

THIS IS A CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT



PROPOSAL PAPER

Proposal: The purpose of this consultation is to review and improve the placing request criteria for mainstream schools (primary and secondary). The proposal document relates to all schools in West Dunbartonshire Council.

1. PROPOSAL

1.0 PROPOSAL

- 1.1 It is proposed that the Council's Admissions and Placing Requests Policy (PP5.1) is changed to amend the current arrangements relating to placing requests for primary and secondary schools, and further amended to provide clarification on proof of residency required for catchment schools.

2.0 BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT

- 2.1 Children attend their local catchment-area school, and catchment schools are allocated in relation to the location of the permanent residence of the child/young person. However, the right of parents to make a placing request for their child/children to be educated in a school other than their catchment school is recognised.
- 2.2 The Admissions and Placing Requests Policy sets out the arrangements for the placing of catchment pupils and the process for considering placing requests, and covers the following areas:
- Children resident within the catchment area
 - Children resident outwith the catchment area, but living in West Dunbartonshire (placing requests)
 - Children outwith West Dunbartonshire area
- 2.3 Placing request criteria are used to determine the allocation of places for children in situations where there are more children seeking places in a school than there are places available. The same placing request criteria are also used to allocate places in schools where the number of catchment children exceeds the number of spaces available in the school.
- 2.4 In the past 2 years, it has not been possible to grant all placing requests which resulted in a number of statutory appeals to the Placing Requests Appeals Panel. A subsequent analysis of the outcomes of the Placing Request Appeals Panel identified that the Admissions and Placing Requests Policy, which was last updated in 2015, requires to be reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- 2.5 Placing requests are part of the entry requirements for schools, and changes to placing request criteria are covered by the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 and require statutory consultation in line with the Act.

3.0 DETAILS OF PROPOSED CHANGES

- 3.1 The current criteria are detailed in Appendix 1 and have worked well in most cases. However, feedback from the Placing Requests Appeals Panel,

parents and others suggest that not all criteria is perceived to be fair and/or clearly understood. The proposed changes are detailed below:

1. Children residing within West Dunbartonshire

There is no change to this criteria and priority will always be given to children residing within the West Dunbartonshire area, and they are assessed on the detailed criteria.

2. In relation only to denominational schools, those children/young people who have been baptised in the Roman Catholic (RC) Church and whose parents/carer have the same religious beliefs as the school.

This is a new criteria and supports families who can evidence their commitment to the denominational school. It does not exclude parents for making a placing request to the denominational school it just means priority will be given where the same religious beliefs as the school can be demonstrated.

3. Children with relevant medical conditions who require facilities or support available only in the requested school. All applications under this category should be supported by documentary evidence provided by your/ /family doctor and the community paediatrician.

The criteria has been expanded to clarify to parents that the medical condition relates to the child and that they need to demonstrate that the support required can only be provided at the placement school.

4. Children who have siblings already in the school and who will continue to attend the school for the session the application is being made. The number of siblings at the school will be taken into consideration.

This criteria is already in place and supports families with more than one child already in the school. The criteria has been expanded and multiple siblings will be given higher consideration.

5. Children from single-parent families where, for example, proximity of school to the parent's place of work/study would be advantageous for the care and well-being of the child.

The criteria is already in place, however it has been widened to include situations where the single parent is studying rather than just their place of work.

6. Travel distance from home to school by a suitable walking route. Those living closest to the school ranking highest.

This criteria caused confusion with some parents who believed this meant priority was given to those furthest from the school and the criteria has been reworded to provide clarity.

7. Suitability of particular teaching methods to the child's needs or the availability of subjects which he/she was previously studying.

This criteria remains unchanged.

8. We then give children from outside West Dunbartonshire priority in order of categories 2-7

Only after children resident within West Dunbartonshire are considered would we then consider children outside the area and again the criteria would be used.

3.2 The criteria will be applied in the order shown above. If, for any category, the number of requests exceeds the number of places available the next succeeding criteria will be used to prioritise those requests, and so on, until all priority criteria have been exhausted. If, after this process, there are still more placing requests than places available, then a ballot will be held to allocate the places available. The Admissions and Placing Requests Policy will be amended to clarify that the ballot will be organised by the Senior Education Officer, and that parents will be notified of the arrangements for the ballot.

3.3 In addition it is proposed to amend the policy to provide clarity on the documentation required to provide proof of residency which would include:

- The child's birth certificate
- Council tax direct debit mandate
- Recent child benefit statement
- Bank statement/Utility Bill (if not available) showing transactions within the previous 3 months
- A signed and independent witnessed residency / tenant agreement for at least one year

3.4 The proposal is also to amend the policy to include a statement which confirms that if a parent applies for a catchment place prior to taking up residence the place will not be allocated until the child is actually resident in the property and evidence of proof of Council Tax is provided.

