

Changes to the School Admissions Code

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Areas to Cover

- The current (or old) School Admissions and Appeals Code.
- Background to ‘the new’ Codes.
- Changes to ‘the new’ Admission Code.
- Impact of ‘the new’ Admission Code in Warwickshire.
- Questions / Discussion.

Background

- Current (or old) School Admission and Appeals Codes came into effect in February 2010. Largely unchanged from the versions published in 2009.
- Review of the Codes first announced in 'The Importance of Teaching: Schools White Paper' (November 2010).
- Aim was to make them simpler, fairer and more transparent, building on the principle of placing trust in schools and Headteachers.
- Should also be less costly to administer, less bureaucratic, but also more accessible to parents.
- Draft Codes first published in May 2011 followed by a consultation exercise.
- Final versions of the School Admissions and School Appeals Code published in November 2011.
- Expected to come into force from February 2012.
- Many schools (and the Local Authority) consulting based on the new Codes coming into effect.

Aims of the revised Codes

- The Codes have been simplified, with duplication removed (130 pages in total down to 60). The Codes should, as far as possible, be the single point of reference for anyone wishing to understand school admissions.
- References to things admission authorities 'should' or 'should not' do have been removed.
- Bureaucracy should be reduced, with schools given greater freedom. Eg increases in Published Admission Numbers (PANs).
- Aim is not to weaken the admissions system, but to ensure that school places are offered in a fair and lawful way.

Key Changes – The Admissions Code (1)

- Giving adopted children who were previously in care, the same, highest priority as Looked After Children. Expected to benefit some 5,000 children each year.
- National closing dates for secondary and primary school applications (31 October and 15 January).
- National offer Day for primary places from 2014 onwards (16 April or thereabouts).
- Greater freedom for schools to increase their Published Admission Number (PAN) and to admit over their PAN.
- Allowing schools to give priority in their admission arrangements to the children of staff employed at the school.
- Allowing academies to prioritise pupils eligible for the new Pupil Premium.

Key Changes – The Admissions Code (2)

- Allowing infant classes to exceed the limit of 30 children per teacher in very limited circumstances – ‘Exceptions’.
However, the expectation is that such classes should generally still only contain 30 children per qualified teacher.
- The exceptions:
 - children with statements of special educational needs admitted outside the normal admission round;
 - looked after children and previously looked after children admitted outside the normal admission round;
 - children admitted, after initial allocation of places, because of a procedural error made by the admission authority or local authority in the original application process;
 - children admitted after an independent appeals panel upholds an appeal;
 - children who move into the area outside the normal admission round for whom there is no other available school within reasonable distance;
 - children of UK service personnel admitted outside the normal admission round;
 - twins and children from multiple births when one of the siblings is the 30th child admitted;
 - children with SEN who are normally taught in an SEN unit attached to the school, or registered at a special school, who attend some infant classes within the mainstream school.

Key Changes – The Admissions Code (3)

- A requirement for admission authorities to disclose the results of selection tests prior to the closing date for applications (31 October).
- Consultation on unchanged admission arrangements now only required every seven years, rather than the current three.
- Allowing **anyone** to object to the Adjudicator about a school's admission arrangements, rather than the currently prescribed groups.
- No requirement for the Local Authority to co-ordinate in-year admissions from 2013 onwards. Parents can apply directly to schools who should then notify the Local Authority of the outcome.

Impact of the new Codes

- All of Warwickshire's selective schools looking to increase their PANs for 2013 entry.
- One school looking to change its priority area.
- At least two secondary schools looking to give priority to the children of staff.
- Changes to the 11+ test in order to disclose results prior to closing date for applications.
- Changes to Warwickshire's admission arrangements in line with the new Codes.