

PROPOSED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS FOR THE 2020/21 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 and the Pan-London primary and secondary coordinated admissions schemes for 2020/21.

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 processing of overseas applications for admission to school within the normal admission rounds

We are proposing to accept applications from overseas for processing when this local authority is satisfied there is evidence of a link to an address in its area and that the child will be resident at that address on or before the date of admission (i.e. start of September).

4. Proposed changes to the Pan-London coordinated admissions schemes

- 4.1. Children who are holding an offer at a lower preference school and who are placed on the waiting list for higher preference schools

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. The proposed change emphasizes

parents/carers' responsibility to notify the local authority if they no longer wish for their child to remain on the waiting list for a higher preference school.

4.2. Acceptance of first preference offers

The proposed change would mean that if a parent/carer has been offered their first preference school, the place would no longer be automatically recorded as accepted.

5. **Statutory Consultation**

5.1. Consultation took place between 18 October 2018 and 6 December 2018. Stakeholders were asked their views specifically on the proposed changes to the Admission Arrangements and to the Pan-London primary and secondary coordinated admissions schemes and also for any other comments they might have.

5.2. A consultation document 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/carers and local residents, about the proposed changes to the Admissions Arrangements and Coordinated Schemes.

6.2. Communication activities included the circulation of the consultation document, including questionnaire via email to Schools, neighbouring admission local authorities, councillors and local MPs.

Schools E-Bulletin

- ✓ Schools' e-bulletin to all schools within the borough

Email:

- ✓ Ward Councillors / MPs
- ✓ schools within neighbouring/adjourning boroughs
- ✓ local residents
- ✓ parents/carers

Website:

- ✓ Online questionnaire (Get Involved)

7. **Summary of responses**

7.1. Consultation questionnaire

A total of 96 completed questionnaires have been received. A detailed breakdown of the responses is attached in Annex A.

Summary of responses for each proposed change:

- Proposal 1 – the processing of overseas applications.
65 of the 96 respondents answered this question.
 - 19 – Support
 - 30 – Do not support
 - 12 – Not sure
 - 4 – Did not wish to answer/are not affected

- Proposal 2 – children on the waiting list for higher preference schools.
69 of the 96 respondents answered this question.
 - 47 – Support
 - 7 – Do not support
 - 15 – Not sure

- Proposal 3 – acceptance of first preference offers.
All 96 respondents answered this question.
 - 66 - Support
 - 11 – Do not support
 - 17 – Not sure
 - 2 – Did not wish to answer/are not affected

8. Key issues raised during the consultation period

Proposed Change	Comments from Respondents	Council Response
<p>1: The processing of overseas applications for admission to school within the normal admission rounds</p> <p>This change has been proposed in order to achieve commonality with all coordinating boroughs.</p>	<p>“Overseas applications should not be accepted until AFTER all pupils in Croydon have been suitably placed and all appeals dealt with. Priority should always be given to those already resident in the Borough.”</p> <p>“Could make school choice even more fraught...they may not return or come to the UK anyway.”</p> <p>“Schools are already oversubscribed and I feel that we are unable to accommodate those from overseas.”</p> <p>“Open to abuse. You have to surely be resident in the country to apply for your school place.”</p>	<p>Overseas applications will be processed from the overseas address until such time as satisfactory evidence is received that a child is residing in the UK/Croydon area. Such evidence might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a tenancy agreement showing the date of commencement of tenancy in Croydon • Booked travel tickets • End of lease/notice to tenants in property • Start of employment contract in London/South East area. <p>As places are allocated strictly in accordance with schools’ oversubscription criteria, there is no risk for a child to be</p>

