

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: 2 April 2014

Subject: Determination of school admissions arrangements 2015



Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
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?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

1. This report seeks approval for the local authority admission policy and coordinated admission arrangements for September 2015.
2. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 section 84 and The School Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admissions Arrangements)(England) Regulations 2012 require the local authority to consult on their proposed admissions arrangements, including the admissions policy and the coordinated scheme, as well as in year admission arrangements, every seven years or whenever any changes are proposed. Every year, the admissions arrangements must be determined by 15 April irrespective of whether any changes are made.
3. Proposals for three possible changes were considered and consulted on. Two of these changes related to admissions outside the normal round, in particular waiting lists and a minor change to the sibling priority. The third change was to remind secondary schools of the need to specify an admission number for entry to sixth form if they wished to attract external students. Only two responses to the consultation were received, one from a school in support of maintaining waiting lists and a second from a member of the public enquiring about sibling priorities.

4. The paper also outlines the outcome of further work conducted on the support offered to young carers through the school admissions policy, and some context to the admissions policy as more schools become trusts and academies, and thus have their own admission policies. Consideration is given as to the potential impact of this.

Recommendations

5. Executive Board is asked to:
 - a) approve the admissions policy for community and voluntary controlled schools for September 2015. The officer responsible for publication of the determined arrangements is the Capacity Planning and Sufficiency Lead, and the date for implementation (ie publication) is 1 May 2014.
 - b) approve the Coordinated scheme for admissions arrangements for entry in September 2015. The officer responsible for this work is the Capacity Planning and Sufficiency Lead, and the date for implementation (ie determination of any revised policy) is 15 April 2014.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1. This report seeks approval of the local authority admission policy and admission arrangements for entry 2015.

2. Background information

- 2.1. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 section 84 and The School Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admissions Arrangements)(England) Regulations 2012 require the local authority to consult on their proposed admissions arrangements, including the admissions policy and the coordinated scheme, as well as in year admission arrangements, every seven years or whenever any changes are proposed. Following consultation, arrangements must then be determined by 15 April 2014.
- 2.2. The consultation was sent out on Monday 2 December 2013 and closed on Friday 31 January. As required by the regulations it was sent to all local schools, neighbouring authorities, diocesan bodies, elected members, trade unions and early years providers. It was also hosted on the Leeds.gov.uk web site for parents to comment.

3. Main issues

- 3.1. The Coordinated Scheme sets out the key dates and admission arrangements for entry in the normal admission round in September 2015. There are no key changes to this scheme from last year. No comments were received on the Coordinated Scheme from any consultees. No significant changes were proposed to the admission policy although requests had been received to consult on two aspects of the in-year admission arrangements. Secondary schools were also reminded through the consultation of the need to specify an admission number for year 12, and admission criteria, if they intended to seek to recruit to their sixth form from other schools.
- 3.2. At a workshop event some school representatives had queried the use of in year waiting lists, feeling that they potentially added administrative burden to schools and asked that we consult on their removal. Only one response was received and this was in support of retaining them. Waiting lists ensure consistency, fairness and transparency for parents, and whilst requiring some administration are considered, on balance, to be beneficial. It is therefore proposed to continue to hold in-year waiting lists. The School Admissions Code requires that waiting lists be held for Reception and Year 7 until the end of December each year, and the arrangement in Leeds community and voluntary controlled school remains that waiting lists are held for each year group until the end of the academic year.
- 3.3. The Admission policy for the normal admission round allows priority to younger siblings based on the attendance of an older sibling at the same school. This works well for admissions in the normal round, however when families move during the year it is helpful to try and place siblings together, and in this circumstance the priority should be flexible and work for both older and younger siblings. An amendment was proposed that would allow sibling priority for both older and younger siblings for admission outside the normal round. This amendment would apply only to in-year admissions. The consultation received one response seeking clarity that changes would not be made to the main policy. It is therefore proposed to adopt this change.
- 3.4. In recent years Leeds secondary schools with sixth forms have not been seeking to admit pupils from other schools and have therefore not required an Admission number or policy to be set for entry into year 12. Ad hoc applications are able to be considered

by using the same course criteria for internal and external applicants. However should a school seek to admit additional pupils, that were not part of their own school, they are required to set an admission number for entry to year 12 and the admission criteria (these only apply to applicants from another school). The consultation served to remind all secondary schools of this requirement as they plan for their future sixth form provision. None of the community secondary schools indicated a wish to set an admission number for year 12.

- 3.5. Following consultation on the arrangements for 2014, the local authority committed to complete further work about a possible priority for young carers. The previous consultation had drawn five comments in support of this in principle, but had noted concerns about how to provide a suitable definition of young carers for the purpose of an admission policy. Further investigation led to detailed work and extensive consultation with the carers themselves, and their support agencies, which concluded that the real challenges being faced are not generally around accessing a school place initially, but in the support they received once on roll in order to ensure continued attendance and achievement.
- 3.6. Following the consultation with young carers, in relation to the admission policy, their responses highlighted that changes to the policy were not necessary. They did welcome further support where appropriate.

