

THE EXECUTIVE

17 JUNE 2003

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION ARTS AND LIBRARIES

CONSULTATION ON ADMISSIONS CRITERIA AND PROCESSES - THE RESULTS

FOR DECISION

Summary

This report provides the details of the responses to the recent Admissions consultation and outlines the options for future action.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the report and to agree the recommendations of the Admissions Forum for further action:

Primary and Secondary Co-ordination

1. To adopt all proposed changes in time for the 2004 Admissions Round:
 - to have three preferences on the Primary application form and four on the Secondary form;
 - to restrict "in-Borough transfers" to the first day of each term; and
 - to manage all waiting lists through the Admissions Section.
2. To undertake follow-up work through the press and the website so that the description "in-Borough transfer" is clearly defined for parents and schools;
3. To discuss the full detail of the Primary waiting list procedures with Primary headteachers before they are finalised and published; and
4. To circulate the revised Secondary waiting list procedures to all Secondary Headteachers.

Secondary Transfer

1. To move to an "equal preference" model of allocating pupils to schools;
2. To replace the Link School criterion with "Distance from home to school";
3. To work closely with Leisure and Environmental Services to maintain an up to date list of all recognised footpaths, by-ways and public highways and link with schools to investigate any other routes regularly used by parents;
4. For secondary schools with split sites, to measure distance from the home to the "Main site"; and
5. To phase in the removal of the sibling criterion (secondary transfer only).

Contact Officer: Jenny Crossley	Head of Policy and Planning	Tel: 020 227 3507 Fax: 020 227 3275 Minicom: 020 227 3180 E-Mail: jenny.crossley@lbbd.gov.uk
Kathryn Livingston	Consultant/Admissions and Support to Schools)	Tel: 020 8227 3435 Fax: 020 8227 3275 Minicom: 020 8227 3180 E-Mail: kathryn.livingston@lbbd.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1. The FORUM commended the consultation document to the Executive as the basis for consultation at its meeting on April 2nd 2003 and the Executive agreed to the consultation on April 15th 2003.
- 1.2. 500 copies of the detailed consultation document were printed and sent out to neighbouring admission Authorities and interested parties on April 22nd. The list of the recipients is shown in Appendix One.
- 1.3. A separate parents' leaflet was drawn up summarising the proposals. 30,000 leaflets were distributed to parents via Barking and Dagenham schools.
- 1.4. Copies of the consultation document were placed in the Borough libraries and schools were given copies for their reception areas.
- 1.5. Copies of both documents were available in the reception area at the Town Hall.
- 1.6. Details of the consultation proposals were posted on the Council website. By May 22nd, 92 unique visitors had visited the website on 167 sessions. 30 of these visitors were repeat visitors. Between them, the visitors looked at 492 pages, averaging 24 pages per day. One person downloaded the response sheet; 3 people responded on line.
- 1.7. There were two public meetings: one in Barking on the afternoon of May 13th and one in Dagenham on the evening of May 14th. These were advertised in both consultation documents, on the web site, in press releases and in posters displayed in places in Primary schools where parents waited to collect their children. 19 people attended the afternoon meeting; 38 people attended the evening meeting.
- 1.8. The document was also discussed at the Director's meetings with Chairs and Vice Chairs of Governing Bodies.
- 1.9. It is important to note that we will still have oversubscribed schools after the implementation of any changes. Parents do not have a choice of schools: they do have the right to state their preferred schools and their relative priorities.
- 1.10. In the recent DfES Code of Practice on School Admissions, Charles Clarke emphasises the point by stating that the Education Act 2002 clarifies the law on parental preference. "It will not always be possible for every parent to get a place at their preferred school but we want this for as many parents as possible". The aim of

the Barking and Dagenham changes is to enable parents to gain a clearer view of the likelihood of the success of their chosen preferences.

2. The Size of the Response

2.1 Each document contained a tear off response sheet. The website contained an interactive area through which responses could be transmitted. Staff were ready to receive mailed or phoned or faxed responses. The Language Support Service was ready to provide an interpretation facility in the key Borough languages.

