

STATES OF JERSEY



SCHOOLS ADMISSION POLICY

**Presented to the States on 4th October 2005
by the Education, Sport and Culture Committee**

STATES GREFFE

REPORT

1. Introduction

This report considers a number of issues raised by the Deputy of St. John regarding the Education, Sport and Culture Committee's policy and procedures for admission to non-fee-paying primary schools and sets out the Committee's considered response to those issues.

2. Background

- 2.1. In January 2005, the Deputy of St. John wrote to the President of the Education, Sport and Culture Committee raising concerns regarding the Committee's Admissions Policy for Reception Classes in non-fee-paying primary provided schools. His letter (Appendix A) challenged both the priority given to children with older siblings attending the school and the application of distance from the school as a criterion for distinguishing between applicants when the school is over-subscribed. His argument was that this policy may result in children from families with long-standing connections with the Parish being unable to secure a place.
- 2.2. In response to Deputy Rondel's approach, the Committee, at its meeting of 23rd March 2005 reviewed its policy in respect of admissions to reception class in non-fee-paying provided schools (Appendix B) and endorsed the criteria applied under Section C3, whereby priority is given to those children who have an older brother or sister attending the school and thereafter to those who live closest to the school.
- 2.3. In arriving at its decision the Committee noted that, prior to 1996, children living in the catchment area were given first priority and that, on occasions, this resulted in children from the same family attending different schools. The Committee also recognised that distance from school is an objective criterion which is commonly used by education authorities to eliminate any potential for discrimination on the basis of race, creed, ethnicity or national origin.
- 2.4. At the same meeting, the Committee also approved a revised admissions policy for Jersey College for Girls Preparatory School (Appendix C) which, similar to the Committee's policy for non-fee-paying provided schools, gives priority to 'sibling' relationships with remaining places being offered on the basis of a ballot of those who have applied for places within prescribed time limits.
- 2.5. The Deputy of St. John subsequently lodged a Report and Proposition (Appendix D) requesting that the Education, Sport and Culture Committee reviewed its policy in respect of primary school admissions and, in particular –
 - (i) the criteria used for admission when a child already has a sibling at a particular school; and
 - (ii) the distance from school policy.

Following the lodging, the President undertook to report back to the States within 4 months.

3. Issues for consideration

3.1. Priority for siblings

The rationale for the priority given to siblings is that it ensures that children from the same family have the opportunity to be educated in the same school. As many children are taken to school by a parent the separation of children and, in particular, the separation of young children, could result in considerable inconvenience for the parents. The amendment to the Committee's policy agreed in 1996 resulted from a number of concerns which were raised by individual parents and parental associations. It is significant that this priority is contained in both the admissions policy for non-fee-paying provided schools and also Jersey College for Girls Preparatory School.

The policy constitutes a pragmatic and sensible provision which focuses on meeting the best interests of children and their parents.

3.2. Distance from school

The criterion based on distance from school only applies when the school is over-subscribed. As recognised when the Committee recently reviewed its admissions policy and procedures, it constitutes an objective and easily verified measure which is not susceptible to challenge on the basis of lack of fairness or discrimination. This criterion does not apply to admissions to Jersey College for Girls Preparatory School as that school does not have a defined catchment area. The approach to dealing with over-subscription at that school is to hold a ballot of all eligible potential pupils, in the interests of fairness and equality of opportunity although, as noted above, this approach only applies to children with no 'sibling' connection.

3.3. Priority to families who have lived within the catchment area for an extended period

The Deputy of St. John proposes that priority should be given to children from families which have long standing connections with the Parish. Leaving aside the issue that the majority of school catchment areas do not coincide with Parish boundaries, the Committee recognises that giving first priority to children from these families could be achieved by introducing a registration scheme similar to that which is available for applications to Jersey College for Girls Preparatory School. Thus, as happened prior to 1996, parents who live within a catchment area could register their child at any time and, subject to them residing within the catchment area at the time of admission, would be offered a place. If a school is over-subscribed from within its catchment area there would need to be a means of selecting those to be offered places which is both fair and objective, such as the distance from school criterion which is applied at present. In all probability, the adoption of length of residence or time order of registration would result in younger siblings not being offered places and those who fail to register early being disadvantaged.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. The Committee accepts that links between a school and the community it serves are important and encourages their development and maintenance. As such, the Committee has sympathy with the points raised by the Deputy of St. John with regard to families which may have a long association with the school. Recognising this factor, the Committee gave consideration to varying its admissions policy and procedures to give priority to children from families with extended residence within the catchment area. However, such an arrangement could give rise to the problems which led to the most recent significant change in policy and procedures enacted in 1996. The Committee has therefore determined that, on balance, the perceived benefits associated with the arrangement proposed by the Deputy of St. John are insufficient to justify the withdrawal of priority to siblings and the objective criterion of distance from the school.



