



REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 12 March 2008

SUBJECT: Annual Consultation on Admission arrangements for 2009

Executive Summary

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

1.2 The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act, section 84, and the Admissions Code requires the Local Authority to consult neighbouring Local Authorities and all maintained schools in Leeds on admission arrangements each year. This includes consultation on proposed admission numbers, the admission policy as well as the arrangements.

1.3 A consultation document was sent out on 9 November 2007 with a closing date of 31 January 2008 to all schools in Leeds, all neighbouring Local Authorities, the Church of England and Catholic Diocesan Boards.

2. Background Information

2.1 The consultation included the co-ordinated admission scheme which lays down the process and timetable for information sharing with schools who are their own admission authority as well as the other local Authorities. Other than amendments to the timetable there were no other significant changes to the co-ordinated scheme.

2.2 The proposals for change to the community admissions policy include changing the sibling link criterion when the older child would be in the sixth form, giving priority to children in an infant school for a place in the linked junior school, asking parents to confirm acceptance of an offered place and asking academies and foundation schools to adopt the 'nearest' criteria within their admissions policy.

2.3 Changes to admission numbers consulted on were:

Barwick in Elmet CE Primary	25 to 30
Swillington Primary	40 to 30
Haigh Road Infants	60 to 45
Guiseley Infant	80 to 90
Mill Field Primary	45 to 30
Farnley Park High	150 to 210
Roundhay High	240 to 250

2.4 There were 31 responses received from school governing bodies. There were no responses from neighbouring Local Authorities or Diocesan Boards. The Admission Forum discussed the consultation responses at their meeting in February 2007. They accepted that the proposals above should be supported.

3 **Recommendations**

3.1 Executive Board is asked to approve the following proposals for implementation in the 2009 admission round:

- 3.2
- Primary and secondary school co-ordinated admission arrangements.
 - Changing the sibling link criterion when the older child is in the sixth form in accordance with either paragraph 3.2 or paragraph 3.5 of the main report.
 - Asking academies and foundation schools to adopt the 'nearest' criteria within their policies.
 - Asking parents to confirm acceptance of the offer of a school place
 - Giving priority to pupils in the infant schools when transferring to their linked junior school.
 - Changes to school admission numbers.

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Agenda Item:

Originator: Viv Buckland

Telephone: 247 4956

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<p>Electoral Wards Affected: ALL</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)</p>	<p>Specific Implications For:</p> <p>Equality & Diversity <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Community Cohesion <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Narrowing the Gap <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in
(Details contained in the Report)

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 Education Leeds is responsible for allocating children to primary, infant, junior and secondary schools and defending admission appeal for community and voluntary controlled schools. The company is also responsible for co-ordinating admissions between the 50 voluntary-aided schools, the four neighbouring LEAs and the David Young Community Academy.

1.2 This report gives statistical information about the process and highlights issues that need to be addressed for the 2008 admission round.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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2.2 The proposals for change to the community admissions policy include breaking the sibling link when the older child would be in the sixth form, giving priority to children in an infant school for a place in the linked junior school, asking parents to confirm acceptance of an offered place and asking academies and foundation schools to adopt the 'nearest' criteria within their admissions policy.

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3.0 **MAIN ISSUES**

3.1 The consultation included the co-ordinated admission scheme which lays down the process and timetable for information sharing with schools who are their own admission authority as well as the other local Authorities. Other than amendments to the timetable there were no other significant changes to the co-ordinated scheme.

3.2 ***Changing the Sixth Form sibling link criterion***

We have consulted again on a proposal to change the sibling link criterion where it applies through the older sibling's place in a sixth form. The proposal is to cease to apply the sibling criterion where the link exists solely as a result of having at the relevant school an older sibling in year 12 or year 13 at the September admission date. This has been supported by a majority of parents, headteachers and the Admission Forum. With the emerging 14-19 agenda young people undertaking post-16 qualifications may in many cases find themselves on the roll of one institution but attending elsewhere for at least some of the time to complete their diplomas. The new Schools Admission Code introduced in February 2007 is much strengthened and prohibits priority being given to a child on the basis of a former pupil.

