

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: 13 March 2013

Subject: Outcome of annual consultation on admissions arrangements for September 2014

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report seeks approval for the Local Authority admissions policy and co-ordinated arrangements for September 2014, as well as the arrangements for in year applications.
2. The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act section 84 and the School Admissions Code 2012 require the local authority to consult on proposed changes to their admissions arrangements. This includes consultation on proposed admission numbers and the admissions policy as well as the admissions arrangements for the normal admission round and for those applying for a school place in year.
3. Four changes were consulted on. These included two minor changes to the wording of the admissions policy to make it clearer, and a change to the admission policy to better support young carers gaining a place at suitable school. The fourth change was to the admissions arrangements for in year applications to reflect the process from September 2013 when the authority's duty to co-ordinate is removed, and a proposal to delegate the power to convey offers to community and voluntary controlled schools as part of this.
4. Five responses were received, two from schools and three from elected members, supporting the proposal to consider priority for young carers. One also supported the revised wording for medical needs, and one queried the removal of the term 'other relevant professional'.

Recommendations

5. Executive Board is asked to approve the Local Authority admissions policy and co-ordinated arrangements for September 2014, as well as the arrangements for in year applications. Specifically it is asked to:
 - 5.1. Approve the clarifications around medical priority and infant and junior sibling links,
 - 5.2. Approve the admissions arrangements for in year applications, including the delegation of the power to convey offers and refusals to community and voluntary controlled schools with effect from September 2013,
 - 5.3. Note that further work will be undertaken to determine appropriate wording and definitions to provide better support for young carers in obtaining a place at an accessible school.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to the Local Authority admissions policy and co-ordinated arrangements for September 2014, as well as the arrangements for in year applications.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act section 84 and the School Admissions Code 2012 require the local authority to consult parents, neighbouring local authorities, diocesan bodies, other local admitting authorities and all maintained schools in Leeds on admission arrangements. This includes consultation on proposed admission numbers and the admissions policy as well as the admissions arrangements for the normal admission round and for those applying for a school place in year.
- 2.2 The consultation was sent out on 30 November 2012 with a closing date of 25 January 2013 to the neighbouring authorities, the local schools, the diocesan bodies and elected members and trade unions. The consultation was placed on the council's website for parents to comment, and also sent to Early Years providers.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The consultation proposed four changes - two minor changes to the wording of the admissions policy to make it clearer, and a change to the admission policy to better support young carers gaining a place at suitable school. The fourth change was to the admissions arrangements for in year applications to reflect the process from September 2013 when the authority's duty to co-ordinate is removed, and a proposal to delegate the power to convey offers to community and voluntary controlled schools as part of this.
- 3.2 Admissions policy – clarification of wording. Following an ombudsman case in 2012 we agreed to review the wording for medical priority in the admissions policy to clarify the expectations around social and emotional needs, and the need for a specific school. The policy itself remains unchanged, but the explanatory notes have been expanded.
- 3.3 The new Admissions code which came into effect on 1 February 2012 removed a previous barrier to allowing priority for children with older siblings at linked infant and junior schools. In March 2012 the Executive Board approved a change to the operation of the policy to incorporate this sibling link into the policy with effect from September 2013, and this has been implemented in practice. The consultations proposed a minor wording change to make this clearer.
- 3.4 These two clarifications received only one comment which was in support of the changes. One queried the removal of the term 'other relevant professional'.
- 3.5 Admissions policy – change to policy to better support young carers to gain a place at a suitable school. Concerns had been raised that we can better support a vulnerable group of children and young people who are young carers in accessing

a suitable school place. They often need the support of a wider extended family which the current sibling and distance priorities do not fully provide for. The consultation indicated this intention subject to agreeing the appropriate definitions and wording. A working party has been convened to consider all the particular circumstances surrounding young carers which require consideration, and to draw up appropriate wording to address this. This group includes representatives from Willow Young Carers, and the Barnardos group who work with Leeds City Council to support them. It has started consultation with carers themselves, as well as parents and GPs. It is important that there is an independent, objective and verifiable definition of young carers in order that the priority can be fairly and consistently applied, but equally that obtaining this evidence does not place further undue burden on the carers or their families. Options include the use of medical records or supporting letters from GPs.

