

**Report of Director of Children's Services**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 10 February 2016**

**Subject: Determination of School Admission Arrangements 2017**



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**

This report seeks approval for the local authority admission policy and coordinated admissions arrangements for September 2017

The School Standards Framework Act 1998 Section 89(2) and The School Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admissions Arrangements) (England) Regulation 2014 require the local authority to consult on their proposed admissions arrangements, including the admissions policy and the coordinated scheme, as well as in year admissions arrangements, every seven years or whenever any changes are proposed. The admissions arrangements must be determined by 28 February 2016.

Two main proposals were consulted on. These included a change of wording of the explanatory note to priority 1b of the policy to provide more clarity as to when it applies, and a change to admission to secondary schools to provide catchment areas for the 6 remaining community schools.

The paper also asked for comments on possible future changes to priorities for admission to primary schools, however there was no support for the changes suggested.

**Recommendations**

Executive Board is asked determine the school admissions arrangement for 2017 by:

- approving the admissions policy noting the following:
  - the amended explanatory note relating to priority 1b.
  - the admission policy for primary schools will now differ from secondary schools
  - the remaining community secondary schools will have catchment areas.
  - the Coordinated scheme for admissions arrangements for entry in September 2017.
- The officer responsible for this work is the Admissions and Family Information Service Lead, and the date for implementation (ie determination of any revised policy) is no later than 28 February 2016.
- The officer responsible for publication of the determined arrangements is the Admissions and Family Information Service Lead, and the date for implementation (ie publication) is no later than 15 March 2016.

### **Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of local authority admissions policy and admissions arrangements for entry to school in 2017. The paper describes changes to the Leeds Admissions policy and seeks Executive Board approval for the policy and the co-ordination arrangements.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 The School Standards Framework Act 1998 Section 89(2) and The School Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admissions Arrangements) (England) Regulation 2014 require the local authority to consult on their proposed admissions arrangements, including the admissions policy and the coordinated scheme, as well as in year admissions arrangements, every seven years or whenever any changes are proposed. Following consultation the admission arrangements must be determined by 28 February 2016.
- 2.2 Consultation was conducted between 2 November 2015 and 14 December 2015. In line with the regulations, information 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 Leeds City Council promotes inclusion for all children and young people across the city. In line with the Children and Families Act 2014 and the ethos that every child where possible should be able to have their needs met in local mainstream provision, it is an expectation in Leeds that all mainstream schools are able to provide for all children with low level Special Educational Needs (SEN) and also the majority of children with Complex SEN Needs. It is also an expectation that

all Leeds schools provide an inclusive and nurturing environment that can meet the needs of those vulnerable children who have social, emotional and mental health needs.

- 3.2 Priority 1b of the Admissions policy is intended to support pupils who have a significant physical disability or complex sensory impairment, but do not have an Education Health and Care Plan. The wording of the explanatory note has been made clearer to enable parents to understand whether this is likely to apply to their child. There were only seven responses received to the consultation as a whole, six of which supported this change, and one did not comment on this proposal.
- 3.3 There are only six community secondary schools remaining for whom Leeds City Council are the Admitting Authority. The wording of the priority for 'nearest' children has been much the same for many years, and whilst other criteria have been evaluated periodically Leeds has continued to prioritise children who have applied for their nearest non-faith school. The proposed change to catchment areas for the remaining schools, holds to this same principle and has been proposed to avoid unintended consequences when other Own Admitting Authority schools and academies alter their admission policies.
- 3.4 The proposal is that catchment areas be set for the remaining community secondary schools with the area defined as the straight-line distance between the school and the next nearest school with a non-faith based admission policy. For most schools this has remained the same for many years. The benefit of setting catchment areas is that the schools are less susceptible to changes around them, allowing time to consider proposed changes by neighbouring schools and academies before responding.
- 3.5 All of the responses to the consultation supported the proposal. One did comment that all children who lived in a catchment area should be guaranteed a place, however this is contrary to the School Admissions Code, and no guarantee can be given. Many academies and foundation schools, who are their own admitting authority, continue to use the same priority of 'nearest'. As the catchment areas for community schools are being set using the definition the other schools are able to continue to use the same wording, or may choose to move to defining a catchment area.
- 3.6 The proposal to change the wording of the admission policy for secondary schools to catchment areas (although setting them using the 'nearest definition') is in response to the very small number of schools, six out of 40, that are still community schools. The situation is different with primary schools, with significantly more who are still community schools, and of those who have become academies or foundation schools almost all have continued to adopt the local authority admission policy. There is no proposal to change the admission policy for the primary schools for 2017.
- 3.7 The consultation did ask whether we should look further at alternative policies for future years, but there were very few responses. There was no support for the two options put forward. There were two alternative policies put forward by respondents, however it is not proposed that we model any changes at this time.

