consult **all** schools in Buckinghamshire; **primary** schools need only **consult all other primary** schools. In order to assist in this process we are offering to post their admission details on the LEA website. This will mean less paper for everyone and each school will be able to check the arrangements proposed by any schools of interest to the school or their parents.
 - Governing bodies of foundation and voluntary aided schools may choose to make their own arrangements if they do not wish to use this facility.
 - The Admissions Forum has to consider proposals from each admission authority at its meeting of 29 January. The LEA will prepare and arrange distribution of proposals from foundation and voluntary aided schools where these are submitted by the deadline.
 - The consultation must be complete by 1 March and arrangements determined by 15 April.
 - All admission authorities may then arrange for their finalised arrangements to be posted back on the website or make their own arrangements for distribution.

Schools have the right to object to the Adjudicator about any admission arrangements proposed by other schools.

Background Papers

“Getting a School Place” consultation document issued summer 2003

Report to Cabinet 10 November - Attached as Appendix 1.

Report to County Council 27 November

These are available on the Buckinghamshire County Council website:

www.buckscc.gov.uk/cabinet_papers/cabinet/index.stm