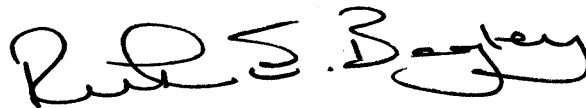


Date of issue: 13th January 2009

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|---|---|
| MEETING | ADMISSIONS FORUM |
| DATE AND TIME: | THURSDAY, 22ND JANUARY, 2009 AT 4.00 PM |
| VENUE: | COMMITTEE ROOM 2, TOWN HALL, BATH ROAD, SLOUGH |
| DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries) | CLAIRE GRAY (01753) 875120 |

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



RUTH BAGLEY
Chief Executive

NOTE TO MEMBERS

This meeting is an approved duty for the payment of travel expenses.

AGENDA

PART 1

| <u>AGENDA ITEM</u> | <u>REPORT TITLE</u> | <u>PAGE</u> | <u>WARD</u> |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| | Apologies for absence. | | |
| 1. | Minutes of the last meeting held on 24th September, 2008. | 1 - 4 | |

| <u>AGENDA ITEM</u> | <u>REPORT TITLE</u> | <u>PAGE</u> | <u>WARD</u> |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 2. | Matters Arising | | |
| 3. | Secondary Schools Admissions Report | 5 - 20 | All |
| 4. | Ombudsman's Report Summary | 21 - 22 | All |
| 5. | Slough Grammar Adjudication | 23 - 28 | All |
| 6. | Date of the Next Meeting | | |

Press and Public

You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before the Committee considers any items in the Part II agenda. Special facilities may be made available for disabled or non-English speaking persons. Please contact the Democratic Services Officer shown above for further details.

Minicom Number for the hard of hearing – (01753) 875030

Admissions Forum – Meeting held on Wednesday, 24th September, 2008.

Present:-

Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

Gill Bodman – Western House Primary School
Kate Makinson – Chalvey Early Years Centre

Foundation Schools

Hilda Clarke – Langley Grammar School
Maureen Ball – Baylis Court School

Parent Governor Representatives

Mohammed Din – Ryvers Primary School

Local Education Authority

Councillors Dale-Gough, Pantelic, Shine

Officers Present

Bill Alexander (Assistant Director, Raising Achievement)
Tony Browne (Head of Schools Services)

Apologies for Absence:- Chris Bowler, Councillor Dodds, Bowler, Italo Cafolla
and Kevin Marsh

PART 1

10. Minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2008 were agreed as a correct record subject to the removal of the words “Roman Catholic” which preceded the words “child who has passed the 11+” from minute item no. 5.

11. Grammar Schools Admissions

The Assistant Director of Raising Achievement informed the Forum that a report on all secondary schools, both selective and non-selective had been commissioned. This was currently available in draft form and was due to be discussed at the Slough Education Forum in the same week. It was confirmed that when one or two issues had been finalised the report would be considered by the Admissions Forum. It was noted that this tied in with some of the issues that the Forum had been looking into and these would be included in the report. A Member presented the findings following a question

at the last meeting of the admissions forum regarding pupils in Slough scoring 111 and above who did not receive a place in a Grammar school.

At Herschel Grammar eight children who achieved the required pass mark did not receive a place. At Langley Grammar this figure was 29 children, although at St Bernard's all children who passed were offered a place. Figures were not available for Slough Grammar as this was not part of the consortium. No data on Slough Grammar was held by the local authority as it was a self-controlling foundation school. The results were based on 'SL' postcodes, as that was how the data was recorded by the schools. Therefore it was likely that some pupils recorded, who did not receive the offer of a place, did not live in the borough. In total 37 children scoring 111 did not receive a grammar school place in slough. This represented only about 2% of secondary school entrants in 2008.

The Chair commented that since South Bucks grammar schools used catchment areas it would be appropriate for the Slough grammar schools to do likewise. An officer confirmed that no matter where a child went to school in Slough they were assured of an excellent standard of education as confirmed by excellent OfSTED reports. A member mentioned the skills gap that existed in Slough, it was noted that this was due to not retaining high achieving pupils in the area rather than a lack of provision in Slough schools. Business needed to interact more closely with schools to ensure that pupils were aware of the opportunities available. Workplace diplomas were being introduced which would hopefully improve the current situation but these were at the very early stages.

Members noted that there were no non-selective schools remaining in Langley and it was believed that children living outside of Slough applying to the Langley Academy had received places when Slough children had not.

Resolved – That a report on the Secondary Admissions Survey be brought to the next meeting of the Forum.

12. DCSF Admissions Consultation

Tony Browne, Head of School Services highlighted the key points from the DCSF Admission Consultation Paper. This was addressed to all Schools and local authorities. Some of the members present commented that they had not seen a copy of the document but believed that it had been mentioned to governors. The Forum was asked if it would like to make a separate response or endorse the comments of the local authority's response. Members felt that in theory the proposals for changes to admissions arrangements were something to be supported but whether it would be practical would remain to be seen.

