

Admissions: The Consultation Process

- Admission Authorities should consult with the Diocese prior to going to any public consultation (Under the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 1991, referred to in section 1.38 of the School Admissions Code 2014)
- To allow time for the Diocese to comment draft arrangements should be sent no later than the end of September but preferably before. This timeline is possible if Diocesan advice of reviewing admissions arrangements in the summer term is followed.
- The statutory consultation process **must** last for a period of six weeks in a period between 1st October and 31st January.
- The formal consultation must include:
 - parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen in the relevant area*
 - other persons in the relevant area* who, in the opinion of the Board have an interest in the proposed admissions;
 - all other admission authorities within the relevant area* (primary schools need not consult secondary schools);
 - the LA;
 - any adjoining neighbouring local authorities;
 - the Diocese.
- Many LAs offer a service of publishing proposed admission arrangements for voluntary aided schools, academies and foundation schools on their website and undertake the consultation on behalf of the Board. Where the LA offers this service, schools are likely to use it, but the Board still holds responsibility for the consultation.
- The Board must publish a copy of their **full** proposed admission arrangements (including the proposed published admission number and any supplementary information forms used by the school) on the school's website, together with the details of the person at the school to whom comments may be sent.
- Schools should ensure that a full record of the evidence that consultation has taken place, including the timeline, are kept along with responses.
- Failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals (see below).
- Following consultation, governors must amend, if necessary, agree and ratify their admission arrangements in a full meeting of the Board **by 28th February**.
- A copy of the new arrangements should be sent to the Diocese and LA **by 15th March**.

*the 'relevant area' is defined by each local authority so advice should be sought as to how they define this.

Effective Consultation

The Office of the School's Adjudicator has previously issued some examples of ways in which schools and local authorities have communicated about proposed changes to their admissions arrangements. In addition to a prominent and simple message on the front page of the school website, backed up with more detailed information, these have included:

- a) asking (other) schools and early years settings (including childminders) to pass on information about the consultation to parents;
- b) articles in the local press including free papers sent to every household in the area, magazines/newsletters published by voluntary groups in an area, family information directories and child focused magazines;
- c) use of local radio and social media including Twitter and Facebook and online parent forums (one local authority described a parental networking group with over 3,000 members);
- d) seeking feedback and responses online as well as in paper form;
- e) posters in schools, stay and play session locations, supermarkets, doctors' surgeries, children's centres, health centres, places of worship and the 17 local authority's own buildings;
- f) consultation meetings including drop in sessions targeting areas or groups which past experience showed were less likely to respond;
- g) use of personal contacts - talking to parents at the school gate or at parents evenings;
- h) asking local voluntary groups, parish councils and faith bodies to use their networks to pass on material and information;
- i) and direct emails to parents who have given permission and provided email addresses via their applications for admission in previous years; this had a high response rate.

Whichever process is used, schools should ensure that **a full record of the evidence that consultation has taken place**, including the timeline, are kept along with responses. As failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals