

PROCEDURE FOR THE ADMISSION OF PUPILS TO PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SEPTEMBER 2009

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to consult with the Governing Bodies, Admission Forum, other Local Authorities, the Diocese and parents on the proposed admission arrangements for community, voluntary controlled and voluntary aided primary, infant, junior and secondary schools in Stockton on Tees for the school year 2009/10.

The School Admissions Code (the Code) came into force on 28 February 2007, and applies to admissions to all maintained schools and Academies. The Code is made under section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by section 40 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Admission authorities must ensure that their determined admission arrangements for 2008 comply with the mandatory provision of the Code. The Admission arrangements for Stockton on Tees, laid out in this report for 2009/10, are compliant.

Elected Members will consider and determine the LA's admission policy for 2009/10 and the co-ordinated arrangements for all Stockton on Tees schools in the Spring term of 2008. In order that Members can take account of the views and opinions of Governors and others, comments are invited on the issues raised in this paper. Any responses to the consultation will be included in the final report to Cabinet in February/March 2008.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that all Governing bodies express their views on the Admission Arrangements for 2009/10 and feedback comments on:

- (i) policy change for reception to one single intake in the academic year (Item 7);
- (ii) policy change for the way distances are measured, when a school is oversubscribed (Item 8);
- (iii) Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic (RC) and Church of England (CE) draft admission policies for 2009.

Views and comments need to be fed back by the **21 December 2007** please, contact details at the end of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

Admission arrangements for 2009/10

To ensure equity and fair access the new Admissions Code states that in drawing up admission arrangements, admission authorities must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide on the allocation of school places are:

- clear in the sense of being free from doubt and easily understood;
- objective and based on known facts. Admission authorities and governing bodies must not make subjective decisions or use subjective criteria;
- procedurally fair and are also equitable for all groups of children and actively promote equity across all social groups and communities;
- enable parents' preferences for the schools of their choice to be met to the maximum extent possible;
- provide parents or carers with easy access to helpful admissions information
- comply with relevant legislation, including on infant class sizes and on equal opportunities, and have been determined in accordance with the statutory requirements.

4. ADMISSION POLICY FOR SEPTEMBER 2009/10 – Primary, Junior, Infant and Secondary Schools

There are no changes to the admissions policy for 2009/10.

Admission Policy for 2009/10

The proposed Admission Policy will give priority to applications for admission to a school if that school is oversubscribed, in the following order:

1. pupils who are in the care of the Local Authority;
2. pupils who have a statement of special educational need that names the school;
3. Primary pupils who have a brother or sister at the school when the pupil begins, where the parent requested a place at the admission zone school for their older sibling but the LA were not able to offer a place to the older sibling at that school.
(This applies to parents of primary aged children who, in the main round of admissions in respect of the older sibling, put the admission zone school as a 1st preference on the form provided by the LA and returned it on time.)
4. pupils resident within the admission zone who have returned a School Admission Form by the due date and giving the school as their first preference.
5. pupils who have a brother or sister living at the same address and are still at the school when the pupil begins;
6. pupils who have social or medical reasons for being admitted to the school which would, should the child not be admitted, cause him or her to be seriously disadvantaged or put personal safety at risk.
In all cases corroboration will be sought from independent sources such as a medical specialist who has had continuing involvement over a period of time, social worker, or other professional. It should be noted that places would not be allocated on the basis of aptitude or ability.
7. Pupils who live closest to the particular school as decided by the shortest convenient public access route.

5. CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS AND TIMETABLE

The LA is responsible for administering a co-ordinated scheme for its area in relation to all maintained (community, voluntary controlled and voluntary aided) schools. The purpose of co-ordinated admission schemes is to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, every parent of a child living in the LA area who has applied for a school place in the normal admission round receives an offer of one school place on the same day.

The LA plans to roll forward last years co-ordinated scheme for 2009/10 apart from date changes for the timetables. A copy of the scheme will be forwarded to the Secretary of State before the 15th April 2008 and copies can be obtained from the Admissions Section on request or when the 09/10 arrangements are approved, can be viewed on the Stockton on Tees website.

5.1 Timetable for co-ordinated admissions

September/ December 2007	Consultation with governing bodies, Admission Forum, Diocese, parents and other admission authorities in accordance with legislation on admission arrangements for September 2008/09
September 2007	Report to Admission Forum for their views on Admission procedures for 2008/09.
February/March 2008	Consultation reported to Members and policy agreed.
April 2008	LA informs Secretary State of the Stockton-on-Tees preferred

co-ordinated primary admission scheme.

August 2008

Primary and Secondary Booklet published

5.2 Secondary

September 2008

Advertisements in local press of LA's co-ordinated admission arrangements for September 2009/10

Wc 8 September

Common application forms/information packs go out to parents through primary schools

24 October 2008

Closing date for return of common applications forms

14 November 2008

Lists of applications sent to VA schools and other LAs

16 January 2009

LAs and VA schools send each other 1st cycle of allocations

Between 16/1 and 13/2 further exchanges of information will take place as and when necessary.

13 February 2008

Final allocations made to own schools, informing other LAs of offers to be made to their residents.

1 March 2009

Offers made to all parents living in the Borough – sent 2nd class post (letters will be posted on the 27th February due to 1 March not being a working day).

End of April 2009

Appeal hearings arranged.

5.3 Primary

November 2008

Advertisement in local press of LA invitation to parents to apply for places in primary schools within the area for September 2009.

Week commencing
1 December 2008

Packs for admission to Primary School in September 2009/2010 distributed through school nurseries and individually through the post to other parents whose children do not attend a school nursery in Stockton on Tees

23 January 2009

Closing date for return of common application forms.

