



**Brighton & Hove**

# Schools' Bulletin

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| <i>Date: 20 November 2009</i>   | <i>Ref: SH Consultation 11-12</i>   |
| <b>To: Governors and Headteachers of all Schools, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Diocesan Authorities.</b>  | <b>From: Head of School Admissions and Transport</b>  |
| <b>Title: School Admissions Consultation 2011/2012. Coordinated schemes of admission for 2011/12 and in year admissions consultation for 2010/11</b>  | <b>Action Required By : Voluntary Aided schools 4<sup>th</sup> January 2010, others 1<sup>st</sup> March 2010</b> |
| <p><b>Admission Arrangements for Brighton &amp; Hove Schools 2011/12</b></p> <p>Governing Bodies of all maintained schools in the City are invited to give their views on the proposals for admission arrangements to Community Schools. The responses to this consultation will be presented to the Cabinet Member for CYPT at a meeting in March 2010. The Admission Forum's comments and advice on the proposed arrangements will also be made known to the Cabinet Member meeting. The consultation will also invite comment from parents in the City who have a child or children between the ages of 2 and 16 years of age. Parents will be directed to the consultation materials through a public notice and may access the consultation through the Council website, or by accessing a hard copy. At the same time the admission arrangements for Voluntary Aided Schools must also be consulted upon (unless the arrangements are unchanged from last year and the governing body has chosen not to consult). As in the past the Council will provide access for other schools to view Voluntary Aided policies via Education Online, and will make them available for public comment on the Council website or by providing hard copy. Please read the section below about Voluntary Aided school consultation.</p> <p>In line with guidance and regulations from the Department for Children, Schools and Families the consultation process must conclude by 1<sup>st</sup> March 2010, and must run for a period of at least 8 weeks. This also means that Voluntary Aided Schools must provide their draft admission priorities for consultation before Christmas 2009 (unless they are not consulting, in which case they will need to specify this).</p> <p>Following last year's consultation, admission authorities that do not change their admission priorities and arrangements will not need to consult again until arrangements for the 2012/13 admissions exercise are due.</p> <p><b>Community Secondary Schools and Falmer Academy</b></p> <p>This part of consultation is about the process for the secondary schools admissions system which remains a catchment area system with random allocation being used as the tie breaker in each admission priority in the event of oversubscription.</p> <p>A change is proposed to the over subscription priorities which are applied in the context of an equal preference system as required by the Admissions Code. They are currently:</p> |   |

1. Children in the care of a local authority (looked after children).
2. Compelling medical or other exceptional reasons for attending the school.
3. The sibling link.
4. Those pupils living in the designated catchment area for the school.
5. Other children.

The proposal is to remove priority 2 (Compelling medical or other exceptional reasons for attending the school). This is because it is difficult to demonstrate that this priority is being applied objectively and also because the need for it has been reduced by the catchment area system. Many of these children have statements of SEN and are therefore entitled to priority for a place anyway. The catchment area criterion has also led to a situation where children are more able to access a place at a local school which further reduces the need for this priority. Please see separate section below for more information.

### **Admissions Arrangements for Community Infant, Junior and Primary Schools**

Three changes are proposed for the admission arrangements to Community Infant, Junior and Primary schools. The over subscription priorities are applied in the context of an equal preference system as required by the Admissions Code. The current over subscription priorities are:

1. Children in the care of a local authority (looked after children).
2. Compelling medical or other exceptional reasons for attending the school.
3. The sibling link. (For infant, junior and primary schools the sibling link only applies where the home to school distance as measured by the Council's admissions software is less than 2 miles.)
4. Home to school distance (measured by the shortest available route).

The first proposal applies only to junior schools. It is the insertion, after the sibling link, of a priority for children who currently attend a linked infant school. This would give children attending the infant school priority for a place at the linked junior school. This is important as the timescales for infant and junior school admissions are now concurrent due to the requirements of the new Admissions Code.

As a result of this, it is also proposed to remove the two mile limit to the sibling link, for both infant and junior schools. This is because these siblings are likely to be attending the linked infant school at junior level, so would have priority. If it is being removed at this level it would also seem sensible to remove it at reception entry for the sake of consistency.

The final proposal is to remove priority 2. (Compelling medical or other exceptional reasons) as described above and in the separate section below. At junior level, the need for this priority would be greatly reduced by the linked school priority. There is an argument for retaining this priority at reception entry, where children's needs have not always been assessed, and where there is very little opportunity for appeals to be upheld due to class size legislation.

If all these proposals were accepted, the priorities would be as follows:

1. Children in the care of a local authority (looked after children).
2. The sibling link
3. For junior schools only: children attending a linked infant school
4. Other children.

