

Report of: Director of Children & Families

Report to: Executive Board

Date: 18th October 2017

Subject: Outcome of School Admissions 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

1. This report aims to inform Executive Board of the overview and statistical information on the outcome of the Admissions Round for 2017 entry into Reception and Year 7, and information relating to the in-year admissions functions
2. In Leeds, 85% of applicants for a Year 7 place were offered their first preference school (82.4% last year). 95.5% were offered one of their top 3 preferences (95% last year) and 97% were offered one of their 5 preferences (96.7% last year). A total of 8455 offers were made, an increase of 145 on offers made in 2016.
3. For the Reception round, 87% of applicants (87% last year) were offered their first preference school. 95% were offered one of their top 3 preferences (96% last year) and 97% were offered one of their 5 preferences (97% last year). A total of 9683 offers were made, a reduction of 371 on the 10051 offers made for 2016.

Recommendations

4. That Executive Board note:
 - 4.1. The number of applications for places in Reception and Year 7 for September 2017 and that 87% of Reception children and 85% of Year 7 children were offered a place at their first preference school
 - 4.2. The number of children receiving an offer at one of their top 3 preferred schools was 95% for Reception and 95% for Year 7

- 4.3. That requests for in-year transfers continues to rise, with 7455 children requesting new school places in Leeds schools between September 2016 and July 2017 – some being new arrivals in the city and some being requests to move within the city.
- 4.4. That the officer responsible for this area of work is the Lead for the Admissions and Family Information Service.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the outcomes of the Admissions functions undertaken by the Local Authority in the academic year 2016/17. It includes statistical information on the annual admissions round for entry to Reception and year 7 for September 2017, including the number of allocations and also the percentage of families receiving a preferred school offer. In addition, information is provided about the admission of pupils 'in-year' where pupils have moved into, or within the city during the academic year 2016/17.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Local Authority (LA) is required to coordinate admissions to Reception and Year 7 in the 'normal round', ie. for entry in September, for all schools in the area – community, foundation trust, faith schools and academies (including free schools). In addition the LA coordinates applications to enter the two Leeds junior schools at Year 3.

- 2.2 For entry in September 2017, 8455 Year 7 places and 9683 Reception places were offered on the respective offer days. The rising birth rate has begun to stabilise following its peak in 2011/12 (children who entered school in 2016). Reflecting this, 371 fewer offers were made for Reception places in 2017, in line with our projections. An additional 365 (215 permanent and 150 bulge) places were made available for September 2017 in advance of offer day, to ensure sufficient capacity across the city.

- 2.3 The number of children offered places to start Year 7 in 2017 has risen again by 145. The additional pressure generated by the rising birth rate has not yet reached the Year 7 cohort, however there has been an increase in the number of children living in the city, year on year and this is expected to continue until the effects of the birth rate increase are shown in the secondary intake in 2020.

- 2.4 The LA does not coordinate applications for schools places outside the normal annual cycle round, with parents approaching schools directly to request places. The Admissions Team do continue to support schools with this responsibility and supports parents to ensure that places are available to them. Where parents do not secure an offer in the normal way, the LA works with schools and parents to ensure places are secured as quickly as possible.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Leeds has a high proportion of children in both Reception and Year 7 who are offered one of their preferred schools. This is due to the increasing number of schools judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted, leading to greater positive choice for families. Birmingham is the only city larger than Leeds, and the successful first preference rate in Leeds was 17% higher for Secondary applicants and had the same first preference success rate for Primary applicants this year.
- 3.2 Additional places were offered at 10 secondary schools, creating 284 places in addition to the published admission number across the city. There were 536

places available in schools throughout the city on offer day, which allowed for pupil movement and late applicants to be offered a place between offer day and the start of term. Since offer day, the number of Year 7 places offered in Leeds by 22nd August had increased to 8621 (+166 since offer day in March).

- 3.3 Additional places were offered in Primary schools, creating 150 places in addition to the published admission number across the city. There were 875 places still available in the city on offer day, which is the surplus aimed for to maintain the capacity to provide places for families moving into the area. New applications continued to be received over the summer, and by 22nd August the number of offers made had increased to 10009 (+324 since offer day in April). This number is expected to continue to rise over the autumn term.
- 3.4 We continue to encourage families to apply for their school place using the online system, as this is the most efficient way for them to have a confirmed receipt of their application, and means that they receive their offer on offer day rather than waiting for the postal delivery. With the aim of encouraging 100% online applications for September 2017, targeted support was offered through drop in sessions and advice available at open days around using the online system. This resulted in an 11% overall increase in the number of applications made using the online system (78% to 89%), however there was a notable increase in online applications in the particular wards where targeted support was offered, as shown below:

| Ward | % online applications for 2016/17 | % online applications for 2017/18 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Beeston & Holbeck | 54% | 79% |
| Burmantofts & Richmond Hill | 45% | 77% |
| City & Hunslet | 44% | 80% |
| Gipton & Harehills | 38% | 77% |
| Hyde Park & Woodhouse | 41% | 79% |

