

Parents' Experiences of the Process of Choosing a Secondary School

A nationally representative survey of parents of children in school years 5, 6 and 7

Office for National Statistics: Social Survey Division
John Flatley, Helen Connolly and Vanessa Higgins

An analysis of policies and practices of LEA admission authorities in England

Sheffield Hallam University: School of Education
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Contents

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	17
Aims of the research	19
Policy background	19
Conduct of the research	21
Part 1: Policies and practices of admission authorities	23
Introduction	25
The statutory context	27
Categorising modes of practice	31
Expressing a preference	35
The use of application forms and procedures for expressing a preference	41
Selection	45
Information provided for parents	51
Quality of admissions information provided on LEA Internet pages	59
Discussion of some issues relating to LEA modes of practice	63
Part 2: The nationally representative survey	71
Introduction	73
Finding out about schools	75
The process of applying for schools	87
Parental satisfaction with application process and outcome	111
Factors that parents take into account when choosing secondary schools	128
Parents of children due to enter secondary school in September 2001	148
Excellence in Cities	159
References	168
Appendices	172
<i>Appendix 1</i>	
Frequency of over-subscription criteria: a comparison of EiC and non-EiC LEAs	174
<i>Appendix 2</i>	
Applying for school places in different LEAs. How helpful is the information provided to parents?	186
<i>Appendix 3</i>	
Methodology: The nationally representative survey	198
<i>Appendix 4:</i>	
The questionnaire	214

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The report is about parents' experience of choosing a secondary school. It is in two stages; firstly, an analysis of policies and practices relating to school admission in Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England and, secondly, the findings from a nationally representative survey of parents of children about their experience of choosing a secondary school. Taken together, the report describes and analyses both the context of choice for parents and their views about the process and outcomes of choosing a secondary school.

2. Diversity in LEA admission practices

The School Admissions Code of Practice requires admission arrangements to be clear, objective and to give every child a fair chance of a satisfactory school place. The report documents the diversity of practices that exist across LEAs as they attempt to achieve the central aim identified in the Code of Practice.

In some areas the number of foundation and voluntary schools with their own admission criteria means that LEA admission criteria apply to only a small proportion of schools within the LEA area. In some LEAs responsibility for admission criteria has been delegated to the schools themselves and the LEA doesn't set its own admission criteria. This may mean that describing an LEA mode of practice does not necessarily provide a meaningful description of the process experienced by all parents. Similarly, a substantial number of parents apply to schools outside their 'home' LEA and if they live near the borders of several LEAs they may find themselves using several different admission procedures. Some larger LEAs may also use different arrangements for different geographical areas of the authority making it difficult to classify the LEA mode of practice. The nationally representative survey of parents examines their experience of applying for a secondary school place against the background of this diversity of LEA admissions practices.

3. Legal judgements

The judgements of the Courts have also had a major impact on school admission practices, particularly the Greenwich judgement in 1989 and the Rotherham judgement in 1997. One of the effects of the former means that an LEA cannot give preference to its own residents in allocating school places. One of the effects of the latter is that parents have to express an explicit preference for a school and they cannot assume that they will have an automatic right to a place in their local school. The judgements have been instrumental in LEAs shifting away from admission policies based on catchment areas and feeder or link primary schools to policies based on the rank order of expressed parental preferences. As discussed below, the rank order first preference system is now by far the most common method used by LEAs in allocating school places.

4. LEA management of the process

In managing the admission process LEA practices can be charted along a continuum with, at one end, some LEAs managing the admission process by co-ordinating centrally the offer of places to all parents and, at the other end of the continuum, more of a quasi market approach with parents having to apply to individual schools but able to apply for as many schools as they wish. In some LEAs a parent may be expected to express a preference for only one school, whereas, at the other extreme, in theory, a parent may have an opportunity to apply for a place in numerous schools.

For LEAs the central task is to resolve the tension between managing the provision of, and access to, secondary school places effectively and efficiently whilst also fulfilling the legal obligation of meeting parental preference wherever possible. The tension between ensuring that the needs of the whole community are provided for whilst also ensuring that individual preferences are met presents many challenges and this is resolved in different ways in different LEAs.

The diversity between LEAs can be partly explained by differences in the density of their population, the geographical distribution of schools in relation to where parents live, the balance between supply and demand for school places in particular locations and the comparative popularity and unpopularity of particular schools. The pattern of demographic change and the history of school building and school closure policies also has an impact and, in part, bears testimony to how well, or otherwise, the planning of school places has anticipated changes in the demography of an area.

5. Finding out about schools

Stage 1 of the report found that the provision of information to parents is variable and, whilst parents use a variety of information and are not wholly dependent upon what an LEA provides, there is a lack of clarity about the information provided in some LEA composite brochures. Stage 2 of the report found that less than half of parents used LEA prospectuses. Of those who did, less than 1 in 3 rated them 'most useful' and 1 in 5 thought they were 'of little or no use'.

The sources of information which were most frequently used by parents, and regarded by them as the most useful, were visits to schools and talking with other parents. Around 8 out of 10 parents used at least one of the following kinds of formal literature: LEA prospectuses, school prospectuses, OFSTED reports or school performance tables. Approximately 1 in 10 parents used all four formal sources. The main factors affecting use of formal sources were the level of education of the mother, her occupational background and whether or not the parents had prior experience of applying for a secondary school place. Controlling for other variables included in the analysis, the likelihood of using one or more formal sources of information was five times greater for parents if the mother had qualifications at degree level or above than if the mother had no qualifications.

Nearly 4 in 10 parents used performance tables to find out about schools. Almost one-third of the users found performance tables 'most useful', whilst 14% found them of 'little or no use'. Five out of 10 parents who consulted the tables did so through newspapers and 4 out of 10 through school publications.

Around half of all parents consulted primary school teachers. In some LEAs this is an integral part of the admission process. Less than 1 in 20 parents had used the Internet to access information about school admission. Stage 1 of the report found that there is room for improvement in the quality and accessibility of information that LEAs provide on the internet.

Overall, nearly 9 in 10 parents said that they were satisfied they had all the information they needed to help them choose a school.

6. Knowledge and information about over-subscription

It is a statutory requirement to publish the over and under-subscription figures for schools. However, by themselves the numbers may not mean very much. Most LEAs do not give guidance by drawing out the implications of the raw figures and, for example, providing a commentary that parents can take into account when deciding for which schools they will express a preference. This gap in the information provided is important because, where schools are over-subscribed, guidance about what the figures mean may help parents to make the admission process more predictable. A written commentary may enable them to make a more realistic assessment of the likely outcomes of expressing particular preferences than would otherwise be the case. Whilst some LEAs provide little or no information that would help parents in this regard, at the other extreme some LEAs do provide information, for example, about the furthest a parent could live from a school and still gain a place. Some LEAs also publish postcode information to provide examples of the area from where a school mostly draws its pupils. However, the validity of the information can change from year to year and what was accurate in a previous year may no longer be the case in the following year.

In contrast to a lack of assistance in contextualising the over-subscription figures for popular schools, the overwhelming majority of LEAs do attempt to explain how over-subscription criteria are interpreted. This is also an important part of the admission process, particularly in densely populated urban areas where living in close proximity to a school is no guarantee of a school place. It may mean that a parent does not waste a preference on a school where there is little or no prospect of gaining a place. Across the country as a whole nearly 6 out of 10 parents reported that they knew about over-subscription criteria.

Nearly 1 in 4 parents said that they took account of over-subscription criteria when considering to which schools to apply. A number of factors were found to be independently associated with reported use by parents of over-subscription criteria. Some of the main findings were:

- parents among whom the mother had a degree or higher qualification were three times more likely than those without any qualifications, and approximately twice as likely as those with lower qualifications, to say they knew how popular schools allocated;
- owner occupiers were approximately twice as likely to say they knew as were parents who were social renters;
- parents among whom the mother was of white ethnic origin were nearly twice as likely to say they knew as those with a mother of non-white ethnic origin.

7. Reasons for choosing or rejecting a school

The most common reason that parents gave for wanting a place in their favourite school was that the school had good academic outcomes, mentioned by 4 out of 10 parents. Other common reasons were that a sibling attended the school, nearness from home, travel convenience and the child's preferences. Almost three-quarters (72%) of parents applied for a place in their nearest state school, but 28% did not. Among the parents who did not apply to their nearest school, the most frequently cited reasons for not doing so were poor discipline, mentioned by more than 1 in 3 (35%), followed by poor academic results, cited by 31%. Other less frequently cited reasons were bullying problems, mentioned by 14%, and the fact that the particular school was not a denominational one, cited by around 1 in 10.

There was a relationship between the reasons articulated for favouring a particular school and the background characteristics of parents. For example, in the most extreme contrast in the multivariate analysis, parents who lived in London, were of a non white ethnic origin, were owner occupiers and where the mother was in Social Class I or II were more than 10 times as likely to cite academic reasons for choosing their favourite school than the group comprising parents in a Shire authority, who rented in the social sector, were of white ethnic origin and where the mother had never worked.

Around 6 in 10 of the schools that parents most wanted their children to attend had higher GCSE scores than their LEA average. As before, the proportion wanting such a school for their children varied according to parental background characteristics. For example, the group most likely to want such a school comprised parents with no previous experience of choosing a secondary school, who were owner occupiers and lived in London, who had a degree level qualification or above and were in a non-manual social class.

Controlling for other variables analysed, the likelihood of parents citing academic factors as among the reasons for wanting a place in their favourite school was lower if the mother was in a manual social class, or had never worked, than if the mother was in a non-manual social class. Parents among whom the mother was of non-white ethnic origin were almost twice as likely to cite academic factors as parents among whom the mother was white.

Parents in Shire authorities were more likely than parents in other LEA types to express a preference for their local school. A common-sense explanation suggests this relates to the greater distances between schools in Shire LEAs making the choice of an alternative school less realistic, especially since travel convenience and nearness to home are key factors in parental preference. However, the explanation may be more complex than this because the population density of different Shire authorities varies considerably and, for example, some have extensive urban developments within their boundaries or are close to urban centres of population in other LEAs.

8. The application process

The report examined the information given to parents and several features of the application process to see what variation existed across the country and whether or not this had any impact on parental satisfaction with the process.

An analysis of LEA composite prospectuses was carried out and one finding to emerge was that the majority of LEA prospectuses do not make clear the consequences of not expressing a preference for school(s). All prospectuses make the point that a parent must express a preference in order for it to be considered but many are not explicit about what the consequences are likely to be if a preference is not expressed.

The number of forms that parents have to complete to apply for a school place varies from one LEA to another: around one-third of LEAs require parents to complete just one form to apply for community schools and voluntary controlled admission authorities and separate forms for other schools; one-third allow parents to use one common form for all admission authorities, and just over a third of LEAs expect parents to complete a common form to the LEA but to apply direct to other admission authorities. At one extreme a parent can complete just one form to apply for all types of school in an LEA and also schools in another LEA. At the other extreme a parent may have to complete a form for each school applied for within an LEA and separate LEA forms for any schools applied for outside the LEA. Over 60% of LEAs use common dates for applications and decisions about admission.

Two-thirds of parents applied to a single admission authority and 9 out of 10 completed an application form provided by their own LEA. Two-thirds of parents reported that they were asked by their LEA to list their preference for school in rank order on their application form. Around 10% of parents reported that their children had been interviewed by at least one of the schools that they had applied to and 9% of parents reported that a test formed part of the application process for one of the schools to which they applied. With regard to the reports of being interviewed it seems most likely that this refers to those parents who apply for a place at a denominational school where participation in Church activities and religious commitment is one of the criteria for admission. Thus, whilst children cannot be admitted or refused entrance to a school on the basis of an interview it can be used for eliciting information about an application to a denominational school. The reported incidence of testing may refer to the use of tests by selective schools or it may be that some

parents perceive erroneously that the End of Key Stage Standardised Assessment Tasks are related in some way to secondary school admission.

9. Applying for a school place in another LEA

Some of the differences in LEA practices occur because of differences in policy. In some LEAs information is provided to parents about applying for schools outside their own LEA whereas in others no information or advice is given. In some LEAs all parental preferences are taken into account irrespective of where a school is located, including schools in other LEAs, whilst in other LEAs only preferences for schools within the LEA boundary are taken into account. Generally, LEAs that attract pupils from other LEAs tend to adopt a different attitude to those LEAs where there is a net loss of pupils to other LEAs. In the former there may be a more relaxed view about parents applying for a place outside the LEA and, in some cases, this extends to making it clear that if this happens it won't affect the priority order in which parents have applied for a place for schools within their 'home' LEA. In effect this means that a parent can apply to as many schools outside the LEA without it impacting on the chances of securing a place at a preferred school inside the LEA. An exception to this is in London where those LEAs that are net importers of pupils are often faced with great difficulties in meeting the demand for places. In this situation there are examples of LEAs who insist on being told of all the schools for which a parent has applied and all preferences are taken into account in priority order even if they are distributed across several LEAs.

Analysis of the relationship between parental background characteristics and the likelihood of applying for a place in a school outside the parents' own LEA showed that LEA type had the strongest independent effect. Specifically, parents living in London were 6 times more likely than those living in Shire authorities to have applied for a place in a school outside their own LEA, once other variables had been controlled. Educational qualifications were also independently associated with the likelihood of applying for a place in school outside the parents' own LEA area. Parents where the mothers' highest educational qualification was a degree or higher were twice as likely to have applied outside their own LEA as those among whom the mother had no educational qualifications.

10. Methods for indicating school preferences

Although there were examples of LEAs using more than one method for different types of school there were four main ways in which LEAs asked parents to express a preference. The most common, found in 75% of LEAs, asked parents to name a number of schools as preferences in rank order (first preference, second preference, etc.). The LEA admission authority then attempts to allocate them a place at their first choice school.

Nearly 13% of LEAs use a system whereby parents are notified of a place allocated at a school and they are invited to confirm that particular school as their expressed preference or to name one or more alternative preferred schools. The parent must confirm in writing that the allocated school is acceptable otherwise it is not treated as a preference and no place is reserved. In 5% of LEAs there is a multiple preference equal weighting system

where parents are asked to express multiple preferences and each preference is treated as if it is equal and parents would be happy for their child to attend any of the schools on the list. LEAs then allocate one of those preferred schools in accordance with their admission criteria often taking into account the distance a child may have to travel to a school.

Just under 10% of LEAs use a single preference system where parents are invited, initially, to express a preference for just one school and if this is unsuccessful they are able to apply for an alternative school(s) at further stages of the process.

LEAs do have some discretion over how places are allocated when parents are asked to express more than one preference and a school is over-subscribed. How preferences should be used by admission authorities to allocate school places is the subject of differing legal interpretations. In general there are different views about whether the preference(s) a parent expresses should be considered in a rank order or treated as if they are equal. The implications of this can be very important for parents. If preferences are dealt with in the strict order of priority as expressed by parents it may mean that a parent who is unsuccessful in obtaining a place at their first preference school is unable to obtain a place at their second preference school even if the school is close to where the parent lives. Some LEAs avoid this problem by ensuring that, if a parent does not obtain a place at their first preference school, a place is available at the local school as long as they have put it as their second choice.

11. The London effect

In London, there is often a shortage of school places and this creates additional tensions in managing demand. A significant feature of admissions in London is the extent of cross border traffic with some 60,000 pupils crossing from their 'home' LEA to attend school in another LEA on a daily basis. Not surprisingly, London parents reported the highest levels of knowledge of how places are allocated at popular schools. As outlined above, after other variables had been controlled, parents living in London were the most likely to have applied to a school outside their own LEA. Further analysis showed that, holding other variables constant, London parents were two and a half times more likely not to apply to their nearest school than parents living in Shire authorities; there were similar but weaker contrasts between parents living in London and parents living in Unitary and Metropolitan authorities. Parents in London were also found to be the most likely to have made applications to more than one admission authority.

The greater number of schools within reasonable travelling distance may mean that the impact of not being able to attend a school in the 'home' LEA is not necessarily as great as it would be in other less densely populated parts of the country where schools are more sparsely distributed.

Competition for places in London schools appears to be more intense than elsewhere. London parents were the least likely to be offered a place for their child in the school they would most like - nearly 70% compared with 85% nationally. In an analysis which controlled for the possible effect of other variables, parents living in London were 3 times

less likely to be offered the school they most wanted than were parents living in a Shire authority.

In a similar multivariate analysis, parents in London were found to be twice as likely as those in Shire authorities to use performance tables and to have considered over-subscription criteria when choosing schools for their children. The likelihood of parents living in urban areas other than London considering over-subscription criteria did not differ statistically significantly from those living in Shire authorities.

In general, the proportion of parents appealing against non-admission did not vary by the background characteristics of parents. The one exception was that 12% of parents resident in London made an appeal compared with 4% in all other LEA types.

12. Excellence in Cities

Sixteen, of the 33 London local authorities are part of the EiC initiative and many of the following points have a particular resonance for London parents. Phase 1 of the EiC initiative is based in London and other major conurbations where the greatest levels of social and economic disadvantage and urban deprivation exist. In this regard Phase 1 EiC LEAs differ in the degree of disadvantage experienced compared with those LEAs that are part of Stage 2 of the EiC initiative. Below we summarise some of the key differences in results for parents in EiC areas compared with the national results. These findings do not control for the possible effect of other variables.

Higher proportions of parents in Phase 1 EiC areas made multiple applications for places than was the case nationally. For example, 16% of parents applied to three or more admission authorities compared with 11% nationally. Across England as a whole, nearly 1 in 8 parents applied for a place in a school outside their own LEA area compared with 1 in 4 in EiC Phase 1 areas. In part, this is likely to reflect urban density and greater availability of schools within close proximity. This may also partly account for the higher proportion of parents not applying for a place in their nearest state school - 4 in 10 did not do so compared with nearly 3 in 10 nationally. Parents living in a Phase 1 EiC LEA were also slightly more likely to apply to a school which was its own admission authority - 48% did so compared with 44% nationally.

Although lower proportions of parents in EiC areas applied for a place in a foundation school compared with national figures applications to voluntary aided schools were more common than was the case for England as a whole. These findings are likely to reflect variation in the provision of such schools by area. In London there are proportionately more voluntary aided schools for which a parent might express a preference.

Parents were less likely to obtain a favourable outcome than was the case nationally. For example, 80% of parents in Phase 1 EiC areas were offered a place for their children in the school they most wanted compared with 85% nationally. Related to this, 80% of parents in Phase 1 EiC areas expressed satisfaction with the process compared with 85% nationally.

13. Parental satisfaction

Nationally, over 8 in 10 parents were offered a place in the school they most wanted and over 9 in 10 received an offer of a place in their first preference school. About 4% of parents were not offered a place in any school for which a preference had been expressed. Eight per cent of parents reported that there were other state schools they would have preferred for their children over the ones in which they had applied for a place.

The vast majority of parents, 9 out of 10, said that they were satisfied with the outcome of the application process. The majority of parents expressed satisfaction with the process itself but nearly 1 in 7 parents were not satisfied with the process. Views on the process were coloured by the outcome - satisfaction with the outcome was related to whether or not parents were offered their preferred school. For parents of children in Year 7, who were interviewed some 9 months after admission to secondary school, 1 in 10 felt less satisfied with the outcome than they had before their child had actually started at the school whilst more than one in three said they were more satisfied, and half said they felt the same.

In general, there were clear socio-economic differences in knowledge about and use made of information about the admission process, as well as the reasons given for applying for particular schools. These socio-economic differences were not as strong regarding satisfaction with the final outcomes of the process. The proportion of parents offered places in the school they most wanted tended not to vary by the socio-economic characteristics analysed in the research. A stronger factor influencing parental satisfaction with the outcome of the process is the type of LEA area in which parents live. In particular, as indicated above, there is an important distinction between the experiences of parents resident in London and those resident in other areas; the contrast was most marked between parents living in London boroughs and those in Shire authorities.

14. The interaction of types of admission practice and parental satisfaction

Admission authorities need to take into account how different practices interact and impact on parents. Thus, for example, focusing on maximising choice may not be very helpful if, for example, one of the consequences of this is that a substantial number of parents do not find out until very late in the process where their child may be attending school. Some children begin the summer break not knowing which school they will attend in September.

Taking the relevant factors together a presumption that parents value choice per se is questionable. Clearly, many parents who are faced with the prospect of sending their child to a school that is considered in their terms as 'unsuitable' want a better alternative - if one is available. One issue is the extent to which parents are seen as mainly engaged in a *satisficing* process of sending their child to a local school, if that option is available and the school is regarded by them as 'good enough', or whether they are viewed as engaged in a *maximising* strategy of choosing the 'best possible' school available - judged by academic results and/or discipline and a lack of bullying.

Parents may be more concerned about whether the outcomes of the admission process can be predicted/manipulated (*predictability*), where, all things being equal, there is a narrower rather than a wider range of actual choice (*choice*); where there is less rather than more diversity (*diversity*); where one admission authority such as an LEA has a strong rather than a weak co-ordinating role (*co-ordination*) and where the outcomes of the admission process are known sooner rather than later (*timescales*). Each factor may not be particularly significant by itself; rather it is the way in which they interact in particular localities that is the most significant issue.

The issue of predictability concerns the transparency of the link between parental action and likely outcomes of their actions. In some LEAs it is known that having a sibling in a school or residence in a particular area, or living a particular distance from a school means that it may be possible to calculate that a place will be available in a particular school.

In those areas where there is maximum 'choice', because the admission system is operated as if it were a quasi market system, the transaction costs are very high for everyone involved. In these circumstances, LEA and school staff may have to spend a lot of time supporting pupils and families for whom no place is offered. The complexity of matching pupils and schools may need to take place over a protracted period of time.

The way in which local factors interact means that there is no simple relationship between the numbers of parents gaining their first preference place and the level of appeals. The contingent nature of LEA modes of practice means that there is a weak relationship between different modes of practice and particular outcomes. The key issue is not necessarily the individual modes of practice used per se but their application and interrelationship in particular contexts. What 'works' in one context may have a completely different effect in another context.

Introduction

1.1 Aims of the research

The Department commissioned research in 2000 into parents' experiences of the process of choosing a secondary school for their child. The research comprised three related components or stages:

- collection of information from each local education authority (LEA) on the type of admissions systems it operated;
- a nationally representative survey of parents who had recently experienced the process; who were currently experiencing it; or who were about to experience it;
- a qualitative survey of parents and other key players in the admissions process.

This report provides the findings from the first two stages of the research¹. The School of Education, Sheffield Hallam University collected the information on admissions systems used by LEAs. The nationally representative survey was carried out by the Social Survey Division of the Office for National Statistics.

The research project had four main aims:

- to draw out the key issues for parents in choosing a secondary school for their child;
- to establish what information is needed by these parents to make informed decisions;
- to identify improvements which could be made to the admissions process or associated information, to ensure that as many parents as possible are satisfied with the outcome;
- to provide a baseline for research on parental choice issues in the 'Excellence in Cities' conurbations.

1.2 Policy background

Every maintained school has an admission authority which decides which children will be admitted to the school. For most schools this is the local education authority, but for foundation schools and voluntary-aided schools it is the school governing body.

The concept of parental choice is fundamental to the law on admissions. LEAs must arrange for all parents to be able to express their preference(s) and admission authorities must comply with those preferences except in specific circumstances. Most of these circumstances are about incompatibility between pupil and school, for example a girl applying to a boy's school, a non-Catholic to a Catholics-only school, or a child who has not passed the designated test to a school that selects by

¹ Sheffield Hallam University conducted the qualitative research, comprising in depth interviews with parents, admission authority staff and children, which will be the subject of a separate report.

general ability. The most common allowable circumstance for refusing application is that the school has more applicants than places. In that event the admission authority must follow the over-subscription criteria in its published admission arrangements to decide which applicants get the places.

The present government has introduced a new admissions framework, to replace the previous system. The new framework is in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The Act's admission provisions came into force between October 1998 and September 1999. The Act requires the Secretary of State to issue a Code (or Codes) of Practice on Admissions, giving statutory guidance to which all admission authorities must have regard. The main Code came into force on April 1 1999. A supplementary Code on Admission Appeals came into force on 1 September 1999. Both apply to arrangements that lead to primary and secondary school intakes from September 2000 onwards. The immediately previous intake (school year commencing September 1999) may have benefited somewhat from Interim DfEE Guidance to admission authorities issued in September 1998, but this could not say anything inconsistent with previous legislation and admission authorities were not obliged to take account of it.

The new legislation and Code included the introduction of the following:

- requirements for all admission authorities to consult each other on their proposed admission arrangements and criteria, with the possibility for other admission authorities (and in the case of existing partial selection arrangements, parents) to complain to the Schools Adjudicator if they think the arrangements are not in the interests of local children and parents;
- the outlawing of any new selection by ability, while allowing up to 10% selection by aptitude to be introduced in certain cases;
- requiring all admissions criteria, in particular over-subscription criteria, and all ability and aptitude testing arrangements to be clear, fair, objective and published;
- encouragement in the Admissions Code for admission authorities in an area to have standard application forms and common timetables and agree arrangements in new Admissions Forums;
- requiring LEAs to publish composite prospectuses with summary admissions information for all schools in their area, including how over-subscribed they have been in the past;
- ruling out admissions interviews, except for church schools checking religious commitment and boarding schools checking boarding suitability;
- making appeal panels independent of the LEAs and governing bodies who made the decisions appealed against, and smaller so as not to intimidate parents.

In March 1999 the Government introduced the ‘Excellence in Cities’ initiative for education in the inner cities. This aims to give targeted support and resources to schools in selected inner cities and provide a package of measures designed to meet the needs of the individual pupil. Key elements of the initiative are:

- an expansion of the Specialist and Beacon schools programmes and a new network of learning centres;
- measures to extend opportunities for gifted and talented children;
- a strategy to strengthen school leadership, recruit and train teachers, head teachers and school governors;
- provision of extra support through measures to tackle disruption in schools and support the learning of individual pupils.

In the first phase, twenty-five authorities were involved: sixteen of them in London. The second phase involved a further twenty authorities, all but two of which were outside London. A third phase will extend the initiative further.

A study by NFER in 1995 found that 15% of parents said that their child had not been offered a place at their preferred secondary school. An Audit Commission survey in 1996 found that 10% of parental secondary school preferences could not be met and that 9% were not expressing their genuine first preference. These findings implied dissatisfaction of some parents with the outcome and process of parental choice of secondary school. In addition the number of appeals has been rising gradually over the last decade.

Other issues of concern have been raised. One is whether parents feel sufficiently informed to be able to choose and whether they do in fact make informed choices. A second is whether all parents understand the admissions process and are able to use it effectively or whether parents in certain social groups are better able to use the system to achieve a satisfactory outcome. A third is whether over-subscribed schools and partially selective schools are allocating their places on a clear, fair and objective basis.

1.3 Conduct of the research

Stage 1 of the research, concerning the policies and practices of admission authorities, was conducted by Sheffield Hallam University. The objectives of this stage were:

- to gain information from all LEAs in England about their present admission arrangements;
- to identify different modes of practice and the frequency of those modes;
- to gain evidence of the quality of information on the Internet from each LEA concerning admission;
- to gain information about the key issues surrounding admission seen from an LEA perspective.

Information was gained from all LEAs in England from the composite prospectuses sent to parents in 1999 whose children were entering secondary school in September 2000. From this information about their present admission arrangements different modes of practice were identified and analysed. The composite prospectuses and the web-sites of each LEA were also assessed as to the quality of the information provided to parents. The results of the analysis of policies and practices of admission authorities is intended to provide a context against which the results of the survey of parental experiences can be read. The intention was to use the emerging results from Stage 1 to inform the design of the nationally representative survey questionnaire. However, in the event the difficulty of developing a small number of categories that would capture both the complexity of LEA practices as well as be meaningful to parents meant that the resulting typology only informed the design of the nationally representative survey to a limited extent.

Stage 2 of the research was conducted by the Office for National Statistics. In 2000, the quantitative survey interviewed nationally representative samples of parents of 3 cohorts of children:

- parents whose children had entered secondary school in September 1999;
- parents whose children would enter secondary school in September 2000;
- parents whose children would enter secondary school in September 2001.

The 3 cohorts were chosen to reflect the experiences and expectations of parents for whom the issues were particularly salient. At the time they were interviewed for the survey, parents of children in the September 1999 entry cohort had completed the process of choosing and their children were in their first year of secondary school. Parents of children in the September 2000 entry cohort had either just completed the formal process of choosing a secondary school or were still engaged in it. Parents of children in the September 2001 entry cohort were about to start to be involved in the formal process of choosing a school.

Details of the methodologies of Stages 1 and 2 of the research will be found in the their respective sections.

Part 1

Policies and practices of LEA admission authorities

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1. Introduction

The School Admissions Code of Practice requires admission arrangements to be clear, objective and give every child a fair chance of a satisfactory school place. In particular, the Code states that:

- The arrangements should enable parents' preferences for the schools of their choice to be met to the maximum extent possible.
- The admission criteria should be clear, fair and objective, for the benefit of all children including those with special educational needs or with disabilities.
- The local admission authorities should consult each other and co-ordinate their arrangements.
- Parents should have easy access to helpful and full information to make an informed choice.

The objectives of Stage 1 of the project were:

- To gain information from all LEAs in England about their present admission arrangements.
- To identify different modes of practice and the frequency of those modes.
- To gain evidence of the quality of information on the Internet from each LEA concerning admission.
- To gain information about the key issues surrounding admission seen from an LEA perspective.

2. The statutory context

2.1 As far as possible all LEAs have to allocate places in secondary schools in accordance with expressed parental preference. 86(1) of the School Standards and Framework Act (SSF) requires LEAs to make arrangements for enabling parents to express a preference as to the school they want their child to be educated and to give reasons for the preference. However, whether parents have a right to express a single preference or more than one preference is interpreted differently by different LEAs. One Education Officer describes how his LEA recently changed its admission form:

...to make it clear that a parent only has a statutory right to express one preference. However, the form enables parents to submit second and third non-statutory preferences. We recognise that this conflicts with some of the legal advice but the advice we have been given is as a result of an approach we made to leading counsel.

Letter from an LEA Education Officer, Jan 2001

2.2 86 (2) of the SSF puts a specific duty on LEAs and governing bodies to comply with that preference except in a specified range of circumstances. In the case of secondary schools compliance with parental preference does not apply if it would:

- Prejudice *efficiency*
- Be incompatible with preserving the *religious character* of a school
- Not be compatible with the *selection* arrangements of a school that selects by high ability
- Mean admitting a child who had been *permanently excluded* from 2 or more schools and at least one of the exclusions took place after 1 September 1997

2.3 When allocating places LEAs must first carry out their duty to meet expressed parental preferences before operating any other allocation policy and they must first consider those parents who have expressed a preference over those parents who have not expressed any preference. However, LEAs must also ensure that a suitable school place within a reasonable travelling distance is available to children whose parents have not expressed any preference.

2.4 Two legal judgements have had a profound affect on the operation of admission arrangements after first, the ‘Greenwich Judgement’ in 1989 established that an LEA could not give priority to its residents just because they live within the LEA’s boundaries. Second, after the ‘Rotherham Judgement’ in 1997 established that a parent must actually express a preference for a particular school if the parent’s wishes are to be taken into account. There is nothing unlawful in the principle of admission authorities operating catchment areas as part of over-subscription criteria but priority must be given to parents who have expressed a preference. This may mean that parents who live outside a catchment area for a school are given priority

over parents who live within the catchment area but have not formally expressed a preference for that school.

- 2.5** The Code of Practice points out that there is some discretion over how places are allocated when parents are asked to express more than one preference and a school is oversubscribed. Priority can be given to the parents' order of ranking but this is not a statutory requirement. How this is interpreted by different LEAs is the source of some of the variation in practice that exists concerning admissions.
- 2.6** Where a parent has been asked or chooses to express more than one preference for a secondary school, how those preferences are used by admission authorities to allocate school places is the subject of differing opinions. In general terms this concerns whether the preferences a parent expresses should be considered in a rank order or treated as if they are equal. The implications of this can be very important for parents. If preferences are dealt with in the strict order of priority as expressed by parents it may mean that a parent who is unsuccessful in obtaining a place at their first preference school is unable to obtain a place at their second preference school even if the school is nearby where the parent lives. Some LEAs avoid this problem by ensuring that if a parent does not obtain a place at their first preference school, a place is available at the local school as long as they have put it as their second choice (see 4.1 below).
- 2.7** Those LEAs where preferences are regarded as if they are equal are able to manage the system more easily and co-ordinate offers of school places. They can ensure that offers are made at the same time to all parents. With these kinds of arrangement LEAs are also able to take into account the travel consequences for parents and travel costs for the LEA when allocating places. However, this can mean that, where the LEAs have asked parents to rank their preferences in order they do not invariably give a parent who has named a school first preference priority over another parent who has named it second or lower.

- 2.8** There are differences in opinion about the variations in LEA practice that exist and whether they merely reflect differing local circumstances and different demographic and geographical differences or whether they arise out of differences in interpretation of their statutory duties. This difference of opinion is reflected in the Annual Report of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator.

Circumstances differ widely from area to area and it is obviously desirable that an LEA, in the admission arrangements it makes should respond to these as sensitively as it can. But the rights of parents and the duties of admission authorities, as these are laid down in the legislation, do not differ from area to area. Local variation must always be consistent with those rights and duties. Yet it is apparent that there are different interpretations amongst admission authorities of the nature of their statutory responsibilities. Not all can be correct....at some stage, more may need to be done to ensure a consistent understanding within all admission authorities of their statutory duties.

Office of the Schools Adjudicator, Annual Report (2000) p17.

3. Categorising modes of practice

3.1 Collecting data from LEAs

All LEAs in England were asked to provide their composite prospectus, copies of admission forms, letters and further information relating to secondary school admission at the age of 11. Of the 150 English LEAs 9 Authorities were excluded from the sample because either they operated a different age of transfer, or they did not provide secondary education. The resulting cohort of 141 LEAs, on which this Stage 1 report is based, comprises 100% of those authorities in England where children transfer to secondary school at the age of 11. It is important to note that all the information in Part 1 relates to arrangements that were in place for admission in September 2000. Any subsequent changes have not been included.

3.1.1 The Department has a particular interest in establishing baseline data about practice in LEAs that are part of the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative. In view of this, wherever it is appropriate, the tables throughout Part 1 compare EiC LEAs with ‘non’ EiC LEAs. Table 1 indicates how many LEAs are in each phase of the initiative compared with the LEAs who are not participating.

Table 1: Proportion of LEAs in this study which are part of EiC initiatives

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
Phase 1 EiC areas	24	17.0
Phase 2 EiC areas	22	15.6
Non-EiC areas	95	67.4
Total	141	100.0

3.1.2 One of the aims of Stage 1 of the research was to describe the different ways in which LEAs operated their admission procedures, as a basis for investigating in more detail in Stages 2 and 3 whether this might have had any implications for parental satisfaction with the process of choosing a secondary school. The material for each of the LEAs was analysed to categorise the different arrangements that were made for admission. Stages 2 and 3 of the research dealt more directly with how parents actually experienced the process. The main source of information was the composite prospectuses provided by the authorities but this was supplemented with interviews and other communications with LEA admission staff.

3.2 Capturing complexity

Finding a means of categorising LEA modes of practice which captures the complexity that exists for parents, whilst ensuring that a useful and useable typology was developed, presented several challenges. For example, in some LEAs community schools were in the minority compared with foundation and voluntary-aided schools and parental preferences may have been dealt with differently for different types of school.

- 3.2.1** A substantial number of parents applied to more than one admission authority and, therefore, only categorising the admission arrangements that an LEA had devised for use in relation to community schools may not have captured most parents' experience of the admission process.
- 3.2.2** In some areas LEA admission criteria applied to such a small proportion of schools within the LEA that describing the LEA mode of practice did not necessarily provide a meaningful description of the procedures that many parents used. Similarly, a substantial number of parents applied to schools outside their 'home' LEA and if they lived near the borders of several LEAs in densely populated urban areas they may have found themselves involved in a range of different procedures.
- 3.2.3** Similarly, in some LEAs responsibility for admission criteria had been delegated to schools themselves which meant that the LEA did not have its own admission criteria. In some instances LEAs used different arrangements for different geographical areas of the authority making it difficult to classify *the* mode of practice.

- 3.2.4** There is also a question about the relationship between a parent’s beliefs about the priority given to the school preferences and how those preferences are actually taken into account when making decisions about the allocation of school places. As one LEA officer commented:

.... what does first choice mean? Because ... we [used to] have something called the [LEA] admission form where parents would express a preference for three schools. It was meaningful,[applications] would be considered by the first school and then [the next school] ... this is the normal, rational understanding of what preferences mean – but then, as schools became their own admission authorities, we continued [to use] this form but it is misleading to parents because actually it may not mean anything. We [as an LEA] can’t have any impact on what happens to those preferences but more worryingly, some schools are using those preferences to do additional sifting. So the schools would say, you know, these are our admissions criteria : A, B, C and D. None of them mentioned first preference or second preference but they would mention siblings, SEN, whatever it may be - but then they would say, “Well, we will only look at you if you have put us down as first preference... LEA hierarchical preference ... is actually not meaningful because we are not able to do anything with that.

Interview with an LEA Admissions officer

- 3.2.5** Taken together, all these factors mean that the attempt to classify LEA practices needs to find a way of dealing with the ambiguities that exist. Where such ambiguities exist the approach adopted here has been to try to classify LEA modes of practice in terms of how the *dominant* mode of practice is likely to be perceived by the majority of parents in an area. This is done in the knowledge that, whilst it simplifies some of the complexity, there is also a risk of over-simplification. However, little useful purpose would be served by trying to accommodate every unique feature and nuance of an LEA’s practice This would lead to a proliferation of categories that would be of little use in trying to summarise the main modes of practice that exist and bear little relationship to the choices that parents perceive are open to them.
- 3.2.6** As a further check that the classification proposed for an LEA was acceptable, all LEAs were given the opportunity to propose an alternative classification if it did not accurately summarise their procedures.

3.3 The main features of admission arrangements that have implications for the parental experience of choosing a school

3.3.1 *General approach to admissions*

The different historical, geographical and demographic contexts of LEA's have led to different ways of implementing the statutory requirements. Some simply use the order of parental preference as the prime criterion (until over-subscription criteria apply); others link it in different procedural ways to feeder primary or catchment area criteria. Wholly selective systems raise different issues again.

3.3.2 *Procedures for parents to express a preference*

The approach to admissions of the LEA is reflected in the procedures adopted for parents to express a preference. This procedure is decisive and therefore the form in which parents experience it has important implications. Parents are also able to express a preference for schools outside the LEA in which they reside so the arrangements for facilitating this are also of interest.

3.3.3 *The application of over-subscription criteria*

This refers to the different criteria that are used and the way they are applied when there are more preferences expressed than places available at particular schools. Over-subscription criteria may apply across an LEA to all categories of schools, or an LEA may delegate responsibility for admission to individual schools. Foundation and voluntary-aided schools normally set their own admission criteria. These criteria and their implementation are potentially important in the way they affect parents' expression of preference. They are particularly relevant to the question of satisfaction since they are used to reject some applications for popular schools.

3.3.4 *Appeals*

Between 1993/4 and 1998/9, the period covered by Departmental Statistical Bulletins, the number of appeals rose which may be because parents became more aware of their rights and used the appeals system to a greater extent or because the number of parents dissatisfied with the school places they were offered increased. Whilst there are areas and particular schools that are subject to Admission appeals on a regular basis, there are also 'hotspots' because of localised factors such as a change in policy or adverse publicity about a particular school.

4. Expressing a preference

4.1 The procedures for expressing a preference

The procedures for expressing a preference have an impact on the experience of parents choosing a secondary school. The procedures found in the composite prospectuses have been categorised into four types. They are described below and Table 1 shows their frequency. The four types are:

Type 1 Multiple preference – Rank order:

The parent is invited to name a number of schools as preferences in rank order (first preference, second preference, third preference etc.) and the LEA admission authority attempts to allocate them a place at their first choice school. Though the first choice takes precedence in the majority of cases it is not guaranteed that a parent's first choice will take precedence over someone else's second choice. There are circumstances where a second choice takes precedence, particularly if this means a pupil would be spared a long or difficult journey to an alternative school. Sometimes a multi-stage process is involved whereby parents may be asked to enter the next stage of the admission procedure and identify further preferences if they have been unsuccessful with their initial preferences.

