

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: 9th October 2013

Subject: Information on the annual admissions round for September 2013 entry



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report provides statistical information on the Admissions round for entry to school in September 2013. There are now national closing dates for applications and for making offers. Secondary applications must be submitted by 31 October and offers are made on 1 March. In Leeds 84% of parents were offered their first preference school (the same as last year) and 95% were offered one of their top three (94% last year). There were 7707 places allocated, a rise from 7568 last year.
2. Primary applications must be submitted by 15 January each year and offers are made on 16 April. In Leeds 85% (84% last year) were offered their first preference with 94% (same as last year) offered one of their top three preferences. There were 9355 places allocated which is an increase from 9154 at the same point last year.
3. In September 2013 the requirement for the local authority to coordinate in year admissions was removed. During the last academic year testing of a new process with all schools and academies in Leeds has taken place which will enable parents to apply directly to schools for places when they are outside the normal admission round. This will enable many applications to be dealt with more quickly and change the focus of the local authority role from processing large numbers of applications to supporting parents who are facing more difficulty in finding a school place.

4. The first two mainstream Free Schools were approved to open in Leeds this year and applications in the pre-opening stage are handled outside of the normal process. The emergence of new schools in this way needs to be considered in the context of the local authority Admission policy.

Recommendations

1. That Executive Board note:

- The percentage of successful first preferences for secondary admissions was 84% and for Reception admissions was 85%.
- The percentage of parents receiving one of their top three preferences was 94%.
- The number of appeals for Reception has decreased slightly although more have been successful.
- The timing of the confirmation of Free Schools opening has led to late adjustments to availability of places.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report provides statistical information on Admissions into Reception and year 7 for September 2013. There is a rising birth rate in Leeds and this is now affecting entry into both primary and secondary schools. The report further considers the effect on the application process of the timing of Free Schools being approved by the DfE and the interaction with the current Admission policy.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The local authority has a duty to coordinate all applications for schools and academies in the normal admission round. This refers mainly to applications for entry into Reception and year 7, but also includes year 3 where we have junior schools. Between September 2010 and September 2013 the local authority also had a duty to coordinate all in year transfers that took place. The local authority defends all admission appeals for community and voluntary controlled schools.
- 2.2 The birth rate both nationally and locally has been rising and the number of children entering Reception continues to rise. This year the rise is impacting on entry into secondary school after a steady decline in numbers over the last decade. An online application facility continues to be popular with 11,800 parents choosing to apply for their school place this way.
- 2.3 In Leeds the birth rate has risen from a low of circa 7,500 in 200/2001 to 10,000 or more in the last four years, and has resulted in considerable pressure on school places. The response of the local authority has been to create 1118 new reception places through permanent structural change to school organisation in the city. In addition, where demographic information is not yet conclusive that permanent change is sustainable or where permanent solutions cannot yet be implemented, 183 extra reception places and 40 extra year 7 places were secured for the respective offer days as temporary additional increases to the admission number. As the birth rate has become more volatile in recent years, use of such 'bulge' cohorts will play an increasing role. The first preference rates achieved should be seen in this challenging context.
- 2.4 The Admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools in Leeds has been based on the use of straight line distance and the principle of nearest school for many years. As schools convert to Academies and Foundation schools, they have the ability to amend their individual admission arrangements. Free Schools that are approved by the DfE are beginning to open after admission arrangements for other schools have been set. It is important that the effects of these changes are monitored and their impact assessed.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Families with children starting secondary school in year 7 continue to have their offer sent to them on 1 March. These are coordinated by each local authority which makes arrangements to ensure that parents are each sent a single offer for their child. In Leeds 7707 children were sent an offer on 1 March with 6500 (84%) offered their first preference school. Parents had the opportunity to ask for

five preferences rather than the previous three. Last year 95% of parents received one of their three preferences; this year 94% received one of the top three and 95.5% received one of their five preferences.

