

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Proposed joint position statement/working agreement between schools in Winchester regarding:

Parents/carers expressing an intention to make a mid-year application for a change of Secondary school.

Rationale

1. The city of Winchester has three high performing secondary schools, all with an inclusive ethos and commitment to meeting the needs of all young people. There are occasions where parents/carers seek to move their child to a different Secondary school at the end of or during an academic year. Whilst there may at times be good reasons for doing so, in many cases such requests for in-year admission to another school arise from issues which may well be straightforward for the home school to resolve.

In addition, the capacity of the receiving school to effectively meet the needs of a significant number of children joining them mid-way through their secondary education, or mid-way through a year, may well prove challenging and a move may not be in the child's best interests. Where a child has complex needs which are well-understood by the home school, a move is potentially disruptive and unsettling. If a child moves to a school further away, this may have an adverse impact on attendance and punctuality. Moving during secondary education might affect a child more acutely at Key Stage 4, where not all schools offer the same options subjects, and where a move might adversely affect a child's KS4 outcomes.

2. Therefore, it is proposed that Winchester secondary schools agree and endorse an approach which ensures that home schools seek to resolve issues, so that the young person remains at their original school. The schools must at all times, recognise the right of parents to make in-year applications to other schools, and the receiving school, must not, at any time lead these conversations.

Requests for in-year change of placement

3. Where parents/carers suggest they want a change of school during the academic year, the following will apply:
 - The home school will invite the parent/carer into school, to discuss any concerns and make best endeavours to resolve any challenges that may result in an application for a change of school.
 - During this discussion, the home school will ascertain whether the desired change of school is as a result of issues which are potentially relatively straightforward to resolve (e.g. a friendship issue, a moment-in-time

interaction with a member of staff that hasn't gone in their favour). Every effort will be made by schools to resolve concerns.

- Schools will not name/discuss other schools as viable/potentially more favourable alternatives during these discussions ('because they are small', 'have a reputation for being good at X', 'child would benefit from a fresh start'), since they are not in a position to fully understand a particular school's capacity at any given time, nor is it their place to do so.
 - It is to be hoped that schools' work to resolve issues leads to individual families choosing to leave their child in their existing school. However, if these attempts are not successful, and the parent/carers wishes to make an application for an in-year admission elsewhere, the school will ensure they are directed to the online admissions link and a school in receipt of an in-year application will adhere to the expectations around timeliness of response, as outlined in the admissions code.
4. By following the agreed principles above, schools can assure themselves that:
- Concerns raised by parents/carers are addressed early and in the right manner, by the home school.
 - Applications for a change of school are made only after all attempts to resolve issues at the home school have been exhausted.
 - Parents/carers are consistently given the same guidance by all parties, which ensures a fair and equitable process for all concerned and gives the child the best chance of success.
5. This agreement will require the endorsement of the governing bodies of all schools. This will be a school-led approach, as opposed to being a defined local authority (LA) policy. Nevertheless, the LA will support schools in implementing this approach, whilst adhering to its statutory responsibility to implement the Admissions code.