Type 2 Invitation to accept a designated school or choose another

Parents are notified of a place allocated at a school chosen by the LEA on the basis of the general admission arrangements of the authority and invited to confirm that particular school as their expressed preference or to name one or more alternative preferred schools. The parent must confirm in writing that the allocated school is acceptable otherwise it is treated as a non-preference and no place is reserved.

This procedure is most commonly used in those areas where a catchment or priority area system is in place. How the consequences of this are handled by LEAs varies considerably. Some LEAs state explicitly that not putting the designated school down as first preference may mean that a place is not available at this 'local' school should they be unsuccessful in gaining a place at a different first preference school. Other LEAs state explicitly that parents who put their 'catchment' school down as a second preference who do not get their first preference will not be treated any less favourably than a parent who chose the catchment school as their first preference.

Type 3 Multiple preference equal weighting

Parents are asked to express multiple preferences and each preference is given equal weighting. LEAs then allocate to one of those preferred schools on the basis of their general admission arrangements. This is often in a context where the admission system is complex involving a number of admission authorities. In such circumstances the procedures can seem to be complex unless there is a common admission timetable and a common application form.

Type 4 Single Preference System

Parents are invited to express a single preference and if this proves unsuccessful they may apply to an alternative school(s) in a second stage of dealing with preferences.

Table 2: Frequency of procedures for expressing a preference: All LEAs

Type of System	Number of LEAs	% of LEAs
1. Multiple preference – rank order	105	74.4
2. Invitation to accept a designated school or express a preference for other school(s)	18	12.8
3. Multiple preference – equal weighting	7	5.0
4. Single preference	11	7.8
Total	141	100.0

Table 3: Frequency of procedures for expressing a preference: Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

Type of System	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
1. Multiple preference – rank order	70	73.7	16	66.6	19	86.4
2. Invitation to accept a designated school or express a preference for other school(s)	13	13.7	3	12.5	2	9.1
3. Multiple preference – equal weighting	5	5.2	1	4.2	1	4.5
4. Single preference	7	7.4	4	16.7	0	0
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

There are no significant differences between Excellence in Cities and other LEAs (details of the statistical correlations are contained in the Appendices).

4.2 Banding

Banding is used in a small number of LEAs and also by some schools as a method of allocating places. It is used mainly when the aim is to ensure that a balanced comprehensive intake of ability is achieved. It is also used as a defensive mechanism by some schools in response to the use of partial selection by a neighbouring school. The aim in this situation is to stop higher ability children being ‘creamed off’ by a school that operates partial selection. Essentially, banding is a method of allocating school places rather than a means for enabling parents to express a preference.

4.3 Catchment areas and feeder schools

Changing school rolls can make some catchment areas obsolete and the relative popularity of schools also means that a linked feeder school system can create administrative difficulties with over and under-subscription in different parts of an LEA area. There is little point in having admission criteria that give priority to link or feeder schools if there are too few places to accommodate the feeder primary school population. Similarly, a link or feeder school admission policy will be problematic if it is likely to leave a set of parents dissatisfied with the secondary school to which they would be expected to send their children. Potentially, it could have a knock-on effect on feeder primary schools and make them unpopular or popular because of their secondary school links rather than their intrinsic features.

4.4 A survey by Forrest² showed that in 1985, some 76 (51%) of LEAs were using catchment areas for secondary admission but by 1996 this had dropped to 51 (44%). Changes in local government boundaries and political devolution means that the current figures are not directly comparable but the 14.9% of LEAs now using catchment area arrangements, as recorded in this Stage 1 survey, shows that their use is now very much in decline as a practice for allocating school places.

4.5 The Greenwich judgement has hastened the decline of catchment areas as one LEA officer explained:

The ‘Greenwich judgement’ and the location of our schools cause major problems. The schools are mainly located around the periphery of the borough and large numbers of non-[home LEA] residents are able to gain access to our schools. Approximately 1000 of this year’s transfer cohort for our schools will be non-[home LEA] pupils. About 250 of our children will start at out-borough schools, most of them unwillingly.

Communication from an LEA officer

4.6 ‘Hybrid’ LEA Practices

This is intended to illustrate some of the complexity when trying to allocate LEA modes of practice to a single category.

² Keith Forrest, *Catchment 22*, Education, 8 March 1996

LEA1

The LEA uses a common form that every parent has to complete but if parents are interested in voluntary-aided and foundation schools those schools have their own admission forms and parents complete an additional form for that particular school. There is a two-part form and on one side they choose up to five schools that they are interested in. On the second side, which is confidential to the LEA, parents list an order of preference which only comes into play if parents meet the admission criteria for a place at more than one school. If they satisfy the admission criteria of more than one school the LEA looks at the order of preferences but this is not shown to the schools. The LEA allocates places for its community schools and has the admission lists for the other voluntary-aided and foundation schools. The schools provide the LEA with a list of children that have been offered places. The LEA identifies those that are going to be offered a place at more than one school, and then rejects the lower preference places. The information will normally be sent to a voluntary/foundation school saying that it has been possible to meet a parent's preference. It is only when parents meet the admission criteria for more than one school that the list of preferences is looked at.

LEA2

Most parents are offered a place at their 1st preference school. However, for community and voluntary controlled schools, all 1st and 2nd preferences are considered equally when applying the admission criteria. The composite prospectus states that parents who put their catchment school down as a second preference who do not get their first preference *'will not be treated any less favourably than a parent who chose the catchment school as their first preference'*.

LEA3

Parents are asked to express multiple preferences in rank order (up to 3) and they are guaranteed a place at a designated school (the priority area school) if they rank this as either first or second choice. It means that a parent who expresses a second preference for a particular school will have a greater chance of obtaining a place at that school compared with someone who has expressed a first preference for the same school providing it is the designated school for the former parent but not for the latter parent.

LEA4

Parents are required to prioritise only their preferences for the 3 community schools. At the same time, they can make preferences of equal standing for one or more voluntary-aided schools.

LEA5

The LEA has 192 admission authorities and 570 schools. Whilst in the majority of the district based systems parents express preferences in a priority order, in many cases this is in addition to the opportunity to 'accept a designated school' shown on the LEA admission form. In other districts there is a multiple preference system.

4.7 Explaining the consequences of expressing or not expressing a preference

The following set of tables looks at the extent to which LEAs provide a clear explanation of the importance of expressing a preference and the consequences of not so doing. The judgements are those of the research team who examined all the prospectuses and made judgements which were then subject to a moderation procedure. To be categorised as giving a clear explanation did not require an LEA to mention the Greenwich and Rotherham judgements by name or to provide chapter and verse on the legal context. It did require a prominent statement explaining clearly what parents must do and what would happen if the advice was not followed.

Table 4 Legal Context: Are the consequences of expressing or not expressing a preference made clear?

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
Made clear	50	35.5
Not made clear	91	64.5
Total	141	100.0

Table 5: Legal context: Are the consequences of expressing or not expressing a preference made clear?: Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
Made clear	35	36.8	7	29.2	8	36.4
Not made clear	60	63.2	17	70.8	14	63.6
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

The information is particularly important for parents in the light of the Rotherham judgement because LEAs must first consider those parents who have expressed a preference over those parents who have not expressed any preference. As both tables indicate this is an area where a substantial number of LEAs could put across the message more clearly.

5. The use of application forms and procedures for expressing a preference

5.1 LEAs were asked whether there is a common application form and a common admission timetable for those parents with children entering secondary school in September 2000. Three ways of making application were identified. These were:

- A common form used only for community and voluntary controlled schools for which the LEA is the admission authority;
- A common form used for all admission authorities (community, controlled, aided and foundation) within the Borough;
- A common form sent to the LEA but in addition the parent must also apply direct to other admission authorities.

Table 6: The frequency of different ways of making application

Procedure	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
Common form used only for community and voluntary controlled schools	46	32.6
Common form for all admission authorities (community, controlled, aided and foundation)	44	31.2
Common form to LEA but must also apply direct to other admission authorities	45	31.9
Other	6	4.3
Total	141	100.0

Table 6 shows that there is quite an even distribution in the types of form that parents are expected to complete when expressing a preference for different types of schools. The easiest option for parents is to complete one form for all schools but, as the table demonstrates, this is only available in forty-four LEAs. The category 'Other' refers to LEAs where common forms are not used, for example, in one LEA parents apply to as many schools as they wish using individual school application forms. All the schools administer their own forms independently of each other and some parents may receive multiple offers whilst other parents may receive no offer initially even though the LEA will co-ordinate information to ensure that, eventually, all children are placed.

Table 7: Frequency of different ways of making application: Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

Procedure	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
Common form used only for community and voluntary controlled schools	28	29.5	10	41.7	8	36.4
Common form for all admission authorities (community, controlled, aided and foundation)	27	28.4	8	33.3	9	40.9
Common form to LEA but must also apply direct to other admission authorities	35	36.8	5	20.8	5	22.7
Other*	5	5.3	1	4.2	0	0
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

* see text below Table 6

The table shows that, overall, there are differences in the types of form used in EiC compared with non-EiC areas.

Table 8: The extent to which common dates are used across schools for applications and decisions:

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
Yes	89	63.1
No	40	28.4
No stated policy	12	8.5
Total	141	100.0

In the majority of LEAs there are common closing dates for applications and common dates for informing parents of outcomes. However, in nearly 30% of LEAs it has not been possible to co-ordinate dates. In some LEAs, for example Enfield and Hertfordshire, there is an attempt to ensure that every parent receives an offer of a school place for their child on the same day.

**Table 9: The extent to which common dates are used across schools for applications and decisions:
Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs**

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
Yes	64	67.4	12	50.0	13	59.1
No	24	25.3	9	37.5	7	31.8
No stated policy	7	7.4	3	12.5	2	9.1
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

The situation regarding common dates is not significantly different in EiC areas when compared with non-EiC LEAs.

6. Selection

6.1 The purpose of the analysis in this chapter is to describe the modes of practice in areas where selection is practised and to consider the implications for the parental experience of choosing a secondary school. The term ‘wholly selective’ implies selection by high ability i.e. a selective grammar school. The Departmental definition of a *selective area* is one where over 25% of the pupils in an LEA area attend selective grammar schools. It should be noted though that while maintained schools that have a wholly selective intake usually have grammar in their title, this is not invariable and some schools that use the title grammar are in fact comprehensive or independent schools. The names of the non-selective schools in a selective area vary. They may be called secondary modern, high schools, all-ability schools or wide-ability schools. The latter two types are an acknowledgement that the admission criteria enable a range of abilities to be represented.

6.2 Modes of practice relating to the management of preferences:

The management of preferences has a considerable impact on the parental experience of choosing a school. Potentially, there is a difficult issue for parents who wish to apply for a selective place if, at the time of stating their preferences for all schools, they do not know if their child is eligible for a place. If they prefer a place at a selective school and their child does not reach the required standard (or too many do) it is possible that they would not get their preferred non-selective school if that was over-subscribed. This may happen if the non-selective school had already reached its admission limit through the allocation of first preferences. Based on current practice in the sample of LEAs that were looked at three distinct ways of managing this were found.

Mode 1: Separate Preferences Arrangement

This arrangement is where the LEA maintains separate selective and non-selective school preference lists, deciding which to use when the child's 11-plus result is known. Thus, in effect there are two lists neither of which has any impact on the other.

Mode 2: Automatic First Preference

Parents express preferences for selective and non-selective schools on a common form but the highest preference non-selective school becomes, in effect, the first preference if it turns out that the child does not pass the grammar school test to be eligible to apply for a place at a selective secondary school. The Schools Adjudicator found that one system of this type was not fair to all children and parents in the area because it could be interpreted as giving some parents two first preferences. Two LEAs have tried to achieve the same results by ensuring that selective tests take place and their results are known before preferences have to be expressed – but the Schools Adjudicator has ruled against their systems.

Mode 3: Rank Order of Preferences Irrespective of Types of School Selected

Parents are asked to express preferences for both selective and non-selective schools on a common form without first knowing if their child has general eligibility for a place at a selective school. The rank order of preferences is used as the basis for allocating places and parents who have expressed a preference for a place at a selective school may be disadvantaged if their child is unsuccessful in the test for admission to such a school. This is because parents who have expressed a first preference for the particular non-selective school will be given priority over everyone else if that school turns out to be ‘oversubscribed’.

- 6.3** In areas where selective secondary schools are available only in the voluntary-aided sector, parents who want their child to attend a popular school have to consider not only their child’s ability but other over-subscription criteria. They may well improve their chances if they follow a particular religion or gain a place at a Church primary school. This is the case for parents where a Church school is perceived as the best choice whether selective or not. Conversely, parents who are really committed to a place at a church school may need to make a choice between applying for a denominational place and applying for a selective non-church school place. To express a preference for the latter over the former may be interpreted as a lack of commitment to a church school education and may make it difficult to gain a place in such a school in the event of failing to secure a place at a selective non-church school.
- 6.4** Parents will have a different range of choices and need to manage the admission process in different ways depending on whether they live in a selective area, a non-selective area, or an area with some selective or partially selective schools. Some may live on borders between different types of authorities. Some parents may aspire to selective education for their child but find few selective schools within reasonable travelling distance. Others have to travel outside their area if they wish to ‘escape’ the impact of selection. For yet other parents, the way in which selection operates may deny them a place at their local school
- 6.5** The following comments from an LEA officer illustrates the point that for some parents:

...there is access to a whole series of selective schools...or partially selective schools in different LEAs and there’s a group of parents who apply for all those schools for their children and if they don’t get into any of them they’ll send them private

On the ubiquity of testing, as well as sitting the tests for each grammar school and the end of Key Stage 2 tests there are also other tests a child may be involved in.

A foundation comprehensive school with banding does tests and there’s a couple of other voluntary-aided schools, which, although they’re

comprehensive, still test children the year before so they can set them so you'll end up doing tests come what may, more or less whatever school you wanted your child to go to.

6.6 Applying for places at a selective school

In some areas all children in the last year of primary school are entered for the test with parents able to *withdraw* them by request. This method of entry is common for wholly selective areas and provides universal access and raises no obvious equity issues beyond those generally associated with selective systems. In others children are entered on the primary school's recommendation with parents able to *include* them by request. This involves, as a formal part of the process, a discussion with primary school staff about the child's secondary education and raises issues about the status of primary schools' judgements and the possibility that parents will differ in how they act on that recommendation. In other LEAs parents may request that their child take the test, for example when they must make application to the schools themselves. Again this requires parents to be pro-active and there may be differences in parents' understanding of how to use the system.

6.7 Schools that use partial selection

Partially selective schools are those which select a proportion of pupils entering the schools. Two grounds for selection are identified in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Chapter 2 s 99 to 103). The grounds are selection on the basis of general ability and selection on the basis of aptitude for one or more subjects. Arrangements for partial selection that were in place in the 1997-1998 school year are authorised providing they have remained unchanged since that time. However, objections to such arrangements can be made and this is the most frequent type of objection that the Schools Adjudicator has to deal with.

In almost all partially selective schools testing is carried out by the school. The issue for parents in choosing a partially selective school as their first preference is firstly, the uncertainty of whether their child will be successful in gaining a competitive place at a selective school and secondly, the implications of not gaining a place at such a school for the remaining choices available to the parent.

6.8 The composite prospectuses from all 141 authorities were examined and all schools (community, foundation and voluntary-aided) mentioned in the prospectuses as operating partial selection by aptitude or ability in 1999/2000 were recorded. Since a single school may offer up to three kinds of specialism the table records the distribution of the number of specialisms within different LEAs and not the number of schools. The category 'general ability' means those places allocated on the basis of a test for general ability.

Table 10: Type of partially selective places offered by Specialism

Name of LEA	Music	Other Arts	Sport	Tech ³	Lang ⁴	Other	Total by Aptitude	General Ability
Barnet	1	1		1			3	0
Bexley							0	1
Birmingham				1			1	0
Bradford			1				1	0
Camden	3						3	0
Enfield	2		1				3	0
Essex	2	1		1			4	0
Herts.	8	2	3	1			14	6
Kensington & Chelsea	1						1	1
Kent	3	1	1	1		1	7	1
Kingston upon Thames				1			1	2
Lancs.				1			1	1
Leeds	1	1					2	0
Lincolnshire							0	1
Medway	2	1	2		1		6	1
Norfolk	1						1	0
Northants				1			1	0
Peterborough	1			1			2	1
Reading							0	1
Southend	2	1	1				4	5
Southwark	1		1				2	1
Surrey	1						1	1
Swindon	1						1	0
Torbay							0	1
Walsall	1						1	0
Wandsworth		1			1		2	3
Warwickshire							0	1
Westminster	1	1			1		3	0
TOTAL	32	10	10	9	3	1	65	28

Other arts includes dance, art and drama. The '*other*' category refers to a school where there was insufficient information to categorise it.

³ Technology

⁴ Languages

- 6.9** As can be seen from the table selection on the basis of musical aptitude or general ability is the most common, *Other Arts, Sport and Technology* are found less often and *Language* places are offered by only three schools in the 141 LEAs. Some 28 (19%) of the 141 areas include schools that use partial selection by ability and/or aptitude. In the majority of these LEAs the proportion of schools using partial selection to non-selective schools is a small proportion of the total number of schools within the LEA. When wholly selective areas and partially selective schools are looked at together some 33 LEAs, in England experience some form of selection by general ability. When partial selection by aptitude is added to this the figure rises to 45 LEAs. Thus, although only 5% of the pupil population attends schools that are wholly selective by ability the percentage of children who are admitted to school on the basis of some kind of selection procedure is far higher.
- 6.10** The issue of partial selection has significance for the experience of parents in choosing a secondary school although the significance may be different depending on the basis of selection. In a recent study of the Specialist Schools Programme, Yeomans, Higham and Sharp (2000)⁵ make the point that those schools that select by aptitude are not necessarily the same as those that are designated as Specialist schools:

All of the case study schools, except one which was located in a pre-existing local selective system, were comprehensive schools. None had changed their admissions policies as a result of their specialist status and there was no support for selection by aptitude. The schools had almost all increased their rolls and all were over-subscribed, although most had been popular prior to designation.

- 6.11** Almost half the schools offering selective places by aptitude were in urban areas, including nearly a third located in London. The most common form of admission procedure was a test or audition or other means of establishing performance or potential performance in the subject.

For the parents of children entering school in September 1999 and 2000 the availability of schools offering a specialism is not likely to have been a significant factor in the majority of parents' choice of school although it will have had significance for a small minority. In future a large expansion of the programme is planned and could become a more significant issue in admission arrangements.

⁵ Yeomans, D.J., Higham, J.J.S. and Sharp, P.R. *The Impact of the Specialist Schools Programme: Case Studies*, DFEE, 2000.

6.12 Selection on the basis of general ability

Parents are more likely to have access to places on the basis of selection by general ability. Of the areas where some schools use partial selection on the basis of general ability three of these already have a number of schools that select wholly by general ability, Kingston-upon-Thames, Southend and Wandsworth.

6.13 In categorising different systems it is important to be mindful of what the *actual* parental experience is likely to be. For example, in some LEA areas that have wholly selective schools the size of that administrative area and/or the geographical distribution of schools and/or the practical transport options may mean that the local admission system is experienced by a group of parents as ‘wholly selective’ even though overall the LEA is not categorised as such.

7. Information provided for parents

7.1 Accessibility of information

The School Admissions Code of Practice points out that parents are likely to find it helpful to have in one booklet the information for all schools to which they are likely to apply and recommends that the information offered provides clear guidance in plain English and in commonly-used community languages. In particular the information should:

- explain briefly each school's admission policy and over-subscription criteria and how they are applied;
- give the number of applicants who were successful in previous years and the criteria under which they were accepted;
- explain what is expected from parents, and what the parent can expect from the school and the LEA, at each stage;
- give a name and details of a contact point for further information.

Information is of high quality if it enables parents to express an informed preference for a school or number of schools. Thus, information needs to be relevant, comprehensive, convenient, accessible and useful.

7.2 Concerning accessibility the relevant questions are , *"Will it be understood by those for whom it is intended and will people be able to use it efficiently and effectively to participate in the process?"* For example, the OFSTED LEA inspection report for one LEA makes the point that there is room for improvement which would promote equal access to admission arrangements because the LEA does not routinely provide translations of admission forms and information into common additional languages so that parents would be better able to understand their role in the process and make informed decisions.

Each LEA composite prospectus was coded as to whether or not there was access to information in community languages or an indication of who and how to contact someone if there were language issues.

Table 11: Availability of information in community languages

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
Yes	69	48.9
No	72	51.1
Total	141	100.0

Table 12: Availability of information in community languages: Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
Yes	40	42.1	20	83.3	9	40.9
No	55	57.9	4	16.7	13	59.1
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

7.3 The research project has not attempted to ascertain the number of LEAs where there is a need to provide access to information in other languages. As can be seen from the tables above a large number of LEAs do provide access to information in other languages. However, in some ways this is a limited measure because in areas where a large number of community languages are spoken it is difficult to provide the range of translations to meet the demand. There are also doubts about the efficacy of using official documentation to gain access to hard to reach communities or those where a number of parents (whether ethnic minority or not) have literacy problems. One London Borough uses an approach based on primary schools and networking to try to ensure that when the time arrives for expressing a preference for a secondary school place parents have been contacted and know what they need to do.

7.4 Interpretation /Guidance

To what extent does the admission authority offer support and guidance for parents in the process of making decisions about an initial offer for one of their chosen schools? Each LEA composite prospectus was coded as to:

- How far statutory information about previous years’ admission figures that exceed the published standard numbers were contextualised i.e. was there an attempt to explain what they meant and what the implications of this might be for expressing a preference?
- How far an explanation was offered as to how the over-subscription criteria are interpreted;
- How far guidance was offered about what to look for/ take into account when choosing a school;
- Whether or not a explicitly anticipated the kinds of questions that parents may ask, in the form of frequently asked questions (FAQs).

7.5 As the tables following indicate, most LEAs do not give guidance by contextualising the figures. This is important because, in a context of over-subscription, guidance may help parents to predict the likely outcomes of expressing particular preferences. Some of the information provided by a minority of LEAs does not provide any help to parents. The descriptor *Clear and Comprehensive* refers to the fact that an attempt is made in the prospectus to draw out the implications of the raw data and provide a commentary that parents can take into account when deciding for which schools they will express a preference. *Raw Data* refers to the fact that the raw data is provided but there is little assistance in helping to interpret the figures. Many LEAs cite this as a problem as one response indicates:

The problem that we have been unable to overcome is that a significant number of parents fail to understand that their local community school may not be available to them as second preference if they take a gamble by stating a first preference for a voluntary-aided school whose religious adherence they do not share, or a popular community school not very close to where they live. We publish a list of the schools that have been oversubscribed over recent years, but this does not succeed in deterring every applicant from naming one of those schools as second preference. This is not really a disadvantage of the system, but our failure to communicate with parents.

One LEA actually publishes the postcodes of where parents live who have obtained a place at a particular school.

7.6 Explaining how criteria for over-subscription are interpreted

Over-subscription criteria are only relevant to those parents who express a preference for a school that is oversubscribed and are not relevant to all parents. They are likely to be of most relevance to parents in high-density urban areas. In this situation a knowledge of the criteria is important in trying to ascertain the likelihood of being successful. It is particularly important where first preferences are used as the basis for allocating places. Sometimes the criteria would be ambiguous unless there was an attempt to explain them. The descriptor *No explanation* means that the criteria are stated in a brief form with no further explanation. As can be seen from the table the majority of LEAs do explain, albeit briefly, how over-subscription criteria are interpreted.

7.7 Information was gathered about what criteria were used and in which priority order for each LEA. As shown by the Tables in Appendix 1 the most common were:

- Social
- Medical
- Special Needs
- Siblings
- Parental ranking of preferences
- Distance.

7.8 To know that an admission authority gives priority to a particular criterion does not necessarily provide any significant information about most parents’ experience of the process. Some of the criteria may only affect a few parents and this is particularly the case where special needs and social/medical criteria are used. In a clear majority of LEAs surveyed there is an explicit proviso that any exceptional social and medical cases are to be given the first priority when allocating places and it is assumed that children with Statements of Special Educational Needs, which identify a particular secondary school, will be allocated to that school automatically. Therefore, it was decided not to include social, medical and special needs criteria in this analysis because of the possible distorting effect this might have when comparing the LEA modes of practice that will affect most parents.

7.9 Despite the legal implications and the role of the criteria in appeals there is still some ambiguity in interpretation of what they might mean. For example, social and medical criteria are often not defined; distance criteria are defined but sometimes in ambiguous ways and it is not always clear how the over-subscription criteria might be applied. In one LEA priority is given to “*pupils living nearest a school defined ‘as the crow flies’...with account being taken of physical barriers or issues of safety of movement by pupils*”. However, there is no definition of what might constitute physical barriers or factors that might impede safe movement. Other ways in which distance criteria are interpreted include:

- Ease of access by public transport;
- Safest walking route;
- Longest extra journey to alternative school;
- Straight line distance/as the Crow flies.

7.10 As can be seen from the tables 17 and 18 the overwhelming majority of LEAs attempt to explain how their over-subscription criteria are interpreted but in the majority of cases it is only a brief explanation. In many cases it is self-evident what the criteria mean, how they are interpreted and a brief explanation is sufficient but sometimes the criteria would be ambiguous unless there was an attempt to explain them. The descriptor *No explanation* means that the criteria are stated in a brief form with no further explanation. The nationally representative survey reported Part 2 has investigated to what extent parents know about and use over-subscription criteria.

Table 13: Explaining how criteria for over-subscription are interpreted

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
Full explanation	20	14.2
Brief explanation	120	85.1
No explanation	1	0.7
Total	141	100.0

Table 14 : Explaining how criteria for over-subscription are interpreted: Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
Full explanation	15	15.8	3	12.5	2	9.1
Brief explanation	79	83.2	21	87.5	20	90.9
No explanation	1	1.1	0	0	0	0
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

7.11 Provides section on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This is connected to several of the categories above and refers to whether an LEA has tried to anticipate the kinds of questions that a parent might ask about the admission process. This kind of information falls into the category of being helpful rather than essential but it may provide an indicator of the extent to which an LEA has tried to adopt a parent perspective as opposed to a merely compliant approach to the provision of information.

Table 15: Provides on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
Yes	61	43.3
No	80	56.7
Total	141	100.0

Table 16: Provides on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
Yes	46	48.4	9	37.5	6	27.3
No	49	51.6	15	62.5	16	72.7
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

- 7.12 Does the LEA offer guidance about what to look for in choosing a school?**
 This refers to LEA attempts to put the admission process in a wider context and suggest to parents the range of factors they may wish to take into account when expressing a preference for a particular school. The overwhelming majority of LEAs try to provide some guidance to parents.

Table 17: Attempts to offer guidance about what to look for in choosing a school

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
Comprehensive	23	16.3
Some	79	56.0
None	39	27.7
Total	141	100.0

Table 18: Attempts to offer guidance about what to look for in choosing a school: Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
Comprehensive	16	16.8	6	25.0	1	4.5
Some	55	57.9	12	50.0	12	54.5
None	24	25.3	6	25.0	9	40.9
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

7.13 Contextualising over-subscription data from previous years

Linked to the importance of the above tables there are other aspects of the information made available to parents that can help to inform parental decision making. For example, whilst there is a statutory duty to provide information about over-subscription data for individual schools, making sense of this is easier if there is a commentary that puts the figures into a context. The purpose of providing a commentary is to help parents make ‘realistic’ choices and express a preference for a school or schools where there is a good chance that they will secure a place for their child.

Table 19: Contextualising over-subscription data from previous years

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
Clear and comprehensive	62	44.0
Raw data – no contextualising	77	54.6
Other*	2	1.4
Total	141	100.0

Table 20 : Contextualising over-subscription data from previous years: Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
Clear and comprehensive	45	47.4	11	45.8	6	27.3
Raw data – no contextualising	48	50.5	13	54.2	16	72.7
Other*	2	2.1	0	0	0	0
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

*Two LEAs did not include over-subscription data although this is required by law.

7.14 Providing Information about applying to schools in other LEAs

Some parents, especially those living in high-density areas and particularly in London, do not only apply to schools in their own LEA area. Given that this is more of an urban issue it was decided to analyse all the EiC prospectuses to see what each said about applying to schools in other LEAs. The results are as follows:

Table 21: The Information and advice given to parents in EiC 1 areas about applying to schools in other LEAs: Numbers of LEAs by mode of practice

Advice given to parents explaining what they need to do if they want to attend a school in another LEA		Information provided about neighbouring schools and/ or LEAs		The Process of applying for a school in another LEA – How is it done and who needs to know?	
Contact the Individual School	Contact the relevant LEA	Info about schools given	Info about other LEAs given	LEA processes form on behalf of the parent	Parent does it but does not have to inform anyone
8	18	8	19	10	14

In some cases the numbers add up to more than the number of EiC 1 LEAs because some LEAs provide information about schools and LEAs. As can be seen from the tables above, practice varies widely. An examination of the prospectuses tends to show that at least for some LEAs where they experience a net outflow of pupils at the age of 11 there is little or no information provided about admission arrangements in other LEAs. It may be that if a parent requests specific information it is provided but this research project has not been able to investigate this. The worst scenario for parents is where they are not given any information but are expected to make all the arrangements for expressing a preference for a school in another LEA.

8. Quality of admissions information provided on LEA Internet pages

- 8.1** The nationally representative survey found that only 4% of parents cited the Internet as a source of information about school admission but it is a medium that will grow in importance. Internet information needs to be organised in a way that makes it easy for parents to find and use the information that they need. The quality of the information provided on the Internet should be no less than that provided on paper but it should also capitalise on the benefits of the medium, particularly in the way that information is presented.
- 8.2** An assessment of the quality of information provided at the present time by LEAs helps to highlight what improvements need to be made. In categorising LEAs it was decided to use some simple descriptions relevant to ease of access and ultimate, usefulness to parents in the admission process. It is important to note that the categorisation of LEAs refers only to information provided about the admission process. It is not a general assessment of LEA web pages.
- 8.3** Inevitably, making judgements about usefulness and accessibility is subjective. To ameliorate this problem two methods have been used. Firstly, the criteria that were used to categorise LEAs are outlined, although it is also important to remember that the whole is sometimes more than the sum of the parts and overall impression has also been taken into account. One caveat to note is that the Internet is by its very nature fast moving so all categorisations are merely a snapshot at a moment in time. By the time this study is read the picture for some LEAs may have changed. Another caveat concerns the speed with which information can be accessed and this depends upon the computer, modem and telephone line used by the person wanting the information as well as technical and aesthetic issues relating to the design and structuring of the Internet pages developed by the information provider.
- 8.4** Undoubtedly, some Internet pages are so badly designed that it takes a very long time to access any information even if the content is of high quality. Although it is likely to be a critical factor in satisfaction with the information provided no attempt has been made to make judgements about speed of access to information because it is difficult to separate this out from the influence of the user's and provider's hardware and software. Examples of the kind of criteria that have been used to categorise LEA Internet pages follow.

8.5 An LEA is categorised as **Very Good to Good** if it meets a high proportion of the following criteria:

- It is clear that there is an Internet page aimed at Parents;
- School admission information is highlighted as a link from other Internet pages;
- If a search has to be conducted it is easy to find the school admission information, for example, the information is structured so that it is easy to follow links and to find relevant information;
- Statutory and Code of Practice requirements relating to the provision of admission information are met, including, if relevant, the availability of information in community languages or, at least an indication of who and how to contact someone if there are community language requirements;
- The facility for parents to contact the authority by e-mail for further information is provided;
- Links are provided to other information sites giving information that may be of use to parents, for example, the Department's parent page, OFSTED school reports, school performance tables etc., individual school web pages are linked to the Internet page;
- The composite prospectus or at least a modified version is provided online;
- There is an attempt to identify frequently asked questions, or at least there is an attempt to lead a parent through the admission process stage by stage, pointing out key issues that a parent needs to think about at each stage;
- Over-subscription figures from previous years are given and explained;
- The fact that the Internet enables different formats to be used is recognised and information is provided in a user-friendly way.

8.6 An LEA was categorised as **Fair** if at least half of the criteria were met. It refers to a situation where there is some useful information provided but where there are also significant gaps and/or weaknesses, for example, information may be available but it is difficult to find or searches do not immediately produce relevant information.

- 8.7 An LEA is categorised as **Very Poor to Poor** if three or fewer of the criteria are met and very little is offered that a parent would require for understanding the admission process and acting upon the information provided. Typically a telephone number or contact address may be provided for further details but little else.

Table 22 : An assessment of the quality of LEA Internet pages solely as they relate to information about secondary school admissions and the extent to which parents are likely to find them helpful in the admissions process

Categorisation of the quality of admission information on the Internet	Number of LEAs	% of LEAs
Good to Very Good	16	
Fair (Some useful information but also significant gaps and/or weaknesses)	28	
Poor to Very Poor (Of little or no use to parents in the admission process)	97	
Total	141	

- 8.8 As Table 22 shows the information available to parents in most LEAs is either poor/very poor or non-existent. Many LEAs do not seem to have begun to think of parents as a potential audience for useful content placed on the Internet. As well as using the categories in the table it is also possible to draw up a typology of LEA Internet pages according to the major shortcomings that the research has identified. Briefly, the main types of poor Internet pages are:

The Techno Site

This is where an Internet page displays considerable technical innovation but almost no attention has been given to the content of the pages. Sometimes the technical features either make access to information very slow, or become a barrier to understanding.

The Directory Enquiries Site

This is where the same information that would be found in a telephone directory is placed on the Internet page but little else besides. Sometimes a very extensive catalogue of services and whom to contact is placed on the web-site but this merely replicates what might be found in a telephone directory. In short the potential of the Internet is not exploited. Many of the authorities placed in the Poor/Very Poor categories are of this kind.

The Needle-in-a-Haystack Site

The information that is available to parents is so badly sign-posted that only someone experienced in using the Internet would stand a chance of finding it. Sometimes the information may be potentially very helpful to parents but it is very unlikely a parent would find the information.

The Internally Focused Site

This refers to Internet pages that seem to be mainly concerned with who does what in the authority. Sometimes it may be a showcase for elected members or for each Department to provide information for other Departments. Its internal focus gives the impression it is designed mainly for other people working in the Authority – ‘the Intranet that thinks it is an Internet’ would be a shorthand way of describing this kind of page.

The Dead End Site

This is where much is promised but the links lead nowhere but empty pages. The claim is that the page is under construction but a closer inspection of the last time it was modified casts doubt on whether the page will ever be functioning.

The Kitchen Sink Site

Every conceivable piece of information is provided about issues from overhanging trees to stray dogs but nothing about school admissions. A search of the site using phrases such as ‘Choosing a School’; Admissions; School Admissions; ‘Applying for a School Place’ yields no information.

8.9 Summary

The above descriptions are somewhat tongue in cheek but LEAs need to evaluate their websites from the point of view of their customers and clients. As the nationally representative survey in Stage 2 found (see Part 2, Chapter 2), less than 4% of parents have used the Internet for accessing information about school admission. This is a very small percentage in comparison with the statistics for the general population with access to the Internet. In the main LEAs do not appear to have considered the Internet as something that parents may want to use to access information. The best sites signpost clearly that there is an area of the site dedicated to information for parents and/or topics are clearly sign-posted so that parents would be able to see what was relevant to them. Information is divided into small sections so that it can be accessed quickly. The best sites do more than merely replicate the printed word. They try to anticipate the kinds of questions parents may ask and/or the key issues that parents will need to address when choosing a school.

9. Discussion of some issues relating to LEA modes of practice

- 9.1** The question of why different LEAs have different admission policies in the first place is of interest but beyond the remit of the research project. One LEA officer described the goal:

As a Local Authority you're there to serve parents and what do parents want? They want a place at a good school. And you've got to empathise and be able to deliver within the constraints in which you operate.

The differential nature of the constraints contributes in large measure to the variation in LEA practices. The biggest single constraint is parental views about the quality of schools. The fact that a proportion of parents do not want to send their children to some schools and too many parents want to send their children to other schools creates the imbalances in demand and supply that are not easily resolved.

9.2 Applying for over-subscribed schools

As we have seen there is some variability in the extent to which LEAs help to guide parental preferences so as to avoid a situation where an expressed preference is 'wasted' on a school at which the parent has little or no chance of securing a place. Some LEAs do not communicate the message very well but, in other cases, some parents do not interpret the message that the LEA is trying to put across in the way that it is intended. This is an area of ambiguity because, on the one hand, the right of parents to express a preference for the school of their choice needs to be respected but, on the other hand, a preference that has no chance of succeeding is in no-one's interest. Worse still, an unrealistic preference can also mean that access to a local school is denied.

9.3 Strong or weak LEA co-ordination

The two ends of the continuum are, at one extreme, where an LEA tries to co-ordinate the application process amidst a disparate range of admission authorities, and at the other where there is little co-ordination and parents are more or less left to their own initiative in applying to each of the schools in which they are interested. It is an interesting question as to whether and how these two extremes impact on levels of parental satisfaction. There is no straightforward relationship between modes of practice and the level of appeals. For example some LEAs experience a very high level of appeals for reasons such as the popularity of particular schools, overall shortage of places compared with demand or variations in perceived quality (i.e. some schools are seen as very much better than others). The existence of a number of different admission authorities presents a number of challenges and, makes the admission process more complex for parents where there is no or weak co-ordination.

Parents tend to expect an LEA to be in control of the process and not understand why they cannot deliver places at foundation or voluntary-aided schools especially

if they are having difficulty in finding a place at a local school. This is particularly true in those authorities where there are many admission authorities in their area.

9.4 Relationship between admission authorities

The following comment is illustrative of the variability that exists

We have a large number of admission authorities in the LEA. Relationships with some are excellent (we operate common arrangements), with others co-operation does not exist. The issues are hinged around selection. Some non-selective schools oppose the process and actively work their admissions arrangements in a way which do not support selection. Voluntary-aided relationships vary. We have several diocesan bodies in the LEA. Relationships with these (on secondary transfer arrangements) vary from good to hostile. In respect of the governing bodies of these schools, the same spectrum could be applied.

And, by way of contrast, another LEA officer said:

Yes. I mean we work with all of our neighbouring LEAs. We've also got very good relationships with schools who are admission authorities, so much so that we get admission lists from those schools, which is very useful for us, obviously. We also do some work for one of our neighbouring foundation schools in another LEA - they're very willing to share information with us, including at the later stage when places are allocated.

Good relationships are very important to the sort of effective co-operation between LEAs and schools that will make life easier for parents. One LEA officer describes the main admissions issue facing the authority as finding places for looked-after children and other hard to place children.

When an LEA is only the admission authority for [a minority] of secondary schools... fulfilling our statutory responsibilities in finding school places for looked-after children and various other difficult to place children...including excluded pupils is very challenging.

9.5 Predictability/uncertainty of outcomes

Many parents want to know what actions they need to take, and by when, in order to secure a place at a preferred school. The more predictable the relationship between actions and outcomes the easier it is for parents to ensure their child gains a place at a favoured school. Sometimes this can be achieved through making the right housing moves, sometimes by attending the right feeder primary school and sometimes by ensuring that a sibling attends the 'right' school. Sometimes it is achieved by a combination of all of these and sometimes parents play the system, as the following comment indicates:

If the family's in the know, they will play the game, and we had a case only last year of a boy, who we knew had five offers from two schools [in this LEA], two schools in two different authorities and one in an independent school...

The factors discussed below influence the predictability of whether a place at a particular secondary school is likely to be secured.

9.5.1 Type of admission arrangement: First preference, catchment area or other admission policy

The sole use of the first preference system has increased in recent years and the use of feeder/link primary and catchment areas has decreased. In a situation of over and/or under-subscription the link/feeder school concept may become an inefficient way of trying to distribute the school population and this can lead to surplus places in some areas and difficulties in accommodating pupils in other areas.

However, one of the findings of the research is the variety of practices that exist according to local interpretations of what works best in the light of particular constraints and opportunities. Just as one LEA is moving from 'express a preference for a designated school or express a preference for another school' to a 'multiple preference rank order' system, another LEA is changing its rank order system to one of equal preference. Both LEAs claim to be making the change because it will enhance parental choice, thus reinforcing the point that a particular mode of practice is neither fair nor unfair, effective or ineffective by itself; it needs to be looked at in the context in which it is used before any evaluation of it can be made.

