



**Secondary school admissions in England:  
Exploring the extent of overt and covert selection**

**Anne West & Audrey Hind**

**Centre for Educational Research**

**Department of Social Policy**

**London School of Economics and Political Science**

**Final Report**

**March 2003**

## Table of Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2 POLICY CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3 ADMISSIONS CRITERIA – OVERT AND COVERT .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4 SUMMARY AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>ANNEX EXAMPLES OF ADMISSIONS CRITERIA .....</b>	<b>20</b>

## Executive Summary

This report provides an analysis of secondary school admissions criteria in England. A database of 95 per cent of state-maintained secondary schools in England was created and oversubscription criteria recorded on a school-by-school basis. Key findings are presented below.

### Admissions criteria

- Our analysis revealed that some admissions criteria are clear, fair and objective. This is particularly apparent in the case of community schools, which comprise the majority of secondary schools in England.
- However, in a significant minority of schools, notably those that are their own admission authorities – voluntary-aided and foundation schools – a variety of criteria are used which appear to be designed to select certain groups of pupils and so exclude others. These include children of employees; children of former pupils; partial selection by ability/aptitude in a subject area or by general ability; and children with a family connection to the school.
- We found that specialist schools were more likely than non-specialist schools to report selecting a proportion of pupils on the basis of aptitude/ability in a particular subject area (5.9 per cent versus 1.7 per cent). However, voluntary-aided/foundation schools were far more likely to select on this basis than community/voluntary-controlled schools (8.8 per cent versus 0.3 per cent). The issue of partial selection by aptitude/ability is thus less a function of specialist school status and more a function of whether schools are their own admission authority.
- It is noteworthy that criteria giving priority to children with medical or social needs were given for nearly three-quarters of schools; however, community/voluntary controlled schools were far more likely to include this as a criterion than voluntary-aided/foundation schools.
- Similarly, nearly two-fifths of schools mentioned as an oversubscription criterion, pupils with special educational needs. Again, these were predominantly community/voluntary-controlled schools as opposed to voluntary-aided/foundation schools.
- The practice of interviewing parents and/or pupils as part of the admission process will not be permitted under the new Code of Practice; at the time of our study, 10 per cent of voluntary-aided schools reported interviewing parents and 16 per cent reported interviewing pupils.
- Some grammar schools, which are by definition academically selective, also use a range of practices which make such schools even more ‘exclusive’ than would otherwise be the case by using as oversubscription criteria such factors as aptitude/ability in a subject area or giving priority to the children of former pupils.
- City Technology Colleges are intended to be representative of the full ability range of pupils in the catchment area. Whilst some attempt is made to obtain a balanced intake in terms of pupils’ cognitive ability, other selection criteria – including, for example, school reports, tests of ‘aptitude’, a writing test to assess ‘motivation’ to succeed, and questions relating to parents’ occupations – mean that in practice such schools cannot be considered to be genuine ‘all ability schools’.
- In short, for some types of schools, there are clear opportunities for schools to ‘select in’ and ‘select out’ pupils, and given the links between social background, prior attainment and later

examination performance, these practices enable some such schools to obtain higher positions in examination 'league tables' than others.

### **Policy implications**

- The evidence reported here reveals that, despite attempts by the Labour Government to reform school admissions, there is considerable room for improvement. Admissions criteria that are not objective, clear or fair continue to be used and some may also contravene current legislation. There are also problems with the admissions process; in some areas for example, parents are required to make multiple applications to different schools. The situation should improve, however, with the introduction of the new Code of Practice (DfES, 2003).
- The new Code of Practice also reiterates the concerns about oversubscription criteria that are potentially discriminatory, but were in operation at the time of our study (e.g. criteria giving preference to children whose parents or older siblings had previously attended the school or whose parents followed particular occupations, such as teachers).
- One issue raised in the Code of Practice, but addressed by very few admission authorities, relates to children in public care, who are a particularly disadvantaged group. The Code recommends that 'all admission authorities give these children top priority in their oversubscription criteria'. Our analysis of admissions criteria revealed that this was a criterion for only two per cent of schools. It remains to be seen which admission authorities will take up this recommendation.
- Another issue that is mentioned in the Code of Practice relates to children with statements of special educational needs; where a school is named in the statement, pupils are required to be admitted to that school. This is another area where current practice could be improved. The admissions criteria and brochures we analysed were not consistent in terms of what information was provided; it would be in the interests of all parents, especially those with children with special educational needs, to have information about this issue.
- Guidance is not being adhered to by certain admission authorities and the body that has been set up to regulate school admissions – the Office of the Schools Adjudicator – needs more power if it is to have the impact that is needed for unfair admissions policies and practices to be removed.
- In our view, the process of secondary transfer needs to be further reformed so that some groups of parents and pupils – and schools – do not continue to benefit at the expense of others. At present, the majority of schools use admissions criteria that are not overtly or covertly selective. However, the policies adopted by a minority of schools have an impact on the intake to community schools, especially in certain urban areas. Schools that are their own admission authorities need to be encouraged to be both academically and socially-mixed with 'fair access' to all in an area. Policy makers have an opportunity to improve educational outcomes for the majority at the same time as promoting social justice. This will require legislation and more regulation, to prevent a continuation of policies and practices that are inequitable and contrary to the principles of social justice.
- The new Code of Practice is a step in the right direction, but in our view there are more improvements that could be made – maybe with the adjudicator adopting a more pro-active role – to ensure that school admissions are clearer, fairer and more objective.

## 1 Introduction

The education reforms introduced by previous Conservative administrations in the 1980s and in particular the Education Reform Act 1988 resulted in the introduction of a 'quasi-market' in school-based education. These reforms resulted in twice as many schools becoming their own admission authorities: in January 1988, 15 per cent of schools were their own admission authority whereas in January 1999, this figure was 30 per cent (West & Pennell, 2003). Schools that are their own admission authority are in a position to 'cream skim'. This means that they are able to select pupils who will maximise their examination 'league table' results or, conversely, not select those who are likely to have a negative impact on school examination results. However, only oversubscribed schools that are their own admission authorities are in this position, namely foundation schools<sup>1</sup> and voluntary-aided (in the main religious) schools.<sup>2</sup>

This paper focuses on reforms to school admissions made by the Labour Government since 1997 and the impact they have had on policy and practice. Section 2 examines the policy context, in particular the changes made to policy in an attempt to make the process of admissions fairer and more transparent. It also reports on objections made to, and decisions by, the schools adjudicator - a new system of quasi-regulation. The methods used for the research reported are also outlined. Section 3 examines admissions criteria in place in English secondary schools classified as comprehensive, in grammar schools and in City Technology Colleges. In doing so, we explore the extent of overt and covert selection and present some examples of ways in which individual admissions authorities 'select in' or 'select out' particular types of pupils via these criteria and other admissions policies. Section 4 summarises the main findings and their implications for policy and practice.

