

REPORT TO LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM

DATE: 16 November 2010

SUBJECT: REPORT ON THE SEPTEMBER 2010 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 neighbouring LAs and the Academies.
- 1.2 Over recent years there has been an increase in the birth rate, both nationally, and locally although the number of children entering secondary school is still falling. Previously we have allocated all children that we believe to live in the City a school place even if they have not applied, after all applications have been dealt with. This is no longer possible and there were 140 fewer secondary places allocated, and 60 additional primary places allocated. However as term begins in September many parent who had not previously applied have now done so and a further 480 primary places have been allocated since 1 March. It is increasingly difficult to place these children within a reasonable distance.
- 1.3 As the numbers of children entering secondary school continues to fall in line with the demographics of the City we have been able to offer all children a place in their nearest school if they have requested one. We are expecting a further two years of low numbers entering secondary school before the increases in births begin to pass into the secondary sector.
- 1.4 The on-line service has once again proved popular with parents, with 44% of on time applications using this method to apply for a school place. This is almost double the number who used the service in 2009. In the forthcoming round we are promoting the ease and security of using the online service to more parents and have used the feedback provided by parents to make improvements to the system.
- 1.5 There have been over 100 more secondary appeals this year although primary appeals have remained steady. The number of in year appeals has fallen by 60 and is likely to be due to the number of cases now handled through Fair Access, who are more successfully offered places. The percentage that were successful fell last year by 30% and has fallen by a further 8%.

2. Admissions Round

2.1 Percentage of first preferences achieved

	2010	2009	2008	2007
Secondary	83.9	83.7	86.7	86.6
Primary	88.1	83.2	88.6	94.5
Junior	96.2	96.9	95.3	94.6
Total	86.2	83.7	87.8	90.5

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

	2010	2009	2008	2007
Secondary	96.5	95.5	97.0	97.5
Primary	96.9	91.3	95.1	98.8
Junior	97.3	97.3	96.1	98.8
Total	96.7	93.5	96.1	98.2

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 09/10.

	Granted	Not Granted	Total	% Granted
Secondary	104	296	400	26%
Primary	24	293	317	7.5%
In year	126	183	309	40.8%
Total	254	772	1026	

3.3 The percentage of successful secondary appeals increased this year, largely due to a small number of schools where appeal panels admitted an unusually high number of children. We will be working with the schools to improve their Statements of Case which explain why the school cannot admit any more children. The Choice Adviser offers an advocacy service for parents who need support with their appeal, and the offer letter sent to parents also directs them to the Advisory Centre for Education for further free and impartial advice on appeals.

3.4 The number of primary appeals has remained the same as last year although the number of successful appeals has increased slightly. 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 have fallen slightly after a very large increase last year. More children are now placed through the Fair Access Protocol which may be helping to reduce the need to appeal. After a significant reduction in the percentage of successful appeals by parents from 78.2% to 48.9% last year, there has been a further fall to 40.8% this year.

4. **Conclusion**

4.1 There has been an increase in the number of applications for admission that have been received in the last year for primary and a small reduction in secondary. The birth rate is rising both locally and nationally and around 250 more primary allocations were made this year. Despite this increase the percentage of successful first preferences has also increased indicating that the programme of expansions that took place was of the appropriate size and location. The number of secondary block appeals has sharply increased this year predominantly concentrated in three schools.

4.2 The number of in year appeals has fallen slightly accompanied by a further fall 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 send representatives to assist Education Leeds presenting officers in defending the appeals, however the preparatory work undertaken on the written statements has proved effective.