

Ombudsman Report Summary

Introduction

The Ombudsman received a complaint from a parent about the admissions procedure at Herschel Grammar School. The complaint concerned an application for a place in September 2008. The Ombudsman completed the investigation in December 2008.

The Complaint

The parent applied for a place at two schools in the Grammar School Consortium. Langley Grammar School was the first preference and Herschel Grammar the second preference. Pupils scoring 111 in the 11+ test are eligible for a grammar place and the pupil concerned scored 114. Langley Grammar could not offer a place because places are offered to those scoring the highest marks first and the final pupil to be offered a place scored 117. Herschel Grammar only considered applicants who had put the school first on the application form and offered places down to a score of 111. The parent considered that his child should have been offered a place at Herschel Grammar School because he had a higher score than some of the children who had been offered places.

Findings

The Admissions Code states that admission authorities for all maintained schools must not operate first preference first admission arrangements. In other words they must not consider applicants who have put the school first before any others. All applicants should be considered at the same time regardless of preference. For this reason the Ombudsman decided that the pupil should have been offered a place at Herschel Grammar School and an offer has now been made. The Consortium Grammar Schools have agreed to change the way places are offered for the 2009 intake and not operate first preference first. All applicants will now be considered, not just those who place the school first on the application form.

Implications

The Grammar Schools are now complying fully with the admissions Code of Practice. However it is possible that compliance may result in fewer Slough resident pupils securing a place at Herschel for September 2009. For example: Child A lives in Slough and places Herschel first on the application form and scores 111. Child B lives outside Slough and places Langley Grammar first on the application form and Herschel Grammar second. Child B is not offered a place at Langley Grammar because the school cuts off at a score of 117.

Herschel is required to consider child B and child A's applications together and makes offers down to a score of 113. Child A is therefore not offered a place. This should be a temporary problem for 2009 because Herschel Grammar is proposing to give some priority to Slough residents for 2010 rather than offering places in test score order.