

Surrey County Council Consultation on proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for September 2022

Introduction

Surrey County Council is consulting on:

- proposed changes to admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for September 2022
- its relevant area – this is the geographical area within which schools must consult on their admission arrangements

Further details of the changes being proposed and Surrey’s relevant area are set out in this document.

A copy of the proposed admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools and Surrey’s coordinated schemes are set out in the following documents:

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| Enclosure 1 | Admission arrangements for community & voluntary controlled schools |
| APPENDIX 1 | Published admission numbers |
| APPENDIX 2 | Schools to operate shared sibling priority |
| APPENDIX 3 | Schools to be excluded when assessing nearest school |
| APPENDIX 4 | Catchment map for Southfield Park Primary School |
| APPENDIX 5 | Supplementary form for staff applicants |
| Enclosure 2 | Primary and secondary coordinated schemes |

Local authorities are also required to consult on their relevant area every two years. As two years have passed since Surrey’s last consultation, it is consulting again this year. The proposed Relevant Area is included at **Enclosure 3**.

An equality impact assessment is included as **Enclosure 4**.

What changes are being proposed?

1. Removal of use of ‘nearest school’ as a criterion – majority of community and voluntary controlled schools

Surrey has 92 community and voluntary controlled schools. Of these, 87 currently give some level of priority to children who have the school as their nearest school, as measured in a straight line from the child’s home address. As part of this consultation it is proposed that, for 79 of these schools, priority for children who have the school as their nearest school will be removed – see **Enclosure 5** for details of which schools are affected. However, home to school distance isn’t being removed as a category for admission. For most schools, after siblings, priority will be based on straight line distance from the child’s home address to the school.

This review has been triggered by a determination by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) in October 2019 (determination number ADA3589) which identified some concerns with the use of ‘nearest school’ and the objectivity and clarity regarding this. The Schools

Adjudicator set out that, by having 'nearest school' as a criterion within a set of admission arrangements, the local authority effectively creates a catchment area which is defined by a polygonal (multi-sided) shape based on the location of the other schools surrounding the school. As a catchment area, the local authority has a duty to consult on any changes, such as when the inclusion or location of 'nearest' schools change as these can result in a change to the polygonal shape/catchment area and thus which children may receive priority.

The School Admissions Code also sets out other requirements for catchment areas that the local authority must comply with, such as they must be reasonable and clearly defined. In order to assess whether such a catchment area meets the requirements of the Code, it would be necessary to understand the catchment boundaries that are created as a result of using 'nearest school' as an admission criterion.

Other reasons for reviewing use of 'nearest school' within the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools are as follows:

- 'nearest school' is measured in a straight line from the child's home address. In this way, although this may be used to prioritise applicants, it does not necessarily reflect the school that is nearest by walking or road route or the one that is easiest for the child to get to
- having a school as a 'nearest school' does not guarantee admission
- the majority of academies, foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools do not give priority to children based on whether or not it is a child's nearest school

As a result of the OSA's determination, the local authority has reviewed the intakes for the 87 community and voluntary controlled schools which give priority according to an assessment of 'nearest school' to consider its impact on the intake. Eleven of these schools are primary schools with an intake at both Reception and Junior and so, for these schools, each intake was reviewed separately.

Considerations as part of the review included:

- Whether a place was offered to all children who had applied;
- Whether most children allocated under the 'nearest school' criterion would still have been allocated a place based on straight line distance if 'nearest school' had not been used;
- Whether any children would have been displaced (not offered a place) if the criterion for 'nearest school' was removed.

Each intake for these 87 schools (98 intakes in total) was categorised as follows (see **Enclosure 5** for a breakdown by school):

- Category 1 (17 schools) - Schools which allocated to all children who had applied **in each of the past three years** (2018, 2019 & 2020)
- Category 2 (13 schools) - Schools which allocated places to the 'distance' criterion and the furthest distance allocated was **further** than the last child allocated under the 'nearest school' criterion **in each of the past three years** (2018, 2019 & 2020)
- Category 3 (2 schools) - Schools which only allocated places to the 'nearest school' criterion and there were **no children left unplaced** under the 'distance' criterion who lived closer than the furthest distance allocated under the 'nearest school' criterion **in each of the past three years** (2018, 2019 & 2020)

