

Consultation on Proposed School Admission Arrangements for Sheffield Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the Academic Year 2021/22

Summary Report of the Findings

i. Background

Sheffield City Council operates within the statutory Admission Code of Practice. Our admission arrangements include the oversubscription criteria and other detailed information that explain how we manage this function. Where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult. This is subject to the requirement that admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years, even if there have been no changes during that period.

We are not proposing any changes to the existing oversubscription criteria. There is however a proposed catchment area change for the academic year 2021/22 for King Edward VII Secondary School is consulting on. We have consulted on this separately and the report of the findings is available with the main report at Appendices D and D1.

ii. Consultation on Proposed School Admission Arrangements

The main method of consulting was an online questionnaire, however people were also invited to get in touch by telephone or email if they preferred. They could contact the Pupil Admissions Team on 0114 273 5766 or at admissionsconsultation@sheffield.gov.uk.

The consultation took place between **Monday 4 November** and **Sunday 15 December 2019** and it was publicised via the following channels:

- Made available on the SCC website: www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/schools-childcare/admissions-consultation

- Circulated via Sheffield City Council’s GovDelivery system on Monday 4 November 2019 to 5824 subscribers of the Children, Young People & Families topic. (It was recirculated on Monday 18 November to all subscribers of this topic *who did not open the previous bulletin* – 3720 recipients.)
- Added to the SCC Consultation Hub on Thursday 7 November

iii. Overall Response to the Proposal

- **84 people responded to the consultation**
- **53% felt we had explained the oversubscription criteria ‘very clearly’, 33% felt it was ‘quite clearly’ explained and 14% said it wasn’t clear.**

This report provides response statistics and a summary of the most common / recurring views and concerns. The full set of comments is attached at **Appendix 1**.

iv. The Online Questionnaire

The online questionnaire was accompanied by a statement outlining the proposal.

The questionnaire asked:

- In what capacity respondents were giving their views (e.g. parent, professional, school governor)
- How clearly the oversubscription criteria had been explained
- What respondents thought was unclear (if anything)

Respondents were also given the opportunity to submit additional comments about admission arrangements (oversubscription criteria, catchment areas or admission numbers).

A copy of the survey questions can be found at **Appendix 2**.

Key questions were extracted from responses throughout the consultation period and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) report was posted on the website addressing these.

v. Who responded?

84 people completed the online questionnaire. The majority of these were parents and carers.

<u>Respondent type</u>	<u>Number</u>
Parent / carer	76
Young person	0
Headteacher	1
Other school staff	2
Governor	3
*Other	1
Not answered	0

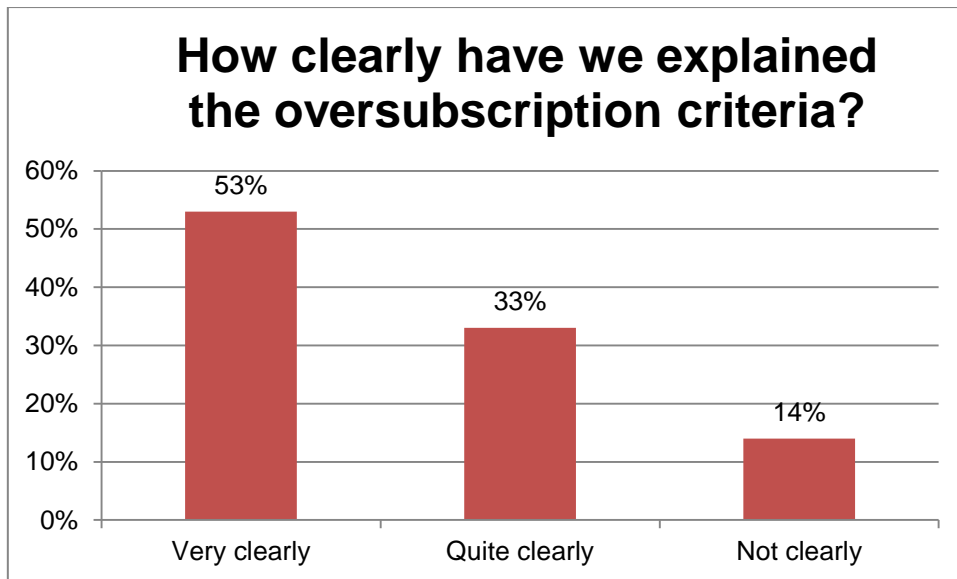
The other respondent was:

- Chairperson of Tenants and Residents Association

The consultation was anonymous but some optional equalities monitoring questions were asked at the end of the questionnaire. This information can be provided on request.

vi. How clearly did we explain the oversubscription criteria?

