

Education Admission Forum	EAF/01/12
Date: 21 February 2012	

Admission Arrangements (oversubscription criteria) for Community and Voluntary Controlled Infant, Junior and Primary Schools for 2013-14

Report by School Planning and Admissions Manager – School Planning and Admissions

Enquiries to Shamsun Noor 01245 436 353

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the views of the Forum on the proposed changes to the standard oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled infant, junior and primary schools in Essex for the 2013-14 admission year – to the effect that children with siblings already at a preferred school (at the time of application and admission) are given the highest possible priority for admission to that school.

2. CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CHANGES

- 2.1 The County Council firmly believes that families must be at the heart of the school admissions system. As such, the Council as the body responsible for admission arrangements of community and voluntary controlled schools feels that where parents are successful in gaining a place at a community or voluntary controlled infant, junior or primary school of their preference, they should be able to secure a place for future siblings of an older child who will still be at that school at the time of the younger child's admission.
- 2.2 The Council is currently consulting, through the formal statutory consultation process, on the admission arrangements and oversubscription criteria for all community and voluntary controlled infant, junior and primary schools in Essex. The proposal is that children with a sibling already at a preferred school (at the time of application and admission) will have the highest possible priority for admission to that school in the case of oversubscription.
- 2.3 A period of pre consultation was carried out between October and November 2011 with key stakeholders on this proposal, including all Essex schools, County Councillors, MPs as well as Parish Councils and parents. A majority of respondents indicated their support for the proposals during the pre-consultation period.

2.4 The formal statutory period of consultation commenced on 3 January 2012 and will close on 29 February 2012. The Forum is being consulted as part of this process.

3. FURTHER BACKGROUND AND CURRENT POSITION

3.1 The County Council is the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled infant, junior and primary schools in Essex. This means that it is the Council which sets the admission policies for all of these schools and makes decisions, under those arrangements, as to which pupils are offered and refused places.

3.2 The current standard oversubscription criteria for the vast majority of these schools give priority for admission, in the case of oversubscription to applicants in the following order of priority:

- 1) Looked after Children;
- 2) Children living in the priority admission area with a sibling attending the school;
- 3) Other children living in the priority admission area;
- 4) Children living outside the priority admission area with a sibling attending the school;
- 5) Remaining applicants

In the event of oversubscription within any of the above criteria, priority will be determined by straight line distance from home to school, those living closest being given the highest priority. Exceptional medical circumstances, supported by medical evidence, may override the above (except Looked after Children)

3.3 Under the above arrangements, children considered under criterion 4 are sometimes unable to gain a place at a school where they already have a sibling in attendance, because the school becomes fully subscribed with children offered places under criterions 1-3, mostly local 'catchment' children. In the case of children admitted under the existing criterion 3, these children do not have a sibling at the school already and the Council feels that those parents who do have sibling at a school should be given a higher priority, even if they do not live in the local priority admission (catchment) area.

4. THE PROPOSED CHANGES

4.1 The Council proposes to change the standard oversubscription criteria for all community and voluntary controlled infant, primary and junior schools in Essex to the following:

- 1) Looked after Children (in line with the revised Admissions Code)
- 2) Children with a sibling attending the school (at the time of application and admission);

- 3) Children living in the priority admission area
- 4) Remaining applicants

In the event of oversubscription within any of the above criteria, priority will be determined by straight line distance from home to school, those living closest being given the highest priority. Exceptional medical circumstances, supported by medical evidence, may override the above (except Looked after Children)

- 4.2 Where, in certain areas of the County, existing oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled schools already give the highest priority to siblings, irrespective of where they live, (after Looked after Children), it is not proposed to change those arrangements.

5. SUMMARY AND FORUM ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The Council considers that it is appropriate that admission arrangements for community infant, junior and primary schools in Essex give the highest possible priority for admission to children with siblings already at a preferred school. This supports the principle of parental preference and will assist parents who need to take and collect young children from school by ensuring, as far as is possible, that they are able to secure a place at the same community or voluntary controlled school for their primary aged children.
- 5.2 The Forum is asked to give its opinion on the proposed changes to inform the current consultation process.
- 5.3 Following completion of the consultation process, the Council will, as required by law, determine the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in Essex for the 2013-14 admission year by no later than 15 April 2012.