

**SCHOOL ADMISSIONS: RAISING AWARENESS OF IN YEAR FULL CO-ORDINATION****Background**

- A revised School Admissions Code, which came into force on 10 February 2010, confirmed a new duty for Local Authorities to co-ordinate all in-year admissions which had previously been set out in the 2009 Code;
- The intention of the new duty is that from September 2010 there will be more consistent arrangements for parents regarding how they apply for school places in-year - they will need to apply to the LA in which they live;
- As at 'normal round' parents will be able to express up to three preferences and receive a single offer;
- The in-year co-ordination scheme will require every letter offering or refusing a school place at any time of year to be sent by the LA. In the case of own admission authority schools this will be on behalf of the governing body.

**Policy Framework**

- In order to deliver this new duty the LA has consulted upon and determined an in-year co-ordinated admissions scheme:  
[www.devon.gov.uk/admissions-2011-inyear2010.pdf](http://www.devon.gov.uk/admissions-2011-inyear2010.pdf)
- The scheme sets out a commitment that the LA will resolve all applications within 20 school days wherever possible and an indicative timetable of how applications will be handled;
- The DfE acknowledges that these new arrangements may introduce a delay to some admissions requests;
- The Local Admissions Forum has a duty to monitor the effectiveness of in-year admissions arrangements.

**Practical Impact in Devon**

- The impact will be largely in primary schools, many of which have historically handled their own in-year applications, particularly where the school is undersubscribed;
- There is a need to ensure that staff at all levels within schools are aware of the change in policy and the need to direct parents seeking admission to the Local Authority;
- The new arrangements became effective from **summer half term** as that is when places for September began to be offered;
- It is anticipated that there will be an initial 'settling' period whilst new practices become embedded;
- This duty will create an additional burden for the Local Authority admissions team in terms of numbers of requests to process.

**Programme of Awareness Raising**

- Given the impact will be mainly at primary level, and that the LA does not have a definitive database of pre-school parents in the same way as for transfer to junior and secondary schools, much of the LA Awareness raising activity has been targeted at those supporting parents and providing information to them as part of the admissions process;
- This includes school Heads and Chairs of Governors, DAG, DAPH and DASH, school administrators, Choice Advisers, Parent support groups and other county council based staff - for example the 'My Devon' Customer Service Centre;
- Specific 'road show' events have been organised for school administrators who are often the people advising parents at the frontline in schools to ensure they

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are aware of changed practice. Heads support in ensuring their administrators attend these events is very much welcomed;

- Awareness raising has extended to Devon's website, in-house publications such as *Devon Talk* and *Insider* as well as a general press release and the Admissions Team are attending area Heads Panels, Social Care Team meetings and other service based team meetings to ensure key staff are aware of the changes

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CO-ORDINATION OF IN-YEAR ADMISSIONS (approved by DAPH, DASH and DAG)

### *What does this mean?*

*All applications for a school place must be made via the Local Authority for admissions from September 2010. Schools cannot offer a school place directly.*

### *Who does it apply to?*

*This applies to all schools, including voluntary aided, foundation and trust schools.*

### *Why is this happening?*

*The School Admissions Code of Practice now requires all admissions to be co-ordinated by the Local Authority for a child's home address. This is a statutory obligation on all Local Authorities and all schools. The government's intention is partly to improve safeguarding by tracking children in education more effectively and also to provide a more consistent and transparent service to parents.*

### *We have vacancies at our school, can we offer a place?*

*No, all offers and refusals have to be made by the School Admissions Team at County. Parents asking for a place at a school may also be asking for a place at another school and may actually prefer another school. Other requests for places with greater priority may have been made for your school via the Local Authority or another local authority.*

### *Does this mean we will lose control over our own admissions?*

*The same decisions will be made whether or not places are available as should be made now - according to the published over-subscription criteria for your school. If those decisions are made by the governing body of a school which is its own admissions authority, that will still happen. Where the Local Authority is the admissions authority (community and voluntary controlled schools), it will make the decision with the knowledge of the school.*

### *Won't this be slower?*

*There will be some applications which take longer to process but it is expected that the majority of outcome letters will be sent out to parents within a couple of days. The DCSF acknowledge that the transfer of information between local authorities and schools which are their own admissions authority will take time. Where children have moved into an area and don't have a school place, the aim will be to process applications as quickly as possible. Where the request is for a transfer from one local school to another, there will be an expectation that the transfer will take place at the beginning of a term or half-term.*

### *What if a parent wants to look round the school?*

*Absolutely no change - where they want to, parents should visit the schools they are interested in. this will help them to make informed decisions on their preferences.*

### *What should we say to parents?*

*You should not say a place can or can't be made available. It would be fine to say what your number on roll is. Whatever you say should be consistent for all parents and must include a referral to the School Admissions Team.*

### *How will parents apply for a school place?*

*This must be on a Local Authority Devon Common Application Form, not on a school application form or S11 or note of interest form. Around the end of April you will be sent a supply of Devon CAFs to enable parents to apply as quickly as possible - along with your Supplementary Information Form if you have one. Those schools which request a minister's letter along with an application will still need to advise parents of that. Online applications are not yet available.*

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*Parents can post their Devon CAFs or scan and email them or fax them to the School Admissions Team. If you can help parents to do that, particularly by fax, that would be a service to them and speed up the process.*

***What if we are full?***

*The Fair Access Protocol is a part of the In-Year Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme and provides for children to be admitted to a local school above-PAN under certain circumstances. In all cases where a parent's preferences are refused, the School Admissions Team will advise regarding appeals, waiting lists and alternative places.*

***Who will maintain waiting lists?***

*The School Admissions Team will automatically place refused children onto a waiting list according to the oversubscription criteria for the school. This will be held centrally but will be available at all times to schools. Only children formally refused will be on the list and vacancies will be offered from the list as they arise.*

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Lisa Boon  
Schools Access Service Manager