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To: Cabinet – 4 April 2011

Subject: PROPOSED CO-ORDINATED SCHEMES FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENT AND ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS 2012 /13

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To report on the outcome of the consultation on the proposed admission arrangements for transfer to Primary and Secondary schools in September 2012 and the scheme for In Year Casual Admissions. Cabinet is asked to determine the In Year Casual Admission process, the admission arrangements for the 2012 school year and determine the coordinated schemes for Primary & Secondary Admissions in Kent.

Introduction

1. (1) The Local Authority (LA), as the admissions authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, is required to consult on its proposed admission arrangements for these schools, and to determine its admission arrangements by 15 April each year.

(2) The Education Act 2002 introduced a duty on each LA, to formulate a scheme to co-ordinate admission arrangements for all maintained schools in its area and to take action to secure the agreement to the scheme by all admission authorities. In addition in 2010 a new requirement was introduced to coordinate casual in year admissions. A number of reservations about coordinating in year admissions have been expressed by both the LA and individual admission authorities. There has been a legal duty on the LA to coordinate this since September 2010 and a reluctant agreement has been reached by Kent Admission Authorities to work within the proposed arrangements if determined. Cabinet are requested to agree the Co-ordinated scheme for Admissions to Primary and Secondary schools in Kent for 2012 and determine the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.

(3) All admission arrangements identified in this document are outside the arrangements for pupils with statements of special education need which take place in accordance with the SEN Code of Practice (2001) Paragraph 5.72.

(4) The LA has consulted the headteachers and chairmen of governors of all Kent primary and secondary schools; neighbouring LAs; diocesan bodies; independent schools (which have pupils transferring to secondary schools); parents and parental groups on its proposals to co-ordinate admissions to all Kent Primary and Secondary schools in September 2012.

(5) The LA consulted with the Admissions Forum on the proposed changes prior to consultation. The Admissions Forum expressed its continued reservations regarding the duty on the LA to coordinate in year admissions but recognised it is a legal duty and supported the proposed schemes.

Consultation and Outcome

2. (1) The LA consultation ran from the 1 November 2010 to 14 January 2011 and considered the following aspects:

- a) The Primary Co-ordinated Admission Scheme including the In Year admissions process for 2012/13;
- b) The Secondary Co-ordinated Admission Scheme including the In Year admissions process for 2012/13;
- c) Over-subscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary, Infant and Junior schools
- d) Over-subscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary schools 2012/13.
- e) Published admission numbers for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary, Infant and Junior Schools 2012/13;
- f) Published admission numbers for Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary Schools 2012/13;
- g) The relevant statutory consultation areas for Primary and Secondary schools 2012/13;

(a) The Coordinated Primary Admissions Scheme 2012 incorporating the In Year admissions process

(2) All Admissions Authorities within Kent agreed to the proposed Co-ordinated Primary Admissions Scheme for 2012. The scheme is set out in a similar way to last year following broadly similar scheme dates.

The details of the scheme for determination is located in Appendix A

Feedback from this section of the consultation can be summarised as follows:

Initially, 20 Infant Junior and Primary schools refused to accept the proposed scheme; (Benenden, Boughton-Under-Blean, Brunswick House, Discovery, Eastling, Harcourt, High Halden, Istead Rise, Leeds & Broomfield, Leybourne, Maypole, Newlands, Nonington, Painters Ash, Riverhead, Ryarsh, Stansted, St James' Junior, St Joseph's and Wickhambreaux) stating concerns relating to the LA involvement in Casual in Year Admissions. A great many Kent schools and indeed LA Officers consider that admissions outside of the normal point of entry to schools should be managed by schools and this was the crux of their argument. *(It was made clear that it is presently a legal requirement to administer in year admissions through the LA and as a result each of the schools agreed to work within the scheme. It is clear that many schools and the LA is discontent at this ill thought through duty placed on LAs. Schools raised similar concerns last year most of which were realised, but there is little that can be done without a change in legislation).*

(b) The Coordinated Secondary Admissions Scheme 2012 incorporating the In Year admissions process

(3) The Secondary Coordinated Scheme was agreed by all Kent Admissions Authorities.

The details of the proposed scheme for determination are located in Appendix B

Feedback from this section of the consultation can be summarised as follows:

Two schools initially did not accept the scheme (The North School and Skinners Kent Academy) each raising similar concerns to those raised by primary schools in relations to the LA's role in processing In Year Casual Admissions. Officers explained that it is a legislative requirement that has been placed on the LA and this resulted in them agreeing to work within proposed scheme. The scheme dates have remained broadly similar for the last 3 years with no proposed changes other than the incorporation of the coordination of in year admissions. Feedback has however been received by Medway LA raising concerns that KCC has placed within its scheme a facility for exceptional late applications to be regarded as on time beyond the National closing date of 31 October up until 4 November. This is because the National Closing date falls at the end of half term and as a consequence many parents will not have had the opportunity to discuss the outcome of any selection test results with their primary headteacher before making their secondary school preferences. The scheme dates are similar to last year, but Medway officers have suggested this caused some discontent in Medway as they received a number of complaints from Medway parents that felt they were disadvantaged in not having as long to make their school choices as Kent parents. It is an understandable concern, however it should not be forgotten that the selective process in Medway is different to that in Kent and their process allows appeals against test results that parents will not know the outcome of until after the closing date for applications. The Kent scheme offers no such appeal against a selective decision but presently ensures parents know the outcome of the assessment including an opportunity to discuss this with their child's primary headteacher before the closing date. It is therefore considered to be in the best interest of Kent parents to allow these extra few days when schools will be open to assist parents.