Contextual information about Admission policies within the City

- 3.7. The local authority admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools has for many years provided priority for places based on the nearest school. Aided schools generally have faith based policies, and when defining nearest schools these have been omitted. Having been previously extensively reviewed it was found that it continued to provide a fair and balanced admission system for the City. Over recent years there has been a notable increase in schools changing their status to become academies or Foundation (or Trust) schools which are their own admission authority and thereby set their own admission policy. At the time of writing there are now only 6 community secondary schools in Leeds with all others having their own admission policies following a change in status. The majority have continued to use the local authority admission policy with small numbers adopting alternatives.
- 3.8. As further changes occur and Free Schools open in Leeds there is potential for a much greater diversity of admission policies. Some, such as DYCA and Garforth, have fair banding or feeder schools as part of their criteria, but also include nearest as a criteria giving a priority for local parents. Others include postcode or distance which still offers a local priority but may in years of oversubscription affect children that would have the school as nearest. Where a school or academy uses a feeder school priority, where the total numbers on roll at the feeder schools exceed the admission number of the secondary school then there is greater potential for impact on local families.
- 3.9. This choice and diversity amongst own admitting authority schools and academies is inevitable and continued monitoring will be necessary by the local authority to ensure no community is left disenfranchised as a result.
- 3.10. The table below shows the current policies for all currently open schools and academies:

Secondary Total 39 schools	Policy basis	No.	Notes

Community schools	Local authority admissions policy	6	
Own admitting authority schools,	Faith based policy, not included in nearest calculations	6	3 Voluntary Aided, 3 Academy
	Uses local authority policy	23	
	Fair banding with nearest criterion for oversubscription	1	DYCA
	Partial selection (10%) based on aptitude, majority based on local authority policy	2	Leeds West, Cockburn
	Postcode then nearest	1	Horsforth
	Feeder schools, then nearest	2	Garforth, Woodkirk
	Feeder schools	1	Cooperative Academy
Primary Total 224 schools	Policy basis	No.	Notes
Community and Voluntary controlled schools	Local authority admissions policy	124	
Own admitting authority schools,	Faith based policy, not included in nearest calculations	46	40 VA schools, 6 Academies
	Uses local authority policy	53	
	Distance	1	Khalsa

- 3.11. Horsforth still retains a nearest school criterion after postcode, which projections suggest will still be meaningful for 2105. Should this not be the case those children for whom it is the nearest school but are not in the priority postcode area will have Ralph Thorsby as their next nearest school, and based on projections will be able to access to that school. It remains reasonable to advise local families that they have this as their nearest school and include it in the nearest school definitions.
- 3.12. Of the feeder school policies, Woodkirk and Garforth both have more secondary places than their feeder schools have year 6 places. Their feeder schools are their local schools, and they both retain a nearest school criterion after feeder school. This means local children will still have reasonable access to the school. On balance we can continue to treat them as a nearest school.
- 3.13. The Co-Operative Academy has fewer places than their feeder schools have year 6 places. The schools which are its feeder schools are Shakespeare Primary and the Co-operative primary academies, but these are not all the nearest primary schools to it. This could mean that not all of the year 6 children in the feeder primary schools could be offered a place if the school is oversubscribed. It also means that according to our definition of 'nearest' school, other families in the local area would still have the Academy as their nearest school but would not receive a priority for it. They would also not have any other priority school. As the school has not been oversubscribed in recent years this issue has not yet arisen.
- 3.14. As admission policies diversify in the City it is increasingly difficult to keep parents clearly informed when they are expressing their preferences about their likelihood of gaining a place in each school. A review will be carried out of the applications and allocations of places for September 2014 to assess whether any families were placed at a disadvantage as a consequence of any of the policies. We will share this, where

appropriate with governing bodies, to enable meaningful discussions to take place about how we work together when considering any policy changes that might be necessary for 2016 entry to school.

4. Corporate Considerations

4.1. Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1. The admissions policy and arrangements were consulted on in line with regulations and local custom and good practice, and included consultation with ward members. There is typically a low level of engagement with this annual consultation and a review will take place of how this can be improved upon in the future.

4.2. Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1. An EDCI has been completed for the proposed changes to the policy and arrangements, and is attached to this report (appendix 4). It shows there is no adverse impact.

4.3. Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1. The admissions policy and arrangements continue to ensure children receive fair and consistent treatment, and have reasonable access to local schools. In doing so it supports the council's obsession with improving attendance, contributing to good educational outcomes for children. These are important factors in the drive to become a child friendly city.

4.3.2. A key objective within the Best Council Plan 2013-2017 is to build a child friendly city. The delivery of pupil places through the Admission arrangements is one of the most baseline entitlements of a Child Friendly City. A good quality school place contributes to the achievement of targets within the Children and Young People's Plan such as our obsession to 'improve behaviour, attendance and achievement'. In addition, "Narrowing the Gap" and "Going up a League" agenda and is fundamental to the Leeds Education Challenge.

4.4. Resources and value for money

4.4.1. There are no resource implications arising from this report.

4.5. Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1. As the admitting authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, the authority is required under The School Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admissions Arrangements) Regulations 2012 to determine the admission arrangements for September 2015 by 15 April 2104.

4.5.2. The report has been considered by the Children's Services legal officer, and it is considered compliant with all relevant legislation.

4.5.3. The report is subject to call in.

4.6. Risk Management

4.7. There are no significant risks associated with the required approval of the policy for

2015. There is a need to conduct further work to fully understand the risks and issues associated with future admissions arrangements.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. Following consultation there is no evidence of a need to remove the operation of waiting lists for in year admissions, and no community or voluntary controlled schools have identified a need to publish an admission number for year 12. The only change that is supported by the consultation is the clarification of the operation of in year admissions arrangements. The admissions policy and coordinated scheme are attached at appendix 1-3.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1. Executive Board is asked to:
 - 6.1.1. Approve the admissions policy for community and voluntary controlled schools for September 2015. The officer responsible for publication of the determined arrangements is the Capacity Planning and Sufficiency Lead, and the date for implementation (ie publication) is 1 May 2014.
 - 6.1.2. Approve the Coordinated scheme for admissions arrangements for entry in September 2015. The officer responsible for this work is the Capacity Planning and Sufficiency Lead, and the date for implementation (ie determination of any revised policy) is 15 April 2014.

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.