- 3.6 There were five comments received in support of this proposed change, although one noted the challenge of agreeing appropriate wording and definitions. Although the authority remains committed to this change, establishing appropriate wording to provide effective support has been difficult. Further to ensure that the burden of proof is not in itself a barrier it is recommended that further work be undertaken with the representative group to resolve these issues. The intention is to include the change in the consultation for admission in September 2015. In the interim the Choice Advisor will provide targeted support for young carers through advocacy work both in their applications for school places and any subsequent appeal process.
- 3.7 Co-ordination of annual cycle applications. The scheme was updated to reflect the dates applicable for the year 2014/15 and published. There were no other changes.
- 3.8 Changes to admissions numbers. All admission number increases that will take effect in September 2014, to meet Basic Need pressures, have been, and will continue to be, subject to their own statutory consultation process wherever physical expansion of the building is required. Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools, and academies, are not required to consult on an increase to their admission number (where physical expansion is not involved). Consultation is only required to lower an admission number.
- 3.9 In Year Admissions arrangements. The new School Admission Code removed the duty for local authorities to co-ordinate in year admissions, and so enables parents to approach schools directly. A pilot scheme has been running to prepare for this transition, and has met with broad support from parents and schools who have found the process more efficient. The consultation included the proposed arrangements for in year applications to formalise this from September 2013.
- 3.10 The Local Authority remains the admitting authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, and as such is required to formally convey offers. With the removal of the duty to co-ordinate in year applications, own admitting authorities will be able to convey offers directly, which will remove a further administrative delay for parents. The consultation included the proposal to delegate the specific power to community and voluntary controlled schools to be able to convey offers and refusals to parents directly. This is similar to the existing arrangement for

sixth form places in all schools. There were no comments received on this proposal.

3.11 Other comments. One respondent suggested consideration of a change to the use of straight line distances to prioritise nearest children, and suggested alternatives be considered which take into account physical barriers. To implement such a change would require the creation of catchment areas which would in itself warrant much greater consultation, and therefore could not be recommended as an outcome at this time.

3.12 The proposed policy is attached at Appendix 1.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

i) The consultation was carried out in line with the regulations and guidance, and local good practice.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

i) The proposed changes have no adverse impact for equality and diversity.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

i) The proposed changes to the admissions arrangements are intended to support the key priorities of improving attendance and reducing NEET. The inclusion of a priority for young carers and clarification of medical priority wording will support parents and young people to negotiate the admissions process to secure an accessible school place. The changes to the in year admissions arrangements provided by the removal of the duty to co-ordinate facilitate a speedier and more intuitive process for parents, thereby reducing the amount of time spent out of school.

4.4 Resources and value for money

i) There are no resources and value for money implications of this report.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

i) The consultation was conducted in line with the relevant legislation and the admissions code.

4.6 Risk Management

i) There are no risks identified.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The consultation attracted very limited response, and those that did reply were in favour of the proposed changes. There were some minor changes for clarification which should therefore be adopted. The change to remove the term 'other medical professional' was queried by one respondent, but this change was introduced as

part of a wider clarification of the requirements. The changes to the in year admissions arrangements, and specifically the delegation of the power to convey offers and refusals have drawn no comment. These would allow community and voluntary controlled schools to handle in year applications in the same way as foundation and voluntary aided schools, and academies, enabling a faster process of securing a school place for parents, and so should also be implemented.

- 5.2 In implementing any changes to support young carers it is important that the wide range of circumstances they face are fully considered and addressed, and the definitions and validation of the status of young carers does not place additional or undue burden on the very people we are seeking to support. It has not been possible to complete the work to ensure this is the case yet but this will continue with a view to bringing forward the change for September 2015.