(c) The Oversubscription Criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Infant Junior and Primary schools in Kent

The proposed wording for the oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled Infant Junior and Primary Schools is different from that used in 2011. The tick box previously used to indicate that a parent has chosen a particular voluntary controlled school because it is a faith school has been removed. This change has been made following discussion with the relevant Dioceses and the Admissions Forum in order to bring the oversubscription criteria in line with the requirements of the School Admissions Code. In addition, some infant and junior schools which were geographically close together but not formally linked have chosen to become linked. This will allow a sibling connection to be recognised across the two schools, and will allow the Junior school to give priority for admission to children from the linked infant school

Details of the oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled Infant Junior and Primary Schools are located in appendix C (1)

Feedback to this part of the consultation on this can be summarised as follows:

Two Schools commented on the difficulties the tick box caused and welcomed its removal as they had had local siblings denied places in their village school because they had not ticked the box. *(This was always a problem faced each year which caused significant anguish to parents to the extent that some schools simply advised all parents to tick the box)*. Four schools considered that its removal would diminish the ethos of the school and its distinctiveness. *(This is an odd position to take, there was no requirement to show any connection to the church previously, the box was merely used as an indicator as to whether parents were choosing a school because it was a church school – the teachings and ethos of the school needn't change in the slightest – the removal of the box will simply seek to ensure the school's local community has priority)*. Two of the 4 schools suggested they would be keen to introduce faith based oversubscription criteria requiring a commitment to the church to receive priority. *(Any such introduction would require a full consultation by LA in future years and is unlikely to be in keeping with the general position that children should be given priority for admission to their nearest schools)*

One parent raised concerns relating to faith-based criteria and how this prevented her from securing a place in her local schools as a non church-goer. *(Clearly this was aimed at Voluntary Aided schools since no voluntary controlled schools apply such restrictions)*. One parent felt that there should be no distinction between Children in Care and Adopted children when applying priority for admissions. *(Whilst accepting there will often be similar complexities, this would be difficult to introduce in a fair and equitable way. An adopted child becomes part of a family unit, but a child in LA care will often need additional support especially in relation to frequency of moves and benefits associated with settling into school quickly when a placement is found – this is why there is a legal requirement for them to be given priority for admission)*.

(d) The Oversubscription Criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary schools in Kent

The proposed wording for the oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled Secondary Schools is broadly similar to that used in 2011. There has been a

change in arrangements proposed for some Ashford secondary schools to try to combat some of the problems faced by children in rural areas unable to secure places in their nearest schools. The change will basically mean that these children will have priority for admission to their nearest school over someone who may live closer but have easy access to alternative schools.

Details of the oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled Secondary Schools in Kent are located in appendix C (2)

Feedback to this part of the consultation can be summarised as follows:

One school raised its concerns (again) in regard to the Dover Grammar Schools being able to admit pupils both through the LA testing arrangements and through their own 'Dover Tests'. It considered that as a result those children at the higher end of the ability range were being drawn out of local non selective schools disproportionately which impacted negatively on those schools. The LA considers this to be a valid point, but the Schools Adjudicator has not upheld either of the challenges brought against the admission arrangements for Dover Grammar School for Boys in recent years. The LA has therefore allowed Dover Grammar School for Girls to use the same dual testing arrangements so that boys and girls are treated in the same way. One school commented on the proposal relating specifically to the North and Towers schools and welcomed the proposed changes. One school commented that the arrangements should continue to be monitored to ensure there is not unintended advantage caused to children living between the two schools. *(It's hard to see how this might happen, because before the change a child living between the two schools would arguably be in a better position to secure one of the preferred schools by the very nature of the place of residence; if anything this makes it more equitable.)*

(e) Published Admission Numbers

The proposed Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary, Infant and Junior schools are identified in Appendix C (3) and for Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary schools are detailed in Appendix C (4). Please note that the LA can only determine the admission number for schools where it is the Admissions Authority and the schools listed fall into this category.

(f) Relevant Statutory Consultation Area

Details of the relevant statutory consultation areas have not changed from 2011/12. Details for the Primary arrangements are in appendix C (5) and Secondary arrangements in appendix C (6).

Recommendations

7. Cabinet is requested TO ACCEPT AND DETERMINE
- a) The Coordinated Primary Admissions Scheme 2012 incorporating the In Year admissions process as detailed in Appendix A
 - b) The Coordinated Secondary Admissions Scheme 2012 incorporating the In Year admissions process as detailed in Appendix B
 - c) The oversubscription criteria relating to Community and Voluntary Controlled Infant, Junior and Primary schools in Kent as detailed in Appendix C (1)
 - d) The oversubscription criteria relating to Community and Voluntary controlled Secondary schools in Kent as detailed in Appendix C (2)
 - e) The Published Admissions Number for Community and Voluntary Controlled Infant, Junior and Primary Schools as set out in Appendix C (3)
 - f) The Published Admissions Number for Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary Schools as set out in Appendix C (4)
 - g) The relevant statutory consultation areas for Kent primary schools as detailed in Appendix C (5) and the relevant statutory consultation areas for Kent Secondary Schools as set out in Appendix C (6)

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