## 2 Policy context

Under the previous Conservative administration a variety of concerns were expressed about the administration of school admissions in various parts of the country. These included the lack of policy co-ordination and equity issues surrounding admissions policies and practices, particularly those used by the former grant-maintained schools (now mostly foundation) and voluntary-aided (mostly church) schools (see Audit Commission, 1996; Gewirtz et al., 1995; West & Pennell, 1997; West et al., 1997, 1998).

The Labour Party in its 1997 election manifesto committed itself to a fair system of admissions to schools: 'We support guidelines for open and fair admissions...' (p. 9). The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act and accompanying regulations set a new legal framework for admissions. Associated with the legislation is a Code of Practice on School Admissions. This can be seen as an attempt to alleviate problems created by the development of a largely unregulated market as regards school admissions. It also provides a new mechanism - the adjudicator - for resolving local disputes in relation to, amongst other issues, school admissions.

The first Code of Practice came into force on 1 April 1999 and applied to arrangements leading to admissions from September 2000 onwards; a new Code of Practice came into force in January 2003 but applies to arrangements that lead to primary and secondary intakes from September 2004

---

<sup>1</sup> Former grant-maintained schools either reverted to 'voluntary-aided' status or were designated 'foundation' schools.

<sup>2</sup> Admission authorities are legally required to admit children, on demand, up to the physical capacity of the school except in the case of selective or religious schools; religious schools will be required to admit children up to this limit from 2004/05 (DfES, 2003).

onwards (DfES, 2003). Key aspects of the Code of Practice relate to the provision of information for parents, and guidance concerning the admissions process. Details are also provided in relation to oversubscription criteria that admission authorities should use; in short, where more parents have expressed a preference for a particular school in a given year than it has places available, the admission authority must apply the oversubscription criteria in its published admission policy in deciding which parents' preferences it should meet.

Specific reference is made to partial selection that is permitted in some circumstances but not others. The first Code of Practice addressed the issue of interviews stating that schools or admission authorities should not interview parents as any part of the application or admission process, although church schools may do so, but only in order to establish a person's religion, including religious denomination or practice. It is significant that the revised Code of Practice (DfES, 2003) states that for the admission round leading to September 2005 intakes and subsequently 'no parents or children should be interviewed as any part of the application or admission process, in any school except a boarding school' (s3.15).<sup>3</sup>

Turning specifically to oversubscription criteria, the Code of Practice (DfES, 2003) states:

The admission authority has a fairly wide discretion in deciding what these oversubscription criteria should be, provided that:

- The criteria are not unlawful
- The admission authority has considered the factors which it believes to be most important in ensuring that children receive an efficient and suitable education and has had regard to guidance in the Code
- The criteria are clear, fair and objective and are published (sA.51)

One of the mechanisms introduced by the Labour Government was the 'schools adjudicator', designed to resolve local disputes in relation to, amongst other issues, school admissions. Objections can be made to adjudicators by admission authorities and in the case of certain existing partially selective arrangements, by parents.

West & Ingram (2001) investigated objections to school admissions made to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator during the first 13 months of its operation (July 1999 to the end of July 2000). During the period in question, the schools adjudicator ruled on 57 objections relating to admissions. Objections related to admissions policies in different parts of the country, but the vast majority were in London and in the South East of England (excluding London); in almost all cases these were in LEAs where there is a 'highly developed' market in operation (West et al., 1998), with a variety of school types co-existing - foundation schools, voluntary-aided schools, fully selective schools, partially selective schools and so on.

Objections to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator concerned different aspects of the admissions process but in the main related to such issues as partial selection, interviews, whether employees/children of former pupils should have priority for places, concern about the testing procedures in operation, and feeder schools to named secondary schools (see West & Ingram, 2001). The majority of objections relating to partial selection were not upheld by the schools adjudicator. In some cases the objection was partially upheld (e.g. by partial selection being reduced) but in only two cases was the objection upheld. In both these cases the partial selection by ability was deemed unlawful as it had been introduced after the 1997/98 school year.

---

<sup>3</sup> The Code also notes that 'auditions which are part of objective testing for aptitude conducted by a school with a specialism in a prescribed subject' may be carried out in accordance with its published admission arrangements.

Interestingly, across all the examined adjudications, none of the objections to priority being given to children of former pupils of the school provided evidence showing specific examples of adverse effects, but each time the adjudicator decided that such admissions criteria were unfair and objections were thus upheld. In several additional cases an admissions criterion referred to priority being given to children with a parent employed at the school; this, each adjudicator similarly reasoned could discriminate against traveller and refugee children who had moved to the area and was thus contrary to the Race Relations Act 1976. Objections to the practice of interviewing pupils prior to admission were made in relation to one voluntary-aided school for non-religious places. The school claimed that they were not breaking the law as the Code of Practice does not explicitly state that interviews with pupils are not allowed. However, the adjudicator upheld the objection. Other objections to interview-like processes (e.g., sports trial, musical audition) were similarly upheld.

As noted above, the use of interviews is not permitted in the revised Code of Practice. Moreover, the Code (DfES, 2003) also specifically addresses some of these issues raised in rulings made by the adjudicator:

Bearing in mind the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000), and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001), admission authorities should carefully consider the possible impact, direct or indirect, on equal opportunities of their proposed oversubscription criteria. For example, criteria which give preference to children whose parents or older siblings had previously attended the school or whose parents followed particular occupations, such as teachers, could disproportionately (even if unintentionally) disadvantage ethnic minority, Traveller or refugee families who have more recently moved into the area. In such cases, the criterion could be unlawful unless objectively justified. Such criteria have been determined by the Schools Adjudicator not to be in the interests of all local children and have been ruled out when the subject of an objection. It would not be good practice for admission authorities to set or seek to apply oversubscription criteria that had the effect of disadvantaging certain social groups in the local community, including disabled pupils. Examples would be explicit or implicit discrimination on the basis of parental occupation, employment, income range, standard of living or home facilities (s3.12).

We now turn to our own investigation of admissions criteria; this involved setting up a database of state-maintained secondary schools' admission criteria for entry in September 2001.<sup>4</sup> Data were collated for the vast majority (95 per cent) of secondary/high schools (excluding City Technology Colleges) in England (N=3013). The missing schools were foundation/voluntary-aided schools that were not included in LEA brochures and did not provide us with admissions information. The sample consisted of 68.6 per cent community schools, 14.3 per cent voluntary-aided schools, 14.0 per cent foundation schools and 3.1 per cent voluntary-controlled schools.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst we did not include the 15 CTCs in our database we nevertheless report on the overall admissions procedure they adopt with reference to some examples.