Key options for changes to the role of the Admissions Forum were highlighted. The proposal for additional requirements and guidelines surrounding admission for excluded children was already supported by best practice in Slough. There were proposed changes to the statutory

arrangements for changes to the PAN. Members also noted the difficulty in implementing the proposals concerning school ethos and the subjectivity of this. It was agreed that the draft response from the local authority would be circulated to all members and any comments would need to be received by 2nd October in order to submit the response. Members may also submit individual responses if they so wished.

13. Dates of Future Meetings

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 22nd January 2009.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.00 pm and closed at 4.40 pm)

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School Admissions

Report by Maggie Waller July 2008

Commissioned by Slough Borough Council

1

1.1 Introduction

This report is based on work carried out during June and July 2008, the aims of which were:

- **To understand the current admissions arrangements and criteria for the grammar schools in Slough, in order to consider the implications of these in terms of the balance of in-borough and out-borough children who are successful in passing the 11+ test and in gaining places;**
- **To consider this in the light of the approach in other Local Authorities (LAs)**
- **To explore any other pertinent issues arising through discussions with Headteachers and Officers.**

The work was carried out through:

Interviews (see **Appendix 1** for list of interviewees) as well as web-based research into practice in a number of other Local Authorities.

I would like to thank interviewees, in particular Headteachers, for the time they gave to this exercise, the information they provided and their openness throughout the process.

Recommendations are set out at the end of each section and summarised in Section 3 of this report.

1.2 Context

Slough has eleven secondary schools, four of which are grammar schools. Admissions arrangements are complex. There is a culture of collaboration across all schools, evidenced by the consortium arrangements in place, federations and sharing of good practice including joint teaching appointments. This level of collaboration is an important backdrop to any discussion of admissions and is perhaps unusual in an LA with such a wealth of mixed provision. It should also be noted that all young people attending Slough secondary schools receive a good education, with all secondary schools in Slough deemed by Ofsted to be 'outstanding' or 'good with outstanding features'.

2 Issues

2.1 The balance of in-borough and out-borough children who are successful in passing the 11+ test and in gaining places at grammar schools

This was the key issue for consideration.

It should be noted that the national admissions arrangements are complex. The Common Application Form, 'equal preference' model and common dates are imposed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The aim of the arrangements in terms of seeking to ensure fairness and

consistency for parents is laudable, but does lead to restrictions for LAs and schools – LAs and schools cannot easily solve some of the complex problems that arise.

There are constraints imposed upon LAs and schools in terms of criteria. Slough Borough Council (SBC) has a statutory duty to provide sufficient secondary school places for Slough children i.e. those residing within the borough. This duty is carried out in a complex context of choice, diversity and access (LA duty to provide a choice and diversity of provision) and parental choice creates a tension. Local schools for local children is an ambition of many Local Authorities (LAs). However, added to this are restrictions which make it difficult for the LA to prioritise its own residents within admissions criteria:

‘each local authority **must** ensure that they...do not disadvantage applications to their schools from families resident in other local authorities (which would be contrary to the Greenwich Judgment¹¹). (R v Greenwich London Borough Council, ex parte John Ball Primary School (1989) 88 LGR 589 [1990] Fam Law 469) (School Admissions Code)

Distance or designated areas as criteria within admissions policies for grammar schools can be used to provide a greater chance of access to local children (though ‘local’ is not always synonymous with ‘in-borough’) and there are examples of such criteria in use in other LAs. Desk top research showed some LAs where distance and / or area are used within the criteria to admit eligible children (i.e those who have passed the required test). **Appendix 2** shows a variety of criteria within the admissions policies of grammar schools within 5 LAs - criteria used include:

- Proximity to school including a first area or radius followed by a wider one
- Feeder school arrangements
- Catchments / designated areas
- Top scorers followed by distance criteria e.g. a smaller area first then a wider one

It should be noted that within each LA there was variety and some traditional ranking arrangements but this was not the majority method.

The balance of in-borough / out- borough children in Slough grammar schools varies.

a) St Bernard’s School

In January 2007 there were 66.6% out borough pupils in the school. There are 30 in-borough children in Year 7. Numbers of in-borough children are not high as a proportion of the total intake (Published Admissions Number (PAN) is 120) but this is because the school, as a Roman Catholic school, provides for a potentially larger area than non-denominational schools. In the current admissions round all in-borough children who passed the 11+ test and had applied to St Bernard’s have a place, regardless of faith. It is rare that this is not the case and the Headteacher indicated that even when this had been an issue, numbers did not exceed 4 or 5.

Distance is used as tie-beak within criteria but not as a main criterion and whilst the number of children in-borough who are not successful is marginal it may be worth exploring this with governors should this situation change.

b) Herschel Grammar School

Herschel is seen by many as a ‘local’ school. In January 2007 there were 35.9% out-borough pupils in the school. The balance of in– borough and out-borough has not been an issue until this year with 7 in-borough children and 15 out-borough not placed as of May 08. The school’s PAN is 120 and this year

145 were admitted and if this had not been the case the situation would have been different, with 12 of those additional 25 children being in-borough.

