



REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 4 April 2007

SUBJECT: Annual Consultation on Admission Arrangements fro September 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To seek approval of the proposed admission numbers, the admission policy as well as the arrangements.

INTRODUCTION

- 2 The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act, section 84, and the Admissions Code requires the Local Authority to consult neighbouring Local Authorities and all maintained schools in Leeds on admission arrangements each year. This includes consultation on proposed admission numbers, the admission policy as well as the arrangements.
- 3 A consultation document was sent out on 25 October 2006 with a closing date of 31 January 2007 to all schools in Leeds, all neighbouring Local Authorities, the Church of England and Catholic Diocesan Boards.

PROPOSALS

- 4 The consultation covered:
 - Primary and secondary school co-ordinated admission arrangements.
 - Breaking the sibling link when the older child is in the 6th form.
 - Introducing a final deadline date for admission appeals.
 - Giving 'looked after' children priority for in-year transfers.
 - Delegating admission into the 6th form to school governors.
 - Changes to school admission numbers.
 - Bankside Primary from 70 to 90
 - Harehills Primary from 60 to 90
 - Brownhill Primary from 60 to 45
 - Stanningley primary from 28 to 30
 - Kippax North J & I from 40 to 30
 - Bramley St Peters from 60 to 45

- Giving children at an infant school priority to attend the linked junior school.

- 5 The Admission Forum requested that for the proposal to break the sibling link when the older child is in the 6th form, Education Leeds consult all parents with children in year 5. These will be the first parents affected should the proposal be accepted. Over 1100 parents voted with 72% supporting the proposal
- 6 There were 55 responses received from school governing bodies. There were no responses from neighbouring Local Authorities or Diocesan Boards. The Admission Forum discussed the consultation responses at their meeting in February 2007. They accepted that the proposals above should be supported. The final proposal did not receive support from schools but it was felt that this was because the proposal was sent out late and did not give schools sufficient time to respond. Education Leeds has agreed to withdraw the proposal and to re-issue it next year to allow schools more time to respond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7 Executive Board is asked to approve the following proposals for implementation in the 2008 admission round:
- Primary and secondary school co-ordinated admission arrangements.
 - Breaking the sibling link when the older child is in the 6th form.
 - Introducing a final deadline date for admission appeals.
 - Giving 'looked after' children priority for in-year transfers.
 - Delegating admission into the 6th form to school governors.
 - Changes to school admission numbers.
 - Bankside Primary from 70 to 90
 - Harehills Primary from 60 to 90
 - Brownhill Primary from 60 to 45
 - Stanningley primary from 28 to 30
 - Kippax North J & I from 40 to 30
 - Bramley St Peters from 60 to 45
 - That the proposal to give priority to children in infant schools for entry into junior schools be re-issued in next year's consultation round.

Agenda Item:

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EXECUTIVE BOARD: 4 APRIL 2007

SUBJECT: ANNUAL CONSULTATION ON ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2008

Electoral wards Affected:
ALL

Specific Implications For:

Equality & Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in
(Details contained in the Report)

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act, section 84, and the Admissions Code requires the Local Authority to consult neighbouring Local Authorities and all maintained schools in Leeds on admission arrangements each year. This includes consultation on proposed admission numbers, the admission policy as well as the arrangements.
- 1.2 A consultation document was sent out on 25 October 2006 with a closing date of 31 January 2007 to all schools in Leeds, all neighbouring Local authorities, the Church of England and Catholic Diocesan Boards. The consultation covered:
- Primary and secondary school co-ordinated admission arrangements.
 - Breaking the sibling link when the older child is in the 6th form.
 - Introducing a final deadline date for admission appeals.
 - Giving 'looked after' children priority for in-year transfers.
 - Delegating admission into the 6th form to school governors.
 - Changes to school admission numbers.

- Giving children at an infant school priority to attend the linked junior school.

2.0 **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2.1 The Admission Forum requested that for the proposal to break the sibling link when the older child is in the 6th form, Education Leeds consult all parents in year 5. These will be the first parents affected should the proposal be accepted.

