

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN OF UK SERVICE PERSONNEL & OTHER CROWN SERVANTS (INCLUDING DIPLOMATS)

1. PURPOSE

This protocol is devised to ensure that Gloucestershire Local Authority Schools comply with the requirements of the School Admission Code 2014 to ensure that our procedures or criteria do not disadvantage children who arrive in the area outside the normal admissions round and that the particular challenges for children of UK service personnel and other Crown Servants are minimised.

In the light of the guidance and requirements set out in the Schools Admissions Code 2014, the county and its partner admission authorities recognise the particular needs of Service parents and others serving the Crown, many of whom have to manage frequent moves of home both inside and outside the UK.

2. SCOPE

Families of UK service personnel, other Crown Servants and British Council Employees are subject to frequent movement within the UK and from abroad, often at relatively short notice. Local Authorities and admission authorities must:

- a) allocate a place in advance of the family arriving in the area provided the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date and a Unit postal address or quartering area address when considering the application against their oversubscription criteria. This **must** include accepting a Unit postal address or quartering area address for a service child. Admission authorities **must not** refuse a service child a place because the family does not currently live in the area, or reserve blocks of places for these children;
- b) ensure that arrangements in their area support the Government's commitment to removing disadvantage for service children. Arrangements **must** be appropriate for the area and be described in the local authority's composite prospectus.

3. KEY STAGE 1 CLASSES

The Admissions to Schools in England and The Armed Forces' Covenant guidance issued April 2013 by Ministry of Defence says:

"Since 1997, it has been unlawful for infant aged classes to contain more than 30 children with one qualified teacher, with a tiny number of permitted exceptions. The purpose of this legislation was to try to give young children starting school the best possible chances of success by limiting class sizes. However, mobile Service families with children needing Key Stage 1 (infant) places in schools have often found the inflexibility of this legislation difficult to live with."

In the light of the Covenant and representations made by the MOD's Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) to the Department for Education (DfE), the Code has been amended to try to strike a balance between the original intentions of the infant class size legislation and the needs of mobile Service families with children requiring Key Stage 1 school places when they move to a new area.

It is important to note that admission authorities are not required to treat all Service children in Key Stage 1 as 'excepted pupils'; they are empowered to do so in respect of only those who are the subjects of in-year applications. In other words, they can admit a Service child over the 30 limit, but they do not have to. Where a number of Service children require in year admission to a Key Stage 1 class at the same time, for example, it is inevitable that some admission authorities will be reluctant to see significant increases to infant class sizes over and above the legal limit.

Where such applications are rejected, parents will continue to have access, should they wish to, to the independent admission appeals' process. Whereas, under the previous Code, appeals panels were forbidden by law to uphold most appeals of this kind, under the current guidance, they now have the discretion to treat the appeal much as they would treat any other appeal for a child in another Key Stage.

This provision is not intended to and does not offer preferential treatment to Service families. It is hoped, however, that it will provide enough flexibility to lessen the disadvantage experienced by some Service families.

Please see the flowchart in Appendix 1, which details the Appeals Process.

4. PROCEDURE

This protocol will ensure that admission authorities in Gloucestershire will:

- 4.1. Conduct electronically, as far as possible, all written communication regarding admissions and admissions appeals, particularly with families outside the U.K. seeking school places in Gloucestershire in the light of their move into the area. Where web based and email communication is not possible, relevant documents will be faxed if parents have access to such a facility
- 4.2. Consider, up to a term in advance of a child's arrival in the area, a school place in response to an application accompanied by an official government letter e.g.
 - Posting orders **or**
 - Confirmation in writing from the unit clerk **or**
 - Confirmation in writing from the commanding officer that the parent is service personnel

declaring a relocation date and intended address or area of residency. A allocation will be made where the child would meet the criteria on relocation and there is a place available at the preferred school.

- 4.3 Accept a Unit or a "quartering area" address (the address of the closest house in the nearest "quartering area") for applications from Service personnel in the absence of a new home postal address.

- 4.4 Ensure, through the relevant documents and publications that, in addition to the support offered by the Local Authority, service personnel and their families may obtain information, advice and guidance about any aspect of admissions to schools from : Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) www.gov.uk/childrens-education-advisory-service

Own Admission Authority Schools and Academies in Gloucestershire may also opt to use this protocol.

*Access to Learning
Gloucestershire County Council
June 2015*