

Appendix 1

School Admissions arrangements for 2017 – annual consultation Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel 10 February 2016

Background

The council should consult annually on its admissions arrangements prior to determination in the spring. There is then an opportunity for stakeholders to appeal to the Office of the School Adjudicator before the arrangements are finally published in August /September for the following year's entry.

The London Borough of Merton is presently consulting on the admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools for September 2017. The consultation commenced on 7 January and runs until 18 February 2016.

A summary of the changes being consulted on is as follows:

1. Community Primary Schools
 - Amendment to the wording around delayed entry to primary school to specify the application to summer born children, and to remove the application of the policy in 'exceptional circumstances' only
 - Reduction in the Admissions Priority Area (APA)* for Wimbledon Chase Primary School
 - Introduction of an Admissions Priority Area (APA) for Dundonald Primary School
 - A change to the sibling rule for Wimbledon Chase and Dundonald Primary Schools, to prioritise siblings and then other families living within the APA above other siblings and families living outside the APA
2. Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary Schools
 - Changes to the sixth form entry requirements to RR6 (joint sixth form between Ricards Lodge and Rutlish School)
 - Introduction of a cross sibling policy between Ricards Lodge and Rutlish School

* An Admissions Priority Area (APA) is a defined area whereby residents living inside it will receive a higher priority for entry to a school than those outside it. It does not guarantee entry to a school

Full details of the consultation and the changes being proposed are detailed on the council's website http://www.merton.gov.uk/admission_arrangments_2017-18

3. The consultation has gone to:
 - all Merton primary and secondary schools with requests to share with parents through newsletters/notices
 - neighbouring LAs with a request to share with any interested parties/schools as appropriate
 - nursery applicants naming Wimbledon Chase or Dundonald in the last three rounds
 - all early years providers with a request to share with interested parents

Detail

1. Changes to wording around summer born pupils has been in place since the autumn to comply with the Schools Minister's letter on the subject, and the changes to the sixth form entry requirements for Rutlish and Ricards Lodge are detailed matters on entry requirements.

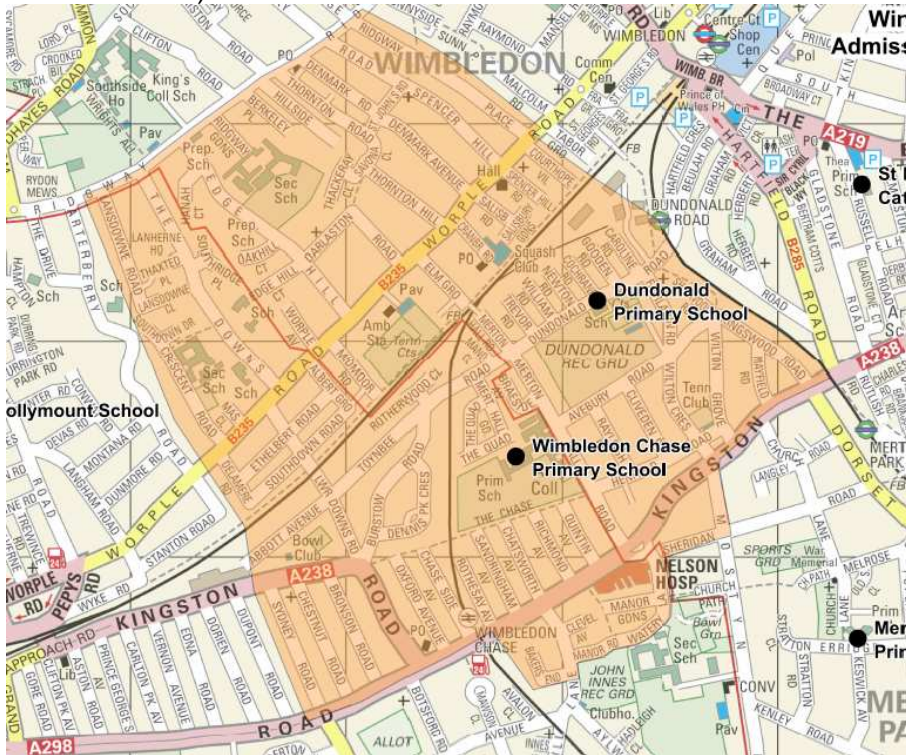
2. Therefore the two significant changes that are being consulted relate to (i) Wimbledon Chase and Dundonald Primary School Admissions Priority area and siblings, and (ii) Ricards and Rutlish joint siblings. The rationale for these changes is therefore outlined below.

Wimbledon Chase and Dundonald Primary School Admissions Priority area and siblings – background and rationale

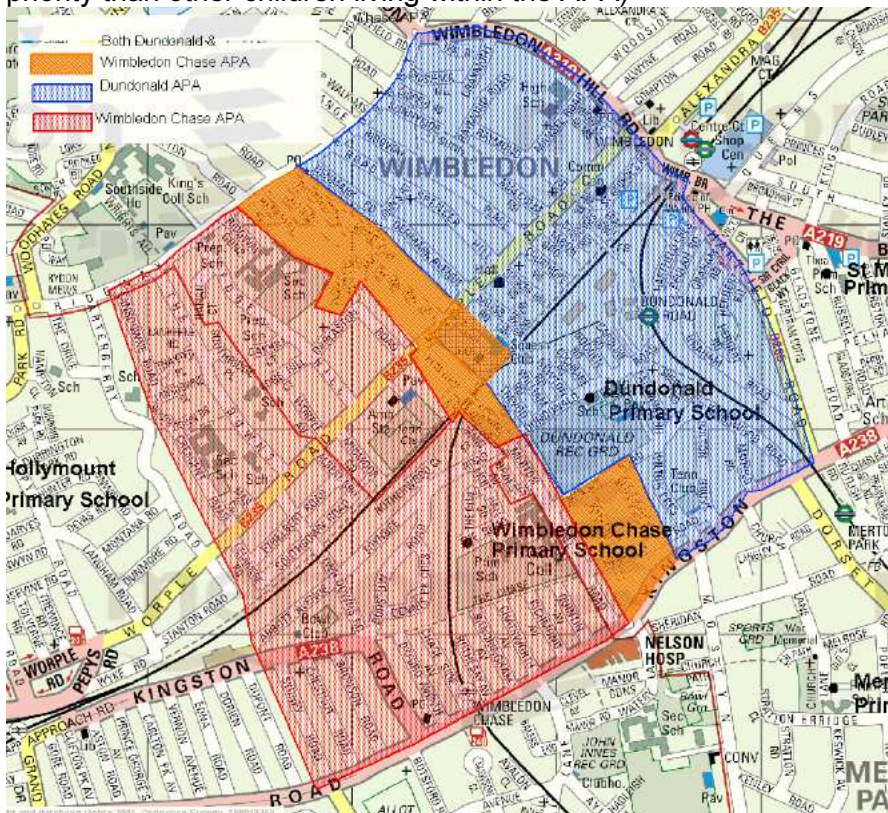
3. To date the council has been robust in defending admissions policies that give priority to siblings, to ensure that families with young children are not inconvenienced by separate school drop-offs.
4. The Schools Minister has indicated a future Admissions Code will strengthen this requirement but the promised consultation is now not due until at least late February.
5. The only place the council's siblings policy has really been challenged through complaints in recent years is for Dundonald and Wimbledon Chase Schools, which are only a few hundred metres apart and in an area where there has been most controversy in providing sufficient local places. Here, parents are concerned about admissions applications from people moving into the area through a property letting for a short period purely to get access into the schools, and then getting priority for all their siblings despite subsequently moving away, thus reducing the distance that the schools can offer places to non-siblings.
6. There have been complaints regarding this issue at Dundonald Primary School for a number of years (though less so last year as the expansion meant it offered to a greater distance), and a growing number of complaints with regard to Wimbledon Chase because the school only offered to 269 metres in 2015 within their Admissions Priority Area (APA); 55 of their 90 places went to siblings
7. Officers have considered having a maximum distance for all siblings, as is being implemented in 2016 for LB Wandsworth for all schools. However, setting a distance for Wimbledon Chase would be random when the distance offered changes from year to year, and is complicated by their APA.
8. The fact that Wimbledon Chase school currently has a large APA (much larger than the actual distance offered) provides the opportunity to ensure that priority is only given to siblings living within the general vicinity of the school.
9. Officers have consulted the headteachers and chairs of governors at both Wimbledon Chase and Dundonald Schools. Both schools would like an APA to be implemented with priority only given to local siblings as a means to address the issue outlined in paragraph 6 above.
10. As can be seen from the map below, the present Wimbledon Chase APA is extremely large compared to the distance it can offer places and it includes the Dundonald Primary School site since, when it was established, Dundonald Primary School only offered its 30 places to just over 100 metres.
11. With Dundonald expanding to 60 places, there is therefore a logic to both schools having complementary admission primary areas and the proposal below ensures all areas currently in the Wimbledon Chase APA either continue in their APA or are in the Dundonald APA, except a small area to the south of the Kingston Road, which

is well served by primary places – for example last year these residents would have been offered a place at either Joseph Hood, Poplar or The Park schools, but, even though they were in the APA, were some distance of being able to obtain a place at Wimbledon Chase.

Existing Wimbledon Chase APA (siblings outside the APA get priority ahead of other children living within the APA)



Proposed Wimbledon Chase and Dundonald APA (siblings living outside the APA get a lower priority than other children living within the APA)



12. Because Dundonald and Wimbledon Chase are so close to each other it is necessary for a small area to be in both APAs to prevent an address being caught in the middle of no places being offered even when it is only 200-300 metres from either school.

Ricards and Rutlish joint siblings – background and rationale

13. Ricards Lodge (Girls) and Rutlish (Boys) are the only non-faith single sex schools state secondary schools in the borough, and are currently the only non-faith schools in the general Wimbledon area, except Raynes Park, to the south west of Raynes Park town centre.

14. Ricards and Rutlish have increased their close links over the past few years, with a joint governor committee and a joint 6th form including a pooled sixth form budget.

15. With aspiring parents in the area looking at many options for secondary schooling such as Grammar Schools, the schools market themselves jointly as ‘the best option for local families in the Wimbledon area’. As part of this ‘offer’ they would like to give families the security that once one sibling is offered a place, so would others of either sex.

16. However, the schools are some 2.2 km apart (straight line distance). Therefore they have different catchment areas.

17. The distance offered in the last 3 years is as follows:

RUTLISH

	Distance on offer day	Distance by end of autumn term
2015	2804	5854
2014	3471	5523
2013	3061	8043

RICARDS

	Distance on offer day	Distance by end of autumn term
2015	3377	4083
2014	3265	4918
2013	3566	4097

Implications of existing policy

18. The different catchment areas of Ricards and Rutlish mean siblings of the same family do not have the same opportunity, with boys to the north of the borough, and girls further south in the borough having less opportunity of a place.

19. This will be an increasing issue if, as expected, the catchment areas of the schools reduce, as demand for places increases.

20. The perception of the schools is that this makes them less popular, as families with boys and girls are put off by the lack of certainty that all their children could receive a comparable education, and inhibits closer links with families.

Estimated practical implications

21. Given the location of Rutlish to the south of Wimbledon town centre, most of the additional siblings for Ricards who would not already be eligible under distance are likely to come from towards the Morden and Mitcham areas. The impact on Rutlish would be the converse, with girls to the north of Wimbledon being able to benefit. However, in considering the admissions patterns over the past few years, the impact on opportunity for school places is likely to be relatively minimal, so there appears to be few negative implications to offset the positive benefit that the schools can market themselves as providing a local offer for a family with boys and girls.

