

Consultation
Admissions Policy 2022/3
for Woodlea Primary School

Consultation on Admission Arrangements for Woodlea Primary School for 2022

Tandridge Learning Trust is the Admissions Authority for Woodlea Primary School.

Woodlea Primary School is conducting a full consultation on admission arrangements, including proposed changes on behalf of Tandridge Learning Trust.

Full details of the consultation and the changes are available on the school's website www.woodlea.surrey.sch.uk.

Comments are invited on any aspect of the proposed Admissions Policy 2022 for the school.

In particular, the proposed changes from the 2021/2 policies are as follows:

- to add a children of staff criterion.
- to remove the "exceptional arrangements" criterion.
- to remove references to the "Nearest School" and replace with "catchment area" in the three criteria with this reference.

The consultation will run from Monday 16th November 2020 to Wednesday 31st December 2020.

Anyone wishing to submit their views can email the School consultation@woodlea.surrey.sch.uk or by writing to Christine Starkey, School Business Manager, Woodlea Primary School, Long Hill, Woldingham, Surrey CR3 7EP.

After the closing date, responses will be collated and presented to the Woodlea Primary School Governing Body meeting in January 2021 and then to the Tandridge Learning Trust for final Determination in late January 2021.

Once the Tandridge Learning Trust has considered all the responses the determined admission arrangements will be placed on the school's website at www.woodlea.surrey.sch.uk

Table to show Current Oversubscription Criteria 2021/2 and Proposed Oversubscription Criteria 2022/3

Priority	Over subscription criteria 2021/2	Oversubscription Criteria 2022/3
1	LAC/PLAC	LAC/PLAC
2	Exceptional Arrangements	Children of Staff
3	Siblings nearest school	Siblings within Catchment area
4	Others nearest School	Others within Catchment area
5	Sibling Not Nearest school	Siblings outside Catchment area
6	Any Other	Any others outside catchment area

Reasons for removing the Exceptional Arrangements Criterion (Sometimes referred to as Social/Medical Criterion)

The school admissions code 2014 states that schools “may” use this criterion as an over subscription criterion. There is no compulsion to have such a criterion and it is increasingly common for admission authorities to remove this criterion.

The criterion as it currently stands is broad, applying to both medical and social conditions as well as to conditions and circumstances applicable to either or both the child and/or members of the family. The subjective nature of the application of this criterion has led to inconsistency of decision making. It has also increased the administrative burden.

Any child who needs to attend a particular school will have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in place which will name the particular school. In all other cases, any school is expected to make arrangements for its pupils.

There has only been one application granted under this criterion in the last three years.

Reasons for adding a Children of staff criterion

The school admissions code 2014 states

Admission authorities may give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children of staff in either or both of the following circumstances:

- a) where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made, and/or*
- b) the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.*

Many Admissions Authorities, including Surrey County Council have this as an admission criterion for Community and Voluntary Controlled school.

Such a criterion is increasingly important in staff recruitment and retention. This means it should only apply to permanent members of staff who are directly employed by the school.

The numbers falling in this criterion is expected to be small and occasional and would not materially affect admissions to the school both in the normal round or admission or for in year applications.

The criterion’s position is important when considering for waiting list purposes. It needs to be sufficiently high so that in cases of it being relevant for in year applications, sufficient priority is given for it to be effective. It should therefore be above sibling priority.

Reasons for removing “Nearest school” Criterion

General issues when considering the “Nearest School” criterion

In October 2019, the Schools Adjudicator issued a determination on the admission arrangements for Stamford Green Primary School which identified some concerns with the use of ‘nearest school’ and the objectivity and clarity regarding this (ADA3589

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/stamford-green-primary-school). Although this determination applied to Stamford Green Primary School, its’ key message applies to any school which uses ‘nearest school’ as part of their admission arrangements.