3.3 Section 2.13 of the Code states that 'In setting oversubscription criteria the admission authorities for all maintained school MUST NOT: h) allocate places as a school on the basis that a sibling or other relative is a former pupil, including siblings who were on the roll at the time of application but will have left by the time that the child starts school.' This is a mandatory item in the Code.

3.4 The reasons for the proposal are that when parents apply for a place in year 7 in September quoting the sibling rule the decisions for entry into the 6th form have not been made. The decision often relies on GCSE results, which are not known until August, which is after the offer letters are sent out in March. It is possible for us to offer a place based on the sibling rule and the older child then not progress onto year 12. This would have the potential for a claim of maladministration as we have

discussed with the legal team. There were 45 children last year and 20 in this most recent whom this proposal would have directly affected.

- 3.5 Parents occasionally seek a place for their older child in a different sixth form with the intention of using the sibling link to gain a place for their younger child. Executive Board may wish to consider the option of addressing only this concern with the current sixth form sibling link. In this case, the new criterion would be to recognise a sixth form sibling link only where the older sibling has not moved schools.
- 3.6 Executive Board may wish to consider a lesser change breaking any link with older siblings who are transferring into a sixth form from another school. Parents occasionally seek a place for their older child in a different sixth form with the intention of using the sibling link to gain a place for their younger child. This is a clear manipulation of the admission priorities, however is not one open to abuse at the time of preferencing in the autumn term. It should be made clear that breaking this link with those transferring in would not mitigate against the potential for maladministration as this arises where a place might be offered on the basis of a sibling who subsequently leaves, and does not remain on into sixth form.
- 3.7 ***Asking Academies and Foundation schools to adopt the 'nearest' criteria***
As we can expect more academies and foundation schools in Leeds who will be responsible for setting their own admission arrangements we have put forward a recommendation to the Admission Forum to ensure that as far as possible any new admission policy dovetails into the existing Council admission policy.
- 3.8 We have asked the David Young Community Academy to adopt the 'nearest' criteria that we use for community and controlled schools, within its admission policy. This means that we would apply the 'nearest' criteria to the DYCA which would in turn reduce the 'nearest' area for the adjacent schools - Roundhay, John Smeaton and Primrose High Schools, (it does not affect Parklands Girls' or Corpus Christi Catholic School).
- 3.9 The governors of the DYCA have agreed to this proposal and revised their admissions policy accordingly, which means that their admission policy prioritizes applications nearest the school before those outside the nearest area. The Admission Forum has supported this as a model for future foundation schools or academies. It would ensure that local children are prioritized in any new admission policies. Garforth Community College has also adopted this principle, as have the Garforth Primary schools who will all be operating their own admission policies from September 2009.
- 3.10 ***Linking infant and junior schools in the admission arrangements***
The effect of this proposal would be to give priority to children attending the linked infant school if the junior school were to be oversubscribed. This would give parents who wish to choose an infant school a greater degree of confidence that their children could progress with the established friendship group into the junior school.
- 3.11 As well as consulting schools on this proposal we consulted parents who would be in the first year affected, and 100% of parents who replied agreed with the proposal. Priority for attendance at the infant school would fall after the sibling priority and before the nearest and distance priorities.

3.12 The proposal differs from the one put forward by Westroyd Infant school who requested that priority be given to children applying for the infant school who had an older sibling in the junior school. This would be contrary to the Schools Admission Code which prohibits giving priority to a child based on the former attendance of a sibling at the school.

3.13 ***Changes to Admission Numbers***

We received comments about changes to admission number at Guiseley Infant school. It is proposed to raise the number from 80 to 90 to provide sufficient places to accommodate the projected increase in children in the area. Two of the schools in the area raised concerns that the additional places were not necessary and may have a detrimental affect on demand for their schools.

3.14 Education Leeds view is that the projections indicate the additional 10 places are needed in Guiseley, without which there would be a risk that local children would be unable to gain a place in their area. The uncertainty in the projections is acknowledged, particularly in an area on the Leeds border where there is significant movement. There is significant new housing in the Guiseley area which is not accounted for in the projections. Best estimates suggest this is likely to add ten or more primary aged children in this timeframe.

