

## Admission Forums

4.9 Section 85A of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requires all local authorities to establish an Admission Forum<sup>1</sup>. Admission Forums provide a vehicle for admission authorities and other key interested parties to discuss the effectiveness of local admission arrangements, consider how to deal with difficult admission issues and advise admission authorities on ways in which their arrangements can be improved. Admission authorities of all maintained schools and Academies, when exercising their functions, **must** have regard to any advice offered by the Forum. Local authorities may establish a joint forum with one or more other local authorities to consider and advise on admissions in more than one authority area. Further information on the membership and procedures of Admission Forums is set out in Appendix 2.

### *Statutory role of Admission Forums*

4.10 Admission Forums have a key role in ensuring a fair admissions system that promotes social equity and **must**, under section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, act in accordance with this Code. The role of Admission Forums is set out in Regulations<sup>2</sup>. Admission Forums **must**:

- a) consider how well existing and proposed admission arrangements serve the interests of children and parents within the area of the authority;
- b) promote agreement on admission issues;
- c) consider the comprehensiveness and accessibility of the admissions literature and information produced for parents by each admission authority within the area of the forum;
- d) consider the effectiveness of the authority's proposed co-ordinated admission arrangements;

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<sup>1</sup> The Education (Admission Forums ) (England) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2900) as amended by SI 2007/xxxx

<sup>2</sup> Education (Admission Forums) (England) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2900) as amended by SI 2007/xxxx

- e) consider the means by which admissions processes might be improved and how actual admissions relate to the admission numbers published;
- f) monitor the admission of children who arrive in the authority's area outside a normal admission round with a view to promoting arrangements for the fair distribution of such children among local schools, taking account of any preference expressed in accordance with arrangements made under section 86(1) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and in accordance with this Code (see Chapter 3);
- g) promote the arrangements for children with special educational needs, children in care and children who have been excluded from school;
- h) consider any other admissions issues that arise.

### *Ensuring fair access*

4.11 In discharging these responsibilities, Admission Forums **should**:

- a) refer an objection to the Schools Adjudicator where either it identifies policy, practice or oversubscription criteria of a school that may be unfair, unlawful or that contravene the mandatory provisions of this Code, or where their advice has been disregarded by admission authorities;
- b) review the comprehensiveness, effectiveness and accessibility of advice and guidance for parents by the local authority, both through the published composite prospectus (see Appendix 4) and the delivery of Choice Advice (see Appendix 5); and
- c) agree, promote and monitor local authority In-Year Fair Access Protocols for potentially vulnerable children including those previously excluded from school, children in care, children with special educational need and/or disabilities, children who are hard to place, and those who arrive in the area outside the normal admissions round.

*Reports on effectiveness of local admission arrangements*

- 4.12 Admission Forums have an important power, under section 85A(1A) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (as inserted by section 41 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006), to publish an annual report. Regulations<sup>3</sup> set out the matters that reports will cover which include:
- a) a breakdown of preferences met by ranking (1st, 2nd, 3rd preference etc), and the main factors affecting whether preferences were met;
  - b) the number of admission appeals made for schools in the area;
  - c) the ethnic and social mix of pupils attending schools in the area, and factors which affect this;
  - d) the extent to which existing and proposed admission arrangements serve the interests of vulnerable children;
  - e) how well In-Year Fair Access Protocols are working and the number of children admitted to each school under the protocol;
  - f) whether primary schools are complying with infant class size legislation;
  - g) details of other matters that affect how fairly admission arrangements serve the interests of local children and parents;
  - h) any recommendation or recommendations that the forum wishes to make in order to improve parental choice and access to education in the local authority's area.
- 4.13 These reports are a valuable tool in ensuring an open and fair admission system as admission authorities **must** have regard to any advice published by the Admission Forum. The reports will be drawn upon by the Schools Commissioner in drawing up his two yearly national review of fair access.

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<sup>3</sup> Admission Forum (England) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2900) as amended by SI 2007/xxxx