	<p>“I would want to know what would seem as a link to an address. As people abuse the system and local children could miss out.”</p> <p>“[it’s] so easy to fake details.”</p> <p>“surely until that person is actually residing here then my daughter lives closer and should be offered the place.”</p> <p>“I think that the resource(s) utilised to confirm potential residency may outweigh the resources required to efficiently support UK residents who require a confirmed place for their children by September.”</p> <p>“How will you prove this? It seems a bit tenuous.”</p> <p>“Preference should be given on a geographical radius from the school and allocated a percentage of acceptable applicants who match certain criteria such as returning from an overseas placement; are part of the indigenous population with a known history of association; a work placement.”</p>	<p>disadvantaged over a child who is currently residing in the UK.</p> <p>Any school offer made will be withdrawn in the absence of insufficient evidence of a child’s residency in Croydon being received or should the child fail to start school on the agreed date.</p> <p>If a fraudulent address or address of convenience is found to have been used after the allocation of places, any offer made will be withdrawn and this may be the case even if the child has started the school.</p> <p>Croydon’s admission arrangements for community schools do not allow for a percentage of places to be reserved for overseas applicants. Distance will remain fourth in the order of priority after the admission of looked after children, siblings and children with an upheld medical condition.</p>
	<p>Potential impact on schools/education:</p> <p>“Many class rooms are oversubscribed reducing the amount of time provided to the students. I am concerned...that the classrooms will be filled up with students from abroad... Especially as Croydon council has a large population of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.”</p> <p>“Permitting overseas applications will lead to late declines, prolonged admission procedures and deferrals...For every school place not filled at October Census, we lose a</p>	<p>No school place will be allocated unless this LA has received sufficient evidence to show that a child will be in Croydon to take up the offer of school on the date of admission in September. In the event that a child cannot start on the agreed date in September, the place will be withdrawn with immediate effect and offered to the next child on the waiting list.</p> <p>Since this policy applies to the main rounds of admission only and not in-year admissions, there will be no impact on the October census. All overseas applicants offered a place at Croydon schools will be expected to start</p>

	<p>minimum of £3156 in funding...The pressure is then on the admissions team and school to fill all places by October Census.”</p> <p>“We have a large number of children who have moved to the UK with their families... [we] receive communication that the child will not be present for the beginning of term / their planned start date due to delayed paperwork. The children miss induction and Home Visit appointments... We have had cases where parents exercised their right to defer due to their documents not coming through in time; they eventually declined and we lost funding for that place”.</p> <p>“The amount of travelling on buses and trams has a negative impact on attendance. It also affects local residents trying to use local transport.”</p>	<p>at the beginning of the academic year in September.</p>
<p>2. Children who are holding an offer at a lower preference school and who are placed on the waiting list for higher preference schools</p>	<p>“I received 4th preference school. I would not be happy to have this offer withdrawn on the assumption that I would take up the higher preference offer.”</p> <p>“Parents are in an awkward situation if they are compelled to accept a place at a school that was not their first choice. It is the nature of the system that they would hope that a place would become available at their first-choice school later on in the process... Why not allow less choices - 3 schools instead of 6 perhaps, so that parents would be happy for their child to go to any of the 3 schools?”</p>	<p>The local authority is only proposing that parents/carers who are happy with their lower preference offer notify us if they wish their child to be removed from the waiting list for any higher preference school. This will eliminate the risk of the lower preference school offer being withdrawn if a higher preference school offer can be made. This will also ensure that schools’ waiting lists are made up of genuine applicants, will cut down on the time spent chasing parents’ responses to subsequent offers and eliminate the risk of parents holding multiple offers.</p> <p>Parents are under no obligation to accept a place at a school they do not want their child to attend. Although this LA recommends that parents express a preference for as many schools as possible and</p>

