

REPORT TO LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM

DATE:

SUBJECT: REPORT ON THE SEPTEMBER 2009 ADMISSIONS ROUND

1 **Background**

- 1.1 Education Leeds is responsible for allocating children to primary, infant, junior and secondary schools and defending admission appeals for community and voluntary controlled schools. The company is also responsible for co-ordinating admissions between the voluntary-aided and foundation schools, the four neighbouring LAs and the David Young Community Academy.
- 1.2 The Admission and Transport Team manage transfers into Reception and Year 7 for approximately 17,000 families each year and offer each parent the highest preferred school available within the admission policy.
- 1.3 Over recent years there has been an increase in the birth rate, both nationally, and locally. There are around 600 more allocations to primary school this year than at the same time last year. Whilst we still have some surplus places in a small number of primary schools, these are in a limited number of areas of the City. It has been possible to allocate all parents who applied on time a place, however each year there are a significant number of parents who apply late and it is increasingly difficult to place these children within a reasonable distance. These factors are adversely affecting the number of parents being offered their preferred school.
- 1.4 The number of secondary school allocations on 1 March was approximately the same as last year. There remain a small number of schools where children are unable to gain a place in their nearest school. However all nearest children were offered a place in Roundhay school this year, following the changes to the admission policy reflecting the David Young Community Academy as a nearest school.
- 1.5 The on-line service has once again proved popular with parents, with 26% of on time applications using this method to apply for a school place. Statutorily, we must send offers out on 1 March each year. As this was a Sunday in 2009, parents who applied online received their offer on the Sunday, several days ahead of those who applied on the traditional paper form.

2. **Admissions Round**

2.1 **Percentage of first preferences achieved**

	2009	2008	2007	2006
Secondary	83.7	86.7	86.6	86.9
Primary	83.2	88.6	94.5	93.3
Junior	96.9	95.3	94.6	97.4
Total	83.7	87.8	90.5	90.1

2.2 The admission policy within Leeds allows parents to try for a school out of their local area because they have the safety net of their local school if they are unsuccessful. As an equal preference policy it allows parents to be as aspirational as possible. It enables parents to ask for their favourite school, despite knowing their chances may not be high, without prejudicing their chance at obtaining a place in their nearest school, so long as they put it on the preference form. Given this is our agreed policy a further measure is the percentage of parents who received one of their three preferences.

2.3 **Percentage of parents who achieved one of their three preferences**

	2009	2008	2007	2006
Secondary	95.5	97.0	97.5	96.9
Primary	91.3	95.1	98.8	97.3
Junior	97.3	96.1	98.8	99.3
Total	93.5	96.1	98.2	97.2

3. **School appeals**

- 3.1 Whenever a parent is refused entry to a school they have a right to appeal against the decision. The appeal is heard by an independent panel which is organised by Governance Services as the process needs to be fully independent.
- 3.2 The figures below are based on the period from National Offer day on March 1st to the end of July for secondary and primary appeals. The in year appeals cover those appeals that have taken place within the academic year 08/09.

	Granted	Not Granted	Total	% Granted
Secondary	53	236	289	18.3%
Primary	13	298	311	4.2%
In year	177	185	362	48.9%
Total	243	719	962	

- 3.3 There have been fewer block appeals this year despite a fall in the percentage of parents gaining their first preference. The number of in year appeals has significantly increased although the percentage that were successful has reduced by 30%.
- 3.4 The number of primary appeals has fallen slightly from last year although the number of successful appeals has not changed. Most primary appeals are governed by the infant class size legislation where there are only very limited grounds on which a parent can succeed.
- 3.5 In year appeals throughout the year now comprise more than either primary or secondary block appeals. This is a combination of a reduction in both primary and secondary block appeals, but also a marked increase in the number of in year appeals, with almost 100 more than last year. Despite this increase the number of in year appeals granted by the panels has fallen by almost 50, reducing the percentage of successful appeals by parents from 78.2% to 48.9%.
- 3.6 The increasingly effective operation of the Fair Access Protocol does mean that many parents are offered a more appropriate school place, sometimes above the admission number of the school, removing the need for an appeal. Changes introduced by new legislation in February 2009 will see families who move into an area where there are no appropriate places available within a reasonable distance also placed through the Fair Access Protocol, further reducing the need for appeals.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 There has been a general increase in the number of applications for admission that have been received in the last year. The birth rate is rising both locally and nationally and around 600 more primary allocations were made on 1 March than at the same time the previous year. Despite this increase the number of primary and secondary block appeals has fallen this year suggesting that whilst the percentage of parents being offered their first preference school has fallen, parents are relatively happy with the school they have been offered.
- 4.2 The number of in year appeals has significantly increased although there has been a fall of 30% in the success rate. This indicates that the independent panels do not consider the cases being put forward by parents are strong enough to warrant offering places in schools that are already full. A change in the Appeals Code has meant that fewer schools now send representatives to assist Education Leeds in defending the appeals, however the preparatory work undertaken on the written statements has proved effective.
- 4.3 We continue to have some pockets of the City where demand for a child's nearest school cannot be met, and although this has improved in the secondary sector the number of primary schools where the issue exists has risen from 7 to 15.