

Central Bedfordshire
Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands,
Shefford SG17 5TQ



please ask for Leslie Manning
direct line 0300 300 5132
date 16 November 2012

NOTICE OF MEETING

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE ADMISSIONS FORUM

Date & Time

Tuesday, 27 November 2012 4.30 p.m.

Venue at

Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford

Richard Carr
Chief Executive

To: The Chairman and Members of the CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE ADMISSIONS FORUM:

Local Authority:	Cllr M A G Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools:	Mrs C Neale	Governor, Dunton VC Lower School, Dunton and Wrestlingworth VC Lower School, Wrestlingworth
	Mrs A Phillips	Headteacher, Streetfield Middle School, Caddington
	Mrs J Woodthorpe	Headteacher, Campton Lower School, Campton
Voluntary Aided Schools:	Mr N Sharpe	Ashton Middle School, Dunstable
	Mrs C Spurgeon	Headteacher, St Mary's C of E Lower School, Clophill

Academies:	Mr J Kemp	Vice-Principal, All Saints Academy, Dunstable
	Mr S Fell	Headteacher, Harlington Upper School, Harlington
Church of England Diocese:	Mr R Garrard	Diocesan Representative, Diocese of St Albans
Roman Catholic Diocese:	Mrs F Image	Diocesan Representative, Diocese of Northampton
Parent Governor:	Mr I Robinson	Parent Governor, Caldecote VC Lower School, Upper Caldecote
	Mr B Sear	Parent Governor, Alameda Middle School, Ampthill
Local Community:	Ms W Anderson-Welsh	(representing Ethnic Minority Groups)
	Mr P Harpin	School Intervention Manager and Virtual School Lead, Central Bedfordshire Council (representing Looked After Children)
	Squadron Leader T Sellers	RAF Henlow (representing the Armed Forces)

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive apologies for absence and notification of substitute Members.

2. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Admissions Forum held on 25 June 2012 (copy attached) and to note any actions taken since that meeting.

3. **Consultation on Admission Arrangements - 2014/15**

To receive an oral update on the consultation on proposed changes to the Schools Admission Arrangements which would have effect from 2014/15 (note: copies of the consultation document and FAQ sheets are attached).

4. **Date of Next Meeting**

To agree the date of the next meeting of the Admissions Forum.

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CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE ADMISSIONS FORUM** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 25 June 2012

PRESENT

Local Authority:	Cllr M A G Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services
Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools:	Ms C Neale	Governor, Dunton VC Lower School, Dunton and Wrestlingworth VC Lower School, Wrestlingworth
	Mrs J Woodthorpe	Headteacher, Campton Lower School, Campton
Church of England Diocese:	Mr R Garrard	Diocesan Representative, Diocese of St Albans
Roman Catholic Diocese:	Mrs F Image	Diocesan Representative, Diocese of Northampton
Local Community:	Mrs D Day	Virtual School Headteacher, Central Bedfordshire Council (representing Looked After Children)
Apologies for Absence:	Mrs A Phillips Squadron Leader Ted Sellers	
Officers in Attendance:	Ms L Braisher Mr L Manning Mr R Parsons	– Senior Admissions Officer – Committee Services Officer – Head of School Organisation, Admissions and capital Planning

CBAF/12/1 Election of Chairman

RESOLVED

that Councillor M A G Versallion be elected Chairman of the Forum for the 2012/13 municipal year.

CBAF/12/2 Election of Vice-Chairman

Nominations were sought for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Forum for the 2012/13 municipal year. However, no nominations were forthcoming.

CBAF/12/3 Minutes and Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Admissions Forum held on 27 March 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CBAF/12/4 **Current Status Report**

Following an introduction by the Head of School Organisation, Admissions and capital Planning the Senior Admissions Officer provided an oral update on the allocations for the 2012 admissions.

The Senior Admissions Officer first reported on the Upper allocations. These had been processed and offer letters sent out on the national offer day of 1 March. 97.9% of children had been offered their first preference school. Three upper schools (Harlington, Manshead and Redborne) had been oversubscribed. The 35 appeals lodged in total for admission into Year 9 for these schools in September had been heard and 23 had been upheld. In response to a query the Senior Admissions Officer advised that 10 of the appeals had been for Manshead of which five had been upheld and five dismissed.