FKCOM:

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St. John JE3 4EJ

27th January 2006

Senator M. Vibert President
The Education Committee
Education Department
P O Box 142
JE4 8QJ

Dear Members

I write as Parish Deputy to raise concerns that the Education Committee is trying to break up the Parish way of life with its policy on siblings and distance from school criteria. Over recent years the committee have permitted children from outside St. John's to take up places within the school. This at a time when children born to the parish was low, St. John over recent years has built a number of village developments for first-time buyers mainly for St. John's families so as to keep our community together. The church, school, parish hall and recreation centre being our focal points. By the education committee allowing siblings from outside St. John to take priority over our children this will do long term damage to our community, this policy should be reviewed with some urgency.

Secondly the criteria of distance from schools is also totally flawed, recently property speculators have built luxury homes near the school, the properties are not first-time buyers homes and in general the new owners have no previous connections with the parish. Yet because of their close proximity to the school the children from these homes will take precedence over children from families who have been in the parish for generations who's parents, grand-parents and generations beyond have been to St. John's School.

This criteria is not equitable, the parish of St. John for generations have striven to hold its entire community as one, if education are permitted to use the distance from school policy I see the parish way of life will soon start to crumble.

Could the committee and department please review its policy for the 2005 reception intake and produce a policy that is acceptable to all in the parish?

Yours Sincerely

Deputy P.J. Rondel

c.c. Mrs. F. Pittman Headteacher St. John
c.c. Mr & Mrs. Hardisty

Part C Admissions Policy for Reception Classes in NFP Provided Primary Schools

C1. Preamble

The reception year constitutes a critical element of children's education and development and makes a positive contribution not only to their early progress and learning but also provides a basis for continuing success. During the early years, children develop rapidly – physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Foundation Stage focuses on developing key learning skills such as listening, speaking, concentration, persistence and learning to work together and co-operate with other children. It also enables children to develop early communication, literacy and numeracy skills that prepare them for Key Stage One of the Jersey Curriculum.

All children should be given the opportunity to experience the very best possible start to their education which establishes solid foundations on which they can build, thus enabling them to flourish throughout their school years and beyond. The Education, Sport and Culture Committee's (the Committee) Admissions Policy to Reception Classes is framed to maximise the opportunities for all children to attend three terms in their reception class.

C2. Age for Admission

- In accordance with the Education (Jersey) Law 1999 a child is of compulsory school age from the first day of the school term in which his(her) fifth birthday falls.
- However, it is the Committee's policy to offer a place to all children, commencing during September of the school year in which their fifth birthday falls, to enable them to experience three terms in the reception class. (*The school year is defined as the period beginning the first day of September and ending on the thirty-first day of August.*)

C3. Allocation of Places

(See Para. C4 for Application Procedures)

The headteacher, in consultation with the reception teacher, is responsible for the allocation of places in the reception class, in accordance with the standard form of admission determined by the Committee (*see Schedule Two*).

The Committee has determined the areas to be served by each provided primary school (*catchment area*). Details of school catchment areas are available at primary schools, libraries, Parish Halls and the Department for Education, Sport and Culture.

If a school receives more applications than can be accepted from within its catchment area then priority will be given to:

- children who have an older brother or sister attending the school;
- proximity of the residential address to the school.

N.B. *Attendance at a nursery class does not guarantee a place in the school.*

C.4 Time-table for Application and Allocation of Places

- Parents should make application for a place at their catchment area school, using the Committee's approved form (*Attachment B*), before the end of January in the year during which admission is sought. At this stage the parent is invited to indicate whether the catchment area school is the school of first choice or whether there is an alternative school of preference. The parent may also indicate a second choice if such a choice should be necessary. Parental preferences for the schools of their choice will be met to the maximum extent possible, subject to the priorities determined within this policy.
- The headteacher will confirm offers of places at his/her school by the end of the first full week in March. Parents should accept or refuse this offer by the end of the second week in March.
- Applications from parents received after the end of January whether they live within or outside the catchment area will be considered, provided the school has not reached its standard form of admission. Priority will be given to:
 - children who have an older brother or sister attending the school;

– proximity of the residential address to the school.