As indicated above, the School Admissions Code of Practice enables flexibility in how a first preference system may be implemented but the greater flexibility can mean less predictability because a discretionary element enters into decision making. As the School Admissions Code of Practice states:

Where parents can express more than one preference, the order of priority by which parents rank their preferences may be given priority over any other means of determining how to allocate places at oversubscribed school, but that is not a statutory requirement. An LEA must have regard to

the guidance in this Code in drawing up its admission policy. It may do this by adopting the parent's order of ranking as one of the criteria if it regards that as a fair and beneficial way of determining such cases and maximising parental preference; or it may adopt an admissions policy which applies some other criterion, compatible with parents' preferences and the guidance and objectives set out in the code.

Whereas a catchment area admission policy means that parents know what place they will be offered, a preference policy often means there is no guarantee of a place at a particular school unless another high-ranking criterion, such as siblings, is met. For some parents their preference for a particular school is activated well before the final year of primary school, when they make decisions about where they are going to live. This is particularly the case if a link feeder school or catchment area admissions policy is in operation.

In descending order of certainty an admission policy that gives priority to siblings is the most certain of links (it is known well in advance and is a criterion unlikely to change); secondly, a feeder/link primary school makes gaining access to a particular secondary school relatively predictable although not certain; a *catchment area* policy is less certain because the policy can change between, for example, years Y1 and Y6. For example, one LEA operates a flexible catchment area system based on the numbers of children applying to particular secondary schools from particular primary schools over a period of time. Sometimes sibling and catchment criteria interact and the order might be, for example, siblings in a catchment area, other children living in a catchment area, siblings living outside a catchment area and, finally other children outside a catchment area.

9.5.2 Distance from school as a criterion for gaining access to a secondary school

The use of distance is one of the least predictable outcomes because no one can know in advance whether or not they live near enough to a school in any given year. Usually it is not clear how near 'near enough' is but, for example, some individual schools in some LEAs do publish information over several years about the 'cut-off point' for distance from the school which distinguishes successful and unsuccessful applicants. It is clear that the actual distance from school that a parent would need to live in order to secure a place for their child varies from year to year. Whilst it is understandable that some LEAs use the straight line proximity criterion for measuring distance because it means that there are relatively few disputes about what is meant, the application of it as an over-subscription criterion can create problems.

Where it is used instead of travel routes and/or ease of access and accompanied by a mismatch between available school places and where parents live, children in some parts of some LEAs may be severely disadvantaged at secondary transfer stage. In some LEAs there are areas that are not within easy reach for parents whilst in other parts of the same LEA other parents may find they are geographically close to several schools. This is particularly the case where new LEA boundaries have been

created out of former larger LEAs. An obvious example is the now obsolete Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) where the location of schools was not planned with the present inner London Borough boundaries in mind. The problem is also exacerbated in London because there is an overall shortage of places. One LEA officer from one London Borough pointed out:

We have an area in part of the LEA which doesn't fall into any school's natural area and there are other areas which fall into two schools' natural areas because years ago one school was closed, which was nearer to a particular location. And some schools have distance as a fairly high up [admissions criterion].

And as another officer from another London Borough indicated,

The schools are all in completely the wrong place. ... a lot of our secondary schools are actually on the boundary and, for instance, there's a foundation school in another LEA, which is right on the edge of this LEA and half their intake is from us.

Another feature of distance is that a house building programme near to a school can also upset calculations of whether close to a school is close enough. Some schools now fill their admission limit through attracting children who live hundreds of yards rather than one or two miles away from the school.

At the same time voluntary-aided denominational schools may find themselves in a position of using a dual track policy of expanding their 'catchment' area when it relates to admitting children on the basis of the religious commitment of their parents and of contracting that part of their catchment area that admits children on grounds other than religious commitment because distance from the school becomes the main criterion.

9.5.3 Impact of selection

Selection is another factor that can be difficult to predict, not only for the obvious reason that it depends on performance in a test, but less obviously because the selection policy may change at short notice. For example, a high proportion of secondary schools may formerly have opted for grant maintained status, partly so that they could set their own admission criteria. A number of the popular schools did admit a proportion of their intake on the basis of ability. However, as has been outlined above, the Schools Adjudicator reduced partial selection in a number of foundation schools.

The least predictable outcome is the *first preference* system because it depends, amongst other things, upon how many parents apply to a school in a given year and that cannot be known in advance. Information about over subscription of particular schools in the previous year is now legally required to be published in LEA composite prospectuses, though this study found 2 LEAs who did not do so.

9.5.4 Supply of and demand for school places in particular locations

The balance between local supply and demand is a key factor influencing parental satisfaction. The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector records that LEAs such as Liverpool and Knowsley face problems with the loss of pupils across LEA boundaries within a large conurbation whereas Bury has the converse problem. Movement of pupils between LEAs at the age of eleven is an acute difficulty for some London LEAs, where they lose more than they gain (for example, Lambeth loses half of its pupils at that stage) but particularly where they gain more than they lose. The number of appeals is rising, particularly where schools are attracting admissions from surrounding LEAs. One comment from an LEA officer illustrates the problem:

Balancing supply and demand is impossible [in this LEA]. The number of places available each year has been constantly increased. This year we had 3710 places available for a borough cohort of 3300 and we still have had to encourage parents to look outside the LEA to ensure a school place for their children. The demand for places is expected to continue, and there is no sign that the Greenwich judgement will be overturned. There are major housing developments within the LEA. The growth in demand is such that we are currently planning to open a new secondary school.

9.5.5 Wide/Narrow range of realistic alternatives from which to 'Choose'

The fact that parents may be able to choose from a wide number of schools is not necessarily something that works in parents' interests. Few parents will be committed to an abstract concept of 'choice'. It is more likely that they want choice when the alternative would be to have something they do not want imposed on them. It could also be argued that the wider the choice the greater the uncertainty for at least some parents. Whether or not alternative choices are practicable will be a factor influencing parental satisfaction – in rural areas transport is an issue as it may be for lone parents and the unwaged. Other relevant issues concern the effect on choice when the pattern of secondary provision is incompatible with the religious and ethnic diversity of the population. Similarly, when the demand for school places exceeds supply in particular locations this has an impact, particularly in urban areas. For example, in one LEA the shortage of secondary school places is projected to rise to about 1,000 places by 2002/3 and in London there are many boroughs that have a shortage of places to accommodate their own populations.

9.5.6 The interaction of different modes of practice

Individual modes of practice may have little significance in themselves. Rather, it may be the way the various modes of practice interact that has implications for parental satisfaction. To look at any single element in isolation such as methods of expressing a preference, or the nature of the over-subscription criteria, does not give the best clue to the lived experience of parents in specific situations. Clearly, there are significant variations in how different factors combine in different LEA areas and this in itself is influenced by changing LEA boundaries or LEA actions or inaction in the past. The supply of school places in different locations and

whether the LEA has removed surplus places or provided additional places in popular schools are examples. As has been mentioned the schools in some LEAs are mainly located around the periphery of the borough and large numbers of parents from other LEAs are able to gain access to the schools. This may be a good thing for some parents but it will disadvantage others.

In general we conclude that parents may be more satisfied when the outcomes of the admission process can be predicted/manipulated (*predictability*); where, all things being equal, there is a narrower rather than a wider range of actual choice (*choice*), where there is less rather than more diversity (*diversity*), where an admission authority such as an LEA has a strong rather than a weak co-ordinating role (*co-ordination*) and where the outcomes of the admission process are known sooner rather than later (*timescales*).

At first sight it may seem surprising to claim that choice may not be valued per se. However, the concept of choice has little meaning for parents who are not offered a school place. In those areas where there is maximum 'choice' because the admission system is operated as if it were a quasi-free market system, the transaction costs are very high for everyone involved. In these LEAs school staff may have to spend a lot of time supporting pupils for whom no place is offered; the process of matching up pupils and schools is very complex and can take place over a protracted period of time. Also, in these contexts some parents may have several offers whilst others are faced with a number of rejections. In one LEA the OFSTED Inspection report states that primary school head teachers report high levels of anxiety amongst children waiting for a school place.

Another feature of LEAs that operate their admission system on a quasi free market basis with the minimum of intervention is that the LEA may not collect any data to analyse the extent to which parents are provided with their preferred school. This may mean that the 'problem' is hidden from view. However, this is not exclusive to such LEAs and there are examples of LEAs that use a different system for allocating places who similarly do not keep statistics on the extent to which parents are allocated a place at their preferred school.

To re-iterate, it is the way in which all these local factors interact that is the significant issue. For example, in one LEA individual schools administer admissions rather than the LEA but in 1999, 94 per cent of applicants to community secondary schools were successful in their first preference and appeals were relatively few⁶. However, in another LEA, where 93.7 per cent of applicants gain a place at their first preference school - which is almost as high as the first LEA mentioned - when parents' preferences are not met they tend to appeal⁷. The pressure on school places leads to about five times as many appeals as the Metropolitan District average. Thus, there is no simple relationship between the numbers of parents gaining their first preference place and the level of appeals.

⁶ Inspection of Walsall Local Education Authority, December 1999, London, OFSTED

⁷ Inspection of Bury Local Education Authority, January 1999, London, OFSTED

In one LEA admissions to secondary schools is described in the OFSTED LEA Inspection Report⁸ as a major issue, especially because there are 3000 applications for fewer than 2000 places. The administration of admission is managed by the schools but in this particular authority this has resulted in a divergence of practice amongst the thirty-three admission authorities. Parents make multiple applications and whilst some pupils receive several offers others receive only rejections. Some children do not know which school they will be attending when they start the summer break.

Thus, the extent of choice is not *the* significant issue - what is more important for parents is the extent to which the outcomes can be predicted and those who are 'engaged' can take the appropriate action early enough to ensure that the outcomes are favourable for them. An LEA can contribute to this by ensuring that parents are made aware of the situation for the schools in their area and, partly, this is a question of the quality of information that an LEA provides although other more informal sources of information are also important (see Part 2, Chapter 2). As indicated in the preceding discussion, the contingent nature of LEA modes of practice makes it unlikely that any particular mode of practice is connected to particular levels of satisfaction. Most parents do not have to engage with different types of admission practices and, therefore, are not in a position to compare. The outcome of the process is everything and there is a weak relationship between different modes of practice and particular outcomes.

⁸ Inspection of Wandsworth Local Education Authority, May 2000, London, OFSTED

Part 2

The nationally representative survey

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and purpose

This is a report on Stage 2 of the project, the nationally representative survey of parents of eligible children. The objectives of the nationally representative survey in England were to investigate:

- factors parents take into account in choosing a school for their child;
- information parents use to help them make their choice, and how they gather this information;
- parents' views on the information they used;
- parents' expectations and experiences of the admissions process;
- parents' satisfaction with outcomes;
- parents' experiences of the appeals process.

In addition to these objectives, the Department wanted the survey to provide a baseline for a future study of parental choice issues in the 'Excellence in City' (EiC) conurbations.

The survey aimed to examine the experiences, views and expectations of three groups of parents:

- *the 1999 entry year cohort*: those who applied for a place in a state secondary school for September 1999 (those applying before the new Code of Practice came into operation);
- *the 2000 entry year cohort*: those who applied for a place in a state secondary school for September 2000 (the first cohort under the new Code of Practice);
- *the 2001 entry year cohort*: those who intend to apply for a place in a state secondary school for September 2001.

Parents in the 1999 entry year cohort applied before the new Code of Practice came into operation. Their children had been at secondary school for some 9 months at the time of the survey interview in May-June 2000. At that time, parents in the 2000 entry year were in the process of applying so that their children could start secondary school in September 2000. The third group comprises parents who had not yet entered the process of choosing a secondary school for their child who was selected for the survey. They were asked about their hopes and expectations of the process. The majority of this group of parents was interviewed in September 2000, just before they started the process, so that the issues would be as salient as possible to them. In total 2,916 parents were interviewed with a breakdown by cohort as follows:

- 1,192 with parents of children in the 1999 entry cohort;
- 977 with parents of children in the 2000 entry cohort;
- 746 with parents of children in the 2001 entry cohort.

1.2 Arrangements for applying for a secondary school place

While the Code of Practice lays down guidelines for admission authorities, arrangements for applying for a secondary school place vary across the country. In part, this reflects the diversity of school provision. The complexity and variety of admission arrangements has been highlighted, which suggested that the different historical and geographical contexts of LEAs have led to variation in the way in which they implement their legal requirements (see Part 1, Chapter 3). The quantitative survey design needed to capture this diversity. At the same time it had to provide a framework within which the range of parental experiences could be compared and valid estimates made of their prevalence and the levels of parental satisfaction associated with them. The sample and questionnaire designs were key elements in meeting this need. Detailed information about them is provided in the appendices.

1.3 Structure of Part 2

Chapters 2 to 5 present analyses of data collected from the two cohorts of parents who, at the time of the survey, had experience of the process of choosing a secondary school for their child who was selected for the survey (i.e. parents of children in the 1999 or 2000 entry cohorts). Where appropriate, results are presented separately for the two cohorts. In most analyses, where preliminary examination has shown no important differences between the two cohorts, they are combined to provide statistically more precise estimates than they would yield separately.

Chapter 6 of Part 2 presents analysis of parents who, at the time of the survey, were yet to embark upon the process of choosing a secondary school. These were parents who expected to apply for their children to start at a state secondary school in September 2001.

Chapter 7 is concerned with the experiences of parents resident in the EiC conurbations and provides key results for parents living in EiC areas alongside figures for the country as a whole.

Appendix 3 provides information on the survey methodology. This includes:

- a description of the design of the survey;
- information on survey response rates;
- a description of weighting methods used to adjust for unequal probabilities of selection and non-response;
- information on the methods of analysis presented in Part 2.

The questionnaire used in the nationally representative survey is presented at Appendix 4.

2. Finding out about schools

Summary

- Visits to schools (78%) and talking to other parents (70%) were the most frequently cited sources of information used to find out about schools. Except for school prospectuses (69%), official literature was used by less than half of all parents. Around half of all parents consulted primary school teachers but less than one in twenty parents (4%) had used the Internet .
- The two most commonly used sources were also rated the two most useful.
- Ninety-four per cent of users expressed satisfaction with the presentation and ease of understanding of school brochures.
- Performance tables were used by 39% of parents to find out about schools. Of these parents, almost one-third (32%) found them ‘most useful’ whilst 14% found them ‘of little or no use’.
- Multivariate analysis showed that a range of variables predicted use of performance tables. For example, controlling for other factors:
 - ◆ parents resident in London were twice as likely as those in Shire LEAs to use performance tables;
 - ◆ parents among whom the mother had educational qualifications at degree level or above were nearly twice as likely to consult performance tables as those among whom the mother had no educational qualifications.
- Eight in ten parents (82%) used at least one *formal* source (LEA prospectuses, school prospectuses, OFSTED reports or school performance tables). Around 10% of parents used all four sources.
- Nearly nine in ten parents (87%) said that they were satisfied they had all the information they needed to help them choose a school

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the sources of information that parents used to find out about schools. Previous research suggests that parents obtain information about schools from a variety of sources, from formal published information such as LEA composite prospectuses and performance tables through to informal information obtained from conversations with other parents and friends.

The quantitative survey asked parents which of these types of sources they had used to find out about schools. All LEAs are required to publish information about schools in their area in a composite prospectus. As this official term was unlikely to be recognised by all parents, the survey asked parents whether they had used ‘LEA booklets’. Parents were also asked whether they had consulted ‘school brochures or prospectuses’. It is possible that some parents may have been unclear about the distinction between LEA and school prospectuses and attributed information from one source to the other.

The survey asked parents to grade the sources they had used in terms of their usefulness. In addition, parents who had used LEA and school prospectuses were asked to rate their satisfaction with these sources in terms of their presentation and ease of understanding. Parents who had used performance tables were asked where they had obtained them. Parents who had obtained information from the Internet were asked which websites they had accessed.

Multivariate analysis (logistic regression) was undertaken to explore the relationship between use of information sources and social characteristics. In addition, univariate and bivariate results are shown for social groups of interest.

2.2 Information sources used by parents

The proportions using various information sources did not vary by entry cohort except in one respect discussed in section 2.4 below. Most analyses in this chapter combine the results for parents of children in the September 1999 entry cohort with those for the September 2000 entry cohort.

Visits to schools (78%) and talking to other parents (70%) were the most frequently cited sources of information. School prospectuses were used by 69% of parents, but other official literature was used by smaller percentages of parents (LEA booklets (45%); performance tables (39%); OFSTED reports (25%)). Conversations with their children's' primary school teachers were another common means of obtaining information for almost half (49%) of all parents. Less than one in twenty (4%) of the parents surveyed had used the Internet to obtain information about schools.

Table 2.1

Table 2.1 Use and usefulness of types of information sources

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Information source	All parents % using source	Parents using source Usefulness of information source				Base = n
		Most useful	Some use	Little/no use		
Visited schools	78	% 68	27	5	1696	
Talked to other parents	70	% 49	42	9	1515	
School prospectuses	69	% 37	51	12	1488	
Primary school teachers	49	% 50	37	13	1062	
LEA prospectuses	45	% 29	52	19	982	
Performance tables	39	% 32	54	14	839	
OFSTED reports	25	% 38	54	8	548	
Newspaper articles	22	% 22	62	16	484	
PTA information	10	% 45	45	10	207	
Internet	4	% 28	52	20	82	
Asked anyone else	15	% 60	31	8	298	
<i>Weighted base</i>	2170	-	-	-	-	

2.3 Perceived usefulness of information sources

A three-point Likert scale was used to rate the usefulness of information sources. Respondents were asked whether they had found the source ‘most useful’, ‘of some use’ or ‘of little or no use’.

The two sources which were used by the largest proportions of parents were also rated the two most useful. School visits, which were used by 78% of parents, were rated ‘most useful’ by two thirds (68%) of users. Conversations with friends and relatives, which were cited by 70% of parents, were rated ‘most useful’ by almost half (49%) of all users. Although only 10% of parents had used information from Parent Teacher Associations, of those, almost half (45%) rated the information ‘most useful’. School prospectuses, which were used by 69% of parents, were rated ‘most useful’ by 37% of users. Half of the parents who used them (51%) rated them ‘of some use’.

LEA prospectuses and Internet sites were rated the lowest in terms of usefulness. Of the 45% of respondents who used LEA prospectuses, less than one third (29%) rated them ‘most useful’ and one fifth (19%) rated them ‘of little or no use’. Internet use was rated similarly, with 28% of parents who used the Internet to obtain information about schools rating the information they found there ‘most useful’ and one fifth (20%) rating the information ‘of little or no use’.

Table 2.1

2.4 Satisfaction with the presentation of published information

A five point Likert scale was used to rate the presentation and ease of understanding of LEA and school prospectuses. Parents were asked how satisfied they were ‘that the information was well presented and easy to follow’. Both LEA and school prospectuses were rated highly by parents. When the ‘very satisfied’ and ‘fairly satisfied’ categories are combined 94% of users expressed satisfaction with school prospectuses and 90% with LEA prospectuses.

There were few statistically significant differences in parents' perceptions of the usefulness of information sources between the 1999 entry cohort and the 2000 entry cohort. However, among parents who used LEA prospectuses, those in the 2000 entry cohort were more likely to find them ‘most useful’ (33%) than those in the 1999 entry cohort (25%).

There was also a difference between the cohorts regarding parental satisfaction with the presentation and ease of understanding of LEA prospectuses. The proportion of 2000 entry parents who rated themselves ‘very satisfied’ with LEA prospectuses was higher than among the 1999 entry parents (52% and 41%, respectively). However, there was no difference between the cohorts in the overall percentages expressing satisfaction (very satisfied or fairly satisfied), so there is a need for

caution about interpreting the difference in the cohorts in the percentages saying they were "very satisfied".

Although it is not clear that there is a difference between cohorts in satisfaction with the LEA prospectuses, it should be noted that the booklets changed at a relevant time to have had an effect. Following the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, the present government introduced a new Code of Practice on Admissions to which all admission authorities must have regard. As part of the new admissions legislation and Code, LEAs were required to publish composite prospectuses with summary admissions information for all schools in their area, including how over-subscribed they have been in the past. The main code applied to secondary school admission from September 2000 onwards. It is possible that there was a change in the booklets which resulted in the greater level of satisfaction among parents of the 2000 entry cohort who were "very" or "fairly" satisfied compared with parents of the 1999 entry cohort.

Table 2.2

Table 2.2 Perceptions of LEA and school prospectuses

Users of prospectuses	Entry cohort of selected child		
	September 1999	September 2000	All parents
	%	%	%
<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>			
Usefulness of LEA composite prospectuses			
Most useful	25	33	29
Of some use	53	50	52
Of little or no use	22	16	19
Presentation of information in LEA prospectuses			
Very satisfied	41	52	46
Fairly satisfied	49	38	44
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	8	6	7
Slightly dissatisfied	2	2	2
Very dissatisfied	0	2	1
<i>Weighted base (N=users of LEA prospectuses)</i>	536	446	982
Usefulness of school prospectuses			
Most useful	35	38	37
Of some use	52	50	51
Of little or no use	12	12	12
Presentation of information in school prospectuses			
Very satisfied	52	59	55
Fairly satisfied	42	36	39
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4	4	4
Slightly dissatisfied	1	2	2
Very dissatisfied	0	0	0
<i>Weighted base (N=users of school prospectuses)</i>	832	657	1489

2.5 Use of performance tables

The survey collected information about parents' use of performance tables. In addition, it sought to find out whether parents obtained the performance tables from media sources, government or school publications, or elsewhere. Table 2.1 has shown that performance tables were used by 39% of parents to find out about schools. Of these parents, almost one-third (32%) found them 'most useful' whilst 14% found them 'of little or no use'.

Table 2.3 shows that newspapers were the most common source of information about performance tables and were cited by over half of all parents (56%). Parents used local and national newspapers in similar proportions. School prospectuses formed the next most popular source and were cited in 38% of cases. Ten per cent of parents reported having seen the performance tables in an LEA booklet. Departmental publications were cited in 2% of cases. The Internet, including The Department, OFSTED, LEA and school websites, as well as unknown websites, accounted for less than 4% of cases.

Table 2.3

Table 2.3 Where parents saw performance tables

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Where seen	Parents using tables %
Newspaper	56
School publication	38
LEA publication	10
DFEE publication	2
Internet - can't remember	2
OFSTED website	0
LEA website	0
School website	0
DfEE website	0
Can't remember where seen	5
<i>Weighted base (N=users of performance tables)</i>	838

Note: Percentages total more than 100% as parents could give more than one answer

2.6 Factors associated with the use of performance tables

A preliminary exploration of the data identified a number of factors associated with use of performance tables. Although tables can be used to examine the importance of each factor in explaining behaviour, tables do not show the inter-relationship between these different factors. Failure to take account of these inter-relationships can lead to a misleading impression of the strength of association of a factor when it is borrowing most of its strength of association from another factor with which it is itself associated and which is truly associated strongly with the dependent variable (use of performance tables in this case). To overcome this problem, logistic regression analysis was undertaken. Logistic regression allows the identification of the relative importance of each factor in the model, acting independently.

The results of the logistic regression analysis identified five variables which have an independent relationship with use of performance tables:

- Parental LEA type;
- Highest educational qualification of mother;
- Tenure;
- Social class of mother; and,
- Whether or not parents had previous experience of choosing a secondary school.

In the logistic regression analysis one of the categories of each variable in the model is defined as the reference category and its odds are set to 1.0. This provides a point of comparison for the odds in other categories.

The reference categories used in the logistic regression analysis were as follows:

- Shires LEA type;
- Mothers' highest educational qualification at degree level or above;
- Owner occupier;
- Mother in social class I & II; and,
- With previous experience of choosing a secondary school.

Parental LEA type had an independent effect. Controlling for the other factors in the logistic regression model, parents resident in London boroughs had odds of using performance tables which were twice those of parents in Shire LEAs (2.1:1.0). Parents in Unitary authorities were nearly one and a half times as likely as those in Shire authorities to use performance tables (1.3:1.0).

Again controlling for the other factors in the model, the following are the main findings. Parents among whom the mother had educational qualifications at degree level or above were twice as likely to consult performance tables as those among whom the mother had no educational qualifications (1.0 : 0.5). Parents who were owner occupiers were more likely than those who were social renters to consult performance tables (1.0 : 0.7). Parents among whom the mother was in a non-manual social class were more likely than those where the mother was in a manual

social class (1.0 : 0.6) and those among whom the mother was not assigned a social class because she had never worked (1.0: 0.3) to consult performance tables, as were parents with no previous experience of choosing a secondary school compared with those with previous experience (1.3 : 1.0).

Table 2.4

**Table 2.4 Likelihood of using performance tables to find out about schools
(based on odds ratios from logistic regression)**

Characteristic	Odds ratios	1999 and 2000 entry cohorts	
		95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
Parental LEA type			
London borough	2.1	1.6	2.8
Metropolitan authority	1.1	0.9	1.4
Unitary authority	1.3	1.0	1.7
Shire authority	1.0	..	..
Highest educational qualification of mother			
Degree or equivalent or higher	1.0	..	..
Other qualifications	0.8	0.6	1.1
No qualifications	0.5	0.3	0.7
Tenure			
Owner occupier	1.0	..	..
Social rented sector tenant	0.7	0.5	0.8
Private renter	1.0	0.7	1.4
Social class of mother			
I & II	1.0	..	..
III non-manual	1.0	0.7	1.2
III, IV & V manual	0.6	0.5	0.8
Never worked	0.3	0.2	0.5
Experience of choosing secondary school			
Has previous experience	1.0	..	..
No previous experience	1.3	1.1	1.6
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	0.1	..	..

The odds ratios produced by logistic regression analysis can be combined to build up a picture of the groups most likely and least likely to use performance tables. In terms of the factors included in the model, which were selected in a preliminary

analysis, the group most likely to use performance tables comprised parents living in a London borough; with a parent among whom the mothers' highest educational qualification was at degree level or above; who were owner occupiers; in social class I or II; and with no previous experience of choosing a secondary school. This group of parents was three times as likely to use performance tables than the combined reference group, described earlier, who differed from them in being resident in a Shire authority, and with previous experience of choosing a secondary school. The group least likely in this analysis to use performance tables comprised parents living in a Shire authority, with the mother having no educational qualifications, who were social sector renters, with the mother having never worked; and with some experience of choosing a secondary school. This group was ten times less likely than the combined reference group to consult performance tables and nearly thirty times less likely than the group most likely to do so.

Table 2.5 Parents use of performance tables by selected background characteristics

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>		
% using performance tables	%	Base=n
All parents	39	2170
Highest educational qualification of mother		
Degree or equivalent or higher	53	203
Other qualifications	41	1470
No qualifications	23	440
Social class of mother		
I & II	49	485
III non-manual	45	658
III, IV & V manual	32	779
Never worked	19	193
Experience of choosing secondary school		
Has previous experience	35	994
No previous experience	42	1174
Parental LEA type		
London borough	49	286
Metropolitan authority	36	534
Unitary authority	40	386
Shire authority	37	962
Tenure		
Owner occupier	43	1439
Social rented sector tenant	27	576
Private renter	37	148

The logistic regression analysis has shown the effects of particular characteristics when other characteristics are controlled for. If the results on differences between social groups is considered, without separating out the effects which contribute to those differences, it is evident that:

- almost half of parents in London boroughs (49%) used performance tables;
- 43% of parents who were owner occupiers used them;
- over half of parents among whom the mother's highest educational qualification was a degree or higher (53%) consulted performance tables.

Table 2.5

2.7 Use of a range of information sources

Ninety-five per cent of parents used at least one of the information sources which the survey asked them about. A large majority (90%) of parents used more than one of the sources. A majority (52%) of parents used four or more sources; 15% of parents used more than five sources.

One in twenty parents used none of the sources asked about. Further analysis of this group identified previous experience as the most important explanatory factor. Of those parents using none of the information sources, two-thirds (67%) had previous experience of choosing a secondary school.

Exploratory analysis was undertaken to see whether parents in different social groups were using different types of information sources to find out about schools. There was little variation between groups in their use of the most common sources. School visits, talking to other parents and talking to primary school teachers were information sources for all groups of parents to a similar extent. However, social groups varied in their use of the published sources of information. This is explored in the next section.

2.8 Factors associated with the use of *formal* published sources

Information sources published by central government, local authorities and schools aim to provide definitive information about schools and the process of choosing them. These sources comprise LEA composite prospectuses, school prospectuses, OFSTED reports and performance tables. In this report these are referred to as *formal* published sources. A preliminary exploration of the data suggested a range of social factors associated with parents' use of formal published sources. Eighty-two per cent of parents used at least one formal source to find out about schools. Just under one in ten (9%) parents used all four formal sources, as shown in **Table 2.7**.

Parents were analysed in two groups: those who had used one or more of the formal published sources (81%); and those who had used none of the formal published sources (19%). This dichotomy enabled the examination of the characteristics of parents who did not use any formal published sources to find out about schools. It

was the dependent variable in a series of logistic regressions which were carried out on some of the factors which appeared to influence parents' use of formal sources. **Table 2.6** shows the results of the logistic regression analysis. Mothers' educational qualifications; mothers' social class and previous experience of choosing a secondary school are all independently associated with parents' use of *formal* sources. Controlling for other factors, the likelihood of using one or more *formal* sources was greater for parents if:

- the mother had qualifications at degree level or above than if the mother had no qualifications (1.0:0.2);
- the mother was in Social Class I or II than if the mother was in a manual social class (1.0:0.5); and,
- they did not have previous experience of choosing a school (compared with those with previous experience, an odds ratio of 1.4:1.0).

Table 2.6

**Table 2.6 Likelihood of using formal published sources to find out about schools
(based on odds ratios from logistic regression)**

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Characteristic	Odds ratios	95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
Highest educational qualification of mother			
Degree or equivalent or higher	1.0	..	..
Other qualifications	0.4	0.2	0.8
No qualifications	0.2	0.1	0.5
Social class of mother			
I & II	1.0	..	..
III non-manual	0.7	0.5	1.1
III, IV & V manual	0.5	0.3	0.7
Never worked	0.3	0.2	0.4
Experience of choosing secondary school			
Has previous experience	1.0	..	..
No previous experience	1.4	1.1	1.8
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	0.1	..	..

Table 2.7 Parents use of formal published sources by selected background characteristics

		1999 and 2000 entry cohorts					
Background characteristics		Number of formal published sources used by parents					Base= N
		Used none	Used one	Used two	Used three	Used all four	
All parents	%	19	23	30	20	9	2170
Highest educational qualification of mother							
Degree or equivalent or higher	%	6	19	34	24	17	202
Other qualifications	%	16	22	31	22	9	1471
No qualifications	%	33	27	24	11	5	442
Social class of mother							
I & II	%	10	19	36	21	15	486
III non-manual	%	15	20	31	25	8	658
III, IV & V manual	%	23	25	28	18	7	779
Never worked	%	37	31	20	8	4	195
Experience of choosing secondary school							
Has previous experience	%	22	22	30	19	7	995
No previous experience	%	16	23	30	20	11	1175

Table 2.7 provides a breakdown of the number of sources used by parents for each of the variables found to be independently associated with the use of *formal* information sources. These results do not control for other variables. It is noted, however, that the proportion of parents who had not used any of the *formal* sources was highest for:

- parents among whom the mother had never worked (37%);
- parents among whom the mother had no educational qualifications (33%).

The above figures compare with 19% of all parents not using any of the formal sources.

Table 2.7

2.9 Parents' overall satisfaction that they had all the information they needed

When respondents had answered the questions on the sources of information that they used, interviewers asked them to rate their satisfaction that they had had all the information they needed to help them decide which schools to apply to. Eighty-seven per cent of parents said that they were very satisfied (51%) or fairly satisfied (36%). Six per cent of parents said that they were very dissatisfied (3%) or fairly dissatisfied (3%).

3. The process of applying for schools

Summary

- 57% of parents reported they knew how schools that received more applicants than places decided how to allocate its places.
- 24% of parents took account of over-subscription criteria when considering schools to apply to.
- Controlling for other variables, the following groups of parents were shown to have a higher than average likelihood of knowledge of over-subscription criteria:
 - ◆ parents resident in London;
 - ◆ parents who were owner occupiers;
 - ◆ parents where the mother has a degree level qualification or above;
 - ◆ parents where the mother was in Social Class I and II.
- 87% of parents applied only for places within their own LEA area.
- Multivariate analysis showed that parental LEA type had the strongest independent effect on whether or not parents applied for a school in another LEA area: those living in London were six times more likely than those living in a Shire authority to have applied to a school outside their own LEA.
- Two thirds (67%) of parents applied to a single admission authority.
- Couples where both parents were employed were twice as likely as parents without work to have applied to multiple admission authorities.
- Nine out of ten (90%) parents completed an application form provided by their own LEA.
- Two thirds (66%) of parents were asked by their LEA to list their preference for school, on their application form, in rank order.
- 10% of parents reported that their children had been interviewed by at least one of the schools that they had applied to.
- 9% of parents reported that a test formed part of the application process for one of the schools to which they applied.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines parents' experience of the application process. The survey asked parents about the process of applying for a secondary school place for their children. In addition, the chapter analyses the characteristics of the schools in which parents applied for a place. This was made technically possible by the use of computer assisted coding, so that names of schools were coded to a frame with full national coverage during the interview. This has allowed the analysis to include administrative information about the school, such as its location and status.

For most maintained secondary schools the local education authority (LEA) is the admission authority. These schools are officially referred to as community or voluntary controlled schools. In other schools, decisions about applications are made by the governing body as the admission authority. Such schools are officially referred to as foundation (formerly grant-maintained) and voluntary aided schools.

To gain a place in such a school, parents normally apply directly to the school itself, rather than to an LEA.

Parents are not restricted to applying to schools within their own LEA area. They may apply for a place in a school in another LEA area. LEAs are not permitted to give preference to their own residents in offering places to parents.

Admission authorities are required to have clear, fair and objective criteria for the allocation of places. There is a requirement that the criteria should be published. This requirement covers both *admissions criteria* (those criteria which restrict eligibility to certain categories of pupils, such as girls) and *over-subscription criteria* (which define the rules for prioritising eligible applications). Admission authorities tend to give priority to children of siblings at the school; to children living within a catchment area; and to children with social or medical needs. Distance is another common criterion, though one that is operationalised in a variety of ways.

Selective schools are permitted to test prospective pupils and to take the result of the test into account when deciding to whom to offer a place. Church schools may interview to assess suitability of prospective pupils. The new Code of Practice on admissions, which came into force in April 1999 (Introduction), made it explicit that there should not be admission by interview except in church schools. The analysis presented below on admission by test or interview is restricted by the relatively small numbers of parents who reported this mode.

3.2 Knowledge of over-subscription criteria

The Code of Practice requires all authorities to make their admission criteria clear, fair, objective and published. LEAs are required to publish composite prospectuses about information on all schools in their area, including details of how over-subscribed they have been in the past and the criteria used to allocate places.

If it is relevant to their range of preferred schools, parents with good knowledge of over-subscription criteria will be in a better position to make effective decisions about which schools to apply for a place for their child. If a parent wishes to apply for a place in a school which has surplus places, lack of knowledge about over-subscription criteria will not jeopardise their chance of securing a place in that school.

In areas where a number of schools are over-subscribed, and competition for places is intense, a good understanding and interpretation of over-subscription criteria can be critical to determining parental success. So, for example, a parent may need to take into account the chance of their child meeting the over-subscription criteria before deciding which school to list as their first preference. If they list as their first preference a school which they do not have a realistic chance of getting into, they

risk not being offered a place in an acceptable school. This risk occurs because their second choice school may fill its places with children of parents who have listed it as their first preference.

The survey asked parents if they knew how schools that received more applicants than places decided how to allocate its places. Fifty seven per cent of parents reported that they knew how such places were allocated.

All parents, including those reporting no definite knowledge of the over-subscription criteria, were asked what over-subscription criteria they thought was used by authorities. This was asked as an opinion question, which means that interviewers were instructed not to prompt respondents except to ask, using standard phrases, if they could clarify an answer or if they had anything more to add.

Table 3.1 shows the criteria mentioned by parents, analysed by whether or not the parents had previously said that they knew how places were allocated. The reasons most frequently cited by parents are among those included in over-subscription criteria, such as:

- 57% of parents mentioned one or more of the two criteria: attendance of siblings or parent teaching at the school;
- 45% mentioned catchment area;
- nearness of home to school was cited by 34%; and,
- distance or safety of journey from home by 19%.

Table 3.1

3.3 Use and usefulness of over-subscription criteria

About one in four parents (24%) said that they had taken account of over-subscription criteria when considering schools.

Of the parents who had examined over-subscription criteria, more than one in three (34%) reported that they were of little or no use in helping them choose in which school to apply for a place for their children. Eight out of ten of these parents (82%) were satisfied that the information was well presented and coherent. Fewer than one in ten of these parents (7%) were dissatisfied with the presentation by LEAs of information on over-subscription.

Table 3.2

Table 3.1 Over-subscription criteria cited by parents by reported knowledge of criteria

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Reasons cited	Whether or not parent reported knowledge of criteria		
	Yes %	No %	All %
Sibling attended school or parent teaches there	70	39	57
Lived within catchment area	49	40	45
Nearness of home to school	31	37	34
Distance or safety of journey from home	20	18	19
Religion of family or priest's reference	16	8	13
Child's special needs or disability	15	6	11
Whether attends link or feeder school	12	8	10
Test of child's ability	9	10	9
Performance in primary or junior school	5	9	7
If school was first preference	3	4	4
Discipline record of child	2	3	2
Parent attended school	2	1	2
Family background	2	1	2
Whether asked for single sex school	1	1	1
Lived within the LEA	1	1	1
Interview with parent or child	1	1	1
Time on waiting list	1	0	1
Other	6	6	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1234</i>	<i>819</i>	<i>2053</i>

Note: Percentages total more than 100% as parents could give more than one answer

Table 3.2 Use and usefulness of over-subscription criteria

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

	%
% parents reporting knowledge of criteria	57
% parents using criteria	24
<i>Weighted base</i>	2170
% parent using criteria	
of which:	
% finding it most useful	26
% finding it of some use	39
% finding it of little or no use	34
% satisfied information well presented and coherent	82
% no view on presentation and coherence	10
% dissatisfied information well presented and coherent	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	513

3.4 Factors associated with reported knowledge of over-subscription criteria

The proportions of parents citing knowledge and use of over-subscription criteria varied by a range of socio-economic characteristics. The relationships were consistent within each of the parental cohorts so multivariate analyses were conducted on the combined group. The results of the separate analyses in respect of knowledge and use of over-subscription criteria were similar: to avoid repetition, only the results concerning knowledge of over-subscription are presented here.

The following variables were included in a logistic regression model in which the dependent variable was whether or not the parent cited knowledge of over-subscription criteria:

- Age of mother;
- Social class of mother;
- Parents' employment and marital status;
- Parental LEA type;

- Whether or not LEA part of EiC area;
- Whether or not parents had previous experience of choosing a secondary school;
- Tenure;
- Household income equivalised to adjust for households of different size and composition; and,
- Ethnic origin of mother.

The results of the analysis are presented in **Table 3.3**. The model shows the variables that have an independent association with the dependent variable, that is after controlling for other variables in the model. The odds ratios shown in Table 3.3 compare the likelihood of reporting knowledge of over-subscription criteria for parents with different combination characteristics. The reference category in the model is made up of parents with the following combination of characteristics:

- Mother in Social Class I or II;
- Mother aged 50 or over;
- Mother's highest educational qualification is degree level or above;
- Owner occupiers;
- Resident in a Shire authority; and,
- Mother is of White ethnic origin.

Controlling for other variables in the model, parents resident in London were twice as likely as those living in Shire areas to have considered over-subscription criteria (1.8 : 1.0). The likelihood of parents living in other urban areas did not differ statistically significantly from those living in the Shires.

Parents among whom the mother had a degree or above were some three times more likely than those without any qualifications (1 : 0.3), and approximately twice as likely as those with lower qualifications (1.0 : 0.5), to know how popular schools allocated places.

