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Analysis of the Admission Consultation

Appendix 3

**PROPOSED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
FOR THE 2018/19 ACADEMIC YEAR**
CONSULTATION OUTCOMES REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning with the outcomes from the formal consultation on the proposed changes to the Admissions Arrangements for 2018/19 and the Fair Access Protocols.

2. Background

2.1. The Council is the Admission Authority for Community schools and is therefore responsible for consulting on, determining and applying the admission arrangements for community schools

2.2. The Council retains the co-ordinating role for reception, junior and secondary transfer. This means that all offers are made by the Council and that every child should receive just one offer. Admission Authorities, including Local Authorities are responsible for ensuring that admission arrangements are compliant with the School Admissions Code 2014.

2.3. This includes consulting on any proposed changes to admission arrangements annually or at least every 7 years where there have been no changes. In addition, Admission Authorities are required to determine their admission arrangements on an annual basis

3. Proposed changes to admission arrangements

3.1. The definition of the Sibling criterion

The Wording has been clarified to confirm the point of eligibility for sibling priority

3.2. The definition of the distance criterion

This change is proposed to provide a clearer explanation of how home to school distance measurements are calculated by the Council.

3.3. How children are added to waiting lists

This change is proposed to reduce the number of children who are unnecessarily added to waiting lists and to ensure that places are allocated swiftly to children who require a place.

3.4. The definition of the medical criterion

This definition places greater emphasis on the responsibility of the parent to submit medical evidence before the primary closing date, provides clarity on how late medical submissions will be considered and clarifies the circumstances in which a late medical claim can be made.

3.5. How first preference offers are recorded

The proposed change would mean that if a parent has been offered their first preference school, the place would be automatically recorded as accepted.

3.6. Applicants requesting to be added to the waiting list for lower preference schools

Applicants who receive an offer at a first preference school are not permitted to be placed onto a waiting list for a lower preference school unless there has been a change in circumstances which would need to be supported with relevant evidence. However applicants could request to be added to a waiting list through the in-year admission process

3.7. The linked infant to junior criterion

The table of schools has been reviewed to include all infant and junior schools and wording has been provided to make it clear which schools are community schools and which are non-community.

4. **Proposed changes to Fair Access Protocols**

4.1. Clarification to the procedure setting out when a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan will be considered by the Fair Access Panel (FAP).

The proposal clarifies in what circumstances a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan will be considered under the Fair Access Panel. The proposal will ensure the appropriate emergency annual review of the plan has taken place before a referral to the Fair Access Panel is made.

- 4.2. Strengthening of the procedures at the pre Fair Access Panel meeting.

The proposal seeks to ensure the right level of support has been put in place before a change of school has been considered.

- 4.3. The number of other vulnerable and challenging pupils recently admitted to schools will be taken in to account when placement decisions are made

The proposal will ensure that schools are not asked to take a disproportionate number of challenging or vulnerable pupils via the Fair Access Panel in any one year group

The full consultation document can be accessed via the following web link: www.croydon.gov.uk/admissionsandfairaccessconsultation

5. Statutory Consultation

- 5.1. Consultation took place between 10 November 2016 and 16 January 2017. Any responses received between 13 and 16 January will be considered and appended to this report. Stakeholders were asked their views specifically on the proposed changes to the Admission Arrangements and also for any other comments they might have.

- 5.2. The consultation document set out in appendix 3 was provided online and as a paper document to support stakeholders to respond to the consultation

6. Communication and Consultation activities

- 6.1. A consultation document, including a questionnaire was used as a basis of informing stakeholders, including parents/cares and local residents, about the proposed changes to the Admissions Arrangements, Co-ordinated Schemes and Fair Access Protocols.
- 6.2. Communication activities included the circulation of the consultation document, including questionnaire and poster via email to Schools early years providers, childminders, neighbouring admission local authorities, councillors and local MP's.

- **Schools E-Bulletin**
 - ✓ Schools' E-bulletin to all schools within the borough
- **Email:**
 - ✓ Ward Councillors / MP
 - ✓ schools within neighbouring/adjourning borough
 - ✓ Early Years Providers
 - ✓ Childminders

- **Website:**
 - ✓ Online questionnaire (Get Involved)

7. Summary of responses

7.1. Consultation questionnaire

A total of 14 completed questionnaires have been received, of which the majority of respondents are in support of the proposed changes. A detailed breakdown of the responses is attached in Annex A.