6 Recommendations

- 6.3 Executive Board is asked to approve the Local Authority admissions policy and co-ordinated arrangements for September 2014, as well as the arrangements for in year applications. Specifically it is asked to:
- i) Approve the clarifications around medical priority and infant and junior sibling links,
 - ii) Approve the admissions arrangements for in year applications, including the delegation of the power to convey offers and refusals to community and voluntary controlled schools with effect from September 2013
 - iii) Note that further work will be undertaken to determine appropriate wording and definitions to provide better support for young carers in obtaining a place at an accessible school

7 Background documents¹

None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

APPENDIX 1

The admissions policy for Leeds community and voluntary-controlled schools for entry in September 2014.

Our Chief Executive makes all offers of a school place for Reception and Year 7 places on behalf of Leeds City Council, which is the admissions authority. Headteachers or school-based staff are not authorised to offer a child a place for these year groups. The authority to convey the offer of a place has been delegated to schools for places in other year groups.

Children with a statement of special educational needs will be admitted to the school named on their statement.

We will offer places to children in the following order of priority.

Priority 1

a) Children in public care or fostered under an arrangement made by the local authority. (see note 2)

b) Pupils without a statement but who have Special Educational Needs, or with exceptional medical or mobility needs, that can only be met at a specific school. (See note 3)

Priority 2

Children with older brothers or sisters who will be at school at the start of the academic year and are living at the same address (see note 4). This includes priority for a sibling applying for an infant school where the older sibling is or will be attending the linked junior school. This priority will not apply where the older sibling joined the sixth form from a different school.

Priority 3

Where children attend the following infant and junior schools they will have priority for the linked infant or junior school:

Farsley Westroyd Infant linked to Farsley Springbank Junior

Guiseley Infant linked to St Oswald's Junior

Rothwell Haigh Road Infant linked to Rothwell Victoria Junior

Yeadon Westfield Infant linked to Yeadon Westfield Junior

Should there be more children than places available priority 4 will be used as a tie break.

Priority 4

We will give priority to parents who put their nearest school (see note 6). This does not include any voluntary-aided schools which act as their own admission authorities.

If we have more applications than there are places, we will offer places first to children living nearest to the school (measured in a straight line) (see note 5).

Priority 5

We will give priority to parents who choose a Leeds school, which is not the one nearest to their home address (see note 6).

If we have more applications than there are places, we will offer places first to children living nearest to the school (measured in a straight line) (see note 5).

Note 1

If we cannot offer parents or carers a place for their child at any school they put on their preference form, we will offer their child a place at the nearest school that has places available when we make the offer (this may include voluntary aided and foundation schools or academies where their governing bodies have given us permission to do so).

Note 2

Children who have been adopted from local authority care, children with a residency order and those with special guardianship immediately following being Looked After will all be included within the higher priority for looked-after children (priority 1a).

Note 3

Leeds City Council promotes inclusion in local schools and it is an expectation in Leeds that all mainstream schools are able to provide for the majority of children with learning and medical disabilities. It is also an expectation that all Leeds schools provide an inclusive and nurturing environment that can meet the needs of those vulnerable children who have social and emotional needs. Children with exceptional needs who require additional support above that expected of a mainstream school will usually have a statement of SEN. In some instances there are some children with a particular need such as a significant physical disability or complex sensory impairment who require the expertise only found in a particular school. e.g. blind children who need to access Braille. It is these instances where priority for admission may need to be considered. Applications in this category must be supported by a SEN SIF, available from the Admissions Team, which must include a statement in writing from a paediatrician/doctor or other relevant professional who can evidence why a particular provision is needed over another. The statement must also evidence why the school of choice is the only school that can meet the particular need in question. This is necessary as the LA will be assessing if your child has a stronger case than other children. Cases will be considered individually the LA in consultation with the school preferenced. Advice and support can be sought from the Parent Partnership Service on 0113 395 1222.

Note 4

For these purposes, brothers and sisters must be living at the same address as your child. Siblings refers to brother or sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, step brother or sister, foster brother or sister. The definition does not include cousins or other family members sharing a house.

