

Academies and catchment areas Migrating to a new policy

Scrutiny Commission

26th February 2014



- Catchment areas set by LEA to balance numbers
- Concept of primary schools feeding upwards
- Transport based on catchment or nearer school to support the catchment policy
- No dual eligibility
- All contained within the County, with the exception of some, e.g. Uppingham, East Leake, Grantham
- Very well established position – met parents' expectations

- Catchment areas set by Academy to underpin business model
- Element of competition, overlapping catchment areas
- Age range changes, such as 11-14 becoming 11-16
- Academies independent of County Council; need for LCC not to favour one business over another
- Catchment areas do not need to make reference to administrative boundaries

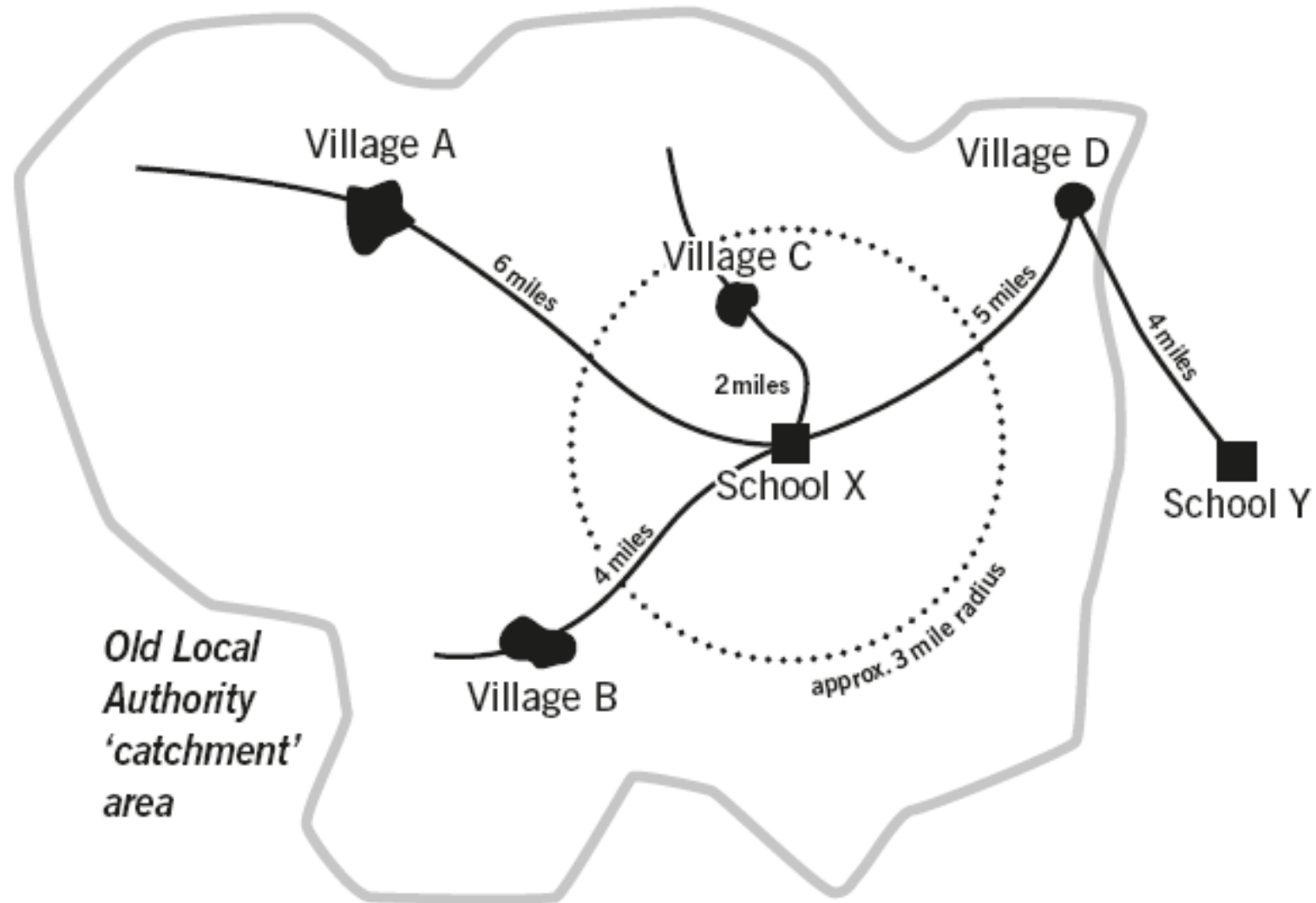
- Dual eligibility, or more, can create multiple travel arrangements from individual settlements
- Catchments change as new schools emerge or existing schools change age range
- Need to reduce the amount of transport on the roads and manage cost pressures
- Need to ensure clarity and fairness for parents so they can make informed choices and can be sure that all receive a consistent offer

- Academies well established throughout Leicestershire
- Home to School Transport Policy “frozen” as of 31st May 2012
- Challenges starting to emerge
 - Changes to age ranges
 - Overlapping catchment areas
 - Some schools already feeling exposed
- Meeting with Schools Minister piqued interest but little realistic prospect of significant change
- Government guidance on Home to School Transport to be consulted on at some point
 - A re-hash of guidance withdrawn as a result of Judicial Review
 - Not likely to address this issue

- LCC is obliged to offer free transport to school for eligible children
 - 1996 Education Act sets the obligation as nearest school
- Cannot let Academies set Transport Eligibility Areas as they are not accountable for costs of schools travel
- Policy must not be seen to favour one Academy (business) over another or different types of providers e.g. maintained sector over academies
 - Any discretionary service has to be fairly applied and universally available
- Therefore policy recommended is
Nearest school only (with available space)

- Traditional catchment areas no longer apply
- Feeder primary school arrangement can be broken
- Nearest school not necessarily in Leicestershire
 - Tamworth, Atherstone, Corby, Leicester as examples
- Studio or free schools may change transport eligibility from one year to the next
 - Need to decide on continuity of eligibility
- Parents may seek to manipulate the system by late applications
 - Detailed procedures and rules will be needed

How a Nearest School policy would work



- Requirement to consult widely and to conduct Equality Impact Assessment and consider Public Sector Equality duty
- Requirement to publish policy by no later than mid September 2014 for implementation with effect from September 2015
- School place and transport eligibility decisions advised to parents/pupils from March/April 2015
- Requirement to consider phasing /transitional arrangements

Timetable for delivering the change (2)

- Cabinet authority to consult 13th November 2013
- Consult 27th January – 12th March 2014
- Scrutiny considers consultation responses 30th April 2014
- Cabinet to consider consultation outcome and determine policy 6th May 2014
- Publication of policy no later than 12th September 2014
- Policy effective September 2015

Consultation questions

Q1: Do you agree or disagree with the council's proposed policy for the provision of transport to schools and academies?

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

Any other comments on our proposed policy for the provision of transport to academies:

Q2: Do you agree or disagree with the council's proposed policy for the provision of post 16 transport to schools, academies and colleges?

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

Any other comments on our proposed policy for the provision of post 16 transport:

Q3: Do you agree or disagree with the council's proposals for transitional arrangements if this revised home to school transport policy is adopted?

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

Any other comments on our proposals for transition arrangements:

Q4: Do you have any alternative suggestions for a revised home to school transport policy?

Discussion