Tenure and ethnic origin also contributed independently to the likelihood of knowledge of over-subscription criteria. Parents who were owner occupiers were approximately twice as likely as parents who were social renters to say they knew how popular schools decided how to allocate places. Parents where the mother was of White ethnic origin were nearly twice as likely as those with a mother of non-white ethnic origin to say they knew about over-subscription criteria (1.0 : 0.6).

In contrast, social class did not appear to have such a strong influence, once other variables were taken into account. Only the difference between parents among whom the mother was in Social Class I or II (i.e. professionals and managers) and those where the mother had never worked was statistically significant. The former group of parents was twice as likely as the latter group to have knowledge of over-subscription criteria (1.0 : 0.4).

As might be expected, analysis showed that there was a relationship between age of mother and previous experience of choosing a secondary school. The proportion citing previous experience increased with age. The logistic regression showed that, once other variables included in the model had been controlled, whether or not parents had previous experience of choosing a school was not independently associated with the likelihood of having knowledge of the over-subscription criteria. Age of mother, however, was found to be independently associated with such knowledge. Mothers in their forties were those who were the most likely to have reported knowledge of over-subscription criteria, once other factors had been taken into account. Compared with the reference category (mothers aged 50 or over), the likelihood of other mothers knowing about over-subscription criteria was not statistically significantly different.

**Table 3.3 Likelihood of parents reporting knowledge of admission criteria
(based on odds ratios from logistic regression)**

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Characteristic	Odds ratios	95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
Social class of mother			
I & II	1.0	..	..
III non-manual	1.0	0.8	1.3
III , IV & V manual	0.8	0.6	1.1
Never worked	0.4	0.3	0.6
Age of mother			
Below 30	0.5	0.2	1.0
30-34	1.4	0.8	2.3
35-39	1.5	0.9	2.5
40-44	2.0	1.2	3.3
45-49	2.2	1.3	3.8
50 or above	1.0	..	..
Highest educational qualification of mother			
Degree or equivalent or higher	1.0	..	..
Other qualifications	0.5	0.3	0.7
No qualifications	0.3	0.2	0.4
Tenure			
Owner occupier	1.0	..	..
Social rented sector tenant	0.6	0.4	0.7
Private renter	0.7	0.5	1.0
Parental LEA type			
London borough	1.8	1.3	2.5
Metropolitan authority	1.0	0.8	1.3
Unitary authority	0.8	0.6	1.0
Shire authority	1.0	..	..
Ethnic origin of mother			
White	1.0	..	..
Non-white	0.6	0.4	0.9
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	0.2	..	..

Table 3.4 Knowledge of over-subscription criteria by selected background characteristics

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Background characteristics	Citing knowledge of criteria	
	%	Base=N
All parents	57	2170
Social class of mother		
I & II	71	486
III non-manual	63	659
III , IV & V manual	52	779
Never worked	28	194
Age of mother		
Below 30	22	60
30-34	46	432
35-39	57	751
40-44	68	573
45-49	68	234
50 or above	45	76
Highest educational qualification of mother		
Degree or equivalent or higher	82	202
Other qualifications	61	1470
No qualifications	35	442
Tenure		
Owner occupier	66	1440
Social rented sector tenant	39	577
Private renter	48	148
Parental LEA type		
London borough	62	286
Metropolitan authority	55	535
Unitary authority	50	386
Shire authority	60	963
Ethnic origin of mother		
White	59	1956
Non-white	42	169

Table 3.4 shows, for each of the variables that were independently associated in the multivariate analysis, the percentages of parents with that attribute reporting knowledge of over-subscription criteria. These results are presented for reference. It should be noted that, unlike the preceding analysis, the effect of other variables has not been controlled. There are, for example, statistically significant differences between all four categories of the variable measuring the social class of mothers; the multivariate analysis has shown that only the difference between parents among whom the mother is in social class I or II and those where the mother has never worked is statistically significant when other factors in the model are taken into account.

3.5 Application routes

This chapter is based on an analysis of the schools in which parents reported that they had applied for a place for their children. The analysis makes use of administrative data about the schools, such as their location and status, supplied by the Department. For 1% of respondents, at least one of the schools that the parent named could not be coded and thus administrative data could not be attributed to them. These parents have been excluded from the analysis in this chapter.

Key results from this analysis are presented in **Table 3.5** and show that:

- two in three parents (67%) applied to a single admission authority;
- approximately nine in ten parents (87%) applied only for places within their own LEA area;
- nearly half of parents (44%) made at least one application to a school that was its own admission authority;
- one in four parents (25%) applied for a place in a foundation school;
- around one in four parents (23%) applied for a place in a voluntary aided school;
- approximately one in ten (9%) applied for a place in a selective school.

It should be noted that there is overlap between some of these categories.

While Table 3.5 shows some differences in the proportions by cohort, these tended not to reach statistical significance. There were a few exceptions, however. Compared with the preceding cohort, a higher proportion of parents of children starting secondary school in September 2000 dealt with two admission authorities (25% compared with 19%) and a lower proportion with just one (63% compared with 70%). Differences between the two cohorts were also apparent in relation to the proportion applying for a place in a selective school. Amongst the 2000 entry cohort, 11% of parents had applied for selective school place compared with 8% of parents in the 1999 cohort.

Table 3.5

Below, variation in the proportions of parents taking some of the key application routes by parental background characteristics is examined.

Table 3.5 Applications routes used by cohort

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

% of all parents	Entry cohort of selected child		
	September 1999	September 2000	Total
	%	%	%
Number of admission authorities applied to			
1	70	63	67
2	19	25	22
3	9	8	8
4 or more	3	3	3
Applying for place wholly within own LEA	89	85	87
Applying for place wholly outside own LEA	4	5	5
Applying for place inside and outside own LEA	7	10	8
Applying for a place wholly in LEA/Vol controlled schools	57	54	56
Applying wholly to schools direct	22	21	22
Applying for a place in both	21	25	23
Applying to at least one school direct	43	46	44
Applying for a place in a City Technology College	1	2	2
Applying for a place in a Foundation School	25	26	25
Applying for a place in a Vol Aided school	22	24	23
Applying for place in a selective school	8	11	9
<i>Weighted base</i>	1163	969	2140

Note: Excludes parents with incomplete data on status and location of schools applied to

3.6 Applications to schools in other LEA areas

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the characteristics of parents who apply for schools beyond their own LEA. The analytical approach was similar to that described previously (see section 3.3). In this analysis, the dependent variable was whether or not parents had applied for a school in another LEA area.

Following preliminary analysis, the following independent variables were included in the model:

- Highest educational qualification of mother;
- Social class of mother;
- Parents' employment and marital status;
- Parental LEA type;
- Whether or not the LEA was part of a Phase 1 EiC area;
- Whether or not parents had previous experience of choosing a secondary school;
- Tenure;
- Household income equivalised to adjust for households of different size and composition;
- Ethnic origin of mother; and,
- Entry cohort of selected child.

The model found that the following variables were independently associated with the dependent variable:

- Highest educational qualification of mother;
- Social class of mother;
- Parental LEA type;
- Whether or not the LEA was part of Phase 1 EiC; and,
- Entry cohort of selected child.

The reference category in the model comprises parents with the following combination of characteristics:

- Mother in Social Class I or II;
- Mother has educational qualification at degree level or above;
- Resident in a Shire authority;
- Not a Phase 1 EiC area; and,
- With a child starting secondary school in September 2000.

Controlling for other variables in the model, parental LEA type had the strongest independent effect. Parents resident in a London borough were six times more likely than those living in a Shire authority to have applied for a school outside their own LEA area (odds ratio of 6.3 : 1.0). Parents resident in one of the first phase of

the EiC areas were also more likely than others to apply outside their own LEA area. Controlling for other variables, such parents had an odds ratio nearly twice that of parents living elsewhere (1.9 : 1.0).

Social class and educational qualifications each exercised an independent effect. For social class, the important distinction was between parents among whom the mother was in Social Class I or II and parents where the mother had never had paid employment. The latter parents were three times less likely than the former group to have applied for a place outside their own LEA (0.3 : 1.0). Again compared with the former group, parents where the mother had no qualifications were half as likely (two times less likely) to have applied outside their own LEA (0.5 : 1.0).

Whether or not a parent lived in an EiC area was found to exercise an independent effect. The modelling allows an analysis of parents living in EiC areas by different combinations of characteristics. Considering parents living in a Phase 1 London EiC area, the model predicts that those among whom the mother is in Social Class I and II and has a degree would be 12 times more likely to apply outside their own LEA than those parents in the reference group, i.e. with the mother having the same social class and level of educational qualifications but living in a non-EiC, Shire authority (12.0 : 1.0). In contrast, if another group of parents living in a Phase 1 London EiC area is considered: those where the mothers have never worked and whose highest qualification, if any, is below degree level, the model predicts that they are around twice as likely as the reference group to apply outside their own LEA (1.8 : 1.0). These examples highlight the importance of social class and education in examining variation within EiC areas in London.

Table 3.6

For reference, Table 3.7 shows the percentage of parents applying for a place in a school outside their own area for each of the factors that were independently associated in the logistic regression model with this dependent variable. Careful interpretation of the results in Table 3.7 is required since they do not take account of the effect of other variables.

Table 3.7

3.7 Applications to more than one admission authority

Table 3.5 showed the proportion of parents applying to more than one admission authority. In this section, the characteristics of these parents are examined. As before, logistic regression analysis is used to examine the independent effect of a range of parental background characteristics on the likelihood of applying to two or more admission authorities. Following preliminary analysis of bivariate relationships, a set of candidate variables were entered into the model. The variables included were:

- Parents' marital and employment status;
- Tenure;
- Parental LEA type;
- Age of mother;
- Social class of mother;
- Highest educational qualification of mother;
- Whether or not parent lived in a Phase 1 EiC area;
- Household income, equivalised to adjust for composition and size;
- Ethnic origin of mother;
- Whether or not parent had previous experience of choosing a secondary school; and,
- Entry cohort of selected child.

The following variables were found to be independently associated with parents making applications to two or more admission authorities:

- Parents' marital and employment status;
- Tenure;
- Parental LEA type;
- Whether or not parent had previous experience of choosing a secondary school; and,
- Entry cohort of selected child.

Controlling for other variables in the model, couples where both parents were employed were twice as likely as parents without work to apply to multiple admission authorities (1.0 : 0.5).

The combined reference category for the model comprises parents who were both employed, owning their own home, living in a Shire authority, with previous experience of choosing a secondary school and whose child was in the September 1999 entry cohort. A parent who shares all these characteristics, except that they live in London rather than a Shire authority, was three times more likely to apply to more than one admission authority (3.0 : 1.0). Similar comparisons for other areas were not statistically significant.

**Table 3.6 Likelihood of parents applying for a place in a school outside their own LEA area
(based on odds ratios from logistic regression)**

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>				
Characteristic	Odds ratios	95% confidence intervals		
		Lower	Upper	
Highest educational qualification of mother				
Degree or equivalent or higher	1.0	..	..
Other qualifications	0.5	0.4	0.9	
No qualifications	0.4	0.2	0.7	
Social class of mother				
I & II	1.0	..	..
III non-manual	1.0	0.7	1.5	
III , IV & V manual	0.9	0.6	1.4	
Never worked	0.3	0.2	0.6	
Parental LEA type				
London borough	6.3	4.2	9.4	
Metropolitan authority	1.3	0.8	2.0	
Unitary authority	2.6	1.8	3.8	
Shire authority	1.0	..	..
Whether Phase 1 EIC area				
Is EIC area	1.9	1.3	2.8	
Not EIC area	1.0	..	..
School year				
September 1999 entry cohort	1.0	..	..
September 2000 entry cohort	1.3	1.0	1.7	
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	<i>0.1</i>	..	..

**Table 3.7 Parents applying to schools outside own LEA
by selected background characteristics**
1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Background characteristics	%	Base=N
Highest educational qualification of mother		
Degree or equivalent or higher	21	200
Other qualifications	13	1450
No qualifications	9	438
Social class of mother		
I & II	15	481
III non-manual	14	651
III , IV & V manual	12	766
Never worked	8	193
Parental LEA type		
London borough	33	282
Metropolitan authority	11	524
Unitary authority	15	381
Shire authority	7	953
Whether or not Phase1 EIC area		
Is EIC area	20	517
Not EIC area	11	1623
School year		
September 1999 entry cohort	12	1171
September 2000 entry cohort	15	969

The combination of characteristics yielding the lowest odds, relative to the combined reference category, comprised parents with previous experience of the process, whose child had started secondary school in September 1999, where both parents were not working, who were renting their accommodation from a social landlord and who were resident in an unitary authority. This group had an odds ratio of 0.24. That is, they were four times less likely to apply to more than one admission authority than those in the reference category.

Table 3.8

**Table 3.8 Likelihood of applying to more than one admission authority
(based on odds ratios from logistic regression)**

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Characteristic	Odds ratios	95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
Parents' marital and employment status			
Couple, both employed	1.0	..	..
Couple, both non-employed	0.5	0.3	0.8
Couple, one employed	0.6	0.5	0.8
Lone parent, employed	1.1	0.8	1.6
Lone parent, non-employed	1.0	0.7	1.5
Tenure			
Owner occupier	1.0	..	..
Social rented sector tenant	0.6	0.5	0.8
Private renter	0.7	0.5	1.1
Parental LEA type			
London borough	3.0	2.2	4.0
Metropolitan authority	0.9	0.7	1.2
Unitary authority	0.8	0.6	1.1
Shire authority	1.0	..	..
Previous experience of choosing			
Has previous experience	1.0	..	..
No previous experience	1.3	1.1	1.6
School year			
Sep 1999 entrant	1.0	..	..
Sep 2000 entrant	1.4	1.1	1.7
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	<i>0.1</i>	..	..

An analysis of the number of admissions authorities applied to by parents' background characteristics used in the logistic regression model is shown in **Table 3.9**. As before, it should be noted that the results are not controlled for the effects of other variables as are the results in the logistic regression analysis (see section 3.5). They may, however, be of descriptive interest for policy purposes.

Table 3.9 Number of applications to separate admission authorities by parental background characteristics and cohort

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

	Number of admission authorities applied to					Base= N
	1	2	3	4 or more		
September 1999 entry cohort	%	70	19	9	3	1164
Parents' marital and employment status						
Couple, both employed	%	67	22	8	3	589
Couple, both non-employed	%	83	9	7	1	70
Couple, one employed	%	77	13	9	2	196
Lone parent, employed	%	68	20	9	3	151
Lone parent, non-employed	%	69	18	10	3	155
Tenure						
Owner occupier	%	67	21	9	3	764
Social rented sector tenant	%	74	15	8	2	314
Private renter	%	78	17	5	0	82
Parental LEA type						
London borough	%	49	22	21	8	155
Metropolitan authority	%	73	19	7	2	294
Unitary authority	%	78	17	4	1	223
Shire authority	%	71	19	8	2	492
Experience of choosing secondary school						
Has previous experience	%	74	17	7	2	523
No previous experience	%	67	20	10	3	640
<hr/>						
September 2000 entry cohort	%	63	25	8	3	964
Parents' marital and employment status						
Couple, both employed	%	59	27	10	4	478
Couple, both non-employed	%	72	21	7	0	67
Couple, one employed	%	72	19	6	3	187
Lone parent, employed	%	61	29	6	4	114
Lone parent, non-employed	%	65	26	5	4	117
Tenure						
Owner occupier	%	61	26	9	4	650
Social rented sector tenant	%	71	20	6	3	247
Private renter	%	62	33	2	3	63
Parental LEA type						
London borough	%	43	27	17	13	125
Metropolitan authority	%	69	22	7	3	226
Unitary authority	%	67	27	5	1	158
Shire authority	%	65	26	7	2	455
Experience of choosing secondary school						
Has previous experience	%	67	25	6	2	446
No previous experience	%	60	26	10	4	517

3.8 Application forms

Analysis in this chapter examines parental perceptions of LEA application forms. The survey asked about parental experiences of completing an application form to apply for schools within their own LEA area. In addition, parents were asked how many separate forms they completed, that is including applications to schools directly and to LEAs other than their own.

Nine in ten parents (90%) said that they completed an application form provided by their own LEA. This proportion was higher amongst parents of the September 2000 entry cohort (92%) than those whose child had started school in September 1999 (88%). However, views on the ease of completing the application form and satisfaction with its presentation and coherence did not vary by cohort. Over both cohorts, only 3% of parents reported difficulties in completing the application form. Three per cent of parents were not satisfied that instructions on the completion of the form were well presented and easy to follow.

Table 3.10

Table 3.10 Completion of own LEA application form

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>	
All parents/those completing own LEA form	
	%
% parents completing own LEA application form	90
<i>Weighted base</i>	2170
<u>Parents who completed own LEA application form</u>	
Views on ease of completing form	
Easy	94
No view	4
Difficult	3
Satisfaction with instructions on completing form	
Satisfied	92
No view	5
Dissatisfied	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	1949

Parents were also asked the total number of application forms that they were required to complete as part of the process of applying for school places. Three per cent of parents said that they had not completed a single form. The explanation for this finding appears to be that over 90% of these parents reported that they had been offered a single school by their LEA at the beginning of the application process and they had not actively pursued applications for other schools.

Seventy-two per cent of parents said that they completed a single application form, 18% had completed two forms and 8% had completed three or more application forms.

Table 3.11

Table 3.11 Number of application forms completed by parents

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>	
Number of forms	%
0	3
1	72
2	18
3 or more	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2170</i>

3.9 Expressing preferences for schools

In this section, the experiences of parents who said that they were asked by their LEA to list their preferences for schools in rank order are examined. When listing schools on their LEA form, parents need to consider whether or not the schools they most prefer are likely to be over-subscribed. If their preferred schools are likely to receive more applicants than places available, parents need to consider their chances of fulfilling the over-subscription criteria. This is particularly important in areas where there are a number of popular schools (see section 3.1).

Two-thirds of parents (66%) reported that they were asked by their LEA to list their preference for schools, on their application form, in rank order. These parents were asked whether or not they had listed schools on their application form in the order that they most wanted them. More than nine in ten parents said that they had done so (93%).

Table 3.12 Parents' perception of method of expressing preferences

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Parents' expressing rank multiple preference

	%
% all parents listing preference in rank order	66
<i>Weighted base</i>	2170
Of which:	
% listing in ideal order of preference	93
% taking advice about order of listing	31
<i>Weighted base</i>	1437
Of which:	
% changing order of preferences	9
<i>Weighted base</i>	439

Approximately, one in three of these parents (31%) said that they had taken advice on the order in which they should list schools on their application form. Among those who had taken such advice, around one in ten (9%) said that this had led them to change the order in which they were planning to list schools.

Table 3.12

More than half of those who had taken advice received it from their LEA (54%); 31% received it from their child's primary school; 17% received it from secondary schools; and 8% received from other parents, friends and relatives.

3.10 Admission by interview or test

Admission by interview was addressed by the new Code of Practice on admissions which came into force for the September 2000 entry cohort. Under the Code, church schools are allowed to interview to assess the suitability of potential pupils. Other schools are not permitted to use interviews as a formal part of the admission process.

The survey asked parents if they or their child had been interviewed for a place in any of the schools in which they had applied for a place. Ten per cent of parents reported that their child had been interviewed by at least one of the schools to which they had applied for a place.

Table 3.13

Table 3.13 Admission by interview

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

% parents	
	<u> </u> <u> </u> %
% parents whose child interviewed by a school	10
% parents interviewed by a school	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	2170

Table 3.14 Status of schools in which admission by interviews perceived

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

% all schools in which admission by interview reported	
	<u> </u> <u> </u> %
Voluntary Aided	45
Community	29
Foundation	17
City Technology College	8
Other schools	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	258

Percentages add to more than 100% since child may have been interviewed by more than one school

It was possible to examine the characteristics of schools in which an interview was reported to have formed part of the application process. Nearly half of the schools in which the child was reported to have been interviewed were voluntary aided schools (45%). These are largely denominational schools. Nearly a third (29%) of these schools were community schools in which it is unlikely that formal interviews would have played a part in the application process. However, they were perceived to have done so by some parents.

Table 3.14

Around one in ten parents (9%) reported that a test formed part of the application process for one of the schools that they applied for. In virtually all cases it was a general ability test. Less than half of one per cent of all parents said that their child had sat an aptitude test.

Two thirds of those who reported their child having sat a test had applied for their child to do. Among the schools in which tests formed part of the application process two thirds were selective (67%) and most of the remainder were comprehensive schools (31%).

Table 3.15

Table 3.15 Admission by test

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>	
% parents	%
All parents	
% parents reporting application included test	9
% sitting ability tests	8
% sitting aptitude tests	1
% entered for test by primary school	2
% in which children selected for test	1
% in which parent applied for child to sit test	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2170</i>
Parents reporting at least one application included test	
% of tests for selective schools	67
% of tests for comprehensive schools	31
% of tests for secondary modern schools	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>185</i>

4. Parental satisfaction with application process and outcome

Summary

- 85% of parents were offered a place in their *favourite* school.
- 92% received an offer of a place in a survey measured *first preference* school and 96% in a school for which a preference was stated.
- About 4% of parents were not offered a place in a school for which a preference was expressed.
- Eight per cent of parents reported that there were other state schools they would have preferred for their children over the ones in which they had applied for a place.
- Parents living in London were the least likely to be offered a place for their child in their *favourite* school (68% compared with 85% nationally).
- Appeals were highest in London but, as with other outcome measures, did not vary significantly by general socio-economic factors.
- The vast majority of parents said that they were satisfied with the outcome of the application process (91%). A slightly lower proportion (85%) expressed satisfaction with the process itself.
- Views on the process were coloured by the outcome, and satisfaction with the outcome was related to whether or not parents were offered their preferred school.
- For parents who had experience of their child attending a secondary school, one in ten felt less satisfied with the outcome than they had before their child had actually started at the school; more than one in three (37%) said they were more satisfied and half said they felt the same.

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is parental satisfaction with the outcome of the application process. The chapter examines a number of objective measures of parental satisfaction, including the proportion of parents offered places in preferred schools and the number of parents lodging an appeal with an admission authority. In addition, the chapter investigates subjective measures of satisfaction. The survey asked parents to rate their satisfaction with the application process and with the outcome for their child.

Results in this chapter are presented separately for parents of children entering secondary education in September 1999, and for those starting in September 2000. In contrast to other chapters, the analysis shows some differences between these two cohorts. Interpretation of these differences should take into account the possibility that they arise from differential exposure to the whole process of choosing a secondary school and experiencing the results of the process and the choices made. At the time of fieldwork, in summer 2000, the 1999 cohort of parents had completed the process of choosing a school. Their children had been

attending secondary school for at least two full terms. In contrast, parents in the 2000 cohort had only recently completed their applications. Most had accepted an offer, but their children had not yet started secondary school. Others in the 2000 cohort who had been refused a place at the time they were interviewed may have been subsequently offered a place.

4.2 Measuring outcomes

Stage 1 of this research describes arrangements for parents to express a preference for a school (see Part 1, Chapter 4). It is possible for parents to express a preference for more than one school. Most LEAs invite them to name more than one on the LEAs preference form. And a parent may apply to more than one admission authority, for example to more than one LEA, or to their own LEA and to a school that is its own admission authority (such as a foundation or voluntary aided school). The extent to which parents have such an opportunity varies. In general, parents living in more densely populated areas, such as large cities, will have a greater number of schools within reasonable travelling distance, and those will have a greater number of admission authorities. However, even in less densely populated areas, there may be opportunity for parents to express preferences to a number of admission authorities.

The survey provides information on parents' preference order in their own LEA, where the LEA asked them to express it. Around two in three parents reported that their own LEA asked them to rank in preference order the LEA controlled schools they most wanted their child to attend. Further, 44% of parents applied to at least one school which was its own admission authority (see Chapter 3). As the term *first preference application* is open to several meanings, for analysis purposes *survey-measured stated first preference* applications refers to all those: (1) ranked first in applications to LEA-controlled schools in the parents' own LEA; (2) made to schools which are their own admissions authorities, and (3) applications to LEA controlled schools in an LEA other than the one in which the parent is resident.

The analysis also covers the schools parents wanted most. As outlined in the previous section, the survey collected the names of all schools to which parents applied for a place. Parents were asked which of these schools they most wanted their child to attend. For the purposes of analysis this school is referred to as the parent's *favourite* school.

Thus, the following measures are analysed below:

- Parents receiving offers of places in their *favourite* school;
- Parents receiving offers for survey-measured stated first preference schools (whether or not they were favourites);
- Parents who received an offer for a school which was neither their survey-measured stated first preference nor (if different) their favourite, but for which they had expressed a preference; and,
- Parents receiving offers in schools which were not among either their favourites or those for which they had expressed any preference.

4.3 The offer of places in schools

As Table 4.1 shows, 85% of parents were offered a place in their *favourite* school. The proportion of parents receiving such an offer was lower amongst parents of the 2000 entry cohort (81%) than the 1999 cohort (89%). However, as noted earlier, a proportion of those who reported a rejection at the time of interview may subsequently be offered a place.

Ninety-two per cent of parents received an offer of a place at a survey-measured stated first preference school, that is to say at their first preference school in their own LEA or at a community or controlled school in another LEA or which was its own admissions authority. Ninety-six percent of parents received an offer of a place in a school for which they had expressed at least some preference.

Table 4.1 Outcome measures by cohort

% offered a place in	1999 and 2000 entry cohorts		
	Entry cohort of selected child		
	September 1999 %	September 2000 %	Total %
In a preferred school			
Favourite school	89	81	85
First preference school	93	91	92
Any school for which preference expressed	97	95	96
In a school for which no preference stated			
Parent satisfied with outcome	2.3	1.8	2.1
Parent dissatisfied with outcome	0.3	2.8	1.4
No view	0.3	0.3	0.3
<i>Weighted base</i>	1192	977	2170

Nationally, 4% of parents were offered a place in a school for which no preference had been stated. Nevertheless, among these parents around half reported they were satisfied with the school they had been offered.

Table 4.1

In order to explore the hypothesis that some parents do not apply to popular schools because they are often over-subscribed, parents were asked if there were any state schools they had not applied to but would have preferred their child to attend. Eight per cent of parents reported that there were other state schools they would have preferred for their children over the ones in which they had applied for a place.

4.4 Factors associated with lack of success in an application for a favourite school

Previous research has examined variation in success in being offered a place in preferred schools according to the characteristics of the child's parents. For example, it has been suggested that children of unemployed fathers are less likely to attend their first choice school.⁹ Once other factors had been controlled for, it was found that there was not a strong relationship between the background characteristics of parents and their likelihood of being offered their favourite school.

A multivariate analysis, using logistic regression, found that only four variables had an independent significant association with whether or not the parents were offered a place in their favourite school. The four factors were: whether or not the parent had previous experience of the process; mother's ethnic origin; parental LEA type and the entry cohort of the child.

The variable that was most strongly related to our outcome measure was parental LEA type. Specifically, parents in London were the least likely to be offered a place in their favourite school (an odds ratio of 0.3 : 1.0 compared with the reference category). The three other variables did not exercise such a strong independent effect.

The ethnic minority community is disproportionately represented in urban centres. For example, the last Census recorded that ethnic minorities represented one in five Londoners, compared with one in twenty across the country as a whole. Despite this, both parental LEA type and ethnic origin were found to be independently associated with the likelihood of not being offered favourite school. Holding other factors constant, the impact of the mother being non-white was to decrease the likelihood of being offered one's favourite school by half (0.6 : 1.0).

A greater contrast is apparent between white mothers in Shire areas and non-white mothers in London. Holding previous experience and entry cohort constant, a non-white mother in London had an odds ratio of 0.18 relative to a white mother living in the Shires (0.18:1.0). In other words, a white mother of a child living in London and entering secondary school in 1999, with previous experience of the process, was five times more likely to be offered their favourite school than a non-white mother with the same experience but living in a Shire authority.

Everything else being equal, the model suggested that those applying for a school for the first time were statistically significantly less likely to be offered their

⁹ Fitz, J. Halpin, D. and Power, S. Grant maintained schools: education in the market place, London: Koogan Page, 1993.

favourite school than those with previous experience (comparative odds of 0.5 : 1.0). It is difficult to judge whether this reflects better knowledge of ‘working the system’, or is simply a reflection of the priority commonly given in admission criteria to children who have older siblings attending a school.

The model suggested that the year of entry was also independently associated with our dependent variable. As outlined above, part of the explanation for the lower proportion of the 2000 entry cohort being offered their favourite school relates to the timing of the survey.

Table 4.2

**Table 4.2 Likelihood of being offered place in favourite school
(based on odds ratios from logistic regression)**

Characteristic	Odds ratios	1999 and 2000 entry cohorts	
		95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
Mothers' ethnic origin			
White	1.0	..	..
Non-White	0.6	0.4	0.9
Parental LEA type			
London borough	0.3	0.2	0.4
Metropolitan authority	0.9	0.7	1.3
Unitary authority	0.8	0.5	1.1
Shire authority	1.0	..	..
Previous experience of choosing a secondary school			
Has previous experience	1.0	..	..
No previous experience	0.5	0.4	0.7
Entry cohort of selected child			
September 1999	1.8	1.4	2.4
September 2000	1.0	..	..
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	0.1	..	..

For reference, **Table 4.3** presents in tabular form the relationship between the dependent variable (whether or not a parent was offered their favourite school) and other variables in the model.

4.5 Multiple offers

As described above, it is possible for parents to apply to more than one admission authority. Therefore, it is possible for some parents to receive multiple offers. Given that admission authorities do not always operate to a common timetable, parents may decide to hold offers of places until they know the outcome of the application to the school they most wanted their child to attend. Thus the rational, strategic decision of an individual parent can have an adverse effect on the operation of the admission system, leading to greater uncertainty and, possibly, dissatisfaction with the process. An attempt was made to explore this issue by analysing the number of offers that were accepted by parents. Those who accepted more than one offer were defined as *holding places*.

Across the whole sample, around half of parents (55%) reported they applied for more than one school. The proportion of parents applying to more than one school was higher amongst the 2000 entry cohort (59%) than the 1999 cohort (52%).

However, the proportion receiving more than one offer (11%) did not vary by cohort. Nor did the percentage that were defined as *holding offers* (2%).

Table 4.4 also provides percentages based on those who applied for more than one school. Of this sub-sample, around one in five were offered more than one school place and four per cent accepted more than one offer.

Table 4.4

Table 4.4 Acceptance of multiple offers by cohort

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

	Entry cohort of selected child		Total %
	September 1999 %	September 2000 %	
Sample of all parents			
Applying to more than one school	52	59	55
Offered more than one school	11	11	11
Accepting more than one offer	2	2	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	1192	977	2170
Parents applying to more than 1 school			
Applying to more than one school	100	100	100
Offered more than one school	22	19	20
Accepting more than one offer	4	3	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	623	575	1198

Table 4.3 Proportion of parents receiving offer of favourite school by selected background characteristics

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

	Entry cohort of selected child		
	September 1999	September 2000	Total
	%	%	%
All parents	88.7	81	85.2
Experience of choosing secondary school			
Has previous experience	92	86	89
No previous experience	86	77	81
Parental LEA type			
London borough	75	59	68
Metropolitan authority	90	85	88
Unitary authority	89	82	86
Shire authority	92	85	89
Tenure			
Owner occupier	87	83	85
Social rented sector tenant	91	76	84
Private renter	93	78	86
Highest educational qualification of mother			
Degree or equivalent or higher	83	85	84
Other qualifications	89	83	86
No qualifications	90	75	84
Parents' marital and employment status			
Couple, both employed	89	84	87
Couple, both non-employed	93	81	87
Couple, one employed	88	80	84
Lone parent, employed	85	81	83
Lone parent, non-employed	89	71	81
Social class of mother			
I & II	87	81	84
III non-manual	89	81	85
III , IV, V	90	84	88
Never worked	86	71	80
Ethnic origin of mother			
White	90	82	87
Non-white	75	71	73
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1190</i>	<i>974</i>	<i>2164</i>

4.6 Appeals

Parents who are not satisfied with the outcome of the application process may appeal against non-admission. As Stage 1 of the research noted, administrative records suggest that the number of appeals nationally has been rising in recent years.

About 5% of respondents to our survey reported that they appealed against non-admission to a secondary school of their choice. The survey estimate of appeals by 5% of respondents has a confidence interval of +/- 1% at the 95% confidence level; that is, on average, 19 out of 20 samples will correctly estimate the population value as in the range 4%-6%. The administrative estimate of appeals heard (6%) is within the sampling error for the survey estimate. The administrative estimate for the proportion of appeals lodged was 9% in 1998/99.

The survey question did not make a distinction between appeals lodged and appeals heard. Taken literally the main question on the topic should have led to the more inclusive answer, i.e. all appeals lodged. If, however, the question had been interpreted by all respondents in the most inclusive manner, some would not have been able to answer the subsequent detailed questions about the appeal since they did not go on to that stage. There were, in fact, few cases where respondents were unable to answer in detail about the appeal at stages where it was heard. This suggests that by the time of the fieldwork, there were some parents who had appealed and withdrawn their appeals; these parents regarded themselves as not having appealed and answered accordingly. If this is correct, the appropriate comparison is with the administrative estimate, for 1998/99, of 6% - within the sampling error for the survey estimate.

Further, the different bases upon which the estimates are made mean that the sources are not directly comparable. The survey estimate is based on the number of *parents* who made at least one appeal as a proportion of all parents applying for a place in a State school. The administrative figures are based on the total number of *appeals* made by all parents as a proportion of total admissions for the relevant school year.

In general, the survey proportion of parents appealing against non-admission did not vary by the background characteristics of parents. The one exception was that 12% of parents resident in London made an appeal compared with 4% in all other LEA types. Administrative statistics also show that there are more appeals in London than elsewhere. As noted above, parents living in London were the least likely to be offered places in their preferred schools.

Twenty-five per cent of appeals against non-admission had been successful, 62% had failed and, at the time of the survey, the outcome for 13% was not known. Excluding those cases which had not yet been decided, 29% of appeals had been successful.

Table 4.5

Table 4.5 Appeals against non-admission

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>	
% parents	%
% parents making at least one appeal	5
<i>Weighted base</i>	2170
Parents making an appeal	
% appeals won	25
% appeals lost	62
% still waiting to hear	13
<i>Base= total number of appeals made by parents</i>	129
Satisfaction with appeals process	
Satisfied	25
No view	9
Dissatisfied	66
<i>Base=appeals case decided</i>	108

Note: some parents made more than one appeal

4.7 Parents' satisfaction with the application process

All parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the application process and outcome. A lower proportion of parents expressed satisfaction with the application process (85%) than with the outcome (91%). This was true of parents of children in both the 1999 and 2000 entry cohorts.

Tables 4.6 and 4.7

It was anticipated that views on the process were likely to be coloured by the outcome. This was borne out by the analysis. Parents who were dissatisfied with the outcome also expressed the highest level of dissatisfaction with the process. Overall, 46% of parents who said that they were dissatisfied with the outcome said that they felt similarly about the process. This compared with 7% of parents who were content with the outcome expressing dissatisfaction with the process. The relationship between satisfaction with the outcome and satisfaction with the process was most marked amongst parents of 2000 entrants. In this group 60% of those dissatisfied with the outcome also reported dissatisfaction with the process. This was twice as high as among the 1999 entry cohort (30%). Part of the explanation may lie in how recently the cohorts had experienced the process.

Table 4.6

Table 4.6 Satisfaction with the application process by outcome and cohort

Process satisfaction	Outcome satisfaction			
	Satisfied	No view	Dissatisfied	Total
	%	%	%	%
<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>				
September 1999 entry cohort				
Satisfied	87	[62]	53	84
No view	5	[24]	17	7
Dissatisfied	8	[15]	30	9
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1085</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>1190</i>
September 2000 entry cohort				
Satisfied	91	[63]	31	86
No view	3	[17]	9	4
Dissatisfied	6	[21]	60	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>878</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>976</i>
All parents				
Satisfied	89	60	42	85
No view	5	22	13	5
Dissatisfied	7	18	46	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1963</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>2170</i>

4.8 Factors associated with parents' satisfaction with the application process

In addition to expressed satisfaction with outcomes, it might be expected that other factors would be associated with views on the application process. To examine this the relationship between process satisfaction and a range of other variables was analysed. The following variables were examined:

- Age of mother;
- Highest educational qualification of mother;
- Social class of mother;
- Parents' employment and marital status;
- Household income, equivalised to take account of different household types and sizes;
- Tenure;
- Parental LEA type;
- Whether or not parents had previous experience of choosing a secondary school.

In general, there was a weak relationship between these variables and views on the application process.

This was confirmed by a series of multivariate analyses focusing on the variables associated with process dissatisfaction. When outcome measures, such as whether the parent was offered a place in their favoured school or expressed satisfaction with the outcome, were added to the model these were shown to be the variables exercising the greatest independent effect. Alongside these outcome variables, tenure alone was indicated to have an independent association.

4.9 Parents' satisfaction with the outcome of the process

Above, in the discussion of process satisfaction, a general overview of satisfaction with the outcome was provided. In this section, the relationship between parents' expressed satisfaction with the outcome and the particular nature of the outcome they experienced is considered in more detail.

As expected, parents who were offered a place in their favourite school expressed higher levels of satisfaction with the outcome than those who were refused. The proportion of parents dissatisfied with the outcome was seven times higher among those not offered a place in their favourite school (23%) than those who were (3%). As with expression of process satisfaction, this was more striking amongst the latest cohort of parents.

Table 4.7

Table 4.7 shows parents' satisfaction with the outcome by whether or not they were offered a place in their *favourite* school. In the 1999 cohort 78% of parents who were not offered a place in their *favourite* school nevertheless expressed satisfaction with the outcome. The comparable proportion among parents in the 2000 cohort

was lower (60%). As shown below, this result is related to the passage of time and the fact that perceptions may change once children start secondary school.

Table 4.7 Satisfaction with the outcome by whether offered place in favourite school and cohort

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>			
Outcome satisfaction	Whether offered place in favourite school		
	Offered place %	Refused place %	Total %
September 1999 entry cohort			
Satisfied	93	78	91
No view	2	10	3
Dissatisfied	5	12	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	1055	135	1193
September 2000 entry cohort			
Satisfied	97	60	90
No view	1	8	3
Dissatisfied	2	31	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	789	186	977
All parents			
Satisfied	95	67	91
No view	2	9	3
Dissatisfied	3	23	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	1744	320	2170

Table 4.8 How views have changed since child started secondary school by outcome satisfaction

<i>1999 entry cohort</i>				
How views have changed	Satisfaction with school offered before start of term			
	Satisfied %	No view %	Dissatisfied %	Total %
More satisfied	40	[6]	3	37
Feel the same	53	[54]	29	52
Less satisfied	6	[40]	68	11
<i>Weighted base</i>	1086	35	66	995

An attempt to explore this hypothesis was made in the interviews in May-July 2000 by asking parents of children who started secondary school in September 1999 how their views on the school compared with how they felt before their child started. As Table 4.8 shows, only around one in ten parents (11%) felt less satisfied after two terms in secondary school than they were before their child started. More than one in three (37%) reported increased levels of satisfaction and one in two said that they felt the same (52%). Among those who were dissatisfied with the outcome of the

process feelings appeared to have hardened. Only three per cent had become less dissatisfied.

Table 4.8

4.10 Factors associated with parents' satisfaction with the outcome of the process

A similar analysis to that previously described, for process satisfaction, was undertaken for outcome dissatisfaction. The same background characteristics were included in the model together with a variable indicating whether or not the parents were offered a place in their *favourite* school. This last variable, not surprisingly, had by far the strongest independent effect. Only one other variable, a combined measure of parents' marital and employment status, was predicted to have an independent association with outcome satisfaction.

The model predicted, that holding marital and employment status constant, those who were not offered their *favourite* school were eight times more likely to express dissatisfaction with the outcome than those who did receive such an offer (odds ratio of 8.0 : 1.0).

Holding everything else constant, non-employed lone parents were twice as likely to express dissatisfaction with the outcome than dual employed couples (odds ratio of 2.5 : 1.0).

Thus, compared with dual employed couples who had received an offer of their *favourite* school, lone parents without paid work who were not offered their *favourite* school were 20 times more likely to express dissatisfaction with the process.