Within all these priorities, the tie break would be home to school distance (measured by the shortest available route) as now.

More detail about the primary and secondary admission arrangements can be found in the two school admission booklets. Schools have copies of the booklets which can also be viewed on the Brighton & Hove City Council web site.

### **Proposal for removal of exceptional circumstances priority**

The School Admissions Code published in February 2008 allows admission authorities to make provision for giving children with an identified social or medical need priority for admission to a preferred school. However this is only allowed if the authority is able to be clear about what is required in order to qualify for this priority, and how this will be assessed objectively.

In recent years, concern has been expressed by parents that there is a lack of transparency in what is required to meet this criterion. Concerns have also been raised that it is very difficult to demonstrate objectivity in the process. There are also concerns within the admissions team that expectations are being created that school places can be made available to those who present their home life or the child's circumstances as sufficiently difficult, and some parents/carers seek to obtain evidence of this (for example Doctors' letters, EP reports). Some children with health or other significant difficulties may have a Statement of Special Educational Needs which specifies which school that they should attend.

The need for the exceptional circumstances priority at secondary level has diminished with the advent of catchment areas, as children are now more likely to be able to access a local school. Additionally it is now more difficult to consider needs relating to friendship groups as with equal preference and dual catchment areas it is no longer possible to predict where these children will be offered places in advance.

For junior schools, the need for this priority should be less as we now have more places and a higher proportion of preferences are met for junior schools than primary or secondary. Should the option to introduce priority for children in the linked infant school be introduced, the need for this priority will reduce still further.

At junior and secondary level, families with exceptional needs can be successful on appeal where the independent panel consider that their circumstances warrant it. This means that in the absence of an exceptional circumstances priority, there is a route through which individual child and family needs can result in the award of a place. However at Key Stage 1 panels are not able to exceed the class size limit of 30 except in very rare circumstances, so that it may be advisable to retain the exceptional needs priority for this age group only to allow for these cases. There are also pupils at this age whose needs have not been previously assessed, and may need special consideration.

### **Relevant Area for Consultation**

The relevant area for school admissions in the city is currently defined as the area within the city boundary. This is the area which the LA uses when consulting on admissions arrangements, and can include other admission authorities and voluntary aided schools outside the city. The area can be larger than LA boundary, or smaller through the operation of a number of different relevant areas within the LA. The use of a relevant area was a requirement of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and this requirement remains in force. It is currently defined as the area within the Brighton & Hove city

boundaries, so all voluntary aided schools within the city are required to consult all schools within the city boundary about their proposed admission arrangements. No change is proposed to the relevant area for 2011/12.

### **Voluntary Aided Schools Consultation**

Voluntary Aided schools are required to consult with all other city schools, with the LA and with parents in the City who have children between the ages of 2 and 16 about their proposed admission arrangements for 2011/12 *unless the arrangements are unchanged from last year*. We will continue to publish proposed arrangements on Education Online, but in order to allow the parental consultation we will also publish on the Council's website. Schools not wishing to use this method of consultation, but still needing to consult, must conduct their own consultation process. In any event they must consult the LA and other City schools before finalising their admission arrangements. Consultation, if taking place, must be completed by 1<sup>st</sup> March 2010, and the Governors must have settled the final version of their admission arrangements by 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

If schools whose admission arrangements have changed do not consult then their admission arrangements will be open to challenge by parents and by appeal panels. I cannot emphasise strongly enough that failure to consult will lead to very difficult consequences for the schools concerned. Church of England and Roman Catholic VA schools are reminded that in law they must consult their diocesan authority with their proposed admission priorities before consulting anyone else.

In order to comply with the new DCSF regulations VA schools must consult for a period of 8 weeks before 1<sup>st</sup> March 2010. This means that those schools wishing to use the LA website and Education Online to meet their consultation requirements must provide an electronic copy (Word format please) by 5<sup>th</sup> January 2010 at the latest. Realistically the Christmas break means that it would be better if the documents were forwarded to the School Admissions Team by the end of the autumn term. Diocesan Authorities have already been in contact with schools about the new consultation requirements. Schools which are not consulting should notify the School Admissions team by the end of the autumn term as well.

VA Schools have already been informed of this process.

### **Published Admission Numbers**

The proposed admission numbers for each school are attached to this bulletin. Schools are asked to comment on whether they agree with the number shown. These numbers are based on the net capacity range of each school, or in some cases a higher figure. As previously, this list includes the expected admission numbers for voluntary aided schools, which act as their own admission authorities and set their own admission number. I should be grateful for a response from all schools as to whether they agree with the number shown on the attached list.

