

## **Maintained Nursery Class and Nursery School Admissions**

There are two major changes to three and four year old early learning and childcare provision and funding in 2010. Discussions during the Single Funding Formula consultation in the Autumn Term 2009, and plans for the increase in provision from 12.5 hours to 15 hours a week from September helped identify a number of issues. It now seems appropriate, therefore to review the present admission arrangements for maintained nursery classes and schools.

Since 2003, in order to ensure the consistent application of the nursery admission arrangements these arrangements have been held by the Early Years, Childcare and Extended Schools Team. The current system is that schools submit their nursery waiting lists to Sue Brown in the Early Years Team. She applies the Local Authority admission criteria and informs schools as to whether they are able to admit all the children to their nursery. Sue also advises schools about how to inform any parents who have been unsuccessful in gaining a place for their child.

The Local Authority criteria state that, where a maintained nursery is oversubscribed the following criteria are applied and places allocated to:

1. children with a statement of special educational needs naming the nursery
2. children in public care who are due to access three and four year old funding
3. children who are due to access three and four year old funding who are living in the area served by the school and nursery and who have a brother or sister attending the school
4. children who are due to access three and four year old funding who are living in the area served by the school and nursery
5. children who are due to access three and four year old funding living outside the area served by the school and nursery and who have a brother or sister attending the school
6. children who are due to access three and four year old funding living outside the area served by the school and nursery

If all children cannot be offered a place using the above criteria, the highest priority in each category will be given to the children living nearest the nursery. This distance will be measured on a straight line "crow fly" basis, using Ordnance Survey data. The address will be measured from the post office address point on the property.

From September 2010, all three and four year olds are entitled to receive 15 hours flexible free entitlement each week. Since September 2009, 25% of three and four year olds have been receiving 15 hours of flexible free entitlement. During this first phase of the rollout, it has become apparent that the new arrangements make it extremely difficult for schools to submit waiting lists in the way they have previously. This is particularly true of those maintained nurseries that, while embracing the flexible entitlement and endeavouring to support the needs and requirements of parents, also need to ensure that their funding is sustainable.

In order to support schools in offering the three and four year old 15 hour flexible free entitlement from September 2010, maintained nursery class and nursery school admissions will no longer be held by the Early Years, Childcare and Extended Schools Team. Schools with maintained nursery classes and nursery schools will become responsible for their own admissions, in line with providers in the private, voluntary and independent sector.

To ensure consistent practice, schools will need to adopt a clear Policy for Nursery Admissions which must include the criteria set out above. It is important to note that school admissions will continue to be held by the Local Authority and schools cannot guarantee a school place for any child attending nursery.

The Early Years, Childcare and Extended Schools team will continue to offer guidance, advice and support during this transition period. If you have any questions regarding the above, or need further help with implementing the new arrangements, please contact Sue Brown or Sheila Wigg using the contact details below.

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