

**Report of: Director of Children and Families**

**Report to: Executive Board**

**Date: 17 October 2018**

**Subject: Outcome of School Admissions Arrangements 2018 and upcoming consultation on Admissions Policy for 2020**



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 aims to inform Executive Board of the outcomes of the Admissions Round for 2018 entry into Reception and Year 7, and the Admissions Service functions and outcomes relating to in-year school transfers in 2017/18.
2. The growth seen in previous years in the number of children entering Primary School has stabilised, with a similar number of children joining Reception in 2018 as in 2017. 88% of children were offered their 1<sup>st</sup> preference (87% last year) and 95.5% were offered one of their top 3 preferences (95% last year).
3. The number of young people joining Secondary School in 2018 has risen by 4.5% since last year, reflecting the historical increase in birth rate since 2009 and these children now reaching secondary age. 82% of children were offered their 1<sup>st</sup> preference school, which is lower than the 85% first preference rate achieved in 2017 but the same as the 2016 first preference rate. 92.4% of applicants were offered one of their top 3 preferences (95.5% last year).
4. The number of requests for in-year school transfers continues to rise, and particular areas of the city have seen a large number of new arrivals to the area, leading to a pressure on school places in-year.

## **Recommendations**

5. That Executive Board note:

5.1. 88% of Reception children and 82% of Year 7 children were offered a place at their first preference school

5.2. The number of children receiving an offer at one of their top 3 preferred schools was 95.5% for Reception and 92.4% for Year 7

5.3. Requests for in-year transfers continues to rise, with 7909 (+454 compared to the previous year) children requesting new school places between September 2017 and July 2018 – some being new arrivals in the city and some being requests to move within the city.

5.4. A consultation on the Leeds City Council Admissions Policy for 2020/21 will be launched in October 2018

5.5. The officer responsible for this area of work is the Lead for the Admissions and Family Information Service

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the outcomes of the Admissions functions undertaken by the Local Authority in the academic year 2017/18. It includes statistical information on the annual admissions round for entry to Reception and year 7 for September 2018, including the number of allocations and also the percentage of families receiving a preferred school offer. In addition, information is provided about the admission of pupils 'in-year' where pupils have moved into, or within the city during the academic year 2017/18.

## **2 Background information**

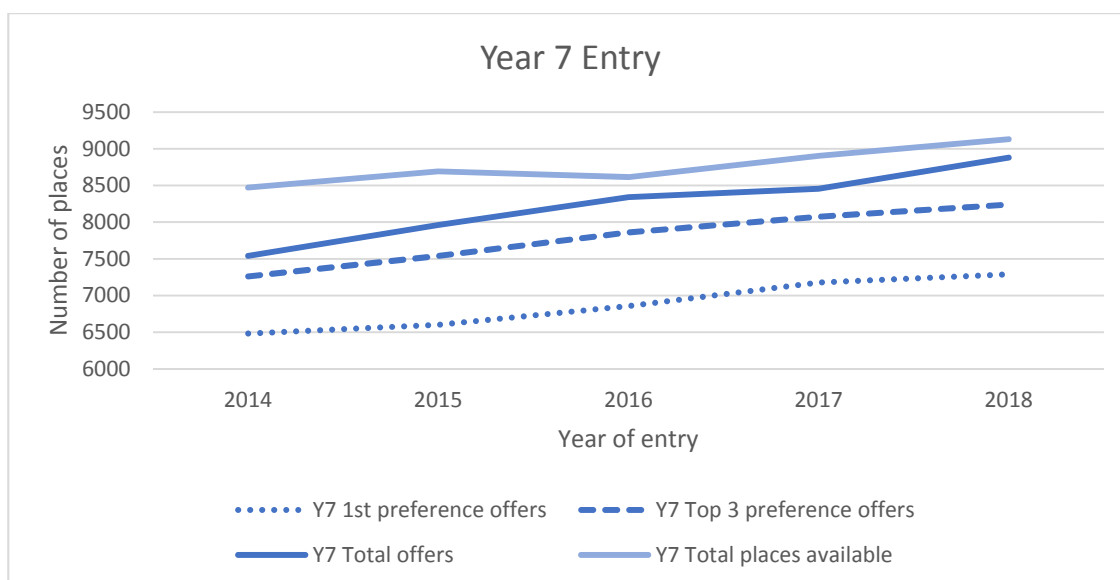
- 2.1 The Local Authority (LA) is required to coordinate admissions to Reception and Year 7 in the 'normal round', ie. for entry in September, for all schools in the area – community, foundation trust, faith schools and academies (including free schools). In addition the LA coordinates applications to enter the two Leeds junior schools at Year 3.
- 2.2 For entry in September 2018, 8881 Year 7 places and 9595 Reception places were offered on the respective offer days.
- 2.3 The growth in children entering primary school, seen since 2009, peaked in 2016 as seen in the graph at 3.3. An additional 240 places were made available for September 2018 before offer day to ensure sufficient capacity across the city. These were a combination of permanent expansions to existing schools (creating 150 places) bulge cohorts (45 places) and the opening of Elements Primary Academy in Middleton which created an additional 60 places. Brodetsky Primary reduced its admission number by 15 places for September 2018.
- 2.4 The number of children offered places to start Year 7 in 2018 has risen again by 426. The additional pressure generated by the rising birth rate since 2009 is now impacting on the need for school places in the Year 7 cohort. There has also been an increase in the number of children living in the city, year on year. The Sufficiency and Participation Team engaged with secondary schools throughout the city to explore opportunities for places to be created, resulting in an additional 459 places being available for Year 7 in 2018. These were a combination of permanent expansions to existing schools (100 places), the opening of the Secondary Phase of Dixon's Trinity Chapeltown Academy (112 places) and temporary expansions to existing schools (247 places). The Morley Academy reduced its admission number by 56 in 2018, however this was offset by the increase in places offered across the multi-academy trust at Bruntcliffe Academy.
- 2.5 The LA does not currently coordinate applications for school places outside the normal annual cycle round. Parents are required to approach schools directly to request places. The Admissions Team continues to support schools with this responsibility, ensuring that places are available to families when they need them and families are supported to fulfil their duty to secure an appropriate education for their child. Where parents do not secure an offer in the normal way, the LA works with schools and parents to ensure places are secured as quickly as possible.