2.2 Table 1 shows the numbers of responses:

Source of response	Respondents
Consultation document tear off sheet	32
Arising from the Governors' meetings	21
Arising from the Public meetings	35
	total 88
Parents' leaflet tear off sheet	238
Phoned response	None
Faxed response	4
e-mailed response	2
Letters - sole responses	11
<i>Letters - linked with the sheets</i>	3
Web-site link	3
Total	346

Table 1: details of the ways in which people responded to the consultation

2.3 In total, 346 responses were received and there were 20 telephone calls to the admissions section for information.

2.4 One parent presented a letter with 57 signatures, which said that they were against the removal of the link and sibling criteria.

2.5 The Language support service did not receive any calls for assistance

2.6 There was a nil response from our neighbouring LEAs. This is not a cause for alarm: we only receive comments when they have concerns.

2.7 We asked people to indicate their links to Barking and Dagenham schools on their response: whether they were parents, governors or teachers. We were not successful in categorising all respondents, but the spread of responses is shown in table 2 (below):

Category of respondent*	Respondents
Parent (Barking and Dagenham) (leaflet)	277
Parent (Barking and Dagenham) (document)	48
Governor (Barking and Dagenham) (document)	45
Teacher (Barking and Dagenham) (document)	13
Headteacher response	5
Chair of Governors response	1
Neighbouring admission authority	2
Other	7

Table 2: the different categories of the respondents

*respondents ticked more than one category – parent/teacher; parent/ governor etc.

3. The Detail of the Responses

- 3.1. The responses to the proposals varied according to the implications of the proposal for the respondent. The following paragraphs attempt to balance the individual needs shown by the responses with the need to provide a structure that provides transparency, simplicity and equality of access for all.
- 3.2. There was a general welcome for the clarity of the consultation document and for the existence of the consultation.
- 3.3. Parents at the public meetings were most concerned by the changes to the Primary-Secondary transfer criteria. (See Appendix 2 for details of the questions raised). Both the sibling and the link proposals were challenged. People were foreseeing that these changes would affect their chances of getting the school of their (first) preference.
- 3.4. Parents also raised more general questions:
- Why are so many places going to out-borough children?
 - Why can't we get a cross section of ability in all schools?
 - Why can't all school be brought to the same standard?
 - Why can't we have more time to discuss this and to reply properly?
- 3.5 Both parents and governors were concerned that the emphasis on distance would disadvantage those parents living in less densely populated areas and could advantage out-borough families in some areas. They were also concerned about the changes to link school arrangements, seeing disadvantage for parents in specific schools.
- 3.6 Headteachers welcomed improvements to co-ordination but were concerned that current staffing levels might not cope with the extra activities.
- 3.7 The detail of the responses is shown in the table 3:

	Leaflet		Document		Other		Total	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Pri 2	169	30	85	8			254	38
Pri 3	133	65	59	34	1	1	193	100
Pri 5	162	37	81	11			243	48
Sec 2	151	65	73	12		1	224	78
Sec 3	151	56	75	6			226	62
Sec 4	120	103	56	28	2	3	178	134
Sec 5	150	68	65	20			215	88
Sec 6*	65	161	52	32	3	3	120	196
Sec 7	145	78	65	20			210	98
Sec 9	169	53	76	11			245	64
Total	238		97		11		346	

Table 3 : responses by proposed change

**Parents were saying yes to the removal of the sibling criteria and no to the phasing out*

4. Primary Co-Ordination Proposals

4.1 There were two changes which were described purely for information: they are a requirement of the Education Act 2002:

- **Primary 1:** to have one application form, sent to the Admissions Section at the Town Hall;
- **Primary 4:** that all allocations to Infant, Junior, Primary schools during the school year are centralised through the Admissions Section at the Town Hall.

We received no adverse comments on these proposals.

4.2 There was one change designed to maintain the current level of parental preference:

- **Primary 2:** to have spaces for three preferences on the application form. This was generally accepted as reasonable. It was not challenged in any of the discussions or public meetings, although all respondents who filled in forms did not agree:

Parents' leaflets		Consultation sheets		other	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
169	30	95	2	9	0

Table 4: responses to changing to 3 primary preferences

4.3. There were two changes designed to increase our efficiency in co-ordinating admissions to schools when parents applied during the school term. The need to change our existing use of waiting lists had been highlighted by OFSTED:

- **Primary 3:** to restrict "in-Borough transfers" to the first day of each term
- **Primary 5:** that all waiting lists for Infant, Junior and Primary schools are managed through the Admissions Section at the Town Hall.

