Introduction

1. The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 require local authorities to consult on proposed changes to admission arrangements.

2. The new School Admissions Code 2012 removed the duty on Local Authorities to co-ordinate in-year admissions from 2013. Ealing did not consult last year because it was considered there was insufficient time.

3. In line with the Pan London Admissions Group, the Local Authority intends to continue co-ordination of in-year admissions for community schools and those own Admission Authority schools who opt in.

The advantages of continuing co-ordination are:

- provides a single point of application and information for parents, which avoids the need for approaches to multiple schools and the potential for mis-direction due to poor understanding of the process and parental rights and responsibilities. This particularly applies to in-year applicants newly arrived from abroad.

- exposes unlawful practices by some Admission Authorities, and gives the LA opportunity to intervene and ensure Fair Access. These practices include deterring parents from applying, not providing the formal right to appeal, offering places without regard to criteria or waiting lists.

- creates greater transparency and the opportunity for all schools to operate on a more level playing field.

- reduces the opportunity for unnecessary transfers by allowing the LA to facilitate communication between heads of current and potential schools, and to act as an honest broker in negotiations with parents.

- provides improved opportunity for cross-departmental working in LAs and schools, and between LAs, to promote safeguarding. It is in-year mobility (rather than normal round admission) which creates the greatest potential for vulnerable children to fall through the net.

- enables early identification of hard to place and unplaced children whose application needs to be managed under the Fair Access Protocol.
• removes the necessity for multiple applications and offers which cause duplication and confusion in the process and make the system less transparent.

• reduces administrative burdens and costs in schools.

• provides LAs with accurate data for place planning and school improvement purposes. The Local Authority has knowledge of all unplaced pupils as early as possible and their postcodes, so can address the issue of needing extra provision more quickly (as has been required in the past few years despite significant expansion).

• gives LAs an accurate picture of children without a school place and the ability to monitor and track individual placements. Only a single point of application and outcome can deliver this.

• The Local Authority has full knowledge of waiting lists and can better advise families with multiple siblings of best chances for placement together (which will not always be at the catchment school).

4. One significant change is proposed, recognising that the inter borough communication has been the least satisfactory aspect of in-year co-ordination: all applicants will apply to the maintaining authority or own admission authority school which has opted out (rather than to their home authority, as happens now). Own admission authority schools who opt out will offer or refuse and advise their LA of the outcome. Inter borough communication will continue in advising other Local Authorities of applications received, offers, acceptances and start dates. This will reduce delays in offers for applicants living in other LAs.

5. The Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic and Church of England Schools last year indicated that they would not participate in the co-ordination of in-year admissions by the Local Authority and these schools will offer in-year places directly to parents as vacancies occur. As these schools have lower turnover than other schools, this would not undermine the co-ordination. Under the new Code these schools are required as minimum requirements to inform the Local Authority of all applications and their outcomes, to allow the local authority to keep up to date figures on the availability of places in the area and to meet safeguarding issues relating to children missing education. They must also inform parents of their right to appeal against the refusal of a place.

The RC Diocese has provided the following advice to schools:

**IN-YEAR ADMISSIONS**

1 Applications for In-Year admissions are made directly to the school.

2 If a place is available and there is no waiting list, the child will be admitted.

3 If there is a waiting list, then applications will be ranked by the Governing Body in accordance with the oversubscription criteria, [with the following option: Catholic
children without an offer of a school place elsewhere are given priority immediately after Catholic ‘looked-after’ children; similarly, other children without an offer of a school place are given priority immediately after other ‘looked-after’ children].

4 If a place cannot be offered at this time then you may ask us for the reasons and you will be informed of your right of appeal.

5 You will be offered the opportunity of being placed on a waiting list.

6 This waiting list will be maintained by the Governing Body in the order of the oversubscription criteria [as modified above] and not in the order in which the applications are received.

7 Names are removed from the list at the end of each academic year.

8 When a place becomes available the Governing Body will decide who is at the top of the list so that an offer can be made.