3.15 We have looked carefully at the preference patterns, and are not persuaded that this expansion will unduly affect other schools. Guiseley Infants is not currently fully subscribed and as such parents could already gain a place there. Raising the admission number will add capacity if required however there is no reason to believe it would have any impact on preferencing patterns. On balance, we feel the appropriate course of action is to proceed with this change. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

3.16 ***Asking parents to confirm acceptance of an offered place***

This is a proposed change to procedure rather than a change to the admission policy. Most Aided schools already ask parents to confirm that they intend to take up a place once the offers are made. This assists them in identifying any places that parents may not wish to take up and re-offer through the waiting list to other parents. It is proposed that we ask all parents to confirm to schools that they will be taking up the offered place, or to contact us to request and appeal or to go onto other waiting lists.

3.17 The benefit will be come through maximising places that can be re-offered through the waiting list, and for schools to plan effective inductions for their new pupils. Parents will not be disadvantaged through this as the intention is not to withdraw places. The procedure has been introduced to allow us to work closely with schools during the summer term establishing where families have left the area or opted to take up private school places. The aim is to support the reduction of avoidable absence figures on school rolls in September.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE**

4.1 If the proposal to link infant and junior schools were to proceed it would apply to all infant schools with a linked junior school and affect the order of priority within the oversubscription criteria, which would become:

- 1a. Statemented children.
- 1b. Children in public care.

2. Siblings.

3a. If there are enough places left everyone will be offered a place.

3b Children **who attend the named infant school, (There would be a note giving details of the named infant and junior schools. The actual wording would be subject to approval by the legal section.)**

3b1 Parents who prefer their nearest school.

3b2 Parents to prefer a non nearest school.

4.2 The notes defining siblings connected with priority 2 would be amended to make it clear that only siblings currently in year 7 to 10 inclusive, for secondary applications, will be included.

4.3 Priority 3b1 will be re-worded to give priority to those parents who put their nearest school, not including voluntary aided schools or single sex schools. Currently this also excludes academies and foundation schools, but both Garforth and DYCA will be including the nearest criteria within their policies, as are the Garforth primary schools.

5.0 LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The local Admissions Policy in Leeds complies with the new Schools Admission Code. The breaking of the sibling link with sixth form will reduce the potential for a claim of maladministration as we have discussed with the legal team

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The Admission Forum has supported the proposals for change outlined in this report. The consultation exercise has indicated a large degree of support with few schools disagreeing. A summary of the responses is included in Appendix 1.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Executive Board is asked to approve the following proposals for implementation in the 2009 admission round:

- Primary and secondary school co-ordinated admission arrangements.
- Changing the sibling link criterion when the older child is in the sixth form in accordance with either paragraph 3.2 or paragraph 3.5 of the report.
- Asking academies and foundation schools to adopt the 'nearest' criteria within their policies.
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Appendix 1

There were 31 responses from school governing bodies and the results of the consultation exercise are given below. There were no responses from other local authorities or Diocesan Boards.

	Agree	Disagree
1. Do you agree with the proposal for the primary school co-ordinated admission scheme? We are required to consult on the coordinated scheme every year.	31	0
2. Do you agree with the proposal for the secondary school co-ordinated admission scheme? We are required to consult on the coordinated scheme every year.	23	0
3. Do you agree with the proposal for the relevant area in Leeds? We are required to consult on the relevant area every two years. There are technical regulations concerning the geographical area included in the annual consultation round.	29	0
4. Do you agree with the proposal to change school admission numbers?	28	2
5. Do you agree with the proposal to ask all parents to accept the place offered? We would give parents a reply slip for them to send to the school to accept the place or indicate they are moving away or appealing for a different school.	29	1
6. Do you agree with the proposal for the Academy and any new admission authorities in Leeds to prioritise 'nearest' students in line with the Leeds admission policy? This is to safeguard the Council's admission policy in terms of the 'nearest' and 'non-nearest' criteria.	27	1
7. Do you agree with breaking the sibling link where the 6 th form is involved? This was a repeat of the consultation last year. The responses for both years from parents are given.	23	5
For 2008 there were 1123 replies.	803 72%	320 28%
For 2009 there were 1158 replies	808 70%	350 30%
8. Children who attend the infant school should be given priority for admission to the junior school. Parents in infant schools were consulted on this proposal.	37 100%	0 0%