Table 4.9

**Table 4.9 Likelihood of parental dissatisfaction with outcome of application process
(based on odds ratios from logistic regression)**

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>			
Characteristic	Odds ratios	95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
Parents' marital and employment status			
Couple, both employed	1.0	..	..
Couple, both non-employed	1.3	0.5	3.5
Couple, one employed	0.8	0.4	1.4
Lone parent, employed	1.0	0.5	1.9
Lone parent, non-employed	2.5	1.5	4.1
Whether or not parent offered place in favourite school			
Offered place	1.0	..	..
Not offered place	8.0	5.3	12.0
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	0.2	..	..

5. Factors that parents take into account when choosing secondary schools

Summary

- The most common reasons that parents gave for wanting a place in their *favourite* school (the school they most wanted their child to attend, from those they applied to) were related to:
 - ◆ academic outcomes (43%);
 - ◆ reasons which commonly appear in published over-subscription criteria, such as whether a sibling attended or nearness from home (40%), though parents mentioned these reasons for their own sake and not because they were over-subscription criteria;
 - ◆ travel convenience (35%); and
 - ◆ the child's preferences (31%).
- Multivariate analysis examined the characteristics of parents who cited academic outcomes among the reasons why they chose their *favourite* school. Controlling for other variables, the following groups were shown to have increased likelihood of citing such factors:
 - ◆ owner occupiers;
 - ◆ non-white mothers;
 - ◆ mothers in Social Class I and II; and,
 - ◆ parents resident in London boroughs.
- Almost three in ten parents (28%) did not apply to their nearest state school. Controlling for other factors, parents who lived in London were two and a half times more likely not to apply to their nearest school than parents in Shire LEAs.
- The main reasons why parents said they did not apply to their nearest school were that the school had:
 - ◆ poor discipline (35%);
 - ◆ poor academic results (31%); and
 - ◆ bullying problems (15%).◆ 12% of parents said that they did not apply to the nearest school because it was not a denominational school.
- Sixty per cent of parents' *favourite* schools had higher average GCSE performance scores at age 15 than their LEA average.

5.1 Introduction

In order to explore the factors that parents consider when choosing secondary schools to apply to, respondents were asked a series of questions about why they applied or did not apply to particular state schools that were open to them. Parents were asked the names of all the state schools in which they had applied for a place for their children. The school names were coded during the interview from a computerised list of all secondary schools in England, which was provided by the

Department. Parents who had applied for only one school were asked the reasons why they wanted their child to attend that particular school. Parents who had expressed a preference for more than one school were asked which school they most wanted their child to attend and the reasons why they wanted their child to go there.

The media and public discussion sometimes suggest that there are particular schools which are unpopular among parents. In order to examine this further, parents were asked whether or not they had applied to their nearest state school. Those who had not done so were asked their reasons.

5.2 Reasons why parents want a place in their *favourite* school

This analysis uses the term *favourite* to describe the school that the parents most wanted their child to attend from among those which they expressed a preference. The term was not used in the interviews with parents.

The reasons that parents gave for wanting a place in their *favourite* school were coded by interviewers. For the purpose of analysis, the 76 original codes were grouped together into 13 categories. These groups were confirmed by the results of a principal components analysis. The nationally representative survey did not interview children. Thus, the category labelled as *child preferences* refers to parental reporting of children having cited a reason for preferring a particular school.

Parents could cite more than one reason for wanting a place in their *favourite* school. The most commonly cited reasons were related to:

- Academic outcomes, such as scoring well in performance tables (43%);
- The same factors as many authorities use as over-subscription criteria, such as whether a sibling attended the school or the distance from home (40%); it should be noted that these reasons were chosen for their own sake and not because they were over-subscription criteria
- Travel convenience (35%); and,
- Child preferences (as perceived by parents), such as having friends going to the school (31%).

About one in seven (15%) parents cited reasons related to the ethos of the school and 14% cited reasons related to the schools' resources or facilities and the quality of the staff. Encouragingly, fewer than 0.5% of parents said that they had a limited choice of schools or no choice at all.

Table 5.1

A preliminary exploration of the data was carried out in order to identify which factors might have an influence on parental reasons for choosing their *favourite* school. Each of the 13 grouped reasons were analysed by the following variables:

- Entry cohort of selected child;
- Whether or not parents had previous experience of choosing a secondary school;
- Parental LEA type;
- Whether or not parents were resident in an EiC area;
- Household income, equivalised to take account of household type and size;
- Ethnic origin of mother;
- Mother's Social class;
- Parents employment and marital status; and,
- Mother's highest educational qualification.

Table 5.1 Reasons for wanting a place in favourite school

All parents	<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>
Reason related to:	%
Academic outcomes	43
Convenience*	40
Travel convenience	35
Child preference	31
School ethos	15
Quality of staff	14
Resources/ facilities	13
Behaviour of pupils	10
Curriculum or teaching methods	8
School status	6
Gender intake	4
Social characteristics	1
Limited/ no choice	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2170</i>

* Includes nearness to home, local school and sibling attends

Note: Percentages total more than 100% as parents could give more than one answer

There was no important difference between parents of September 1999 entrants and the parents of September 2000 entrants in their reasons for choosing their *favourite* school. All further analysis combines the cohorts.

Following the preliminary exploration of the data, a series of logistic regressions were carried out on some of the factors likely to influence the reasons that parents

cite for choosing their *favourite* school. The purpose was to identify the relative importance of each factor acting independently.

Table 5.2 Likelihood of citing academic outcomes as a reason for choosing favourite school (based on odds ratios from logistic regression)

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>			
Characteristic	Odds ratios	95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
Parental LEA type			
London borough	1.5	1.1	2.0
Metropolitan authority	1.1	0.9	1.4
Unitary authority	1.5	1.2	1.9
Shire authority	1.0	..	..
Tenure			
Owner occupier	1.0	..	..
Social rented sector tenant	0.6	0.5	0.8
Private renter	0.8	0.5	1.1
Ethnic origin of mother			
White	1.0	..	..
Non-white	1.7	1.2	2.5
Social class of mother			
I & II	1.0	..	..
III non-manual	0.9	0.7	1.2
III, IV & V manual	0.6	0.5	0.8
Never worked	0.4	0.3	0.6
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	0.1	..	..

Academic Outcomes

Table 5.2 shows the factors independently associated with whether or not parents cited academic outcomes among the reasons why they chose their *favourite* school. Analysis of each factor takes a sub-group of the parents as the basis for comparison with other sub-groups; the sub-group which provides the basis for comparison always has odds of 1.0.

Controlling for other factors in the regression model, parents who lived in London Boroughs or Unitary authorities were one and a half times more likely than those living in Shire authorities to have cited academic outcomes (1.5 : 1.0).

Parents who lived in social sector rented accommodation were just over half as likely as owner occupiers to cite academic outcomes among their reasons for choosing their *favourite* school (0.6 : 1.0)

The ethnic group of the mother was independently associated with citing academic outcomes: the odds of non-white mothers doing so were almost twice those of white mothers (1.7 : 1.0). It should be noted that the non-white mothers in the sample were of a range of ethnic origins. The sample was not large enough to explore variation in the responses of mothers from different ethnic minority groups.

The odds of parents citing academic reasons were lower if the mother was in a manual social class than they were if the mother was in a non manual social class (0.6:1.0). Parents among whom the mother had never worked, and thus for whom a social class was not assigned, were also half as likely as those in Social Class I and II to have cited academic related reasons (0.4 : 1.0).

Table 5.2

The odds of the above four factors in combination with each other can be examined by multiplying the odds ratios. The combined reference category is formed from the reference categories for each factor: parents who lived in Shire authorities, were owner occupiers, and where the mother was of white ethnic origin and was in Social Class I and II. The sub-group of parents who contrasted most strongly with the reference group in their likelihood of giving academic outcomes among the reasons why they chose their *favourite* school were parents renting from the social sector and in the mother having never worked. This sub-group of parents was four times less likely than the reference group to cite academic outcomes (0.24 : 1.0).

At the other end of the scale, the parents who had the highest odds of citing academic outcomes lived in London, were owner occupiers, were of a non white ethnic origin and the mother was in Social Class I and II. These parents were around three times as likely as the reference category to have cited academic outcomes among the reasons why they chose their *favourite* school (2.6 : 1.0). They were more than ten times as likely to give this reason as parents in the sub-group, discussed above, comprising parents in the Shire authorities who rented in the social sector, were of white ethnic origin and where the mother had never worked.

Table 5.3 provides an analysis of the same topic from a different perspective. The analysis so far has explored the independent effects of social background factors. For some policy purposes it may be useful to examine the responses of different social groups without isolating the independent effects which combine to form them. Table 5.3 shows the variation among parents in the probability of citing

academic outcomes among the reasons for choosing their *favourite* school, by the parental LEA type, tenure, social class of the mother and ethnic origin of mother. In this analysis, for example, differences between parental LEA types will be due in part to differences between these units by the other characteristics (and other unmeasured characteristics).

Owner occupiers were more likely than those in rented accommodation to cite reasons related to academic outcomes (48% of owner-occupiers compared with 39% of private renters and 32% of social sector renters). Around half (51%) the parents of children whose mother was non-white cited academic outcomes, compared with 42% of those with children whose mother was white.

Approximately half of the parents of children whose mother was in a non-manual social class cited academic outcomes (51% of those in Social Class I and II; and 48% of those in Social Class III non-manual), compared with only 36% of those with children whose mother was in a manual social class, and 31% of those whose mother had never worked.

Table 5.3

**Table 5.3 Parents citing reasons which relate to academic outcomes
by selected background characteristics**

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

% citing reasons	%	<i>Base=N</i>
All parents	43	2170
Parental LEA type		
London borough	49	286
Metropolitan authority	41	535
Unitary authority	48	386
Shire authority	40	576
Tenure		
Owner occupier	48	1440
Social rented sector tenant	32	577
Private renter	39	148
Ethnic origin of mother		
White	42	1956
Non-white	51	170
Social class of mother		
I & II	51	486
III non-manual	48	658
III , IV, V manual	36	780
Never worked	31	194

Reasons which coincide with over-subscription criteria

Table 5.4 shows the factors independently associated with whether parents cited reasons commonly taken into account by the admission authorities, for example whether a sibling attended the school or the distance from home. The parents valued these reasons for their own sake.

The odds of parents citing reasons for choosing their *favourite* school which coincide with those taken into account by admission authorities were slightly lower if the parents had no previous experience of choosing a secondary school than the odds if parents had some previous experience (0.7 : 1.0).

Controlling for other factors in the model, parents who rented their accommodation from the private sector were about one and a half times more likely than owner-occupiers to give reasons which coincide with over-subscription criteria when choosing their *favourite* school (1.5 : 1.0). Similarly, parents who rented their accommodation from the social sector were just under one and a half times more likely than owner-occupiers to take such criteria into account (1.3 : 1.0).

Table 5.4

Table 5.4 Likelihood of citing reasons which coincide with over-subscription criteria (based on odds ratios from logistic regression)

Characteristic	Odds ratios	1999 and 2000 entry cohorts	
		95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
Previous experience of choosing a secondary school			
Has previous experience	1.0	..	..
No previous experience	0.7	0.6	0.9
Tenure			
Owner occupier	1.0	..	..
Social rented sector tenant	1.3	1.0	1.6
Private renter	1.5	1.1	2.1
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	0.02		

Travel convenience

For reasons related to travel convenience, the modelling found only one variable - tenure - to be independently associated with increased likelihood of citing such factors as among the reasons why they chose their *favourite* school. Parents who rented their accommodation from the social sector were one and a half times more

likely than parents who were owner occupiers to cite travel convenience among the reasons for choosing their *favourite* school (1.4 : 1.0). The odds of parents who were renting their accommodation privately were not statistically significant different from parents in the reference category (owner occupiers).

Table 5.5

Table 5.5 Likelihood of citing travel convenience as a reason for choosing favourite school (based on odds ratios from logistic regression)

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>			
Characteristic	Odds ratios	95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
Tenure			
Owner occupier	1.0		
Social rented sector tenant	1.4	1.1	1.7
Private renter	1.3	0.9	1.9
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	<i>0.1</i>		

Table 5.6 shows that 41% of social sector renters cited travel convenience among their reasons for choosing their *favourite* school compared with 33% of owner occupiers. This table does not control for other factors.

Table 5.6 Factors associated with parents who cited travel convenience as a reason for choosing favourite school by tenure

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

	%	<i>Base=n</i>
All parents	35	2170
Tenure		
Owner occupier	33	1440
Social rented sector tenant	41	577
Private renter	39	148

5.3 The characteristics of *favourite* schools

It was felt that the schools that parents chose as their *favourite* may have had certain characteristics, for example they may have been of a certain legal status or they may have had higher than average performance scores. One might expect, given the findings of previous research, a relationship between the social composition of the school, for example as indicated by the proportion of current pupils eligible for free school meals, and the social class background of prospective parents.¹⁰ In order to examine this, the *favourite* schools were analysed by a number of LEA and school classification variables.

Table 5.7 shows that 62% of the schools that parents chose as their *favourite* were community schools, 18% were foundation schools and 16% were voluntary aided. The majority of the *favourite* schools were mixed sex (86%), 8% were single sex girls schools and a further 6% were single sex boys schools. Almost nine in ten *favourite* schools (88%) were comprehensive schools, 7% had a selective admission policy and 4% were secondary modern schools (i.e. schools that do not select their intake in an area where there are grammar schools).

Table 5.7

Six in ten of the *favourite* schools had higher than average GCSE performance scores at age 15 than their LEA average. When compared to national figures for the proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, 46% of *favourite* schools fell within the two lowest national quintile groups (i.e. in the 40% of schools with the lowest proportions of students receiving free meals). Fifteen per cent of the *favourite* schools were in the 20% of schools with the highest proportions of students receiving free school meals.

Table 5.7

Following the preliminary exploration of the data, logistic regressions were carried out on the gender intake of schools and the GCSE performance of schools. This was to explore whether parents with certain characteristics or within certain types of LEAs were more likely to choose single sex schools or schools with high GCSE performance scores as their *favourite*. The purpose was to identify the relative importance of the parental and LEA characteristics acting independently. One important variable, which could not be controlled for, was the availability of schools of different types across the country. It was not appropriate to carry out logistic regression analysis on the admission policy data because selective schools are not available to parents within all LEAs.

¹⁰ Sparkes, J. Schools, Education and Social Exclusion, CASE paper 29, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics, November 1999.

Table 5.7 Characteristics of favourite schools*1999 and 2000 entry cohorts*

	%
School status	
Community	62
Foundation	18
Voluntary aided	16
Voluntary controlled	3
City Technology College	1
Community special	1
Gender intake	
Mixed	86
Girls	8
Boys	6
Admission policy	
Comprehensive	88
Selective	7
Secondary modern	4
Not known	1
School GCSE Performance	
Higher than LEA average	60
Lower than LEA average	40
Free school meals - quintile groups	
Quintile 1	24
Quintile 2	22
Quintile 3	20
Quintile 4	20
Quintile 5	15
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2170</i>

Table 5.8 shows the parental and LEA characteristics independently associated with parents choosing *favourite* schools that had higher average GCSE scores at 15 years than their LEA average. The odds of parents who lived in social sector rented accommodation choosing *favourite* schools with higher GCSE performance scores than their LEA average were less than half those of parents who were owner occupiers (0.4 : 1.0). Controlling for other factors in the model, parents who lived in London boroughs were twice as likely as those living in other LEAs to have

chosen a *favourite* school with a higher GCSE performance score than its LEA average. (For example, by comparison with the reference group, 1.9 : 1.0) Parents of a child whose mother's highest qualification was below degree level or who had no qualifications were about half as likely to choose a *favourite* school with a high GCSE performance score than parents of a child whose mother had qualifications at degree level or above (the reference category).

Table 5.8 Likelihood of choosing a favourite school that has a higher than LEA average GCSE performance (based on odds ratios from logistic regression)

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>			
Characteristic	Odds ratios	95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
Previous experience of choosing			
Has previous experience	1.0	..	..
No previous experience	1.5	1.2	1.8
Tenure			
Owner occupier	1.0	..	..
Social rented sector tenant	0.4	0.3	0.5
Private renter	0.8	0.6	1.2
Parental LEA type			
London Borough	1.9	1.4	2.6
Metropolitan Authority	1.1	0.9	1.4
Unitary Authority	1.2	0.9	1.5
Shire	1.0	..	..
Highest educational qualification of mother			
Degree level or above	1.0	..	..
Other qualifications	0.6	0.4	0.9
No qualifications	0.5	0.3	0.8
Social class of mother			
I & II	1.0	..	..
III non-manual	0.8	0.6	1.0
III , IV, V manual	0.6	0.5	0.8
Never worked	0.6	0.3	0.9
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	0.1	..	..

When the odds of all the different factors in combination are examined, parents who had no previous experience of choosing a secondary school, were owner occupiers, lived in London boroughs, had a degree level qualification or above and were in Social Class I and II had the highest odds of choosing a *favourite* school with a high GCSE performance score. They were three times more likely to do so than those parents in the reference category (who differed from them in having previous experience of choosing a secondary school, and in living in Shire authorities). Parents who had the lowest odds of choosing a secondary school with a high GCSE performance score had previous experience of choosing a secondary school, lived in social sector rented accommodation, lived in a Shire authority, had no qualifications and were parents among whom the mother had never worked. This group of parents were about eight times less likely than the reference group of parents to choose a *favourite* school with a GCSE performance score above the LEA average.

Table 5.8

Table 5.9 shows the parental and LEA characteristics independently associated with parents that chose a school that had a single sex intake as their *favourite*. The odds of parents choosing a single sex school as their *favourite* school were twice as likely if the parents lived in an EiC Phase 1 area compared with those who did not live in an EiC Phase 1 area. The odds of parents who lived in rented accommodation (either in the social sector or private sector) choosing a single sex school as their *favourite* were about half those of parents who were owner occupiers.

Parents who lived in London Boroughs were over three and a half times more likely than those living in Shire Authorities or Metropolitan Authorities to have chosen a single sex school as their *favourite* school. Parents who lived in an EiC Phase 1 area, were owner occupiers and lived in a London Borough had the highest odds of choosing a single sex school as their *favourite*. They were eight times more likely to do so than those parents in the reference category (who differed from them in living in a non-EiC area in a shire authority).

Table 5.9

**Table 5.9 Likelihood of choosing a favourite school that has a single sex intake
(based on odds ratios from logistic regression)**

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Characteristic	Odds ratios	95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
EiC area - phase1			
EiC area	2.3	1.6	3.4
Non EiC area	1.0	..	..
Tenure			
Owner occupier	1.0	..	..
Social rented sector tenant	0.4	0.3	0.6
Private renter	0.5	0.3	0.9
Parental LEA type			
London Borough	3.5	2.4	5.1
Metropolitan Authority	0.8	0.5	1.2
Unitary Authority	1.2	0.8	1.7
Shire	1.0	..	..
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	<i>0.1</i>	..	..

5.4 Parents who did not apply to their nearest state school

Almost three-quarters of parents, 72%, applied to the nearest state school, but 28% of parents did not. A logistic regression analysis was carried out to identify factors independently associated with parents' choice not to apply to their nearest state school. Parental LEA type and mothers' highest educational qualification were independently associated with whether or not parents decided not to apply for a place in their nearest state school.

Controlling for educational qualification of mother, parents who lived in London Boroughs were three times more likely not to apply to their nearest state school than parents who lived in Shire authorities (2.8 : 1.0). Again controlling for mother's highest qualification, parents who lived in Metropolitan authorities and Unitary authorities were about one and a half times more likely not to have applied to their nearest state school than those who lived in Shire authorities.

Table 5.10

**Table 5.10 Likelihood of not applying to nearest school
(based on odds ratios from logistic regression)**

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>			
Characteristic	Odds ratios	95% confidence intervals	
		Lower	Upper
Resident LEA type			
London borough	2.8	2.1	3.8
Metropolitan authority	1.7	1.3	2.2
Unitary authority	1.5	1.1	2.0
Shire authority	1.0	..	..
Highest educational qualification of mother			
Degree level or above	1.0	..	..
Other qualifications	0.8	0.6	1.1
No qualifications	0.5	0.4	0.8
<i>Nagelerke R²</i>	<i>0.04</i>		

Table 5.11 illustrates that four in ten parents who lived in London Boroughs did not apply to their nearest state school compared with about two in ten (21%) parents who lived in Shire authorities. This table does not control for other factors.

The Department was particularly interested in whether or not the fact that the nearest state school was in an EiC area had an influence on parents' decisions about applying to it. The logistic regression model showed that this was not an independent influence.

Table 5.11 Parents not applying for place in nearest state secondary school by parental LEA type

% not applying to nearest state school		
	%	Base=N
All parents	28	2170
London borough	40	286
Metropolitan authority	31	535
Unitary authority	29	386
Shire authority	21	963

5.5 Reasons why parents did not apply to their nearest state school

As discussed above, only a small number of parents did not apply to their nearest state school. As a result of the small size of this group of parents, the analysis can only examine with any reliability the chief types of reasons that parents cited for not applying to their nearest state school, rather than the wide variety of reasons differing only in detail.

Two of the more detailed reasons that parents cited for not applying to their nearest state school were related to poor discipline.¹¹ When these two reasons were grouped together they accounted for over one-third (35%) of parents. A further two of the more detailed reasons that parents cited for not applying to their nearest school were related to poor academic results.¹² These accounted for just under one-third (31%) of parents. One in seven (14%) parents gave bullying problems as one of the reasons why they did not apply to their nearest school. Twelve per cent of parents stated that one of the reasons why they did not apply to their nearest school was because it was not a denominational school. Only small proportions of parents cited other specific reasons.

Table 5.12

Table 5.12 Main reasons why parents didn't apply to nearest school

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>	
Reason parents did not apply to nearest school	%
School has poor discipline	35
School had poor results	31
School has a bullying problem	14
Not a denominational school	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>596</i>

¹¹ pupils are badly behaved/the school has weak discipline

¹² The school has poor results or the school scores poorly in performance tables

5.6 The characteristics of nearest state schools which were not chosen

State schools which were the nearest but were not applied to were more likely than *favourite* schools to be community schools (74% compared with 62%) and less likely to be foundation schools (12% compared with 18%) or voluntary aided (11% compared with 16%).

Table 5.13

Table 5.13 School status of unpopular schools and popular schools

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

School status	Unpopular schools	Popular schools
	%	%
City Technology College	0	1
Community	74	62
Community special	0	1
Foundation	12	18
Voluntary aided	11	16
Voluntary controlled	2	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	596	2170

State schools which were the nearest but were not applied to were more likely than *favourite* schools to have a mixed gender intake (92% compared with 86%). They were less likely than *favourite* schools to be single sex girls schools (4% compared with 8%).

Table 5.14

Table 5.14 Gender intake of unpopular schools and popular schools

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Gender intake	Unpopular schools	Popular schools
	%	%
Boys	4	6
Girls	4	8
Mixed	92	86
<i>Weighted base</i>	596	2170

More than seven in ten (73%) state schools which were the nearest but were not applied to had lower average GCSE performance scores at 15 years than their LEA average.

Table 5.15

Table 5.15 School performance of unpopular and popular schools compared with LEA average performance score

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

	Unpopular schools	Popular schools
	%	%
Higher than LEA average	27	60
Lower than LEA average	73	40
<i>Weighted base</i>	596	2170

When compared to national figures for the proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, around two-thirds (63%) of the state schools which were the nearest but were not applied to fell within the two highest national quintile groups (i.e. in the 40% of schools which had the highest proportions of pupils receiving free schools meals).

Table 5.16

Table 5.16 Proportion of unpopular and popular schools within the national quintile groups of eligibility for free school meals
1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Quintile group	Unpopular schools	Popular schools
	%	%
Quintile 1	6	24
Quintile 2	11	22
Quintile 3	20	20
Quintile 4	27	20
Quintile 5	36	15
<i>Weighted base</i>	596	2170

6. Parents of children due to enter secondary school in September 2001

Summary

Parents who expected to apply for their children to take up a place from September 2001 were interviewed in September 2000, shortly before they were to embark upon the application process:

- Four in ten parents had already sought information about schools.
- Seven in ten parents said that they thought school performance tables would be very (23%) or fairly important (48%). Twenty percent of parents said that they were not very important and one in ten thought they were not important at all.
- The great majority of parents (94%) already knew which schools they intended to apply for a place for their children. Analysis of the status and location of schools showed:
 - ◆ Two in three parents (67%) expected to apply to a single admission authority.
 - ◆ 86% expected to apply only for places in schools within their own LEA area.
 - ◆ 44% of parents expected to make at least one application to a school that was its own admission authority.
 - ◆ One in four parents (24%) expected to apply for a place in a foundation school and one in four (24%) expected to apply for a place in a voluntary aided school.
 - ◆ One in ten expected to apply for a place in a selective school.

There is some overlap between these categories.

- At the time of the survey, 78% of the 2001 entry cohort parents expected to be offered a place in their most preferred school. This was lower than the proportion of parents who reported that they had actually been offered such a place in the other cohorts who had experience of the process. The survey found that 89% of parents in the 1999 entry cohort and 81% of those in the 2000 entry cohort were, in fact, offered a place in their *favourite* school.
- Among the fifth of parents who were not confident that they would be offered a place in their most preferred school, two in three parents (66%) thought that they would be offered a place in an acceptable school and one in five an unacceptable school.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on parents who expected to apply for their children to take-up a place in a state secondary school from September 2001. Most of these parents were interviewed during September 2000, shortly before they were to embark upon the application process.

This group of parents were asked fewer questions than those in the other two cohorts. The survey asked about their expectations of the application process. The

Department required a smaller achieved sample for parents in this cohort (750) compared with parents in the other two cohorts (1,000 in each). For these two reasons, the analysis presented here is less elaborate than that presented elsewhere in Part 2.

Direct comparison between parents of children in the 2001 entry cohort with those in the 1999 and 2000 entry cohorts is not possible. At the time of the survey, parents in the 2001 entry cohort were answering hypothetical questions about expected behaviour. Parents in the other two cohorts were reporting on actual past behaviour. Nevertheless, it is interesting to compare the two sets of responses, and this is presented here where possible.

6.2 Use of information

As with the other entry cohorts, parents were asked about use of information (see Chapter 2). At the time of the survey, shortly before they were to embark on the application process, four in ten parents said they had already sought information on schools they were considering for their children. Of those who had sought information, over half (52%) said that they had looked at brochures provided by schools. Forty-one percent said they had talked to other parents. Less frequently mentioned sources cited included local education authority (LEA) prospectuses (cited by 27%) and school performance tables (cited by 17%).

Other sources were cited by relatively small proportions of parents – OFSTED inspectors' reports (6%), newspapers (6%), information from parent teacher associations (5%) and the Internet (4%).

Parents who had not, at the time of the survey, sought information were asked what they expected to use. The four sources most frequently cited by parents who had used information were also the four most often cited by those yet to seek information – discussion with other parents were cited by 44%, school brochures by 39%, school performance tables by 23% and LEA prospectuses by 10%.

Table 6.1

Those who had used LEA literature were asked to rate their satisfaction with its presentation and coherence. Eight in ten (82%) expressed satisfaction, one in ten said they were dissatisfied (8%) and the remainder had no view on the matter (9%). The same question was asked of those who had looked at school prospectuses. Amongst those who had consulted school prospectuses, higher levels of satisfaction were expressed compared with users of LEA literature. Eighty-six percent were satisfied the information was well presented and easy to follow and only 2% were dissatisfied.

Table 6.2

Table 6.1 Use of information sources

2001 entry cohort

Information source		
	Sought information	Not sought information
% using source	%	%
School prospectuses	52	39
Talked to other parents	41	44
LEA prospectuses	27	10
Performance tables	17	23
OFSTED reports	6	4
Newspaper articles	6	3
PTA information	5	2
Internet	4	1
Primary school teachers	-	18
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>294</i>	<i>452</i>

Note: Percentages total more than 100% as parents could give more than one answer

Table 6.2 Perceptions of LEA and school prospectuses

2001 entry cohort

Information source		
	LEA prospectuses	School prospectuses
	%	%
% had used LEA booklets	11	21
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>746</i>	<i>746</i>
Users of information:		
Very satisfied	37	35
Fairly satisfied	45	51
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	9	11
Slightly dissatisfied	4	1
Very dissatisfied	4	1
Weighted base	80	154

All parents were asked whether they intended to visit schools as part of the application process. Seventy-eight percent of parents in the 1999 and 2000 entry cohorts reported they had visited schools during the application process (see section 2.2). A higher proportion of parents in the 2001 entry cohort (83%) said that they expected to visit schools. It is impossible to judge the extent to which this reflects a difference in actual behaviour. Despite their expressed intentions, it is possible that some of these parents may not end up visiting schools.

The 2001 entry cohort was also asked how important they thought school performance tables would be in helping them choose schools. Seven in ten said that they thought they would be very (23%) or fairly important (48%). Twenty percent of parents said that they were not very important and one in ten thought they were not important at all.

Table 6.3

Table 6.3 Perceived importance of school performance tables

<i>2001 entry cohort</i>	
	%
Very important	23
Fairly important	48
Not very important	20
Not at all important	9
Weighted base	746

6.3 Knowledge of over-subscription criteria

As with the other entry cohorts, parents were asked whether they knew how over-subscribed schools would allocate their places. Fifty per cent of parents in the September 2001 entry cohort said that they knew how such schools would decide whom to offer places to. This compared with 57% of parents in the other two cohorts combined (see section 3.2). It might be expected that those who had yet to start the formal process were less likely to say that they knew about over-subscription criteria. Nevertheless, the proportion of parents in the 2001 entry cohort saying they knew about such criteria was quite close to that for parents in the other two cohorts.

All parents, including those reporting no definite knowledge of the over-subscription criteria, were asked what criteria they thought authorities would use to

Table 6.4 Over-subscription criteria cited by parents

2001 entry cohort

Reasons cited	Whether or not parent reported knowledge of criteria		
	Yes %	No %	All %
Sibling attended school or parent teaches there	69	35	52
Lived within catchment area	52	37	45
Nearness of home to school	32	35	34
Distance or safety of journey from home	16	17	16
Child's special needs or disability	25	8	16
Religion of family or priest's reference	19	10	15
Performance in primary or junior school	9	12	11
Whether attends link or feeder school	12	9	11
Test of child's ability	11	10	10
If school was first preference	2	2	2
Discipline record of child	1	2	2
Family background	1	1	1
Parent attended school	1	1	1
Lived within the LEA	1	1	1
Interview with parent or child	1	1	1
Whether asked for single sex school	1	0	1
Time on waiting list	0	0	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>375</i>	<i>371</i>	<i>746</i>

allocate places. Table 6.4 shows the criteria mentioned by parents, analysed by whether or not the parents had previously said that they knew how places were allocated. As with the 1999 and 2000 entry cohorts the most frequently cited reasons were among those commonly featuring among over-subscription criteria – sibling attending the school (cited by 52%), catchment area (cited by 45%) and nearness of home to school (cited by 34%).

Table 6.5 Expected application routes

<i>2001 entry cohort</i>	
% of all parents	
	%
Number of admission authorities	
One	67
Two	23
Three	9
Four or more	2
Applying for place wholly within own LEA	86
Applying for place wholly outside own LEA	4
Applying for place inside and outside own LEA	10
Applying for a place wholly in LEA/Vol controlled schools	56
Applying wholly to schools direct	21
Applying for a place in both	23
Applying to at least one school direct	44
Applying for a place in a City Technology College	1
Applying for a place in a Foundation School	24
Applying for a place in a Vol Aided school	24
Applying for place in a selective school	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	694

Note: excludes those who did not know the names of schools in which they expected to apply

6.4 Schools expected to apply for a place

Six percent of parents said that they expected to apply for a place in a private school as well as a state secondary school. More than nine in ten parents (94%) said that they knew which secondary schools they expected to apply for a place for their children.

As with the other entry cohorts, interviewers asked for the names of these schools and interviewers used computer assisted coding to record these schools within the questionnaire (see section 3.4 for a description). The analysis replicated that undertaken for the other two entry cohorts and the results were

similar (see section 3.4). Analysis of the status and location of schools named by parents showed:

- Two in three parents (67%) expected to apply to a single admission authority;
- 86% expected to apply only for places in schools within their own LEA area;
- 44% of parents expected to make at least one application to a school that was its own admission authority;
- One in four parents (24%) expected to apply for a place in a foundation school;
- One in four parents (24%) expected to apply for a place in a voluntary aided school;
- One in ten expected to apply for a place in a selective school.

There is some overlap between these categories. The proportion of parents in each category was similar to those recorded for the actual applications made by parents in the 1999 and 2000 entry cohorts.

Table 6.5

6.5 Factors parents expect to take into account when choosing schools

Parents were asked what factors they expected to take into account when choosing schools for their children. Parents could cite more than one reason and the interviewers coded these. For the purpose of analysis, the 76 original codes were grouped together using the same 13 categories developed for the analysis of the 1999 and 2000 entry cohorts (see section 5.2).

Five factors stood out from the rest – each cited by 29% of parents. These were:

- Behaviour of pupils;
- Travel convenience;
- Factors often related to over-subscription criteria, such as whether a sibling attended the school or the distance from home; it should be noted that these
- reasons were chosen for their own sake and not because they were over-subscription criteria;
- Academic outcomes, such as scoring well in performance tables; and,
- Child preferences, such as having friends going to the school

In contrast with the previous entry cohorts, this cohort rarely mentioned other factors.

Table 6.6

Table 6.6 Factors expect to take into account when choosing

<i>2001 entry cohort</i>	
Reason related to:	
	%
Behaviour of pupils	29
Travel convenience	29
Convenience*	29
Academic outcomes	29
Child driven	29
School ethos	2
Resources/ facilities	1
Curriculum or teaching methods	1
Quality of staff	1
School status	1
Gender intake	0
Social characteristics	0
Limited/ no choice	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	746

* Includes nearness to home, local school and sibling attends

6.6 Parents who did not expect to apply to their nearest state school

Among all parents 30% did not expect to apply for a place in their nearest school. This was a similar proportion of parents in the 1999 and 2000 entry cohorts who had not applied to their nearest state school (28%). Among parents resident in London 46% did not expect to apply to their nearest state school. This compared with 25% of parents who lived in Shire and 22% in Unitary authorities.

6.7 Expectations of outcomes

Parents of children in the 2001 entry cohort were asked about their expectations of the outcome of the application process. Specifically, all parents were asked three questions:

- How satisfied they were that they had a good chance of being offered a place in a good school;
- How satisfied they were that the state system would provide a good secondary education; and,
- Whether or not they expected to be offered a place in their most preferred school.

The proportions responding positively to these questions were similar – 78% thought they had a good chance of being offered a good school, 77% that the state system would provide a good education for their child and 78% that they would be offered a place in their most preferred school.

Table 6.7

Table 6.7 Expectation of outcomes

<i>2001 entry cohort</i>	
	%
Good chance of being offered a good school	
Very satisfied	37
Fairly satisfied	41
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	9
Slightly dissatisfied	6
Very dissatisfied	7
State system will provide good education	
Very satisfied	25
Fairly satisfied	52
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12
Slightly dissatisfied	7
Very dissatisfied	4
Expecting offer of place in most preferred school	
Yes	78
No	10
Don't know	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	746

One in five parents were not confident that they would be offered a place in their most preferred school. When asked, two in three of these parents (66%) thought that they would nevertheless be offered a place in a school that was acceptable to them. One in five of these parents thought they would be offered an unacceptable school and 15% said they didn't know what to expect. Based on all parents, 8% feared being offered an unacceptable school.

At the time of the survey, 78% of the 2001 entry cohort parents expected to be offered a place in their most preferred school. The survey found that 89% of parents in the 1999 entry cohort and 81% of those in the 2000 entry cohort were, in fact, offered a place in their *favourite* school (see section 4.2).

7. Excellence in Cities

Summary

- The background characteristics of parents resident in EiC areas differ in important respects from the national average. This was more marked in Phase 1 EiC areas than in Phase 2 EiC areas.
- Higher proportions of parents in Phase 1 EiC areas made multiple applications for places than was the case nationally. For example, in Phase 1 EiC areas 16% of parents applied to three or more admission authorities compared with 11% nationally. Parents in EiC Phase 1 areas were also more likely to apply to a school which was its own admission authority (48% did so compared with 44% nationally).
- 24% of parents in Phase 1 EiC areas applied for a place in a school outside their own LEA area compared with 16% in Phase 2 EiC areas and 13% nationally.
- Parents were less likely to apply for a place in their nearest school in EiC areas (38% did not do so in Phase 1 areas and 32% in Phase 2 areas compared with 28% nationally).
- Parents in all EiC areas taken together did not have statistically significantly different results from the national average across a range of outcome measures. However, the general pattern was that parents resident in Phase 1 EiC areas were less likely to obtain a favourable outcome than was the case nationally. The reverse was true for parents living in Phase 2 EiC areas. Some key results were that:
 - 80% of parents resident in the first Phase EiC areas were offered a place for their children in their favourite school compared with 88% in Phase 2 EiC areas and 85% nationally
 - 88% of parents living in Phase 1 EiC areas were offered a place in a school for which a survey measured first preference had been expressed, compared with 95% of parents in Phase 2 areas and 91% nationally
 - 85% of parents nationally expressed satisfaction with the application process compared with 80% of parents living in first Phase EiC areas.
 - Nationally around three-quarters of parents of children entering secondary education in September 2001 were confident they had a good chance of being offered a place in a good school. The same was true also of the proportions saying that they thought the state system would provide a decent education for their children. The comparable proportions were not statistically significantly different in Phase 1 or Phase 2 EiC areas.

7.1 Introduction

The objectives for the quantitative survey included the provision of baseline estimates for future study of parental choice issues in the 'Excellence in City' (EiC) conurbations. Parents resident in LEAs covered by the first Phase of the EiC programme were over-sampled¹³ on the survey to provide more precise

¹³ LEAs covered by the first phase of the EiC initiative are City of London, Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth, Westminster, Birmingham, Bradford, Knowsley, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Rotherham, Salford and Sheffield.

estimates than would otherwise have been possible. After the survey design had been finalised, the EiC initiative was extended to include a second set of LEA areas¹⁴. These Phase 2 areas have been included in our analyses. At the time of writing, Phase 3 areas have been announced. These Phase 3 areas have not been included in our analysis.

Given the policy interest in the EiC initiative, this chapter presents key results for parents resident in LEAs covered by the first two phases of the EiC initiative. The bivariate tables presented in this chapter do not control for the effect of other variables. The sample size of parents in EiC areas does not allow for the more complex analysis presented elsewhere in Part 2. Comparisons are made with the national average and results are also shown separately for parents living in Phase 1 and Phase 2 EiC areas.

7.2 Background characteristics of parents resident in EiC areas

The background characteristics of parents resident in EiC areas differ in important respects from the national average. As **Table 7.1** shows, this is more marked in Phase 1 than Phase 2 EiC areas.

In summary:

- Parents among whom the ethnic origin of the mother was non-white were over-represented in EiC areas. This was especially so in Phase 1 EiC areas where the proportion of parents among whom the ethnic origin of the mother was non-white was three times higher than the national average (24% and 8% respectively);
- Higher proportions of parental units comprised lone parents in both Phase 1 (36%) and Phase 2 (29%) EiC areas than was the case nationally (25%);
- Parents renting from the social rented sector comprised 45% of the total in Phase 1 EiC areas and 34% in Phase 2 areas (compared with 26% nationally);
- The proportion of parents among whom the mother did not have any educational qualifications was higher in EiC areas than the national average (29% in Phase 1 EiC areas, 25% in Phase 2 EiC areas compared with 20% nationally); and,
- One in three parents in Phase 1 EiC areas (32%) were workless compared with one in five nationally (19%) and one in four in Phase 2 EiC areas (26%)

It should be noted that many of these indicators are correlated.

¹⁴ LEAs covered by the second phase included Barking and Dagenham, Brent, Ealing, City of Bristol, Gateshead, Halton, Hartlepool, Kingston-upon-Hull, Leicester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North Tyneside, Nottingham, Redcar and Cleveland, Rochdale, St. Helen's, South Tyneside, Stockton on Tees, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland and Wirral.

