

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: Education Committee	Subject: Revised Policy on Admission to Schools: Implications of the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act 2000
From: Director of Education	
Date: March 2001	
Ref: MM/IS/CG	

Summary

The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act 2000 included changes to placing request procedures and admissions of under school age children to primary school. This report makes the necessary changes to the authority's admission to schools policy.

Recommendations

The education committee is recommended:

- (1) to note the changes for the admissions of under age children to primary school
- (2) to note the changes to placing request procedures introduced by the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act 2000.
- (3) to approve the revised admission to schools policy included as appendix 2 to this report.
- (4) to approve the interim policy that children under 5 who are entitled to enrol in primary 1 in August 2001 be given the right of appeal against the refusal of a placing request.

Michael O'Neill

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NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL : DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Revised Policy on Admission to Schools : Implications of the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act 2000

Report by the Director of Education

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 the authority is obliged to have regard to the general principle that within certain constraints "children are educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents". This includes the right to select a school other than the school designated by the authority. The legislation specifies the grounds on which placing requests can be refused and these were incorporated into the admission to schools policy approved by the education committee in January 1996.
- 1.2 In January 1997, the education committee approved a report on a revised policy on admissions to schools as a result of the Education (Scotland) Act 1996. A copy of that policy is attached as appendix 1.

2. NEW REGULATIONS IN STANDARDS IN SCOTLAND'S SCHOOLS ETC ACT 2000

- 2.1 The recent Act has the following implications for the existing policies on school admission and placing requests:
- (A) Under school age entry requests: Section 38 requires the authority to provide primary school education for a child under school age if requested by parents and if it is considered appropriate to the aptitude and ability of the child. Under age requests can only be made to the authority in which the parent is resident. There is no right of appeal against a refusal of an early entry request.
- (B) Placing requests: Section 44 indicates that placing requests can be made only for children of school age. It also adds the following additional grounds on which the authority may refuse a placing request.
- (i) granting the request will require the formation of an additional class or the appointment of an additional teacher at a future stage of the child's education at primary school.
- (ii) granting the request would mean a breach to the school's maximum capacity. The implementation of this clause has been postponed until a working group on school capacity has reported.

- (iii) in order to reserve as many places as are reasonably required to accommodate pupils likely to become resident in the catchment area. This may be applied to any school in the authority and to the period from the time of consideration of the placing request to the end of the school session to which the placing request relates.

- (C) Placing requests for children with a record of special educational needs:
The new act ensures that parents of children with a record of special educational needs may make a placing request for a school or a centre with which the authority has an arrangement for the provision of pre-school education, as well as schools under direct management of the authority.

- 2.2 As a result of a loophole in the Standards etc Act Parents of children aged between 4½/5 years who submit a placing request currently have no right of appeal against a placing request decision. The Scottish Executive are currently investigating this issue and a legislative amendment will be necessary. It is proposed that as an interim measure children in North Lanarkshire are given the right of appeal.

3. REVISED SCHOOL ADMISSION POLICY

The revised school admission policy taking account of the legislative changes described in section 2 is included as appendix 2

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The education committee is recommended:

- (1) to note the changes for the admissions of under age children to primary school
- (2) to note the changes to placing request procedures introduced by the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act 2000.
- (3) to approve the revised admission to schools policy included as appendix 2 to this report.
- (4) to approve the interim policy that children under 5 who are entitled to enrol in primary 1 in August 2001 be given the right of appeal against the refusal of a placing request.

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ADMISSION TO SCHOOLS

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Education (Scotland) Act requires the authority to secure the adequate and efficient provision of school education including arrangements for the admission of children to schools. The recommendations in this paper take account of the legal requirements and of established practice with the exception of appeal procedures. The main aspects covered include:
- (a) entry to primary education including age of entry and annual start dates
 - (b) entry to secondary education
 - (c) placing requests
 - (d) early entry requests
- 1.2 Once policy is approved, the director of education will establish the relevant procedures and ensure that parents, head teachers and school boards are fully informed.

2 ENTRY TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

- 2.1 The authority is required to establish the following 2 dates every year:
- (a) "school commencement date or dates" on which attendance at school will begin. The current arrangement is one start date per year at the beginning of the school session.
 - (b) "appropriate latest date". This is the date on or before which the child must reach age 5 to be admitted to school on the commencement date. The current arrangement is that children who are 5 before 1 March may start school in August of the previous year.
- 2.2 The authority is also obliged to establish a catchment or delineated area for every primary school and to inform parents of the designated school for their child. The current practice is that parents are advised by advertisement in the local paper in January every year to register their child at the local primary school. To ensure that catchment area arrangements are rigorously followed detailed street maps have been issued to all head teachers. Any change to the catchment area of a primary school requires formal consultation with parents, staff and other interested parties.

