

These notes were prepared by Scott Bagshaw for KPHE. They are not the formal response from the LA to the consultation.

A copy of the School admissions code for consultation can be downloaded from the DfE website at the link below:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1744&external=no&menu=1>

Comments to be read in conjunction with proposed paragraphs in the code

1.7f The code has been amended to allow Children of staff to be given priority in admissions criteria. This is fundamentally unfair. It may make it easier for teachers, but why is their profession or that of the cleaner in the school; any different to the person who works in a shop or library next door?

If this is retained there really needs to be greater clarity around what constitutes school staff. If someone takes a P/T admin job in the office for 3 months, gets their child into the school then resigns – would the school regard that place as having been secured fairly (I don't think parents will see it like that) – someone taking a short term let to try to gain access would have the place withdrawn up until the end of the first term, this would be no different.

2.2 - Says CAFs "must allow parents to supply their address (including documentary evidence in support)". KCC currently defers this responsibility to schools. Does this mean it will need to be an LA function? It says we must allow the inclusion of evidence, but this significantly complicates a parent's ability to apply on line – presumably they would need to scan evidence – by allowing schools to check this post offer (The benefit is they only need check the applications of those offered a place and not the hundreds that apply) It's far more bureaucratic if we have provide an opportunity to present evidence at the point of application.

2.5 - Limits proof of address to things that don't include "financial status" or info about marital status. This makes it difficult for parents to evidence where they live – and the reason it is prohibited is that it might influence the school in their ranking – if they don't have to prove residency until post offer – as in Kent, it can't influence the ranking decision anyway.

2.6 - Says parents can use the CAF to apply for 6th forms. Is this because of the change in legal age and will we need to start running a 6th form round?

Government needs to recognise that the way in which pupils apply to 6th form has moved on.– in Kent we have the choices4you website where children/young adults log on, identify courses they are interested in and are directed to all the providers both 6th form and colleges etc. The code should provide some allowances for where LA's are more joined up in there education offers to students. A conscious effort has been made to make the course the focus of the application for 14-19 rather than the institution.

2.11 – States LA’s only need to allocate if places are available? Is the revised code intentionally saying that LA’s do not need to allocate a place at a school for its resident children if it has failed to provide sufficient places in its area – this would seem to be a backward step – far better for parents to have a place to fall back on even if it is not a school they want whilst seeking something closer to home.

2.16 The code suggests that admission authorities must provide full or part time places for four year olds in their area.....it does not go on to clarify who has the final say. It is my view that the existing code makes it the parent who can demand full time education from the Sept after the child’s 4th birthday – the proposed wording leaves it unclear whether the school has the final say about whether it chooses to provide FT/PT education.

2.19 The admissions codes present and proposed require parents to apply to their ‘home’ LAs for a school place. When families are resident abroad they do not have a home LA which creates a problem.

It is clear that for crown servants and military personnel we can accept an applications whilst out of the country and LA’s use a UK base location for identifying the home LA and administering the applications but there is no such facility for someone who is working abroad of their own choice, and want to apply for a school place because of an intention to return to the UK – this need clarification – either LA should be allowed to refuse applications until they are UK residents or the requirement to apply to the home LA must be lifted for international applicants.

2.21 Removes the duty to coordinate in year admissions – if this is going to be the case – the code needs to include a requirement for schools to inform their home LA of accurate and up to date pupil roll data. LAs will have no way of championing parents or knowing if schools are acting fairly or in accordance with their admission procedures without this information. Parents need to be assured that if they are turned away from schools they can seek support from the LA.

3.16 This sets out the requirement on LAs to consult with schools etc before directions can be made for schools to admit challenging pupils. - One of the biggest factors delaying admission is school failing to respond to LA letters – with no response either way LA’s have to send follow up letters and then allow further time for these to be received. It would be very helpful for the code to include some requirement on schools to respond within a given time period of receipt of an email or letter and failure to do so constituting acceptance of the pupil.

More general observations not necessarily covered but worthy of consideration.

National offer day for Primary Admissions

There is an opportunity to set a National Offer Day for primary schools in the same way as is currently in place for Secondary. Following the previous consultation (because there was such conflicting timescales between different LA’s) the DfE were not minded to set a National offer day for the primary stage. This is a mistake and a missed opportunity. LAs are still expected to coordinate admissions for entry to

primary school in the same way as with the secondary round. An LA with several neighbours can set dates in its scheme to aim for an offer day that fits with the majority of its neighbouring LA's only to find that one might choose to set their process a month later which prevents accurate pupil data being sent to schools results in the potential for duel offers and disadvantage.

Although Kent is proactive and engages with neighbours in preparing its primary admissions scheme, this is additional work that would be removed if there was a single National offer date, all LAs could work back from it in their schemes. It would make sense if this was at the beginning of April so it happens a month after Secondary settles down.

Primary and Secondary prospectuses

Existing arrangements require composite prospectuses to be published by the 12 September for both primary and secondary. This (existing practice) can be confusing for parents – because the two schemes run at different times it would be helpful if secondary dates for publication remaining around September but LA's had the option to delay primary information booklets until November (In Kent they are not used until November for choosing primary schools anyway).

Coordinating Boarding school admissions – why??

Boarding schools (with the agreement of the home LA) should be allowed to withdraw from coordination in relation to allocating their boarding places. – These are often from international placements (military – foreign office personnel seeking places – they need to do separate assessments regarding suitability for boarding and only seek to confuse the normal admissions coordination process)

Issues relating to PAN flexibility:

Increase in PANs – impact on coordination

The code needs to clarify the timescales/process that would need to be followed if a school intends to increase its PAN. The LA cannot coordinate admissions fairly if places are allocated on offer day and then a few weeks later the school decides to admit an additional form of entry (unless it is clear that the additional offers must go to the next pupils on the ranked list as at offer day.

Increase in PANs – impact on fair access protocols/placing of pupils outside of the round

The proposed code implies that any school should be allowed to expand and should only really be challenged if it reaches a maximum capacity on health and safety grounds. If this is progressed there is a risk that schools may fill to capacity with capable children and be able to refuse entry to LAC children moving into the area, statemented children where the statement names the school and indeed they will be able to renege on their Fair Access Protocol responsibility because they would not be in a position to admit pupils without causing a real danger to other pupils due to fire

safety levels and other legislative restrictions that may be in place and identifying a maximum school capacity.

Increase in PANs – impact on other schools and transport – EIA

The flexibility and freedom to increase PANs may prevent other schools from being able to offer a quality curriculum if numbers fall as a result of unplanned expansion. These sorts of changes have the potential to significantly disadvantage children in those schools and I suspect an EIA will single out more detriment to some protected groups which may well be disproportionately high in those schools already struggling and facing a downward spiral – there doesn't appear to have been any mention of EIA's and I suspect this is something that could create a spanner in the works.

The future closure of schools as a result will have a direct and real impact on the cost of transport as pupils migrate to alternative school provision. This responsibility sits with the LA but it will have no resource to fund it.

Expansion of grammar school

The code should be clear about grammar schools and their ability to expand. If they are to be given the same freedoms as any other schools as has been suggested, there needs to be a recognition that this will be very detrimental to neighbouring non selective schools as the grammars will inevitably draw in less able pupils.