Distance is used as a criterion within criteria (after rank) and is used for entry beyond Yr 7 and this could be extended to initial application. However, the school emphasises that the strength of Herschel as a school has never been at the expense of the non-selective schools and whilst the Governing Body may be open to looking at distance as a criterion, this would only be if this was with the support of the non-selective schools. The concern is that if more Slough residents were successful in gaining places at the grammar schools this would mean these higher ability children were not taking up places at neighbouring non-selective schools and this could have a negative impact in terms of the cohort and its results.

c) Langley Grammar School

The right of parents to express a preference, to choose a 'local school' regardless of which LA it is in, parents' willingness and ability to travel as well as parents' own travel to work patterns all create difficulties for the LA in supplying places for Slough children. These factors affect Langley Grammar School, given its proximity to the Slough border and the M4.

The school selects on ability and is not a local school but can be seen as the school of choice for many 'local' people, despite overall high out-borough figures (in January 2007 there were 64% out-borough pupils in the school). The highest number of applicants for entry by postcode area is from SL3 although part of this falls outside Slough borough boundaries. The numbers of applicants from SL3 have risen from 2007 to 2008 by over 80%, way in excess of the rise from anywhere else.

The picture as of June 2008 is that 38 pupils with SL postcodes who were eligible have not received offers: this number may change as further places become available. Of these 20 are Slough residents.

Interestingly, there were some offers made to pupils with SL postcodes who rejected those offers and some families who were unsuccessful in gaining a place, despite scoring over 111 in the 11+ test, but opted not to appeal.

The number of pupils taking the 11+ test is rising.

Distance is used as a tie break within criteria.

Other influences on the intake of Langley Grammar include Churchmead School in Datchet not being a first choice of many parents it would otherwise serve and Langley Academy which serves this end of the borough.

d) Langley Academy

The Langley Academy allocates places according to distance within nine ability bands.

e) Slough Grammar School

Out-borough children in the school represented 54.7% (January 2007). The Headteacher's view is that more in-borough children in the grammar schools would have a negative impact on the non-selective schools. There are no plans to change current admissions criteria.

f) Wexham School

The Headteacher was clear that if grammar schools take more of the Slough children than now there will be an impact on non-selective schools and this could create 'sink' schools in the non-selective sector. He believes that the number of grammar schools means there will always be one non-selective school at

risk in Slough and even an over-subscribed school like Wexham is fragile. The Headteacher believes that in some schools the impact of 1 child on GCSE results can be as high as 1%. It was suggested that if the 11+ pass mark was higher this would demonstrate the true difference between the grammar schools and other schools – greater pace and rigour. When some non-selective schools were under-subscribed this provided a safety net and school improvement has accelerated without all the additional places to absorb its impact.

Overall

The balance of in-borough to out-borough children in Slough grammar schools is a concern. Many factors contribute to this increasing trend but it must be considered with regard to both the selective and non-selective schools.

Distance and / or catchment areas are used in a number of LAs (see **Appendix 2**). Further research needs to be carried out to engage with these LAs to find out the impact of these arrangements and to consider which model/s could be appropriate in Slough's geographical circumstances if this were under consideration. The LA should extend this debate with the grammar schools (and non-selective schools) and if there was a willingness to consider such an approach, a detailed piece of work needs to be done to identify which young people would have been offered places under any such criterion and the impact this would have had on the cohort of adjacent non-selective schools. It is essential to consider any increased number of in-borough children gaining grammar school places against any impact on the non-selective sector.

Recommendations 2.1

LA to explore further the arrangements in other LAs where such criteria exist to find out impact and equity of such arrangements.

The LA to discuss with all secondary schools further; the LA to discuss with any grammar school which might consider using some method of distance as a main criterion and, if in agreement, to explore further the range of models that might be used: proximity, area, top scores followed by proximity etc.; carry out a detailed mapping to identify what the change in intake would have been for that grammar school and its surrounding non-selective schools and share the data to inform debate.

2.2 Compliance

DCSF is carrying out a review of all admissions policies nationally in order to audit compliance with the School Admissions Code.

There have been changes to the admissions process in Slough grammar schools for the coming round of admissions and these are welcomed as being in line with the Coordinated Admissions Arrangements, for example, the grammar school of choice now being placed as first choice on the Common Application Form (CAF).

Recommendation 2.2

All admissions authorities within Slough should comply with DCSF recommendations.

2.3 Information

2.3.1 Clarity of Information

Admissions in Slough is very complex given the diversity of the provision and there is a high degree of misinformation and misunderstanding by parents, elected members and even, according to Headteachers, amongst themselves. Phrases like 'equal preference' are difficult for parents to understand.