### 3 Main issues

3.1 Annual Cycle Secondary - On 1<sup>st</sup> March offer day, there were 308 vacancies in Secondary Schools throughout the city which allowed for pupil movement and late applicants to be offered a place between offer day and the start of term.

3.2 Own admitting authority schools (Academies, Trust Schools and Voluntary Aided schools) can notify the local authority that they wish to offer additional places at their school at any time. After national offer day six schools asked the Local Authority to admit children over their published admission number, resulting in 123 additional places being available. We have outlined the potentially detrimental impact of these decisions on their neighbouring schools for their consideration, as some schools raised concern that the more popular schools were expanding and reducing the number of children on roll at the lower preference schools. The parental order of preference has a significant impact during this process, as the Local Authority is obliged to offer the family their highest possible preference.

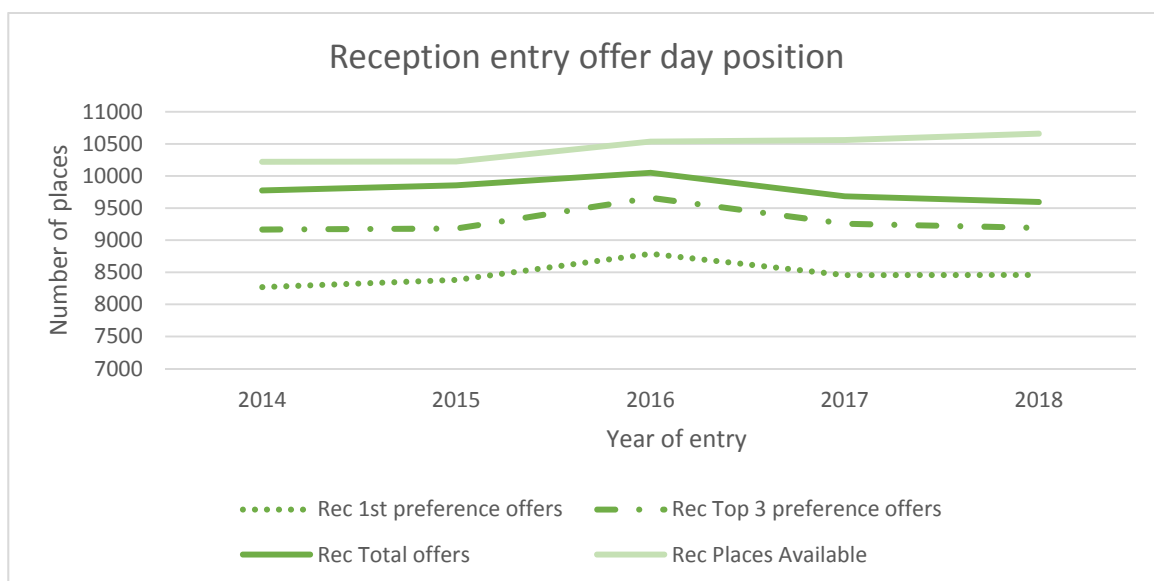
3.2.1 Places available and offered in Year 7 for past 5 years:



3.3 By 26 September the number of Year 7 places offered in Leeds had increased to 8960 (+35 since offer day in March). 85% of applicants have received a first preference offer (+3% since offer day in March) due to appeals, pupil movement, the waiting list process and the additional places mentioned above.