---

<sup>4</sup> In a minority of cases criteria for September 2002 were used. The schools in the sample were secondary schools; middle schools were excluded but high schools included.

<sup>5</sup> According to DfES figures 66% of secondary schools (including middle schools) are community; 16% are voluntary-aided; 14% are foundation; and 4% voluntary-controlled. It is not possible to make direct comparisons with our sample as we did not include all middle schools. As certain voluntary-aided and foundation schools did not provide information our sample under-represents these school types.

### 3 Admissions criteria – overt and covert

In this section we highlight key features to emerge from our analysis of admissions criteria and other policies and practices. In the first part we focus on admissions to non-grammar secondary schools in England (N=2862). The second part focuses on grammar schools (N=151) and the third on City Technology Colleges.

#### 3.1. Secondary schools (non-grammar)

##### 3.1.1 Frequently used criteria

Some admissions criteria were used by high proportions of schools. Table 1 gives those reported most frequently.

**Table 1: Most frequently used admissions criteria**

Criteria	Percentage of schools (N=2862)
Siblings	96
Distance	86
Medical/social need	73
Catchment area	61
'First preference'	41
Pupils with special educational needs	39
Feeder schools	28

A high proportion of schools reported giving priority to siblings and to distance. Criteria such as catchment areas or feeder schools were also used. Other criteria frequently used were medical/social need and pupils with special educational needs.

A wide variety of other criteria were used by admission authorities. These included: religious criteria; children of employees; a difficult journey to another school/convenience of access/no alternative school within x miles; children of former pupils; travel time; 'banding' to obtain a balanced intake; partial selection by ability/aptitude in a subject area; compassionate factors; children from other religions; children in public care; children with a family connection to the school; and partial selection by general ability.<sup>6</sup>

In the following sub-sections we provide more detail on some of the criteria that are used frequently and some of those that are not. We focus in particular on those criteria that may be considered to be 'unfair' or allowing for selection, because, for example, they give preference to pupils with certain abilities or aptitudes or because they could contravene current legislation. Some of these criteria can be considered to be forms of overt or covert selection; in other cases, we provide details of criteria whose **absence** might be construed as being unfair (e.g. medical/social need, special educational needs).

---

<sup>6</sup> Percentages as follows: religious criteria (14 per cent of schools); children of employees (9 per cent); a difficult journey to another school (6 per cent); children of former pupils (5 per cent); travel time (4 per cent); banding (3 per cent); partial selection by ability/aptitude in a subject area (3 per cent); compassionate factors (3 per cent); children from other religions (3 per cent); children in public care (2 per cent); children with a family connection (2 per cent); and partial selection by general ability (1 per cent).



### 3.1.2 Criteria relating to ability/aptitude

The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act defines ‘ability’ as ‘either general ability or ability in any particular subject or subjects’. It does not define aptitude, but the Code of Practice notes that a pupil with aptitude is one who ‘is identified as being able to benefit from teaching in a specific subject, or who demonstrates a particular capacity to succeed in that subject’. It is hard to see how demonstrating a ‘capacity to succeed’ differs from ‘ability’ and given this we have focused on partial selection by either ability or aptitude<sup>7</sup>, although we have excluded here ‘general ability’. Thus our focus was on partial selection by ability or aptitude in particular subject areas (e.g. technology, music, dance, art, languages). It is noteworthy that the relevant subjects, set out in regulations, are: physical education or sport or one or more sports; the performing arts or one or more of those arts; the visual arts or one or more of those arts; modern foreign languages or any such language; design and technology and information technology (DfES, 2003). Amongst the schools in our sample, we also found cases of schools selecting pupils on the basis of these subjects, but also on the basis of science and mathematics.

The legislation governing partial selection by aptitude is not that straightforward, as certain pre-existing partial selection may continue. New partial selection (introduced after 1997/98) is permitted for schools with a specialism (including specialist schools) and in these cases schools may select up to ten per cent of pupils on the basis of aptitude in the subject(s) in question.

Given the debate about specialist schools selecting pupils on the basis of ability/aptitude, we examined whether designated specialist schools were more likely than non-specialist schools to be selecting pupils by ability/aptitude in a subject area. As our database related to admissions in October 2001, we focused on specialist schools in operation in September 2001.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, we found that three per cent of secondary (non-grammar) schools selected a proportion of pupils on the basis of ability/aptitude in one or more specific subjects. Only 1.7 per cent of these schools were non-specialist schools, whilst 5.9 per cent were specialist.<sup>9</sup> This difference was statistically significant.<sup>10</sup> One might therefore assume that the reason that more specialist schools are selecting is as a result of their ‘specialist’ status (which allows such schools to select up to ten per cent of pupils on this basis). However, it has also been argued that the schools that select on this basis are more likely to be voluntary-aided or foundation. As such schools are in control of their own admissions they may be more likely to have taken up the option of partial selection. Indeed this hypothesis was confirmed in our analysis. We found that 8.8 per cent of voluntary-

---

<sup>7</sup> The distinction between aptitude, ability and achievement is not clear. For example, one school made reference to selecting up to 10 per cent of pupils on the basis of ‘proven aptitude in music’; the accompanying notes state that children applying under this criterion ‘must have achieved at least Grade III of the Associated Board...in an instrument or voice’. This can be construed as a measure of ability or aptitude or achievement – or all three.

<sup>8</sup> Our sample comprised 90 per cent of specialist schools in operation at this time (613 out of the 676 specialist schools that were not special schools). Of the specialist schools, 68.5 per cent were community/voluntary-controlled and 31.5 per cent voluntary-aided/foundation.

<sup>9</sup> If we look at those schools that had specialist status in September 2002 (932 secondary schools in our sample), we find a similar picture, with 1.7 per cent of non-specialist schools selecting on this basis compared with 4.6 per cent of specialist schools (it should be remembered that admissions criteria could have changed between 2001/02 the year for which most of our data related, and 2002/03).

<sup>10</sup> Chi-squared = 31.8,  $p < 0.001$ .

aided/foundation schools, versus 0.3 per cent of community/voluntary-controlled schools selected pupils on this basis.<sup>11</sup> This difference was statistically significant.<sup>12</sup>

If we look at the percentage of schools of different types selecting a proportion of pupils on the basis of ability/aptitude in a subject area, we find that the highest percentage of schools selecting in this way are foundation schools, followed by voluntary-aided schools, then community and voluntary-controlled schools (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Percentage of secondary schools selecting a proportion of pupils by aptitude/ability**

Type of school	Percentage selecting by ability/aptitude	N
Foundation	11.2	357
Voluntary-aided	6.5	401
Community	0.3	2023
Voluntary-controlled	0.0	81
All schools	2.5	2862

It is clear from this table that the schools selecting a proportion of pupils by aptitude/ability were predominantly those that were their own admission authority.