3.5 In addition it is proposed to clarify that the Council will conduct checks to establish accuracy of information supplied which may include visits to premises to confirm residence. If fraudulent information is provided, the school place may be withdrawn even if the child has enrolled in the school.

4.0 EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

- 4.1 The placing request process/system would be more readily accessible in terms of its clarity and processes and the following points contribute to the educational benefit of the proposal.

Pupils

- 4.2 The revised Policy will ensure a fairer and more transparent system that allocates places. All schools would be covered by a clear, accessible system for submitting placing requests and children would benefit as the criteria would be applied fairly and consistently. The consultation also aims to provide greater clarity for stakeholders, including children. The proposal continues to ensure that pupils attending their designated catchment schools are always afforded priority for school places. In exceptional circumstances where it may not be possible to allocate all catchment children a place in their designated catchment school, the proposed revision of the policy clearly sets out the priority for allocating school places.

Parents, Carers and Local Community

- 4.3 There is a need to ensure clear information for parents, in order that they can make informed decisions about their child's education. The proposed new arrangements will provide clarity and will be communicated in a clear accessible format. The proposal will not adversely impact on local, social or economic activities. The limited variation to the policy will have no effect on the sustainability of communities and there would be no impact on the existing arrangements for communities to use schools.

Other users of the schools

- 4.4 There would be no change.

Future Pupils (within 2 years of the publication of the proposal paper)

- 4.5 All mainstream schools would be applying the same criteria.

Effect on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 4.6 There will be no implications for any teaching or support staff in any schools nor any impact on school management arrangements as a result of the proposed changes.

Other pupils in the council area

- 4.7 Provision of a fair and transparent process.

Any other likely effects of the proposal (if implemented)

- 4.8 There may be children whose 'relative' position is altered due to the changes. However, overall we believe that reviewing the criteria would lead to greater benefits which could outweigh any disadvantage caused.

How we would intend to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal (if implemented)

- 4.9 Equitable application of the policy would ensure fairness and transparency, and ensuring equality for all.

The benefits, which we believe, would result from implementation of the proposal

- 4.10 There would be greater clarity around the criteria used to allocate places, the documentation required for proof of residency, and the awareness of the checks which would be made. This we believe would eliminate any concerns that could be raised by parents that there may be fraudulent claims of residency within a catchment area.

5.0 DATE OF CHANGE

- 5.1 If the proposal is agreed and implemented the changes will take effect for admissions from Session 2021/2022.

6.0 CORRECTION OF THE PROPOSAL PAPER

- 6.1 If any accuracy or omission is discovered in this proposal document, either by the Council or any other person, the Council must investigate and decide what, if any action is required
- 6.2 If relevant information has been omitted, or if there has been an inaccuracy, the Council will then take the appropriate action, which may include the issue of a correction notice, the publishing of a corrected Proposal Paper or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and Education Scotland will be advised. The Council must inform the person who made the allegation of what action has been taken.

2. CONSULTATION

1.0 LEGISLATION

- 1.1 A formal consultation is required under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 for any proposal to change the Council's Admissions and Placing Requests Policy.

2.0 CONSULTEES

- 2.1 The proposal document will be placed on the Council's website (<https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/>) and copies of the proposal document will be made available to the consultees below, free of charge as prescribed by the Act. Copies of the document will be placed in the Council Offices, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton, G82 1QL, all Schools, Libraries and Contact Centres. Views on the proposals are being sought from a range of interested parties including:

- Pupils attending schools
- Parent Councils within our schools
- Parents of pupils and children, including those expected by the Council to attend any affected school within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper.
- Teaching and support staff in schools
- Trade Union representatives of the above staff
- Community Councils
- Archdiocese of Glasgow
- Neighbouring Councils (as appropriate)
- Other users of the school premises

3.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS

Consultation Period

- 3.1 The consultation period will run from Monday 16 March 2020 until midnight on Wednesday 13 May 2020, which includes a period of 30 school days.

Advertisement

- 3.2 An advertisement will be placed in the relevant local newspapers.

Public Meeting

- 3.3 Public Meetings will be held as follows:

Wednesday 25 March 2020 – 7.00 p.m. – 8.30 p.m.