3.4 Annual Cycle Primary – The graph below shows the offer day position for the past 5 years. There were 1065 vacancies in Primary Schools in April 2018, which is the surplus aimed for to provide places for families moving into the area and ensure sufficiency. New applications continued to be received over the summer, and by 26 September the number of offers made had increased to 9882 (+288 since offer day in April). This number is expected to continue to rise over the autumn term. 89% of applicants have received a first preference offer by the end of September (+1% since offer day in April).

### 3.4.1 Graph showing offer day position for Reception for past 5 years



3.5 Appeals - Whenever an application is refused, the applicant has the right of appeal against the decision. The number of appeals lodged and heard for places in Reception was slightly lower in 2018/19 than in 2017/18. The percentage of appeals granted was also lower than previous years. Although a greater percentage of Reception parents received an offer of their first preference school, more appeals were lodged with the local authority, as outlined in the table below. Parents state being unhappy with the school allocated as their reason for appeal – despite being offered a school they expressed a preference for. This reflects parental perception that they can choose which school their child attends, while in law they only have the right to express a preference.

#### 3.5.1 Table showing appeals lodged and heard for Reception entry 2015 - 2018

*16th April – 1st September*	Rec 2015/16	Rec 2016/17	Rec 2017/18	Rec 2018/19
<b>Appeals lodged with LCC*</b>	730	479	463	357
<b>Appeals heard *</b>	352 (48% of those lodged)	301 (62.8% of those lodged)	309 (66.7% of those lodged)	245 (68.6% of those lodged) with 17 remaining outstanding and to be heard in September 2018
<b>Appeals granted*</b>	40 (11% of those heard)	18 (6% of those heard)	18 (5.8% of those heard)	9 (3.7% of those heard)
<b>Appeals not granted*</b>	312 (88.6% of those heard)	283 (94% of those heard)	291 (94.2% of those heard)	219 (89.4% of those heard)
<b>Number of offers made</b>	9,854	10,051	9,683	9,595
<b>1st Preferences met</b>	8,383 (85%)	8,789 (87%)	8,458 (87%)	8460 (88%)
<b>Placements (no pref met)</b>	550 (5.5%)	301 (3%)	284 (3%)	279 (3%)

\*The appeals reported here relate to the appeals arranged and heard by the Local Authority.

3.6 The number of appeals lodged and heard for entry into Year 7 has increased compared to last year. This increase was unexpected as the number of children offered their first preference school is the highest it has been in Leeds for many years. After national offer day six schools also asked the Local Authority to admit children over their published admission number, resulting in 123 additional places being available. However, the number of applications for entry into year 7 has increased overall by 4.8% and there was also an increase in the number of children who were not offered a preferred place, with 474 children (5.3%) receiving a placement offer (in 2017 this figure was 279 children (3.3%).

3.6.1 Table showing number appeals lodged and heard by LCC for Year 7 entry 2015-2018

*1 <sup>st</sup> March – 1 <sup>st</sup> September*	High 2015/16	High 2016/17	High 2017/18	High 2018/19
<b>Appeals lodged with LCC*</b>	443	438	304	396
<b>Appeals heard *</b>	208 (46% of those lodged)	314 (71.7% of those lodged)	208 (68.4% of those lodged)	258 (65.2% of those lodged) with 17 remaining outstanding and to be heard in September 2018
<b>Appeals granted*</b>	29 (14% of those heard)	41 (13.1% of those heard)	36 (17.3% of those heard)	45 (17.4% of those heard)
<b>Appeals not granted*</b>	179 (86% of those heard)	273 (86.9% of those heard)	172 (82.7% of those heard)	198 (76.7% of those heard)

*\*The appeals reported here relate to the appeals arranged and heard by the Local Authority.*

3.7 Office of the Schools Adjudicator - All Trust schools, Academy, Free Schools and Voluntary Aided schools are an own admitting authority and are wholly responsible for the admissions functions within the school. 50.5% of Primary Schools (n=113) and 86% of Secondary Schools (n=36) are own admitting authority schools. The LA role with own admitting authorities is to provide support and challenge to ensure that they are meeting their statutory duty.