2.3 Currently, consideration is given to early entry requests on behalf of children who have not reached the age for normal entry. The criteria for judging these requests include the emotional and intellectual maturity of the child and the general procedures for placing requests.

2.4 Recommendations

The following admission arrangements for primary schools are recommended:

- (a) there will be one school commencement date every year, in August at the beginning of the school session
- (b) children will normally be admitted to school in August if they reach age 5 after the end of February of that year and before 1 March of the following year. However, for children who reach age 5 between the school commencement date and 1 March, parents may opt to postpone admission for a year until the next commencement date
- (c) parents will be able to submit an early entry request on behalf of their child who has not reached the eligible age for normal entry. The decision of the authority will be based on the child's readiness for primary education and the criteria for school admission detailed in paragraph 5.1.
- (d) the existing catchment areas of primary schools will remain unaltered
- (e) children resident within the catchment area of each primary school will normally be admitted to the school without the need for special consideration.

3 ENTRY TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS

3.1 There are no regulations for age of entry to secondary education. Normally, children transfer to secondary school once they have completed 7 years of primary education at age 11 or 12.

3.2 Each secondary has a group of associated primary schools in the local area and at the end of P7 stage the children normally transfer to the associated secondary school without the need for a special request. The catchment areas of the associated primary schools make up that of the secondary school.

3.3 A complication to this arrangement arises where a child is attending the primary school by placing request. Currently, there are 2 secondary school options for that child. Firstly, the parents may select the secondary school associated with their designated local primary school. Secondly, the child may transfer to the secondary school associated with the primary school presently attended. This choice takes account of both the desirability of primary/secondary continuity and

the principle that children will attend the secondary school for the area in which they live.

3.4 Recommendations

The following admission arrangements for secondary schools are recommended:

- (a) children attending a primary school and residing in the catchment area of the school will normally transfer at the end of P7 stage to the designated associated secondary school without the need for any special consideration
- (b) for a child attending a primary school as a result of placing request, the parents may opt for transfer at the P7 stage to the secondary school associated with the primary school currently attended or to the secondary school associated with their local primary school.

3.5 In certain circumstances a secondary school may be close to full capacity because of a high number of placing requests into the associated primary schools followed by automatic transfer to the secondary at primary 7 stage. Should this occur for the secondary school affected, it will be necessary to seek committee approval to change the admissions policy from one based on attendance at the associated primary schools to residency in a delineated geographical area. This will ensure that for transfer to secondary school from the associated primary schools higher priority will be given to local children compared to placing requests. The process of approval will take account of formal consultation with interested parties.

3.6 The committee has already approved the delineation of Dalziel High School and as a result priority for admission will be given to those children who live in the delineated area and those children with hearing impairment allocated places in the integrated special unit in Dalziel High School. Any child enrolling in one of the primary schools associated with Dalziel High School after 1 January 1997 and not resident in the delineated area will be required to make a placing request at the appropriate time for transfer to Dalziel High School. It will be considered in accordance with the priorities for admission to Dalziel High School approved by the education committee.

4 PLACING REQUESTS

4.1 Under legislation the authority is obliged to 'have regard' to the general principle that within certain constraints 'children are educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents'. This includes the right to select a school other than the primary or secondary school designated by the authority. So that parents can make an informed choice the authority is obliged to publish information about each school in a school handbook. The information includes details of educational aims, curriculum and assessment, examination attainment, school policies, provision for special needs and extra curricular activities.

4.2 Placing requests must be made to the authority in writing and must indicate the specified preferred school. The authority is under a duty to grant each placing request unless specific grounds for refusal apply. These are as follows:

- (a) if placing the child in the specified preferred school would
 - (i) make it necessary for the authority to employ an additional teacher
 - (ii) give rise to significant expenditure on extending or altering the accommodation or facilities provided in connection with the school
 - (iii) be seriously detrimental to the continuity of the child's education
 - (iv) be likely to be seriously detrimental to order and discipline in the school
 - (v) be likely to be seriously detrimental to the educational well-being of the pupils attending the school
- (b) if the education normally provided at the specified preferred school is not suited to the age, ability or aptitude of the child
- (c) if the authority has already required the child to discontinue his attendance at the specified school
- (d) if the specified school is a special school and the child does not have special educational needs requiring the education or special facilities normally provided at that school
- (e) if the specified school is a single sex school and the child is not of the sex admitted or taken to be admitted to the school
- (f) in addition, the authority may refuse a placing request for the specified school in order to reserve a place for a pupil likely to become resident in the catchment area of the school in the period from the time of consideration of the placing request up to and during the year from 1 August to which the placing request relates. This ground will be applied only where there is no equivalent school managed by North Lanarkshire within 2 miles walking distance in the case of a request relating to primary education and 3 miles in any other case.