There are a number of things that could be done and there is a need for all involved in guiding parents and providing information to do so in a clear and consistent manner.

Elected members and local MPs may, on occasion, have admissions issues brought to their attention by constituents and whilst they should not be involved in cases personally nor seek to influence outcomes, it is essential that they be provided with up to date and accurate data and information so that they can refer constituents to the correct process, information and guidance.

Recommendations 2.3.1

Information in all admissions policies should be reviewed for consistency and clarity.

Slough Borough Council should continue to review its admissions brochure on an annual basis.

Briefings should be held for both Primary and Secondary Headteachers and others involved in admissions to ensure equal understanding of LA and schools' processes and the CAF process.

A briefing should be held for elected members and MPs in the autumn term to provide information about the CAF / admissions process, criteria and data such as in-borough and out-borough.

2.3.2 Data and Information Sharing

One way of reducing the misunderstandings that exist for schools, parents and between admissions authorities would be by increasing the degree of sharing of data across all admissions authorities and taking every opportunity to provide consistent advice to parents.

The School Admissions Code states that:

*'Schemes **must** continue after 1 March to ensure that places which become available are reallocated effectively'* and this supports the recommendation to continue to coordinate the process beyond March .

Recommendations 2.3.2

The LA and schools should continue to take every opportunity to work closely together throughout the admissions process, to minimise administration and streamline the process, keeping one another informed about progress and sharing data, in order to inform robust discussion about issues based upon accurate and shared information.

Since only the Local Authority should offer school places, coordination should extend beyond March to ensure clarity for parents and a smoother process.

Whilst the LA is present at primary school meetings about admissions this could be expanded to include more secondary school open evenings.

Cont'd

Cont'd

The details of enhancing coordination could be one of the issues which an Admissions Task and Finish group might address (see section 3 below).

2.4 Children in Public Care

During discussions and consideration of criteria for admissions the priority given to children in public care was discussed. It is a statutory requirement that children in public care (like children with a statement of SEN) are given high priority. It appears that grammar schools are applying this criterion but there is mixed practice regarding its inclusion in admissions policies.

One school had been given legal advice that, as this is a statutory requirement, it was not necessary to state it within the admissions policy and this advice has been followed.

This appears to be in breach of the Admissions Code of Practice which states:

'Children who are in public care (looked after children) must now be given top priority in the oversubscription criteria for all schools.'

Admission authorities are required to give highest priority to children in care in their oversubscription criteria.'

There is inconsistency within the grammar schools' admissions information and the Slough Admissions Booklet for these schools; this inconsistency could lead to misunderstanding on the part of carers.

The criterion is clearly stated in the Slough Booklet (p7) for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools.

Recommendations 2.4

The LA issue clarification to all schools, having sought further legal advice, to confirm the position regarding children in public care and the explicit inclusion of the relevant priority in written admission policies.

All published information to be consistent in all publications.

2.5 Earlier testing

Currently the 11+ test is taken in the autumn term (November) and there has been some debate about earlier testing.

The School Admissions Code now states that:

*Grammar schools and other schools, or their admission authorities, which are permitted to use selection by ability or aptitude, **should** ensure that parents are informed of the outcome of entry tests before they make their applications for other schools.(2.92)*

Currently there are no grammar schools in Slough operating earlier testing but Slough Grammar School is considering introducing this for 2010 entry and plans to include this in the annual consultation on

admissions in the autumn of 2009. The school already holds open evenings for year 5 children and their families in July each year.

Discussions with Headteachers showed a variety of views:

Some Headteachers could see the merits of an earlier test, with parents knowing the results prior to application but perceptions varied as to whether this would be welcomed by primary colleagues as it would allow more time to focus on Year 6 or whether it would be unpopular and also might put pressure on children too early (Heads assumed that testing may be necessary in the summer term but it is interesting to note that some other LAs – see below – run tests in September.) It would be crucial to seek parents' views early. One Headteacher was of the view that parents may be able to challenge the LA and schools as currently they do not have all information available at the point of application as they have not got 11+ results. With results known prior to application parents would be in a better position to be making an informed choice.

It was also stated that there could be a down side if the test was earlier and there were insufficient grammar school places for all Slough residents at grammar schools.

Headteachers were concerned about the appropriateness of holding open evenings in the summer term and the logistical difficulties this might cause.

This is clearly an issue for the grammar schools themselves who carry out all the administration and organisation of these tests.

Other LAs:

Kent holds the test in September; results in October and CAF closing date in November.

Sutton tests in September; results are early October and CAF later in October.

Recommendations 2.5

Whilst this is an issue for the grammar schools themselves, given the School Admissions Code recommendation, discussion could take place about earlier testing. The debate could be had amongst Primary and Secondary Headteachers and the LA; the educational and other implications for children and their families could be explored further.

Should any change to testing arrangements be introduced at any time this should be done with a long lead in time to enable full consultation with parents.