As a result of this determination, the Governors have reviewed this aspect of the admission arrangements. Options considered were as follows:

- Remove nearest school priority and just use home to school distance
- Replace nearest school with a drawn catchment area
- Replace nearest school with a straight-line distance radius (making sure that this conforms to the Code)

Considerations as part of the review included:

- Is the school undersubscribed? – in which case the removal of ‘nearest school’ would be unlikely to make a difference to the intake
- Would all the children allocated under ‘nearest school’ be allocated a place on straight line distance if ‘nearest school’ was not used? - in which case the removal of ‘nearest school’ and use of priority according to straight line distance would be unlikely to make a difference
- Would children be displaced if ‘nearest school’ was removed? If so, where do those children live and would there be alternative schools for them?
- If use of ‘nearest school’ is considered to be worthwhile, can a catchment be drawn to easily replicate the current use of ‘nearest school’ so parents can understand whether or not they meet this criterion and so it can be easily measured?

In considering these points, the Governors looked at the pattern of admission in order to assess whether or not it changes from year to year. In considering the best way forward the Governors assessed the relevance of nearest school for the school; how much it influences the outcomes of admissions; and the demographics and geography of the area.

The analysis used by the Governors is the same analysis used by the Local Authority in determining the effect of removal of this criterion.

The Local Authority placed each Community and Voluntary Controlled (C&VC) schools into a number of categories. Any schools within these categories will have nearest school criterion removed subject to consultation. The relevant categories for the purposes of Woodlea Primary School are:

Category 1 - Schools which did not fill up on preferences in each of the past three years (2018, 2019 & 2020)

Category 2 - Schools which allocated to 'distance' criterion and furthest distance allocated was FURTHER than the last child allocated under 'nearest school' in each of the past three years (2018, 2019 & 2020)

Category 3 - Schools which allocated to 'nearest school' criterion and there were no children left unplaced under 'distance' criterion who lived closer than the furthest distance allocated under nearest school in each of the past three years (2018, 2019 & 2020)

Category 4 - Schools which experienced a combination of the scenarios set out in categories 1, 2 and/or 3 in each of the past three years (2018, 2019 & 2020)

The Office of School Adjudicator Decision 2013

The 2013 Office of School Adjudicator decision is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/woodlea-primary-school .

The objection, bought by the Parish Council, argued that if did not have split sibling criteria, then there was a trend indicating that children living in the village had less chance of being admitted to the school whereas siblings for whom this was not the nearest school were being given priority. The Adjudicator upheld the objection and the school adopted the current oversubscription criteria used for the 2021/2 Admissions Policy.

It should be noted that this decision did not in any way comment on the “nearest School” concerns highlighted in the previous section for the Office of the School Adjudicator decision for Stamford Green Primary school 2019.

The Woodlea Adjudicator decision also raised concerns about the methodology of the consultation exercise, in particular whether it had been a “full” consultation or a “narrow” consultation.

The Local Authority Option

The data for how places were offered at Woodlea primary school in the last three years are as follows:

Woodlea Primary School Criteria for 2020 and numbers offered	<p>1 LAC & PLAC. 2 Exceptional social/medical need. 3 Siblings, at the time of admission, for whom Woodlea is the nearest school to their home. 4 Other children for whom the school is nearest to their home. 5 Siblings, at the time of admission, for whom the school is not nearest to their home. 6 Any other applicant.</p> <p>Criterion 1 = 0, Criterion 2 = 1, Criterion 3 = 5, Criterion 4 = 7, Criterion 5 = 5, Criterion 6 = 12, Distance = 2.512km</p> <p>Offered 30 Last place offered under crit 4 – 1764.72m = nearer than last place in criterion 6</p>
Woodlea Primary School Criteria for 2019 and numbers offered	<p>1 LAC & PLAC. 2 Exceptional social/medical need. 3 Siblings, at the time of admission, for whom Woodlea is the nearest school to their home. 4 Other children for whom the school is nearest to their home. 5 Siblings, at the time of admission, for whom the school is not nearest to their home. 6 Any other applicant.</p> <p>Criterion 1 = 0, Criterion 2 = 0, Criterion 3 = 7, Criterion 4 = 8, Criterion 5 = 8, Criterion 6 = 7, Distance = 2.529km, EHCP = 0</p> <p>Offered 30 Last place offered under crit 4 – 1836.72m = nearer than last place in criterion 6</p>
Woodlea School Criteria for 2018 and numbers offered	<p>1 LAC & PLAC. 2 Exceptional social/medical need. 3 Siblings, at the time of admission, for whom Woodlea is the nearest school to their home. 4 Other children for whom the school is nearest to their home. 5 Siblings, at the time of admission, for whom the school is not nearest to their home. 6 Any other applicant.</p> <p>Criterion 1 = 1, Criterion 2 = 0, Criterion 3 = 6, Criterion 4 = 6, Criterion 5 = 8, Criterion 6 = 9, Distance = 2.553km, EHCP = 0</p> <p>Offered 30 Last place offered under crit 4 – 1764.72m = nearer than last place in criterion 6</p>

For 2020, 2019 and 2018 entry, it would not have made a difference if Woodlea had not had nearest school criteria. All siblings were offered a place, whether under criterion 3 (siblings for whom Woodlea is nearest) or under criterion 5 (siblings not the nearest).