To see if there were independent effects of specialist school status and school type (community/voluntary-controlled versus voluntary-aided/foundation) on whether schools partially selected pupils by ability or aptitude we carried out a logistic regression. The results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Logistic regression analysis of partial selection**

Model	B	Wald	Probability	Odds ratio
School type	3.32	68.73	<0.001	27.64
Specialist school status	1.16	22.26	<0.001	3.2

Table 3 shows that there was a statistically significant association between school type and partial selection (with voluntary-aided/foundation schools selecting more than community/voluntary-controlled schools). The odds ratio revealed that voluntary-aided/foundation schools were over 27 times more likely to be partially selecting pupils by ability/aptitude than community/voluntary-controlled schools. Specialist schools were about three times more likely than non-specialist schools to be partially selecting on this basis. Thus, both factors had a statistically significant association with partial selection by ability/aptitude but the odds ratio was greater for the 'school type' variable (community/voluntary-controlled versus voluntary-aided/foundation) than for specialist school status.

It is noteworthy that some schools had more than one criterion relating to pupils' aptitude. One foundation school, for example, had three such criteria: ten per cent of places for pupils by aptitude for music by audition; five per cent of places for pupils by aptitude for dance by audition; and ten per cent of places for pupils with technological aptitude.

<sup>11</sup> Within specialist schools, we found that one per cent of community/voluntary-controlled schools were selecting pupils on the basis of aptitude/ability in particular subjects, compared with 16.6 per cent of foundation/voluntary-aided schools.

<sup>12</sup> Chi-squared = 156.7,  $p < 0.001$ .

Finally, whilst only one per cent of schools selected a proportion of pupils on the basis of general ability, we again found that such selection was not observed in voluntary-controlled schools and was exceedingly rare in community schools.<sup>13</sup> However, two per cent of voluntary-aided and four per cent of foundation schools selected a proportion of pupils on this basis.

For example, in one voluntary-aided school selection by aptitude was combined with selection on the basis of general ability, with 10 places being allocated for 'pupils demonstrating musical aptitude' and 65 places for pupils with high levels of general ability (measured by verbal reasoning test scores and additionally tests of English and mathematics).

### **3.1.3 Criteria giving priority to children of employees/former pupils etc.**

The Code of Practice on School Admissions makes specific reference to admission authorities giving priority to certain categories of pupils such as the children of former pupils, stating that these should not be used as they may contravene the Race Relations Act 1976. However, we found that nine per cent of schools were giving priority to the children of employees/governors, for example (some other examples are given in the Annex).<sup>14</sup>

Children of present school staff who are normally employed for a minimum of 10 hours per week. Headteachers will have the discretion to include children of other staff employed at the school (community schools in one LEA).

Five per cent of schools gave preference to the children of former pupils<sup>15</sup> and a small percentage of schools (2%) gave preference to pupils with a 'strong family connection'<sup>16</sup> or equivalent; for example one voluntary-aided school had as an oversubscription criterion 'previous family connections'.

Altogether we found that 11 per cent of schools were giving priority to one or more of these categories of pupils (priority to employees, the children of former pupils or some other family connection).

### **3.1.4 Criteria relating to medical/social need**

Over seven out of ten schools (73 per cent) had an admissions criterion relating to medical or social needs of the child. However, as can be seen from Table 4, the schools that were far more likely to specifically include such a criterion were community/voluntary controlled schools as opposed to voluntary-aided/foundation schools.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> 0.2 per cent of community schools.

<sup>14</sup> 4.5 per cent community/voluntary-controlled schools versus 19.8 per cent voluntary-aided/foundation schools.

<sup>15</sup> 2.4 per cent community/voluntary-controlled schools versus 11.2 per cent voluntary-aided/foundation schools.

<sup>16</sup> 0.8 per cent community/voluntary-controlled schools versus 3.8 per cent voluntary-aided/foundation schools.

<sup>17</sup> 80 per cent versus 52 per cent, chi-squared = 229, p < 0.001.

**Table 4: Percentage of schools with admissions criteria referring to medical/social needs**

Type of school	% schools with medical/social need criterion	N
Community	80	2023
Voluntary-controlled	80	81
Voluntary-aided	35	401
Foundation	69	357
Total	73	2862

Interestingly, medical/social need did not necessarily need to be supported by a professional, so leaving the possibility of administrative discretion being used by an admission authority to admit certain categories of pupils.

Below we show the admissions criterion for one foundation and one community school in one LEA. As can be seen, the former allows discretion as to what constitutes ‘personal or medical need’ whilst the latter is less likely to be amenable to administrative discretion:

Where there are special medical/social grounds for admitting the girl (foundation school).

In exceptional circumstances, the Director of Education has discretion to give a higher priority where a parent provides professionally supported evidence, at the time of application, that their child has an acute personal or medical need for a place at the college (community school).

### 3.1.5 Special educational needs

Over a third (39 per cent) of schools’ admissions criteria made reference to pupils with special educational needs. However, as shown in Table 5, these were predominantly community/voluntary-controlled schools.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 5: Percentage of schools with special educational needs admissions criterion**

Type of school	% schools with SEN as criterion	N
Community	48	2023
Voluntary-controlled	44	81
Voluntary-aided	11	401
Foundation	20	357
Total	39	2862

It thus appears that children with special educational needs may be less likely to be admitted to schools that are their own admission authority.<sup>19</sup> However, in some LEA brochures the issue of

<sup>18</sup> 48 per cent of community/voluntary-controlled schools versus 15 per cent of voluntary-aided/foundation schools (chi-squared = 245, p<0.001).

<sup>19</sup> The hypothesis that faith schools are not accepting their ‘fair share’ of pupils with special educational needs is supported by recent data. A parliamentary written answer revealed that in January 2000, pupils with statements of special educational need accounted for 2.2% of the population of Church of England secondary schools, 1.9% of Roman Catholic secondary schools, 1.5% of Jewish secondary schools and 2.6% of all other secondary schools.

admissions for such children is not explicitly given as an admissions criterion so this information needs to be treated with caution.

Nevertheless, when we examined admissions brochures from LEAs where special educational needs was included as an admissions criterion for community schools it was generally not included as an admissions criterion for voluntary-aided or foundation schools. For example, for community schools in one LEA, the first admissions criterion was: '[Children] for whom a statement of special educational needs has been made under the Education Act 1996 and for whom the school has been named in that statement'. None of the foundation or voluntary-aided schools in this particular LEA had such a criterion and only 16 per cent of the schools in this category mentioned 'special needs' in their admissions criteria or admissions information to parents.

