
Meeting: Central Bedfordshire Admissions Forum
Date: 19 March 2013
Subject: Determined Admission Arrangements 2014/15
Report of: Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services
Summary: The report informs the forum of the outcome of the consultation and Executive's decision on the determination of Central Bedfordshire's admission arrangements for 2014/15.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Lydia Braisher, Admissions Manager
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATION:

The forum is asked to note the outcome of the consultation and the subsequent determination of the admissions arrangements.

Background

1. The School Admissions Code and The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 require admission authorities to consult every seven years or where changes are proposed. The regulations set out that the consultation period must be conducted for a minimum of eight weeks, commencing no earlier than 1 November and concluding by 1 March.
2. Central Bedfordshire Council commenced a consultation on 12 November which concluded on 21 January which proposed the removal of catchment areas, medical criterion and nursery/feeder schools for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. The co-ordinated schemes for Lower/Primary and Middle and Secondary, Upper and the UTC were also consulted on.

The consultation

3. The admission criteria for all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in the event of oversubscription for the Academic Year 2014/15 was proposed and consulted on as follows:
 - 1) All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'
 - 2) Pupils with siblings at 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
4. The co-ordinated scheme for Lower, Primary and Middle sets out the timetable for the admission process including the national closing date of 15 January and national offer date which has been prescribed for the first time for 'primary' admissions from 2014 as the 16 April.
5. The co-ordinated scheme for Secondary, Upper and UTC sets out the timetable for the admission process including the national closing date of 31 October and national offer date of 1 March.
6. Legislation prescribes that the consultees must include the following:
 - a) Parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen
 - b) Other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the Admissions Authority have an interest in the proposed admissions
 - c) All other admission authorities within the relevant area
 - d) The Governing Bodies of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools
 - e) Adjoining neighbouring local authorities
 - f) The body or person representing religious denomination schools
7. The consultation was publicised via the following methods:

A letter was sent to:

- Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in Central Bedfordshire.
- Headteachers/Principals of Academies, Foundation, Trust and Voluntary Aided schools in Central Bedfordshire, with a copy of the letter being sent to the Roman Catholic Diocesan Board and the Church of England Diocesan Board.

Posters to publicise the consultation, detailing the website address to access information were sent to:

- Schools and academies in Central Bedfordshire
- Nurseries and Children's Centre
- Town and Parish Councils
- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Disability Resource Centre
- Community Centres
- Supermarkets

8. An email was also sent to neighbouring local authorities and publicised through a press release to the local newspapers.
9. Drop in sessions were also held for all Headteachers/Principals and Governing Bodies at Schools and Academies in Central Bedfordshire. These were held over three separate dates in December in Priory House, Watling House and a school in Leighton Buzzard to provide an opportunity to discuss the proposals and raise queries.

Responses to consultation

10. 84 responses were received to the consultation. 44% stated support for the proposals and 45% of respondents objected, with 11% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. No comments were received in relation to the proposed co-ordinated schemes for admissions.
11. Following feedback received during the consultation period it became apparent that although an open admission system would introduce simplicity and freedom of choice to the admissions process for parents, some of the complex local issues need further exploration in order to ensure that children in rural areas were not disadvantaged or that a child's transitional pathway is not changed from what was traditionally regarded as their local school. School Transport was also raised as a concern if catchment areas were removed.

Determined Admission Arrangements

12. The Council's Executive considered a recommendation to approve the admissions criteria to include catchment and remove the medical and nursery/feeder criterion for all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools except Greenleas Lower School (Sandhills site) which does not currently operate a catchment area and so it was recommended that the school's admission criteria should be based on straight line distance. The Executive approved the standard policy as below, however those schools whose admissions criteria currently vary from the standard policy e.g. nursery/feeder and faith criteria, will retain those exceptions.
13. The Standard admissions policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools is as below:
 - 1 All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after'
 - 2 Children living in the catchment area with siblings at the school
 - 3 Children living in the catchment area
 - 4 Other children with siblings at the school
 - 5 Children who live nearest to the school determined by straight line distance from the school site to the child's home address
14. Russell Lower School and Slip End Lower School had asked to increase their published admissions numbers. Approval was given to Russell Lower School to increase their PAN from 54 to 60 and Slip End Lower School from 22 to 24.

Conclusion

15. Legislation requires admissions authorities to publish their determined admission arrangements by 15 April in the determination year. Details of the admissions policy and published admissions numbers for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools and the co-ordinated scheme for admission has been sent to all schools. Academies and own admission authority schools have been sent a letter to inform that the Council has determined its admission arrangements with a copy of the co-ordinated scheme relevant to them. All of the required information on the Council's admission arrangements has been uploaded to the website and are attached as appendices to this report.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Determined Community and VC admissions policy

Appendix B – Determined PANs Community and VC

Appendix C – Determined Lower, Primary and Middle 2014 co-ordinated scheme

Appendix D – Determined Secondary, Upper and UTC 2014 co-ordinated scheme