- 3.2 There were 350 children who could not be offered any of their preferences, a reduction from 507 the previous year. All were made an alternative offer of a school place. Once all applications have been received by the deadline of 31 October, those children who are known to attend a primary school are reminded of the need to apply. The primary schools are also sent a list of all of their children for whom no application has been received. At the time when the offers were made there were still 127 children where no preference had been made. Each of these children was allocated a school place to ensure they were not left without one.
- 3.3 The Jewish Free School was given approval to open for September 2013 and will begin by admitting children into year 7. Parents who were interested in sending their children to the school were still encouraged to apply for other schools in the usual way until confirmation was received that the Free School had been approved. The school is only seeking to admit up to 25 students per year group and have been well subscribed. They have worked closely with the local authority and this has ensured that once they received confirmation of their funding agreement being signed by the DfE formal confirmation of offers could be made to their first students and any previously held offer withdrawn.
- 3.4 Primary school offers are now made each year on 16 April by all local authorities. In Leeds 9355 children were allocated places to begin Reception for September 2013, an increase of 200 from last year. There were 7949 (85%) children offered their first preference school, a slight increase on last year of 50 from 84%. Parents applying for Reception were also able to ask for five preferences. Those offered one of their top three preferences was consistent with last year at 94%, rising to 95% receiving one of their five preferences.
- 3.5 Similarly to the secondary allocations, more families were offered one of their preferences with 434 children who could not be offered any preference, reduced from 546 last year. Many of these families had not asked for their nearest school as one of their preferences and it is increasingly important that parents are supported to understand how places are allocated. For a small number of families who had followed all of the advice about applying for places it was still not possible to allocate one of their preferences. The Basic Need programme of school expansions continues to consult on providing sufficient places throughout Leeds to meet the increasing birth rate.
- 3.6 Several schools agreed to admit additional children, where space permitted, to ensure that local children could be offered schools within their area. There have been over 500 new applications for Reception places since April from families who have moved into or within Leeds as well as those who simply did not understand the need to apply until after offers had been made. There have also been families who have moved out of Leeds and released places that had been offered for Reception, resulting in a net increase of approximately 250 additional places being offered. Khalsa Science Primary Academy, a Sikh sponsored Free School, also received confirmation of its funding agreement being signed by the

DfE following the end of term. They have been in close contact with the local authority throughout their approval process and have confirmed offers to the first families whose children will be starting there.

- 3.7 In preparation for the requirement to coordinate in year transfers ceasing in September 2013 a new process has been going through a trial with schools over part of the last academic year. This has enabled parents to apply directly to schools for places outside of the normal admission round. For many families this will reduce the amount of time spent out of school waiting for their request to be processed, and allow the admissions team to focus more time on supporting families who are having more difficulty in finding a school place.
- 3.8 The volume of appeals being heard through the local authority has decreased slightly; as schools convert to Foundation and Academy status they become responsible for making their own appeal arrangements. Many choose to purchase a service from the local authority who continues to make arrangements on their behalf, whilst others take on the presenting of the appeals themselves. As a consequence changes in the number of appeals may not be entirely representative as the data includes fewer schools. More parents have been offered one of their preferences, and clearer information about Infant Class Size appeals is made available to parents which may be affecting their decision to take up their right of appeal.
- 3.9 The confirmation of whether a Free School will be opening has been received significantly after the offers have to be made. Where the schools are admitting small numbers of children the result is late changes to other school allocations, in many cases after induction visits have already taken place. It is of concern that where larger Free Schools are seeking to open, for example secondary schools offering 200 places a year, that this will cause significant disruption late in summer term. The ability of the local authority to plan effectively for the number of places it commissions will be challenging. As there are three opportunities for Free Schools to submit bids each year it is likely that this will continue to be difficult to manage effectively.
- 3.10 The Admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools in Leeds has, in most cases, also been adopted by schools that have converted to Foundation or Academy status. This co-operation has ensured that the operation of the policy, and the priority criteria of nearest school, has remained effective. Some academies have inserted a higher priority for feeder schools or postcode area. As Free Schools emerge they also introduce a range of admission criteria. For those who seek to adopt the local authority policy they are unable to do so in the first year due to the challenging timing of their approval. The Council will need to consider whether its current policy remains appropriate in light of these changes and some analysis of potential impact will be undertaken. Within this consideration of the relevance and continued use of straight line as a measure for distance will be included.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 Consultation on any proposed changes to the Admission policy for entry in September 2015 will take place later in the year, beginning no sooner than 1 November and concluding before 1 March as required by the regulations. Information will be hosted on the Council website and sent out to elected members, head teachers and chairs of governors as well as a range of other interested parties.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 This report is for information only and therefore does not have any implications for equality. Screening form attached at appendix 3.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The Admission policy for Leeds community and voluntary controlled schools is fully compliant with the School Admissions Code and has been made available to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for checking. Looked After Children are the highest priority in the policy.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 Whilst the published guide for parents applying for the normal admission round remains a statutory document and must be printed, maximum use of the website is used to provide a wider range of information for parents to support their application for school. Continued use of the online application process by 70% of parents provides a secure means of applying whilst reducing the administrative requirement to manually input written requests.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 Executive Board determined the admission policy in operation for entry in September 2013 at their meeting on 11 April 2011. Admission arrangements must be determined by 15 April each year in accordance with School Admissions Arrangements Regulations (amended in 2012).