Furthermore, it is calculated that the furthest distance offered out to under criterion 4 (non-siblings for whom Woodlea is the nearest) was closer than the last distance offered out to under criterion 6 (any other children). This means that anyone living closer than the last distance offered under criterion 6 got in, whether Woodlea was their nearest or not.

This means that the school will be able to frame this as an argument for removing nearest school if it so wishes, because it has not made a difference to the intake in the last three years and arguably adds unnecessary complexity to the admission arrangements.

Woodlea Primary school could therefore consult (if it wishes) on just having four criteria: 1 LAC & PLAC; 2 exceptional; 3 siblings; 4 any other.

This is the easiest and simplest solution to the nearest school issues. It is the simplest for parents to understand.

If the admission authority had been the local authority and not the Trust, then the local authority would have assessed the school as Category 2 above i.e. - Schools which allocated to 'distance' criterion and furthest distance allocated was FURTHER than the last child allocated under 'nearest school' in each of the past three years (2018, 2019 & 2020 and therefore the Local Authority would have consulted on simply removing this criterion altogether.

However, although it would have been the case for the last three years, it is prudent to be mindful of the 2013 Adjudicators ruling, particularly as the concerns raised then could be resurrected.

It is also possible that adopting this option is liable to be challenged by referral to the Office of the School Adjudicator.

The Catchment Area Option

The school admissions code 2014 states that

*Catchment areas must be designed so that they are reasonable and clearly defined.
Catchment areas do not prevent parents who live outside the catchment of a particular school from expressing a preference for the school.*

The code (in a suffix) refers to R v Greenwich London Borough Council, ex parte John Ball Primary School (1989) 88 LGR 589 [1990] Fam Law 469 held that pupils should not be discriminated against in relation to admission to the school simply because they reside outside the local authority area in which the school is situated. Section 86(8) of the SSFA 1998 places an equal duty on local authorities to comply with parental preference in respect of parents living within and outside their boundary

It has not been possible to devise a map based entirely/exactly on nearest school definition so it can be an exact like for like change.

It is recognised that drawing a catchment area is not an exact science.

Various possible fixed catchment areas were considered. In determining a fixed catchment area to replace the “nearest school” references, the governors considered inter alia:

- What catchment area were reasonable and clearly defined
- That it met the requirements of the School Admissions Code 2014
- The effect of a fixed catchment area on various addresses including those located in the areas known as the Ridge, Woldingham school, and addresses north of Halliloo Road.
- The effect of any fixed catchment area on other surrounding schools namely Marden Lodge Primary school, St John’s C of E (Aided) Primary School, St Mary’s C of E Primary School and Warlingham Village Primary School.

- The effect, if any, on allocation of reception school places in the Borough of Tandridge for September 2020, 2019 and 2018. This is available on www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/admissions/arrangements-and-outcomes/previous-years.
- Whether there were easily identifiable physical boundaries to clearly identify the perimeter of any fixed catchment area.
- Whether all the addresses that would have had Woodlea primary school as their nearest school were within any fixed catchment area.

The Governors agreed that in the absence of being able to draw a fixed catchment area which exactly replicates the nearest school criterion, using the parish boundary as the fixed catchment area would be the best fit alternative to replacing the nearest school criterion. It is fair, reasonable and clearly defined. It is easy to understand, already entrenched in the local community, and would not detrimentally affect any of the neighbouring schools.

The consultation will run from Monday 16th November 2020 to Wednesday 31st December 2020.

Anyone wishing to submit their views can email the School consultation@woodlea.surrey.sch.uk or by writing to Christine Starkey, School Business Manager, Woodlea Primary School, Long Hill, Woldingham, Surrey CR3 7EP.

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