

Report of the Strategic Director Children's Services to the meeting of Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 13th December 2017

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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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Overview & Scrutiny Area:
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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the statutory requirement for Local Authorities to co-ordinate In Year admissions in September 2010 but this was withdrawn in September 2013, although local authorities could continue to do so if schools wished this to be the case.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.

3. Data

3.1 Primary School Admissions for September 2017

	% as at National Offer Day	No. of applications	% as at Oct 2017	No. of applications
No. of applications received		7530		7852
1 st pref allocations	89.72	6756	89.86	7056
2 nd pref allocations	5.90	444	5.97	469
3 rd pref allocations	1.47	111	1.78	140
4 th pref allocations	0.53	40	0.69	54
5 th pref allocations	0.31	23	0.34	27
Allocated against preference	2.07	156	1.36	106

- 3.1.1 As the cohort size was slightly smaller than last year there was a small increase in the number of parents who received their 1st preference. Some parents received allocation against preference even though they live in a 'priority area' but they did not preference the school whose 'priority area' they reside in. 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 and these issues are being addressed.

3.2 Secondary School Admissions September 2017

	% as at National Offer Day	No. of applications	% as at Oct 2017	No. of applications
No. of applications received		7672		7838
1st pref allocations	73.94	5673	77.02	6037
2nd pref allocations	10.27	788	10.21	800
3rd pref allocations	4.28	328	4.12	323
4th pref allocations	3.14	241	2.96	232
5th pref allocations	1.63	125	1.62	127
Allocated against preference	6.74	517	4.07	319

- 3.2.1 There has been pressure on school places in various areas of the City and several schools agreed to admit above their Published Admissions Number (PAN) including Beckfoot Upper Heaton (25) Carlton Bolling (30) Oasis Academy Lister Park (15) Grange Technology College (30), Buttershaw (30) and Titus Salt 10.

This year pressure has been in BD5 (West Bowling), BD7(Great Horton), BD8/9 (Manningham/Girlington/Heaton) BD15(Allerton).

- 3.2.2 Unfortunately, some parents continue to disregard the advice given to parents by the Admissions Team regarding preferencing. This advice is printed in the booklet sent to parents and contained in the Guide for Parents on the Council website.

Parents continue to only preference one school, preference one school five times; use multiple preferences for schools that use fair banding and random allocation admission policies; preference schools whose 'Priority Area' they do not reside in; do not preference their local school or the school in whose 'Priority Area' they do reside.

The complexity of admissions policies within Bradford can be very difficult for parents to navigate and publish as much information as possible to advise parents that certain schools only admit from specific post code areas, have 'Priority areas', require parents to fill in Supplementary Information Forms, require children to sit fair banding assessment tests and that some schools also use random allocation in deciding which children are offered places.

We are working hard with the Department of Education and the Education & Skills Funding Agency to ensure that all new schools that open in Bradford adopt the Local Authorities admission policy to enable parents to have a better idea of whether or not their child will meet the criteria for a school place.

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 a start date is often discussed between the parent and the new school. School and parents are encouraged, wherever possible to defer transfer to the beginning of the next term, wherever possible, to minimise disruption. 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 2016/17 and whilst this fluctuates termly on average approximately 34 applications are received every day of the school term. 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 the complexity of those applications and where the Team is within the Annual Cycle and Appeals timetable. Between 18th July and 5th October the Admission Team received 1,740 applications that required processing. The Team were able to process and allocate 1,625. As well as ensuring as many children as possible were allocated a place by the census deadline to ensure maximum funding for the schools within the Local Authority, the team have also been facilitating secondary applications for admission in September

2018 and attending open evenings to help advise parents, throughout September and October. The Primary application round for reception September 2018 is now open with a closing date of 15th January.

Many In Year applications are complex and require negotiation with headteachers to admit pupil through the Fair Access Protocol (see 3.4), 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 these increases continue to move through schools year on year and there is still significant pressure in primary schools in BD3 (Bradford Moor) BD2/D10 (Eccleshill/Idle/Thackley), BD5 (West Bowling), BD8/9 (Manningham/Girlington), LS29 (Ilkley), BD12 (Wyke) in specific year groups. This increases the time taken to find a school place within a reasonable distance and in some cases we have to ask schools to admit over PAN in KS1 as a permitted exception or in KS2 as a Fair Access case. This can be very difficult for schools, some who are already over PAN due to the high levels of demand in their area.