		use up their entitlement of up to 6 preferences, parents should not name schools on their application that they do not want. Restricting the number of preferences to 3 would still not guarantee that a school place will be offered at one of the 3 preferences.
<p>3. Acceptance of first preference offers as part of the coordinated admission arrangements</p> <p>Some parents/carers fail to notify the LA of their refusal of their school place and it is often the case that schools and the LA do not find out that places have been declined until the start of the new academic year when children do not turn up at the school.</p>	<p>“If they stated this as a first preference when applying, then if they get the place it shouldn't be necessary to reconfirm.”</p> <p>“This would contribute more anxiety to parents in an already over-complicated and unfair system.”</p> <p>“This proposal assumes that all parents/guardians are digitally literate; fully aware of the deadline dates; in sufficient physical, mental and emotional health to respond accurately and in a timely manner and that the system is robust enough to record the data.”</p> <p>“It is too easy to log in and miss the accept and confirm buttons and people may believe they have accepted their place, then find they haven't.”</p>	<p>The local authority cannot assume that because a first preference offer has been made that it will be automatically accepted. The current position is that parents who receive an offer at a 2nd to 6th preference school must accept or decline the offer online. The LA proposes that this applies to parents holding first preference offers too, as this used to be the case. Any declined places can then be reallocated at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Evidence has shown that not all parents notify the LA when they wish to decline their first preference offer which results in an unnecessary delay filling any vacancies.</p>
Other comments	“The consultation does not include any proposals regarding extending the priority given to children previously in care in England to children previously in care outside of England as recommended by the guidance issued by the Department of Education (August 2018) and Nick Gibb Minister of State for School Standards (Dec 2017).”	This local authority is not planning to introduce a priority criterion with regards to children previously in care outside of England until this passes as law and becomes a DFE statutory requirement.

9. Key points made in support of the proposed changes

Some respondents made comments in support of all the proposed changes:

- *“Anything to help the admissions process become better is a good thing. Admissions in Croydon do an amazing job considering the volume that they have to process.”*

In relation to the processing of overseas applications:

- *“[it] would help people who are intending to move to the UK, especially when for instance one of the parents have lived here already’.*
- *“As long as the evidence part is done rigorously, then I see no issue with overseas entries”*

In relation to children holding lower preference offers and who are placed on the waiting list for higher preference schools:

- *“This is a simple request that will help improve the system.”*
- *“Yes speeds up process. Parents can always remain on list and change their mind at a later date.”*
- *“It should free up more places quicker.”*
- *“This proposal allows the admissions departments allocate places more efficiently and fairly to those who need them in a timely manner.”*

In relation to the acceptance of first preference offers:

- *‘Now notification of places comes via email this new action should be easy to implement’.*
- *“[parents/carers] may change their mind after filling the form and should be allowed that flexibility.”*
- *“A quicker admissions process would benefit parents greatly.”*
- *“It just means one place to go and check about admissions without the need of calling schools or the local borough directly.”*

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, this outcomes report will be presented to the Council's Cabinet Committee on 21 January 2019 for a decision on the proposed changes and determination of the admission arrangements for the 2020/21 academic year for community schools. The admission arrangements will then be presented to full Council on 28 January 2019 for ratification. Subject to approval, the determined admission arrangements for community schools will be published on the Council's website

Annexe A

A total number of 96 responses were received via completed questionnaires during the consultation period.

*As respondents were asked to tick all that apply when informing the council of who they are, some respondents have selected multiple options.

Proposal 1 – Please tell us whether you support/do not support the proposal to this local authority allowing applications from overseas when evidence that a child will be residing at an address in Croydon before the date of admission is received and confirmed.

Response	Number	%
I support the proposed change	19	29%
I do not support the proposed change	30	46%
Not sure	12	19%
I am not affected by/do not want to answer	4	6%
Total	65	100%

Of the 19* who support the proposed change: 6 are parents/carers of a child/children at a primary school, 5 are local residents, 4 are parents/carers of a child/children at a secondary school, 2 are members of staff at a secondary school and 1 is a member of staff at a primary school. 7 did not specify.

Of the 30* who do not support the proposed change: 14 are local residents, 7 are parents/carers of a child/children at a primary school, 4 are parents/carers of a child/children at a secondary school, 2 are members of staff at a secondary school, 1 is a member of staff at a primary school, 1 is a School Governor at a primary school, 1 is a parent to a toddler, 1 is a Grandparent and 14 did not specify.

