



# **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

amongst the schools where the Council is the admissions authority and will give parents and carers more freedom to express a preference for a school of their choice.

### **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](http://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](mailto:admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

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

# CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE - COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

## 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		



## A great place to live and work

### **Contact us...**

by telephone: 0300 300 8000

by email: [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

on the web: [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

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