Table 7.1 Background characteristics of parents

1999, 2000 and 2001 entry cohorts combined

	EiC Phase 1	EiC Phase 2	All EiC	England
	%	%	%	%
Ethnic origin of mother				
White	76	89	82	92
Non-white	24	11	18	8
Family type				
Couple	64	71	67	75
Lone parent	36	29	33	25
Tenure				
Owner	49	58	53	67
Social rented sector tenant	44	34	40	26
Rented privately	7	7	7	7
Highest educational qualification of mother				
Degree or equivalent or higher	10	8	9	10
Other qualifications	61	67	64	71
No qualifications	29	25	27	20
Social class of mother				
I & II	20	20	20	23
III non-manual	27	27	27	31
III, IV & V manual	36	40	38	38
Never worked	17	13	15	8
Parents' marital and employment status				
Couple, both employed	37	42	39	51
Couple, both non-employed	10	9	9	6
Couple, one employed	18	20	19	18
Lone parent, employed	14	11	13	12
Lone parent, non-employed	22	18	20	13
<i>Weighted base</i>	389	301	690	2916

7.3 Key results

Tables 7.2 to 7.7 present a selection of key results for parents in EiC areas.

Use of information

The pattern of usage of information was similar in EiC areas to the national situation. Most of the sample differences between EiC areas and the country as a whole, shown in **Table 7.2**, do not reach statistical significance. One exception is the proportion of parents who reported knowledge of over-subscription criteria was lower in EiC areas (51%) than across the country as a whole (57%).

Differences in the perceptions of the usefulness of LEA composite prospectuses did not reach statistical significance.

Table 7.2 Use of information

<i>1999 and 2000 entry cohorts</i>				
	EiC Phase 1	EiC Phase 2	All EiC	England
	%	%	%	%
% used information source				
Visited schools	76	75	76	78
Talked to other parents	67	69	68	70
School brochures	66	64	65	69
Primary school teachers	50	47	49	49
LEA composite prospectuses	46	42	44	45
Performance tables	39	35	37	39
OFSTED reports	25	24	25	25
Newspaper articles	21	26	24	22
PTA information	9	10	10	10
Internet	2	3	3	4
Asked anyone else	18	13	16	15
Over-subscription criteria				
% parents reporting knowledge of criteria	54	47	51	57
% parents using criteria	22	25	23	24
<i>Weighted base (n=all parents)</i>	292	232	524	2170
Perception of usefulness LEA booklets				
Most useful	32	30	31	29
Of some use	46	52	49	51
Of little or no use	21	18	20	19
Satisfaction with LEA booklets				
Very satisfied	42	59	49	46
Fairly satisfied	47	34	41	44
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7	2	6	7
Slightly dissatisfied	4	2	3	2
Very dissatisfied	*	3	1	1
<i>Weighted base (n=users of LEA booklets)</i>	135	97	232	981

* This includes LEA composite prospectuses, school performance tables, OFSTED inspectors reports and school brochures

LEA application forms

The proportion of parents, in Phase 1 and Phase 2 EiC areas combined (87%), who reported that they had filled in an application form to apply for a place in schools administered by their own LEA was not statistically significantly different from the national figures (90%). However, the lower proportion of parents resident in Phase 1 EiC (85%) who said that they had completed such a form was statistically significantly different from the national average.

Table 7.3 Completion of LEA application forms

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

	EiC Phase 1	EiC Phase 2	All EiC	England
	%	%	%	%
% parents completing own LEA application form	85	90	87	90
Reported number of application forms completed				
None	5	3	4	3
One	60	79	69	72
Two	21	12	17	18
Three or more	14	6	11	8
<i>Weighted base (n=all parents)</i>	292	232	524	2170
Views on ease of completing LEA form				
Easy	90	98	94	94
Difficult	5	1	3	3
No view	6	1	4	4
Views on clarity of instructions				
Satisfied	89	95	92	92
Dissatisfied	5	2	4	3
No view	6	2	4	5
<i>Weighted base (n=parents completing LEA application form)</i>	247	208	455	1955

When asked how many application forms they completed in total, a higher proportion of parents resident in EiC Phase 1 areas reported completing more than one form. For example, 14% of parents in Phase 1 areas had completed three or more application forms compared with 6% in Phase 2 areas and 8% across England as a whole. Overall 79% of parents in Phase 2 areas reported

that they had completed just one application form: a proportion that was higher than in Phase 1 areas (60%) and the comparable national figure (72%).

Parents' perception of the ease of completing LEA application forms, and on the clarity of instructions, was similar in EiC areas to parents across the country as a whole. The proportions of parents expressing satisfaction with LEA composite prospectuses was not statistically significantly different.

Table 7.3

Table 7.4 Application routes

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

	EiC Phase 1 %	EiC Phase 2 %	All EiC %	England %
Parents not applying for a place in nearest school	38	32	36	28
Number of admission authorities applied to				
One	64	73	68	67
Two	19	18	19	22
Three	10	8	9	8
Four or more	6	1	4	3
Location of schools for which a place applied				
Applying for place wholly within own LEA	76	84	80	87
Applying for place wholly outside own LEA	9	4	7	5
Applying for place inside and outside own LEA	15	12	13	8
Applying to at least one school direct	48	33	40	44
Applying for a place in a City Technology College	5	3	4	2
Applying for a place in a Foundation School	13	10	12	25
Applying for a place in a vol. Aided school	37	25	32	23
Applying for place in a selective school	6	1	4	9
<i>Weighted base*</i>	280	227	507	2126

* Excludes those for whom schools data could not be analysed

Application routes

There were differences apparent in the number of admission authorities that parents applied to. For example, in Phase 1 EiC areas 16% of parents applied to three or more admission authorities compared with 11% nationally. In Phase 2 areas, the comparable proportion (9%) was not statistically significantly different from the national figures.

Related to these findings, parents in EiC Phase 1 areas were more likely to apply to a school which is its own admission authority than was the case nationally (48% did so, compared with 44% nationally). In contrast, parents in Phase 2 EiC areas were less likely to apply to an admission authority school (33%).

Across England as a whole, 13% of parents applied for a place in a school outside their own LEA area. The comparable proportions were higher in EiC areas (24% in Phase 1 areas and 16% in Phase 2 areas). In part, this is likely to reflect urban density and greater availability of schools within close proximity. This may also partly account for the higher proportion of parents not applying for a place in their nearest state school.

Lower proportions of parents in EiC areas applied for a place in a foundation school compared with national figures (All EiC, 12%; England 25%). In Phase 1 EiC areas, however, applications to voluntary aided schools were more common than was the case for England as a whole (37% compared with 23%). These findings are likely to reflect variation in the provision of such schools by area.

Table 7.4

Outcomes of application

Table 7.5 provides figures for a series of outcome measures. In general, results for parents resident across all EiC areas (i.e. Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas combined) were not statistically significantly different from the national average. However, some differences were apparent when results for parents living in Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas were examined separately.

While not all of the differences shown in Table 7.5 reached statistical significance a clear pattern is evident. Parents resident in Phase 1 EiC areas were less likely to obtain a favourable outcome than was the case nationally. The reverse was true for parents living in Phase 2 EiC areas. For example (figures quoted are statistically significantly different from the national average):

- 80% of parents resident in the first Phase EiC areas were offered a place for their children in their favourite school compared with 88% of parents living in Phase 2 EiC areas (national average 85%);
- 88% of parents living in Phase 1 EiC areas were offered a place in a school for which a survey measured first preference (see Chapter 4 for definition) had been expressed, compared with 95% of parents in Phase 2 areas and 91% nationally; and,
- 85% of parents nationally expressed satisfaction with the application process compared with 80% of parents living in first Phase EiC areas.

Table 7.5 Outcomes of application

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

	EiC Phase 1 %	EiC Phase 2 %	All EiC %	England %
Offered place in a preferred school				
Favourite school	80	88	84	85
First preference school	88	95	91	92
Any school for which preference expressed	94	94	94	96
Offered place in a school for which no preference stated				
Parent satisfied with outcome	6	6	6	4
Parent dissatisfied with outcome	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.1
No view	2.7	2.2	2.5	1.4
	0.7	0.9	0.8	0.3
Satisfaction with process				
Satisfied	80	87	83	85
No view	7	4	6	5
<i>Weighted base (n=all parents)</i>	292	232	524	2170

Reasons for wanting a place in favourite school

Analysis of the reasons parents give for wanting a place for their children in their favourite school are presented in **Table 7.6**. Parents in EiC areas tended to cite reasons in similar proportions to parents nationally (see Chapter 5 for details of classification).

Table 7.6 Reasons for wanting a place in favourite school

1999 and 2000 entry cohorts

Reason related to:	EiC Phase 1	EiC Phase 2	All EiC	England
	%	%	%	%
Academic outcomes	44	45	44	43
Admission Criteria *	39	42	40	40
Travel convenience	34	35	35	35
Child driven	31	33	32	31
School ethos	15	12	14	15
Quality of staff	14	11	13	14
Resources/ facilities	13	8	11	13
Behaviour of pupils	14	10	12	10
Curriculum or teaching methods	7	7	7	8
School status	7	5	6	6
Gender intake	7	3	5	4
Social characteristics	2	1	1	1
Limited/ no choice	0	0	0	0
<i>Weighted base (n=all parents)</i>	292	232	524	2170

Table 7.7 Expectation of outcomes

2001 entry cohort

	EiC Phase 1	EiC Phase 2	All EiC	England
	%	%	%	%
Good chance of being offered a good school				
Very satisfied	36	34	34	37
Fairly satisfied	38	34	37	41
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	9	10	10	9
Slightly dissatisfied	9	6	8	6
Very dissatisfied	7	16	11	7
State system will provide good education				
Very satisfied	31	23	29	25
Fairly satisfied	40	46	43	52
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10	13	11	12
Slightly dissatisfied	13	7	11	7
Very dissatisfied	5	10	7	4
Expecting offer of place in most preferred school				
Yes	73	70	73	78
No	13	14	13	10
Don't know	13	16	14	12
<i>Weighted base (n=all parents)</i>	98	69	167	746

Expectations of 2001 entry cohort

Parents of children entering secondary education in September 2001 were asked about their expectations of the process of choosing a school. They were asked three questions:

- How satisfied they were that they had a good chance of being offered a good school;
- How satisfied they were that the State system would provide a good education for their children; and,
- Whether they expected to be offered a place in their most preferred school.

Around three-quarters of parents nationally (78%) said that they were confident that they had a good chance of being offered a place in a good school. A similar proportion (77%) was satisfied that the state system would provide a good education for their children. Likewise, three in four parents nationally expected to be offered a place in their most preferred school. For each of these three questions the comparable proportions in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas were lower than the national average. However, these proportions were *not* statistically significantly different from the national figures.

Table 7.7

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Frequency of over-subscription criteria: a comparison of EiC and non EiC LEAs

Appendix 1: Frequency of over-subscription criteria: a comparison of EiC and non EiC LEAs

The following tables document the range of practices used by LEAs. The purpose is to portray the extent to which different criteria are used in Excellence in Cities LEAs and other LEAs.

Table 1: Frequency of catchment area as an over-subscription criterion

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
1 st priority	68	48.2
2 nd priority	21	14.9
3 rd priority	0	0
4 th priority	0	0
Not included as criterion	52	36.9
Total	141	100.0

**Table 2 : Frequency of catchment area as an over-subscription criterion:
Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs**

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
1 st priority	51	53.7	4	16.7	13	59.1
2 nd priority	14	14.7	4	16.7	3	13.6
3 rd priority	0	0	0	0	0	0
4 th priority	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not included as criterion	30	31.6	16	66.7	6	27.3
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

Table 3:Frequency of straight line distance as over-subscription criterion

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
1 st priority	0	0
2 nd priority	16	11.3
3 rd priority	15	10.6
4 th priority	1	0.7
Not included as criterion	109	77.3
Total	141	100.0

**Table 4:Frequency of straight line distance as over-subscription criterion.
Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs**

	Number of Non	% of Non	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2

	EiC LEAs	EiC LEAs				
1 st priority	0	0	0	0	0	0
2 nd priority	11	11.6	4	16.7	1	4.5
3 rd priority	8	8.4	2	8.3	5	22.7
4 th priority	1	1.1	0	0	0	0
Not included as criterion	75	78.9	18	75.0	16	72.7
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

Note: The use of 'straight line' distance from a school is used sometimes by LEAs as a way of avoiding disputes about what is or isn't a practicable route to a school. 'Straight line distance' from a school is an unambiguous criterion for deciding which children live nearest to the school but it takes no account of the distance and difficulty of a particular journey to a school.

Table 5: Frequency of ease of access by public transport as over-subscription criterion

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
1 st priority	3	2.1
2 nd priority	1	0.7
3 rd priority	0	0
4 th priority	0	0
Not included as criterion	137	97.2
Total	141	100.0

Table 6: Frequency of ease of access by public transport as over-subscription criterion: Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
1 st priority	2	2.1	0	0	1	4.5
2 nd priority	1	1.1	0	0	0	0
3 rd priority	0	0	0	0	0	0
4 th priority	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not included as criterion	92	96.8	24	100.0	21	95.5
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

Table 7: Frequency of shortest/safest walking route as over-subscription criterion

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
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1 st priority	1	0.7
2 nd priority	16	11.3
3 rd priority	18	12.8
4 th priority	1	0.7
Not included as criterion	105	74.5
Total	141	100.0

The use of this criterion is the antithesis of the 'straight line' criterion mentioned in Table 4 because it represents an attempt to take into account a child's *actual* journey to school rather than distance as measured by a straight line drawn on a map. This is a more ambiguous criterion than straight line distance and capable of being interpreted in different ways.

Table 8: Frequency of shortest/safest walking route as over-subscription criterion: Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
1 st priority	1	1.1	0	0	0	0
2 nd priority	8	8.4	7	29.2	1	4.5
3 rd priority	13	13.7	1	4.2	4	18.2
4 th priority	1	1.1	0	0	0	0
Not included as criterion	72	75.8	16	66.7	17	77.3
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

Table 9: Frequency of closeness to school as over-subscription criterion

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
1 st priority	0	0
2 nd priority	19	13.5

3 rd priority	26	18.4
4 th priority	0	0
Not included as criterion	96	68.1
Total	141	100.0

**Table 10:Frequency of closeness to school as over-subscription criterion:
Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs**

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
1 st priority	0	0	0	0	0	0
2 nd priority	11	11.6	5	20.8	3	13.6
3 rd priority	22	23.2	2	8.3	2	9.1
4 th priority	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not included as criterion	62	65.3	17	70.8	17	77.3
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

Table 11:Frequency of longest extra journey to alternative school as over-subscription criterion

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
1 st priority	1	0.7
2 nd priority	3	2.1
3 rd priority	11	7.8
4 th priority	1	0.7

Not included as criterion	125	88.7
Total	141	100.0

Table 12: Frequency of longest extra journey to alternative school as over-subscription criterion: Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
1 st priority	1	1.1	0	0	0	0
2 nd priority	1	1.1	2	8.3	0	0
3 rd priority	7	7.4	3	12.5	1	4.5
4 th priority	1	1.1	0	0	0	0
Not included as criterion	85	89.5	19	79.2	21	95.5
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

Table 13: Frequency of sibling as over-subscription criterion

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
1 st priority	69	48.9
2 nd priority	64	45.4
3 rd priority	4	2.8
4 th priority	0	0

Not included as criterion	4	2.8
Total	141	100.0

Table 14 :Frequency of sibling as over-subscription criterion:Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
1 st priority	41	43.2	20	83.3	8	36.4
2 nd priority	47	49.5	4	16.7	13	59.1
3 rd priority	3	3.2	0	0	1	4.5
4 th priority	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not included as criterion	4	4.2	0	0	0	0
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

Table 15: Waiting lists

	Number of LEAs	Percentage of LEAs
No	38	27.0
Yes	91	64.5
Other*	12	8.5
Total	141	100.0

*LEAs considered to have provided insufficient information to make a judgement on whether a waiting list is or is not in operation.

Table 16: Waiting lists: Breakdown of Non EiC, EiC 1 and EiC 2 LEAs

	Number of Non EiC LEAs	% of Non EiC LEAs	Number of EiC 1	% of EiC 1	Number of EiC 2	% of EiC 2
No	27	28.4	6	25.0	5	22.7
Yes	60	63.2	16	66.7	15	68.2
Other*	8	8.4	2	8.3	2	9.1
Total	95	100.0	24	100.0	22	100.0

Appendix 2

Applying for school places in different LEAs: How helpful is the information provided to parents?

Appendix 2: Applying for school places in different LEAs: How helpful is the information provided to parents?

The Code of Practice for School Admission requires LEAs to publish information that will be helpful to parents in choosing schools. This includes information about how to apply for places at schools that are in a different LEA from that in which the parent is a resident. The main aim of the survey of a sample of authorities was to ascertain what information was made available to parents about applying for school places but also to see how this related to the particular context of each LEA to see whether there were any conclusions that could be drawn about the sample. All the LEAs surveyed are part of the Excellence in Cities initiative and part of large urban conurbations where there are often greater possibilities for pupils to attend a school in neighbouring LEAs.

The format of this section is as follows:

Context

This provides a brief description of the admissions context and, where relevant, identifies the extent of 'over-subscription' and 'under-subscription'. It also draws upon relevant information from OFSTED LEA Inspection reports.

Expressing a Preference for a School in Another LEA Area

This contains details of the information that an LEA provides about expressing a preference for a school or schools in other LEAs.

Assessment

This is mainly an interpretation of how helpful is the information provided to parents but also it tries to understand why LEAs may be adopting a particular strategy.

LEA 1

Context

The OFSTED Inspection Report indicates that within the borough the percentage of unfilled places in secondary schools is 7.8 per cent, well below the national average. The percentage of pupils in excess of school capacity in secondary schools is 4 per cent. Approximately half of the secondary school population comes from outside the LEA.

Expressing a Preference for a School in Another LEA Area

Residents from neighbouring boroughs are expected to make an application using a LEA form although in two of the boroughs the prospectuses do not make any explicit reference to this. Parents are also informed that they may express only one first, one second and one-third preference for a secondary school irrespective of which borough. Parents are also warned that they must use the same order of preferences even if they complete different application forms for different boroughs; the prospectus states that:

[The LEA will treat as void any application stating a preference for a school if we find the same parents have notified other admission authorities of different school choices and/or a different order of preference']

Assessment

Generally schools in the LEA are oversubscribed and the LEA appears to keep a tight control over the admission process to ensure that it is operated as equitably as possible within the published arrangements. The stark warning to parents is understandable in a context where parents may be able to hold on to offers of school places in different authorities depriving other parents of the offer of a place in one of the LEA's schools.

LEA 2

Context

The 1999 OFSTED Report pointed out that the context in which the LEA works remains very difficult with acute turbulence caused by the shifting settlement of refugees and high numbers of families who move house.

Expressing a Preference for a School in Another LEA Area

The prospectus makes no mention of the parental right to express a preference for a school in a neighbouring LEA or of any implications or consequences of so doing. There is a single form used for admission to schools within and outside the LEA and the Transfer form includes a space for a parent to write in the name of the borough in which a preferred school is located. The guidance notes attached to the form also mention that parents need to 'satisfy themselves about the closing date for completing and returning application forms for schools outside the LEA' as well as pointing out that some LEAs and some schools may require a separate form to be completed. The general tenor of the information provided in the prospectus suggests that its purpose, first and foremost, is to provide information about schools in the LEA. However, contact information is provided about foundation and voluntary-aided schools within a three-mile radius of the LEA border in adjoining LEAs.

Assessment

The prospectus contains little information of use to parents who would be interested in expressing a preference for a school in another LEA area.

LEA 3

Context

The OFSTED report indicates that the relative unpopularity of the LEA's secondary schools creates some difficulty. Only 63% of Year 6 pupils transferred to the LEA's schools in 1998 at Year 7 with mostly higher attaining pupils moving to schools in

other boroughs. The OFSTED LEA Inspection Report cites a high level of dissatisfaction among schools with the LEA's handling of admissions, particularly, a lack of information about admission arrangements to secondary schools.

Expressing a Preference for a School in other LEA Areas

If parents want to express a preference for a school in another LEA they are asked to contact the other LEA(s). If they want the telephone number of a school outside the LEA they need to telephone the LEA as phone numbers are not included in the composite prospectus. The Transfer form contains spaces for expressing a preference for three of the LEA's community schools. At the bottom of the form there is also a space for listing any voluntary-aided schools and schools in other LEAs for which the parent has expressed a preference. There is no specific information given about the implications or consequences of applying to a school in another borough.

Assessment

The borough experiences a significant exodus of children at the end of Year 6 and the information it provides to parents about Admissions in other LEA areas is minimal.

LEA 4

Context

The LEA's admission arrangements have been praised by OFSTED and the Authority surveys parental opinion attempt to improve its procedures.

Expressing a Preference for a School in Another LEA Area

Parents use one form to apply for foundation schools within and outside the LEA and it applies on behalf of the parent. Applications to foundation or voluntary-aided schools are made direct to the school or to the other LEA. Applying to a school outside the LEA counts as the first preference and parents are warned that if they apply direct to out of borough school without informing the LEA this will still count as a first preference. Parents are warned that if they are not successful in obtaining their first preference place they may find that there are no places available in their second preference school. Contact details are provided about LEAs and LEA maintained schools in six adjoining LEAs. Somewhat confusingly there are two publications entitled *School Prospectuses and General Information* – one a brochure that is mainly devoted to details about individual schools and another detailing actual admission arrangements. The prospectus makes the point that '*these are difficult and unpredictable issues to decide so it's important to read all the information*'.

Assessment

The information provided tries to strike a balance between outlining parental rights in this area whilst also encouraging realistic choices so that a parent is not disadvantaged.

LEA 5

Context

The OFSTED Report indicates that in 1998 21.7 per cent of primary school leavers chose schools outside the Borough and 7.1 per cent of the Year 7 cohort in secondary

schools came from outside the Borough. This is a net loss of 332 pupils at age 11 but the LEA has had some success in reducing this trend as a result of improved standards in its schools. The LEA co-ordinates transfers to secondary schools at age 11 and each secondary school is associated with a number of primary schools in order to promote good links. The LEA has relatively little input into the process of admission. The number of appeals lodged is very low.

Expressing a Preference for a School in other LEA Areas

Information about places in schools maintained by other LEAs is confined to the statement that, '*We expect that most pupils living in the LEA will attend schools maintained by the Education Authority*' The application form contains a footnote indicating that an application for a non- the LEA school will be passed on to the relevant local education authority. Apart from this there is no information provided about Admission to schools in other LEAs.

Assessment

The LEA does experience an exodus of pupils at the Secondary School phase but provides no information about admission arrangements in the areas and schools to which parents actually send their children. This minimalist approach is in keeping with the fact that the LEA does not play a leading role in the admission process.

LEA 6

Context

Parents in the LEA have a good chance of getting their first preference school. In 1998 94.3 per cent were offered a place at the school for which they expressed a first preference. Despite this the level of appeals has increased over the past two years leading to appeals being heard up to the end of the summer term and beyond.

Expressing a Preference for a School in other LEA Areas

The composite prospectus makes the point that if parents wish their child to attend a school in the area of another Local Education Authority, they should contact the school concerned to find out how to apply. Details are provided of a number of arrangements that allow children to attend (sic) Church aided schools outside the LEA area including arrangements with neighbouring LEAs. No contact information is provided about other LEAs.

Assessment

The Composite prospectus provides very limited information for parents wanting to send their child to a community or foundation school in another LEA area. The information provided about arrangements for Church schools is more helpful.

LEA 7

Context

The LEA has a high volume of casual admission of refugee pupils. In 1997/98 there were above average numbers of surplus places in secondary schools (19.9% compared with 11.5% nationally) Admission to secondary schools is based on places for pupils in five ability bands. There are a comparatively high number of admission appeals and in

some areas there is a shortage of places. Just over half the appeals in 1999/00 were for places in the voluntary-aided schools.

Expressing a Preference for a School in another LEA

The prospectus asks parents to apply direct to schools or LEAs in other authorities and makes clear that the responsibility lies with the borough concerned. Although the main prospectus doesn't mention it the Admissions letter sent to parents states that parents might express a preference for a school in one of the adjacent boroughs using a LEA form. Attached to the letter is a helpful guide to the admission arrangements in adjacent boroughs although the information provided states that the LEA forms will also be accepted by *three* of the neighbouring LEAs. Thus, although the information is likely to be useful to parents who want to express a preference for a school in another LEA the fact that the information given about this differs in different parts of the material may cause some confusion.

Assessment

The information provided is likely to be helpful to parents.

LEA 8

Context

The assisted late transfer of pupils from one school to another late into the autumn term is an issue and pupils may be transferring from one secondary school to another at the instigation of the local authority as late as November. Parents are able to express only one preference for a school but the District Auditor has suggested that the Policy should be reviewed. The number of appeals has increased 76 per cent over the past two years to 382 in 1998/99, when 248 were upheld (65 per cent).

Expressing a Preference for a School in another LEA Area

Information in the LEA composite prospectus is described as '*Consideration of Extra District Requests*' which may not be immediately understood by parents unfamiliar with the terminology. Parents are informed that if they wish their children to attend a school situated in a neighbouring Local Education Authority they should apply direct to the relevant local Education Office or the school in cases where the Governing Body is the Admission Authority. Parents are also asked to inform The LEA's admissions officers if they obtain a place for their child outside the Authority. Addresses of adjacent LEAs are provided in the composite prospectus.

Assessment

The LEA provides a minimal amount of information.

LEA 9

Context

There are 20 per cent surplus places in the secondary sector and almost 40 per cent of secondary schools have surplus places in excess of 25 per cent. Not surprisingly there are a low number of appeals for places.

Expressing a Preference for a School in another LEA

Parents are informed that if they wish to apply for a school in another LEA they need to contact the other LEA or a school direct. If the parent is successful they have to inform The LEA. No contact information is provided about other LEAs or schools in neighbouring LEAs.

Assessment

Little information is provided of use to parents.

LEA 10

Context

The 1997/98 figures for surplus places were below the averages for metropolitan districts and all English LEAs. The OFSTED report indicates that the LEA performs its functions for school admissions very well but the timing of admission appeals means that some children do not know sufficiently well in advance of the end of term which schools they will be joining.

Expressing a Preference for a School in another LEA Area

Parents are advised that they should apply direct to the relevant LEA if they wish to apply for a place in another Authority and are asked to inform the LEA if they obtain a place for their child outside the LEA. A list of adjacent LEAs is shown.

Assessment

The information assumes that the starting point for a parent interested in schools in another LEA area would be to contact the relevant LEA. The LEA's liaison and co-ordination arrangements with neighbouring LEAs have been praised in the recent OFSTED LEA Inspection Report.

LEA 11

Context

There has been an increase in pressure for places in some secondary schools. The LEA has reviewed its admission criteria and tried to increase choice by introducing the allocation of a proportion of secondary places according to linked primary schools.

Expressing a Preference for a School in another LEA

Parents are informed that they need to contact the other LEA or school direct using the appropriate forms supplied by the other LEA or school. The LEA accepts no responsibility for naming a school in another LEA on the LEA form. Addresses and telephone numbers of neighbouring London Boroughs are provided.

Assessment

The Authority leaves it up to parents to pursue any interest in other LEA areas but does provide contact numbers to enable parents to make a start on finding out more information.

LEA 12

Context

In The LEA there is a shortage of secondary school places and half of the secondary schools are significantly overcrowded. Only 40 per cent of secondary pupils are resident in the LEA. The OFSTED Report mentions that the structure of secondary provision with five church schools is incompatible with the religious and ethnic diversity of the population, particularly in the north of the borough. The Report urges the LEA to identify options for increasing the proportion of its residents in its schools and for better addressing the diversity of the population.

Expressing a Preference for a School in another LEA

The LEA points out that parents are 'free' to apply to schools in other areas but parents are expected to arrange this for themselves. The LEA Transfer form is to be used exclusively for secondary schools in the LEA and any parent from outside the borough wanting to express a preference for a school in the LEA has to use the LEA form. It is suggested that a child's primary school headteacher may be able to help them but they are expected to contact the relevant LEA. Parents are advised that applications to out-borough schools "will not influence the decision to offer a preferred the LEA Community School'. The LEA provides a list of secondary schools in areas surrounding the LEA and includes more detailed information from individual schools where this has been provided by the school. Generally, parents wanting to express a preference for an LEA school complete the Transfer form 'with' the headteacher of their child's primary school but parents wanting to choose a school outside the borough need to find out the relevant information themselves.

Assessment

Parents are left to their own devices to initiate the process of finding a school in another LEA but the LEA does provide a list of local schools in other areas.

LEA 13

Context

There is a diversity of practice with 33 admission authorities and the OFSTED LEA inspection Report indicates that the administrative burden for admissions falls on both the LEA and school staff with the latter spending a great deal of time helping parents work through an application process that is complex because each secondary school has its own form.

School staff also spend time supporting pupils for whom no place is initially offered and secondary schools are faced with a lengthy period of information exchange between schools, parents and the LEA as children and places are matched up. Parents make multiple applications which means that some pupils have several offers whilst others have only rejections. Some pupils have no confirmed place when they start the summer break and the OFSTED report states that Primary school headteachers report high levels of anxiety amongst children waiting for a school place. The LEA does not collect any data to analyse the extent to which parents are provided with their preferred school although from the details provided above the concept of choice has little meaning for parents who are not offered a school place.

Expressing a Preference for a School in another LEA

Parents are informed that they can apply to schools outside the borough; the prospectus contains the names of schools and contact details for other local boroughs. Parents are actively encouraged to apply for as many schools as they like in case their child is not offered a place at their first preference school. This is a major issue for the LEA as there are 3000 applications, many from outside the Borough, for fewer than 2000 places available inside the borough.

Assessment

The extracts from the OFSTED Report identify clearly the problems that exist for some parents. In theory it is a system that appears to value choice but it produces winners and losers.

Conclusion

The descriptions of the range of practices that exist in different urban LEAs reveals the complexity that parents can face if they wish to apply for a school place in a different LEA from the one in which they are resident. It also shows that there is little consistency of approach across LEAs but this is partly influenced by the supply and demand for school places in different localities and whether the LEA's schools are generally oversubscribed or undersubscribed. In part the different responses represent tactics for coping with excess demand or too little demand. In the case of the former there is more information about applying outside an LEA and in the case of the latter much less information so as not to be seen to be encouraging an even greater outflow of pupils to neighbouring LEAs.

Appendix 3
*Methodology: The Nationally
Representative Survey*

Appendix 3 Methodology: The Nationally Representative Survey

A3.1 Design of the nationally representative survey

Surveys of schoolchildren and their parents have conventionally developed a two stage sampling process in which schools are selected and approached for permission to sample from their school rolls. This approach may place a burden on schools and affect their willingness to respond. The associated costs, lack of precision in estimates and potential bias of this approach led ONS to propose an innovative design.

The sample for this survey was drawn from former respondents of the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The size of the LFS sample is such that it is cost-effective for it to use simple random sampling. The precision of LFS estimates is not weakened by any clustering of the sample. The benefits also apply to samples which follow-up the LFS. The follow-up design allowed the use of a range of personal and household information already collected on the LFS, thereby reducing the burden on respondents and interview costs.

As the LFS collects information on the demographic characteristics of responding households, including the dates of birth of all household members and their relationships to each other, it could identify the parents of children in the eligible age ranges. In some households there was more than one child in the eligible age range. In these cases, one was selected by a random process at the start of the interview to be the focus for the survey. The necessary weighting adjustment for this procedure is described below.

There was a target of 2,750 achieved interviews with parents across the three cohorts: 1,000 each in the 1999 and 2000 entry year cohorts and 750 in the 2001 entry year cohort. There was a further target of an extra 120 interviews with parents resident in the EiC conurbations to add to interviews with this group of parents found in the three national cohort samples. These extra interviews in EiC areas were restricted to parents of children entering secondary school in September 1999 and September 2000.

The sample comprised parents in all households that had completed their final LFS interviews between September 1998 and February 2000 that were found to contain an eligible child. The boost sample for parents in EiC areas was drawn from two earlier quarters of the LFS: March-May 1998 and June-August 1998.

Following a pilot in April 2000, main stage fieldwork for the first two cohorts of parents took place between May and July 2000. Fieldwork was suspended during the school summer holidays and was completed, for the 2001 entry cohort, in September 2000 when it was anticipated that the issues would be more salient for this group of parents than earlier in the year.

Some 85% of LFS final wave interviews are conducted by telephone. Those who were last interviewed by telephone were approached by telephone for the follow-up survey. Around 15% of the set sample were distributed to the SSD's General Field Force of interviewers for face-to-face interviewing.

A3.2 The interview in the nationally representative survey

The interview was carried out by ONS's permanent force of interviewers using a computer-assisted (CAI) questionnaire. CAI methods have become standard for complex national interview surveys since compared with paper-based surveys they can improve quality and reduce costs and the time between fieldwork and reporting. For example, CAI questionnaires can flag inconsistencies in respondents' answers for further checking with the respondent during the interview. In the current survey, it was particularly valuable to be able to carry out a computer-assisted check of the names and details of schools provided by respondents against an official database of all schools in England. For example, a number of schools share common names and the coding frame listed the name, address and LEA area of the school to check with the respondent and assist correct coding.

The questionnaire was identical for face-to-face (CAPI) and for telephone (CATI) interviews. The questions are reproduced at Appendix 4.

The mean length of interview for parents in each of the years 1999 and 2000 entry cohorts was 45 minutes. Each cohort was asked a common core set of questions and some questions which were particular to its circumstances. The core set of questions for years 1999 and 2000 entry cohorts covered the following topics:

- Information used to find out about schools;
- Names of individual schools applied to;
- Application process, including stating of preferences;
- Interviews and testing by the schools;
- Outcomes of the application process, including appeals;
- Satisfaction with the application process and outcomes;
- Reasons for choosing schools; and,
- Arrangements for travelling to school (not reported on here).

In addition, household demographic information collected from the last LFS was checked and updated where necessary, as were housing tenure, educational qualifications, employment status and the occupational data used to derive social class. Household income data were more subject to change since the LFS interview so they were collected anew rather than by checking previous data.

At the analysis stage, it was possible to add a range of administrative data about the schools which parents mentioned, drawn from several DfEE databases. Among these administrative data in the DfEE databases, which have enriched the analysis, are:

- Admission policy of school (e.g. comprehensive, selective);
- Type of school (i.e. boys, girls, mixed);
- Status of school (e.g. community, foundation, voluntary aided)
- School performance data (e.g. % of 15 year old pupils passing 5 or more GCSE at A-C); and,
- Receipt/eligibility for free school meals.

A3.3 Eligibility and the unit of sampling and analysis for the nationally representative survey

The DfEE's focus for this study was on parents who applied for their child to take up a place in a state school in the school year in which their child would be eleven years old. Eligibility under a more precise form of this definition was determined by the use of a series of screening questions.

The sampling unit for the survey is not readily described in commonly understood terms. It was the *parental unit*, formed by a couple or a lone parent, responsible for an eligible child. Guardians were treated in the same way as parents for this purpose. Only one parent in a parental unit was interviewed: either the lone parent or one of a couple. In the latter case, the couple selected which parent would answer to represent their joint views¹⁵. As the experiences and views explored in the analysis were those of either a lone parent or the joint views of a couple this report uses the common language term *parents* rather than *parental units*. It should be remembered in reading this report that the base for percentages and other statistics is not literally all parents in households in the sample but all *parental units* as defined above.

A3.4 Response to the nationally representative survey

The set sample for the nationally representative survey comprised 3,715 *parental units* drawn from households which had completed their LFS interview between March 1998 and February 2000. For brevity, elsewhere in this report, *parents* are referred to rather than *parental units*.

Response to the nationally representative survey is shown in **Table A3.1**. The response rate was 80%. As this survey was based on a follow-up sample drawn from the LFS, the LFS response rate must also be taken into account in calculating the true rate of non-response for an assessment of the potential for non-response bias.

¹⁵ It is accepted that the joint views reflected in the actual decisions of a couple during the application process might be the outcome of differing views but it was not the survey's purpose to explore such differences.

Table A3.1 Response to the survey*1999, 2000 and 2001 entry cohorts combined*

	No	%
Set sample of parental units	5041	100
Not issued to interviewers	70	1
Ineligible parental units	814	16
Child no longer resident/date of birth incorrect	11	0
Moved/empty/house demolished	244	5
Telephone number unobtainable	559	11
<i>Eligible parental units</i>	4157	100
Non-contact with parental unit	295	7
Refusals	529	13
Refusal in field	503	12
Refusal to advance letter	26	1
Interviews achieved	3332	80
Full interviews	2916	70
Screening interview completed - ineligible	416	10

A3.5 Adjustment for non-response bias

The sampling frame for this survey was constructed from former respondents to the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LFS is a continuous survey in the United Kingdom. Its design yields estimates that are nationally representative for any period of three consecutive months at the level of the UK and its constituent countries.

The LFS sample design yields an unclustered sample of addresses in England. Compared with conventional designs, which are more clustered, the LFS provides more precise estimates for a sample of a given size. A detailed description of the LFS design can be found in the LFS User Guide¹⁶.

Below the weighting procedure used in the survey of parents' experiences of choosing a secondary school for their child is described. There were two distinct elements to the weighting, which are dealt with in turn. These were:

- to take account of unequal probabilities of selection; and,

¹⁶ Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey User Guide Volume 1: Background and Methodology, ONS, 1999.

- to correct for measured non-response biases.

A3.6 Adjusting for unequal probabilities of selection

The initial sample for this survey was drawn from seven LFS quarters (see below). In five of these quarters, all parental units¹⁷ in England with children in the eligible age range were selected. The Department (DfEE) required extra interviews in local education authority (LEA) areas that were part of the first phase of the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative, over and above the number yielded from a national sample. To meet this requirement, the initial sample was boosted with a further sample of parents living in EiC areas from the two preceding LFS quarters.

The sample initially drawn turned out to be insufficient to yield the target number of interviews.¹⁸ An additional sample of addresses was issued, drawn from the latest LFS quarter (which had not been available when the initial sample was drawn). As there was only sufficient time for the additional sample to be followed up by telephone, it was drawn from LFS households which had responded to the final LFS interview by telephone (85% of LFS interviews at the final wave). The initial sample comprised parents of 3 cohorts of children, based on year of entry to secondary school (see below). The sample size achieved initially for the youngest cohort was adequate, so the additional sample was restricted to the two older cohorts.

¹⁷ The term parental unit describes a couple or a lone parent. As discussed in the introduction, references in this report to parents are, more precisely, to parental units

¹⁸ This was because the proportion of the sample who had moved since the last LFS exceeded our estimate. Our estimate of this had been based on general population and it is likely that the rate of moving amongst this sub-group of the population is higher than average. As, there is anecdotal evidence that parents are often motivated to move house to live close to a 'good' school this is pertinent to the subject of the survey. Therefore, it is important to take account of any response bias this may introduce (see below).

The final sample was constructed as follows, by LFS quarters:

March-May 1998	} parents of all eligible children resident } in EiC areas
June-August 1998	
September – November 1998	} parents of all eligible } children resident in England } including all those resident in EiC areas }
December 1998 – February 1999	
March – May 1999	
June – August 1999	
September – November 1999	
December 1999 – February 2000	} parents of all eligible children resident in England at LFS final interview and interviewed by telephone, excluding those with a single child with a date of birth between 1 September 1989 and 31 August 1990

This strategy yielded a sample in which not all the parental units had an equal probability of selection. Therefore, the first stage of the weighting was designed to deal with this by applying compensating weights.

The weights were assigned as follows, to adjust for the probabilities of selection. For example, parents of eligible children resident in EiC areas had a chance of selection in all 8 LFS quarters in the sampling frame; parents of other eligible children had a chance of selection in only 6 of the quarters. The former group of parents had 8/6 chances of selection by comparison with the latter group, so they were weighted by the reciprocal (6/8). Within quarters, there were equal probabilities of selection for each group.

- **W1a** - parents of eligible children resident in EiC areas were given a weight of 0.75 (6/8) and the remainder a weight of 1 (8/8)
- **W1b** – parents of eligible children previously interviewed by telephone were given a weight of 0.875 (7/8) and those face-to-face a weight of 1 (8/8)
- **W1c** – parents of eligible children with children solely born between 1 September 1989 and 31 August 1990 were given a weight of 1 (8/8) and the remainder a weight of 0.875 (7/8)

The combined first stage weight (**W1**) was thus derived as $w1a * w1b * w1c$. It adjusted for unequal probabilities of selection.

