

Report of the Strategic Director Children's Services to the meeting of Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 15th November 2016.

V

Subject: School Admissions

Summary statement:

The report details the annual admissions to schools process, the current position with annual admissions, appeals and in year applications. The report will give an update on the progress the Team have made with programme of change over the last 12 months and will outline changes of the forthcoming year.

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Portfolio:
Education, Employment & Skills

Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Children's Services



1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report details the annual admissions to schools process, the current position with annual admissions, appeals and in year applications. The report will give an update on the progress the Team have made with programme of change over the last 12 months and will outline changes of the forthcoming year.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Admissions Team's work is based on the School Admissions Code 2014, the School Standard and Framework Act 1998 and underpinning legislation. All local authorities have a scheme which co-ordinates admission arrangements for all primary and secondary schools within their area for annual cycle admissions. Both Primary and Secondary annual cycle admissions (Reception and Yr7) have a national closing date (to receive applications) and a national offer day (where parents are informed of their allocated school place), introduced in the revised Admissions Code in February 2012. For Secondary, the National Closing date is 31st October with National Offer Day on 1st March. For Primary, National Closing date is 15th January and National Offer Day is 16th April.
- 2.2 A previous Admissions Code introduced the statutory requirement for Local Authorities to co-ordinate In Year admissions in September 2010 but this was withdrawn in September 2013, although local authorities could continue to do so if schools wished this to be the case. An In Year admission request is when a parent seeks a school place at any time throughout the year other than those dealt with by the Annual Cycle, known as the 'normal round'. This can be for a variety of reasons including a family: new to Bradford or the UK; moving house within the City; or, is unhappy with the current school. The School Admissions Code allows parents to make applications for any reason and at any time.

Bradford City Council has continued to co-ordinate In Year Admissions for all community schools, voluntary controlled schools and some of the voluntary aided schools and academies. We do not co-ordinate for Idle CE Primary School, Shipley CE Primary School or any Catholic school. The introduction of In Year co-ordination had a positive impact for the Local Authority. Knowing who is applying for school places and whether or not they start school had vastly improved the In Year process for parents as they can be advised which schools have places and be offered alternative schools. It has enabled the Local Authority to have a much better database enabling the Team to ensure children are admitted to school and to identify Children Missing Education.

- 2.3 In the Government's White Paper 2016 'Education, Excellence, Everywhere' ensuring every child has a school place is a key priority. The Government intend to look at the current Code of Practice and make processes clearer and simpler for parents. The DFE will consult on re-introducing the statutory duty to co-ordinate In Year admissions; and will discuss with the sector the feasibility of requiring the local authorities to handle the administration of the independent appeals function. The Local Authorities role will be to act as the champions of parents and families,



supporting parents in navigating the system.

3. Data

3.1 Primary School Admissions for September 2016

	% as at National Offer Day	No. of applications	% as at 8 th Sept 2016	No. of applications
No. of applications received		7775		8134
1 st pref allocations	88.63	6891	88.80	7223
2 nd pref allocations	6.15	478	6.38	519
3 rd pref allocations	1.85	144	1.95	159
4 th pref allocations	0.77	60	0.64	52
5 th pref allocations	0.45	35	0.41	33
Allocated against preference	2.15	167	1.82	148

3.1.1 Whilst some parents receive allocation against preference even though they live in a 'priority area' other reasons include parents only using one preference; preferencing one school five times; multiple preferences for school that use fair banding and random allocation; preferences for schools whose priority area they do not live in; parent who do not preference their local school or the school in whose 'Priority Area' they reside. Whilst some schools in the district have increased their capacity which has eased pressure in these areas, there are still pressures in other areas. Although projected data is showing a decrease in the number of children starting school there are specific areas that require additional capacity, therefore three primary consultations are currently being consulted upon to increase the capacity within three primary schools in KS2.