3.0 **MAIN ISSUES**

3.1 There were 55 responses received from school governing bodies. There were no responses from neighbouring Local Authorities or Diocesan Boards. The Admission Forum discussed the proposals and consultation responses at their meeting in February 2007. They accepted that the first six proposals above should be supported. The final proposal did not receive any support from schools but it was felt that this was because the proposal was sent out late and did not give schools sufficient time to respond. Education Leeds has agreed to withdraw the proposal and to re-issue it next year to allow governing bodies time to respond.

3.2 **Co-ordinated admission arrangements**

These arrangements have to be agreed each year with the voluntary aided sector and neighbouring local authorities. The arrangements cover the distribution of work between the schools and Education Leeds and the timetable that all parties must agree to make sure the scheme can work. There were no proposals to amend the current arrangements for 2008. From the replies received from governors 45 agreed with the primary scheme and 2 disagreed. For secondary schools 40 agreed with the scheme and 2 disagreed.

3.3 **Breaking the sibling link when the older child is in the 6th form.**

3.3.1 A report was taken to the Admission Forum in the Autumn term concerning this proposal and the Forum asked that parents with children in year 5, the first cohort to be affected, be consulted.

3.3.2 Education Leeds believes that local children should have the opportunity to attend local schools. The number of places at each school that can be allocated to local is reduced by the number of children who have an older sibling already at the school. Quite often some of these families have moved out of the immediate area and would not have qualified for a place at the school based on their address. There are good reasons for giving priority to siblings, especially in primary schools where parents or carers take their children to school and the principle of the sibling link remains sound.

3.3.3 However, the situation is different in secondary schools where the vast majority of children make their own way to and from school. Last year, September 2006, 354 children would not have been offered the place had it not been for the sibling link. This is because the families no longer lived in the area but their older child still attended the school. The result was that 354 children were denied a place at their local school because siblings from outside the area were offered a place. It has been argued that this places families with lone children at a

disadvantage.

- 3.3.4 The proposal to sever the sibling link with sixth form is made to allow more local children access to their local school. There would be an impact at Garforth, Roundhay, Temple Moor and Cockburn secondary schools. There are difficulties in operating the current system effectively. When the parents complete the preference form in September and an offer letter is sent the following March neither the parents nor Education Leeds knows if a child will actually enter the 6th form as this is dependent on GCSE results which are published in August. Hence when a parent states that their older child will be at school in the 6th form Education Leeds has to accept this at face value as there is no way of checking.
- 3.3.5 Education Leeds are proposing a change to this situation where the older child will be in the 6th form. If the sibling connection was removed in these cases then 45 more local children would have been offered a place at their local school last year. A similar policy has operated in Bradford and Wakefield for many years. There is no proposal to remove the sibling link in years 7 to 10.
- 3.3.6 From the consultation exercise 29 school governing bodies agreed with the proposal and 15 disagreed. The results from the parents questionnaire given to all year 5 parents was 803 (72%) in agreement and 320 against (28%).
- 3.3.7 A small number of parents who voted against the proposal made comments. These were as follows:
Is this the first step to abolishing the sibling connection?
The assistance of the older child will be lost.
Any change in policy should not affect those parents already in the system, you are moving the goalposts.
It is not possible for a parent to take their children to two schools at once and it will affect travelling, safety and after school activities.
The proposal does not take account of where the local authority moves the boundary and it is not the fault of the family. It does not take account of changing family circumstances, even older children need transport to school e.g. with musical instruments.
Not all parents can plan to have their children close together.
We feel that local children should take priority but as I am affected I am voting against.
- 3.3.8 There is a balance between a family maintaining its relationship with a school which has been built-up over a number of years and allowing more local children to access the school. Education Leeds would wish to allow more local children a place at their local school.
- 3.3.9 The Admission Forum discussed this matter at their meeting in February 2007 and agreed that with over 1100 parents voting and 72% agreeing with the proposal it should be recommended to the Executive Board.

3.4 **Introducing a final deadline date for admission appeals.**

- 3.4.1 At the request of the Leeds Admission Inquiry in 2000 Education Leeds has removed all bureaucratic barriers within the admission process. This means that parents can change their preferences at any time before and after the offer date of March 1. They can appeal for any school, even if it was not listed on the preference form and they can appeal at any time as there is no deadline. This

freedom has impacted on schools especially in the area of appeals.