- Category 4 (34 schools) - Schools which experienced a combination of the scenarios set out in categories 1, 2 and/or 3 **in each of the past three years** (2018, 2019 & 2020)
- Category 5 (9 schools) - Schools which allocated places to the 'distance' criterion, and the furthest distance allocated was **further** than the last child allocated under the 'nearest school' criterion **in TWO of the past three years**
- Category 6 (1 school) – Schools which only allocated places to the 'nearest school' criterion, and there were **no children left unplaced** under the 'distance' criterion who lived closer than the furthest distance allocated under the 'nearest school' criterion **in TWO of the past three years**
- Category 7 (6 schools) - Schools which allocated places to the 'distance' criterion, and the furthest distance allocated was **nearer** than the last child allocated under the 'nearest school' criterion **in TWO of the past three years**
- Category 8 (4 schools) – Schools which only allocated places to the 'nearest school' criterion, and there **were children left unplaced** under the 'distance' criterion who lived closer than the furthest distance allocated under the 'nearest school' criterion **in TWO of the past three years**
- Category 9 (2 schools) – Schools which allocated places to the 'distance' criterion, and the furthest distance allocated was **nearer** than the last child allocated under the 'nearest school' criterion **in each of the past three years** (2018, 2019 & 2020)
- Category 10 (1 school) – Schools which only allocated places to the 'nearest school' criterion, and there **were children left unplaced** under the 'distance' criterion who lived closer than the furthest distance allocated under the 'nearest school' criterion **in each of the past three years**
- Category 11 (9 schools) – Schools which experienced a combination of scenarios where no regular pattern exists

For all 66 intakes in categories 1 to 4, use of 'nearest school' had no impact on the intake to the school, i.e. based on the previous three years' intake, the allocation would be no different if 'nearest school' was not used as a criterion. It was therefore decided to consult on removal of the 'nearest school' criterion for these schools/intakes.

For the 10 intakes in categories 5 to 6, use of 'nearest school' had minimal impact on the intake to the school, i.e. based on the previous three years' intake, the allocation would be minimally different in only one of those years if 'nearest school' was not used as a criterion. It was therefore decided to consult on removal of the 'nearest school' criterion for these schools/intakes.

Further analysis of the 22 schools within categories 7 to 11 indicated that, for 14 of these schools, the impact of removing the 'nearest school' criterion was low. It was therefore decided to consult on the removal of the 'nearest school' criterion for these 14 schools in categories 7 to 11.

By removing priority for children who have the school as their 'nearest school', the standard admission criteria for the majority of schools is proposed to be as follows:

1. Looked after and previously looked after children
2. Exceptional social/medical need
3. Children of a member of staff
4. Siblings
5. Any other children (with priority being based on the straight line distance from the child's home address to the school)

This change will simplify the admission arrangements for these schools and will enable parents to better understand how their application will be considered.

However, a small number of schools with feeder links will retain school specific criteria. Enclosure 5 sets out whether it is proposed for a school to adopt 'standard' or 'school specific' criteria for 2022 admission. Full details of the school specific criteria for each school is set out in Enclosure 1.

For the following eight schools, it was considered that removal of 'nearest school' was more likely to have a medium or significant impact on the pattern of admission to the school:

Elmbridge

Hurst Park Primary School

Epsom & Ewell

Southfield Park Primary School

Stamford Green Primary School

Wallace Fields Junior School

Guildford

Tillingbourne Junior School

Reigate & Banstead

Langshott Primary School

Meath Green Infant School

Walton on the Hill Primary School

As such, no change is proposed for these eight schools for 2022 admission. Further analysis will be done on the pattern of admission to these schools and the options for change ahead of consultation for 2023 admission. Respondents to the consultation may however choose to comment on the arrangements for these schools, even though no change is proposed.

In addition, no change is proposed to the admission arrangements for the following schools, which do not currently give priority according to 'nearest school':

- Walsh Church of England Junior School - Guildford
- Banstead Community Junior School - Reigate & Banstead
- Meath Green Junior School - Reigate & Banstead
- Shottermill Junior School - Waverley
- West Byfleet Junior School - Woking

The assessment of nearest school for 2022 admission will remain as it was for 2021 admission and no changes are proposed to the list of schools to be excluded from the assessment of nearest school, as set out in Appendix 3 to Enclosure 1.

2. Beauclerc Infant School – Spelthorne

It is proposed to introduce a sibling link for Beauclerc Infant School with Chennestone Primary School. In this way, families with an older child already attending Chennestone Primary School would receive sibling priority for a younger child to attend Beauclerc Infant School.

The admission criteria for Beauclerc Infant School would not change but the school would be described as operating shared sibling priority with Chennestone Primary School for 2022 admission (see Enclosure 1 – Appendix 2).

It is not intended to make this a reciprocal link and so the same arrangement will not apply to Chennestone Primary School. This means that families with a child on roll at Beauclerc Infant School will not receive sibling priority if they apply for another child to go to Chennestone Primary School. This is because families applying for a place at Chennestone Primary School already have the benefit of being able to claim sibling priority if a sibling is in Reception to Year 6 at the school, unlike Beauclerc Infant School which only has year groups from Reception to Year 2.

This proposal is supported by the Headteacher and Governing Body of the federated schools of Beauclerc Infant and Chennestone Primary schools.