4.5.2 This report provides information on the outcome of the admission arrangements in place. All requirements for the coordination of the admission process have been carried out in line with all relevant legislation and the criteria of the policy for community and voluntary controlled schools. The local authority received copies of all admission arrangements from own admitting authority schools and academies which were checked and found to be compliant with the regulations.

4.5.3 A greater number of infant class size appeals have been granted this year than previously. Almost all children who are granted an appeal will go on to be taught in a class of more than 30 per qualified teacher. Under the current legislation this will remain the case throughout their time in key stage 1 as schools are no longer required to take qualifying measures after the first year.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 Deadlines in current legislation for hearing appeals have limited flexibility and any increase in appeals will have to be carefully managed. The appeals must be heard within 40 school days of the deadline for submitting the appeal and 10 school days' notice must be given to the parent leaving only 30 for the appeals to be heard. There is a risk that appeals will not be able to be heard in the available time and preparations are being made for managing this situation next year.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The number of applications for school places is rising however the percentage of successful first preferences is remaining at a consistent level. The volume of appeals, particularly for Reception, is proving challenging to be heard within the statutory deadlines.
- 5.2 Free Schools are increasing the choice and diversity of places but the late confirmation of their opening leads to changes to the allocation of places after induction meetings have been held. This can create uncertainty for parents and additional work for schools who then find themselves with children allocated after term has ended.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 That Executive Board note:

- The percentage of successful first preferences for secondary admissions was 84% and for Reception admissions was 85%.
- The percentage of parents receiving one of their top three preferences was 94%.
- The number of appeals for Reception has decreased slightly although more have been successful.
- The timing of the confirmation of Free Schools opening has led to late adjustments to availability of places.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Appendix 1

Admission numbers and percentages for September 2013											
	Total	1st	%	2nd	%	3rd	%	4 th & 5 th	%	Placed	%
Secondary	7707	6500	84.3%	659	8.6%	155	2%	43	0.6%	350	4.5%
Primary	9355	7949	85%	636	6.8%	207	2.2%	129	1.4%	434	4.6%
Junior											
Total			%		%		%				%

Percentage of first preferences received

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Secondary	84.3%	83.9%	86%	83.9%	83.7%
Primary	85%	84.1%	84.4%	88.1%	83.2%
Junior	%	95%	97.9%	96.2%	96.9%
TOTAL	%	84.1%	85.4%	86.2%	83.7%

Percentage of parents who achieved one of their three preferences

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Secondary	94.9%	93.2%	96%	96.5%	95.5%
Primary	94%	94%	96.9%	91.3%	95.1%
Junior	%	97.5%	97.9%	97.3%	97.3%
TOTAL	%	95.2%	95.3%	96.7%	93.5%

Appeals

	Granted	Not Granted	Total	% Granted
Secondary	51	127	178(197)	29%(36%)
Primary	59	390	449(487)	13%(5.7%)
In Year	60	159	219(233)	27.4%(30.9%)
TOTAL			846(917)	

Last years figures in brackets

**Appendix 2
SECONDARY SCHOOLS APPEAL RESULTS**

School Name	Granted				Not Granted				Total		
	2011	2012	2013		2011	2012	2013		2011	2012	2013
Allerton Grange	1	0	4		4	9	0		5	9	4
Allerton High	7	5	2		28	28	7		35	33	9
Benton Park	3	0	0		5	0	0		8	0	0
Boston Spa (F)	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
Brigshaw (F)	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
Bruntcliffe	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
Carr Manor	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
City of Leeds	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
Cockburn (F)	8	n/a	n/a		12	n/a	n/a		20	n/a	n/a
Cooperative Academy (A)	0	0	8		0	0	0		0	0	8
Crawshaw (F)	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
Grangefield (F)	4	4	0		9	11	3		13	15	3
Guiseley	4	0	0		7	0	0		11	0	0
Horsforth Academy	8	8	9		7	8	6		15	16	15
John Smeaton	1	0	0		3	0	0		4	0	0
Lawnswood	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
Otley Prince Henry (A)	0	6	8		0	4	2		0	10	10
Priesthorpe (F)	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
Ralph Thoresby	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
Rodillian (A)	12	37	11		0	0	18		12	37	29
Roundhay	16	9	7		73	64	76		89	73	83
Royds	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
Swallow Hill (A)	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
Temple Moor (F)	0	0	2		0	0	15		0	0	17
Wetherby (F)	0	0	0		0	0	0		0	0	0
Total	64	69	51		148	124	127		212	193	178

Some Aided Schools and Academies conduct their own appeals and are not included in this information. Schools with (F) have converted to Foundation status and those with (A) have converted to academy status. Data is only available for these schools when they purchase the traded service offered by the local authority.