• Once an offer of a place at a particular school has been made, it may only be withdrawn in very limited circumstances. These include when the place was offered on the basis of a misleading application from the parent or where a parent has not responded to the offer within the specified time.

C.5 Admissions Appeals

Any parent who is refused a school place for which they have applied has the right to appeal. In the first instance, this appeal will be to the Director of Education, Sport and Culture. A further appeal is available to a panel established by the Committee whose decision is final.

C.6 Arrangements for Admission

Headteachers have discretion to phase all admissions to reception classes to occur during the month of September. In exercising this discretion, the headteacher will take account of:

- the age of the child;
- the development needs of the child;
- the particular circumstances applying at the school;
- the need for the efficient and effective use of resources.

Flexibility of attendance must be considered, particularly during the early stages of attendance. As an introduction to the reception class, two or three half day sessions may be appropriate, gradually building up hours of attendance to ten sessions each week. However, all children will commence attendance during the month of September and all will be offered the opportunity for full-time attendance before half-term in the Autumn Term. Such flexibility is not applicable either to children whose fifth birthday falls in the Autumn term or children who have previously attended a full-time nursery provision. These children will be offered a full-time place from the beginning of the Autumn term.

C.7 Associated Requirements

- Headteachers must ensure a staffing ratio of one adult to 13 children within the reception class.
- The Foundation Stage Guidelines must form the basis of the curriculum offered to the children.
- The reception children must have a safe and secure area for play during break times.

Jersey College for Girls Preparatory School

Admissions Policy

Jersey College for Girls Preparatory School (JCGP) is co-educational in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 for children aged 4-7 years and for girls only in Key Stage 2 the school has an Island wide catchment and welcomes children from a wide variety of social, cultural and racial backgrounds.

There is a high demand for places at JCGP and the application procedure is as follows:

An application form is completed by the parents/guardians as early as possible. A non-refundable registration fee of £50 must accompany each application form. On receipt of the application form and fee the child's name is included on the appropriate admission list.

There are six lists (three of these lists are for girls and three for boys).

- Autumn Term birthdays for children born 1st September to 31st December
- Spring Term birthdays for children born 1st January to 30th April
- Summer Term birthdays for children born 1st May to 31st August

The forms are registered in order of their receipt at school.

Sibling priority

Siblings are defined as children with one parent in common.

Priority is given to a child when an application form has been received within the specified time (see below) who has a sibling who:

- is already attending JCGP in Reception, Key Stage 1 or 2;
- has a confirmed place in the entry list;
- is Victoria College Preparatory (VCP) and will be in attendance at either JCGP or VCP in the year when the child will enter JCGP.

The sibling list for each of the three terms close:

- Autumn on 31st January
- Spring on 31st May
- Summer on 30th September

In the situation where a child would have been a priority case, but the form arrives after the sibling list closes the child will be registered in date of receipt order and given no priority.

After the closure of the priority lists, selection for the remaining places will be by ballot. All places offered are subject to assessment, which takes place in the Autumn Term prior to the year of entry. Parents will be notified if their application has been successful or if they are on a waiting list, and what position they are on the list.

In the unlikely situation that there are more siblings than places selection will be by ballot.

Waiting list

Waiting lists are maintained as long as the child is of Key Stage 1 age. A further waiting list will be made for Key Stage 2 after the 7+ entry has taken place.

Parents with children on the waiting list will be sent a letter 18 months prior to the date of entry asking them to confirm that they wish their child to remain on the list. If parents do not reply to this letter by the deadline date stated therein, the child's name will be automatically deleted from the list.

It is essential that parents notify the school of any change of address or if they are to be away from the Island for a length of time.

Acceptance to Reception does not guarantee admission to Key Stage 2 at JCGP or the Key Stage 2 at VCP.

A child's place on the waiting list will change if there is a withdrawal or on the rare occasion when either of the following points taken effect:

- When a sibling is on a waiting list he or she is moved up the waiting list taking priority if the older sibling has managed to gain entry, thus giving maximum opportunity should a place become available;
- If an older sibling does not take up the place offered then priority is withdrawn from the young sibling and the application is inserted in date order of receipt.