Turning next to Middle allocations the Senior Admissions Officer reported that offer letters had been sent out on 30 March and 93.8% of children had been offered their first preference school. Five middle schools (Holywell, Leighton, Linslade, Priory and Robert Bloomfield) had been oversubscribed. The 34 appeals lodged for the middle school transfer for Leighton, Linslade and Priory and were due to be held in the next two or three weeks.

With regard to Starting School allocations the letters were sent out on 27 April and 90.7% of children obtained their first preference school. Over a third of lower schools were oversubscribed and three schools (All Saints, Kingsmoor and Maulden) were unable to accommodate all of the children in their catchment area. 51 appeals had been lodged for admission into the Reception year in September and these were due to be heard in July.

The meeting noted that the Starting School admission round had presented the usual challenges and the School Organisation, Admissions and capital Planning Team therefore investigated options for schools to accommodate local children in a local school where possible.

The Chairman referred to the Middle school allocations and queried what proportion of the 93.8% of children who had been offered their first preference school resided outside Central Bedfordshire and whether priority had been given to Central Bedfordshire children. In response the Senior Admissions Officer stated that admissions had followed the agreed procedure and places offered in accordance with the schools admission criteria. Catchment children were given priority and in some areas children living in other local authority areas such as Bedford or Milton Keynes were part of the catchment area to a particular school.

With regard to online admissions the Senior Admissions Officer stated that the School Admissions Service had been keen to increase the number of online applications received for the Upper, Middle and Starting School admission rounds on the basis that applying online was more efficient and parents who applied online were notified on the offer day of the result of their application. The service had promoted the benefits of applying online in the autumn term when the rounds were opened and sent leaflets to parents of children at a Central Bedfordshire school who were due to transfer to either an Upper school or a Middle school with information on the school open evenings and how to apply online.

The Senior Admissions Officer advised that Starting School admissions rounds were heavily promoted with posters being sent to nurseries, pre-schools, doctors' surgeries, supermarkets, leisure centres and libraries to advertise to parents of children in the relevant date of birth (dob) range that it was time to apply. Information was also provided by NHS Bedfordshire of children in the dob range and letters were sent to parents of those children to inform them of the need to apply. She stated that the online applications had been as follows:

- Upper schools – 83% (56% in 2011, an increase of 27%)
- Middle schools – 81% (58% in 2011, an increase of 23%)
- Starting School – 80% (71% in 2011, an increase of 9%)

In response to a query regarding the support offered in libraries to parents wishing to submit an online application the Senior Admissions Officer stated that she was unsure what assistance was provided at libraries although parents did telephone the Admissions Service and officers would guide them through the admissions process if they had any difficulties.

The Chairman referred to the number of appeals and requested that a note be circulated comparing the number of children securing their first preference with the previous two years in order that it could be established whether the situation was improving or getting worse.

The Chairman then queried the number of academies making use of the appeals service. The Head of School Organisation, Admissions and capital Planning stated that there were, currently, two but it was assumed that there would be a steady increase in demand as academies recognised the responsibilities involved in undertaking this function.

NOTED

the oral update on the allocations for the 2012 admissions.

RESOLVED

that a note be circulated comparing the number of children securing their first preference with the previous two years in order that it can be established whether the situation has improved or is getting worse.

(Note: Resolution 4 of minute CBAF/12/6 also refers).

CBAF/12/5 Update on Disaggregation

The Admissions Panel received an oral update from the Senior Admissions Officer on the disaggregation of the Admissions Service. Members had been advised at the previous meeting (CBAF/11/20 refers) that disaggregation would take effect from 1 April 2012 and the Senior Admissions Officer reported that the Schools Admission Service had moved out of Borough Hall into Watling House, Dunstable at the end of April. The meeting noted that the function was now part of the School Organisation, Admissions and capital Planning Service which, it was felt, would enable greater opportunities to manage and respond to demand for school places.

The Senior Admissions Officer further reported that the Schools Admission Service was offering two traded services to own admissions authority schools and academies; these being the preparation and presentation of admissions appeals and the processing of applications received for point of entry admissions.

The Senior Admissions Officer advised the meeting that the appeals provision was still provided by Bedford Borough Council but this service was scheduled to be disaggregated from 1 September 2012 when it would be provided in-house by Central Bedfordshire Council's Committee Services. She added that disaggregation would enable Central Bedfordshire Council to take ownership of all aspects of the school admissions and appeals process and make the system simpler for parents who appealed as everything would be dealt with by one authority.

In response to a query the Senior Admissions Officer stated that local authorities were required by statute to co-ordinate all admissions for their area. It was then the responsibility of own admission schools and academies to determine which applications met their criteria. This function could be provided at cost by the Council if required.