- 3.5 Some schools and parents and carers raised concern about the push for online applications, with schools reporting that this created an administrative burden on them as they were required to support families more than usual with the application process. Clearer guidance has been developed for schools on how they can support and advise families about the online application process, and amendments have been made to the online system to make it more user friendly.
- 3.6 Similar support for the online application portal will be available for the next admissions round, with drop-in sessions targeted at those areas where online applications are still low, or where take up of the support was high for the 2017 round, to sustain this progress.
- 3.7 Temple Learning Academy, which had been due to open in September 2016, was confirmed to open in September 2017 and although it was not filled to capacity, it did provide additional places in the area.
- 3.8 Dixon's Trinity Chapeltown (Primary campus) was also approved to open in September 2017, providing an additional 30 places for Reception pupils. At August 2017, 28 of these places have been offered and the school will open in a temporary building in advance of the permanent building work.

3.9 Although fewer Reception places were allocated for September 2017 than for September 2016, the number of appeals lodged and heard for places in Reception was similar to the number of appeals lodged and heard in 2016/17. In line with this, the percentage of appeals granted and not granted was the same for 2017 entry as for 2016. Whenever an application is refused, parents are offered the right of appeal against this decision. However, for Reception entry, there are very limited grounds on which an appeal panel may grant a place, due to class size legislation. Communication with parents has been improved to highlight the grounds on which a parent's appeal might be granted, and that parental preference is not sufficient grounds for an appeal to be granted.

| *16th April – 1st September* | Rec 2015/16 | Rec 2016/17 | Rec 2017/18 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Appeals lodged with LCC* | 730 | 479 | 463 |
| Appeals heard * | 352 (48% of those lodged) | 301 (62.8% of those lodged) | 309 (66.7% of those lodged) |
| Appeals granted* | 40 (11% of those heard) | 18 (6% of those heard) | 18 (5.8% of those heard) |
| Appeals not granted* | 312 (88.6% of those heard) | 283 (94% of those heard) | 291 (94.2% of those heard) |
| Number of offers made | 9,854 | 10,051 | 9,683 |
| 1st Preferences met | 8,383 (85%) | 8,789 (87%) | 8,458 (87%) |
| Placements (no pref met) | 550 (5.5%) | 301 (3%) | 284 (3%) |

3.10 The number of appeals lodged and heard for entry into Year 7 was lower than the number of appeals lodged and heard in 2016. In part this is due to an increase in the number of children being offered their first preference school (up by 2.6%) meaning that more parents were happy with the offer they were initially given. In particular, some schools who historically have a large number of appeals, had additional places available for 2017 due to temporary increases or permanent expansions (Allerton High, Roundhay, Priesthorpe, Cockburn and Temple Moor) which will have reduced the overall number of appeals heard. The appeals reported here relate to the appeals arranged and heard by the Local Authority.

| *1st March – 1st September* | High 2015/16 | High 2016/17 | High 2017/18 |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Appeals lodged with LCC* | 443 | 438 | 304 |
| Appeals heard * | 208 (46% of those lodged) | 314 (71.7% of those lodged) | 208 (68.4% of those lodged) |
| Appeals granted* | 29 (14% of those heard) | 41 (13.1% of those heard) | 36 (17.3% of those heard) |
| Appeals not granted* | 179 (86% of those heard) | 273 (86.9% of those heard) | 172 (82.7% of those heard) |

3.11 All Foundation, Academy, Free and Voluntary Aided schools are an own admitting authority and are wholly responsible for the admissions functions within the

school. 44% of Primary Schools (n=98) and 86% of Secondary Schools (n=40) are own admitting authority schools. The LA role with own admitting authorities is to provide support and challenge to ensure that they are meeting their statutory duty. The Admissions Team will have a greater focus during the 17/18 academic year on ensuring that all own admitting authority admission policies are compliant with the School Admissions Code, challenging schools where necessary and reporting any non-compliance to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator as statutorily required.

