



School Organisation Committee

AGENDA ITEM 8

Title: Admissions: Review of Primary School Catchment Areas for 2006 onwards

Date: 7 July 2004

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Electoral Divisions Affected: All

Summary

1. This report gives details of the review of primary school catchment areas and the consultation with parents about the proposals for these catchment areas from 2006.

Recommendation

The committee is asked to note and comment on:

- The principles used to determine proposed primary school catchment areas
- The arrangements for the consultation

BACKGROUND

2. Following the 2002 Education Act the County Council undertook a major review of admission policies and procedures, including the catchment areas for secondary schools. During the summer of 2003 there was a major consultation with parents and schools about new proposals for admission arrangements and amended secondary school catchment areas. The new arrangements determined following the consultation will be implemented from the September 2005 admission round.
3. In order to complete this work the County Council has reviewed the catchment areas for primary schools in Buckinghamshire and will be consulting parents and schools about the proposed catchment areas during September and October 2004.

THE REVIEW

Reasons for the review

4. There has not been a full review of primary catchment areas for many years and:
 - The Schools Admission Code of Practice states that it is good practice to regularly review admission arrangements
 - There have been significant demographic changes in the county (with more expected in the next few years). This has led to an imbalance of pupil numbers compared to school admission numbers in some areas.
 - We need to look at catchment areas in the light of the changes to admission arrangements, including secondary catchment areas, determined in April 2004.
 - The coordinated admissions scheme to be introduced for 2005 will work best for most parents if children can attend their catchment area school.

How the review has been conducted

5. All schools have had a copy of the catchment area currently in operation for their school. Governors have been asked to comment on:
 - Any inaccuracies
 - Any anomalies
 - Any changes they would like to be considered
6. A list of principles was drawn up against which changes would be considered. A copy of these principles is included in Appendix 1.
7. Other factors known to the County Council were also taken into account and maps are now being drawn for amended catchment areas.

Other amendments

8. Once the catchment areas have been decided it is intended that they should be changed into postcodes. Although this will mean minor changes to boundaries the benefit to parents of this method for accurate assessment of the catchment area schools proved very popular for the secondary schools and would enable the County Council to have a web based primary catchment area 'calculator' as well as a secondary one.

Schools included in the consultation

9. All community and voluntary controlled schools will be involved, including those where no change is proposed so that parents may have the opportunity to comment.

10. The governors of many foundation and voluntary aided schools have asked the County Council to consult with parents on their behalf. A list of schools involved is included as Appendix 2 (to follow as all responses have not yet been received).

THE CONSULTATION

Groups to be consulted

11. The groups consulted about the proposals will be:

- Parents of children in nursery, reception and year 1 classes in Buckinghamshire maintained primary schools in September
- Parents of 3 year old children in pre-school and nursery classes
- Schools
- Parish and District Councils
- The Church of England and Catholic Dioceses
- Neighbouring LEAs

Consultation information and documentation

12. The documentation will include:

- A booklet (Getting a Primary School Place) explaining the proposals and how to respond. This will be similar in style and format to the 'Getting a School Place' consultation document used in 2003 for secondary schools.
- A response form in blue
- A prepaid envelope
- A4 Maps of individual schools with a map of the district on the reverse
- Large A1 poster maps for display boards, showing the catchments of each educational area – Aylesbury, Chiltern/South Bucks/Wycombe
- A consultation website. Maps of schools, the document and response forms will be available from this site.
- Details of an on-line postcode catchment enquiry facility

Schools and libraries will display poster maps of the area. Most schools will be able to help parents who do not have Internet access to view maps. Buckinghamshire libraries all have Internet access.

13. Parents of children in primary schools will receive the map for the school their child attends. Parents of children in the private and voluntary pre-school provision will receive the document and response form, together with details of how to see the map of their local school. This is because it is not possible to assess which will be the local school for children in pre-school provision as they generally come from a wider area.

The decision making process

14. The timetable for the process is outlined below:

Summer term 2004	Briefing of appropriate groups and committees. Collating responses from schools and other groups. Examination of these with other known issues and pupil number/admission number statistics. Production of draft proposals and documentation. Discussion with individual or groups of schools. Further discussion with forum representatives and briefing of elected members.
September 1 to 13 October 2004	Public consultation period.
8 November 2004	Cabinet
25 November 2004	County Council
Spring Term 2005	Statutory Spring Term Consultation
April 2005	Policy determined
Summer 2005	Parent guides published for 2006 admissions
September 2006	New catchment areas in place

Background Papers

School Admissions Code of Practice: DfES/0031/2003
 Buckinghamshire School Admissions Policy – available on the County Council
 website: buckscc.gov.uk/schools/admissions

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APPENDIX 1

PRIMARY CATCHMENT AREAS REVIEW: PRINCIPLES TO BE USED IN DETERMINATION OF CATCHMENT AREAS

1. All primary schools should be able to admit the children who live within the catchment area and name the school as a preference. This is in accordance with the principle of 'Local Schools for Local Children'. For primary aged children this should be within 2 miles of home if possible.
2. Subject to achieving a match with admission numbers the new areas should broadly reflect the current catchment areas unless there is a significant need for change.
3. Normally each residential address should be within the catchment area of one primary school. The coordinated admissions scheme will accord parents flexibility in expressing preferences. There will be areas where there are voluntary aided Catholic or Church of England schools that do not have a catchment area, or have an area defined by ecclesiastical parishes, which may cause an overlap. In these cases there should be a maximum of two catchment area schools for an address.
4. Where appropriate, and circumstances permit, consideration will be given to enabling children to transfer to the same school as their class colleagues by ensuring that villages (or other discrete communities) feeding into the same infant school are allocated the same junior or combined school. Work on secondary catchments achieved the opportunity for children within the same catchment for KS2 to transfer to KS3 together if that was in accordance with parental wishes.
5. Where primary schools are linked for admission purposes this will be taken into account where possible to give some commonality
6. Catchment areas should be rationalised to take account of demographic changes.
7. Catchment areas should take account of major geographical features to support safe journeys to schools.

Once catchment areas are established they will be translated into postcodes to enable parents to check more easily the school which serves their area.