Summary of responses for each proposed change:

- Proposal 1 - definition of the Sibling criterion
 - 11 - Support
 - 3 – Do not support
- Proposal 2 - definition of the distance criterion
 - 10 – Support
 - 1 – Not affected/Does not wish to answer
 - 3 – No response
- Proposal 3 - How children are added to waiting lists
 - 3 - Support
 - 5 - Against
 - 1 – Not affected/Does not wish to answer
 - 5 – No response
- Proposal 4 - The definition of the medical criterion
 - 7 - Support
 - 1 - Against
 - 1 – Not sure
 - 5 – No response
- Proposal 5 - How first preference offers are recorded.
 - 9 - Support
 - 5 – No response

- Proposal 6 - Applicants requesting to be added to the waiting list for lower preference schools.
 - 7 – Support
 - 1 – Not affected/Does not wish to answer
 - 6 – No response

- Proposal 7 - The linked infant to junior criterion.
 - 6 – Support
 - 2 – Not affected/Does not wish to answer
 - 6 – No response

- Proposal 8 - Clarification to the procedure setting out when a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan will be considered by the Fair Access Panel (FAP).
 - 6 – Support
 - 2 – Not affected/Does not wish to answer
 - 6 – No response

- Proposal 9 - Strengthening of the procedures at the pre Fair Access Panel meeting.
 - 6 – Support
 - 2 – Not affected/Does not wish to answer
 - 6 – No response

- Proposal 10 – The number of other vulnerable and challenging pupils recently admitted to schools will be taken in to account when placement decisions are made.
 - 7 – Support
 - 7 – No response

- Proposal 11 – Clarification of the categories of vulnerable pupils considered at the panel to ensure they are compliant with the School Admissions Code.
 - 6 – Support
 - 1 – Not affected/Does not wish to answer
 - 7 – No response

8. Key issues raised during the consultation period

- 8.1. The main comments/concerns on the proposed changes and the Council's response.

Concern

- Sibling criterion – sibling being number one in listing of priority order.

Response to concern

- The LA is not proposing to make any changes to sibling priority which comes second in the oversubscription criteria.
It is a requirement of the School Admission Code for looked after children to be accorded the highest priority.

Concern

- How children are added to the waiting list – this should be automatic and applicants should not have to complete an additional form to be added to the waiting list.

Response to concern

- There is an urgent need for the LA to ensure that all children on a waiting list actively require a place. A lot of time and resources are spent chasing parents who do not respond to offers made when the place could have been allocated to a child who is actively seeking a transfer or an alternative school offer.
- This not only makes the process of filling vacancies from waiting lists unnecessarily lengthy but it also impacts on the LA's ability to understand the demand in real terms.
- The current process also encourages moves between schools once a child is settled and happy in school, which may not be in their best interest.

Concern

- Medical criterion – policy unclear.

Response to concern

- It is the LA's intention to make its policies clearer through the proposed changes in this consultation and to ensure that no parent/carer misses out on the opportunity to be considered for a place under the medical criterion.

A detailed analysis of responses is attached at Annex A below.

9. Key points made in support of the proposed changes

- 9.1. Some respondents made comments in support of the proposed changes in relation to the distance criterion '***this is a fair system I also feel a check on the council tax system to ensure that is that person address***', how children are added to waiting lists '***As long as it is clear and easy this is good and fair***', how first preference are recorded '***I support this change it would save me the hassle of going online to accept the place***', the primary and secondary fair access protocols '***clear guidance***'.

10. Equality Impact Assessment

10.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the Cabinet report to assess the potential impact of the proposed changes on the nine protected characteristics covered under the Equality Act 2010.

