

REPORT TO LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM

Date: 25th November 2008
Venue: Civic Hall
Time: 4.00pm

PROPOSED ITEMS FOR CONSULTATION RELATING TO THE 2010 ADMISSION ROUND

Education Leeds is required to consult each year on the Council's admission arrangements and prepare a report for the Executive Board meeting in April. The consultation process is prescribed for all admission authorities, including the David Young Community Academy, voluntary-aided and foundation schools. The items proposed by Education Leeds for consultation in the next admission round are:

1. Changes in admission numbers.
 - a. Brownhill Primary school has requested an increase in its admission number from 45 to 60.

The School Organisation Team is currently talking to a number of schools and further changes may be proposed.

2. Statemented children and children with SEN but without a statement.

The Office of the Schools Adjudicator have asked us to remove children with a statement of SEN from the oversubscription criteria. Whilst we have always operated within the legislation we have previously included statemented children for information for parents. We do however, accept that this is not strictly as the policy should appear. In future the priority for children with a statement of SEN will appear ahead of the policy.

There may be a very occasional need to give a higher priority to a child with a high level of need, but for whom a statement has not been sought. It is proposed that priority 1 (b) of the policy become:

*Pupils with Special Educational Needs, or with exceptional medical or mobility needs, that can only be met at a specific school.**

*Applications in these categories must be supported by a statement in writing from a doctor or other relevant professional. This is necessary because you will be asking the Authority to assess your child as having a stronger case than other children. Each case will be considered on its merits in consultation with the school concerned.

3. Looked After Children

In order to comply with the regulations Looked After Children must be the first priority in any admission policy. It is proposed that the priority 1 (a) Looked After Children have a note added extending the priority to those who have been adopted within the previous twelve months, thus recognising some of the complexities that arise with children recently leaving care.

4. Accepting offers

When offers were made on 1 March 2008 parents were asked to accept the offer and respond to the school. This allowed the school to contact parents more quickly and prepare for the child's arrival. For entry in September 2010 we wish to formalise and extend this process. It is proposed that parents will be sent their offer of a school place and be given a minimum of 21 days in which to respond and accept the offer. This will in no way affect the parents right to appeal if they have not been offered their first preference school. They will be able to accept the offer and if later successful at appeal or through the waiting list, take up their higher offer.

Parents who refuse the offer made to them will have their place withdrawn to be offered to another child who does wish to attend the school. This may help to reduce the number of appeals required. Parents who refuse the offer made can go onto the waiting list or appeal for any of their original preferences. The Authority will make a further offer to the parents at their request. This will be in line with a new preference, if a place is available and all original preferences have been satisfied, or at the next nearest school with an available place, again where all original preferences have been satisfied.

Parents who have declined all offers made to them by 6 July (when all on time appeals should have been held) will be referred to the Attendance Strategy Team. They will arrange to follow up and ensure that the parents are making appropriate provision for their child's education.

5. Waiting lists

It is proposed that the waiting lists for reception and year 7 be held only until the end of September rather than the current arrangement where they are held until October half term. Movement that takes place after the first few weeks of term is often unwelcome to both parents and schools. There are occasions each year where despite the Admissions team's best efforts to contact parents, it becomes necessary to allocate a place at their higher preference school and withdraw their current offer. Parents have often settled their child into the school and no longer wish to change but have not informed us that they no longer wish to be considered for another school. This can cause a great deal of distress and upset for the child and family concerned. Reducing the waiting list to one month following the beginning of term would partly address this.

6. Late applications

Since the School Admissions Code was changed in February 2007, parents are not allowed to change their preferences after the deadline for applications. It therefore seems that parents applying on time are, in some ways, being treated less favourably than those who apply late.

Coordination with other local authorities is becoming increasingly difficult where late applications are received and information has been shared with other authorities. Given this circumstance and the change in the Code we now feel it necessary to consider late

applications after those received on time, unless there is an exceptional reason for the delay, for example moving into the area.

7. Fair Access Protocol

As we continually strive to improve the procedures for the timely admission of young people, we are proposing to strengthen the local authority fair access protocol by the inclusion of timelines for admission. This will offer greater clarity for parents and schools. Secondary re-inclusion panels are currently held on a monthly basis and it is proposed that clear expectations will be set around outcomes from those meetings.

Recommendations

That the proposals for consultation in the 2010 admission round be noted.

1. Changes in admission numbers.
2. Statemented children and children with SEN but without a statement.
3. Looked After Children to include very recent adoptions
4. Requiring parents to accept the offer of a school place.
5. Closing the waiting list for reception and year at the end of September
6. Late applications being considered after on time applications
7. More timelines in the Fair Access Protocol