Please note that the published number of 90 for Westdene Primary and Goldstone Primary and of 60 for Queens Park Primary will be subject to the separate consultation process on enlarging those schools which has already started. If the outcome of that process is a decision not to extend the schools premises then the numbers would return to 60 or 45 for Queen's Park.

### **Co-ordinated Admission Schemes for 2011/12**

The coordinated schemes are attached for comment along with the scheme for coordinating in year admissions for 2010/11 which is now a legal requirement.

## **The Admission Timetable for 2011/12**

The dates for applications and allocations for admission for the 2011/12 school year will be:

|                                     |                           |                               |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Infant, Junior and Primary Schools: | Closing date              | 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2011 |
|                                     | Letters to parents/carers | 27 <sup>th</sup> April 2011   |
| Secondary schools:                  | Closing date              | 29 October 2010               |
|                                     | Letters to parents/carers | 1 <sup>st</sup> March 2011    |

These dates are set out in more detail in the co-ordinated schemes.

## **The Consultation Timetable**

**4 January 2010** Voluntary Aided Schools to have provided the LA with their proposed admission arrangements for 2011/12 for publication if they wish to make use of the LA school and public consultation process using Education Online and the Council website.

**1<sup>st</sup> March 2010** Schools and others to have returned any response to the Community School admission arrangements for 2011/12.

**Mid March 2010** Cabinet Member for CYPT to consider admission arrangements for Community schools, taking into account the consultation responses and any advice provided by the Admission Forum. The proposed admission arrangements for Voluntary Aided schools may also be discussed at this meeting and may be commented upon. Schools and other admission authorities will be notified of the Sub-Committee's conclusions within 2 weeks of the meeting.

**15<sup>th</sup> April 2010** Deadline for Voluntary Aided Schools to have finalised their proposed admission arrangements.

## **Documents attached**

1. Reply form (below)
2. Proposed Admission Numbers – Primary
3. Proposed Admission Numbers – Secondary
4. Coordinated scheme – secondary
5. Coordinated scheme – primary
6. Coordinated scheme – in year admissions 2010/11

## **Consultation Responses**

Governing Bodies are asked to respond to this bulletin as soon as possible, using the attached response form. The closing date for responses is 26 February **2010**. Please note that this consultation bulletin and its attachments are being sent to all schools. The neighbouring Local Authorities of East and West Sussex are also being consulted in accordance with the Admissions Code requirements, and views will also be sought from the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Diocesan authorities. VA colleagues are again reminded that they must have determined their proposed admission arrangements by **4<sup>th</sup> January 2010** and sent them to the admissions team by that date for inclusion on the Council website consultation.

**Contact Name:** Steve Healey  
**Telephone:** (01273) 293444  
**Email:** [schooladmissions@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:schooladmissions@brighton-hove.gov.uk)  
**Address:** King's House, Grand Avenue, Hove

**Reply Form – Please return this form to School Admissions, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, King's House, Grand Avenue, Hove, by 26 February 2010.**

**School Admissions Consultation - Admissions for the 2011/12 academic year**

**Name of School:**

**Name of Respondent:**  
(Please print)

**Signature:**

**School Admission Arrangements and Over Subscription Priorities – Community Secondary Schools and Falmer Academy**

Please indicate whether you support/do not support the removal of priority 2 (compelling medical or other exceptional reasons):

Support  Do not support

Please set out below any comments or changes you would propose to the published arrangements.

**School Admission Arrangements and Over Subscription Priorities – Community Infant, Junior and Primary Schools**

Please indicate whether you support/do not support the removal of priority 2 (compelling medical or other exceptional reasons):

Support removal from both  Support removal from junior only   
Do not support

Please indicate whether you support/do not support the removal of 2 mile sibling limit:

Support  Do not support

Please indicate whether you support/do not support the proposal to give priority for admission to junior school for children attending the linked infant school:

Support  Do not support

Please set out any comments or changes you would propose to the published arrangements.

**Published Admission Number**

This school agrees/disagrees\* with the proposed admission number.

Comments on admission number.

**Voluntary Aided Admission Priorities** (for completion by VA schools only)

I confirm that this school will formally consult with maintained schools in the LA area (the Relevant Area), with the LA, parents and carers and with other consultation partners as required in law about the school's proposed admission arrangements for 2011/12 and will/has provide(d) draft admission arrangements for publication in Education Online. (Please tick the box.)

I confirm that this school is not proposing to consult as the admission arrangements are unchanged from last year.

**Coordinated Schemes of Admission**

Please set out any comments or changes you would propose to the coordinated schemes.