Note 5

In Leeds we use a straight-line distance system. We use a national computer system to run our school-admission system. As part of this system there is a program that measures the 'straight-line' distance from the centre of the main school building to your home address. The point we measure to at your home address is determined by the Royal Mail Postcode Address File. This information provides us with coordinates for every dwelling. If we are not able to match your address with the Postcode Address File then we will use the centre of your dwelling.

In the unlikely event there are insufficient places for two (or more) pupils living in the same building (e.g. flats) or otherwise equidistant from the school, then any final place will be allocated by the drawing of lots.

Note 6

If you live in Leeds

If you live in Leeds and your nearest school is a school in another local authority, then your nearest Leeds school by straight-line distance will be your nearest eligible school. You can apply for any school but the nearest priority only applies to Leeds schools. It includes all community and voluntary controlled schools, as well as Foundation schools and Academies who have chosen to include a priority for 'nearest'.

If you don't live in Leeds

If you live in another local authority and the nearest school to your home in a straight line is a Leeds community, voluntary-controlled or foundation school, or academy we will give you the relevant priority under our admissions policy.

If you live in another local authority and the nearest school to your home, by straight line, is a school not in Leeds you are still able to apply for a Leeds School but priority 4 will not apply.

Nearest School

When we say the 'nearest' school, we do not include voluntary-aided (faith based) schools. This is because they apply their own admissions policies and, if they are oversubscribed, they mainly offer places based on the religion practised by the child and family. If Free Schools open subsequently that have not included a 'nearest' priority these would also be excluded.

Address

For admission purposes, the home address is where the child usually lives with their parent or carer. You must not give the address of a childminder or relative. We will investigate any queries about addresses and, depending on what we find; we may change the school we offer your child. When we make an offer, we assume your address will be the same in the following September as we have on record. If you plan to move house, you must still give your current address. If you move house after the deadline of 31 October 2013 for Secondary places or 15 January 2014 for Primary and Junior places, you must tell us your new address as we may have to offer your child a place at another school.

Late Applications

If you return the preference form after the deadline we cannot guarantee to consider your preferences at the same time as those received on time. Any secondary applications returned after 10 December 2013, or primary applications returned after 24 February 2014 will only be dealt with once all other preferences have been considered, unless there are significant and exceptional reasons. Late applications will be considered before placements are made (where no preference could be met).

Accepting Offers

Parents will be asked to accept the offer of a school place. This will not affect their position on any waiting list for a higher preference, or their right to appeal. Parents who do

not wish to accept the offer, or do not accept the offer within a reasonable time, may have the place withdrawn.

Waiting List

After offers have been made on 1st March for Secondary and 16th April for Primary and Junior, parents can ask to go on the waiting list for any school. The waiting list will be held in criteria order of the admission policy and will close on 22 July 2014. Waiting lists will be held in each year group for applications outside of the normal admission round closing on 22 July 2014.

Nursery

A place in a nursery does not guarantee a place in the school. Parents must apply for a place if they want their child to transfer to the reception class.

Temporary School Site

If a school has to move to a temporary site for any reason, such as the building being damaged by a fire, we will base our distance measurements on the school's permanent site.

Starting Reception Age

We normally only allow children to start primary school in the appropriate age range. You must ensure your child receives an appropriate full time education from the term following their fifth birthday. Almost all children start school in Leeds in the September following their fourth birthday. However, parents can request that the start date for their child is deferred until later in the school year in the case of children who have not reached their 5th birthday. You can also request that your child attends part-time until he/she reaches compulsory school age. If you want a later start date within the academic year you should discuss this with the school. If your child is born in the summer term and you wish to defer entry until the next academic year, unless you have exceptional reasons, you will need to apply for a place in year 1. You should contact us for further advice.

Applications outside the normal admission round

All applications outside the normal admission round should be made using an in year application form. From September 2013 you return the form directly to your preferred school. If the school is full you will be offered a right of appeal.

Where no house move has taken place you will only be offered a place to start at the beginning of the next term. You can contact the Admissions Team to find out about vacancies in schools.