

REPORT TO LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM

DATE: 1 October 2009

SUBJECT: Proposed consultation on admission arrangements for the September 2011 round

1 Background

- 1.1 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 academies, foundation and voluntary-aided schools.
- 1.2 The consultation covers the coordinated scheme, relevant areas as well as the admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools. All other admission authorities will consult on their admission policies. Education Leeds will publish a public notice advising parents of the consultation and where they can find information, and how they can make their views known.
- 1.3 New legislation was introduced in December 2008 to accompany a new School Admissions Code which came into force in February 2009. There were two significant changes relating to the coordinated scheme which will require local authorities to fully coordinate all applications for school places.
- 1.4 Leeds has been experiencing a rapidly increasing birth rate and there is a need to expand a number of primary schools. The School Organisation Team will ensure that all statutory processes are followed in connection with these changes and any possible new schools in the future. The consultation on admission arrangements is to consider the admission numbers proposed for entry in September 2011, whereas a full statutory consultation will be carried out with respect to any permanent expansion.

2. Coordinated Scheme – In year

- 2.1 From January 2010 each local authority will have to have in place a coordinated scheme for in year transfers. This scheme will outline how parents will be able to apply on a common preference form and the procedure for ensuring they end up with a single offer of a school. It will explain how local authorities will communicate with each other and with governing bodies. Admissions Forum will be consulted on the content of the scheme before consultation is extended more widely.
- 2.2 From September 2010 all in year transfers will be fully coordinated in line with the published scheme. This will mean that parents wishing to apply for any school place at any point in time will only need to contact the local authority. No academy, foundation or aided school will be able to offer places directly to parents but will be required to do so through the local authority.
- 2.3 The local authority will be able to ensure that any parent refused a place in any school will be offered their right of appeal. Whereas this occurs for all community and voluntary controlled schools there is some anecdotal evidence from parents contacting the local authority that this is

not always happening in all schools.

3. To be able to handle the additional volume of transfer requests and still ensure that children are allocated a school place in a timely way it is proposed that we consider using in year waiting lists. At present all applications are dealt with as they arrive. It is possible for a place to be allocated to a child on one day from some distance away, but a request arrive the next day for a family living much nearer. On occasions parents apply for a place in a popular school where they have received information from someone at the school about a place becoming available. This can be very unfair for other parents and would be resolved if waiting lists were used.

3.1 **Coordinated scheme – annual cycle**

- 3.2 A coordinated scheme has been in place for primary and secondary schools for some time. Each year these are updated to reflect new dates and any changes to legislation. Whilst the secondary scheme remains largely unaltered the primary scheme now has a number of changes.
- 3.3 For September 2011 entry there will be full coordination in primary as well as secondary. At present we fully coordinate secondary applications for year 7 with all academies, aided and foundation schools and other local authorities. In primary this has not previously been extended to other local authorities, allowing parents to apply to more than one local authority. It has also meant that local authorities have had quite significantly different offer dates.
- 3.4 In Leeds we have previously offered parents both primary and secondary places on 1 March. Unfortunately we will no longer be able to do this from 2011. There has been a national closing date for applications introduced in the legislation. For secondary this will be 31 October each year. National offer day will remain at 1 March. The closing date is only about two weeks later than we have previously used which will mean that governing bodies of academies, aided and foundation schools will have less time available to them to undertake any testing and meet to rank the order of the applicants according to their policies.
- 3.5 For primary applicants there will be a national closing date much later on 15 January. Whilst the legislation has stopped short of a national offer date, it will bring local authorities much closer together. The offer date in Leeds for Primary places will be 22 April 2011.

4. **Changes to admission numbers**

- 4.1 Due to the increasing birth rate in Leeds there will be a need to expand a number of primary schools in 2011. Discussions are proceeding with most schools in the City about the potential changes in their area and it will be November before a list of schools will be available. At that time a further report will be sent to members of the Admission Forum identifying the schools, before publishing the consultation document.

5 **Conclusion**

- 5.1 No fundamental changes are proposed to the Admission policy. The coordinated schemes have been updated to reflect the latest legislation and the requirement for full coordination. It is proposed that we consult on whether or not to hold in year waiting lists from September 2010. Changes will be required to primary school numbers and these will be available from November.

6 **Recommendations**

- 6.1 That Admission Forum discuss and provide feedback on their views around the holding of in year waiting lists and the coordination of in year applications.
- 6.2 That a meeting of the Leeds Admission Forum be scheduled for November 2009 when details of which school admission numbers would be changing would be available