In line with Surrey County Council policy, the introduction of a sibling link with Chennestone Primary School would enable sibling priority to be given to a child who is applying to start at Beauclerc Infant School in Reception even if they have a sibling who would have left Year 2 of the school by the time the younger child starts (see section 12 of Enclosure 1). This is because the feeder link within the admission criteria for Chennestone Primary School would provide for them to be admitted to that school, thereby retaining their sibling priority.

The introduction of a sibling link with Chennestone Primary School would provide a greater chance of families keeping their children together or at schools in close proximity.

3. Horley Infant School – Reigate & Banstead

It is proposed to introduce a sibling link for Horley Infant School with Yattendon School. In this way, families with an older child attending Yattendon School would receive sibling priority for a younger child to attend Horley Infant School.

The admission criteria for Horley Infant School would not change but the school would be described as operating shared sibling priority with Yattendon School for 2022 admission (see Enclosure 1 – Appendix 2).

This proposal is in line with a proposal being considered by Yattendon School to introduce a reciprocal sibling link with Horley Infant School. As a foundation school, the governing body of Yattendon School is responsible for consulting on any proposals for change to their admission arrangements. Implementation of this proposal for Horley Infant School would be subject to Yattendon School also implementing a reciprocal sibling link with Horley Infant School.

This proposal is supported by the Headteacher and Governing Body of Horley Infant School. It is also supported by the Headteacher and Governing Body of Yattendon School, although this school's governing body must first carry out its own consultation before it can formally agree to introduce a reciprocal sibling arrangement.

In line with Surrey County Council policy, the introduction of a reciprocal sibling link with Yattendon School would enable sibling priority to be given to a child who is applying to start at Horley Infant School in Reception even if they have a sibling who would have left Year 2 of the school by the time the younger child starts (see section 12 of Enclosure 1). This is because the feeder link within the admission criteria for Yattendon School would provide for them to be admitted to that school, thereby retaining their sibling priority.

The introduction of a reciprocal sibling link between the two schools would provide a greater chance of families keeping their children together or at schools in close proximity.

4. Onslow Infant School

For September 2022, the local authority is proposing to reduce the published admission number (PAN) at Reception for Onslow Infant School from 90 to 60. This change is reflected in Appendix 1 of Enclosure 1 which sets out the proposed PANs for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2022 admission.

Onslow Infant School currently has a Reception PAN of 90. However, the school is not filling to its PAN and is currently running with an operational cohort of two classes in each of its year groups.

It is anticipated that there would still be sufficient places in the area if the PAN is decreased, and this decrease would have no impact on children who are currently on roll at the school.

5. Surrey's Relevant Area

The Relevant Area that Surrey intends to publish for schools for the next two years is set out in Enclosure 3.

The School Standards & Framework Act 1998 requires local authorities to establish Relevant Area(s) for admission policy consultations. The Relevant Area is the area in which admission authorities must consult with schools regarding their proposed admission arrangements before finalising them. **It does not influence which children will be admitted to which schools.** The Education Act 2002 requires the local authority to review and consult on its Relevant Area every 2 years. Surrey is not proposing any change to its Relevant Area.

6. Changes to Published Admission Numbers (PANs) that are not subject to consultation

Admission authorities are not required to consult on proposed increases to PANs but must include the proposed increase within the admission arrangements. Appendix 1 of Enclosure 1 sets out the proposed admission numbers for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2022 admission.

Surrey is proposing to increase the Year 3 PAN at William Cobbett Primary School from 50 to 60. The Reception PAN was decreased from 40 to 30 in September 2019 to enable the school to operate with one class of 30 throughout KS1, rather than having mixed aged classes in Year 1 and Year 2. 2022 will be the first year that there will be 30 children transferring from KS1 and an increase to the Year 3 PAN from 50 to 60 for children entering the school at Year 3 will provide consistent class sizes of 30 throughout the school. It will also provide a greater likelihood that all children at Badshot Lea Village Infant School who want a place at William Cobbett Primary School would be able to secure one at the initial allocation. No consultation is required for this.

How can you respond to the consultation?

The consultation on the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and these proposed changes will run until Tuesday 1 December 2020. If you would like to take part, please complete an online response form available at www.surreysays.co.uk. Alternatively, if you would prefer to respond on a paper form, please telephone the Surrey Schools and Childcare Service on 0300 200 1004 to request a copy. Please note that only response forms which are fully completed with the respondent's name and address will be accepted.

What happens next?

After the closing date, responses will be collated and presented to the County Council's decision-making Cabinet on 26 January 2021. It will decide whether to proceed with the proposed changes as well as determining the admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools for which no changes are proposed. Cabinet's decision will then need to be ratified by the full County Council on 9 February 2021. Once determined the final admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2022 will be placed on Surrey's website at www.surreycc.gov.uk/admissions.

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