4.3.1. The "In-Borough" nature of the transfers in Primary 3 was difficult to explain in writing. Respondents often assumed that this would mean that children would be refused entry to schools until the beginning of every term and that children would be at home until then. They also thought that this was unfair to people who had to move house within the Borough. At the various meetings, the position was clarified:

- Those pupils with allocated places at Barking and Dagenham schools, who had no material change of circumstance, but were just requesting a transfer from one Barking and Dagenham school to another would be able to apply to change school at the beginning of a term;
- Those pupils in families who had moved house, whether in the Borough or from outside, would still be able to apply for places in borough schools during term time.

In general, people who responded at the meetings accepted this proposal.

Parents' leaflets		Consultation sheets		other	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
133	65	59	5	8	0

Table 5: responses to changing to a beginning of term start for in-borough primary transfers

- 4.3.2. Some Primary schools welcomed Primary 5; others were more concerned. The main problem reported during the consultation process, apart from the need to maintain accurate and up to date records, was that the historical good links that Primary schools had with their parents through the waiting list process would be destroyed un-necessarily if parents had to travel to the Town Hall. At meetings it was possible to explain that "managing the waiting list" means taking responsibility for keeping the lists up to date and ensuring that all allocations are made in line with existing criteria, and not necessarily undertaking the negotiations with parents.

Parents' leaflets		Consultation sheets		other	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
162	37	82	9	9	0

Table 6: responses to centralising primary waiting lists

- 4.4. The final Primary proposal was again provided for information:
- **Primary 6:** we are establishing a panel to manage the allocation of pupils with additional, identified needs for support

We received no adverse comments on this proposal.

5. Secondary Co-Ordination Proposals

- 5.1. As with the primary phase information, we included reference to mandatory changes under the Education Act 2002:
- **Secondary 1:** to have one application form, to be returned to the Town Hall;
 - **Secondary 8:** that all allocations to Secondary schools during the school year are centralised through the Admissions Section at the Town Hall.

We received no adverse comments on these proposals.

- 5.2. There was one change designed to maintain the current level of parental preference:
- **Secondary 2:** to have spaces for four preferences on the application form

This was generally accepted as reasonable. It was not challenged in any of the discussions or public meetings, although it was not agreed with by all respondents who filled in forms.

Parents' leaflets		Consultation sheets		other	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
151	65	76	17	8	2

Table 7: responses to changing to 4 secondary preferences

5.3. Again, there were two changes designed to increase our efficiency in co-ordinating admissions to schools when parents applied during the school term. The need to change our existing use of waiting lists had been highlighted by OFSTED:

- **Secondary 7:** to restrict "in-Borough transfers" to the first day of each term
- **Secondary 9:** that all waiting lists for Infant, Junior and Primary schools are managed through the Admissions Section at the Town Hall.

5.3.1. The comment in paragraph 4.3.1 is again relevant to Secondary 7.

Parents' leaflets		Consultation sheets		other	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
145	78	68	20	6	2

Table 8: responses to changing to a beginning of term start for in-borough secondary transfers

5.3.2. The management of secondary waiting lists has been transferring to the Town Hall over the past few years. Most schools were content to continue with this trend and agree to Secondary 9, although they expressed concern that the current procedures need revision:

Parents' leaflets		Consultation sheets		other	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
169	53	77	18	8	2

Table 9: responses to centralising waiting lists for secondary schools

5.4 The final Secondary proposal was again provided for information:

- **Secondary 10:** we are establishing a panel to manage the allocation of pupils with additional, identified needs for support

We received no adverse comments on this proposal.

6. Primary-Secondary Transfer Proposals.

6.1 The bulk of the written responses and the discussion at the meetings related to these four proposals:

- **Secondary 3:** to move to an “equal preference” model of allocating pupils to schools;
- **Secondary 4:** to remove the Link School criterion and replace it with “Distance from home to school”;
- **Secondary 5:** for secondary schools with split sites, to measure distance from the home to the “Main site”;
- **Secondary 6:** to phase in the removal of the sibling criterion at primary-secondary transfer.