### **3.1.6 Religious schools and other faiths**

Altogether, 14 per cent of schools made reference to religious criteria. Unsurprisingly, over nine out of ten (92 per cent) of voluntary-aided schools had such criteria and 16 per cent of voluntary-controlled schools. Very small numbers of community and foundation schools had such criteria (less than one per cent each).

Just under a quarter (23 per cent) of voluntary-aided schools made explicit reference in their admissions criteria to pupils from other faiths or another 'World Faith'. Below is one example:

If after considering applications made which meet any of the above criteria or a combination of one or more of the same, there remains a shortfall in the planned admissions, then the governors will consider all applications made by parents of children of other Christian denominations. It would be necessary for such parents to have expressed a genuine desire for them to be educated in a Catholic School and to be fully supportive of its Catholic ethos. Such admissions will be limited to 5% of the relevant age group (such an application would need to be supported, in writing, by the appropriate Minister of Religion. Also parents of such applicants may be required for interview).

It is noteworthy that some voluntary-aided schools do not even mention pupils from other Christian denominations. However, we found an example of a school that not only had a criterion relating to those who were not Christians, but also provided details of the proportion of 'Non-Christians' admitted the previous year.

An unusual example, was a voluntary-aided school that used the same admissions criterion as the LEA (which was very rare) but also noted: 'However, in addition, as we are a Church and a multi-faith school, we request that students are sensitive to, and respectful of, religious worship and prayer (voluntary-aided school)'.

### **3.1.7 Idiosyncratic practices to 'select in' and 'select out' pupils**

We found a wide range of other idiosyncratic criteria and practices that are potentially unfair. These include interviews, imprecise, unclear criteria, reference to the pupil's academic record or the record of siblings.

#### *Interviews*

The first Code of Practice (DfES, 1999) stated that 'Church schools may carry out interviews, but only in order to assess religious or denomination commitment' (s5.25). Altogether, one per cent of

schools in our sample reported that parents were interviewed. All of these schools were voluntary-aided; overall, 10 per cent of voluntary-aided schools reported interviewing parents.<sup>20</sup>

In relation to interviewing pupils, we found that two per cent of schools in our sample reported interviewing pupils. The vast majority of these schools were voluntary-aided; overall 16 per cent of voluntary-aided schools reported interviewing pupils.<sup>21</sup> One voluntary-controlled school (one per cent of voluntary-controlled schools) and three foundation schools (one per cent of foundation schools) reported interviewing pupils.

In some cases, the interviews were to assess religious commitment:

An interview to confirm Catholicity (voluntary-aided school).

Whilst for some schools it was stated that interviews were to determine religious commitment, in other schools this was not their sole aim:

Applicants and their families making a Foundation application will be invited to come for interview. The function of the interview is to assess whether the aims, attitudes, values and expectations of the applicant and her family are in harmony with those of this Anglican school as detailed in the school prospectus ...and to explore further the family's commitment to their faith (voluntary-aided school).

Catholicity of home and pastoral benefit to be derived by child (voluntary-aided school).

Moreover, in some schools, no reference was given to 'religion':

Admission criterion 1: The outcome of an interview with the pupil to ascertain their potential to contribute to or benefit from a small school with a caring family atmosphere.

*Criteria that are not clear, objective or fair*

Some criteria were not clear or fair in that they were vague and allowed administrative discretion:

Any pastoral, social or educational benefit to be gained from the pupil's education at the particular school (voluntary-aided school).

Compassionate factors (voluntary-aided school).

Other criteria related to the behaviour of siblings, which again would appear to be unfair and enable schools to 'select out' some pupils on account of the behaviour of others:

The satisfactory presence of a brother or sister...at the time of admission (voluntary-aided school).

Whether the candidate has a brother or sister with a satisfactory record at the school and whose parents have supported the school (for this purpose, a pupil's record will be regarded as satisfactory if she or he has: (i) consistently achieved A or B grades for effort in all subjects, general attitude to work and school, and conduct (as shown in interim and annual reports); (ii) good records of punctuality and attendance; and (iii) taken part in extra-

---

<sup>20</sup> Of these 42 schools, 27 were Roman Catholic, 11 Church of England and 4 other religions or denominations.

<sup>21</sup> Of these 69 schools, 45 were Roman Catholic, 13 Church of England and 11 other religions or denominations.

curricular activities or made a contribution to the school in another way) (voluntary-aided school).

Whilst not necessarily an ‘admissions criterion’ some schools reported taking up references from pupils’ primary schools:

The school will also require each application to be supported by a reference from the applicant’s primary headteacher...The purpose of taking [this] up is to give the primary heads the opportunity to show that the applicant and her family’s attitudes, values and expectations are in sympathy with this...school (voluntary-aided school).

Finally, in one case the criteria, relating to religious commitment appeared to be unachievable:

Baptised fully practising children of families where at least one Catholic parent/guardian is a Baptised fully practising member of the Catholic Church, *whose first priority is a Catholic education for the child where both child and parent/guardian have attended Saturday evening/Sunday Mass every week since the child started Primary School.* This must be supported by:

- An interview at the school to confirm Catholicity
- A signed statement by the parent/guardian stating that they have not applied nor taken steps to apply (including the sitting of a selective test) to a non-Catholic school (voluntary-aided school).

Not only is the requirement to have attended Mass every week likely to be unachievable (given usual childhood ailments and holidays) but the requirement for parents to confirm that a non-Catholic school has not been applied to would appear to be on *a priori* grounds unreasonable as there is no guarantee that the application to the school concerned would be successful.

### 3.2 Grammar schools

Grammar schools, by definition, are schools that select pupils with high academic ability. Whilst testing is the norm for such schools, we also looked at other oversubscription criteria used. These are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Main admissions criteria in addition to ability**

Criteria	Percentage of schools (N=151)
Siblings	72
Distance	70
Catchment area	50
Medical/social need	44
‘First preference’	38
Difficult journey to another school*	18
Pupils with special educational needs	15
Children of former pupils**	9
Children of employees**	7
Religious criteria	7
Ability/aptitude in subject area	3
Family connection**	2

\* Or convenience of access/no alternative school within x miles

\*\* All these schools were voluntary-aided or foundation

The main additional criteria used by grammar schools were siblings and distance, followed by catchment area and medical/social need.

The highly selective nature of some grammar schools is exemplified by the following set of oversubscription criteria (see also Annex).

Candidates...will be awarded additional marks under each of the following headings:

Participation and/or ability in

- Youth or community organisations
- Dance, drama and speech
- Sport and physical recreation
- Music
- Hobbies and leisure activities (voluntary-aided school).

In another case, a criterion is: 'The ability of the boy to take advantage of facilities for extra curricular activities at the school'.

