



## SCHOOL ADMISSIONS CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

### Admission Arrangements for Brighton & Hove Schools 2011/12

Parents and carers resident in Brighton & Hove with children between the ages of 2 and 16 are invited to give their views on the proposals for admission arrangements to Community Schools and Voluntary Aided Schools in the City. The responses to this consultation will be presented to the Cabinet Member for CYPT at a meeting in March 2010. This is the second year in which the consultation has included parents and carers and takes place under new regulations arising from the Education and Skills Act 2008. **Parents and carers are invited to return their comments on the proposed admission arrangements by 26<sup>th</sup> February 2010.** Responses are welcome by email to [schooladmissions@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:schooladmissions@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or in writing to:

School Admissions Consultation 2011/12  
King's House  
Hove  
BN3 2LS

Admission authorities that do not change their admission priorities and arrangements are only required to consult every three years.

### Final admission arrangements and right of objection

Once the Council and Voluntary Aided schools have determined their admission arrangements following this consultation, the Council will publish a public notice before 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010 confirming those arrangements and setting out where they can be viewed. Once they have been published then parents and carers will have a right of formal objection to the Schools Adjudicator. Details of that objection process will be given in the public notice.

### Secondary Schools

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.

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:

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 Local Authority (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*. These proposed arrangements will be on the Council's website. Consultation, if taking place, must be completed by 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010 and the Governors must have settled the final version of their admission arrangements by 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

### **Published Admission Numbers**

The proposed admission numbers for each school are attached to this document. You are invited to comment on whether you agree with the number shown. These numbers are based on the net capacity range of each school, or in some cases a higher figure. The net capacity is a nationally required means of measuring how many pupils a school can take. 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.

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 2010/11**

The coordinated schemes are attached for comment. They set out the arrangements, including dates, for the coordination of secondary and primary admissions. The purpose of this coordination is to ensure that all parents and carers receive one offer of a school place for their child within published timescales.

### **Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for In Year Admissions (casual admissions) for 2010/11**

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 most significant change here is that only residents of Brighton & Hove will be able to submit an application via Brighton & Hove City Council. If you live in another authority you must apply via their admissions office even if you are applying for Brighton & Hove Schools.

### **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.

**Other Linked Documents available on the Council website**

1. Proposed Admission Numbers – Primary
2. Proposed Admission Numbers – Secondary
3. Coordinated scheme – secondary
4. Coordinated scheme – primary
5. Coordination scheme – In Year
6. Proposed admissions arrangements at Brighton & Hove Voluntary Aided Schools