6.3 The equal preference model was explained in principle and through examples at meetings and in the consultation document. Once people had seen the examples, they accepted the principle of removing the effective bias towards first preferences, which is inherent in our current model. There was concern expressed by some parents and headteachers that distance would still affect parents’ ability to achieve any school of their preference.

Parents’ leaflets		Consultation sheets		other	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
151	56	78	22	8	2

Table 10: responses to changing to the equal preferences model

6.4 **Removing Link Schools** was difficult for many parents to accept.

6.4.1 The majority of parents assume that a place in a Primary school guarantees a place in the Link Secondary school. Unless they have been refused a place on the grounds of over subscription, they do not see that home-school distance is the deciding factor within the Link school criteria.

6.4.1 From their responses, many parents assumed that removing the link would deny their children access to schools where they previously could have been guaranteed a place.

6.4.2 Discussion about schools on the edge of the Borough also suggested that removal of the link school criteria may lead to increases in out Borough pupils in our Secondary schools.

6.4.3 The working party meetings involved staff with experience of admissions patterns over the years and headteachers with first hand knowledge of the geographical spread of their families. Their discussions started from the point that OFSTED had queried our link school arrangements; developed through the need to change the existing pattern because of the Jo Richardson site and the current imbalance across the link schools; took in the confusion of parents losing appeals for Secondary schools when they were in linked primary schools.

6.4.4 The proposal to remove the Link school criterion is intended to make the admissions process clearer for parents: to enable them to better understand the likelihood of their gaining their preferred schools. From the discussions at the public meetings, parents were very clear about their likelihood of success if distance replaced the Link school criterion.

6.4.5 Taken as a whole, the parents' responses were still in favour of the proposal, although not as clearly as with other proposals.

Parents leaflets		Consultation sheets		other	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
120	103	56	21	7	3

Table 11: responses to replacing the link school criterion with distance from home to school

6.5 **Measuring distance from home to main site** was generally accepted as a proposal, which would remove any ambiguity for parents as long as the main site was clearly defined in the brochures. However, there were some parents and Governors who challenged the contention that this would have a knock on effect of reducing the number of out-borough pupils. Some suggested that certain out borough parents may well be nearer to Barking and Dagenham schools after the changes.

Parents leaflets		Consultation sheets		other	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
150	68	66	9	7	2

Table 12: responses to changing the site for measuring in split site schools

6.6 **Phasing out the sibling criterion** was difficult for parents to accept.

6.6.1 Parents affected by the proposal commented about the need for brothers and sisters in Secondary schools to have security through the presence of family members in the school. They raised problems for lone parents with more than one child and for families needing to buy different uniforms rather than keeping them in the family.

6.6.2 However, generally, siblings live in the same geographical location and distance is likely to remain a more consistent factor if the sibling link is removed. Handing down clothes does not matter much if there are brothers and sisters or if the age difference is great or if they have different physical characteristics. Lone parents have difficulties when one child is in Primary school and others are in Secondary.

6.6.3 A further complication appeared at meetings and in the written responses when parents and governors challenged the phasing in of the proposals. They argued that if the change was needed, it should be phased in immediately, as for the Link criterion.

6.6.4 This was the only proposal to produce an overall "No" response from the parents' leaflets.

Parents leaflets		Consultation sheets		other	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
65	161	54	19	6	3

Table 13: responses to phasing out the sibling criterion

7. Proposals For Change

7.1. Primary co-ordination

- **Primary 1:** to have one application form, sent to the Admissions Section at the Town Hall;
- **Primary 2:** to have spaces for three preferences on the application form
- **Primary 3:** to restrict “in-Borough transfers” to the first day of each term
- **Primary 4:** that all allocations to Infant, Junior, Primary schools during the school year are centralised through the Admissions Section at the Town Hall.
- **Primary 5:** that all waiting lists for Infant, Junior and Primary schools are managed through the Admissions Section at the Town Hall.
- **Primary 6:** we are establishing a panel to manage the allocation of pupils with additional, identified needs for support

7.1.1. Taking account of the information on the rationale for these proposals received on 18th March and 2nd April, and the detail of the responses enclosed in this paper, the proposal that the Admissions Forum commends to the Executive is that all Primary co-ordination changes to the Executive be adopted in time for the 2004 Admissions Round.

7.1.2. In the light of the discussions at various meetings, it is further proposed that follow-up work is undertaken through the press and the website so that the description “in-Borough transfer” is clearly defined and made known to parents and schools.

7.1.3. In the light of the concerns expressed by some Primary schools, it is further proposed that the full detail of the waiting list procedures are discussed with Primary headteachers before being finalised and that they are published and circulated to all Primary headteachers.

7.2. Secondary Co-ordination

- **Secondary 1:** to have one application form, to be returned to the Town Hall;
- **Secondary 2:** to have spaces for four preferences on the application form
- **Secondary 7:** to restrict “in-Borough transfers” to the first day of each term
- **Secondary 8:** that all allocations to Secondary schools during the school year are centralised through the Admissions Section at the Town Hall.
- **Secondary 9:** that all waiting lists for Infant, Junior and Primary schools are managed through the Admissions Section at the Town Hall.
- **Secondary 10:** we are establishing a panel to manage the allocation of pupils with additional, identified needs for support

7.2.1. Taking account of the information on the rationale for these proposals received on 18th March and 2nd April, and the detail of the responses enclosed in this paper, the proposal that the Admissions Forum commends to the Executive is that all Secondary co-ordination changes are adopted in time for the 2004 Admissions Round.

7.2.2. As with the Primary proposals, it is further proposed that follow-up work is undertaken through the press and the website so that the description “in-Borough transfer” is clearly defined and made known to parents and schools.

7.2.3. It is further proposed that the waiting list procedures for Secondary Schools are published and circulated to all Secondary Headteachers.

7.3. Secondary transfer

- **Secondary 3:** to move to an “equal preference” model of allocating pupils to schools;

7.3.1. Taking account of the information on the rationale for the change to an Equal Preference model of allocating pupils to schools received on 18th March and 2nd April, and the detail of the responses enclosed in this paper, the proposal that the Admissions Forum commends to the Executive that this change is adopted in time for the 2004 Admissions Round.

- **Secondary 4:** to remove the Link School criterion and replace it with “Distance from home to school”;

7.3.2. Taking account of the advice from OFSTED that the link School arrangement should be reviewed, the current imbalance across the schools, with special reference to the new Jo Richardson site, and the overall preference for change of the responses, the proposal that the Admissions Forum commends to the Executive is to recommend the removal of the Link School criterion and its replacement with distance from home to school measured by the nearest available walking route using recognised footpaths by the 2004 Admissions round.

7.3.3. It is further proposed that the Admissions staff should work closely with Leisure and Environmental Services to maintain an up to date list of all recognised footpaths, by-ways and public highways. Further, that they should link with schools to investigate any other routes regularly used by parents.

- **Secondary 5:** for secondary schools with split sites, to measure distance from the home to the “Main site”;

7.3.4. Taking account of the information on the rationale for this proposal received on 18th March and 2nd April, and the detail of the responses enclosed in this paper, the proposal that the Admissions Forum commends to the Executive that the measuring of home to school distance from the main site of a split site school is adopted in time for the 2004 Admissions Round.

- **Secondary 6:** to phase in the removal of the sibling criterion at primary-secondary transfer.

- 7.3.5. This proposal was challenged in writing and at meetings for its content and for the fact that it was to be phased in. After lengthy and difficult discussions, the Admissions FORUM concluded that the original justification for proposing the changes had not been challenged by the responses to the consultation proposals.
- 7.3.6. In the light of the challenge to whether or not the change should be phased in, the Admissions Forum considered four possible options:
- To remove the sibling link and phase in the change;
 - To remove the sibling link from September 2004
 - To extend the consultation to September 2005 and include questions on whether or not to phase in the change
 - To not remove the sibling link
- 7.3.7. The proposal that the Admissions Forum commends to the Executive proposal is to remove the sibling link and phase in the change over five years. This would mean that siblings of pupils in school in 2003-4 would retain sibling priority.
- 7.3.8. It is further proposed to monitor the numbers of pupils granted sibling priority and their distances from their schools.
- 7.3.9. It is further proposed that the department should monitor the number of parents not achieving any of their stated preferences, assuming they have expressed a preference for four schools. The recorded data should include information about the unsuccessful parents' postcode, to check for disadvantaged geographical pockets within the Borough.