4.3 The authority may refuse the request if one or more of the above conditions apply. However, even if there are grounds for refusal the authority may still agree to grant the placing request.

5 PRIORITIES FOR ADMISSION

5.1 The authority is obliged to establish a general policy for the admission of children to schools. Currently, the highest priority is given as detailed above in paragraphs 2.4 and 3.4. In addition, where there are more applications than the places available, it is essential that preference is given thereafter in accordance with approved guidelines. Currently, these are as follows:

- (a) in the case of a primary school, applications from children living in the delineated area but who could not be accommodated in the school to date
- (b) in the case of a secondary school, applications from children living in the delineated area of an associated primary school but who could not be accommodated in the school to date
- (c) in the case of a primary school, early entry requests from children living in the delineated area and considered suitable for primary education
- (d) applications from children with medical conditions and supported by the family doctor and the community medicine specialist
- (e) applications from children with older siblings in the school
- (f) applications affected by other factors, for example family circumstances, distance between home and school and curricular provision

5.2 Once the applications have been considered in terms of the above admission criteria and where there are still more requests than places available, these places will be allocated by ballot.

5.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that the priorities for admission detailed above in paragraph 5.1 and 5.2 should be adopted by the authority.

5.4 It should be noted that if it proves necessary to change the admission priorities for a given secondary school because of capacity problems the procedures outlined in paragraph 3.5 will be followed.

January 1997

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL - DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ADMISSION TO SCHOOLS

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Education (Scotland) Act requires the authority to secure the adequate and efficient provision of school education including arrangements for the admission of children to schools. This policy paper takes account of the legal requirements including those set out in the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act 2000. The main aspects covered include:

- (a) entry to primary education including age of entry and annual start dates
- (b) entry to secondary education
- (c) placing requests
- (d) early entry requests
- (e) priorities for admission to schools

2 ENTRY TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

2.1 The authority is required to establish the following 2 dates every year:

- (a) "school commencement date or dates" on which attendance at school will begin. The current arrangement is one start date per year at the beginning of the school session.
- (b) "appropriate latest date". This is the date on or before which the child must reach age 5 to be admitted to school on the commencement date. The current arrangement is that children who are 5 before 1 March may start school in August of the previous year.

2.2 The authority is also obliged to establish a catchment or delineated area for every primary school and to inform parents of the designated school for their child. The current practice is that parents are advised by advertisement in the local paper in January every year to register their child at the local primary school. To ensure that catchment area arrangements are rigorously followed detailed street maps have been issued to all head teachers.

2.3 The admission arrangements for primary schools will be as follows:

- (a) there will be one school commencement date every year, in August at the beginning of the school session
- (b) children will normally be admitted to school in August if they reach age 5 after the end of February of that year and before 1 March of the following year. However, for children who reach age 5 between the school commencement date and 1 March, parents may opt to postpone admission for a year until the next commencement date
- (c) children resident within the catchment area of each primary school will normally be admitted to the school without the need for special consideration.

3 ENTRY TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS

3.1 There are no regulations for age of entry to secondary education. Normally, children transfer to secondary school once they have completed 7 years of primary education at age 11 or 12.

3.2 Each secondary has a group of associated primary schools in the local area and at the end of P7 stage the children normally transfer to the associated secondary school without the need for a special request. The catchment areas of the associated primary schools make up that of the secondary school.

3.3 A complication to this arrangement arises where a child is attending the primary school by placing request. Currently, there are 2 secondary school options for that child. Firstly, the parents may select the secondary school associated with their designated local primary school. Secondly, the child may transfer to the secondary school associated with the primary school presently attended. This choice takes account of both the desirability of primary/secondary continuity and the principle that children should attend the secondary school for the area in which they live.

3.4 The admission arrangements for secondary schools will be as follows:

- (a) children attending a primary school and residing in the catchment area of the school will normally transfer at the end of P7 stage to the designated associated secondary school without the need for any special consideration
- (b) for a child attending a primary school as a result of placing request, the parents may opt for transfer at the P7 stage to the secondary school associated with the primary school currently attended or to the secondary school associated with their local primary school.