In the following example, overt selection is combined with other selective criteria:

Places will be allocated strictly in accordance with score but in allocating the last remaining places between two or more girls who have an equal ranking, the Governing Body will give preference for those remaining places in accordance with the following criteria listed in order of importance:

- a. Girls who are anticipated to have a sister or sisters at the school at the time of admission
- b. Girls whose sister is an Old Girl of [name of school]
- c. Girls whose mother is an Old Girl of [name of school]
- d. Girls whose grandmother is an Old Girl of [name of school] (voluntary-aided school).

### **3.3 City technology colleges**

City Technology Colleges (CTCs) are officially classified as independent schools, but it is often claimed that they are 'comprehensive'. CTCs that recruit at the age of 11 years of age, use a common, nationally standardised National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) Non-Verbal Reasoning Test to divide children into nine ability groups and it is from within these groups that pupils are selected (see Annex for an example of one CTC's admissions procedure).

CTCs are required to admit pupils to ensure as far as possible that the intake of pupils is representative of the full range of ability. Whilst this suggests that CTCs strive to be 'comprehensive', the admissions procedure used by some (if not all CTCs) would appear to enable Colleges to select highly motivated pupils, with good school reports, who are able to express themselves well in writing (the example given in the Annex requires a school report to be submitted and written work to be completed). This is in addition to a test of aptitude, which in essence is a test of attainment as it is based on the key stage two science and technology curriculum. Details of parents' employers and occupations may also be sought. It is hard to see why this information would be needed prior to pupils being admitted to the CTC.



## **4 Summary and policy implications**

### **4.1 Impact of the schools adjudicator**

Our analysis of the ‘quasi-regulation’ of school admissions has revealed that the new legislation and accompanying Code of Practice has had some impact on the process of admissions to secondary schools. The policy changes have resulted in some inequitable admissions criteria being removed. This is more apparent with some criteria than others (e.g. children of employees having priority) as the school as admission authority could be contravening the Race Relations Act 1976. In other cases, and particularly in relation to partial selection by ability or aptitude, adjudicators adopted a cautious approach by reducing partial selection in some, but by no means all cases. Adjudicators are not allowed to intervene when they discover policies that do not adhere to legislation or the Code of Practice and this explains why so many practices considered to contravene legislation are still found in schools’ admissions criteria (e.g. in relation to priority being given to children whose parents are employed at the school, whose parent went to the school, whose parent is a governor and so on).

### **4.2 Admissions criteria**

Our analysis has revealed that some admissions criteria are objective, clear, fair and equitable. This is particularly the case with community schools. However, a significant minority of schools, notably those that are their own admission authorities, use a variety of criteria which appear to be designed to select certain groups of pupils but exclude others. There are clear opportunities for schools to ‘select in’ and ‘select out’ pupils and, given the links between social background, prior attainment and later examination performance, these practices enable some such schools to obtain higher positions in examination ‘league tables’ than others. This assertion is supported by an analysis of the overall increase in terms of the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C between 1997 and 2000. Our analysis found an increase of 3.6 percentage points across all types of maintained secondary schools in our database. However, this figure was only 2.8 for voluntary-controlled schools and 3.4 for community schools, whilst for voluntary-aided schools it was 4.3 and for foundation schools 4.4 percentage points (both of which are in control of their admissions).

### **4.3 Information provided to parents**

Secondary school brochures produced by local education authorities varied enormously in terms of the information they contained and the clarity of information provided. Some LEAs did not provide information on schools that are their own admission authorities. For these schools parents had to contact schools directly for the information needed. This made the secondary school transfer process complicated – in particular, for parents who are not as well-educated or informed as others, for those who are not fluent speakers of English and new arrivals to the country. Parents often had to make multiple applications to schools that are their own admission authority. Other problems for parents relate to the absence of information about how many pupils are accepted under different criteria.

### **4.4 Policy implications**

The evidence presented in this report reveals that despite attempts by the Government to reform school admissions, there is considerable room for improvement. Admissions criteria that are not objective, clear or fair continue to be used and some may contravene current legislation. There are also problems with the admissions process and parents being required to make multiple applications in some areas. The situation should improve, however, with the introduction of the new Code of Practice (DfES, 2003):

We want to make the admissions process easier for parents and children by enabling parents in an area to express all their school preferences at once on one form, by reducing multiple offers of places for some children while others have no offer at all, and by specifying (for secondary admissions) a national day – 1 March – on which all offers should be made. LEAs will be obliged to have co-ordinated schemes for 2005 intakes but where LEAs have the capacity and have agreement from local schools, we would encourage them to be introduced from 2004.

The new Code of Practice also reiterates the concerns about oversubscription criteria that are potentially discriminating, but were in operation at the time of our study (e.g. criteria giving preference to children whose parents or older siblings had previously attended the school or whose parents followed particular occupations, such as teachers).

One issue raised in the Code of Practice, but addressed by very few admission authorities, relates to children in public care, who are a particularly disadvantaged group. The Code recommends that ‘all admission authorities give these children top priority in their oversubscription criteria’. It remains to be seen which admission authorities will take up this recommendation.

Another issue that is mentioned in the Code of Practice relates to children with statements of special educational needs; where a school is named in the statement, pupils are required to be admitted to that school: ‘It is good practice for LEAs to mention this in their composite prospectuses’ (s7.20, DfES, 2003). This is another area where current practice could be improved. The admissions criteria and brochures we analysed were not consistent in terms of what was reported – and it would be in the interests of the parents of children with special educational needs to have information about this issue.

Guidance is not being adhered to by certain admission authorities and the body that has been set up to regulate school admissions – the Office of the Schools Adjudicator – needs more power if it is to have the impact that is needed for unfair admissions policies and practices to be removed.

In our view, the process of secondary transfer needs to be further reformed so that some groups of parents and pupils – and schools – do not continue to benefit at the expense of others. By encouraging academically and socially-mixed schools that do not give unfair advantages to some categories of pupils, policy makers have an opportunity to improve educational outcomes for the majority at the same time as promoting social justice. This will require both clearer legislation and more regulation, to prevent a continuation of policies and practices that are inequitable. The new Code of Practice is a step in the right direction, but in our view there are more improvements that could be made – maybe with the adjudicator adopting a more pro-active role – which would regulate school admissions more effectively.

## References

Audit Commission (1996) *Trading Places: The supply and allocation of school places*. London: The Audit Commission.

Department for Education and Skills (1999) *Code of Practice on School Admissions*. London: DfES. [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Code of Practice on School Admissions*. London: DfES. [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

Gewirtz, S., Ball, S. J. & Bowe, R. (1995) *Markets, Choice and Equity in Education*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

West, A. & Pennell, H. (1997) Educational reform and school choice in England and Wales, *Education Economics*, 5, 285-306.

