

## CO-ORDINATED ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS FOR HEREFORDSHIRE

### Introduction

Herefordshire will operate a co-ordinated scheme from September 2004. The Council has agreed cross border arrangements (in-LEA scheme) with Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Monmouthshire and Powys with regards to the exchange of information following the closing date of 7 November 2003. In the case of Shropshire the Council has agreed an inter-LEA co-ordinated scheme with both authorities offering places to their own residents when they have applied and been successful in gaining a place in the other county.

The following sections describe the proposed co-ordinated scheme for Herefordshire.

### Application Form and Closing Date

Parents are invited to indicate 3 preferences on a common application form, which will also enable parents to give reasons for their preference. All preferences are treated as equal initially, and sent out as equal to other admission authorities. However, if more than one school place can potentially be offered to an individual applicant, the single offer is for the school the parent ranked highest.

The Herefordshire application form invites all parents resident in the County to name 3 preferred schools, in order of preference, by 7 November. It is made clear that parents should name all schools for which they wish their child to be considered for a place, including any voluntary aided schools, and/or any maintained schools outside the County. There is agreement with other Councils that the closing date of 7 November will be respected even if this date is officially later than the other admission authorities closing date. This will be important if a parent expresses a preference for a school outside Herefordshire.

### Initial Allocation Process

By 28 November, the Admission and Transport Office sends other admission authorities/LEAs details of applicants for their schools. The Admission and Transport Office does not reveal the order of preference except insofar as other admission authorities need the information to apply their own over-subscription criteria. For example, if the order of preference is a key criterion in another LEA area, or a school's criteria give highest priority to parents who have made that school their first preference over other parents for whom it is a second or lower preference. This situation will apply for Gloucestershire and Worcestershire for the September 2004 transfer as both Councils have delayed a co-ordinated scheme until 2005. In the meanwhile they will still operate a first preference scheme.

Admission authorities then apply their admission criteria, including any selection tests, and will send the Admission and Transport Office by 20 December a list indicating the order in which all children for whom applications to the school have been made have priority by reference to the over-subscription criteria.

Although all applications need to be assessed and grouped against the criteria, admission authorities of significantly oversubscribed schools need not give individual rankings to applicants in the lowest priority groups for admission, if there is no likelihood of being able to offer them a place after elimination of multiple offers. The Admission and Transport Office will draw up a similar list for any school for which it is the admission authority. After other admission authorities have sent their ranked lists to the LEA in whose area they are located, each LEA should have a list for each of its maintained schools.

## **Finalising the Allocation Arrangements**

Herefordshire will then compare the lists for all schools in its area. When a child qualifies for one of the available number of places at more than one school, the Admission and Transport Office provisionally allocates a place at the school indicated by the terms of its co-ordinated scheme. It also adjusts the list for any other school for which a preference was expressed by that parent, moving another child who was previously not allocated a potential place up the list to the provisional place which has been vacated.

By 15 February, the Admission and Transport Office (whose own decisions on which school to offer, in the event of multiple potential offers, will have been made in accordance with its model scheme, i.e. the school ranked highest by the parent) will also have received similar notifications from other LEAs of any places which those LEAs or schools in their areas can offer in response to any preference expressed by one of their residents. Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Monmouthshire and Powys will not have a co-ordinated scheme until September 2005. Herefordshire has agreed that where the highest ranked school is outside the county boundary the offer of the place will be made by the appropriate authority which is likely to be before the official date of 1 March. When this situation arises the Admission and Transport Office will only confirm that an offer has been made by another Council. That confirmation will be sent on 1 March 2004.

Clearly, if no preferred school in the home LEA can be offered, the Admission and Transport Office need not look for an alternative place if it knows that another LEA will be making an offer.

## **Late Applications**

Between 7 November and 23 February (final allocation list) it is likely that the Admission and Transport Office will receive late applications. The Council has agreed within its co-ordinated scheme to accept these applications, on the understanding that the delay was reasonable, for example service family moving to the 22 SAS regiment or a family moving into the area. Because the individual circumstances will vary from application to application the determination of what is reasonable will be decided by the Director of Education or his nominee. In the case of another admission authority the determination will be made by the Governing Body.

Applications received after 23 February will be placed on a waiting list based on the oversubscription policy. Allocations will be made against the preference order as vacancies occur although the Admission and Transport Office will endeavour to offer a suitable school at a reasonable distance to the child's home where vacancies exist. However, parents will be able to appeal against the decision that an offer to their preferred school has not been made.

## **Offer of a Place**

If any child looks like remaining unplaced, the Admission and Transport Office considers how to place them in schools within its area, having regard to any reasons expressed by the parent for their (unsuccessful) preferences. Each LEA then sends the schools which it maintains the final lists of pupils to be allocated places. On 1 March – the 'national offer day' for secondary schools – it writes to every resident parent who filled in its secondary application form, to tell them of their allocated school place. Where the school in question is its own admission authority, the LEA must state that the offer is being communicated on behalf of that school's governing body.