With regard to the membership of the appeals panels the Senior Admissions Officer reported that Committee Services was in the process of compiling a pool of suitable persons from which such panels could be constituted.

The Head of School Organisation, Admissions and capital Planning emphasised the major advantages in locating the admissions function with school organisation within the same office including an increase in efficiency and effectiveness. As both teams were quite small their close physical proximity also provided increased resilience.

At the request of a Member the Head of School Organisation, Admissions and capital Planning reported on those areas within Central Bedfordshire which were, or would be, experiencing major demand for school places.

NOTED

the oral report on the disaggregation of the Admissions Service.

CBAF/12/6 Future of the Admissions Forum

Members gave consideration to the future of the Admissions Forum mindful of the absence of a statutory basis for its existence. The Chairman, whilst acknowledging the growing 'academisation' of the education sector commented that the meetings of the Admissions Forum provided an opportunity for different types of school to come together and for the discussion on various issues to be held in public. He stated that, given the current high level of change, he was in favour of the Admissions Forum continuing.

In response a Member referred to the continual low representation at Forum meetings and, whilst willing to carry on, queried to what purpose future meetings would have.

Another Member commented that she had found the meetings useful and that they kept her updated.

However, the Head of School Organisation, Admissions and capital Planning stated that there were alternative mechanisms in place for discussion, consultation and dissemination including area planning meetings and engagement with the Children's Services Directorate. The Senior Admissions Officer added that data could be included in the 'Central Essentials' and 'Governors' Essentials' e-publications.

A Member referred to Luton's Admissions Forum and described how it had been effective in influencing major admissions changes that had been proposed by a local academy. However, another Member commented that local headteachers had themselves expressed concern at the academy's proposals, had worked to influence them and would have done so whether the Luton Forum had existed or not. She went on to comment that Central Bedfordshire's Admissions Forum lacked powers and was severely restricted in its impact as a result. She added that other mechanisms existed for discussion and consultation.

The Head of School Organisation, Admissions and capital Planning set out the procedure undertaken by Central Bedfordshire regarding the review of proposals and the consultation process that was required. He also reminded the meeting of the growing number of academies in Central Bedfordshire and how this contrasted with authorities such as Hertfordshire where there were a relatively low number of academies and admissions forums had been retained.

Whilst acknowledging that there was a strong case in favour of discontinuing the Council's Admissions Forum meetings the Chairman favoured further investigation and consultation before any final action was taken.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the Senior Admissions Officer contact those local authorities which have retained admissions forums and establish why they have done so and, by examining the last three agendas for their forum meetings, what they are considering at the meetings;**

- 2 **that the Head of School Organisation, Admissions and capital Planning send a letter to all members of the Central Bedfordshire Admissions Forum setting out the nature of the discussion on the future of the Forum and seeking their views on the way forward;**
- 3 **that a copy of the Forum's Terms of Reference be circulated with the letter referred to in resolution 2 above.**
- 4 **that the note referred to in the resolution under minute CBAF/12/4 be circulated with the letter referred to in resolution 2 above.**

CBAF/12/7 **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED

that the next meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Admissions Forum be held as and when required.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 4.45 p.m. and concluded at 5.46 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Dated.....

Consultation on proposed changes to the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools from 2014/15

Consultation document

Monday 12 November 2012 to Monday 21 January 2013

1. Introduction

All Admission Authorities must adhere to the School Admissions Code which is the legislation and guidance issued by the Department for Education under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The code states that admission authorities ‘...must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. Parents should be able to look at a set of arrangements and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated’

2. Background

Central Bedfordshire Council, as the Local Authority, has a statutory duty to ensure that admissions are co-ordinated for all admission authorities, within Central Bedfordshire, for all children being admitted into the normal year of entry and to ensure that only one offer of a school place is made.

There are currently 130 schools within Central Bedfordshire, 65 are Community or Voluntary Controlled schools, consisting of 57 lower, 3 Primary and 5 Middle. 65 schools within Central Bedfordshire are either Academies or own admission authority schools (Foundation, Trust and Voluntary Aided), with a further 23 schools forecast to undergo Academy conversion before April 2013.

As well as having a statutory duty to ensure the coordination of all admissions for schools and academies within Central Bedfordshire, the Council is also the admission authority for Community and Voluntary-Controlled schools within Central Bedfordshire.

The Council must therefore undertake consultation on its own admission arrangements where changes are proposed.

Current admission arrangements

The Council currently has standard admissions arrangements in place which are used by the majority of the Community and Voluntary Controlled schools within Central Bedfordshire (a list of all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools is on page 5 of this document).

The current arrangements set out the admission criteria in which applications will be considered if the school is oversubscribed. These are set out below in order of priority

- 1) All ‘looked after’ children or children who were previously ‘looked after’.
- 2) Pupils living in the catchment area with siblings at the school
- 3) Other pupils living in the catchment area
- 4) ‘Very exceptional’ medical grounds
- 5) Other siblings
- 6) Any other children

A third of the Community and Voluntary Controlled schools have additions to these criteria which include priority given to nurseries and pre-schools, above the criterion of ‘Any Other Children’. Schools and Academies may also set oversubscription criteria which include ‘feeder schools’ as long as this criterion is transparent and reasonable

Two thirds of Academies and ‘own admission’ authority schools (i.e. those which are part of a Foundation or a Trust or are Voluntary Aided) within Central Bedfordshire have also set their own admissions criteria which differ from the Local Authority’s standard arrangements

The proposed changes to the Council’s admissions arrangements are intended to provide greater clarity for parents and carers on their choices and to make the oversubscription criteria more objective than it currently is.

3. Proposed admission arrangements

It is proposed that the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for the academic year 2014/15 remain the same as that which is in use for the academic year 2013/14 with changes being made only to the relevant dates and phases of education.

The Council is proposing to have an open admission arrangement for all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools with effect from the academic year 2014/15. The proposed new arrangements will determine applications, when schools are oversubscribed, by the following criteria:

- 1) All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'
- 2) Children with siblings attending the school.
- 3) Children who live nearest to the school determined by straight line distance from the school site to the pupil's home address.

Criteria one: All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'

'Looked after' children and previously 'looked after children' are given top priority in line with admissions legislation. These children may have already experienced disruption in their education. This criterion helps us to support the most vulnerable children to succeed.

The Council is the corporate parent for looked after children and has a duty for the care of these children.

Criteria two: Children with siblings attending the school

By also prioritising children with siblings at the school, the Council will provide families with stability and ease potential logistical burdens by having their children in the same school.

Criteria three: Straight line distance

Defined catchment areas would be removed for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.

To determine the allocations of places for children who meet criterion 3, the pupils home address will be measured in a straight line to the designated measuring point on the school's site, with those living closer having priority for a place.

For example, if a school with 60 places received 80 applications requiring a place and 2 applications were for 'looked after' children and 10 met the sibling criterion, 48 would then need to be ranked according to their distance from the school. This would result in 12 applicants who lived further away being declined a place at the school in order to keep within the admission numbers.

Advantages of the proposed open admissions arrangements

- The removal of catchment areas will simplify the admissions process for parents and carers in the changing education landscape within Central Bedfordshire.
- Parents and carers will be able to express a preference for a school without feeling restricted by historical boundaries and feeling constrained to specify a preference for their catchment school.
- Priority will be given to children who live nearest to a school based upon straight line distance. This straight line distance method, which is also referred to as 'open admission', is a fairer system as it gives priority to children who live nearest to the school.
- The simplification of the criteria provides clarity for parents and carers on the choices that are available to them. It also eradicates the inconsistencies of differing policies

Potential disadvantage of open admissions arrangements

In the short term, there may be some uncertainty for parents and carers as to which school their child is likely to be allocated a place at as a judgement could not be based on previous years, where a parent/carer would be able to assess their chances of gaining a place at a school based on whether all catchment children were offered a place. The School Admissions Team will work with parents and carers to explain the new arrangements.

‘Very exceptional’ medical grounds

The current admissions criterion for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools includes the criterion of ‘Very exceptional’ medical grounds. This is where the school is the only school locally that can meet the child’s needs. Parents or Carers are required to submit a medical report from the child’s doctor or medical consultant setting out the valid medical reasons why it is essential for the child to attend the school in question.

Very few applications meet the medical criterion as many schools can meet a child’s medical needs by having the appropriate resources or by training staff. The evidence provided does not always set out a strong enough case of why the school is the only school that can meet the child’s needs.

The new arrangements propose to remove this criterion from the admissions criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. As children with the most severe medical needs will be subject of a statement of Special Educational Needs, this route provides an acceptable alternative within the arrangements.