Further research could be carried out to find out more about the impact where this has been introduced in other LAs.

3. Summary of Recommendations

Overall

In order to take forward a number of the issues raised in this report a Task and Finish Group might be established with Headteachers and the LA. Such a group could explore issues further and commission further research work and analysis by the LA with a view to making any initial

recommendations early in the autumn, to feed into the annual consultation in the autumn of 2009 for the 2010 round of admissions and in respect of any ongoing good practice.

Recommendations 2.1

In borough / Out borough / Distance as a Criterion

LA to explore further the arrangements in other LAs where such criteria exist to find out impact and equity of such arrangements.

The LA to discuss with all secondary schools further; the LA to discuss with any grammar school which might consider using some method of distance as a main criterion and, if in agreement, to explore further the range of models that might be used: proximity, area, top scores followed by proximity etc.; carry out a detailed mapping to identify what the change in intake would have been for that grammar school and its surrounding non-selective schools and share the data to inform debate.

Recommendation 2.2

Compliance of local arrangements with Coordinated Admissions Arrangements:

All admissions authorities within Slough should comply with DCSF recommendations.

Recommendations 2.3.1

Clarity of Information

Information in all admissions policies should be reviewed for consistency and clarity.

Slough Borough Council should continue to review its admissions brochure on an annual basis.

Briefings should be held for both Primary and Secondary Headteachers and others involved in admissions to ensure equal understanding of LA and schools' processes and the CAF process.

A briefing should be held for elected members and MPs in the autumn term to provide information about the CAF / admissions process, criteria and data such as in-borough and out-borough.

Recommendations 2.3.2

Data and Information Sharing

The LA and schools should continue to take every opportunity to work closely together throughout the admissions process, to minimise administration and streamline the process, keeping one another informed about progress and sharing data, in order to inform robust discussion about issues based upon accurate and shared information.

Since only the Local Authority should offer school places, coordination should extend beyond March to ensure clarity for parents and a smoother process.

Whilst the LA is present at primary school meetings about admissions this could be expanded to include more secondary school open evenings.

The details of enhancing coordination could be one of the issues which an Admissions Task and Finish group might address.

Recommendations 2.4
Children in Public Care

The LA issue clarification to all schools, having sought further legal advice, to confirm the position regarding children in public care and the explicit inclusion of the relevant priority in written admission policies.

All published information to be consistent in all publications.

Recommendations 2.5
Earlier Testing

Whilst this is an issue for the grammar schools themselves, given the School Admissions Code recommendation, discussion could take place about earlier testing. The debate could be had amongst Primary and Secondary Headteachers and the LA; the educational and other implications for children and their families could be explored further.

Should any change to testing arrangements be introduced at any time this should be done with a long lead in time to enable full consultation with parents.

Further research could be carried out to find out more about the impact where this has been introduced in other LAs.

Interviewees:

Hilda Clarke: Headteacher Langley Grammar School

Julian King- Harris: Headteacher Herschel Grammar School

Margaret Lenton: Headteacher Slough Grammar School

John McAteer: Headteacher St Bernard's Grammar School

Jeff Richardson: Headteacher Wexham School

Bill Alexander; Assistant Director Raising Achievement SBC

Tony Browne: Head of School Services SBC

| Local Authority | Distance Criteria |
|---------------------|---|
| Kent | Variety of approaches across schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity of child's home to school measured in a number of ways • Children living in, or attending primary schools in, xxxxx and surrounding villages (xxxxxx postcode) ; • Named feeder schools; • Towns / areas prioritised according to access to a grammar school |
| Bucks | Variety: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catchment area • First by rank within reserved area then beyond area |
| Bromley | One girl's school: Top 130 scorers in selection tests and applications accepted from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those within 7.5 mile radius of school • Within a 7.5 to 9 mile radius with sibling |
| Lincolnshire | Variety: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including: pupils living within the traditional catchment area (from x feeder primary schools) • Proximity to the child's home • Children who reside within 6.5 miles as the crow flies are defined as "in catchment" candidates. Should there be need to establish priority within category, it will go to the applicants with the higher V.R. scores • Eligible children whose permanent residence is within the school's designated area for free transport (traditional catchment area) with priority being given to the order of their aggregate scores in the entrance tests. |
| Sutton | 30 highest ranking score then ranked within 10k radius of school then beyond 50 highest then 80% of places to given radius then beyond to wider radius Also schools with pure ranking – mixed NB |

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Secondary Headteacher Admissions Group

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation 2.1

In borough, out borough, distances as a criterion

The outcome from the group reflects the letter from the non-selective Headteachers to the Chair of the Admissions Forum.

The group rejected the notion of distance as this could have an impact upon the non-selective schools across the town. 'To remove this cohort of pupils from our schools would be damaging – not only to examination groups, but also to the whole ethos, culture and atmosphere of our schools.'