St.Peter the Apostle High School, Kirkoswald Dr, Clydebank G81 2DB

Thursday 2 April 2020 – 7.00 p.m. – 8.30 p.m.
Dumbarton Academy, Crosslet Rd, Dumbarton G82 2AJ

Tuesday 21 April 2020 - 7.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.
Vale of Leven Academy, Main St, Alexandria G83 0BH

Officers of the Council will be present to discuss the proposal and there will be an opportunity to ask questions at the meeting. We appreciate, however, that there will be limited time at the meeting to discuss everything fully and not everyone is comfortable with speaking in a public meeting. To make sure all issues are covered and everyone gets the opportunity to contribute to the discussion, we are happy to accept advance notice of specific questions or issues individuals would like to raise at the meeting. Advance questions will be accepted in writing only up to 2 days in advance of the meeting. Individuals should let us how the proposal would affect them and their family whether they would like to be named at the meeting as asking the particular question submitted.

Involvement of Education Scotland

- 3.4 When the Proposal Paper is published, a copy will also be sent to Education Scotland. Education Scotland will also receive a copy of any relevant written representations received by the Council from any person during the consultation period or, if Education Scotland agree, a summary of them. Education Scotland will further receive a summary of any oral representations made to the Council at the public meeting which will be held and, as available, a copy of any other relevant documentation.

Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 3 weeks after the Council has sent them all representations and documents as mentioned above. In preparing their report, Educational Scotland may enter affected schools and make such reasonable enquiries of such other people as they consider appropriate.

Preparation of Consultation report

- 3.5 The Council will review the proposal having regard to the Educational Scotland report, written representations that it has received and oral representations made by any person at the public meeting. The Council will then prepare a consultation report. The report will be published in electronic and printed format and will published on the Council website. It will be available from the Council Office, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton free of charge. Anyone who has made written representations to the Council during the consultation period will also be informed of the report. The consultation report will be published and available for further consideration for a period of 3 weeks.

Decision

- 3.6 The consultation report will be considered by the Educational Services Committee, who will come to a decision of whether to implement the proposal.

4.0 Responding to the Proposal

- 4.1 Interested parties are invited to respond by making online, electronic or written submissions on the proposal or any alternative proposal, no later than midnight on Wednesday 13 May 2020.

Online – <https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/>

Email – educationstaffingteam@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

In writing - Laura Mason
Chief Education Officer
West Dunbartonshire Council
16 Church Street
Dumbarton
G82 1QL

5.0 DATA PROTECTION

- 5.1 Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically should note that personal information i.e. name, address and contact details will not be made available publicly. Only staff involved in the management and administration of the consultation exercise, including Education Scotland and the Elected Members of the Council will be given access to that information. An anonymised summary of responses will be published on the Council's website for information.

Current Placing Request Criteria

Guidelines and Criteria for awarding placing requests

Placing requests for primary and secondary schools will be considered against a set of guidelines which set out the council's priorities for admission. Placing requests for specialist settings are considered on the individual needs of the child or young person. As soon as a decision has been made the parent/carer will be notified of the result, if a placing request is successful, the parent/carer should make contact with the school to establish the procedure for enrolment.

The guidelines are summarised below:

Where there are more placing requests for primary or secondary schools than there places available, priority will be given to those:

- children who are resident within West Dunbartonshire;
- cases which include medical grounds supported by the family doctor and by the Community Paediatrician; and
- Children who have older siblings in the school.

Other Factors

After these criteria have been applied and if there are more requests than places available other factors which the Executive Director may wish to take account of include:

- single parent families, where, for example, proximity of school to the parent's place of work would be advantageous for the care and well-being of the child;
- distance between home and school; and
- the suitability of particular teaching methods to the child's needs of the availability of subjects which he/she was previously studying.

Where it is not possible to identify priority applications, the local Appeals Committee will be advised that the only reasonable solution is to draw lots.

Laura Mason
 Chief Education Officer
 West Dunbartonshire Council
 16 Church Street
 Dumbarton
 G82 1QL



**Proposed Amendments to Admissions and Placing Request Policy
 RESPONSE FORM**

This form can be completed online at <https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/>, sent to the above address or submitted by email to: educationstaffingteam@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Name		Address	
Email			

Your Interest (please tick)

Resident in West Dunbartonshire Parent/ Carer Child/Young Person

Staff Trade Union Other (please specify)

Summary of Proposal (please refer to the proposal paper for full details. It is proposed that the Council's Admissions and Placing Requests Policy (PP5.1) is changed to amend the current arrangements relating to placing requests for primary and secondary schools. It is also propose to amend the policy to provide clarification on proof of residency required for catchment schools.	
Do you agree with the proposal to amend the priority criteria for accepting placing requests?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Do you agree with the proposal to provide clarification on proof of residency required for catchment schools?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Please use this space for any additional comments (including any alternatives which you consider should have been included. Continue on separate sheet if necessary.

Data Protection Act 2010. Your response may form part of the report to the Council for consideration and therefore the details of your response may be made available for public inspection. Your personal details(name, address and contact details) will not be made available publicly.

