

GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Gloucester, Massachusetts

Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners

File: JF

ADMISSION OF STUDENTS TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

1. Introduction

As a matter of principle and good practice in building community, the School Committee believes that children should have the opportunity to attend their local or neighborhood school. The School Committee also believes that:

- a) families resident in the City of Gloucester should have at least the same rights as with regard to School Choice as families living in other municipalities;
- b) siblings should be able to attend the same school;
- c) children with special needs should attend their local school unless due process determines that an alternative placement is in the interests of the student; and
- d) unless there are special circumstances, once a child is enrolled at a school s/he should be able to remain at that school through the grade levels for which the school makes provision, unless the student is removed for misconduct after due process under relevant laws and regulations.

Persistent budget shortfalls have required the committee to restructure the elementary school system and reduce the number of buildings and classes available in order to reduce facilities costs and thereby maintain its class size targets. The greater efficiency in the use of facilities creates a tension between the principle of the neighborhood school and the availability of places in the schools.

This policy is intended to ensure that admission of children to neighborhood schools is managed in an equitable manner with regard to the above principles.

2. School Catchment Areas

The School Committee will establish local “catchment” areas for each elementary school from time to time. Children living within these areas shall have the right of priority in the admission procedure to their local school.

3. Residence

Families may use only one residence on the school admission application. The address must be that of the *permanent residence* of the child; i.e., where the child is expected to live at weekends and during school holidays as well as during the week. Children who spend part of their week with one parent and part with the other, at different addresses, must use the address at which they spend most of their time. The provision of a false address will result in the disqualification of the application if the application is for a school outside the catchment area of the permanent residence.

4. School Choice

Families resident in Gloucester have a right to request admission to a school other than their local catchment area school.

5. Admission Arrangements

- 5.1 The district will place an announcement in the media on or about March 1st each year informing residents of their responsibility to enroll children of school age in school, and their right to apply for admission to a school outside their neighborhood, if there is an appropriate place available.
- 5.2 Intra-district admission requests will open on March 7 and close on May 15.
- 5.3 By June 1 of each year, the Principal of each elementary school, after consultation with the Superintendent of School, will review the places available, enroll catchment area residents, and make a determination as to how many places the school has available for non-area students at each grade level.
- 5.4 In the event of there being more children seeking admission from within the catchment area than there are places as determined by the target class size, the Principal shall consult with the Superintendent of Schools, who will review the situation in the context of class sizes at the relevant grade level across the city. The Superintendent of Schools shall have discretion, in consultation with the Principal, to admit students beyond the target class size if, in so doing, the educational opportunities of other students in the class will not be jeopardized. The provisions of Paragraph 5.18 shall apply to such considerations
- 5.5 If the number of children seeking admission to Kindergarten from within the catchment area is greater than the number of places available, students will be admitted on the basis of the proximity of their home to the school by the nearest safe route.

- 5.6 If the number of children newly resident in the catchment area after June 1 seeking admission is greater than the number of places available, students will be admitted on the basis of the proximity of their home to the school by the nearest safe route.
- 5.7 Siblings shall be given priority consideration within the above process, including priority prior to a lottery.
- 5.8 A child not admitted to its local school under the above process shall be treated as having the same rights as if s/he lived within the catchment area of the next nearest school, as will younger siblings.
- 5.9 Each grade level will be deemed to be full for the purpose of this policy when the average size of the classes at each grade level are at the target class size for the grade level. Average class size will be used for enrollment purposes to accommodate the discretion of Principals to organize classes of different sizes in response to the needs to students with special needs.
- 5.10 After establishing the number of places available for out of catchment area students at each grade level, the latter will be enrolled in the following order:
 - (a) siblings
 - (b) other applicants

Where the number of applications is greater than the number of places available, the available places will be filled by a lottery conducted by the Principal.

- 5.11 Decisions on out-of-district applications will be made during the last week in June, with families notified about the outcome of the placement request postmarked no later than June 30. Out of district students will be enrolled in the following order:
 - (a) siblings (in accordance with the 1994 amendment to the School Choice law)
 - (b) other applicants

Where the number of applications is greater than the number of places available, the available places will be filled by a lottery conducted by the Principal.

- 5.12 Once admitted to the school a child shall be entitled to remain at that school through the grade levels for which the school makes provision, unless the student is removed for misconduct after due process under relevant laws and regulations, or the School Committee redistricts students.

- 5.13 If a family moves out of the City of Gloucester, the student must apply for admission to the school under the terms of the state School Choice regulations.
- 5.14 Once admitted to an out-of-catchment area school a student shall not have the right to return to his or her local school during the school year in question.
- 5.15 The School Committee will provide transport as required by law unless it chooses to make special arrangements to meet particular circumstances. Out-of-catchment area families will be responsible for the transport of their child/ren to and from the out-of-area school. Families are responsible for ensuring that their children arrive at school punctually, and will be required to reapply for admission towards the end of any school year in which punctuality has in the view of the administration prejudiced the learning and participation of the student. In such cases the administration shall have given the family notice of its concerns orally and in writing and reasonable opportunity to meet attendance expectations. Families will confirm this responsibility by signing the admission application form.
- 5.16 In the event of a family changing their place of residence within the city after their child is enrolled in school, the child will have the right to remain at that school through the grade levels for which the school makes provision, unless the student is removed for misconduct after due process under relevant laws and regulations.
- 5.17 In the event of a family changing its place of residence within the city, the family shall have the right to enroll their child at the local school, subject to the provisions of Paragraphs 5.5 through 5.8 above.
- 5.18 In the event of student numbers increasing, such that the average class size at a grade level **at a school** would increase by 2 or more students, consideration will be given, within the resources available, to the district providing additional support for such teachers as may be affected, additional support may include but not be limited to the provision of supplementary adult support in the classroom, supplementary clerical support, or periodic release for grading and preparation purposes. If student numbers in a particular class are such as to cause concern that the addition of a further student would be prejudicial to the interests of students previously enrolled, the Superintendent of Schools will review the situation with the Principal and the family.
- 5.19 A change of school for a student with an IEP will require a meeting of the IEP team to review the implications of a change of placement.

5.20 Once admission arrangements for the year have been completed, Principals will maintain a waiting list. If places become available as a result of students transferring out of the school between June 1 and the opening of school, the available places will be allocated by lottery.

LEGAL REFERENCE: M.G.L. 71:6; 71:6A; 76:6; 76:12; 76:12B

Adopted by the School Committee: May 14, 2008

Advisory On Free Transport Arrangements

The district policy is that transport is provided where a child lives more than 1.5 miles from his or her school, unless the family has chosen a school other than the local school under the intra-district school choice arrangements.