3.8 As part of this role, and in line with the duties outlined in the Admissions Code, the Admissions Team referred 2 secondary academy policies and 4 primary academy policies to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, due to concerns that the school's published admissions policy was not compliant with the School Admissions Code (2014). Referrals were made as the policies did not meet the statutory requirement to be fair, clear, objective and easy for parents to understand. All referrals were upheld by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator and the 6 schools were obliged to make amendments to their admissions policy. The Office of the Schools Adjudicator determinations are published publicly and feature in the annual report to the DfE. The Admissions Team will continue to focus on this area of work to ensure own admitting authority policies are compliant with the Code.

3.9 Summer Born children - In September 2015, an open letter from Nick Gibb MP, indicated that there was an imminent change to be made to the Admissions Code to allow all parents of summer born children free choice about when their children

started school. Since this letter, there have been no progress in making changes to the law. The DfE continue to indicate that this will be included in the next refresh of the School Admissions Code, however there are still no timescales for when this will be. The Admissions Code, which we must comply with, states that all requests for deferred summer born admission must be considered on a case by case basis and any agreement must only be made if the decision is in the best interests of the child. We will continue to review our procedures each year to ensure they are fit for purpose and in line with legislation.

- 3.10 Parental Preference - Leeds has a high proportion of children in both Reception and Year 7 who are offered one of their preferred schools. Some of this is due to the number of schools judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted, leading to greater positive choice for families.
- 3.11 Parents are advised by the Admissions Team to always consider how likely they are to be offered a place at a school before including it as one of their preferences. Historically this has included the Local Authority informing parents which was their 'nearest priority school' as this was a priority offered across the majority of admission policies.
- 3.12 In some areas, there is a polarisation of parental opinion about local schools. Despite sufficient places being available across areas for the number of children living locally, some parents choose not to include a preference for a local school and preference patterns therefore impact on the first preference rates achieved. In some areas this has resulted in a public perception that there are insufficient places, with some parents reporting that an offer of a place at a less popular school is 'unreasonable'.
- 3.13 Historically, all parents have been notified that the application window is open for Reception and Y7 applications via a letter which included information about where their application would receive a 'priority'. The wide range of admission oversubscription criteria used by own admitting authority schools and academies has led to this letter becoming less meaningful for parents. For entry in September 2019 the invitation to apply letter lists the closest 5 schools to the home address, regardless of status of that school. Parents are encouraged to find out about the admission arrangements for those schools they are interested in. Admissions staff are providing drop in sessions at the City Centre Hub and also support secondary school open days to offer parents advice. Maps showing catchments for secondary schools and 'nearest polygons' have been published on the website for clarity.
- 3.14 In Year school moves - Mobility within and into the city continues to create pressure on school places and an increased pressure on the Admissions team to ensure that up to date information regarding vacancies in schools is accurate. Schools are statutorily required to notify the Admissions Team within 5 days of any pupil leaving or starting at their school. Due to the administrative burden, particularly in areas where there is high mobility, schools do not routinely meet this requirement and we are working with our digital information service colleagues to progress an automatic live data feed from schools to the Local Authority meet this need more efficiently.

- 3.15 Schools are required to notify the admissions team of any in-year application received and the decision made by the school regarding whether they can admit the child. We have been working closely with schools to encourage more timely returns of information, however we still receive regular contact from families who report they have applied for school places and had no response for significant periods of time – these are children that the Admissions Team are not aware are seeking a school place prior to the parents contacting us.
- 3.16 Throughout the 2017/18 academic year, over 7909 children requested an in-year transfer, many of them preferencing three or four schools, resulting in over 25,000 transfer requests being dealt with by the Admissions Team.
- 3.17 Particular pressure continues to be seen in areas of the city where there are high levels of mobility. The Admissions Team and the Sufficiency and Participation Team work in partnership with schools in these areas to ensure that solutions are found as quickly as possible when pressures arise. This includes negotiating with schools to offer additional bulge cohorts when needed.
- 3.18 During 2017/18 over 240 bulge places were created in the Harehills / Burmantofts area where demand for places was high. This included the creation of an annex site to Shakespeare Primary School, where the Headteacher and his staff team showed great commitment in successfully providing over 120 places for children who had moved into the area and had been unable to secure a school place offer – many were new to the country and speak little or no English.
- 3.19 The Harehills area has a high number of primary schools, high mobility, and families with large sibling groups. The decision was taken early in the academic year to coordinate in-year applications for the area, to ensure that siblings were being allocated places in the same school wherever possible, and that families were receiving more targeted support to take up the places they were being allocated. This will continue into the 18/19 academic year while the scale of demand is monitored.
- 3.20 Although the Local Authority does not coordinate in-year admissions, we still retain a duty to ensure that children have a school place offered within a reasonable time. The Local Authority is not always aware that a child has requested a place at a school and been unsuccessful in securing one. During 2018/19 we will explore with all schools and academies whether they agree to the LA Admissions Team taking an increased role around the in-year process to ensure efficiency.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.2 Consultation is a statutory requirement to be undertaken on any changes to the local admission policies, and where additional school places are being provided through permanent expansion.