Special Schools

There will be no changes to the current school admissions arrangements for special schools.

4. Have your say

Admission authorities are required to consult on their admission arrangements if changes are proposed. As the Council is the admission authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools within its area, Central Bedfordshire Council are seeking the views of all interested parties on the proposed changes to the admission arrangements.

The accompanying Frequently Asked Questions document provides answers to a range of questions that may help you to respond to this consultation.

Send us your views by completing our online response form which is available on the Council’s website www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations or by completing a paper copy of the form and return it to the FREEPOST address provided at the end of the form

Responses should be submitted by **5.00pm Monday 21 January 2013**.

Further information regarding the proposed changes can be found on the Council’s website, as part of the report considered by the Council’s Executive on Tuesday 6 November. Please follow this link to access this report on the Council’s website [–here.](#)

For more information about this proposal please contact Lydia Braisher by telephone on 0300 300 8037 or email admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Edwina Grant
Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services
Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House, Monks Walk
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SG17 5TQ

Lower Schools

	PAN		PAN		PAN
Aspley Guise	27	Hockliffe	15	Silsoe VC	27
Beaudesert	55	Houghton Conquest	20	Slip End	22
Beecroft	60	Houghton Regis	45	Southcott	60
Caldecote VC	24	Husborne Crawley	12	Southill	15
Campton	22	Kensworth VC	15	Southlands	60
Chalton	15	Kingsmoor	45	St Andrew's VC	90
Clipstone Brook	45	Lancot	60	St George's	30
Doverly Down	30	Lawnside	60	St Swithun's VC	30
Dunstable Icknield	60	Leedon	60	Stanbridge	24
Dunton VC	12	Linslade	45	Stondon	30
Everton	10	Mary Bassett	60	Studham VC	15
Fairfield Park	60	Maulden	30	Swallowfield	58
Flitwick	60	Ramsey Manor	58	Templefield	60
Gravenhurst	10	Raynsford VC	30	Thomas Johnson	18
Greenleas (Derwent Rd site)	60	Ridgmont	15	Toddington St George	60
Greenleas (Sandhills site) due to open Sept 2013	60	Roecroft	60	Totternhoe	29
Harlington	30	Russell	54	Watling	30
Haynes	24	Shefford	90	Woburn	12
Heathwood	30	Shillington	30	Wrestlingworth VC	13

Primary Schools

Middle Schools

Combined

Hawthorn Park	60	Brewers Hill	120	Caddington Village	Year R 60
Thornhill	30	Burgoyne	90		Year 5 15
Tithe Farm	60	Edward Peake VC	120		
		Leighton	120		
		Streetfield	130		



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Frequently asked questions (FAQs) for consultation on proposed changes to the Schools Admission Arrangements for 2014/15



Q - What is an admission authority?

An admission authority is the body responsible for admissions to the school or academy

Q – What are admission arrangements?

Admission arrangements are the methods and procedures that determine how children will be admitted to any given school and include the admission criteria which are applied if more applications are received than there are places available. Admission arrangements must comply with regulations and legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Q - What are Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools?

These are schools which the Council is responsible for.

Q - What is the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme?

It is the timetable for the processing of applications for the area, taking into account national closing dates for the submission of applications and the date on which places must be offered.

Q – What does ‘over-subscribed’ and ‘published admission number’ mean?

A —When a school receives a number of applications for a particular year group which is above their published admission number (PAN) for that year group, the school is classed as oversubscribed for that year group. A school’s PAN is based upon the physical size of its classrooms and the number of teachers within the school. A school will not normally admit children in excess of that number.

Q – What are the significant changes to education provision in Central Bedfordshire which are driving the proposed changes to the school admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools?

A — The major changes are as listed below -

- 36 schools are now Academies with a further 23 forecast to convert to Academy status before April 2013. Academies can determine their own admissions criteria and three academies have defined their own catchment areas as part of their new admissions criteria.
- 4 Houghton Regis lower schools will convert to primary schools, and will extend their age range from 3-9 years to 3-11 years, from September 2013
- Other academies within Central Bedfordshire have received permission from the Education Funding Agency to change their age range to primary.
- Barnfield Vale Academy (formerly Mill Vale Middle School) in Dunstable is to convert to a primary school and Houghton Regis Academy (formerly Kings Houghton Middle School) is currently consulting on a proposed change from middle to secondary
- All Saints Academy is due to convert from an upper to a secondary school from September 2013
- the new Central Bedfordshire University Technical College is now open in Houghton Regis and caters for students from years 10 to 13

In addition to these changes, the shift of some schools to a two tier system from a three tier has made the existing catchment areas obsolete. Moreover, the three academies which have defined their own catchment areas may cause confusion for parents and carers, and add more complexity to the process.