3.8 The consultation also asked whether the current process for in year transfers, where parents approach schools directly in the first instance, should continue or whether schools would prefer that the local authority look at centrally coordinating the process. There was only one comment and that was that the process should remain with schools, although we would look with them at how the process could be improved. No comments were received on the co-ordinated schemes which outline key dates and deadlines for schools and local authorities for the transfer information.

3.9 Although we were advised to expect a consultation on amendments to the Admission Code, no further information has been released by the Department for Education at the time of writing this report. As such it has not been possible to incorporate any potential changes into our planning for Admission arrangements for entry in 2017.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 The process in respect of all the proposals has been managed in accordance with the relevant legislation and with local good practice.

4.1.2 Consultation included a six week period of on-line consultation on the proposals supported by use of the councils Talking Point system. The consultation included direct correspondence with head teachers, chairs of governors, elected members, Diocesan representatives and other stakeholders.

4.1.3 Parents due to enter secondary school in September 2017 will be notified of their catchment or nearest school individually. Information will be provided on the website, and through published information on the Admission policy and how parents can understand the way it will affect them.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 The EDCI form for the Determination of Admission arrangements has been completed and is attached as an appendix to this report.

### **4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan**

4.3.1 These proposals are being brought forward to meet the Council's statutory duty to determine admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in Leeds in 2017. The proposed policy seeks to prioritise places close to where children live allows improved accessibility to local and desirable school places is an efficient use of resources and reduces the risk of non-attendance.

4.3.2 The proposal contributes to the city's aspiration to be the Best Council and the Best City in which to grow up; a Children Friendly City. The delivery of pupil places through Admission arrangements is one of the baseline entitlements of a Child Friendly City, by creating good quality local places. 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'.

4.3.3 Further objectives of the Best Council Plan 2015-2020 are 'Supporting communities and tackling poverty and 'Become a more efficient and enterprising council'. Choice and diversity for parents and families is promoted by responding to the needs of communities, by delivering school places in the areas where families need them. Meeting these expectations while demonstrating the five values underpinning all we do is key to the Admissions policy.

#### **1.4 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 coordination of Admissions Arrangements) Regulations 2014 and the Admissions Code 2014 to determine the admissions arrangements by 28 February 2016.

4.5.2 The report is subject to call in.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 There are no significant risks associated with the required approval of the policy for 2017.

### **5 Conclusions**

5.1 There were only seven responses received to the consultation. All of the comments in respect of the additional clarity through the wording of the explanatory note for priority 1b supported the changes. All the comments received in respect of the catchment areas for secondary schools supported the changes.

### **6 Recommendations**

6.1 Executive Board is asked determine the school admissions arrangement for 2017 by:

- approving the admissions policy noting the following:
  - the amended explanatory note relating to priority 1b.
  - the admission policy for primary schools will now differ from secondary schools
  - the remaining community secondary schools will have catchment areas.
  - the Coordinated scheme for admissions arrangements for entry in September 2017.

- The officer responsible for this work is the Admissions and Family Information Service Lead, and the date for implementation (ie determination of any revised policy) is no later than 28 February 2016.
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## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> 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.