6. Last year, the other own Admission Authority schools were contacted to discuss their views and the majority at that time indicated (without full consultation or taking the matter to their Governing Bodies) that they would participate with the continuation of In-Year Admissions. One school felt that In-Year coordination slowed down offers, but this school was exceptional in being not an all – through primary and having vacancies in all their year groups with no waiting lists. Most year groups in most schools are oversubscribed.

7. The intention is for the In-Year team to continue as now to allocate weekly in term time, and that all applications received by Friday 3 pm will be on the system for allocation the following week. Delays of offers are thereby less than 2 weeks where vacancies exist, and schools keen to expedite admission on the day of offer can check SAM online and ring parents to arrange admission.

8. Under the new Code, there are minimum requirements

a. the Local Authority has a duty to
   - Supply parents with information on how in-year applications are dealt with
   - Provide members of the public with information on vacancies in schools in the area
   - Provide parents with an application form which is suitable for in-year application for all schools including those for which they are not the admissions authority.

b. Own admission authority schools must
   - Inform the Local Authority of every application and its outcome, to allow the local authority to keep up to date figures on the availability of places in the area, (and also to follow up all unplaced children and to inform school place planning so the LA can meet its statutory duty to ensure sufficient provision for all residents)
   - Inform parents of the reasons for refusal and their right to appeal against the refusal of a place; and the process for hearing such appeals

9. Gatekeeping information was sent to all primary and secondary schools on 5/11/12.
Proposed Scheme for Co-ordination for In-Year Admissions 2014/15

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Definitions

“the Home LA”                  the LA in which the child is resident
“the Maintaining LA”         the LA which maintains a school to which an applicant has applied
“own admission authority schools”                            schools, such as voluntary-aided church schools, foundation
                                                             schools and academies, which are allowed by law to set their own
                                                             admission arrangements and determine the order in which places
                                                             are allocated at their schools

Section 1: Applications

1. Applications for London Borough of Ealing maintained schools and those own admission authorities who have opted in to continued in-year co-ordination, will be made on an Ealing In-Year Common Application Form. This will include all the fields and information specified in Schedule 1 of the main scheme. These will be supplemented by any additional fields and information which are deemed necessary by Ealing to enable the admission authorities in the LA area to apply their published oversubscription criteria. Ealing Council will process applications for Ealing community schools and those own admission authorities who have opted in. Those own admission authority schools who have not opted in may use the Ealing In-Year Common Application Form or provide their own in-year application form. They will accept an Ealing Common Application Form where the parent submits this to the school even if their school is the only preference. Where other schools are named, the own Admission Authority school will supply the LA with a copy.

2. The admission authorities within London Borough of Ealing will not use supplementary forms except where the information available through the In-Year Common Application Form is insufficient for consideration of the application against the published oversubscription criteria. Where supplementary forms are used by the admissions authorities within London Borough of Ealing, the LA will seek to ensure that these only collect information which is required by the published oversubscription criteria.

3. Where supplementary forms are used, they will be available from the school concerned and available on Ealing Council’s website. Any supplementary forms must advise parents that they must also complete the LA’s In-Year Common Application Form, or in the case of those own admission authority schools who have not opted in, the school’s own in-year application form or the LA’s In-Year Common Application Form. Ealing Council’s admission booklet and website will indicate which of Ealing’s schools require supplementary forms to be completed and where they can be obtained.
4. Where an admission authority in London Borough of Ealing receives a supplementary form, it will not consider it to be a valid application until the parent has also listed the school on the In-Year Common Application Form, or in the case of those own admission authority schools who have not opted in, the school’s own in-year application form or the LA’s In-Year Common Application Form.

5. Applicants will be able to express a preference for a maximum of three maintained schools or Academies on the In-Year Common Application Form.

6. The order of preference will not be revealed to schools within London Borough of Ealing.

7. Ealing Council will carry out address verification (as far as possible) for each application for community schools and those own admission authorities who have opted in. Those own admission authority schools who have not opted in, may be liable to a charge for distance measurements.

8. Ealing Council will check the status of any child where the application is based on the child being a looked after child or previously looked after child, when any in-year common application form is received; those own admission authority schools who have not opted in and receive direct applications must check the status.

