

**ACADEMIES AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY SCRUTINY REVIEW MEETING.
14th November 2012.**

Local Authority Responsibilities.

These notes are submitted by the undersigned who are concerned about the potential decline in education choices and options for families in Bucks as a result of schools moving away from local authority control and administration.

Our primary concern is to ensure that the interests of parents and children are safeguarded when free schools are established and the county schools transfer to academy status. Although Local Authorities will have no direct supervision of academies and free schools, it is a fact that in the end, final responsibility for educational performance in the county rests with the Local Authority.

We see the local authority as having a critical role in understanding and promoting the interests of parents. In the new arrangements, the L.A. has to be the champion for parents and schoolchildren throughout the county.

Local Authorities must ensure that the county's parents have fair access to good schools in their locality. How education is delivered to children within the schools is the responsibility of the school staff. The Local Authority must exercise its responsibility to ensure that fair access is available for all children and that the expected educational standards are met. These requirements are in line with the Coalition Government's policies and as set out in the Secretary of State for Education's letter to local authorities.

The specific responsibilities for the LA are:

School Admissions

- The L.A has a strategic responsibility for school admission policies. Parents want a common admissions policy that is fair and consistently applied throughout the county.
- The L.A. must work with all schools to develop a common admissions policy to ensure fair, simple and objective admissions.
- The L.A. or an independent body acceptable to the L.A. should carry out the administration of school admission arrangements. Schools should be discouraged from administering their own admission arrangements.
- Where the L.A. has failed to obtain some schools' agreement to operate within a common admissions policy, it should ensure that the deviant schools' admission policies are published in a clear and understandable manner. Where appropriate the L.A. should provide support to families making school applications for schools that are not in the common admission arrangements.

School Transport

Ensure that school Transport arrangements are cost effective and convenient for families.

Appeals

The LA should take on the responsibility to ensure that the L.A. or a competent independent body that has the confidence of parents conducts all appeals for school transfers and school selection.

School performance

The LA should be responsible for:

- Monitoring school performances, intervening and offering support when expected standards are not being achieved.
- Ensuring schools' operations and policies are consistent with their funding agreements.
- Ensuring that the Pupil Premium received by schools is used *only* for the support of the disadvantaged children.

We are aware that at least one academy in the county has introduced a banding selection test. We are of the opinion that this highlights a real danger to a cohesive school admissions system within Bucks. If this precedent is adopted by other schools, parents and children will suffer. The L.A. must do what it can to encourage all maintained schools to co-operate not compete with each other. Co-operation is intended to be at the heart of the academy school system.

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