53% of respondents felt the criteria had been described 'Very clearly' and 33% felt it had been described 'Quite clearly'. 14% felt the proposal had not been described clearly.



vii. What respondents felt could have been clearer

Those who answered 'quite clearly' or 'not clearly' were asked what they had found unclear. The main things concerned specific information around catchments, waiting lists and school places – and how this information is displayed. See **Appendix 1** for the specific comments made.

a) More information on specific elements – catchment areas, waiting lists, school places etc.

- *“It’s really difficult to find out catchment areas.”*
- *“I’d like more information about waiting lists and likelihood of admissions.”*
- *“How school manages number of kids starting reception and what are the real reasons for mix ages classes?”*
- *“What happens if you don’t get your first or second choice of school? Can you be sent outside your catchment area? If you put a school down as second choice are you unlikely to get a place there?”*
- *“List of oversubscribed schools.”*
- *“How this will disadvantage other children outside of the catchment or not part of feeder school.”*

b) Clarity / accessibility / how information is displayed

- *“It is inherently complicated and the text provided is [in]adequate. A set of examples as an appendix could provide additional clarity to make it easier to navigate for parents / people who do not operate in admissions on a regular basis.”*
- *“Would have been helpful to have the oversubscription criteria linked to this consultation.”*
- *“Explanation is clear but wordy and long-winded. For parents with literacy difficulties, something more succinct would be helpful.”*
- *“Not sure where to find them.”*

viii. Comments on the admission arrangements

The main comments on admission arrangements were mainly around catchment areas with a couple of requests for further information also being made. See **Appendix 1** for the specific comments made.

a) Issues – catchment areas

- *“The schools admission criteria is unfair since it is unjust that good students will not have access to good schools if the parents do not live in the good school area. In my opinion, the school allocation should be dependent on capability of the students and not on catchment only.”*
- *“I feel it would be fairer to count 'sibling' above catchment only as having children at two separate schools when they're young would be really difficult and could impact on employment, health, relationships and the wellbeing of parents and children.”*
- *“I think more consideration should be given to non-catchment children in feeder schools, particularly when they live closer to the school than many of the children in catchment. Our catchment boundary makes very little sense and children in catchment walk past our front door to get to the school.”*

- *“We currently live on Hallamshire Road, but our Y5 son attends Nether Green Juniors, along with his Y3 brother. Currently, this means they are in a feeder school for King Edward's, but catchment for Tapton. Our concern with the proposals are that whilst children currently in the same catchment area as us, but attending Hallam Juniors will have a better chance of getting their chosen place at Tapton, we will be 'doubly disadvantaged' as our chances of getting our son into King Edward's may be lessened, due to the widening of the catchment area. Where would this leave us? This seems fundamentally unfair given we are in the same catchment area. Mercia is simply not viable given location and public transport links and especially given that our son is the youngest in his year with a birthday on 28th of August. We would strongly oppose these changes for the reasons outlined above. The overall impact of these proposals seems to act as a significant detriment to children living in the Hallam catchment area, but not attending Hallam Primary. It's not acceptable to make these changes at short notice (i.e. there is not enough time to choose to apply to move our son to another school). At least 3 years' notice would seem fairer so that parents can take this into account when making applications for transition from infant to junior school. It is vital also that the local authority proposals and Tapton Trust proposals are looked at in conjunction with one another so that the wider negative impact on families, and children like ours are considered.”*

b) Requests for (further) information

- *“I have followed the online instructions, but after only two stages I find myself here, being asked to say whether or not you have explained the oversubscription criteria Very clearly, Quite clearly or Not clearly. En route to this page, all I have seen is a statement indicating that you are not considering any changes to the oversubscription area but are thinking of adding Hallam Primary School to the King Edward's catchment area. Is that all? What you have written is not, by any means, an explanation, but more a bald statement. In order for people like me (I am a parent) to be able to comment, we need to be given more information than that. I would be grateful*

to be sent a map of the present and proposed catchment area for King Edward's, together with any similar maps for other parts of the city. I have previous experience, as a parent of a child at Westways Primary School, of "consultations" such as this, where, as now, little or no information was provided before the actual "consultation" occurred. If you are duty-bound to consult, you should comply fully rather than in this short-cut way. For instance, what representations have been made to you in the course of your work, prompting you to add a further part of the city to the catchment area? Do you have a record of any such representations, or is this proposal something that the Council's officers came up with on their own initiative? I look forward to an early reply, so that any further comments I might want to make can be made before the deadline. Thank you in anticipation of your assistance."

- *"It would be great if clear and concise information could be sent to Tenant and Residents Associations as we are approached by lots of parents each year and asked to help with appeals. If we had the correct info it could save all of us time and money!"*