West, A. & Pennell, H. (2003) *Underachievement in Schools*, London: The Falmer Press.

West, A., Pennell, H. & Noden, P. (1997) *Secondary School Admissions: Towards a national policy?* London: Research and Information on State Education Trust.

West, A., Pennell, H. & Noden, P. (1998) School admissions: increasing equity, accountability and transparency, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 46, 2, 188-200.

## Acknowledgements

The research reported here was undertaken in conjunction with the Research and Information on State Education (RISE) Trust. Thanks are due to all those who provided information, in particular the local education authorities and schools concerned. We are also grateful to Louise Irvine for material provided. We would like to thank all those who provided research and administrative support, in particular, Matthew West, Laura Bracking, John Wilkes and Dabney Ingram, and Hazel Pennell for helpful comments.

### Address for correspondence:

Professor Anne West, Director, Centre for Educational Research, Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE.  
Telephone: 020 7955 7269. E-mail: [a.west@lse.ac.uk](mailto:a.west@lse.ac.uk).

## **Annex      Examples of admissions criteria**

Below are examples of admissions criteria for a sample of schools. Some, in our view, are clear, fair and objective (generally those for community schools) and in accord with current legislation, whilst others have elements that are not.

### **Community school**

1. Applicants who have a brother or sister already at the school.
2. Applicants who live nearest to the school. Nearness to the school will be measured on a large-scale map of the area. For this purpose measurement will be over the shortest reasonable walking route and accessibility by private or public transport will be disregarded.
3. In exceptional circumstances the...Director of Education...will admit children on grounds of particular medical or social need for [named school].

### **Community school**

Places will be offered in the following priority order up to the standard admissions number to the applicants who made the school their **FIRST PREFERENCE**.

If more applications are received in any one criterion than there are places available the 'tie-breaker' of distance, measured by the shortest, safe walking route, will be applied.

1. Students with statements of Special Educational Needs which can be best met, in the view of the Learning Support Panel, through attendance at a particular school.
2. Applications made on medical grounds. Such applications must be accompanied by supporting evidence from a Consultant at the time of application. Requests will only be considered for the school nearest to the child's home.
3. Pupils with older brothers and sisters attending the linked high school at the closing date for receipt of application to high school.
4. Pupils who attend in the academic year 99/00 a primary school which was previously linked to the preferred high school AND an older brother or sister attended that school in September 1999.

### **Community school**

Priority for places will be allocated strictly against the following criteria in the order listed.

1. A proven medical need relating to your child: (the requirements are strict and need certification by an appropriate doctor or psychologist).
2. The attendance of a brother or sister at the time of admission.
3. Children living in the area served by the following [five named] primary schools
4. The desirability of maintaining relationships while transferring from primary to secondary school.
5. The distance from home to school and the ease of access.

### **All secondary schools in one LEA**

The criteria for allocating places, in order of priority are:

1. Children who have a brother or sister of compulsory school age (i.e. in Years 7 to 11) attending the school at the date of admission.
2. Children attending a nearby junior or primary school included in an approved linking arrangement whereby junior and primary schools are linked with specific secondary schools.
3. Children who live closest to a particular school measured by the nearest available walking route using recognised footpaths.

Please note these six points:

- Brother or sister means, for the purpose of admission arrangements, a full, half, step, adopted, or long term fostered child living at the same address.
- Distance from home to school will be used as a tie breaker for pupils who have equal claim for a place.
- It is essential that the Education Department is consistent in its judgment. For this reason, factors not listed here cannot be considered. When a first preference cannot be given, the same criteria will be considered for second and third preferences.

- Children with statements of special educational need will be given priority admission only if the LEA itself decides that a place at a particular school is essential in order to meet the child's special educational needs.
- Places will be allocated on the information available as at the closing date. If your child has been allocated a place, this will not be withdrawn if your circumstances change, i.e. change of address. However, if it is proved a place has been allocated on the basis of false information the place will be withdrawn.
- If the LEA is unable to allocate a school place within three miles of the home address, the child's name will be placed on the waiting lists of all schools within three miles of the home.

### **Voluntary-aided school**

Where there are more applications for places than the total of 120 places available, places will be offered according to the following order of priority:

1. Roman Catholic children baptised into and practising their faith, whose parents can produce a letter of priestly support.
2. Other Roman Catholic children baptised into the faith.
3. Christian children whose parents wish their daughter to attend [named school].
4. Non-Christian children whose parents wish their daughter to attend [named school].

### **Voluntary-aided school**

The Governors consider that it is reasonable to ensure that prospective pupils can demonstrate their clear wish to be educated within an environment that has clear and strong emphasis on nautical activities and seafaring traditions. The criteria to be applied in rank order are:

1. Demonstration of a clear commitment to [the school's] nautical ethos, and a wish to pursue a nautical career.

(The Governors would assess this through an interview in which prospective pupils are given the opportunity to demonstrate their interests and ambitions with regard to the school, and express how they would take full advantage of the specialist education offered. The assessment criteria used for the interviews will be available from the school.)

2. Sibling links
3. Geographical distance

### **Voluntary-aided school**

a) Pupils will be admitted at age 11 without reference to ability or aptitude. Clear priority will be given to pupils drawn from the former [named Urban District Council area] as at 1972. The children of staff have a right to attend the school.

b) Where applications for admissions exceed the number of places available, the following criteria will be applied, in the order set out below, to decide the children to admit:-

- 1) Where the child has a sister or brother currently attending the school;
- 2) Where there are medical grounds (supported by a doctor's certificate) for admitting the child;
- 3) Proximity of the child's home to the school, with those living nearer being accorded the higher priority.

### **Voluntary-aided school**

1. Baptised Catholic children who live in [five named parishes] and attend a Catholic primary school which serves these parishes.
2. Baptised Catholic children who have brothers and sisters who attend [this school]
3. Baptised Catholic children who live in the parishes listed in criterion (1) and attend other primary schools.
4. Baptised Catholic children who live in parishes other than those listed in criterion (1) with special medical or pastoral needs that can be met better in this school than in other Catholic High Schools.
5. Baptised Catholic children who live in parishes other than those listed in criterion (1), but attend a Catholic primary school serving the parishes listed in criterion (1).
6. Children of other denominations or faiths, who live within the parishes listed in criterion (1), whose parents have expressed a genuine desire for them to be educated in this Catholic school and who are fully supportive of the Catholic ethos of the school. (No more than 10% of any one year group of pupils of other denominations or faiths may be admitted in order that the Catholic nature of the school may be preserved). Applications under this criterion will be considered only with written

support from a Minister of Religion and following an interview between parents and the Head Teacher.

