**EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS – 2019/20**

The School Admissions Code 2014 requires the Governing Body to consult in the event that any material changes are made to the admissions policy for the school. The Code sets out a list of statutory consultees and parents, not surprisingly, are at the top of the list.

After several years of stability, the Governing Body is proposing to make an important change to the oversubscription criteria in the school’s admissions policy. These are the criteria which are applied to allocate places to children joining in Reception in the event that the school is oversubscribed (which, historically, it always has been). The purpose of this document is to explain the proposed change and set out the reasons for it.

**What change is being proposed?**

The Governing Body is proposing to add an additional oversubscription criterion (Criterion E) to allow the school to offer places to the children of permanent members of staff. As a result of the proposed change, the oversubscription criteria to be applied in the event that the school is oversubscribed will be ranked as follows:

1. Looked after children and previously looked after children.
2. Children with exceptional medical needs
3. Children who will have a sibling at the school at the proposed time of admission.
4. Twenty-four (24) Foundation places
5. *Children of permanent staff directly employed by St. Mary’s school for two years or more.*
6. Children who live nearest to the front gate of the Amyand Park Road school site.

**What does the new criterion say?**

The full text of the proposed additional criterion to be included in the 2019/20 admissions policy is set out below:

1. Children (by which is meant full, step-, half-, adopted and foster children living in the same household) of permanent staff directly employed by St. Mary’s school for two years or more prior to the admissions application closing date and still employed, without having given notice or been given notice that the employment will end, at the time the offer is made.

**Why is the school doing this?**

While in recent years the school has been highly successful in recruiting and retaining excellent staff the process is becoming noticeably more difficult. The costs of living near the school, or commuting to it from further afield, are very high and we have virtually no flexibility about the terms we are able to offer the staff we are trying to attract. The Governing Body is of the view that the inclusion of this criterion will help the school to remain competitive in the current difficult recruitment market and enable it to attract and, just as importantly keep, high quality members of staff.

A number of other local schools are proposing to adopt this approach (St Stephen’s) or, indeed, have done so already (Holy Trinity). As more schools go down this path St Mary’s needs to respond if it is to continue to have its pick of the best candidates.

**Is the school allowed to do this?**

Yes. The School Admissions Code 2014 was specifically amended to allow schools to allow schools to give priority to members of staff (Section.1.39). The Governing Body has kept this option under review for a number of years now but as other schools increasingly adopt this approach the decision has been taken to respond and incorporate the criterion into the admissions policy for 2019/20.

**What impact will the change have on the profile of admissions to Reception?**

It is impossible to predict with any accuracy the impact that the change will have. As parents well know, every year the school is delighted to congratulate staff who are starting or growing their families. Some of those staff leave and return after their maternity or paternity leave and some don’t. The Governing Body has undertaken research to see if any consistent pattern has emerged over the last 3 years. Based on that research the Governing Body estimates that this criterion could account for up to 2 or 3 places a year which would otherwise be allocated to children under the distance criterion every year. As time passes there may also be a knock on effect via a take up of sibling places which may account for another 1 or 2 places in a year.

**What about the impact on places available on distance?**

While strongly advocating the proposed change to the admissions policy the Governing Body recognises that there is a risk that the uptake of places under the proposed new criterion could risk distorting the intended pattern of admissions to the disadvantage local families seeking places on distance.

In agreeing to the proposed change the Governing Body has been very clear that the number of places awarded under the new criterion must kept under close review and reported, explicitly, to the GB at the end of every annual admissions round. In the event that the take up of places under this criterion ever does start to reach levels that distort the pattern of intake, the policy will be reviewed, tightened, or scrapped depending on the circumstances that may apply at that time.

**How can I comment?**

A consultation form is available on the school’s website at <http://st-marys.richmond.sch.uk/> [full address]. Please complete this form and either hand it in to the school office or return it to governors@st-marys.richmond.sch.uk

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