11. Next Steps

11.1. Following the consultation period, the Council's Cabinet Committee will decide whether the proposed changes should be implemented. This will be based on responses received which will be balanced against the requirement for changes

Annex A

Admission Arrangements - Consultation Outcomes report – Qualitative responses

Proposed Change	Comments from Respondents	Council Response
<p>1: The definition of the Sibling criterion.</p> <p>Wording has been clarified to confirm the point of eligibility for sibling priority.</p> <p>This change is proposed to help parents and carers have a clearer understanding of when children with siblings are eligible for priority under the sibling criterion.</p>	<p>Siblings should be number 1 on the list, how you can expect a parent to be in 2 different schools and ensure neither child has poor attendance/time keeping as a result of this, this is quite ridiculous. Siblings number 1, looked after children 2nd and so on. My 2nd child will be due to start school in the 2018/2019 year, if they do not manage to secure a place at the same school as their sibling I will not physically be able to get to 2 different schools at the same time. One will have to arrive late for school and leave school early every day by a substantial amount of time as I do not drive, their education would be directly affected through no fault of my own however I would be held accountable.</p>	<p>The LA is not proposing to make any changes to sibling priority which comes second in the oversubscription criteria. It is a requirement of the School Admission Code for looked after children to be accorded the highest priority.</p>

Proposed Change	Comments from Respondents	Council Response
	I feel that to reduce stress, families already in placement should be offered first, including step/half	Stepchildren and half siblings who are part of the same family unit are eligible for priority under the sibling criterion.
<p>2. The definition of the distance criterion.</p> <p>This change is proposed to provide a clearer explanation of how home to school distance measurements are calculated by the Council.</p> <p>The distance measurements from home to school are calculated by using a computerised measuring system called Geographical Information System (GIS) and geographical reference points as provided by the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG). The geographical reference points determine the start point within the property boundaries to be used for distance calculation purposes.</p>	No this is a fair system I also feel a check on the council tax system to ensure that is that person address.	The LA checks applicants' addresses against council tax and electoral register records using a specialist address verification software known as Datatank.

Proposed Change	Comments from Respondents	Council Response
<p>3. How children are added to waiting lists.</p> <p>This change is proposed to reduce the number of children who are unnecessarily added to waiting lists and to ensure that places are allocated swiftly to children who require a place. Children who receive an offer at a lower preference school would no longer be automatically placed on the waiting list for higher preference schools. Parents/carers would complete the waiting list request form (<i>Annex C</i>) available on the LA website to be added to waiting lists.</p>	<p>This should be automatic or dealt with at time of accepting/rejecting the school place offered. Add a question to the acceptance/rejection of the school that parents have to complete. If they don't get their 1st preference a question of 'do you wish to be added to the school waiting list' should not be hard to add. If for any reason my 2nd child does not get my 1st preference that year to attend their siblings' school I would not expect to then have to complete an extra form that could be added to the acceptance page online as I would already be required to complete an appeal form to state the obvious.</p>	<p>In view of the high demand for school places as well as shrinking resources available to the LA, there is an urgent need to ensure that all children on a waiting list actively require a place. A large volume of offers are made to children from waiting lists where no responses are received. Parents/carers are then chased via email, telephone or letter and in a lot of cases, the place offered is no longer required. The vacancy could have been offered to a child who is actively seeking a transfer or an alternative school offer. This not only makes the process of filling vacancies from waiting lists unnecessarily lengthy but it also impacts on the LA's ability to understand the demand in real terms.</p>
	<p>We believe it is a parent's right to be offered their highest preference school should a vacancy become available at any time during the period preceding their child's entry into school. Historically, we have found that a number of parents in our catchment have accepted a place but later rejected it because they have</p>	<p>The LA is not proposing to remove the parent's right to remain on the waiting list for their highest preference school. The LA is proposing to introduce a waiting list request form for parents to complete in order to ensure that parents of children on its waiting lists are genuinely</p>

Proposed Change	Comments from Respondents	Council Response
	<p>been offered a place at an independent school. We would not be able to fill these places if there was not a waiting list, which in turn would place a significant strain on our budget.</p> <p>Continue to keep a waiting list for parents who have not been offered a place in their 1st preference school.</p>	<p>interested in a place at a higher preference school.</p>

<p>4. The definition of the medical criterion.</p> <p>This definition places greater emphasis on the responsibility of the parent to submit medical evidence before the primary closing date if they wish to be considered under the medical criterion. The proposed change also provides clarity on how late medical submissions will be considered.</p> <p>This will ensure the outcome of the medical claim is determined before places are allocated and that children who are eligible for a place under the medical criterion are not disadvantaged.</p> <p>The proposed change further clarifies the circumstances in which a late medical claim can be made. Claims for priority of admission on medical grounds submitted after a decision on the original application has been made would only be considered if the documents provided were not readily</p>	<p>I have 2 boys one in year 5 and other year 4. Both have complex situation including dyslexia, ADHD, odd and dyspraxia. I am not able to get them stated but hope with the medical reports they would be given a higher priority due to the needs, certain schools may suit better.</p> <p>I wish you would have told me this last year, when I applied for my other child. Your policies are unclear!!</p> <p>Make your policies clearer!</p>	<p>It is the LA's intention to make its policies clearer through the proposed changes in this consultation and to ensure that no parent/carer misses out on the opportunity to be considered for a place under the medical criterion.</p>
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Proposed Change	Comments from Respondents	Council Response
available at the time of application or if they relate to a new medical condition.		
5. How first preference offers are recorded.	Clear and fair.	This response is noted.