8. Other Points Raised in the Consultation Process

- 8.1. Appendix 3 provides a snapshot of the range of comments received during the consultation process.
- 8.2. The LEA gained support for trying to develop a more transparent process:

I think it is a good thing that the system is being reviewed, although the sibling issue worries me. It is very difficult to be a supportive parent of several different schools.

and then there were those who were not supportive:

Being in such a regimental system without choice is a fascist right wing idea.

- 8.3. There were many comments showing that differing standards between schools was a barrier to the ideal of going to a local school:

Really if all schools were of a higher standard then there wouldn't be a race for one or two schools only. Children should go to their local school, ie nearest to home.

- 8.4. Parents wanted the authority to improve the less popular schools; but there were few suggestions on how to do it. When encouraged to work with the school, parents replied that schools do not welcome such an approach.

- 8.5. There was a lot of discussion at one of the meetings that it was the prevalence of unchecked bullying which gave schools a bad name.
- 8.6. There were also requests for us to contravene the Greenwich judgement:
- ...children from this borough's schools to be given priority over other boroughs even though they might be closer in distance.*
- 8.7. Parents raised the problems that Council tenants faced: Council housing is not always near the schools that they prefer. Similarly, other parents talked about Estate Agents and the inflated prices of houses nearer to the more popular schools.
- 8.8. In general, although they were concerned about the issues raised, parents welcomed the opportunity to talk. Many stayed behind after the meetings had been formally closed and discussed individual and general issues further with Admissions staff.
- 8.9. Future meetings of the Admissions Forum, or other groups, may wish to debate parental involvement further.

9. The Consultation Process

- 9.1. The consultation process was always going to be tight on time:
- It related to the Education Act 2002 which came into effect in January 2003;
 - It needed to fit in with schedules for Council meetings;
 - Decisions needed to be finalised in time for the annual parents Admissions booklets to be printed and in schools by July 2003, and,
 - It was at Easter time
- 9.2. It was deliberately designed to involve a wide spread of those affected by the admissions process:
- Headteachers and admissions staff on the working groups,
 - Governors, headteachers, councillors, Diocesan representatives and Community representatives on the Admissions Forum
 - Parents
- 9.3. It used the written word through a formal booklet, distributed electronically and through the post and available on the website, and a briefer leaflet sent to all parents and distributed through the schools.
- 9.4. The message was spread through the network of existing school meetings
- 9.5. Public meetings were arranged at venues in Barking and in Dagenham and at different times (afternoon and evening).
- 9.6. It used local press through press releases and articles in the Citizen.
- 9.7. It used new technology through a website and the possibility of interactive responses.

- 9.8. However, there were things that could not be managed in such a tight timescale:
- Translations of the documents in languages other than English could not be made owing to the short timescale
 - Document production was delayed by Easter
 - Distribution via the schools did not work completely: some leaflets got lost or were delayed
 - More than two meetings could not be scheduled in the time available
- 9.9. Some parents have made formal complaints about the timescale and the content, suggesting that a longer lead in time is necessary and suggesting that we start again.
- 9.10. On reflection, we feel that the spread of involvement and the level of response indicates that the process was a valid consultation and that the available resources were used appropriately.
- 9.11. We would wish to thank all those who were involved and gave of their skill and time.