A3.7 Adjusting for measured non-response bias

Design of the adjustment

All voluntary surveys have an element of non-response. This is potentially an issue of concern, as the non-respondents may differ in important respects from respondents. If this is the case, and is not taken into account, survey estimates will be biased.

The random sample for the follow-up survey of parents of eligible children was drawn from the random sample for the LFS. The LFS is a panel survey in which respondents, who are willing, are interviewed five times at quarterly intervals. For their first interview (wave 1), LFS respondents are interviewed face-to-face and, if possible, by telephone for subsequent waves.

In this survey, there are a number of stages of non-response, which should be taken into account:

- Initial wave 1 response to the LFS;
- Loss between waves 1 and wave 5; and,
- Non response to this survey.

The average wave 1 response rate for the eight LFS quarters making up the sample for this survey was 79%. Taking into account loss between waves the average response rate after 5 waves was 71%.

A Census-linked study of LFS respondents has shown that households with children tend to be over-represented.¹⁹ Thus, the average response rates just quoted are expected to be conservative estimates of response amongst the sub-group of interest for this survey.

In the follow-up survey, parents of 79% of eligible children identified from wave 5 LFS respondents were interviewed. Taking the response rate at wave 5 of the LFS (71%) into account, the overall response rate was therefore 57% ($0.80 * 0.71$).

Where reliable information is available about non-respondents, it is possible to adjust the survey results to take account of important differences between respondents and non-respondents. The LFS makes adjustments for non-response, but the methods are not appropriate for the small subsample which was followed up in this survey. As studies of LFS non-response have suggested that response rates tend to be higher among the group selected for this survey, it is unlikely that leaving this initial stage of non-response unadjusted would lead to any important bias. It is reasonable to assume, in respect of the follow-up survey topics, that LFS wave 1 respondents and non-respondents do not differ in important respects.

¹⁹ Reviewed in Foster, K. Evaluating non-response on household surveys, GSS Methodology Series No. 8, ONS, 1998.

Correcting for non-response bias between wave 5 of the LFS and the follow-up survey

In most cross-sectional surveys, the assessment of non-response bias is limited by the lack of information about non-respondents. It is possible to compare the characteristics of the achieved sample with the target population, if such a source exists. As this was a follow-up survey there was good information collected previously by the LFS about the characteristics of the set sample of parents of eligible children.

A CHAID analysis was conducted using SPSS Answer Tree software.²⁰ It is described in section A3.6. Respondents were defined, for this purpose only, as comprising all those who answered the initial sifting questions in the follow-up survey. The sift questions identified parents who were ineligible for further questions since they had not applied to any state secondary school. This group of parents is not treated as among respondents for the purpose of analysis in this report.

The reason for treating them as respondents in the analysis of non-response is that it was necessary to reflect, in the best estimated proportions possible, the fact that non-respondents to the initial sifting questions included some unknown proportion of parents of the same type. It would be biasing to treat as non-respondents all parents of this type. The method adopted provides the best estimate of the contribution of parents of this type to any non-response bias, i.e., in the absence of any other information, that it did not contribute any bias.

The model for non-response comprised LFS variables shown by other studies to be important response discriminators and also those pertinent to the subject of the survey. The analysis showed particular combinations of characteristics which best explain the response rate variation. For this analysis, the sample was weighted by the first stage weights.

Table A3.2 shows the weighting classes suggested by the analysis and the weights (**W2**) assigned to parents of eligible children in these categories.

A3.8 Parents of more than one eligible child

Some parents of eligible children had more than one child in the eligible age range. It was not appropriate to conduct separate interviews to ask about the experience of choosing a secondary school for each child, as there would have been a very high correlation between the answers. Instead, one child was selected as the focus of the interview. To minimise bias that may arise from choosing one child over another one child was selected randomly at the time of the interview (once dates of births and residence had been checked).

²⁰ . CHAID analysis first divides the population into two or more distinct groups based on categories of the best predictor of the dependent variable (whether or not the parental unit were interviewed). It then splits each group into smaller sub-groups based on the next best predictor variable and continues either until there are no more statistically significant predictors or the minimum segment size, in this case 100, has been reached. Categories whose response rates do not differ statistically significantly are automatically merged.

To ensure the experiences of such parents were not under-represented in the survey, a final weight was applied (**W3**). That is to say, each child randomly selected for interview in a family where more than one child was eligible had to represent another child of the same age who was randomly excluded in another family where more than one child was eligible. The weight was simply the number of eligible children in the household, i.e. for units with one eligible child the weight was equal to 1, for those with two eligible children 2, and so on.

Thus **the final weight (weightp)** was derived as $W1 * W2 * W3$. As there was arbitrariness about the scale of these weights, a scaling factor was used so that the average weight was one.

Table A3.2 Weighting classes for non-response

Set sample

Households with high response

Owner occupiers

Wave 5 LFS completed September-November 1999 and resident in Tyne and Wear or Rest of North East, Greater Manchester or Rest of North West or West Yorkshire or East Midlands or West Midlands Metropolitan County or Inner London or Outer London or South East or South West; and highest educational qualification is a degree or above or A level and above or O level and above

Wave 5 LFS completed June-August 1998

Wave 5 LFS completed March-May 1998 or September-November 1998; and Social Class is I & II or III non manual or Armed Forces

Wave 5 LFS completed December 1998-February 1999; and resident in Tyne and Wear or Rest of North East or Greater Manchester or Merseyside or Rest of North West or South Yorkshire or East Midlands or Eastern or Outer London or South East or South West

Wave 5 LFS completed March-May 1999 and family type is a couple

Wave 5 LFS completed March-May 1999 and in employment

Wave 5 LFS completed September-November 1999 and resident in Tyne and Wear or Rest of North East or Greater Manchester or Rest of North West or West Yorkshire or East Midlands or West Midlands Metropolitan County or Inner London or Outer London or South East or South West; and highest educational qualification is an other qualifications or has no qualifications

Wave 5 LFS completed March-May 1998 or September-November 1998; and Social Class is III manual or IV or V

Wave 5 LFS completed September-November 1999 and resident in Merseyside or South Yorkshire or Rest of Yorkshire and Humberside or Rest of West Midlands or Eastern

Households with low response

Owner occupiers

Wave 5 LFS completed December 1998- February 1999 and resident in West Yorkshire or Rest of Yorkshire and Humberside or West Midlands Metropolitan County or Rest of West Midlands or Inner London

Wave 5 LFS completed June-August 1999 and unemployed or economically inactive

Wave 5 LFS completed March-May 1999 and family type is a lone parent or other

Wave 5 LFS completed December 1999-February 2000

Renters

Family type is a couple and are social rented sector tenants

Family type is a lone parent or others; and highest educational qualification is a degree or higher or O level and above

Family type is a couple and are private renters

Family type is a lone parent and others; and highest educational qualification is an A level and above or other qualifications or no qualifications

A3.9 The CHAID analysis

The following variables were included in the CHAID analysis:

- Region of residence;
- Whether or not household were resident in a Phase 1 EiC area;
- International Labour Office definition (internationally agreed standard) of employment status of head of household;
- Ethnic origin of head of household;
- Social class of head of household;
- Highest educational qualification of head of household;
- Family type;
- Tenure;
- Mode of wave 5 LFS interview (telephone or face-to-face); and,
- Quarter in which wave 5 LFS interview completed.

The analysis yielded 17 weighting classes, as shown in **Table A3.2**. In general, the highest response rates were amongst owner-occupied households. The group of owner occupiers with the lowest response (52%) comprised those who most recently completed their wave 5 LFS interview. However, this finding is an artefact. Potential respondents from this quarter were only issued to interviewers when it was apparent that the target number of interviews was unlikely to be met. A higher proportion of this group was counted as non-contacts and some were not issued to interviewers at all.

For owner occupiers the quarter in which the wave 5 LFS was completed was independently associated with response. This variable was included in the model since it was apparent that response rates that were lower amongst those who were interviewed at a more distant time may reflect higher rate of moving. It is often suggested that some parents take into account catchment areas of schools when they move house. If this is the case, this is pertinent to the survey and should be controlled for in the weighting strategy.

Households that rented their accommodation had the lowest response rates. Within this group a number of sub-classifications were important to predicting survey response. So, for example amongst couples response was lower for private renters (45%) compared with social renters (62%). This might reflect a greater likelihood of such groups having moved property between the LFS and this survey.

A3.10 Methods of analysis of the nationally representative survey

Survey estimates

A sample survey provides estimates for a population. In the current survey, that population comprises parents of eligible children.

In addition to the estimates themselves, it is usual to provide estimates of how precisely they measure the true values in the population. In this report, the conventional criterion of a 95% level of confidence in reporting the range of values (the *confidence interval*) within which the survey estimates that a particular population value lies (such as a simple estimate or an estimate of the difference between the percentages for two social groups) has been adopted. The report does not comment on any findings which do not meet this criterion for statistical significance.

Multivariate analysis: logistic regression

In several chapters the report aims to explore the factors associated with particular parental behaviour and opinions. A common approach is to examine the dependent variable, such as a parental opinion, in a series of tables which each study the effect of a possible explanatory variable, such as parents' social class or educational qualifications. A problem with this approach is that the explanatory variables may be closely correlated, as the example of class and qualifications illustrates, so it is not possible to see to what extent the apparent effect of one variable is actually due to the effect of another variable.

An alternative approach, which is used in this report, is to try to isolate the independent effects of possible explanatory variables through multivariate analysis. As the dependent variables to be investigated in this report are dichotomous (e.g. parents used schools performance tables or did not use them), an appropriate and suitable analysis method is logistic regression. Results from the logistic regression models are reported in tables of *odds ratios* rather than the percentages found in conventional tables. Odds ratios can be directly interpreted in a manner analogous to the interpretation of percentages. They allow the analysis to make statements such as "controlling for other factors in the model, parents resident in London boroughs were twice as likely as parents resident in Shire authorities to use performance tables ". The latter part of this sentence could equally be expressed as "had odds twice those of parents resident in Shire authorities of using performance tables". The odds are shown in the relevant tables, together with the confidence intervals around them. In each logistic regression analysis, one category in the explanatory variable is used as a basis for comparison with the other categories. For this purpose, its odds are set to 1.0 and the odds of the other categories are expressed in relation to it.

Variables for inclusion in the logistic regression models were selected by preliminary analysis of a wider range of possible explanatory variables to determine which appeared to have the largest effects on the dependent variables.

In addition, selection of variables was constrained by the need to compare across the sample. For example, several variables are measured on the mother rather than the father, such as "highest educational qualification of the mother". This choice was made to allow comparison with lone parents, who were predominantly mothers rather than fathers.

As the logistic regression analysis shows the independent effects of the explanatory variables, it could be misleading to show the same variables in simple tables. Such tables would show apparent relationships which might not hold if the correlations with other variables were taken into account as they are in the logistic regression models. The use of tables has been restricted to description of the behaviour and opinions of social groups which are of interest for this report, irrespective of explanatory factors.

Appendix 4

The questionnaire

Appendix 4 The questionnaire

ASK ALWAYS:

LastTime

At the time of the last Labour Force Survey interview, the members of the household were recorded as...

- (1) ^LFSDDataH.Name[1]
- (2) ^LFSDDataH.Name[2]
- (3) ^LFSDDataH.Name[3]
- (4) ^LFSDDataH.Name[4]
- (5) ^LFSDDataH.Name[5]
- (6) ^LFSDDataH.Name[6]
- (7) ^LFSDDataH.Name[7]
- (8) ^LFSDDataH.Name[8]
- (9) ^LFSDDataH.Name[9]
- (10) ^LFSDDataH.Name[10]
- (11) ^LFSDDataH.Name[11]
- (12) ^LFSDDataH.Name[12]
- (13) ^LFSDDataH.Name[13]
- (14) ^LFSDDataH.Name[14]
- (15) ^LFSDDataH.Name[15]
- (16) ^LFSDDataH.Name[16]

Is this still correct?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: : LastTime=No

Name

ENTER THE NAMES OF ANY NEW MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD.

NewOld

INTERVIEWER: WAS/HAS (Name)

- (1) In the household at time of LFS interview
- (2) Moved out since LFS interview
- (3) Moved in since the LFS interview

ASK ALWAYS:

Sex

- (1) Male
- (2) Female

ASK ALWAYS:

Birth

What is your date of birth?

FOR DAY NOT GIVEN...ENTER 15
FOR DAY

FOR MONTH NOT GIVEN...ENTER 6
FOR MONTH

DATE

ASK IF: (Birth = DONTKNOW) OR
(Birth = REFUSAL)

AgeIf

If respondents refuse to give their age, or cannot, then give your best estimate.

0..97

ASK IF: age >= 16

MarStat

- (1) single, that is, never married
- (2) married and living with your husband/wife
- (3) married and separated from your husband/wife
- (4) divorced
- (5) or widowed?

ASK IF: age >= 16 AND more than 2 adults in household AND MarStat <> Married and living with husband/wife

LiveWith

- (1) Yes
- (2) No
- (3) SPONTANEOUS ONLY - same sex couple

ASK ALWAYS:

Ethnic

[*] To which of these groups do you consider (NAME) belongs?

- (1) White
- (2) Black - Caribbean
- (3) Black - African
- (4) Black - Other Black groups
- (5) Indian
- (6) Pakistani
- (7) Bangladeshi
- (8) Chinese
- (9) None of these

ASK OR RECORD:

Hhldr

In whose name is the accommodation owned or rented?

- (1) This person alone
- (3) This person jointly
- (5) NOT owner/renter

ASK ALWAYS:

HoHnum

INTERVIEWER: ENTER PERSON NUMBER OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

- (1) NAME[1]
- (2) NAME[2]
- (3) NAME[3]
- (4) NAME[4]
- (5) NAME[5]
- (6) NAME[6]
- (7) NAME[7]
- (8) NAME[8]
- (9) NAME[9]
- (10)NAME[10]
- (11)NAME[11]
- (12)NAME[12]
- (13)NAME[13]
- (14)NAME[14]
- (15)NAME[15]
- (16)NAME[16]

1..16

ASK ALWAYS:

Respdnt

INTERVIEWER: ENTER THE PERSON
NUMBER OF RESPONDENT

- (1) NAME[1]
- (2) NAME[2]
- (3) NAME[3]
- (4) NAME[4]
- (5) NAME[5]
- (6) NAME[6]
- (7) NAME[7]
- (8) NAME[8]
- (9) NAME[9]
- (10)NAME[10]
- (11)NAME[11]
- (12)NAME[12]
- (13)NAME[13]
- (14)NAME[14]
- (15)NAME[15]
- (16)NAME[16]

1..16

ASK ALWAYS:

Respprt

THE RESPONDENT IS (NAME)

INTERVIEWER: ENTER THE PERSON
NUMBER OF NAME'S
SPOUSE/PARTNER

NO SPOUSE/PARTNER = 97

- (1) NAME[1]
- (2) NAME[2]
- (3) NAME[3]
- (4) NAME[4]
- (5) NAME[5]
- (6) NAME[6]
- (7) NAME[7]
- (8) NAME[8]
- (9) NAME[9]
- (10)NAME[10]
- (11)NAME[11]
- (12)NAME[12]
- (13)NAME[13]
- (14)NAME[14]
- (15)NAME[15]
- (16)NAME[16]
- (97)No spouse/partner

1..97

ASK ALWAYS:

CalcKid

Press 1 to calculate the selected child

1..1

ASK ALWAYS:

IntSub

INTERVIEWER: ^Childname IS THE
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW

CODE 1 TO CONTINUE

1..1

COMPUTED BY PROGRAMME:

ChildNum

PERSON NUMBER OF CHILD
INTERVIEW SUBJECT

1..16

ASK ALWAYS:

IntroEl

Before I begin I will need to check some
details with you.

(1) PRESS ENTER TO
CONTINUE

ASK IF: DoB of ChildNum in range
01.09.1987 and 31.08.1988

SchStrt7

First, can I just check, did (Childname)
start secondary school in September 1999?

(1) Yes
(2) No

ASK IF: SchStrt7 = No

YNtStrt7

Can you tell me why (Childname) did not
start secondary school in September 1999?
CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [6] OF

(1) unhappy with schools they were
offered - kept child off school
(2) were on a waiting list for a
preferred school
(3) stayed on in middle school
(4) (child's) health condition/illness
(5) being educated at home
(6) other

ASK IF: SchStrt7 = Yes

State7

Is Childname attending a state secondary
school?

DO NOT INCLUDE PRIVATE FEE-
PAYING SCHOOLS

(1) Yes
(2) No

ASK IF: SchStrt7 = No OR State7 =
No

Apply7

Did you apply for a secondary school place
in a State school?

DO NOT INCLUDE PRIVATE FEE-
PAYING SCHOOLS

(1) Yes
(2) No

ASK IF: Apply7 = No

YNtApp7

Why did you not apply for a place for
(^Child's name) in a State secondary
school ? (1) being educated at
home
(2) decided on private schools
ONLY
(3) other

ASK IF: DoB of ChildNum in range
01.09.1988 and 31.08.1989

SchStrt6

First, can I just check, is (^Child's name)
starting secondary school in September
2000?

(1) Yes
(2) No

ASK IF: *SchStrt6 = No*

YNtStrt6

Can you tell me why (^Child's name) isn't starting secondary school in September 2000?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [7] OF

- (1) unhappy with schools offered
- (2) on a waiting list for a preferred school
- (3) will be staying on in middle school
- (4) (child's) health condition/illness
- (5) being educated at home
- (6) emigrating
- (7) other

ASK IF: *SchStrt6 = Yes*

State6

Will (^Child's name) be attending a State secondary school?

DO NOT INCLUDE PRIVATE FEE-PAYING SCHOOLS

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *SchStrt6 = No OR SchStrt6 = DONTKNOW OR State6 = No OR State6 = DONTKNOW*

Apply6

Did you apply for a secondary school place in a State school?

DO NOT INCLUDE PRIVATE FEE-PAYING SCHOOLS

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *Apply6 = No*

YNtApp6

Why did you not apply for a place for (^Child's name) in a State secondary school ?

- (1) being educated at home
 - (2) decided on private schools
- ONLY
- (3) other

ASK IF: *DoB of ChildNum in range 01.09.1989 and 31.08.1990*

SchStrt5

First, can I just check, do you expect(^Child's name) to start secondary school in September 2001?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *SchStrt5 = No*

YNtStrt5

Why do you think that(^Child's name) will not be starting secondary school in September 2001?

- (1) will be staying on in middle school
- (2) (child's) health condition/illness
- (3) will be educated at home
- (4) emigrating
- (5) other

ASK IF: *SchStrt5 = Yes*

State5

Do you think that (^Child's name) will attend a State secondary school?

DO NOT INCLUDE PRIVATE FEE-PAYING SCHOOLS

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *State5 = No OR State5 = DONTKNOW OR SchStrt5 = No OR SchStrt5 = DONTKNOW*

Apply5

Do you intend to apply for a secondary school place in a State school?

DO NOT INCLUDE PRIVATE FEE-PAYING SCHOOLS

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *Apply5 = No*

YNtApp5

Why will you not apply for a place for (^Child's name) in a State secondary school?

- (1) being educated at home
 - (2) decided on private schools
- ONLY
- (3) other

ASK IF: *State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes OR State5 = Yes or Apply5 = Yes*

FrstTime

Had/have you any previous experience of applying for a place in a State secondary school, before choosing a school for ^Child's name?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes OR State5 = Yes or Apply5 = Yes*

StartQ

Thank you, now I would like to start the main interview.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

ASK IF: *NOT (State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes OR State5 = Yes or Apply5 = Yes)*

EndQ

Thank you for your help. We will not need to ask you any further questions as this survey is about children transferring to State secondary at age eleven.

INTERVIEWER: USE OUTCOME CODE 61 (INELIGIBLE CHILD) FOR THIS HOUSEHOLD

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

ASK IF: *State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes*

IntCrit

Some schools receive more applications than they have places available. These popular schools are described as over-subscribed. The Local Education Authority, or the school themselves, are required to publish information about how they will allocate places in popular schools. This is referred to as over-subscription criteria.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO
CONTINUE

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

KnwAdCr

Did you know how over-subscribed schools would decide who to accept?

- (1) Yes
(2) No

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

WhtAdCr

[*] What did you expect those over-subscribed schools to take into account?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [18] OF

- (1) If school was first preference
(2) Distance / safety of journey from child's home
(3) Nearness of home to school
(4) Sibling attended / parent teaches at/ school
(5) Parent attended school
(6) Link / feeder primary / junior school
(7) Lived within catchment area
(8) Lived within the Local Education Authority
(9) Examination / test of child's ability
(10) Special needs / disability / health needs
(11) Interview with parent / child
(12) Whether a preference for a single sex school was stated
(13) Religion of family / priests reference etc
(14) Discipline record of child
(15) Family background
(16) Performance in primary/junior school
(17) Time on waiting list
(18) Other

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

UseAdCr

When you were considering schools for (^Child's name), did you use the over-subscription criteria?

- (1) Yes
(2) No

ASK IF: UseAdCr = Yes

AdCrUse

[*] How useful in helping you choose which schools to apply to were the over-subscription criteria. Were they...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

ASK IF: UseAdCr = Yes

QualCrit

[*] How satisfied were you that the information was well presented and easy to follow. Were you ...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

IntInfo

I would now like to ask you about other information you used to help you find out about schools.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

ASK IF State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

LEAbk

Did you use any Local Education Authority booklets?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: LEAbk = Yes

QualInf1

[*] How satisfied were you that the information was well presented and easy to follow. Were you ...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: LEAbk = Yes

LEAUse

[*] How useful in helping you choose which schools to apply to were Local Education Authority Booklets. Were they...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

SchBro

Did you use any school prospectuses or brochures?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: SchBro = Yes

QualInf2

[*] How satisfied were you that the information was well presented and easy to follow. Were you ...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: SchBro = Yes

SchUse

[*] How useful in helping you choose which schools to apply to were school booklets or prospectuses. Were they...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

Visit

Did you visit schools?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Visit = Yes

VisUse

[*] How useful in helping you choose which schools to apply to were school visits. Were they...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

PTA

Did you use any information from Parent Teacher Associations?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: PTA = Yes

PTAUse

[*] How useful in helping you choose which schools to apply to was information from Parent Teachers Associations. Was it...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

PerfT

Did you use Government school performance tables?

THESE ARE TABLES COMPARING EACH SCHOOL'S EXAM RESULTS. THEY ARE SOMETIMES CALLED LEAGUE TABLES.

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: PerfT = Yes

PerfTab

Where did you see the Government school performance tables?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

DO NOT READ OUT

DO NOT INCLUDE TV

SET [10] OF

- (1) In newspaper
- (2) in LEA publication
- (3) in school publication
- (4) in DFEE publication
- (5) DfEE website
- (6) OFSTED website
- (7) an LEA website
- (8) a school website
- (9) on internet - can't remember
- (10) Can't remember where seen

ASK IF: Newspaper IN PerfTab

WhchNws

In which newspaper did you see the Government school performance tables?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [2] OF

- (1) Local newspaper
- (2) National newspaper

ASK IF: PerfT = Yes

PerTUse

[*] How useful in helping you choose which schools to apply to were the school performance tables. Were they...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

OFSTED

Did you use OFSTED Inspectors' Reports?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: OFSTED = Yes

OFSTUse

[*] How useful in helping you choose which schools to apply to were Ofsted Inspectors reports. Were they...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

News

Sometimes newspapers carry articles and stories about schools . Did newspaper articles, apart from those about the school performance tables, help you find out about schools?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: News = Yes

NewsUse

[*] How useful in helping you choose which schools to apply to were newspaper articles. Were they...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

Net

Did you use the internet?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Net = Yes

WebUse

[*] How useful in helping you choose which schools to apply to was the internet. Was it...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

TlkTeach

Did you talk to teaching staff at (^Child's name's) primary school about which schools to choose?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: TlkTeach = Yes

TeachUse

[*] How useful was the advice of teaching staff. Was it...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

TlkFrnds

Did you talk to other parents, friends or neighbours, about which schools to choose?

INCLUDE CHILDREN OF OTHER PARENTS/FRIENDS/NEIGHBOURS

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: TlkFrnds = Yes

FrndsUse

[*] How useful was their advice. Was it...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

TlkOthr

Was there anyone else you spoke to about which schools to choose?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: TlkOthr = Yes

WhoElse

Who else did you speak to?

SET [6] OF

- (1) Priest/Faith official
- (2) health professionals, e.g. doctor, health visitor
- (3) social worker/probation officer
- (4) educational welfare officer
- (5) youth worker
- (6) Other

ASK IF: TlkOthr = Yes

OthrUse

[*] How useful was their advice. Was it...

- (1) most useful
- (2) of some use, or
- (3) of little or no use ?

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

OthInfo

Was there any other information that you would have liked?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [4] OF

- (1) other language translations
- (2) visual impairment materials (braille, large print, talking book)
- (3) other
- (4) no other information needed

*ASK IF State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

SatInfo

[*] How satisfied were you that you had all the information you needed to help you decide which schools to apply to. Were you....

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

IntroLEA

There are various ways in which Local Education Authorities handle applications for secondary school places and there are different arrangements around the Country. I would like to ask you some questions about arrangements in your LEA area.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO
CONTINUE

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

IntForms

Sometimes parents are asked to list all the schools that they would accept a place for their child on a single LEA application form. Sometimes they may be asked to complete a number of forms, for example if they are applying direct to a school or to a school in another LEA area.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO
CONTINUE

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

LEAform

Thinking of your own LEA, did you complete a form to apply for a place in one or more State schools in that LEA area?

OWN REFERS TO THE LEA THEY WERE RESIDENT IN WHEN THEY APPLIED

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: LEAform = No

YNoForm

Why did you not complete an application form for schools in your own LEA area?

SET [7] OF

- (1) LEA offered one school to parents, not required to apply
- (2) Decided not to complete form
- (3) Forgot to apply/ Too late to apply
- (4) Didn't know they had to apply for schools
- (5) Applied ONLY direct to schools
- (6) Applied ONLY to schools in other LEA areas
- (7) Other

ASK IF: NOT (LEAform = No)

FormDif

[*] How did you find the experience of completing your own LEA application form. Did you find it ...

- (1) Easy
- (2) Relatively easy
- (3) Neither easy nor difficult
- (4) Quite difficult
- (5) Very difficult

ASK IF: NOT (LEAform = No)

FormSat

[*] How satisfied were you that the instructions on completing the form were well presented and easy to follow. Were you ...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

IntDirect

In some schools, decisions about the allocation of places are taken not by the LEA but by the schools themselves. Often parents are required to make a direct application to the school for a place. This may include the completion of a separate application form.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

Direct1

Were there any State schools, in your own LEA area, which you had to apply to direct?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Direct1 = Yes

DirCLEA1

Did you also have to list these schools on your own LEA application form?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

Direct2

Did you apply to any State schools outside of your own LEA area?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Direct2 = Yes

DirCLEA2

Did you also have to list these schools on your own LEA application form?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

NumForm

In total, how many separate application forms did you complete?

0..10

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

State1

In some areas parents are asked to state a preference for schools. This is where you write down the names of one or more schools on an LEA application form. Were you asked to express a preference for schools in this way?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *State1 = Yes*

State2

Were you asked to express a preference for ...

RUNNING PROMPT

- (1) just one school, or
- (2) more than one school?

ASK IF: *State2 = MoreOne*

PrefNum

How many schools were you allowed to ask for?

1..20

ASK IF: *State2 = MoreOne*

PrefStat

How many schools did you ask for?

1..20

ASK IF: *PrefNum = RESPONSE*
AND: *PrefStat < PrefNum*

YLessPrf

Why did you ask for less schools than you were allowed?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [4] OF

- (1) Greater chance of success if applied to less
- (2) Didn't like some schools
- (3) Knew that they would be successful at listed school(s)
- (4) Some schools were not within reasonable distance

ASK IF: *State2 = MoreOne*

ListPref

Were you asked to list your schools in order of preference?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *(State1 = No) OR (State2 = JustOne)*

OneSch

At the very beginning of the process, were you offered one particular school?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *OneSch = Yes*

OnePlus

Were you able to choose another school if you didn't like that school?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *OnePlus = Yes*

OneSchX

Did you

RUNNING PROMPT

- (1) accept the school you had been offered or ..
- (2) did you request a different school?

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

DidTest

In some schools, places are offered only to those children who pass an examination or test of general ability. These schools are known as selective. Did (^Child's name) sit such a test or examination?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: (DidTest = No) OR (DidTest = DONTKNOW) OR (DidTest = REFUSAL)

Invite

Was ^Child's name invited to sit such a test or examination?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

InterV

Sometimes parents or their children are interviewed by a school as part of the application process. By this we mean formal interviews which will be used to decide whether a school offers a place to a child. Were you or (^Child's name) interviewed by a school as part of the application process?

DO NOT INCLUDE SCHOOL OPEN
DAYS OR INVITATIONS TO VISIT
THE SCHOOL

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

PrivSch

Can I just check, did you apply for a place in any private, fee-paying, schools?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: PrivSch = Yes

IntPriv

In the rest of the questionnaire I will be asking about applications to State schools only. Please do not include private schools.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO
CONTINUE

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

IntroNam

Now I would like to collect the names of all State schools where you applied for a place for (^Child's name). Please include all those you listed on your LEA application form plus any where you applied direct to the school itself, or to another LEA.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO
CONTINUE

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes

SName

INTERVIEWER: TYPE IN NAME OF
SCHOOL

WHEN NAME HAS BEEN TYPED,
PRESS ENTER TO GO TO SCHOOL
CODING FRAME

IF NO MORE NAMES TO ENTER
PRESS End

STRING[60]

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes

SCode

INTERVIEWER: PRESS <SPACE> TO
START CODING

0..9999999

IF SCHOOL NAME NOT FOUND
ENTER CODE 999999

ASK IF: SCode = 9999999

SchDet

INTERVIEWER: RECORD DETAILS OF
SCHOOL.

TYPE FULL NAME AND ADDRESS
DETAILS

OPEN

0..10

COMPUTE: NUMBER OF SCHOOLS RECORDED AT
SCODE

DVSch

1..10

*This is a system variable which stores the
number of schools which were listed at
SCODE*

ASK IF: DVSch >= 2

NrSch

ASK OR RECORD

Of these schools, which is the nearest to
your home?

NEAREST IN TERMS OF WALKING
DISTANCE

IF ONLY ONE SCHOOL APPLIED TO
RECORD AS NEAREST

- (1) SName[1]
- (2) SName[2]
- (3) SName[3]
- (4) SName[4]
- (5) SName[5]
- (6) SName[6]
- (7) SName[7]
- (8) SName[8]
- (9) SName[9]
- (10) SName[10]

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes

NrSchK

Can I just check, are there any other State
secondary schools which are nearer to your
home than ^NrSch (the one you applied to)
?

NEAREST IN TERMS OF WALKING
DISTANCE

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: NrSchK = Yes

NrSName

Which State secondary school is nearest to your home?

INTERVIEWER: TYPE IN NAME OF SCHOOL

WHEN NAME HAS BEEN TYPED, PRESS ENTER TO GO TO SCHOOL CODING FRAME

STRING[60]

ASK IF: NrSchK = Yes

NrSCode

INTERVIEWER: PRESS <SPACE> TO START CODING

0..999999

ASK IF: NrSCode = 999999

NrSchDet

INTERVIEWER: RECORD DETAILS OF SCHOOL.

TYPE FULL NAME AND ADDRESS DETAILS

OPEN

ASK IF: NrSchK = Yes

YNtNrst

[*] Why did you not apply for a place at ^NrFinSch?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

PROBE

SET [4] OF

- (1) her/his friends are not going there
- (2) school has poor exam results
- (3) there is a problem with bullying at the school
- (4) other

ASK IF: other IN YNtNrst

OthNtNr

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE RECORD OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT DIDN'T APPLY FOR A PLACE AT THEIR NEAREST SCHOOL.

PROBE

STRING[200]

ASK IF: DVSch >= 2

BestSch

Thinking of all the State schools which you applied to, which one did you most want (^Child's name) to attend?

- (1) SName [1]
 - (2) SName[2]
 - (3) SName[3]
 - (4) SName[4]
 - (5) SName[5]
 - (6) SName[6]
 - (7) SName[7]
 - (8) SName[8]
 - (9) SName[9]
 - (10) SName[10]
-

ASK IF: BestSch = RESPONSE

WhyBest

Why did you want (^Child's name) to go to ^BestSch more than the others that you applied to?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [5] OF

- (1) her/his friends are going there
- (2) school has good exam results
- (3) it's the local school
- (4) there is relatively little bullying at the school
- (5) other

ASK IF: other IN WhyBest

BestOth

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE RECORD
OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT
LIKED ^BestSch

PROBE

STRING[200]

ASK IF: DVSch = 1

WhyLike

What did you like about ^SName?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [5] OF

- (1) her/his friends are going there
 - (2) school has good exam results
 - (3) it's the local school
 - (4) there is relatively little bullying
at the school
 - (5) other
-

ASK IF: other IN WhyLike

LikeOth

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE RECORD
OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT
LIKED ^QSName.QBSName[1].FinSch?

PROBE

STRING[200]

*ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 =
Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6
= Yes*

OthPref

[*] Were there any other State schools
which you liked better than those you
applied to ?

- (1) Yes
 - (2) No
-

ASK IF: OthPref = Yes

SNameO

Which schools did you like better than
those which you applied to?

INTERVIEWER: TYPE IN NAME OF
SCHOOL

WHEN NAME HAS BEEN TYPED,
PRESS ENTER TO GO TO SCHOOL
CODING FRAME

IF NO MORE NAMES TO ENTER
PRESS End

STRING[60]

ASK IF: SNameO = RESPONSE

SCodeO

INTERVIEWER: PRESS <SPACE> TO
START CODING

0..9999999

ASK IF: SCodeO = 9999999

SchDetO

INTERVIEWER: RECORD DETAILS OF SCHOOL.

TYPE FULL NAME AND ADDRESS DETAILS

OPEN

Schools applied to outside own LEA area

0..10

COMPUTE: NUMBER OF SCHOOLS RECORDED AT SCODEO

DVPrfSch

1..5

This is a system variable which stores the number of schools which were listed at SCODEO

ASK IF: DVPrfSch >= 2

BestSchO

Of all the state schools which you preferred to the ones you applied to, which one did you most want (^Child's name) to go to?

- (1) SNameO[1]
- (2) SNameO[2]
- (3) SNameO[3]
- (4) SNameO[4]
- (5) SNameO[5]

ASK IF: DVPrfSch >= 2

WyPref

[*] What did you particularly like about ^BestSchO ?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [5] OF

- (1) her/his friends are going there
- (2) school has good exam results
- (3) it's the local school
- (4) there is relatively little bullying at the school
- (5) other

ASK IF: other IN WyPref

PrefOth

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE RECORD OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT LIKED ^BestSchO

PROBE

STRING[200]

ASK IF: DVPrfSch >= 2

YNoApB

[*] Why did you decide not to apply for a place at ^BestSchO ? PROBE FULLY

SET [7] OF

- (1) her/his friends are not going there
- (2) travel/transport related difficulties
- (3) over-subscribed - unlikely to pass test
- (4) over-subscribed - not meet religious criteria
- (5) over-subscribed - not meet distance criteria
- (6) over-subscribed - not meet other criteria
- (7) other

ASK IF: DVPrfSch = 1

YPref1

[*] What did you particularly like about
^SNameO?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [5] OF

- (1) her/his friends are going there
- (2) school has good exam results
- (3) it's the local school
- (4) there is relatively little bullying
at the school
- (5) other

ASK IF: other IN YPref1

PrefOth1

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE RECORD
OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT
LIKED ^QNameO

PROBE

STRING[200]

ASK IF: DVPrfSch = 1

YNoApP

[*] Why did you decide not to apply for a
place at ^QNameO.?

SET [7] OF

- (1) her/his friends are not going
there
- (2) travel/transport related
difficulties
- (3) over-subscribed - unlikely to
pass test
- (4) over-subscribed - not meet
religious criteria
- (5) over-subscribed - not meet
distance criteria
- (6) over-subscribed - not meet other
criteria
- (7) other

ASK IF: DidTest = Yes

IntApp

I would now like to ask you about the
schools in which a test was part of the
application process.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO
CONTINUE

ASK IF: DidTest = Yes

Select

Earlier, you told me that (^Child's name)
sat a selection test. Did you apply to any
selective schools on the basis of this test ?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Select = Yes

DirTest

Did the application for ^Name include a
test or examination of (^Child's name)?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: DirTest = Yes

TestTyp

Was this ...

- (1) a test of general ability, such as
an entrance examination or
- (2) a test of aptitude for a particular
gift or talent ?

ASK IF: DirTest = Yes

WhyTest

How was (^Child's name) entered for the test. Were...

- (1) all children entered for the test by the primary school, or
- (2) were some children selected to sit the test, or
- (3) did you apply for your child to sit the test?

ASK IF: DirTest = Yes

SitTest

Did (^Child's name) sit the test?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: SitTest = Yes

TestSat

[*] How satisfied were you that the test was fair. Were you....

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: InterV = Yes

Intro

I would now like to ask you about the schools for which you were interviewed as part of the application process.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

ASK IF: InterV = Yes

ChilInt

Was (^Child's name) interviewed by ^SName?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: ChilInt = Yes

ParPres

Were you (or your spouse/partner) present at your child's interview?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: ChilInt = Yes

IntSatC

[*] How satisfied were you that the interview was fair. Were you ...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: ChilInt = Yes

ParInt

Were you (or your spouse/partner) interviewed separately from (^Child's name)?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: ParInt = Yes

IntSatP

[*] How satisfied were you that the separate interview was fair. Were you ...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: ListPref = Yes

Intro

Now I would like to ask you how you decided on the order to list the schools you wanted on the application form you filled in for your own Local Education Authority.

OWN IS THE ONE IN WHICH THEY WERE RESIDENT WHEN MAKING APPLICATION

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

ASK IF: PrefStat <= 5 AND PrefStat >= 1

PrefOne

Which State school did you give as your first preference?

- (1) ^QSName [1]
- (2) ^QSName [2]
- (3) ^QSName [3]
- (4) ^QSName [4]
- (5) ^QSName [5]
- (6) ^QSName [6]
- (7) ^QSName [7]
- (8) ^QSName [8]
- (9) ^QSName [9]
- (10) ^QSName [10]

ASK IF: PrefStat <= 5 AND PrefStat >= 2

PrefTwo

Which State school did you give as your second preference?

- (1) ^QSName[1]
- (2) ^QSName[2]
- (3) ^QSName[3]
- (4) ^QSName[4]
- (5) ^QSName[5]
- (6) ^QSName[6]
- (7) ^QSName[7]
- (8) ^QSName[8]
- (9) ^QSName[9]
- (10) ^QSName[10]

ASK IF: PrefStat <= 5 AND PrefStat >= 3

PrefThre

Which State school did you give as your third preference?

- (1) ^SName [1]
- (2) ^SName [2]
- (3) ^SName [3]
- (4) ^SName [4]
- (5) ^SName [5]
- (6) ^SName [6]
- (7) ^SName [7]
- (8) ^SName [8]
- (9) ^SName [9]
- (10) ^SName [10]

ASK IF: PrefStat <= 5 AND PrefStat >= 4

PrefFour

Which State school did you give as your fourth preference?

- (1) ^SName [1]
- (2) ^SName [2]
- (3) ^SName [3]
- (4) ^SName [4]
- (5) ^SName [5]
- (6) ^SName [6]
- (7) ^SName [7]
- (8) ^SName [8]
- (9) ^SName [9]
- (10) ^SName [10]

ASK IF: PrefStat >= 1
AND PrefStat = 5

PrefFive

Which State school did you give as your fifth preference?

- (1) ^SName [1]
- (2) ^SName [2]
- (3) ^SName [3]
- (4) ^SName [4]
- (5) ^SName [5]
- (6) ^SName [6]
- (7) ^SName [7]
- (8) ^SName [8]
- (9) ^SName [9]
- (10) ^SName [10]

ASK IF: NRSCHK = No AND DVSCH > 1

ChkLocalS

INTERVIEWER RECORD: IS THE NEAREST SCHOOL THE SAME AS THE FIRST PREFERENCE SCHOOL?