- 3.5 In certain circumstances a secondary school may be close to full capacity because of a high number of placing requests into the associated primary schools followed by automatic transfer to the secondary at primary 7 stage. Should this occur, for the secondary school affected, the committee may change the admissions policy from one based on attendance at the associated primary schools to residency in a delineated geographical area. This will ensure that for transfer to secondary school from the associated primary schools higher priority will be given to local children compared to placing requests. The process of approval will take account of formal consultation with interested parties.
- 3.6 The committee has already approved the delineation of Dalziel High School and as a result priority for admission will be given to those children who live in the delineated area and those children with hearing impairment allocated places in the integrated special unit in Dalziel High School. Any child enrolling in one of the primary schools associated with Dalziel High School after 1 January 1997 and not resident in the delineated area will be required to make a placing request at the appropriate time for transfer to Dalziel High School. It will be considered in accordance with the priorities for admission to Dalziel High School approved by the education committee.

4 PLACING REQUESTS

- 4.1 Under legislation the authority is obliged to 'have regard' to the general principle that within certain constraints 'children are educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents'. This includes the right to select a school other than the primary or secondary school designated by the authority. So that parents can make an informed choice the authority is obliged to publish information about each school in a school handbook. The information includes details of educational aims, curriculum and assessment, examination attainment, school policies, provision for special needs and extra curricular activities.
- 4.2 Placing requests must be made to the authority in writing and must indicate the specified preferred school. The authority will grant each placing request unless specific grounds for refusal apply. These are as follows:
- (a) if placing the child in the specified preferred school would
 - (i) make it necessary for the authority to employ an additional teacher in the relevant school session
 - (ii) make it necessary for the authority to create an additional class in the specified school or take an additional teacher into employment at the commencement of a future stage of the child's education at primary school

- (iii) give rise to significant expenditure on extending or altering the accommodation or facilities provided in connection with the school
 - (iv) be seriously detrimental to the continuity of the child's education
 - (v) be likely to be seriously detrimental to order and discipline in the school
 - (vi) be likely to be seriously detrimental to the educational well-being of the pupils attending the school
- (b) if the education normally provided at the specified preferred school is not suited to the age, ability or aptitude of the child
 - (c) if the authority has already required the child to discontinue his attendance at the specified school
 - (d) if the specified school is a special school and the child does not have special educational needs requiring the education or special facilities normally provided at that school
 - (e) if the specified school is a single sex school and the child is not of the sex admitted or taken to be admitted to the school
 - (f) to reserve places for pupils likely to become resident in the catchment area of the school in the period from the time of consideration of the placing request up to and during the year from 1 August to which the placing request relates.

4.3 The authority may refuse the request if one or more of the above conditions apply. However, even if there are grounds for refusal the authority may still agree to grant the placing request.

5 EARLY ENTRY REQUESTS

Parents who are ordinarily resident in North Lanarkshire will be able to submit an early entry request on behalf of their child who has not reached the eligible age for normal entry. The decision of the authority will be based on the child's readiness for primary education and the criteria for school admission detailed in paragraph 7.1. There will be no right of appeal against a refusal of an early entry request.

6 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PLACING REQUEST

6.1 In addition to the placing request entitlement available to the parents of non-recorded pupils, parents of children with a record of special educational needs are entitled to make a placing request to the education authority for the area to which

their child belongs for an independent special school, a grant aided special school or a self governing special school in Scotland. Before making such a request however, parents must ensure that the managers of the school they wish to nominate are willing to offer the child a place there.

- 6.2 Parents of children under school age with a record of special educational needs may make a placing request for a school or a centre with which the authority has an arrangement for the provision of pre-school education, as well as to those under the direct management of the authority.

7 PRIORITIES FOR ADMISSION

- 7.1 The policy of the authority will be to give the highest priority for the admission of children to schools as detailed above in paragraphs 2.3 and 3.4. In addition, where there are more applications than the places available, preference will be given thereafter in accordance with the following priority order:

- (a) in the case of a primary school, applications from children living in the delineated area but who could not be accommodated in the school to date
- (b) in the case of a secondary school, applications from children living in the delineated area of an associated primary school but who could not be accommodated in the school to date
- (c) in the case of a primary school, early entry requests from children living in the delineated area and considered ready for primary education
- (d) applications from children with relevant medical conditions and supported by the family doctor and the community medicine specialist
- (e) applications from children with older siblings in the school
- (f) applications affected by other factors, for example family circumstances, distance between home and school and curricular provision

- 7.2 Once the applications have been considered in terms of the above admission criteria and where there are still more requests than places available, these places will be allocated by ballot.

March 2001