Background Papers

- Admissions: Code of Practice (2002) DfES
- Education Act (2002)
- Report to Admissions FORUM, February 12th, March 18th, April 2nd 2003, 22nd May
- Report to Scrutiny Management Board March 19th 2003
- Consultation on Changes to the Admissions Criteria and Processes for schools in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- Consultation with Parents on Admission to schools, 2004-2005

Consultation Document List of Recipients

<p>London Borough of Redbridge Admissions Department</p> <p>Foundation Schools Headteachers Chair of Governors</p>
<p>London Borough of Newham Admissions Department</p> <p>Foundation Schools Headteachers Chair of Governors</p>
<p>London Borough of Havering Admissions Department Foundation Schools</p> <p>Headteachers Chair of Governors</p>
<p>London Borough of Waltham Forest Admissions Department</p> <p>Foundation Schools Headteachers Chair of Governors</p>
The Rev. Canon Palmer
Brentwood Diocese
All Headteacher - Barking and Dagenham
All Chairs and Vice Chairs of School Governing Bodies
All Departmental Management Team
Principal Inspectors
Special Needs School
Looked After Children
Teenage Pregnancy
Language Support Service
Social Services
Members of Admissions Forum
David Z Evans Web Project Officer

**CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE
ADMISSIONS CRITERIA AND PROCESS**

QUESTIONS AT PARENTS MEETINGS:

**EASTBURY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL - 13th MAY 2003
DAGENHAM PRIORY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL - 14th MAY 2003**

- Q1. Sibling rule does not disadvantage anyone as the 1st child has to go through the same procedure as an only child, so why remove the criteria?
- Q2. Why are so many school places going to out of borough children.
- Q3. How is it possible that the 'good' schools can choose the more able pupils? The result is that the remaining schools get filled with the less abled pupils. More should be done to get a cross section of ability all Barking & Dagenham schools.
- Q4. Please explain again the proposed Secondary 6 change.
- Q5. Will the new system force people to apply out of borough or ban out of borough applications for school places?
- Q6. Will new proposals limit the out of borough applications made to Barking & Dagenham schools?
- Q7. Will new proposals force more out of borough applications for school?
- Q8. Removal of link schools is unfair, as many parents have made concerted effort to get their children into specific primary schools to give their children more chance of getting into their preferred linked secondary schools. If these links are removed those children will not get in.
- Q9. There should be a preference to Barking & Dagenham residents or out of borough applications should be rejected.
- Q10. The new proposals will force many children to go to their local schools which these children and parents oppose fiercely.
- Q11. Equal preference model disadvantages those who are surrounded by parkland. Will there be any provision for those living in unpopulated areas who live further to the school than those applicants in the closer denser populous?
- Q12. The new proposals promote local schools. However this is disadvantageous to many as all the boroughs schools are not of the same standard, therefore the education they receive will be poor, solely because of where they live. If all the schools were brought to the same standard surely over-subscription would not be such a problem?

Q13. The notice for this public meeting was too short and not publicised enough. Would it not have been better to have this consultation year earlier? Parents haven't been given enough time to respond.

Q14. The LEA needs to address the question of parents not wanting their children to go to certain schools which will be a factor under the distance proposals.

Q15. Siblings are just as important in secondary schools as this promotes support, emotional for the children & financial for the parents. Everyone with siblings will experience the problem of getting that first child in, so why do they need to keep repeating this process by getting rid of the sibling rule?

Q16. These new proposals will not solve the problem of people getting the school of their choice.

Q17. Why are there not enough good schools in this borough?

Q18. Why are schools being closed down whilst new housing developments are being built? Surely there is a need for more schools?

Q19. The planning and building programme for the authority is poor. Why build new estates with children to close the schools that are need to teach them?

Q20. Why give places to children outside the borough?

Q21. Where will distance be measured to in relation to the Jo Richardson school?

Q22. Do you have to apply for an out of borough school on the Barking & Dagenham form?

Q23. Is the criteria the same for in and out of borough applicants?

Q24. LEA needs to listening to the parents and address the problem of the boroughs failing schools, Dagenham Priory & Sydney Russell.

Q25. Why can't the number of out of borough applications be limited to a certain percentage?

Q26. Why can't checks be made on addresses to limit false applications of parents not resident at the address they have given on the form, because the address they give is close to the schools?

Q27. The new proposals disadvantages those who don't live near a 'good' school.

Q28. If I list only one preference which is a link school, I would get in on the old system, but now I will not get in on distance.

Q29. The system old and new feels like a lottery, can't the LEA remove this feeling?

Q30. Council tenants are limited to where they live by government housing stock and low income groups by low pay and high house prices and therefore cannot move to be nearer to the 'good' schools and this new proposals support that.

