

Admissions to Schools (Criteria and Procedures)

Appendix 3

Background information to the determination of admission arrangements

This Appendix repeats information originally presented to Cabinet on 18th December 2008. It gives the background, significant changes made on 18th December 2008 to the previous arrangements and revenue implications of the 'rising 5' policy.

Background

Under the Co-ordination of Arrangements Scheme, the authority must be responsible for sending parents a single letter offering their child a school place. This requirement extends to all voluntary aided schools, where the offer is made on behalf of the governing body. A Secondary Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme enables parents to complete their 'home' authority's application form and to receive a single letter offering one school place. The Primary Scheme is similar, but parents may fill in a second application form from another authority if they wish to apply for a school in the area of a neighbouring authority.

The provisions of Section 102 of the School Standards and Framework Act enabled maintained schools to consult upon the selection of up to 10 per cent of pupils for admission to their school, by reference to their aptitude in a prescribed specialist subject or subjects. The Windsor Boys' School (performing arts) and Charters School (sports) currently have criteria for selection by aptitude.

Changes approved on 18th December 2008 to existing arrangements

For all schools:

- It was proposed to remove the rule allowing parents to adduce social or medical reasons for a place at a particular school. This was for two reasons: first, operation of this rule inevitably leads to subjectivity in its interpretation; second, pupils with the greatest such needs are likely either to be Looked After or be the subject of statements of special educational need, either of which confers a priority in admission.

For primary and first schools:

- The Consultation formally sought comments on new arrangements for first admission to school. Members agreed in May 2008 that this statutory consultation should include consultation on the principle that children should be first admitted full-time to mainstream school twice a year, on 1st September (those becoming five years of age during the autumn terms) and 1st January (those becoming five in the spring or summer terms).
- Depending on the outcome of the relevant decision making process, South Ascot Village Primary Schools and South Ascot Village Nursery School were to be amalgamated with effect from 1st September 2009.

For secondary, middle and upper schools:

- Had members preferred to retain the medical or social rule, then it was proposed that it should be moved after, rather than before, the sibling rule, to bring it into line with the primary school arrangements.
- It was also proposed that when there are more children living in the designated area for a school than there are places remaining, the tiebreaker should be changed so that it matches the primary school arrangements. This would mean that in this situation places would first be allocated to those children with older siblings attending the school. Proximity to school – which is the only tiebreaker for secondary schools at present – would be used as a tiebreaker (a) if there are more children with older siblings than places available; or (b) where there are still places (but not enough) once all the designated area siblings have been admitted. The proximity measure alone is then used as a tiebreaker on all subsequent rules.
- Charters School had gained Trust status as of 1st September 2008, and its governing body is now responsible for its own admission arrangements for entry in 2010 and beyond. The school must, however, abide by the published admissions arrangements for September 2009 (agreed by the Royal Borough in March 2008).
- Consultation was then in progress (1st December 2008 to 16th January 2009) on changing the designated areas for Maidenhead's secondary schools. Its outcome was to be reported to Cabinet in March 2009 as part of the Determination of School Admission Arrangements.

Most of the above points relating to secondary, middle and upper schools were first raised in the report to Cabinet on the 23rd October 2008 entitled 'Secondary School Designated Areas'