Of the 12* who are not sure: 5 are local residents, 5 are parents/carers of a child/children at a primary school, 3 are parents/carers of a child/children at a secondary school, 1 is a Trustee at a primary/secondary school, 1 is a member of staff at a primary school, 1 is a member of staff at a secondary school and 2 did not specify.

Proposal 2 – Please tell us whether you support/do not support the proposal to parents/carers notifying the local authority immediately after they have received their initial offer at a lower preference school if they no longer wish their child to remain on the waiting list for higher preference schools.

Response	Number	%
I support the proposed change	47	68%
I do not support the proposed change	7	10%
Not sure	15	22%

I am not affected by/do not want to answer	0	0%
Total	69	100%

Of the 47* who support the proposed change: 16 are local residents, 11 are parents/carers of a child/children at primary school, 7 are parents/carers of a child/children at a secondary school, 4 are members of staff at a secondary school, 2 are members of staff at a primary school, 1 is a School Governor at a primary school, 1 is a Grandparent, 1 is a parent to a toddler and 21 did not specify.

Of the 7* who do not support the proposed change: 4 are local residents, 4 are parents/carers of a child/children at primary school, 2 are parents/carers of a child/children at secondary school and 1 did not specify.

Of the 15* who are not sure: 6 are local residents, 5 are parents/carers of a child/children at primary school, 3 are parents/carers of a child/children at secondary school, 1 is a trustee at a primary/secondary school, 1 is a member of staff at a primary school, 1 is member of staff at a secondary school and 1 is parent looking to place their child in a school. 6 did not specify.

Proposal 3 – Please tell us whether you support/do not support the proposal to the local authority not recording first preference offers as automatically accepted.

Response	Number	%
I support the proposed change	66	69%
I do not support the proposed change	11	11%
Not sure	17	18%
I am not affected by/do not want to answer	2	2%
Total	96	100%

Of the 66* who support the proposed change: 23 are local residents, 18 are parents/carers of a child/children at a primary school, 10 are parents/carers of a child/children at a secondary school, 5 are members of staff at a secondary school, 3 are members of staff at a primary school, 1 is a school governor at a primary school, 1 is a Trustee at a primary/ secondary school, 1 is a Grandparent, 1 is a parent looking to put their child in a school and 1 is a parent to a toddler. 28 chose not to specify.

Of the 11* who do not support the proposed change: 6 are local residents, 5 are parents/carers of a child/children at primary school, 3 are parents/carers of a child/children at secondary school and 2 did not specify.

Of the 17* who are not sure: 5 are local residents, 3 are parents/carers of a child/children at primary school, 1 is a member of staff at a primary school, 1 is a School Governor at a secondary school, 1 is the director of Young Minds Matter CIC and 1 is a parent/carer of a child/children at a secondary school. 9 did not specify.

Equality and Diversity

Please tell us who you are.

Please tick all that apply*

Response	Number	%
Member of staff at primary school	5	4
Member of staff at secondary school	5	4
School Governor at primary school	1	1
School Governor at secondary school	1	1
Parent/carer of a child/children at primary school	27	20
Parent/carer of child/ren at secondary school	14	10
Local resident	35	26
Other	6	5
Prefer not to say	2	1
No response	37	28
Total	133	100

Gender:

67% of respondents disclosed their gender; 46% were female and 11% male.

Age:

58% of respondents disclosed their age. The majority of the 96 respondents (25%) were in the age bracket 35-44. 8% were aged 26-34, 13% aged 45-54, 8% aged 55-64 and 4% aged over 65.

Ethnicity:

53% of respondents disclosed their ethnicity. The majority (33%) were White British, 4% Asian - Indian, 4% Black Caribbean, 3% White European, 3% Black African, 2% Other White, 1% White Irish, 1% mixed White and Black Caribbean, 1% mixed White and Asian, 1% Other background

Disability:

2% of respondents identify themselves as having a disability. Of this 2%, 50% identified as having a disability relating to Mental Health whilst the other 50% was undisclosed.