- 3.4.2 When parents are unsuccessful at appeal for a school they often complete another appeal form for another school. This process is often repeated a number of times. We have reached a situation where appeals are still being received in July and August. Children do not attend school in September because they are still waiting for an appeal hearing. Because of this situation schools do not know who will be attending in September, children are missing out on their education and there is a damaging effect on the transition work that schools undertake.
- 3.4.3 Education Leeds proposes to introduce a final deadline of June 14, this is three months after parents are notified of the offered school and informed of the appeal process. There will always be extenuating circumstances where an appeal will be granted, for example where a house move is involved. However, Education Leeds proposes to amend its letters and processes to advise parents to list all the schools on the first appeal form rather than allow the process to take many months. The aim is to hear all appeals before the end of term so that all children and schools know the situation that will apply in the following September.
- 3.4.4 This received the highest response in the consultation exercise with 53 schools agreeing and 2 schools disagreeing. The proposal also links into some recent guidance published in the Admissions Code of Practice about not allowing parents to change their preferences.
- 3.5 **Giving ‘looked after’ children priority for in-year transfers.**
- 3.5.1 The DfES through the Admissions Code has made ‘children in public care’ top priority in the oversubscription criteria of all admission authorities. However, there are no regulations for in-year transfers for these children. We wish to work in partnership with schools and to agree a process whereby these children are admitted, even if the school is above its numbers, whenever there is a reasonable request to move schools. This proposal is a natural progression from the current policy of making them top priority in the oversubscription criteria.
- 3.5.2 Children in public care who require admission to a school outside the normal admissions round will normally be offered a place at a school serving the address at which the pupil is living. For secondary schools, this will normally be the nearest school. For primary schools, this will normally be one of the three nearest schools. Where required we shall involve the Area Management Boards to assist in resolving any issues.
- 3.5.3 Education Leeds will discuss the proposed move with social services and other agencies involved with the student as it is not always educationally appropriate to move a child, for example students in year 10 and 11. The intention is that there should not be a need to resort to the appeals process to gain admission to a preferred school, even when it is oversubscribed or when the waiting list is in operation or when appeals are taking place for other children. We will make these arrangements explicit to the appeal panels and the reasons why they have been introduced.
- 3.5.4 The response to the consultation process indicated that 51 governing bodies agreed with this proposal and 3 disagreed.

3.6 **Delegating admission into the 6th form to school governors**

This proposal is to formalise the situation that occurs at the moment. Each school currently sets its own criteria for admission to the 6th form and arranges for admission of the students. The Education Leeds contract would need to be amended to enable this action to take place but this is a technicality and will not pose a hindrance should the proposal be accepted.

Through the consultation process 39 governing bodies agreed and 4 disagreed.

3.7 **Changes to school admission numbers.**

3.7.1 Education Leeds has proposed the following changes to the admission numbers for 2008:

Bankside Primary from 70 to 90
Harehills Primary from 60 to 90
Brownhill Primary from 60 to 45
Stanningley primary from 28 to 30
Kippax North J & I from 40 to 30
Bramley St Peters from 60 to 45

3.7.2 From the responses received 44 governing bodies agreed with the proposals and 3 disagreed. None of the three schools who objected gave any reasons for their objection.

3.8 **Giving children at an infant school priority to attend the linked junior school.**

During the consultation process Westroyd Infant School governors asked that children at infant schools be given priority when they transferred to the linked junior school. An additional consultation letter was sent to all schools seeking comments.

However, only one letter of support had been received by the closing date and the Admission Forum felt this was not sufficient to recommend the proposal to the Executive Board. This proposal will be re-issued next year with enough time for all schools to respond.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE**

4.1 In giving priority to 'looked after' children all school governing bodies will need to be informed of their priority in order to prevent admission appeals. Education Leeds will involve the Area Management Boards should there be any issues over these admissions.

4.2 In delegating 6th form admissions Education Leeds will need to issue clear advice to school governing bodies.

5.0 **LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The proposal to delegate 6th form admissions to school governing bodies will need an amendment to the Education Leeds contract. This will not pose a

hindrance should the proposal be accepted.

6.0 **CONCLUSIONS**

6.1 The Admission Forum has supported the first six proposals in paragraph 1.2 above. The consultation exercise has indicated a large degree of support with few schools disagreeing.

7.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 Executive Board is asked to approve the following proposals for implementation in the 2008 admission round:

- Primary and secondary school co-ordinated admission arrangements.
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