- 3.12 In September 2015, an open letter from Nick Gibb MP, indicated that there was an imminent change to be made to the Admissions Code to allow all parents of summer born children free choice about when their children started school. Since this letter, there have been no moves to progress this change to the law, and there is no indication that this is likely to happen in the foreseeable future. The Admissions Code which we must comply with states that all requests for deferred summer born admission must be considered on a case by case basis and any agreement must only be made if the decision is in the best interests of the child. We will continue to review our procedures each year to ensure they are fit for purpose and in line with legislation.
- 3.13 The Leeds City Council Admissions Policy, which many own admitting authority schools use when developing their own policies, includes a priority for children with special educational needs who do not have an Education Health and Care Plan. The guidance relating to this priority has been revised in recent years and it is apparent that the number of children requesting and being granted this priority for admission has significantly reduced. We will consider whether this priority continues to benefit children and young people in the way it is intended, and whether alternative approaches to these needs should be considered through the annual consultation period.
- 3.14 **In Year school moves** - Mobility within and into the city continues to create pressure on school places and an increased pressure on the Admissions team to ensure that up to date information regarding vacancies in schools is accurate. Schools are statutorily required to notify the Admissions Team within 5 days of any pupil leaving or starting at their school. School compliance with this process will be closely monitored in the academic year 2017/18 to ensure this duty is being met, as there is evidence in 2016/17 that a significant number of school places were offered by schools but the information was not shared with the Local Authority. Improving this process will ensure that the Admissions Team is able to accurately provide information to parents and carers about where vacancies are available, and will mean that we have more accurate records of where pupils are on roll.
- 3.15 Although the LA does not coordinate in year requests, schools are required to notify the admissions team of any applications received and the decision made by the school regarding whether they can admit the child. In 2016/17, 7455 children requested an in-year transfer, many of them preferencing three or four schools, resulting in approximately 25,000 transfer requests being sent in to the Admissions Team, to monitor offers made and ensure that children secure places in a timely way.

- 3.16 Particular pressure continues to be seen in areas of the city where there are high levels of mobility. The Admissions Team and the Sufficiency and Participation Team work in partnership with schools in these areas to ensure that solutions are found as quickly as possible when pressure arises. This includes negotiating with schools to offer additional bulge cohorts when needed.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Consultation is undertaken on any changes to the local admission policies, and where additional school places are being provided through permanent expansion. Consultation on admissions arrangements takes place late in the autumn term.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

This report is for information only.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

The admissions policy and arrangements continues 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.

- 4.3.1 A key objective within the Best Council Plan 2015-2020 is to build a child friendly city. The delivery of pupil places through the Admissions 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 school attendance'.
- 4.3.2 The admission arrangements contribute to the 2016/17 Best Council Plan outcomes for everyone in Leeds to 'Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life'; 'Be safe and feel safe' and 'Enjoy happy, health and active lives'. It also supports the vision of the Children and Young People's Plan 2015 – 2019 to build a child friendly city with a focus on ensuring all children and young people are safe from harm, do well at all levels of learning and have the skills for life.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 With changing statutory responsibilities in relation to admissions, all opportunities to explore the development of traded services are being explored. At present, the Appeals Service is operating at full cost recovery for those appeals arranged and heard on behalf of own admitting authority schools, as a traded service.
- 4.4.2 The published guide for parents applying for the normal admission round remains a statutory document and must be available as a printed document upon request, however maximum use of the website is used to provide a wider range of information for parents to support their application for school. Higher uptake of

online application reduces the administrative costs associated with manually inputting written requests.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 The admission policy which was applied to applications for entry in 2017 was determined at the February 2016 meeting of the Executive Board.

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 The report is subject to call in.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 This paper is for information only and there is no risk management requirement. The risk around managing sufficiency of school places is managed through the city's corporate risk register.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Despite changing numbers of children requesting and being offered a school place, the percentage of children receiving a 1st preference offer is stable.

5.2 Although in-year applications and offers are not coordinated by the Local Authority, the Admissions Team continues to support schools and families to ensure that places are offered in a timely way.

5.3 The appeals process continues to meet all statutory deadlines and provide parents with their right to appeal to an independent panel following any decision to refuse an application for a place.

6 Recommendations

6.1 That Executive Board note:

6.2 The number of applications for places in Reception and Year 7 for September 2017 and that 87% of Reception children and 85% of Year 7 children were offered a place at their first preference school

6.3 The number of children receiving an offer at one of their top 3 preferred schools was 95% for Reception and 95% for Year 7

6.4 That requests for in-year transfers continues to rise, with 7455 children requesting new school places in Leeds schools between September 2016 and July 2017 – some being new arrivals in the city and some being requests to move within the city.

6.5 That the officer responsible for this area of work is the Lead for the Admissions and Family Information Service.

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.