- 4.1.3 Consultation on admissions arrangements takes place late in the autumn term and will be informed by the outcomes of the 2017/18 in year rounds and the 2018/19 Annual Cycle round.
- 4.1.4 The remaining community secondary schools moved to catchment area priorities for admission from September 2017. There are a number of benefits and this was implemented without any issues. For the forthcoming consultation on admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools, we will be consulting on defining 'catchment areas' for primary schools that reflect local geography and population data in place of 'nearest priority'. This will mean there is a more consistent approach across the Secondary and Primary admissions policies.
- 4.1.5 These proposed changes would allow parents to have a clearer understanding of whether their home address falls within the schools priority area by consulting a map. This makes the oversubscription criteria clearer to parents and consequently allows parents to make more informed decisions about how likely it is that they will be offered a place at their preferenced school(s). The changes have been modelled to increase meaningful priorities, where previously in some areas some families would have been very unlikely to gain a place at the priority school.

## **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

This report is for information only.

## **4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan**

The admissions policy and arrangements continues to ensure children receive fair and consistent treatment, and have reasonable access to local schools. In doing so it supports the council's obsession with improving attendance, contributing to good educational outcomes for children. These are important factors in the drive to become a child friendly city.

- 4.3.1 A key objective within the Best Council Plan to 2020/21 is to build a child friendly city. The delivery of pupil places through the Admissions Arrangements is one of the baseline entitlements of a Child Friendly City. A good quality school place contributes to the achievement of targets within the Childrens and young People's Plan such as our obsession to 'improve school attendance'.
- 4.3.2 The admission arrangements contribute to the Best Council Plan outcomes for everyone in Leeds to 'Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life'; Be safe and feel safe' and 'Enjoy happy, health and active lives'. It also supports the vision of the Children and Young People's Plan 2018 – 2023 to build a child friendly city with a focus on ensuring all children and young people are safe from harm, do well at all levels of learning and have the skills for life.

## **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 With changing statutory responsibilities in relation to admissions, all opportunities to explore the development of traded services are being explored. At present, the

Appeals Service is operating at full cost recovery for those appeals arranged and heard on behalf of own admitting authority schools, as a traded service.

- 4.4.2 The published guide for parents applying for the normal admission round remains a statutory document and must be available as a printed document upon request, however maximum use of the LCC website is used to provide a wider range of information for parents to support their application for school. Higher uptake of online applications reduces the administrative costs associated with manually inputting written requests.

#### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 The admission policy which was applied to applications for entry in 2018 was determined at the February 2017 meeting of the Executive Board.
- 4.5.2 This report provides information on the outcome of the admission arrangements in place. All requirements for the coordination of the admission process have been carried out in line with all relevant legislation and the criteria of the policy for community and voluntary controlled schools. The local authority received copies of all admission arrangements from own admitting authority schools.
- 4.5.3 The report is subject to call in.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 This paper is for information only and there is no risk management requirement. The risk around managing sufficiency of school places is managed through the city's corporate risk register.

### **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Despite changing numbers of children requesting and being offered a school place, the percentage of children receiving a 1<sup>st</sup> preference offer is stable.
- 5.2 Although in-year applications and offers are not coordinated by the Local Authority, the Admissions Team continues to receive a large number of applications and is required to support schools and families to ensure that places are offered in a timely way.
- 5.3 The appeals process continues to meet all statutory deadlines and provide parents with their right to appeal to an independent panel following any decision to refuse an application for a place.

### **6 Recommendations**

That Executive Board note:

- 6.1 88% of Reception children and 82% of Year 7 children were offered a place at their first preference school
- 6.2 The number of children receiving an offer at one of their top 3 preferred schools was 95.5% for Reception and 92.4% for Year 7

- 6.3 Requests for in-year transfers continues to rise, with 7909 (+454 compared to the previous year) children requesting new school places between September 2017 and July 2018 – some being new arrivals in the city and some being requests to move within the city.
- 6.4 A consultation on the Leeds City Council Admissions Policy for 2020/21 will be launched in October 2018
- 6.5 The officer responsible for this area of work is the Lead for the Admissions and Family Information Service
- 7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**
- 7.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> 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.