3.1.2 There was less pressure in primary allocations this year with the exception of Queensbury where 4 students could not be offered a Queensbury school and were offered a school in BD7 (Great Horton/Lidget Green)

3.2 Secondary School Admissions September 2016

	% as at National Offer Day	No. of applications	% as at 8 th September 2016	No. of applications
No. of applications received		7475		7581
1st pref allocations	72.50	5419	75.54	5727
2nd pref allocations	11.61	868	11.48	870
3rd pref allocations	5.03	376	4.72	358
4th pref allocations	3.04	227	2.80	212
5th pref allocations	1.44	108	1.69	128
Allocated against preference	6.38	477	3.77	286



- 3.2.1 There has been pressure on school places in various areas of the City this year and several schools agreed to admit above their Published Admissions Number (PAN) including Beckfoot Upper Heaton (+4) Belle Vue Girls School (+ 18) Carlton Bolling (29) and Oasis Academy Lister Park (+33). Historically, not all the children allocated will take up the places as some gain places at other schools through the waiting list and through the appeals process.

Pressure has remained in the BD2(Eccleshill), BD3 (Bradford Moor), BD5(West Bowling), BD7 (Great Horton) and BD18 (Shipley) areas.

3.3 In Year Admissions

- 3.3.1 Unlike the allocations process for Yr7 and reception, In Year admission applications are dealt with on a case by case basis, as they are received. The Team take into consideration the availability of school places, particularly where there are multiple applications for one family. They liaise with schools to ensure we have updated pupil numbers in each year group and to establish when pupils have been admitted. It is expected that children are admitted to their new school within 20 school days from receiving the application. However it is important to ensure the move meets the needs of the child so an actual start date is often negotiated with the new school. A child should not be without a school place and wherever possible parents are urged to maintain the child's current school place until they can start at the new school.
- 3.3.2 Over 6,500 in year applications were received for the academic year 2015/16 and whilst this fluctuates termly on average approximately 26 applications are received every day. Parents are advised that we aim to allocate a school within 20 school days; however this target is dependent on the numbers of school places available, the number of applications received and where the Team is within the Annual Cycle timetable. Between 18th July and 5th October the Admission Team received 1,594 applications that required processing. Some of these children already had a school place on Census day (6th October). The next peak is between November and July when there is an increase in the pressure on staff to manage their workload of In Year applications that need to be dealt with on a daily basis. Many In Year applications are complex and require negotiation with headteachers to admit pupil through the Fair Access Protocol (see 3.4), especially in Primary schools which takes significant officer time, as does the creation of the Fair Access lists for the secondary schools to consider.
- 3.3.3 Whilst there has been an increase in PAN in schools across the Authority in Reception some of these increases are still moving through schools and there is still significant pressure in primary schools in BD2/3,4,7 (Eccleshill, Bradford Moor, Tong, Great Horton) BD10 (Idle/Thackley), BD12 (Wyke) and BD14 (Clayton) in various year groups in both KS1 and KS2. This increases the time taken to find a school place within a reasonable distance.



3.3.4 The split of In Year applications received between secondary and primary has continued to be around 30/70 of the total every academic year since 2010. Below is a table showing, where captured the reasons given by parents for requesting a school transfer:-

Reasons for In Year Applications	No. received	Percentage of Total %
New to Bradford	950	14.6
Returning to Bradford	455	7.0
Difficulty getting to school	526	8.2
Extended Leave	268	4.1
House Move within Bradford	1303	20.0
New to UK	938	14.4
Rec/Y7 after annual allocation round	845	13.0
Issues with School	693	10.7
Leaving Private Education	152	2.3
Leaving Bradford (applying to another LA)	17	0.3
Faith Reasons	5	0.1
Inappropriate provision	86	1.3
Siblings	151	2.3
Social Reasons	79	1.2
Withdrawn from School	35	0.5
Total	6503	100.00%

3.4 Fair Access Protocol

3.4.1 Admissions work through the Fair Access Protocol (FAP), with the Protocol being used more and more when an offer of a reasonable school place cannot be made due to a lack of places. The aim of the protocol continues to be to find school places for our most vulnerable families, as quickly as possible. All schools are required to take their 'fair share' of students through the protocol. These figures in the table below do not include secondary pupils who present behavioural problems as these are admitted to schools through the Behaviour and Achievement Collaborative (BACs).