Week ending
6 February 2009

Lists of applications sent to VA schools and liaise with other LAs as necessary. All VA schools make arrangements to gather information required from parents and set up admission committees for allocation places.

6 March 2009

RC VA schools inform LA of allocation of places for all applications received in the priority order of their admission policy. Any applications which are refused also need to be listed in order of priority.

Between 6/3 and 20/3 further exchanges of information will take place as and when necessary.

20 March 2009

Final allocations made to own schools,

27 March 2009

Further liaison with RC VA schools regarding allocations if necessary

11 April 2009

Allocation letters sent out to all parents offering places and refusals giving reasons and right of appeal, by second class post.

End of May 2009

Appeal hearings arranged

6. Admission Numbers

Appendix 1 shows published admission numbers for Community and Voluntary Aided Primary and Secondary Schools for September 2009.

7. Change of policy to a single reception intake

7.1 In the summer of 2006 a consultation took place with regard to changing the LA policy to a single intake into reception, the result of which was inconclusive. However, some schools have continued to request that the policy is changed. There are six VA schools already managing one reception intake, and schools feel that this makes an imbalance within the community as it does not provide equal opportunity for all children, when parents/carers are considering which primary school to send their child to.

7.2 The majority of the Local Authorities within the Tees Valley, as well as Durham and North Yorkshire, operate a system of one intake – North Yorkshire and Middlesbrough give individual schools a choice – with Hartlepool currently consulting on a change to one intake. They say that responses received are looking very positive to go with the change.

7.3 There are changes in legislation extending the hours of free nursery education over the next few years, which will ultimately be 20 hours per week. Parents/carers will also be able to take these hours at times that suit them, spread over at least three days. If younger four year olds are able to move from part-time nursery (with flexible hours) to full-time school (with fixed hours) the burden of this change will be reduced for one term every year.

7.4 The law requires that children start full-time school no later than the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Local policy in Stockton on Tees allows them to start before they reach five, at ages ranging from 4 years 4 months to 4 years 11 months. Parents may choose to defer a child's admission until the statutory school age if they feel that their child is not ready for full time school.

7.5 Research has shown that the older children have an advantage that persists for some years. It has been impossible to demonstrate whether this can be attributed to the extra term in reception or just to the age difference itself, but it could be that younger children are being put at a disadvantage by our admission policy.

7.6 To make such a major change of policy would need a high level of support in particular from all primary schools in order for the LA to offer consistency to all parents.

8. Change of policy to measure distances when a school is oversubscribed

8.1 The LA propose to change the policy on the way distances are measured when a school is oversubscribed to 'as the crow flies', this will give more clarity to parents. The distances will be measured from a point at the front gate of the property to the front gate of the school by a straight line using an electronic system of measuring.

The current policy on measuring distances when a school is oversubscribed, is by the shortest public-access route and an electronic system is used. There are a number of disadvantages in using this option e.g. keeping information up to date, users of the electronic system need to have local knowledge to ensure shortest route is taken, different users could interpret the measurement in an alternative way, even the point where a road is crossed could give a different measurement. The LA has been challenged on a number of occasions with regard to measurements at appeal and occasionally the appeal panel has supported the parents case.

It is important, especially with admissions to primary schools, that allocations are completed consistently due to having to comply with Infant Class Size. The result of challenges within the primary sector could mean classes over 30 which could have serious resource implications for the school if there is no reduction in the number of pupils by the beginning of the next academic year.

The new policy would be implemented for admissions from September 2009, any through year transfers would still operate the admission arrangements for the relevant year of admission and so the current system of measurement would still be used for those applications. It will be 2013 before the system will be fully operational in all year groups.

In order to be consistent, VA admission authorities may want to consider changing to a similar system for measuring distances should their school be oversubscribed.

9. Voluntary Aided (VA) RC and CE Draft Admission Policies for 2009

Draft admission policies for 2009 in relation to the following admission authorities within the Stockton on Tees Borough are available on the Stockton on Tees website www.stockton.gov.uk/schooladmissions or copies can be obtained from individual schools. Any comments on these policies should be sent to the Chair of Governors at the relevant school.

Primary Schools

Christ the King RC Primary School
Holy Trinity Rosehill CE Primary School
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary RC Primary School
St. Bede's RC Primary School
St. Cuthbert's RC Primary School
St. Francis of Assisi CE Primary School
St. Gregory's Catholic Primary School
St. John the Evangelist RC Primary
St. Joseph's RC Primary School (Billingham)
St. Joseph's RC Primary School (Norton)
St. Mark's Elm Tree CE Primary
St. Mary's CE Primary
St. Patrick's RC Primary (Fairfield)
St. Patrick's RC Primary (Thornaby)
St. Paul's RC Primary
St. Therese of Lisieux RC Primary
William Cassidi CE Primary

Secondary Schools

All Saints CE Secondary School
Ian Ramsey CE Secondary School
Our Lady & St. Bede RC Secondary School
St. Michael's RC Secondary School
St. Patrick's RC Secondary School

10. Conclusion

The new Admissions Code underpins the Government's aim to create a schools system shaped by parents which delivers excellence and equity, developing the talents and potential of every child, regardless of their background; a system where all parents feel they have the same opportunities to apply for the school they want.

The Code states: 'A fair system needs to provide parents with access to good information about admissions in order to support those parents who find it hardest to understand the system.'

Within Stockton on Tees we aim to ensure that the admission arrangements are in line with the principle of fair access to educational opportunity. The proposed changes to the LA's current policies should support this.

All comments about this report (apart from the VA policies) should be sent to Betty Johns, Assistant Education Officer, Pupils & Students, Municipal Buildings, PO Box 228, Church Road, Stockton on Tees TS18 1XE either by post or by email at the address below.

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