**Section 2: Processing**

8. Applicants for London Borough of Ealing’s maintained schools or those own admission authority schools who have opted in, must complete and return the In-Year Common Application Form to Ealing Council; or if applying for a place at an own admission authority school who have not opted in, to the school directly on the school’s own in-year application form or on the council’s In-Year Common Application Form.

9. Where an application is not fully completed, Ealing Council and / or the school will not treat the application as valid until all information is received. Help will be provided to parents/carers as needed.

10. If Ealing Council receives a In-Year Common application form with an application for a place at an own admission authority school who have not opted in the details of the application will be entered on the Tribal Admissions Pupil Database, and can be viewed by the school using SAM, as for all community schools and those own admission authorities who have opted in.

12. Those own admission authority schools who have not opted in must inform the LA of each direct application (unless showing on SAM), and its outcome, and will aim to do so within 10 school days from receipt of the application.

13. Ealing Council will accept applications from out of borough applicants on the Ealing In-Year Common Application Form and respond directly to the applicant, informing the home Local Authority of each application and its outcome and will aim to do so within 10 school days from receipt of the application.

14. Each school within London Borough of Ealing will update the LA with the numbers on roll and vacancies in each of its year groups weekly during term time.
Section 3: Offers

12. Where a child is eligible for a place at only one of the nominated schools that school will be allocated to the child.

13. Where a child is eligible for a place at two or more of the nominated schools, the child will be allocated a place at the highest ranked preference available.

14. Where an unplaced Ealing resident child is not eligible for a place at any of the nominated schools, the child will be allocated a place at the nearest Ealing school or Academy with a vacancy.

15. Where no offer is possible for an applicant who has applied for community schools or to own admission authority schools who have opted in, a letter will be sent by Ealing Council to the applicant explaining the reasons for the refusal of admission where this applies, and of their right of appeal and how to access the appeal procedure.

16. Where no offer is possible for an applicant to any own admission authority schools who have not opted in, a letter will be sent by that school to the applicant explaining the reasons for the refusal of admission where this applies, and of their right of appeal and how to access the appeal procedure.

16. All schools will require proof of date of birth for each pupil applying for school place in order to satisfy themselves that the date of birth is correct, and where necessary, likewise require proof of address.

Section 4: Post-offer

16. Ealing Council and those own admission authority schools who have not opted in where a direct offer has been made, will request that parents accept or decline the offer of a place within two weeks.

17. Ealing Council and those own admission authority schools who have not opted in where a direct offer has been made will make every reasonable effort to contact the parent to find out whether or not they wish to accept the place. Only where the parent fails to respond and Ealing Council and those own admission authority schools who have not opted in where a direct offer has been made, can demonstrate that every reasonable effort has been made to contact the parent, will the offer of a place be withdrawn on behalf of the admission authority. Where the whereabouts and school place of a child resident at the time of application cannot be established, the admission authority will refer to the Children Missing Education lead.

18. Those own admission authority schools who have not opted in and are dealing with a direct application must inform the LA of the response to the offer and the date of admission.

19. Where a parent accepts or declines a place in a London Borough of Ealing school and the pupil is not a Ealing resident, Ealing Council will forward that information and the start date to the home LA.

- Ealing Council will inform the Home LA of any appeals upheld for Ealing schools.

Section 5: Waiting lists

- London Borough of Ealing will maintain waiting lists for community schools in accordance with the published oversubscription criteria.
Each Foundation, VA, and Academy within London Borough of Ealing will maintain a waiting list in ranked order for each year group, and will, where agreed, share that list with London Borough of Ealing in order to minimise the need for communication.

20. Applicants on the waiting list for a higher ranked school, after a school place has been allocated, are indicating they prefer this school to the school already allocated.

19. Applicants will continue on the waiting list for school(s) ranked higher on the In-Year Common Application Form than any school already offered, only when they confirm this on the Reply Slip.

21. Waiting lists for community schools and for those own admission authority schools agreeing to co-ordinate and agreeing this waiting list policy, will be cancelled at the end of July each year unless the application is less than 2 months old, the applicant is unplaced or has a sibling at the school, or the parent requests (in writing or email in July or August) to remain on the waiting list for the next academic year.