The proposed open admissions system allows for this shift and for more changes of age range that may be implemented, without it adding complication to both the system and the admissions process.

With an open admission arrangement for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools the Local Authority would not have the problem of changing a catchment area to suit the system in operation. For example, the local authority still has lower, middle and upper catchment areas for Houghton Regis; however four of the five Houghton Regis Lower Schools plus All Saints Academy have recently changed their age range to Primary and Secondary respectively. This has changed the provision within the area from three tier to two tier which effectively makes the catchment areas for the town redundant. Removing the catchment areas would eliminate this issue of them being out of date once a new system is in operation.

Q –How is a ‘straight line distance’ determined?

A — The pupils home address will be measured in a straight line to the designated measuring point on the school’s site, with those living closer having priority for a place. Because of the size and layout of school sites, each school has to have a designated measuring point, which is often the main access door to the main school building. This criteria would be used when, for example, a school with 60 places received 80 applications requiring a place and 2 applications were for ‘looked after’ children and 10 met the sibling criterion, 48 would then need to be ranked according to their distance from the school. This would result in 12 applicants who lived further away being declined a place at the school in order to keep within the admission numbers

Q –Will children attending an ‘on-site’ nursery or pre-school have priority under the new proposal?

A — No. The Community and Voluntary Controlled schools within Central Bedfordshire which

currently have an addition to the standard admissions arrangements giving priority to children attending the school's nursery or pre-school ahead of the last criterion of 'Any Other Children' has proved to be misleading. It can appear to give parent/carers a false guarantee that their child will eventually be admitted to the school if they attend the nursery or pre-school on site at the school, despite the fact that other oversubscription criteria will take priority.

Q – Will children with special needs be affected by the proposed changes?

A — No. The arrangements for admitting a child with a statement of special educational needs are different to children who do not have a statement. The 1996 Education Act states that the local authority must consult with a Head teacher and Governing Body of a school before it can be named on a child's statement. Places to children with a statement of special educational needs are allocated before allocations are made to children without a statement.

Q – Will school transport be affected by the proposed changes?

A — The Council's Home to School Transport Policy would be revised in line with the Council's proposed admission arrangements. It is proposed that a policy would be operated which would complement the new admissions policy by providing transport where required to the child's nearest school, in line with the Local Authority's statutory obligations. A separate consultation will take place to convey this and gather people's views

Q – Do other local authorities use straight line distance instead of catchment areas for their admissions criteria?

A – Yes – Hertfordshire County Council use straight line distance for admissions to their Community and Voluntary Controlled schools

Q – Do any schools in Central Bedfordshire use admission criteria other than catchment areas?

A — Yes six Voluntary Aided schools and one Community school do not serve a defined catchment area. The six Voluntary Aided schools admit children in accordance with their own admissions criteria, some of which are faith based and the Community school - Greenleas Lower School (Sandhills site) is a new school due to open in September 2013 and will not serve a defined catchment area.

Q – Who are 'looked after children'?

A — A 'looked after child' is someone who is living away from home, for whatever reason, and are either in the care of the Council, The Council has a responsibility to look after these children and becomes their Corporate Parent.

Legislation requires the admissions authority for maintained schools and academies to give priority in its over-subscription criteria to "looked after" children (one who is looked after by a local authority at the time of his or her application, and who will still be looked after when s/he is admitted to the school) and previously 'looked after' children. An application for a 'looked after' child would be considered under the proposed criteria regardless of the distance they live from the school.

Q – If my child is currently attends a school or an academy that is not a community or voluntary controlled school (listed on page 5 of the consultation document), will they be affected by the proposed changes?

A — No, the proposed changes to the admissions criteria only affect Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools as listed on page 6 of the consultation document. All other schools and academies, for which the Council is not the admissions authority, set their own admissions criteria, which can usually be found on the schools' websites.

Q – Will those currently applying for a new school place for academic year 2013/14 be affected by these proposed changes?

A – No, the proposed changes to the school admissions arrangements will not affect children applying for school places for the academic year 2013/14. The criteria for school admissions will remain the same as it is at the moment. The proposed criteria, if implemented, will apply to children applying for school places from academic year 2014/15 onwards.