Deposit

A deposit of £500 will be requested once a child is offered a date for assessment. This deposit is deductible from the first term's fees and is only refundable if, after assessment, a place is not offered.

Assessment interview

Children offered a firm place will be assessed one year before the date of entry. The main purpose of the interview in which Languages, Literacy, Numeracy and Social Skills will be assessed, is to give guided choice to parents.

A one year in Foundation Stage and two years in Key Stage 2 children normally transfer to Key Stage 2 at JCGP or VCP.

Procedures for transfer to Key Stage 2 at JCGP and VCP

Continuous assessment over a three year period supports the transfer. When the cumulative evidence over this period suggests that a child would experience difficulties with the curriculum offered he or she is asked to transfer to another school.

The Headteacher of VCP maintains close professional links with JCGP and detailed discussions take place between the Heads of the preparatory schools and Year 2 staff with reference to the boys transferring to VCP.

Procedures for entry to Key Stage 2 at JCGP from other primary schools

Entry is determined by assessment, which consists of the following:

- full report from the current school, which forms the major part of the recommendation of or entry;
- reading test;
- Verbal Reasoning Test – this gives an indication of their innate ability in terms of literacy;
- Non-Verbal Reasoning Test – this gives an indication of innate ability in term of numeracy;
- a piece of independent writing.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and at least every two years by the JCGP Management team and the

Governing Body.

STATES OF JERSEY



SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY: REVIEW

Lodged au Greffe on 3rd May 2005
by the Deputy of St. John

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Education, Sport and Culture Committee to review its primary school admissions policy and, in particular –

- (i) the criteria used for admission when a child already has a sibling at a particular school; and,
- (ii) the ‘distance from school’ policy;

and to report back to the States within 4 months.

DEPUTY OF ST. JOHN

REPORT

Recently, old established families in St. John have received letters from St. John's School which explains the policy of the Education, Sport and Culture Committee on children attending St. John's School (see letter at Appendix).

I believe the policy should be reviewed given that it allows families with children with no previous connection with St. John and, in some cases, families who may have just moved to the Island, to take precedence over local children.

A family who may just have moved into one of the new luxury homes built in the Parish but close to the School takes precedence over children in the more remote parts of the Parish like Le Mourier, Bonne Nuit Bay or Sion where families have lived and attended St. John's School for generations. Because of the Committee's policy, these families are being denied places because of the 'distance from school' policy. The second issue in the letter is the sibling policy. Can it be right that a "(j)" Category family move to the Island, living in the east of the Island are given a place at St. John's School for their child as a vacancy existed, then a second child comes along, instead of Education making it clear that when a vacancy is available in this family's own catchment area, the child would need to move or at the very least, any future children to the family would not necessarily be given a place at St. John's School but would be allocated a place in a school within their own catchment area with the option of moving the first child from St. John's School.

As the existing policies have been in place for many years, I ask the Education, Sport and Culture Committee to review their admissions policy and report back to the States within 4 months.

I do not believe there are any financial or manpower implications arising from this proposition as the review should be undertaken by officers of the Committee.

APPENDIX

To parents of September 2005's Reception intake who live in St. John's School catchment area.

Dear Mr. and Mrs.

I am writing to inform of the situation regarding allocation of Reception places and to let you know that this year I will not be able to offer places to all children in catchment, as we are heavily oversubscribed.

On Tuesday, January 18th I had a meeting with Mr. Jim Westwater, Head of Planning and Projects from the Education, Sport and Culture Department regarding this matter. We are working closely together to ensure that places are allocated in accordance with the Education Committee's admissions policy.

In line with the Education Committee's admissions policy I am to firstly offer places to children who have siblings in school. This year there are eighteen children who meet that criteria. This therefore means that I will only be able to offer places to eight out of the seventeen children in catchment. Once again in line with the Education Committee's admissions policy I will be offering these places in accordance with the criteria of 'distance from school', in other words to those children who live closest to school.

I know that you are keen for your child to come to St. John's School and that this may be very disappointing news for you but I felt it was important to let you know well in advance.

You will receive a letter by post from me on March 5th informing you as to whether or not your child has been allocated a place at St. John. If I am unable to offer you a place you will also receive a letter from the school that Mr. Westwater has allocated to you.

Should you have any enquiries then please do not hesitate to phone Mr. Westwater.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Pam Pitman
Headteacher