Proposed Change	Comments from Respondents	Council Response
<p>The proposed change would mean that if a parent has been offered their first preference school, the place would be automatically recorded as accepted.</p> <p>The proposed change is designed to make the application system easier for parents who would only need to notify the admissions team if they wanted to decline a first preference offer.</p>	<p>I support this change it would save me the hassle of going online to accept the place.</p>	<p>This response is noted.</p>
<p>6. Applicants requesting to be added to the waiting list for lower preference schools.</p> <p>Applicants who receive an offer at a first preference school are not permitted to be placed onto a waiting list for a lower preference school unless there has been a change in circumstances which would need to be supported with relevant evidence.</p>	<p>Fair and concise.</p>	<p>This response is noted.</p>

Proposed Change	Comments from Respondents	Council Response
<p>However applicants could request to be added to a waiting list through the in-year admission process.</p> <p>The proposed change would allow greater focus on the processing of applications for children who were not successful at securing a preference school.</p>		<p>This response is noted.</p>
<p>7. The linked infant to junior criterion</p> <p>The table of schools has been reviewed to include all infant and junior schools and wording has been provided to make it clear which schools are community schools and which are non-community.</p> <p>This variation has been made to provide parents and carers with a full list of infant and junior schools and wording has been provided to</p>		<p>This response is noted</p>

Proposed Change	Comments from Respondents	Council Response
<p>make clear which schools are non-community schools.</p>		
<p>8. Clarification to the procedure setting out when a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan will be considered by the Fair Access Panel (FAP).</p> <p>The proposal will clarify in what circumstances a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan will be considered under the Fair Access Panel. The proposal will ensure the appropriate emergency annual review of the plan has taken place before a referral to the Fair Access Panel is made.</p>	<p>As long as the school gives a fair overall submission including what the child is like on a tough day.</p>	<p>This response is noted.</p>
<p>9. Strengthening of the procedures at the pre Fair Access Panel meeting.</p>	<p>These children need much more support, change will affect the whole family. Key worker for year 6 into year 7 would help</p>	<p>This response is noted.</p>

Proposed Change	Comments from Respondents	Council Response
<p>The proposal seeks to ensure the right level of support has been put in place before a change of school has been considered. This would be achieved by additional questions being asked at the panel.</p>	<p>support. This will affect us in a large way just the change any extra support to help this would be good.</p>	
<p>10. The number of other vulnerable and challenging pupils recently admitted to schools will be taken in to account when placement decisions are made.</p> <p>The proposal will ensure that schools are not asked to take a disproportionate number of challenging or vulnerable pupils via the Fair Access Panel in any one year group.</p>	<p>This is a very good thing. Children with complex needs attend to find the same type children, too many in a year leads to bad choices.</p> <p>I have already stated the direct impact to me and my children in my previous answers, as a parent with a sibling due to start school in 2018 it would be impossible for me to arrive for drop off and collection at 2 different schools at the same time. I do not drive but even if I did one child would always be late for school and early collection would be a necessity, this would impact there records and education directly. I would be held accountable for the poor timekeeping of</p>	<p>This response is noted.</p>

Proposed Change	Comments from Respondents	Council Response
	<p>my child despite being put through no fault of my own into an impossible position. I do not believe anything should be a higher priority than siblings in this age group as prior to high school age they are incapable of traveling to and from school unaccompanied.</p>	
<p>11. Clarification of the categories of vulnerable pupils considered at the panel to ensure they are compliant with the School Admissions Code. The proposal outlines the category of vulnerability of pupils to be considered under the Fair Access Panel so that parents are informed of the criteria by which their child could be considered by the panel.</p>	<p>Clear guidance.</p>	<p>This response is noted.</p>