SELECTED QUOTES FROM RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION QUESTION

1. Link schools are good idea, but it shouldn't be a preference. It is a good idea as children can move with friends and be near home.
2. Some changes need to be changed
3. I agree that transfers would be better on time first day of each term - but what happens if there is still no place in that year group for a child - do they have to wait a whole term to have a chance again and it would also mean that lots of children are out of school longer
4. Do not agree with removal of sibling criteria. I have 3 children and it will be difficult if they all have to go to separate secondary school ie uniforms different curriculum's and getting 3 children to 3 different schools. Single children families will not have this problem as they will only have to travel to one school.
5. Applications for secondary schools should be link schools only. 9 times out of 10 a child wants to be with his or her friends - should it be on distance only then some children are going to be allocated a school that they do not know anywhere - changing schools is a trauma if self having no friends is worse!!
6. Really if all schools were of a higher standards then there wouldn't be a race for one or two schools only. Children should go to their local school, ie nearest to home
7. My 1st choice is my choice of school for my children not the third and fourth
8. I think the fair preference idea is a good one, as long as you would be given a place in one of the our preferred school you have chosen
9. That's a very convenient way of dealing with school issues
10. Let's see if this is more effective
11. I believe that distance from school should be what decides who goes where. It would reduce are around schools and encourage kids to walk or ride bikes to school. Everyone should help support their local schools - good, bad, poor or rich Good luck
12. Being in such a regimental system without choice is a fascist right wing idea
13. What is the point of having more choices when the Council will still be allocating on distance, therefore, taking away all free choices, it is a waste of time and paper
14. It would be better if children could attend the school closest to where they live. That is a real community school
15. School should have the ultimate decision as to who they allow in. Bureaucrats in office should have no say and schools should be allowed to pick students on a selection basis.
16. I believe church schools should be allowed to continue to manage their own admissions lists. To take that away from them will be grossly unfair and will destroy the schools.

17. Having one sibling in primary and one in secondary, I feel that it is important to retain the sibling criterion. As it is already difficult getting two children to different schools, considering I am a widow and therefore a single parent. Each case should be dealt with on ITT's own merits and not compared overall.
18. There are two secondary schools in the borough that are under achieving. This is the main reason why they are undersubscribed because of their reputation. By the way my daughter attends one of them and is doing extremely well. It also depends on the child.
19. I really hope that the link school system is not changed but if it is then you must drop the sibling link immediately in order to make it fair.
20. I think it is a good thing that the system is being reviewed, although the sibling issue worries me. It is a very difficult to be a supportive parent of several different schools.
21. More challenge to addresses to addresses to prevent people saying they live in LBBD when they do not.
22. Why should you be penalised for not living in the right area.
23. I'm surprised you are not already managing waiting lists through the Admissions section.
24. Even at secondary level it is important for sibling to attend the same school - so they have the same uniforms and the parent can get to know the school ethos etc., and siblings have the same rules and discipline. If primary and secondary schools aren't linked children are more likely to lose all their friends in the move up at a bad time.
25. Local children should go to the local school they should not be put at risk because they have to travel long distances to get to school. All schools should be of the same standard. What is OFSTED for?
26. The argument for removal of siblings criterion is not sound as all first born of the family will face the same situation where you then have four or five after yourself. This criterion is not penalised people with only one child as the 1st child of families with four or five will still face the same challenge of getting into preferred secondary or primary school.
27. The proposals you suggest are good, by measuring distances seems not too clever, as I know somehow people will abuse the system.
28. I agree totally that distance from school should be the first priority. It makes (or more sense for children to attend their local school rather than have to travel across the borough.
29. If the removal of the sibling criterion is a sensible recognition that sibling links are not necessary at secondary, school age, then why not remove them immediately. If families live at a reasonable distance from a school attended by an older sibling, the younger children will be no less disadvantaged than any other child if the distance criteria is applied.

30. Whilst I agree with equal status applications, I am very concerned that areas on the edge of the borough, like Rush Green will be seriously disadvantaged in obtaining a place at their nearest school.

31. I totally agree with the sibling rule for secondary children to be abolished this is long overdue as there are a lot of children who live a long way away in our schools