

Mark welcomes school admissions proposals

Mark Lancaster has welcomed proposed changes to school admissions after the current system left pupils waiting months for places or being sent to schools miles from home.

The city MP is 'delighted' that the draft new admissions code addresses many of the points he raised in his Parliamentary debate on the problem in December.

Last year he was inundated with complaints from parents applying during the school year. Of the 327 secondary school applicants that year, 120 did not get any of their three choices.

These in-year admissions are frequent as Milton Keynes is a growing city, a burden compounded by the fact that in September councils were left to coordinate these applications.

But the Government has said this responsibility should return to schools, eliminating the bureaucracy which left children sitting at home for weeks until they could take up a place.

The proposals will also allow popular schools to more easily increase their intake, which should alleviate the issue of new children not being able to go to their local school because it is full.

In contributing to the consultation on the proposals, Mr Lancaster has urged the importance of proximity to be considered.

He said: "While I think it is good that schools will be autonomous, able to prioritise certain children, I think it also needs to be remembered that it is beneficial for children to be able to walk to school where possible.

"The situation last year saw children travelling to the other side of the city to their school when there was a full one next door to them. One child was even offered a taxi, which would have cost Â£2,875 a year.

"Delays and distance are not something children should have to encounter when it comes to school places. Therefore I will continue to push for a fairer system."