



ACE Report

Review of the Admission Arrangements for Children and Young People with SEND

For decision For discussion For information

SUMMARY

This is an updated report requested by ACE Committee in January 2021

OWNER

Gill Dunlop

VERSION

Version 2

DATE

20 October 2021

REVIEW DATE

As required

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TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDRENS SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	20 October 2021	AGENDA ITEM:	
TITLE:	REVIEW OF SEND ADMISSIONS POLICIES AND ARRANGEMENTS		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	ASHLEY PEARCE	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
SERVICE:	BfFC	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update requested by ACE Committee in response to the SCHOOL ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS 2022/2 report presented at the 20 January 2021 meeting where the School Admissions arrangements for Community Primary Schools in Reading for the school year 2022/23 was presented for determination.
- 1.2 The report states at 3.7 that ‘BfFC are reviewing the admissions policies/procedure of maintained special schools and resourced bases within mainstream and academy schools. Legal advice is being sort. Any finding will be brought back to ACE committee at a late date’.
- 1.3 ACE Committee requested that a report be submitted to the Committee in March 2021 following a review of SEND admissions policies and arrangements. This was deferred to the October 2021 meeting.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That ACE Committee notes the progress following a review of SEND admissions policies and arrangements.

- 2.2 That ACE Committee comments on whether a review of The Avenue School Admission Policy required.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 School admissions are subject to detailed requirements, set out in law and particularly the School Admissions Code 2021, published by the Government and approved by Parliament. As part of those requirements, local authorities must draw up schemes for coordinating admissions to all maintained schools in their area.
- 3.2 Children with Education, Health and Care Plans are not placed in school through the usual School Admissions policies and arrangements. They are placed in schools by Special Educational Needs Teams through a consultation process with schools based on the needs reflected in the Plan; this could be a mainstream school with or without a Resource Base or a special school. The relevant legislation is the Special Education Needs Code of Practice (2015).
- 3.3 In order that the School Admissions team can manage the spaces available in mainstream schools, the SEND Case Officer informs the Admissions team where children and young people have been placed. This only applies to children of statutory school age.

4. THE PROPOSAL – update on SEND policies and arrangements

- 4.1 The Revised Holy Brook Admissions Policy was agreed by ACE Committee on 1 July 2021.

The impact of the revised Holy Brook policy is that there is a greater understanding of processes and communication between BfFC and the school, and with other Local Authorities who request places at the school. A Senior Case Officer now attends every admissions panel and co-administrates this with the school. The process and procedures will need further review when Oak Tree Special School opens in September 2022 to ensure that the two schools' admissions processes are aligned.

- 4.2 The Avenue School admissions process has not been revised as it is an Academy. Communication between the SEND Team and the school is very frequent and open; the admissions arrangement is transparent and not a cause for concern. The SEND Manager will review the Admissions process if ACE requests this.
- 4.3 Similarly, Cranbury Alternative Provision and Hamilton Special School admissions policies have not been reviewed as they are academies. However, the SEND Team Manager has reviewed the procedures and communications regarding the

consultation process for admissions to both schools. The impact of this is that the SEND Team is receiving more timely responses to consultations and applications.

- 4.4 The Service Level Agreements for all Resourced Base are being reviewed for sign off by the Director of Education and Deborah Glassbrook (Executive Director of Children’s Services – Education, Early Help & Social Care)

The new admissions process is written and agreed for Resourced Bases. Although not a ‘formal’ document, it makes the consultation and admission process clear. Feedback from Headteachers in schools where Resourced Bases are placed report that it is very helpful to have a step by step guide. Admissions panels for Resourced Bases are held every 6 weeks (each new term) and attended by Headteachers and chaired by SEND Team Manager.

- 4.5 The building of the Oak Tree School in Wokingham, a project led by Wokingham Borough Council and the DfE, and for which RBC and BFFC are key stakeholders, has been delayed – having been due to open in September 2022. On-going conversations are being had by all parties around a revised date; this being dependent on the requirement, or not, to re-procure the contractor building the School. If re-procurement is not necessary, the School could be open for September 2023 (but the DfE currently, will not formally commit to this date). If it is necessary to re-procure the contractor, then this will delay the opening beyond 2023. This procurement question also has an impact on where the particular cohort of children, proposed to have attended Oak Tree, will now be placed from September 2022. The Trust that will run the School (Maiden Erlegh Trust) could possibly be willing to open Oak Tree in another School Building for one academic year from September 2022 but will not run the School at another site beyond this date. If opening the School on its designated site from September 2023 proves not be an option by November or December this year, those children proposed to have attended the Oak Tree will have to be placed in other, likely more expensive, settings. If this is the case, it is likely to significantly impact on High Needs Block funding, which is already overspent. This matter is being discussed with the DfE.

4.6 A new SEND consultation letter has been drafted explaining the purpose of consultations to schools i.e. to seek an indicative view, as to whether the school can meet the child’s needs, to inform SEND Panel decision making about applications and placement. This has resolved the issue of schools inviting parents to meetings and visits, prematurely and raising expectations before a placement has been agreed in principle by the SEND EHC panel.

- 4.7 SLAs will be reviewed by the BFFC Commissioning Team in conjunction with the SEND Team to ensure parity and compliance with commissioning policy.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The admission schemes contribute to the aims of Ensuring that there is good education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading
- 5.2 They also contribute to the aims to establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit
- 5.3 Similarly, this applies to the placement of children under the SEND code of Practice (2015)

6 ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 6.2 Within School Admissions arrangements, where possible children are placed as near as possible to their local school. Parental choice and the need to divert children to other schools that are not their preference, means that some children are placed in schools outside their local community. This can have an impact on travel by public transport and in cars.
- 6.3 Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan may be placed outside their local area within Reading in mainstream school with or without a Resourced Base or in a special school.
- 6.4 Some children due their needs are placed in schools out of borough. The SEND Strategy is delivering work to increase the number of SEND places available in Reading through satellite classes in liaison with The Avenue School and through Resources Bases in mainstream schools for children with Social Communication Difficulties.
- 6.5 The opening of Oak Tree special school, although just within the Wokingham border, will enable children to remain closer to their communities and reduce travel.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".
- 7.2 This duty has been met regarding School Admissions arrangements. We have a statutory duty to consult every 7 years on the coordinated scheme for school admissions. We last consulted between 17 October 2018 and 10 December 2018 as per the relevant. The outcome from that was report to ACE on the 14 February 2019.

7.3 The SEND Strategy has been widely consulted upon including Reading Families Forum. The very positive outcome of the SEND Inspection evidences coproduction and engagement.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this decision.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Compliance with School Admissions Code (2021)

9.2 Compliance with SEND code of Practice (2015)

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None arising directly from this report

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

Comment(s) obtained

(delete any not applicable)

DEPT	NAME	COMMENT
Finance		
HR		
Communications		