The group did, however, agree to explore the residence of those young people who had passed the 11+ examination but failed to gain a place in a grammar schools in Slough – estimated to be 30.

It was agreed to keep the situation under review and to revisit, in the light of 2009 admissions, to assess whether the 2008 situation was an isolated year or whether there was significant trend. The Headteachers of the grammar schools are exploring alternative criteria including distance.

Recommendation 2.2

Compliance of local arrangements with co-ordinated admissions arrangements.

The group agreed to this recommendation and that many had already moved to compliance.

Recommendation 2.3

2.3.1 Clarity of Information

This practice is already in place. It was agreed to hold briefings for headteachers regarding the process.

The issue of briefing for elected members to be discussed at Admissions Forum to identify process and way forward

2.3.2 Data and information sharing

There is effective communication between schools and the LA in order to share data and information

Recommendation 2.4

Children in Public Care

It was agreed that children in public care had to be highest criteria for admissions and this to be reflected in ALL admissions policies.

Recommendation 2.5

Earlier Testing

There are points in favour and against earlier testing.

- There are significant benefits to the LA in that it would alleviate the issue of allocating first preferences, in that if young people did not pass the 11+, then a grammar school would not be chosen;
- Parents and young people would know the result of the 11+ test prior completing the Common Application Form;
- Issues regarding dates and times of testing – early in year 6, summer term year 5;
- Detraction from Key Stage 2 tests;
- Organisation of open/information evenings – timing in conjunction with the test.

The group did, however, agree to revisit in the light of any changes to the Code of Practice.

HERSCHEL GRAMMAR SCHOOL - ADMISSIONS POLICY

1. The school's standard admission number is 120.
2. Pupils will be admitted at the age of 11 by reference to their ability and aptitude which will be determined by their performance in entrance tests consisting of Verbal Reasoning and Non-Verbal Reasoning tests set by the National Foundation for Educational Research. The procedure for application and testing will be published by the school each year.
3. Where the number of pupils who have achieved the required standard in the tests by gaining an overall score of 111 or more exceeds the number of places available, places will be allocated according to the following oversubscription criteria in this order of priority:
 - (i) Looked After Children who have reached the required standard;
 - (ii) pupils with special educational needs (where written evidence is supplied from a recognised authority specialising in the particular needs of the pupil) who have or in the view of Governors should have reached the required standard;
 - (iii) the next 70 pupils in rank order of performance in the tests;
 - (iv) proximity to the school. Distance will be measured in a straight line from the front door of the child's home address (including flats) to the main entrance gate of the school, using Slough's Geographical Information System (GIS), with those closer to the school receiving the higher priority.
4. In the event of one or more eligible pupils being tied for a final place or places within criteria (i), (ii) or (iii), priority will be decided according to proximity to the school. Distance will be measured in a straight line from the front door of the child's home address (including flats) to the main entrance gate of the school, using Slough's Geographical Information System (GIS), with those closer to the school receiving the higher priority.
5. A waiting list will be held for all eligible pupils but who may not be offered a place initially due to oversubscription. This waiting list will operate for one term after the commencement of the academic year and places will be offered in accordance with the oversubscription criteria set out above.
6. No child will be admitted to the school, other than at the start of Year 7, unless there are available places and:
 - (i) they are transferring from another grammar school, or
 - (ii) they have **not** already taken the 11+ test, reside in the area (as defined by 10 below) and are successful in the school's entrance examination.

Any pupil who has taken the 11+ test will not be permitted to re-sit an entrance examination for Herschel Grammar School whilst at statutory school age.

7. The maximum number of places in the Sixth Form is 250. The intended number of students admitted from outside the school is 30. There are a variety of Sixth Form courses on offer each with different entry requirements. Full details of these are published annually in the Sixth Form prospectus and applicants should contact the school for information. A supportive school report in the form of a letter from the current Headteacher will be required.

8. The school will establish arrangements for appeals against non-admission, which will be independent of the school.
9. The school will publish details of admissions and appeals arrangements every year.
- 10 The 'area' for Herschel is defined with a parental or legal guardian address in the following districts: Slough; Burnham; Farnham Common; Farnham Royal; Windsor; Iver; Iver Heath; Datchet; Colnbrook.

Ombudsman Report Summary

Introduction

The Ombudsman received a complaint from a parent about the admissions procedure at Herschel Grammar School. The complaint concerned an application for a place in September 2008. The Ombudsman completed the investigation in December 2008.

The Complaint

The parent applied for a place at two schools in the Grammar School Consortium. Langley Grammar School was the first preference and Herschel Grammar the second preference. Pupils scoring 111 in the 11+ test are eligible for a grammar place and the pupil concerned scored 114. Langley Grammar could not offer a place because places are offered to those scoring the highest marks first and the final pupil to be offered a place scored 117. Herschel Grammar only considered applicants who had put the school first on the application form and offered places down to a score of 111. The parent considered that his child should have been offered a place at Herschel Grammar School because he had a higher score than some of the children who had been offered places.