This table shows the number of FAP cases placed from Sept 2015 to July 2016

Type of School	Number of children admitted		
	Primary	Secondary	All through
Community	219	33	0
Voluntary controlled	31	0	0
Voluntary Aided	27	11	0
Foundation	25	115	0
Academy	34	191	74
Free School	1	13	9
Total	337	363	83
Grand Total	783		

3.4.2 Recently there has been a consultation on the revised Fair Access Protocol (FAP) which will be introduced after October half term for both primary and secondary schools

3.5 Independent Appeals

3.5.1 There has been a continued decrease in the number of appeals heard for primary and secondary allocations. There were a number of appeals heard in September and October, due to parents adding additional preferences or applying late. As parents have a right to appeal for any school they have been refused, we still continue to hear appeals for families even when they have been allocated one of their preferred preferences.

By the end of the summer term we will have scheduled and heard over 130 days of appeals; however we heard over 200 less appeals. There are mixed reasons for this. Firstly there were more Reception age primary parents receiving a school that they preferred but there were also a lot of appeals lodged over the Summer holidays for late or changed preferences which meant that these appeals will be accounted for in the following academic year. Due to increased movement on the waiting lists not all of the 130 days were full days of appeal hearings.

The figures below show appeals lodged as of 31st July 2016.

Phase	Upheld	Refused	Withdrawn	2nd Appeals Request Refused	Still to Hear/Waiting for Result	Total Lodged
Primary Schools	42	173	88	1	84	388
Secondary Schools	92	321	94	6	71	584
In-Year Transfers	139	421	132	0	40	732
TOTAL	273	915	314	7	195	1704



3.6 Forecasting number of school places required

3.6.1 Primary School Places

The pressure on primary school reception places in Bradford LA increased over a period of 7 years. Data provided by the Health Authority (2015) which is used in the production of the primary school pupil forecast, shows the numbers who potentially could require places in reception increased by over 1,000:

2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
8782	8625	8540	8275	7309	8041	7741

The pressure on places was met due to the number of additional places provided by the Authority. Since 2010 there has been an increase in the published admission number (PAN) and capacity at 50 primary schools to meet the demand for places. From September 2016 there has been an increase in the PAN (total 45) and capacity (total 315) at 2 additional primary schools.

The PAN at Parklands Primary school has increased from 30 to 60. Hothfield Junior School has closed and Aireview Infant has become a Primary school on two sites, increasing from 75 to 90. This was effective from September 2016. Neither of these changes required additional buildings and any remodelling will be funded from Section 106 and Basic Need funding.

There are on-going conversations for four more primary schools to increase their PAN but these conversations are in the very early stages.

The Health Authority data for 2016 is currently being analysed however, last year's figures showed that the number of children aged 3 and below, living in the District, appeared to be reducing. So a further expansion was not required, however we are aware there continues to be issues within certain areas:

As at 2015

Aged 3	Aged 2	Aged 1	Aged 0
8,382	8,288	8,131	8,123

The figures from the Health Authority do not take into account the movement in and out of Bradford and therefore it can be difficult to build in additional capacity for areas with high mobility. This can also be true of areas with high levels of house building as it is difficult to predict how many children, and in which year groups, will move into the housing and when.

3.6.2 Secondary School Places

Due to some spare capacity in parts of the District and new schools, the demand for year 7 places for pupils entering into secondary education has been met. There were sufficient places for all children across the District but there were also areas



where there was either a lack of places for local children or a surplus of vacancies. However, the majority of parents who were 'allocated against preference' did receive an offer of a school within a 'reasonable' distance.

Cohort numbers have also increased from previous years due to new arrivals in the District that may not have formally been registered with the Health Authority making the cohort larger than the Health Authority data.