NEARST SCHOOL IS ^QSName.NrSch

FIRST PREFERENCE SCHOOL IS ^Pref1Name

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: ChkLocalS = No

YNt1st

[*] Why wasn't your nearest school, ^QSName.NrSch, your first preference?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [4] OF

- (1) her/his friends are not going there
- (2) school has poor exam results
- (3) there is a problem with bullying at the school
- (4) other

ASK IF: other IN YNt1st

OthNtF

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE RECORD OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT DIDN'T MAKE THEIR NEAREST SCHOOL THEIR FIRST PREFERENCE.

PROBE

STRING[150]

ASK IF: ListPref = Yes

RealOr

[*] Sometimes parents decide not to list schools in the order in which they would really prefer. Did you list schools in the order you wanted, starting with the one you preferred most?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: ListPref = Yes

Advice1

[*] Did you get advice about the order in which to list schools ?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Advice1 = Yes

WhoAdv

[*] Who gave you advice about this?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [7] OF

- (1) Child's primary school
- (2) Secondary schools
- (3) Local Education Authority
- (4) Friends, relatives and/or other parents
- (5) Social Services/ Health Professionals/ Education Welfare Officer
- (6) Priest/other religious representative
- (7) Other

ASK IF: Advice1 = Yes

Changes

Did this advice lead you to change the order of your stated preferences?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

AppSat

[*] Overall, how satisfied were you with the application process. Were you...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes

IntroBl

Now I'd like to ask about the outcome of your applications. Sometimes parents accept more than one offer before they make their final decision. Please tell me about all the offers you received and all the offers you accepted

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

ASK: FOR EACH SCHOOL APPLIED TO

AllOff

Were you offered a place at ^SName

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: AllOff = Yes

AcptOff

Did you accept that offer?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: AllOff = No

WaitLst

Are you on a waiting list for ^SName?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: AllOff = No

Appeal

Did you appeal against the decision not to offer (^Child's name) a place at ^SName?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: AllOff = No

RefReas

Were you told why you were refused a place at ^SName?

PROBE NOT TOLD - REASON SHOULD BE GIVEN IN LETTER OF REFUSAL

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *RefReas = Yes*

WhyRef

What reasons were you given?

PROBE IF REPLIES SCHOOL OVER-SUBSCRIBED

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [6] OF

- (1) Application was too late
- (2) They lived too far from school
- (3) Their child failed to achieve sufficient scores in a selection or entrance examination
- (4) Religious grounds
- (5) Not in link/feeder primary
- (6) Other

ASK IF: *RefReas = Yes*

FairRef

[*] How satisfied were you that the reasons given were fair. Were you...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: *Appeal = Yes*

AppOut

Did you win the appeal for a place at ^SName?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No
- (3) Still waiting to hear outcome

ASK IF: *(AppOut = Yes) OR (AppOut = No)*

SatAppl

[*] How satisfied overall were you with the appeal procedure. Were you...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: *DVAccept > 1*

WhyAcc

Did you accept more than one school place because you were waiting for an offer from a preferred school?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *(DVRefuse > 0) AND (DVAppeal = 0)*

KnowApp

Did you know you could appeal if you were not happy with the schools offered?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *KnowApp = Yes*

WhyNoAp

[*] Why did you decide not to appeal?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [4] OF

- (1) Didn't think would win appeal
- (2) Didn't want to go to the trouble of appealing, too much trouble
- (3) Other
- (4) Happy with other schools they were offered

ASK IF: *State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes AND DVOffer >= 1*

NowSch6

Do you know which secondary school (^Child's name) will be starting in September?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes AND DVOffer >= 1*

NowSch7

Does (^Child's name) attend a secondary school now?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *(NowSch6 = Yes) OR (NowSch7 = Yes)*

SOutName

Which school is that? INTERVIEWER: TYPE IN NAME OF SCHOOL

WHEN NAME HAS BEEN TYPED, PRESS ENTER TO GO TO SCHOOL CODING FRAME

STRING[60]

ASK IF: *(NowSch6 = Yes) OR (NowSch7 = Yes)*

SOutCode

INTERVIEWER: PRESS <SPACE> TO START CODING

0..9999999

ASK IF: *SOutCode = 9999999*

ScOutDet

INTERVIEWER: RECORD DETAILS OF SCHOOL.

TYPE FULL NAME AND ADDRESS DETAILS

OPEN

ASK IF: *State7 = Yes OR Apply7 = Yes OR State6 = Yes OR Apply6 = Yes AND: DVOffer = 0*

AltOffr

Were you offered a place at another secondary school that you hadn't applied to ?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *AltOffr = Yes*

SNameA

Which school were you offered?

INTERVIEWER: TYPE IN NAME OF SCHOOL

WHEN NAME HAS BEEN TYPED, PRESS ENTER TO GO TO SCHOOL CODING FRAME

STRING[60]

ASK IF: *AltOffr = Yes*

SCodeA

INTERVIEWER: PRESS <SPACE> TO START CODING

0..9999999

ASK IF: *SCodeA = 9999999*

SchDetA

INTERVIEWER: RECORD DETAILS OF SCHOOL.

TYPE FULL NAME AND ADDRESS DETAILS

OPEN

ASK IF: *AltOffr = Yes*

AcpAlt

Did you accept that offer?

- (1) Yes
 - (2) No
-

ASK IF: *DVOffer = 0 AND: AltOffr = Yes AND: AcpAlt = No AND: (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes)*

AltNow6

Do you know which secondary school (^Child's name) will be starting at in September?

- (1) Yes
 - (2) No
-

ASK IF: *DVOffer = 0 AND: AltOffr = Yes AND: AcpAlt = No AND: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes)*

AltNow7

Is (^Child's name) attending a secondary school now?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *(AltNow6 = Yes) OR (AltNow7 = Yes)*

AltName

Which secondary school is that?

INTERVIEWER: TYPE IN NAME OF SCHOOL

WHEN NAME HAS BEEN TYPED, PRESS ENTER TO GO TO SCHOOL CODING FRAME

STRING[60]

ASK IF: *(AltNow6 = Yes) OR (AltNow7 = Yes)*

AltCode

INTERVIEWER: PRESS <SPACE> TO START CODING

0..9999999

ASK IF: *AltCode = 9999999*

AltDet

INTERVIEWER: RECORD DETAILS OF SCHOOL.

TYPE FULL NAME AND ADDRESS DETAILS

OPEN

ASK IF: *DVOffer = 0 AND: AltOffr = No AND: (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes)*

NowScX6

Do you know which secondary school (^Child's name) will be starting at in September?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *DVOffer = 0 AND: AltOffr = No AND: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes)*

NowScX7

Does (^Child's name) attend a secondary school now?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *(NowScX6 = Yes) OR (NowScX7 = Yes)*

SNameX

Which school is that?

INTERVIEWER: TYPE IN NAME OF SCHOOL

WHEN NAME HAS BEEN TYPED, PRESS ENTER TO GO TO SCHOOL CODING FRAME

STRING[60]

ASK IF: *(NowScX6 = Yes) OR (NowScX7 = Yes)*

SCodeX

INTERVIEWER: PRESS <SPACE> TO START CODING

0..9999999

ASK IF: *SCodeX = 9999999*

SchDetX

INTERVIEWER: RECORD DETAILS OF SCHOOL.

TYPE FULL NAME AND ADDRESS DETAILS

OPEN

ASK IF: *(NowSch6 = No) OR (AltNow6 = No) OR (NowScX6 = No)*

YNoSch6

Are you able to tell me why you do not know which secondary school (^Child's name) will be starting in September?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [9] OF

- (1) remaining in a middle school
- (2) (child's) health condition/illness
- (3) child excluded from school
- (4) being educated at home
- (5) emigrating
- (6) waiting for offer from acceptable school
- (7) waiting to be offered a place anywhere
- (8) waiting for some other reason or other
- (9) other

ASK IF: *(NowSch7 = No) OR (AltNow7 = No) OR (NowScX7 = No)*

YNoSch7

Are you able to tell me why (^Child's name) isn't attending a secondary school at the moment?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [9] OF

- (1) was attending a middle school
- (2) (child's) health condition/illness
- (3) child excluded from school
- (4) being educated at home
- (5) emigrating
- (6) waiting for offer from acceptable school
- (7) waiting to be offered a place anywhere
- (8) waiting for some other reason or other
- (9) other

ASK IF: (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes)

Satis6

[*] How satisfied are you with the outcome of the process. Are you ...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes)

OvrSat7

[*] How satisfied are you now with the school that (^Child's name) attends. Are you ...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes)

Change7

How does this compare with how you felt BEFORE (^Child's name) started school last September. Are you ...

- (1) more satisfied now than you were then or
- (2) less satisfied now than you were then or
- (3) do you feel the same?

ASK IF: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes) OR (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes)

IntroTrv

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your travelling arrangements.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

ASK IF: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes) OR (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes)

Travl

How does/will (^Child's name) travel to school?

(CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

SET [8] OF

- (1) walk
- (2) By car
- (3) By public transport bus
- (4) By school bus
- (5) By underground train/ metro
- (6) By rail/ overground
- (7) By bicycle
- (8) Don't Know/ Not applicable

ASK IF: Walk IN Travl OR Car IN Travl OR PubBus IN Travl OR SchBus IN Travl OR Train IN Travl OR Rail IN Travl OR Bike IN Travl

SatTrv

[*] How satisfied are you with this arrangement. Are you ...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: (SatTrv = FDissat) OR
(SatTrv = VDissat)

YNtSat

[*] Why are you dissatisfied?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [6] OF

- (1) Worried about child's safety
- (2) Too far to travel
- (3) Have to pay travel costs
- (4) Long journey time
- (5) Poor public transport
- (6) Other

ASK IF: (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5
= Yes)

Int5Crit

Some schools receive more applications than they have places available. These popular schools are described as over-subscribed. The Local Education Authority, or the school themselves, are required to publish information about how they will allocate places in popular schools. This is referred to as over-subscription criteria.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO
CONTINUE

ASK IF: (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5
= Yes)

Knw5AdCr

Do you know how over-subscribed schools will decide who to accept?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5
= Yes)

Wt5AdC

[*] What do you expect those over-subscribed schools to take into account?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [18] OF

- (1) If school was first preference
- (2) Distance / safety of journey from child's home
- (3) Nearness of home to school
- (4) Sibling attended / parent teaches at/ school
- (5) Parent attended school
- (6) Link / feeder primary / junior school
- (7) Lived within catchment area
- (8) Lived within the Local Education Authority
- (9) Examination / test of child's ability
- (10) Special needs / disability / health needs
- (11) Interview with parent / child
- (12) Whether a preference for a single sex school was stated
- (13) Religion of family / priests reference etc
- (14) Discipline record of child
- (15) Family background
- (16) Performance in primary/junior school
- (17) Time on waiting list
- (18) Other

ASK IF: (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5
= Yes)

AnyInfo

Have you sought information on schools in which you might apply for a place?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: AnyInfo = Yes

InfUse

[*] What sources of information have you used?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [8] OF

- (1) Views of other parents/ friends
- (2) Newspaper articles
- (3) The internet
- (4) Local Education Authority booklet
- (5) School prospectuses or brochures
- (6) Information from Parent/Teacher Associations
- (7) School performance tables comparing schools exam results
- (8) OFSTED Inspectors' Reports

ASK IF: News IN InfUse

NewsArt

Have you used information from...

- (1) A Local newspaper
- (2) A national newspaper, or
- (3) in both

ASK IF: Net IN InfUse

NetInf

Which websites have you used?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

- (1) DfEE website
- (2) OFSTED website
- (3) an LEA website
- (4) a school website
- (5) on internet - can't remember

ASK IF: LEAbk IN InfUse

QualInf1

[*] How satisfied are you that the information in the LEA booklet was well presented and easy to follow. Are you ...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: SchBro IN InfUse

QualInf2

[*] How satisfied are you that the information in the school prospectus was well presented and easy to follow. Are you ...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: PerfT IN InfUse

Per5Tab

Where did you see the Government school performance tables?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

EXCLUDE TV

SET [8] OF

- (1) In newspaper
- (2) in LEA publication
- (3) in school publication
- (4) DfEE website
- (5) OFSTED website
- (6) an LEA website
- (7) a school website
- (8) on internet - can't remember

ASK IF: *NewsP IN Per5Tab*

WchNws1

Did you see the Government school performance tables in ...

- (1) a Local newspaper
- (2) a national newspaper, or
- (3) in both?

ASK IF: *AnyInfo = Yes*

MorInf

[*] Is there anything else you expect to use to help you decide which schools to apply to?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [10] OF

- (1) Views of other parents/ friends
- (2) Advice of primary school teaching staff
- (3) Newspaper articles
- (4) The Internet
- (5) Local Education Authority booklet
- (6) School prospectuses or brochures
- (7) Information from Parent/Teacher Associations
- (8) School performance tables comparing schools exam results
- (9) OFSTED Inspectors' Reports
- (10) None

ASK IF: *AnyInfo = No*

WhtInf

[*] What information do you expect to use to help you decide which schools to apply to?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [9] OF

- (1) Views of other parents/ friends
- (2) Advice of primary school teaching staff
- (3) Newspaper articles
- (4) Websites on the internet
- (5) Local Education Authority booklet
- (6) School prospectuses or brochures
- (7) Information from Parent/Teacher Associations
- (8) School performance tables comparing schools exam results
- (9) OFSTED Inspectors' Reports

ASK IF: *PerfT IN WhtInf*

Wh5PTab

Where do you expect to obtain the Government school performance tables?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

EXCLUDE TV

SET [8] OF

- (1) In newspaper
- (2) in LEA publication
- (3) in school publication
- (4) DfEE website
- (5) OFSTED website
- (6) an LEA website
- (7) a school website
- (8) on internet - don't know which website

ASK IF: AnyInfo = No AND PerfT IN
WhtInf AND NewsP IN Wh5PTab

WchNws2

Do you expect to see the Government
school performance tables ...

- (1) in local newspapers
- (2) in national newspapers or
- (3) in both

ASK IF: (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5
= Yes)

ImpPerf

[*] How important do you think the
Government school performance tables
will be in helping you decide which
schools to apply to. Do you think they will
be ...

THESE ARE TABLES COMPARING
EACH SCHOOL'S EXAM RESULTS.
THEY ARE SOMETIMES CALLED
LEAGUE TABLES.

- (1) very important
- (2) fairly important
- (3) not very important, or
- (4) not at all important?

ASK IF: (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5
= Yes)

ScVisit

Do you intend to visit any schools ?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5
= Yes)

InfLike

[*] Is there any other information you
would find helpful ?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [4] OF

- (1) Other language translations
- (2) Visual impairment materials
(braille, large print, talking book)
- (3) Other
- (4) No other information needed

ASK IF: (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5
= Yes)

Priv5Sch

Can I just check, do you intend to apply for
a place in any private, fee-paying, schools?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Priv5Sch = Yes

Int5Priv

In the rest of the questionnaire I will be
asking about State schools only. Please do
not include private schools.

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO
CONTINUE

ASK IF: (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5
= Yes)

WhchSch

Do you know which state secondary
schools you will be applying to for a place
for (^Child's name)?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *WhchSch = Yes*

TypeSch2

[*] What factors are important for you in deciding which schools to apply to?

ENTER FULL ANSWER

SET [5] OF

- (1) her/his friends are going there
- (2) school has good exam results
- (3) it's the local school
- (4) there is relatively little bullying at the school
- (5) other

ASK IF: *other IN TypeSch2*

Type2Oth

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE RECORD OTHER IMPORTANT FACTORS IN CHOOSING SCHOOLS.

PROBE

STRING[200]

ASK IF: *WhchSch = Yes*

S5Name

Please can give me the names of State schools that you intend to apply to?
INTERVIEWER: TYPE IN NAME OF SCHOOL

WHEN NAME HAS BEEN TYPED,
PRESS ENTER TO GO TO SCHOOL
CODING FRAME

IF NO MORE NAMES TO ENTER
PRESS End

STRING[60]

RECORD IF: *S5Name := 1 TO 10*

S5Code

INTERVIEWER: PRESS <SPACE> TO START CODING

0..9999999

ASK IF: *S5Name = RESPONSE*

S5Code

INTERVIEWER: PRESS <SPACE> TO START CODING

0..9999999

ASK IF: *S5Code = 9999999*

Sch5Det

INTERVIEWER: RECORD DETAILS OF SCHOOL.

TYPE FULL NAME AND ADDRESS
DETAILS

OPEN

COMPUTE: *NUMBER OF SCHOOLS RECORDED AT S5CODE*

DV5Sch

1..10

This is a system variable which stores the number of schools recorded at S5Code

ASK IF: *DV5Sch >= 2*

Nr5Sch

Which of these is your nearest school?

NEAREST IN TERMS OF WALKING
DISTANCE

- (1) ^QBS5Name[1].Fin5Sc
- (2) ^QBS5Name[2].Fin5Sc
- (3) ^QBS5Name[3].Fin5Sc
- (4) ^QBS5Name[4].Fin5Sc
- (5) ^QBS5Name[5].Fin5Sc
- (6) ^QBS5Name[6].Fin5Sc
- (7) ^QBS5Name[7].Fin5Sc
- (8) ^QBS5Name[8].Fin5Sc
- (9) ^QBS5Name[9].Fin5Sc
- (10) ^QBS5Name[10].Fin5Sc

ASK IF: WhchSch = Yes

Nr5SchK

Can I just check, are there any other State secondary schools which are nearer to your home than ^Nr5Sch (the one you intend to apply to) ?

NEAREST IN TERMS OF WALKING DISTANCE

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Nr5SchK = Yes

Nr5SNam

Which state secondary school is nearest to your home?

NEAREST IN TERMS OF WALKING DISTANCE

INTERVIEWER: TYPE IN NAME OF SCHOOL

WHEN NAME HAS BEEN TYPED, PRESS ENTER TO GO TO SCHOOL CODING FRAME

STRING[60]

ASK IF: Nr5SchK = Yes

Nr5Scd

INTERVIEWER: PRESS <SPACE> TO START CODING

0..9999999

ASK IF: Nr5Scd = 9999999

Nr5SDt

INTERVIEWER: RECORD DETAILS OF SCHOOL.

TYPE FULL NAME AND ADDRESS DETAILS

OPEN

ASK IF: Nr5SchK = Yes

YNt5Nrst

[*] Why will you not apply for a place at ^Nr5FnSc?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [4] OF

- (1) her/his friends are not going there
- (2) school has poor exam results
- (3) there is a problem with bullying at the school
- (4) other

ASK IF: other IN YNt5Nrst

Oth5Nr

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE RECORD OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT DIDN'T APPLY FOR A PLACE AT THEIR NEAREST SCHOOL.

PROBE

STRING[200]

ASK IF: WhchSch = No

TypeSch1

[*] When you begin to think about choosing schools to apply to, what factors will be important to you, what type of schools will you be considering?

ENTER FULL ANSWER

SET [5] OF

- (1) whether her/his friends are going there
- (2) whether school has good exam results
- (3) whether it's the local school
- (4) whether there is relatively little bullying at the school
- (5) other

ASK IF: *other IN TypeSch1*

Type1Oth

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE RECORD
OTHER FACTORS WHICH PARENTS
WILL CONSIDER.

PROBE

STRING[200]

ASK IF: *(State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5 = Yes)*

GdRange

[*] How satisfied are you that you have a
good chance of being offered at least one
good school. Are you...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: *(State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5 = Yes)*

GdEduc

[*] How satisfied are you that the State
system will provide (^Child's name) with a
good secondary education. Are you...

- (1) very satisfied
- (2) fairly satisfied
- (3) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (4) slightly dissatisfied or
- (5) very dissatisfied

ASK IF: *(GdEduc = FDissat) OR (GdEduc = VDissat)*

WhyDis

[*] Why do you think that?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [7] OF

- (1) No good schools in area
- (2) All good schools will be oversubscribed
- (3) Live too far from good schools
- (4) All good schools selective
- (5) Child's primary school not in link/feeder for good school
- (6) Problems with their child will prevent them receiving a good education
- (7) Other reason, please specify

ASK IF: *(State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5 = Yes)*

NumAppl

To how many schools do you expect to
apply for a place?

1..10

ASK IF: *(State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5 = Yes)*

ExpFrst

Do you think you will be offered a place in
your most preferred school?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *(ExpFrst = No) OR (ExpFrst = DONTKNOW)*

ExpSome

Do you expect to be offered a place in a
school which is acceptable to you?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5 = Yes)

SpecProb

[*] Does (^Child's name) have any special needs that would require a particular school?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: SpecProb = Yes

WhtProb

[*] What special needs does (^Child's name) have?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

CODE 1 - ONLY IF MENTIONED SPONTANEOUSLY. FOR CODE 1 PROBE NATURE OF NEEDS AND USE RELEVANT OTHER CATEGORIES

SET [6] OF

- (1) Special educational needs
- (2) Physical disability
- (3) Learning disability
- (4) Ill Health
- (5) Behavioural problems
- (6) Other

ASK IF: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes) OR (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes) OR (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5=Yes)

IntHsng

I have now come to the end of the questions about the schools you applied to. Before I finish I need to ask you some general questions, starting with questions about your accommodation
PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

1..1

ASK IF: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes) OR (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes) OR (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5=Yes)

ChkTen

Last time we spoke you said that occupied your accomodation in the following way:

Information inserted from last LFS interview

Is this still correct?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: ChkTen = No

Ten96

In which of these ways do you occupy this accommodation. Do you ...

- (1) Own it outright or
- (2) are you buying it with the help of a mortgage or loan or
- (3) are you paying part rent and part mortgage (shared ownership)or
- (4) Renting it or
- (5) do you live here rent-free (including rent-free in relative's/friend's property; excluding squatting)?
- (6) Squatting (SPONTANEOUS ONLY)

ASK IF: Ten96 = RentFree

Tied

Does the accommodation go with the job of anyone in the household?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Ten96 = RentFree

LLord

Who is your landlord?

CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

- (1) the local authority/council/New Town Development/ Scottish Homes
- (2) a housing association or co-operative or charitable trust
- (3) employer (organisation) of a household member
- (4) another organisation
- (5) relative/friend (before you lived here) of a household member
- (6) employer (individual) of a household member
- (7) another individual private landlord

ASK IF: (Ten96 = RentIt) OR (Ten96 = RentFree)

Furn

Is the accommodation provided:

- (1) furnished
- (2) partly furnished (eg carpets and curtains only)
- (3) or unfurnished?

ASK IF: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes) OR (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes) OR (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5=Yes)

IntQual

I would now like to ask you some questions about you and your spouse/partner's educational qualifications
PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

1..1

ASK IF: Qualifications recorded as not known or none in LFS

ChkNoQ1

(NAME) Last time we spoke, we did not record any educational qualifications for you.

Is this correct?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Qualifications recorded in LFS

ChkQ1

(NAME) Last time we spoke, we had recorded that your highest educational qualification was a

Description from last LFS interview

Is this still correct?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Qualifications recorded in LFS OR ChkQ1=No OR ChkNoQ1 = No

QualCh

(NAME)
Can I check, do you have any qualifications....
CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [5] OF

- (1) from school, college or university?
- (2) connected with work?
- (3) from government schemes?
- (4) no qualifications
- (5) Don't know

ASKIF: ((School/college/university qualifications) OR (qualifications connected with work) OR (qualifications from a government scheme) IN Qualch) OR (QualCh=Don't know)

Quals

(NAME)
Which qualifications do (you think) you have, starting with the highest qualifications?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY - PROMPT AS NECESSARY

SET [11] OF

- (1) Degree level qualification including graduate membership of a professional institute or PGCE, or higher
- (2) Diploma in Higher Education
- (3) HNC/HND
- (4) ONC/OND
- (5) BTEC, BEC or TEC
- (6) SCOTVEC, SCOTEC or SCOTBEC
- (7) Teaching qualification (excluding PGCE)
- (8) Nursing or other medical qualification not yet mentioned
- (9) Other Higher Education qualifications below degree level
- (10) A-Level or equivalent
- (11) SCE Higher
- (12) NVQ/SVQ
- (13) GNVQ/GSVQ
- (14) AS-level
- (15) Certificate of 6th Year Studies (CSYS) or equivalent
- (16) O-Level or equivalent
- (17) SCE Standard/Ordinary O Grade
- (18) GCSE
- (19) CSE
- (20) RSA
- (21) City and Guilds
- (22) YT Certificate
- (23) Any other professional/vocational qualifications/ foreign qualifications
- (24) Don't know

ASK IF: Degree level qualification IN Quals

Degree

(NAME)
Is your degree...
CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

- (1) a higher degree (including PGCE)?
- (2) a first degree?
- (3) other (eg graduate member of a professional institute or chartered accountant)?
- (4) Don't know

ASK IF: Degree = Higher

HighO

^Names[LTLooPer]
ASK OR RECORD - CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES
Was your higher degree...

- (1) a Doctorate?
- (2) a Masters?
- (3) a Postgraduate Certificate in Education?
- (4) or some other postgraduate degree or professional qualification?
- (5) Don't know

ASK IF: SCOTVEC/SCOTTEC/SCOTBEC IN Quals

SCTVEC

(NAME)
Is your highest SCOTVEC qualification...
CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

- (1) higher level?
- (2) full National Certificate?
- (3) a first diploma or general diploma?
- (4) a first certificate or general certificate?
- (5) modules towards a National Certificate?
- (6) Don't know

ASK IF: BTEC/BEC/TEC IN Quals

BTEC

(NAME)
Is your highest BTEC qualification.....
CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

- (1) at higher level?
- (2) at National Certificate or National Diploma level?
- (3) a first diploma or general diploma?
- (4) a first certificate or general certificate?
- (5) Don't know

ASK IF: NVQ/SVQ IN Quals

NVQlev

(NAME)
What is your highest level of full NVQ/SVQ?

- (1) Level 1
- (2) Level 2
- (3) Level 3
- (4) Level 4
- (5) Level 5
- (6) Don't know

ASK IF: GNVQ/GSVQ IN Quals

GNVQ

(NAME)
Is your highest GNVQ/GSVQ at...
CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

- (1) advanced level?
- (2) intermediate level?
- (3) foundation level?
- (4) Don't know

ASK IF: RSA IN Quals

RSA

(NAME)
Is your highest RSA....
CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

- (1) a higher diploma?
- (2) an advanced diploma or advanced certificate?
- (3) a diploma?
- (4) or some other RSA (including Stage I,II & III)?
- (5) Don't know

ASK IF: City and Guilds IN Quals

CandG

(NAME)
Is your highest City and Guilds qualification....
CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

- (1) advanced craft/part 3?
- (2) craft/part 2?
- (3) foundation/part 1?
- (4) Don't know

ASK IF: A Level or equivalent IN Quals

NumAL

(NAME)
ASK OR RECORD
Do you have...

- (1) one A Level or equivalent or more than one?
- (2) Don't know
- (3) Don't know

ASK IF: SCE Higher IN Quals

NumSCE

(NAME)
ASK OR RECORD
Do you have...

- (1) One or two SCE Highers
- (2) 3 or more Highers?
- (3) Don't know

ASK IF: AS-Level IN Quals

NumAS

(NAME)
ASK OR RECORD
Do you have...

- (1) one A/S level
- (2) 2 or 3 A/S levels
- (3) or 4 or more passes at this level?
- (4) don't know

ASK IF: GCSE IN Quals OR SCE Standard/Ordinary O Grade IN Quals

GCSE

(NAME)
Do you have any (GCSEs at grade C or above) (SCE Standard grades 1-3/O grades at C or above)?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No
- (3) Don't know

ASK IF: CSE IN Quals

CSE

(NAME)
Do you have any CSEs at grade 1?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No
- (3) Don't know

ASK IF: O Level IN Quals OR CSE = Yes OR GCSE = Yes

NumOL

(NAME)
ASK OR RECORD
You mentioned that you have passes at (GCSEs at grade C or above) (CSE Grade 1) (O Levels or equivalent) Do you have...

- (1) fewer than 5 passes
- (2) or 5 or more passes at this level?
- (3) Don't know

ASK IF: GCSE IN Quals OR CSE IN Quals OR O Level IN Quals OR SCE Standard/Ordinary O Grade IN Quals

EngMath

(NAME)
Do you have (GCSEs at Grade C or above) (CSE Grade 1) (O levels or equivalent) in English or Mathematics?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [3] OF

- (1) English
- (2) Mathematics
- (3) Neither

ASK IF: *ChkQ1 = No OR ChkNoQ1 = No*

Enroll

(NAME)

Are you at present (at school or sixth form college or) enrolled on any full-time or part-time education course excluding leisure courses? (Include correspondance courses and open learning as well as other forms of full-time or part-time education course)

- (1) Yes
- (2) No
- (3) Don't know

ASK IF: *Enroll = Yes*

Attend

(NAME)

And are you....?

- (1) Still attending
- (2) Waiting for term to (re)start
- (3) or have you stopped going?

ASK IF: *(Attend = still) OR (Attend = wait)*

Course

(NAME)

Are you (at school or sixth form college), on a full-time or part-time course, a medical or nursing course, a sandwich course, or some other kind of course?

CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES

- (1) School/full-time
- (2) School/part-time
- (3) sandwich course
- (4) studying at a university or college including sixth form college FULL TIME
- (5) training for a qualification in nursing, physiotherapy, or a similar medical subject
- (6) on a part-time course at university or college INCLUDING day release and block release
- (7) on an Open College Course
- (8) on an Open University course
- (9) Any other correspondance course
- (10) any other self/open learning course

ASK IF: *(Attend = still) OR (Attend = wait)*

EdAge

(NAME)

How old were you when you finished your continuous full-time education?

1..97

ASK IF: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes) OR (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes) OR (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5=Yes)

IntILO

I would like to ask a few questions about employment.

INTERVIEWER - PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

1..1

ASK IF: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes) OR (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes) OR (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5=Yes)

Wrking

(NAME)

Did you do any paid work in the 7 days ending Sunday the (DATE LAST SUNDAY), either as an employee or as self-employed?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: Wrking = No

SchemeET

(NAME)

Were you on a government scheme for employment training?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: (SchemeET = No)

JbAway

(NAME)

Did you have a job or business that you were away from?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No
- (3) Waiting to take up a new job/business already obtained

ASK IF: (JbAway = No) OR (JbAway = Waiting)

OwnBus

(NAME) Did you do any unpaid work in that week for any business that you own?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: (JbAway = No) OR (JbAway = Waiting) AND OwnBus = No

RelBus

(NAME) ...or that a relative owns?

- (1) Yes
 - (2) No
-

ASK IF: *RelBus = No AND JbAway = No*

Looked

(NAME) Thinking of the 4 weeks ending Sunday the (DATE LAST SUNDAY), were you looking for any kind of paid work or government training scheme at any time in those 4 weeks?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No
- (3) Waiting to take up a new job or business already obtained

ASK IF: *(SchemeET = No) AND ((Looked = Y) OR (Looked = Wait)) OR (JbAway = Waiting)*

StartJ

(NAME)
If a job or a place on a government scheme had been available in the week ending Sunday the [^]*date last Sunday*, would you have been able to start within 2 weeks?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *(Looked = No) OR (StartJ = No)*

YInAct

(NAME) What was the main reason you did not seek any work in the last 4 weeks/would not be able to start in the next 2 weeks?

- (1) Student
- (2) Looking after the family/home
- (3) Temporarily sick or injured
- (4) Long-term sick or disabled
- (5) Retired from paid work
- (6) None of these

ASK IF: *Economically inactive OR Unemployed*

Everwk

(NAME)

Have you ever had a paid job, apart from casual or holiday work?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *Everwk = Yes*

DtJbL

(NAME) When did you leave your last PAID job?

day.....if in last 12 months
month....if in last 24 months.

DATE

ASK IF: *IN WORK OR EVER WORKED*

IndD

(NAME) CURRENT OR LAST JOB
DESCRIPTION OF WHAT
FIRM/ORGANISATION (NAME)
WORKED FOR MAINLY MAKE/OR DO
(AT PLACE WHERE THEY WORKED)

STRING[80]

ASK IF: IN WORK OR EVER WORKED

OccT

JOB TITLE: CURRENT OR LAST JOB

STRING[30]

ASK IF: IN WORK OR EVER WORKED

OccD

(NAME) CURRENT OR LAST JOB

What did you mainly do in your job?

CHECK SPECIAL
QUALIFICATIONS/TRAINING
NEEDED TO DO THE JOB

STRING[80]

ASK IF: IN WORK OR EVER WORKED

Stat

Were you working as an employee or were
you self-employed?

- (1) Employee
 - (2) Self-employed
-

ASK IF: Stat = employee

Manage

If a respondent says they have both
managerial and supervisory duties, then
code the one which they see as their main
duty - see instructions for more
information.

- (1) Manager
 - (2) Foreman/supervisor
 - (3) Not manager/supervisor
-

ASK IF: Stat=employee

EmpNo

(NAME) How many employees were there
at the place where you worked?

- (1) 1-24
- (2) 25 or more

ASK IF: Stat = Self Employed

Solo

(NAME)

Were you working on your own or did you
have employees?

- (1) on own/with partner(s) but no
employees
 - (2) with employees
-

ASK IF: Solo = With employees

SENo

How many people did you employ at the
place where you worked?

- (1) 1-24
- (2) 25 or more

ASK IF: IN WORK OR EVER WORKED

FtPtWk

In your (main) job were you working:

- (1) full time
- (2) or part time?

ASK IF: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes) OR (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes) OR (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5=Yes)

IntInc

ASK RESPONDENT (NAME) OR PARTNER (NAME[Respprt])

INTRODUCE INCOME SECTION

- (1) PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE

ASK IF: (State7 = Yes) OR (Apply7 = Yes) OR (State6 = Yes) OR (Apply6 = Yes) OR (State5 = Yes) OR (Apply5=Yes)

SrcIncP

I am going to read out a list of various possible sources of income. Can you please tell me which kinds of income you (and your spouse/partner) receive?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [9] OF

- (1) Earnings from employment or self-employment
- (2) Pension from former employer
- (3) Child benefit
- (4) Mobility allowance
- (5) Income Support
- (6) Other state benefits
- (7) Interest from savings etc.
- (8) Other kinds of regular allowance from outside the household
- (9) Other sources e.g. rent
- (10) No source of income

ASK IF: (Earn IN SrcIncP OR (Pens IN SrcIncP) OR (ChldBn IN SrcIncP) OR (Mob IN SrcIncP) OR (IS IN SrcIncP) OR (Ben IN SrcIncP) OR (Intrst IN SrcIncP) OR (OthReg IN SrcIncP) OR (Other IN SrcIncP)

GrossP

TOTAL INCOME BEFORE TAX

1..32

ASK IF: GrossP = 32

Gross3P

Could you please give me your (NAME[QHoH.Respdnt]) total income as an annual amount?

PROMPT AS NECESSARY
ENTER BAND NUMBER

1..60

ASK IF: Respprt < 97 **AND:** GrossP <> REFUSAL

SpincP

Does NAME[QHoh.Respprt] have any separate income of his/her own?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *Respprt < 97 AND: GrossP <> REFUSAL AND: SpincP = Yes*

SGrossP

Will you please tell me what NAMES[QHoh.Respprt]'s total income is from all these sources before deductions for income tax, National Insurance etc.
PROMPT AS NECESSARY
ENTER BAND NUMBER

1..32

ASK IF: *SGrossP = 32*

SGross3P

Could you give me ^NAMES[QHoh.Respprt]'s total income as an annual amount?
PROMPT AS NECESSARY
ENTER BAND NUMBER

1..60

ASK IF: *Respprt < 97 AND: (GrossP = DONTKNOW) OR (SGrossP = DONTKNOW)*

JntIncP

Would it be possible for you to tell me the total income of NAMES[QHoh.Respdnt] and NAMES[QHoh.Respprt] taken together - before any deductions?
PROMPT AS NECESSARY
ENTER BAND NUMBER

1..32

ASK IF: *JntIncP = 32*

Gross5P

Could you please give me total income taken together as an annual amount?
PROMPT AS NECESSARY
ENTER BAND NUMBER

1..60

ASK IF: *((NSrc IN SrcIncP) OR (JWeekGrP = RESPONSE)) AND ((QTHComp.NumAdult > 2) OR ((QTHComp.NumAdult = 2) AND (QHoh.Respprt = 97)))*

IfHSrcP

Can I just check, does anyone else in the household have a source of income?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

ASK IF: *IfHSrcP = Yes*

HGrossP

(And now) thinking of the income of the household as a whole, please could you tell me the total income of the whole household before deductions for income tax, National Insurance etc.
PROMPT AS NECESSARY
ENTER BAND NUMBER

1..32

ASK IF: HGrossP = 32

HGross2P

Could you please give me that as an annual amount?

PROMPT AS NECESSARY
ENTER BAND NUMBER

1..60

CRITERIA OF CHOICE CODING BLOCK

ASK IF: OthNtNr = RESPONSE

YNtNC

THE OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT DIDN'T APPLY FOR A PLACE AT THEIR NEAREST SCHOOL WERE RECORDED AS

^OthNtNr

CODE ALL THAT APPLY USING CODING FRAME 1.

PRESS PAGE DOWN (PgDn) WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED CODING

DO NOT PRESS END

1..99

ASK IF: BestOth = RESPONSE

YBstC

THE OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT LIKED THE SCHOOL THEY MOST WANTED THEIR CHILD TO GO TO WERE RECORDED AS

^BestOth

CODE ALL THAT APPLY USING CODING FRAME 2.

PRESS PAGE DOWN (PgDn) WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED CODING

DO NOT PRESS END

1..99

ASK IF: LikeOth = RESPONSE

YLkC

THE OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT LIKED THE SCHOOL THEY MOST WANTED THEIR CHILD TO GO TO WERE RECORDED AS

^LikeOth

CODE ALL THAT APPLY USING CODING FRAME 2.

PRESS PAGE DOWN (PgDn) WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED CODING

DO NOT PRESS END

1..99

ASK IF: PrefOth = RESPONSE

YPrfC

THE OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT PREFERRED A SCHOOL, OTHER THAN THOSE APPLIED TO, WERE RECORDED AS

^PrefOth

CODE ALL THAT APPLY USING CODING FRAME 2.

PRESS PAGE DOWN (PgDn) WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED CODING

DO NOT PRESS END

1..99

ASK IF: PrefOth1 = RESPONSE

YPrf1C

THE OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT PARTICULARLY LIKED A SCHOOL, OTHER THAN THOSE APPLIED TO, WERE RECORDED AS

^ PrefOth1

CODE ALL THAT APPLY USING CODING FRAME 2.

PRESS PAGE DOWN (PgDn) WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED CODING

DO NOT PRESS END

1..99

ASK IF: Oth5Nr = RESPONSE

YNt5NC

THE OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT DIDN'T APPLY FOR A PLACE AT THEIR NEAREST SCHOOL WERE RECORDED AS

^Oth5Nr

CODE ALL THAT APPLY USING CODING FRAME 1.

PRESS PAGE DOWN (PgDn) WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED CODING

DO NOT PRESS END

1..99

ASK IF: OthNtF = RESPONSE

YNt1C

THE OTHER REASONS WHY PARENT PARENT'S NEAREST SCHOOL WASN'T THEIR FIRST PREFERENCE WERE RECORDED AS

^OthNtF

CODE ALL THAT APPLY USING CODING FRAME 1.

PRESS PAGE DOWN (PgDn) WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED CODING

DO NOT PRESS END

1..99

ASK IF: Type1Oth = RESPONSE

YBst5C

THE OTHER FACTORS PARENTS WILL CONSIDER WERE RECORDED AS

^Type1Oth

CODE ALL THAT APPLY USING CODING FRAME 2.

PRESS PAGE DOWN (PgDn) WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED CODING

DO NOT PRESS END

1..99

ASK IF: Type2Oth = RESPONSE

YImp5C

THE OTHER FACTORS WHICH ARE
IMPORTANT TO PARENTS IN
CONSIDERING SCHOOLS TO APPLY
TO WERE RECORDED AS

^Type2Oth

CODE ALL THAT APPLY USING
CODING FRAME 2.

PRESS PAGE DOWN (PgDn) WHEN
YOU HAVE FINISHED CODING

DO NOT PRESS END

1..99

