
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

ADMISSIONS FORUM: 22 June 2010

SUBJECT: Customer Service Satisfaction with Admissions

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 This report is to inform the Admission Forum of the feedback we have received from parents to the Admissions guidance and information provided.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 The School Admissions Code requires the local Admission Forum to review the comprehensiveness, effectiveness within the local context, and accessibility of the advice and guidance for parents by the local authority, both through the composite prospectus and Choice Advice.

2.2 In Leeds we have provided a summary booklet sent out to all parents to guide them through the admission process and to signpost them to further information. This is in addition to making available the composite prospectus. Our website provides further links to useful information including school websites, Ofsted etc. Offer letters include advice on how to contact the Advisory Centre for Education (a national charity who support parents who wish to appeal).

2.3 Each year we provide parents with a questionnaire seeking feedback from them on the service they receive, and on how useful they have found the information that we provide.

3.0 MAIN ISSUES

3.1 The DCSF have provided targets for encouraging parents to apply online for school places. The target for 2011 is 80% of parents to apply online. For entry in September 2010 44% of parents in Leeds applied online. We ensure that all of the information we provide is made available on our website and make other, easy to use, links available to assist parents in accessing the information they require to make their preferences. 76% of parents rated the online application service as being easy to understand and use.

3.2 Many parents provided comments which we are able to use to make improvements to the online service. For example a number of parents clearly had some difficulty in entering their current school as some of them were not

easy to find using the search provided. We will try to improve this aspect of the search and make sure we have a Frequently Asked Questions section to guide parents when they have a problem.

- 3.3 The majority of parents using the system were pleased with the email confirming they had successfully submitted their preferences, and also with the email on offer day rather than having to wait several days for the post to arrive. Where parents have rung through to the team for advice the feedback has been very positive about the responses they have received.
- 3.4 The minimum contents of the composite prospectus are laid down in the School Information Regulations and must be published, both on the website and as a hard copy to be made available to parents on request. In Leeds we have two booklets, one for Primary and one for Secondary schools. They are between 50 and 75 pages long in order to contain all of the information required. For many parents this is more than they require, and for others, feedback suggests, is a 'challenging read', despite our adherence to the principles of Plain English.
- 3.5 In order to maximise value for money, and produce a more accessible document, we also produce a shorter 8 page summary document that is sent out to all parents. This document provides key information as well as letting parents know where they can obtain the full composite prospectus. An increasing number of local authorities are adopting the same strategy.
- 3.6 The feedback found that 91% of parents rated the information and explanation in the summary booklet as good or excellent, and similarly 90% of parents who read the full composite prospectus rated it good or excellent.
- 3.7 Some of the negative comments received were in relation to secondary schools who had changed the date or time of their open evening after the booklet had been printed, or without advising us of the change. On balance it is important that we continue to provide details of open evenings and will work more closely with schools to try and ensure these late changes are avoided.
- 3.8 Parents also valued the fact that information was sent out proactively to them. Whilst we continue to view this as important, every year parents go to appeal on the basis that they did not receive an application pack from us. We will continue to use the best information available to us to contact parents however need to reiterate that in doing so we are going above and beyond that which is required, and have in no way failed in our duty should a parent not receive an application pack.
- 3.9 The questionnaire asked parents to rate the information and service available to them as a whole, including printed information and contact with the team by telephone or in person. 92% of parents rated the information and service as good or excellent.

4.0 **CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The significant majority of parents are happy with the information and guidance they receive from the local authority. They value the proactive contact and the summary booklet that we provide in addition to the information we are required to provide.

4.2 Whilst continuing to review the information provided in paper format for parents we will continue to seek and use parental feedback to further improve the online application process.

5.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 That Admission Forum note the positive feedback received from parents on the information and guidance provided.