The analysis of future years is that additional places or schools will be required over the next few years and to this end a series of meetings with Headteachers and Chair of Governors of secondary schools have been on-going to discuss this issue and to consider actions and/or proposals to ensure that all pupils can be allocated a place at a school in future years.

There are several schools that have already agreed to expand either voluntarily or through discussion with the Local Authority for 2016 and 2017:

Ilkley Grammar – 25 places
Carlton Bolling – 30 places
Bradford Girls Grammar – 16 places
One In A Million – 3 places
Parkside – 30 places
Appleton – 15 places (temporary for 2017)

The following schools are currently consulting on further expansion that may also require Basic Needs funding:-

Ilkley Grammar (consultation for expansion of PAN to 300 for September 2018)
Immanuel (consultation to increase PAN to 300 for September 2018)
Appleton (consultation to increase PAN to 180 permanently for September 2018)

In addition, there have been free school applications made and these will have an impact on school places in the future.

3.7 School Admissions Policies

3.7.1 All school admissions policies, irrespective of the schools status, must be returned to the Local Authority by 1st May 2017 and if the Local Authority wishes to make an objection to the policy it must be made to the Schools Adjudicator by 30th June 2017. We are also obliged to inform the Schools Adjudicator of any school policies that have not been returned. It is not uncommon for schools not to send their policy to the Local Authority but this has increased for the 2017/18 admission policies process and we will continue to raise awareness with schools as we move forward to the 2018/19 academic year.

3.7.2 In addition whilst the Local Authority has included social or medical reasons in its admission criteria for those applications that require specific schools, many schools do not include this criteria or it is not clear in which order of priority it will be



considered. It is our duty to encourage schools to give priority to the most vulnerable families and to ensure the schools policies are compliant with the Admissions Code 2014 and we continue to liaise with schools regarding their admissions policies.

- 3.7.3 There are now a number of schools that incorporate fair banding and random allocation in their admissions policies. It is important that parents understand when preferencing these schools that there is no guarantee that their child will be given a place when random allocation is used. Parents **must** complete a Supplementary Information Form and sit the Fair Banding assessment. If parents do not follow these steps their applications will only be considered after everybody who has and as the schools receive hundreds of applications they are unlikely to qualify for a place. The fair banding process is designed to ensure the school has a genuine mix of ability across the school, the children take a test and the results are then divided into ability bands. Where random allocation is then used as the admission criteria, children are then randomly allocated a place within each band.

Update on the Admissions Team

- 3.7.4 The Admission Team have introduced an IT Project which has several strands to be introduced over the forthcoming academic year and beyond. The aim is to streamline processes, make the Team less paper reliant and facilitate additional on-line facilities for parents who find it easier and quicker to use IT to request a school place or appeal.

In a bid to raise our on-line applications for secondary places we have not sent the primary schools any paper forms. Instead schools have been asked to sign up to the online system to enable parents to apply through the primary school, if they have been unable to use the online system themselves. Staff are also available to attend schools to assist parents to apply on-line.

The Council Contact Centre is looking at accommodating some of the Team's phone calls that do not require specialist advice, to help the Team focus on building additional capacity.

Communications have been reviewed and Fact Sheets written for Councillors to help advice parents on processes. Letters to Headteachers have also been reviewed.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 The Admissions Team are totally funded by Dedicated Schools Grant. The introduction of the Government's new funding formulae may have implications for the Team. The introduction of the National Funding Formulae has now been delayed until 2018-19 and the impact is yet to be ascertained.



5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 There are currently no known significant risks arising out of the implementation of the proposed recommendations.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 There are no known legal issues arising out of the implementation of the proposed recommendations.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

There is no impact on equality and diversity from the recommendations of this report.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

None

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the Committee notes the current position with Admissions.
- That the Strategic Director Children's services be requested to consider that all schools, regardless of status, are compliant with the Code of Practice regarding consultation of their admission policy every seven years and comply with the requirement to send their policy, every year to the Local Authority.
- That the Strategic Director Children's Services be requested to consider that all schools explore adopting the medical and social priority that the Local Authority has in its own admission policy.

11. APPENDICES

None

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