7. Baptised Catholic children who live in parishes other than those listed in criterion (1) and attend a Catholic primary school other than those serving the parishes listed in the criterion (1). Applications under this criterion will be considered only when parents have visited the school in order that they may be informed of the distinctive nature of the school. If the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, Governors will consider Parents' written applications, including supporting letters, in arriving at a decision regarding the allocation of available places.
8. Baptised Catholic children who live in parishes other than those listed in criterion (1) and attend other primary schools.
9. Other Children

### **Voluntary-aided school**

#### Group A

1. Children of worshipping members of the Church of England including those worshipping at the Cathedral (up to 58 places).
2. Cathedral day choristers (up to 8 places).
3. Children of staff currently at the school at the time of application.
4. Brothers and sisters of children attending the school at the time of application.
5. Children of other worshipping members of other Christian denominations and faiths.
6. Children of any other applicants to the limit of the places available, according to proximity to the school.

#### Group B

Pupils selected by ability as measured by the school's assessment procedures in merit order for a maximum of 15 places.

1. 12 of these places will be selected on overall academic ability.
2. 3 of these places will be selected on musical ability.

### **Voluntary-aided school**

#### Category A1

- (i) Children of families...actively involved in local RC communities (max 118 places).
- (ii) Children of families...actively involved in Anglican Church Communities (min 40 places)

Should the numbers in any one sub-category exceed the number of places the following criteria will be applied

- (a) evidence of significant involvement...in the church...
- (b) evidence of some involvement...
- (c) number of years the family has been involved...

#### Category A2

Children of families who are members, but not active members of the local RC and Anglican Church communities...with reasons...which deserve priority.

Should the numbers in this category exceed the number of places the following criteria will be applied

- (a) evidence of some involvement...
- (b) number of years family involved...
- (c) weight of reasons...

#### Category A3

Notwithstanding all of the above...special consideration...child with special educational needs, medical problems, or exceptional domestic or social problems...with appropriate evidence.

#### Category A4

...applications from parents of other Christian denominations...supported in writing ..

#### Tie break

- (i) brother or sister attending
- (ii) greater number of years the siblings would be part of the same school

(iii) weight of reasons...

### **Voluntary-aided school**

1. Places are offered on the basis of attendance at a place of mainstream Christian or Jewish worship by at least one parent or legal guardian. Preference will be given to the frequency of attendance during the last ten years. This will be determined on the basis of an attendance score (contact the school for full details).
2. For applications with the same record of parental attendance, priority will be given to siblings and employee's children, and then to children living nearest to the school by straight line distance.

### **Foundation school**

1. Residents within [three named] parishes.
2. Children with a brother or sister attending the school.
3. Children who have benefited from a period of residence outside the UK leading to experience of a language/culture other than English.
4. Children influenced by the culture/language of another country as a result of residence there of one or more parents.
5. Children influenced by the culture/language of another country as a result of work/interests of one or more parents.
6. Children with a proven interest in language/culture outside the UK.
7. Children whose parents work/interests are connected with other countries.
8. Proximity of home to school, those living closest being accorded higher priority.

### **Foundation school**

Allocation of places will follow the criteria in order as published:

- Siblings of pupils at present on roll at the School
- 10% places for pupils by aptitude for Music by audition
- 5% places for pupils by aptitude for Dance by audition
- 10% places for pupils with Technological Aptitude
- Pupils whose parent works at the School
- Remaining places allocated by geographical proximity to the School

### **Foundation school**

1. Children with a brother or sister currently attending the school.
2. A number of children, up to a maximum of 21, who have high levels of ability and aptitude in music and/or drama – proportions in each subject to be determined by the Applications and, if there are sufficient, in the ratio of 2:1 respectively, i.e. 14 children of high ability in music and 7 in drama. Preference will be given to those who have high abilities and aptitude in both subjects.
3. Medical grounds (supported by a doctor's certificate) for admitting the child.
4. Proximity of the child's home to the school, with those living nearer being accorded the higher priority.

### **Voluntary-aided grammar school**

...Where the number of candidates for admission exceeds the number of places available the Governors will allocate places from among the candidates who meet this distance criterion in the following order of priority:

1. The 100 candidates who, on evidence of tests, show the highest level of academic potential.
2. A maximum of 20 students who show exceptional music talent and achievement...As a guideline a pupil should have achieved at least Grade 5 distinction level, but this will depend on instrument as well as previous opportunity and experience. Consideration will be given to candidates without that level of qualification but who otherwise show evidence of exceptional music talent and achievement. Candidates may be asked to attend auditions.
3. Candidates who, on the evidence of the tests, show very high academic potential will be awarded additional marks under each of the following headings:  
Participation and/or ability in
  - Youth or community organisations
  - Dance, drama and speech

- Sport and physical recreation
- Music
- Hobbies and leisure activities

Family connection with the school

- A sibling present in the school
  - A sibling or parent formerly in the school
  - Candidates living in the [named] Borough or [named] Ancient Parish
1. In any of the categories 1, 2, 3 above, where two or more candidates have the same total score the following order of priority will be applied:
    - Candidates with a sibling presently in the school
    - Candidates with a sibling or parent formerly in the school
    - Test score in first round test...
    - Test score in second round tests...

## City technology college

### The admissions procedure

The criteria applicable throughout the Admissions Procedure will be:

1. To ensure that the intake is representative of the full range of ability among pupils in the catchment area.
2. The degree to which the child is likely to benefit from the specialist curriculum (Technology, Mathematics, Science & Music) of the College.
3. The strength of the child's motivation to succeed.

...

All applicants are required to take an assessment for the purpose of:

1. identifying ability
  2. identifying aptitude for the specialist subjects of the College
1. NFER Nelson Non Verbal Reasoning Test (common to all CTCs and externally marked)...
  2. Specialist Aptitude Test [multiple choice paper based on Key Stage 2 science and technology curriculum]
  3. Applicant's paragraph

Following the Specialist Aptitude Test, applicants are given approximately 10 minutes to write a SHORT paragraph about themselves and their interests and hobbies outside school. This will demonstrate their motivation to succeed and indicate a positive committed approach to their education. *Additionally the applicant's Year 5 report and application form is used to inform the College of criteria 2 & 3.*

### Allocation of places

Applicants will be put into 1 of 9 ability bands based on the score achieved in the NFER Non-Verbal Reasoning Test.

A Total Admission Score is made up of marks from: -

- **The specialist aptitude test**
- **The applicant's paragraph**
- **The applicant's Year 5 report**

The Total Admission Scores within each band determine the order in which offers are made for each band.

The number of offers in each band will reflect the number of applicants for the band. Applicants with the highest Total Admission Score in each band will be offered places...