Findings

The Admissions Code states that admission authorities for all maintained schools must not operate first preference first admission arrangements. In other words they must not consider applicants who have put the school first before any others. All applicants should be considered at the same time regardless of preference. For this reason the Ombudsman decided that the pupil should have been offered a place at Herschel Grammar School and an offer has now been made. The Consortium Grammar Schools have agreed to change the way places are offered for the 2009 intake and not operate first preference first. All applicants will now be considered, not just those who place the school first on the application form.

Implications

The Grammar Schools are now complying fully with the admissions Code of Practice. However it is possible that compliance may result in fewer Slough resident pupils securing a place at Herschel for September 2009. For example: Child A lives in Slough and places Herschel first on the application form and scores 111. Child B lives outside Slough and places Langley Grammar first on the application form and Herschel Grammar second. Child B is not offered a place at Langley Grammar because the school cuts off at a score of 117.

Herschel is required to consider child B and child A's applications together and makes offers down to a score of 113. Child A is therefore not offered a place. This should be a temporary problem for 2009 because Herschel Grammar is proposing to give some priority to Slough residents for 2010 rather than offering places in test score order.

DETERMINATION

Case reference: ADA/001484
Objector: Slough Admission Forum
Admission Authority: Slough Grammar School
Date of decision: 19 December 2008

Determination

In accordance with section 90 (3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I do not uphold the objection lodged by Slough Admission Forum.

The Referral

1. Slough Admission Forum (“the objector”) has referred an objection to the Adjudicator about the admission arrangements (“the arrangements”) for Slough Grammar School (“the school”) for September 2009. The objections are listed in paragraph 6 below.

Jurisdiction

2. These arrangements were determined under section 89(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (“the Act”) by the governing body, which is the admission authority for the school. The determined arrangements were dated June 2008 and the Admission Forum considered them at its meeting on 9 July and submitted an objection by 31 July 2008. I am satisfied that this objection has been properly referred to me in accordance with section 90 of the Act, and that it falls within my jurisdiction.

Procedure

3. In coming to my conclusions, I have had full regard to the Act and Regulations made thereunder, the Schools Admissions Code (“the Code”) and all the evidence presented so far as it is relevant to the objection. I have also had regard to the relevant provisions of The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, The Race Relations Act 1976, The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and The Human Rights Act 1998.
4. The documents I have considered in reaching my decision include:
 - The objector’s completed form of objection received on 1 August 2008 and supporting documents;
 - The school’s response of 29 August 2008 and supporting documentation;
 - The published admission arrangements for the school for 2008/09;
 - The OSA determination of 16 July 2007;
 - Correspondence from the local authority relating to the timing of the objection.

The Objection

5. There were three parts to the objection in relation to the oversubscription criteria:
 - (i) To the clarity attached to whether the school requires applicants to meet a minimum academic standard to qualify for a place;
 - (ii) To the clarity attached to the admission of pupils with special educational needs described in paragraph 6 of the School's admission arrangements in which there is reference to written evidence of special educational needs from 'a recognised professional of an appropriate discipline';
 - (iii) To the provision in paragraph 10 of the admission arrangements for the admission of up to 150 additional pupils in Year 12 without the school having formally consulted when this policy was introduced.

Consideration and Conclusions

i) Minimum academic standard

6. Paragraph 5 of the arrangements states that the required minimum score in the tests is 111 and deals with oversubscription against this criterion. The objector asserts that 'paragraph 5 is negated by both paragraphs 3 and 8. I have considered these paragraphs, beginning with Paragraph 3. This states that 'the school is not required to fill all the places if pupils do not meet the admissions criteria.' This sentence could be drafted more clearly if the school intends it to provide for paragraph 2.67 of the current Code. I **recommend** that the governors, when determining their arrangements for 2010/11 should amend the words 'admissions criteria' to 'required standard'. The Code (2.67) states that grammar schools are permitted to leave places unfilled if they have insufficient applicants of the required standard.
7. I note that in an adjudication last year, the adjudicator determined that there should be an additional sentence in the criteria which informed parents about the pass mark and any years in which pupils were admitted below the pass mark. It is highly regrettable that this information has been removed from the 2009/2010 arrangements, and I **recommend** that the governors reinstate the information in future arrangements in order to provide the clarity and freedom from doubt required by paragraph 1.65 of the Code.
8. Paragraph 8 deals with the possibility of under-subscription, by inferring that pupils will be admitted below the qualifying mark. Paragraph 8 refers in turn to 'their rank order in the test and the tie break rules set out in paragraph 6'. Possibly this is an error, since tie break criteria are set out in paragraph 7. Nevertheless these are the determined arrangements before me. Paragraph 6 in the arrangements before me is concerned with the admission of pupils with special needs.

ii) Special educational needs

9. Paragraph 8 states that in the event of under-subscription, the governors may admit pupils strictly according to their rank order in the test *and* (my italics) the tie break rules set out in paragraph 6. Paragraph 6 is entirely concerned with the admission of children with special educational needs. Possibly this is an error, since tie break criteria are set out in paragraph 7. Nevertheless these are the determined arrangements before me. While a minimum academic standard

is required for admission, it is right that but there may be an exception in the case of particular special educational needs which affect a candidate from fulfilling the requirements of the selection test or the cannot fulfil the normal attainment criterion. The objector also takes exception to written evidence of special educational need 'from a recognised professional in an appropriate discipline.' The objector wants these words deleted. Since the school in its arrangements commits in all such cases 'to seek to make arrangements in conjunction with the local authority' I consider there is sufficient independent involvement in the process.

