

Consultation and determination of school admissions arrangements

Extract from School Admissions Code 2021 – pages 18 -19

1.47 Admission authorities **must** consult with:

- a) parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen;
- b) other persons in the relevant area⁴⁰ who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions;
- c) all other admission authorities within the relevant area (except that primary schools need not consult secondary schools);
- d) whichever of the governing body and the local authority who are not the admission authority;
- e) any adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the local authority; and
- f) in the case of schools designated with a religious character, the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination.

1.48 For the duration of the consultation period, the admission authority **must** publish a copy of their full proposed admission arrangements (including the proposed PAN) on the school's website or its own website (in case of a local authority) together with details of where comments may be sent and the areas on which comments are not sought⁴¹. Admission authorities **must** also send, upon request, a copy of the proposed admission arrangements to any of the persons or bodies listed above inviting comment. Failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals.

1.49 All admission authorities **must** determine⁴² their admission arrangements, including their PAN, every year, even if they have not changed from previous years and a consultation has not been required by **28 February** in the determination year⁴³.

1.50 Once admission authorities have determined their admission arrangements, they **must** notify the appropriate bodies⁴⁴ and **must** publish a copy of the determined arrangements on the school's website or their own website (in case of a local authority) by **15 March** in the determination year⁴⁵ and continue displaying them for the whole offer year (the school year in which offers for places are made). Admission authorities **must** also send a copy of their full, determined arrangements to the local authority as soon as possible before **15 March** in the determination year. Admission authorities for schools designated with a religious character **must** also send a copy of their arrangements to the body or person representing their religion or religious denomination.

1.51 Where an admission authority has determined a PAN that is higher than in previous years, they **must** notify the local authority that they have done so and make specific reference to the change on their website.

40 As set out in the Glossary

41 Regulation 16 of the School Admissions Regulations 2021

42 Determine occurs at the point at which the admission arrangements are formally agreed by the admission authority. This decision should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which it is made.

43 Regulation 17 of the school Admissions Regulations 2012

44 In addition to the bodies listed at paragraph 1.47 (c), (d) and (f) and so far as not covered by them, all governing bodies for community and voluntary controlled schools in the relevant area.

45 The governing body of a community and voluntary controlled school must also publish this information on the school's website – see regulation 10 of the School Information Regulations 2008.

Page 22 – 2.7 The admission authority **must** keep a clear record of any decisions on applications, including in year applications.

Advice from the School Adjudicator regarding consultation arrangements

Admission authorities are required to consult on their arrangements when a change is proposed to the admission arrangements or at least once every seven years. For a consultation to be effective, those affected must have a reasonable chance of knowing that the consultation is happening. Simply putting information on a local authority website (even if accompanied with a link to the local authority's Twitter feed) and doing nothing else to bring it to the attention of parents is not enough.

Good consultation – whether by local authorities or schools – uses a number of different ways to reach those who may have an interest.

It will include a prominent and simple message on the front page of the relevant website, backed up with more detailed information and use of print and social media. Examples of ways in which schools and local authorities have communicated about proposed changes include:

- a. asking (other) schools and early years settings (including childminders) to pass on information about the consultation to parents;
- b. articles in the local press including free papers sent to every household in the area, magazines/newsletters published by voluntary groups in an area, family information directories and child focused magazines;
- c. use of local radio and social media including Twitter and Facebook and online parent forums (one local authority described a parental networking group with over 3,000 members);
- d. seeking feedback and responses online as well as in paper form;
- e. posters in schools, stay and play session locations, supermarkets, doctors' surgeries, children's centres, health centres, places of worship and the local authority's own buildings;
- f. consultation meetings including drop in sessions targeting areas or groups which past experience showed were less likely to respond;

- g. use of personal contacts - talking to parents at the school gate or at parents evenings;
- h. asking local voluntary groups, parish councils and faith bodies to use their networks to pass on material and information;
- i. direct emails to parents who have given permission and provided email addresses via their applications for admission in previous years; this had a high response rate.

The school's adjudicator in 2019 determined in the case of a Coventry school's admissions policy that the following was not clear and did not comply with the admissions code, therefore please ensure that your admissions policy includes detailed information in regards to the following;

1. The statement concerning the admission of children outside of the normal age group to "include the process of requesting such admission not just the process of how the admission authority would take such requests into account"
2. Statements in the arrangements concerning the tie-breaker to meet the requirements in paragraph 14 and 1.8 of the code for the admission arrangements and the oversubscription criteria to be clear. "Admission arrangements **must** include an effective, clear and fair tie-breaker" using distance and random allocation to differentiate between applicants is not clear, nor is the role of CCC in deciding priority for places for schools who are their own admissions authorities.
3. To ensure that there is a clear definition of the catchment area: ie: including a map or a list of the roads within the catchment area of the school and also including this information on the schools website.