10. The objector says that the arrangements do not 'ensure equity and fair access' as required by Paragraph 1.65 of the School Admissions Code. However paragraph 1.67 insists that admission authorities must not disadvantage 'a child...with special educational needs'. In the absence of evidence that the school acts unfairly or inequitably in applying its admission arrangements, I see no reason to uphold this aspect of the objection.

iii) Consultation about sixth form admissions

11. The consultation arrangements adopted by the school are not part of the admission arrangements and therefore do not fall within my jurisdiction. I refer the objector to the advice given in the adjudicator's determination of 16 July 2007.

Conclusions

12. Although I do not uphold the objection to the school's admission arrangements, I find the arrangements could be clearer and more transparent. I have made recommendations for the admission authority when determining their arrangements fro 2010/11 in the light of consultation and in accordance with the Admissions Code applicable at the time.

Determination

13. In accordance with section 90 (3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, I do not uphold the objection lodged by Slough Admission Forum.

Dated: 19 December 2008

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Dr Peter Matthews

Annex to ADA/001484

Slough Grammar School Admissions Policy 2009-2010

1. The school's planned admission number for September 2008 is 145.
2. The school will give priority to children in public care as required by the Admissions Code.
3. As a Grammar School, the school is not required to fill all the places if pupils do not meet the admissions criteria. Pupils will be admitted to the school at the age of 11 by reference to their ability and aptitude, which will be determined by their performance in entrance examinations consisting of Verbal Reasoning, Non Verbal Reasoning and Mathematics tests set by the National Foundation for Educational Research.
4. The Governors will buy, supply and run a corresponding test to that run by the three consortium Grammar Schools, having regard to the statuses of Slough Grammar School, i.e. Language College and Science College. The test will be run on an appropriate Saturday (or Saturdays) in November 2007. In this way parents should have all the information about results available when they come to select schools for their child.
5. The required minimum score in the tests is 111. Where the number of pupils gaining 111 or more in the tests exceeds the number of places available, places will be allocated (subject to what follows below) according to the rank order of performance in the admission tests.
6. Section 324 of the Education Act 1996 requires the school to admit a child with a Statement of Special Education Needs which names the school. In cases where pupils have written evidence of special educational needs (from a recognised professional in an appropriate discipline) the governors may take account of the pupil's circumstances in deciding; (i) the appropriate arrangements to be made to enable such pupils to take the test and; (ii) whether to offer the pupil a place should they have failed to reach 111 on the entrance examination. In all such cases, the school will seek to make arrangements in conjunction with the Local Education Authority.
7. In the event of one or more eligible pupils being tied for the final place or places at the school, priority will be decided according to the following criteria:
 - (i) children in public care (Looked After Children). These children **must** always rank first, in accordance with the school's mandatory duty under para 2.7 of the School Admissions Code of Practice;
 - (ii) proximity to the school as normally measured from the main gate of the school to the front door of the child's main or principal home (and/or the front door of a flat) by the easiest walking route or easiest route by public transport
8. In the event of under subscription, the governors may admit pupils strictly according to their rank order in the test and the tie break rules set out in paragraph 6 above. This does not replace a parent's formal right of appeal against refusal of a place.

9. Admissions after the initial year of entry will depend upon the availability of a place and suitability of the pupil for a grammar school education as determined by admission tests. This includes admission to the Sixth Form where the relevant admission test will be performance in GCSE examinations or NARIC verified equivalent.

10. In relation to the Sixth Form, the school gives priority to pupils who are already pupils at the school. As with all applicants, they must meet the entry requirements specified by the school for their preferred courses. The planned admission number for Year 12 for applicants who are not existing pupils is 150. There are a variety of Sixth Form courses on offer, each with different entry requirements. Full details of these are published annually in the Sixth Form Prospectus and the school website. Applicants should contact the school for further information. Academic references will be taken up from the current school.

11. The school will establish arrangements for appeals against non-admission, which will be independent of the School and will follow local Admissions Forum guidance and the new Code of Practice.

12. Details of admissions and appeals arrangements will be published by the school every year by 15th April.

13. The Admissions Committee for the Governing Body will publish decisions about admissions and non-admissions to Slough Grammar School annually.

Reviewed June 2008

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