3.3.4 The split of In Year applications received between secondary and primary has continued to be around 30/70 of the total. 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	1023	16.95
Returning to Bradford	373	6.18
Difficulty getting to school	546	9.05
Extended Leave	264	4.37
House Move within Bradford	1407	23.31
New to UK	692	11.46
Rec/Y7 after annual allocation round	471	7.80
Issues with School	674	11.17
Leaving Private Education	141	2.34
Leaving Bradford (applying to another LA)	10	0.17
Inappropriate provision	73	1.21
Siblings	206	3.41
Social Reasons	129	2.14
Withdrawn from School	27	0.45
Total	6522	100.00%

3.4 Fair Access Protocol (FAP)

3.4.1 Every Local Authority is legally required to have a Fair Access Protocol (FAP) which is agreed by the majority of schools and is binding on all schools regardless of status. The FAP in Bradford was refreshed and consulted upon during the academic year 2015/16 and was implemented during the Summer Term, across the City. The Protocol is used when a child meets the criteria set out in the Code of

Practice with some additional, locally agreed criteria. Whilst the aim is to ensure we place children with attendance and behaviour issues quickly it is also used to offer a reasonable school place where one does not exist, due to a lack of places. The underlying aim of the protocol continues to be to find school places for our most vulnerable and challenging children, as quickly as possible with all schools admitting their 'fair share' as outlined in the Code of Practice. The figures in the table below do not include secondary pupils who are dealt with through the Behaviour and Achievement Collaborative (BACs). Currently there are no links between BACs and FAP and there are crossovers between the role of the BACs and the legal role of the FAP, as outlined in the Code of Practice, which require resolution and are being worked through.

This table shows the number of FAP cases placed from Sept 2016 to July 2017

Type of School	Number of children admitted		
	Primary	Secondary	All through
Community	228	54	
Voluntary controlled	30		
Voluntary Aided	11	17	
Foundation	7	46	
Academy	191	400	74
Free School	40	79	10
Total	507	596	84
Grand Total	1187		

3.5 Independent Appeals

- 3.5.1 The overall number of appeals lodged has stayed fairly level in comparison to last year's allocations; however there has been a decrease in Reception appeals due to a small surplus of places but an increase in In Year application appeals due to pressures on places across the City. There were a number of appeals heard in September and October, due to parents adding additional preferences or applying late for Year 7. 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.

The figures below show appeals lodged as of 30th September 2017.

Phase	Upheld	Refused	Withdrawn	2nd Appeals Request Refused	Total Lodged
Primary Schools	21	175	82	6	284
Secondary Schools	81	475	95	6	657
In-Year Transfers	219	423	295	0	937

TOTAL	321	1073	472	12	1878
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3.6 Forecasting number of school places required

- 3.6.1 The pressure on primary school reception places in Bradford LA increased over a number of years. Data provided by the Health Authority (2017) 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:

2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
8415	8631	8782	8754	8544	8332	8176

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. In September 2016 the PAN at 4 schools was increased by 75, a total capacity of 525.

The PAN at Parkland Primary school has increased from 30 to 60. Hothfield Junior School has closed and Aire View Infant has become a Primary school (Silsden Primary) on two sites, increasing from 75 to 90. This was effective from September 2017. A new 3 form entry (FE) school building is being constructed to accommodate all the children onto one site.

Following consultation 2 further schools All Saints Primary School (Ilkley) and Poplars Farm Primary School are to be increased from September 2018, an increase in PAN of 45, additional 315 capacity. Consultation has also been undertaken to increase Low Ash Primary School in the east of the District from 2FE to 3FE, a increase in PAN of 30, 210 additional capacity.

The Health Authority data for 2017 is currently being analysed however early indications show that the number of children aged 3 and below, living in the District, appears to be reducing. So further expansion may not be required, however we are aware there continues to be issues within certain areas which is being monitored.

As at 2017

Aged 3	Aged 2	Aged 1	Aged 0
8,207	8,267	8,142	8,078

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, schools admitting additional pupils above their PAN and new free schools, the demand for year 7 places for pupils entering into secondary education, have been met this year. The majority of parents who were 'allocated against preference' did receive an offer of a school within a 'reasonable' distance.

Cohort numbers have increased from previous years due to the increased number of year 6 pupils in primary schools now requiring places. Some 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 although not all those registered attend maintained Bradford schools

Details of future years needs are calculated each year and published in the School Organisation Plan in each planning area. Meetings with schools or Trusts are held as necessary to consider issues and changes and to find solutions

There are several schools that have already agreed to expand either voluntarily or through discussion with the Local Authority for 2018.

Ilkley Grammar – 25 places in 2017, 30 additional in 2018.

Carlton Bolling – 30 temporary places, consultation currently ongoing to increase permanently by 60.

Bradford Girls Grammar – 8 places.

One In A Million – 15 places.

Parkside – 30 places.

Appleton – 15 places.

Bradford Academy – 25 places.

Buttershaw Business & Enterprise Centre – 30 in 2018, additional 30 in 2019.

Immanuel – 15 in 2018, additional 45 in 2019.

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

Bradford Girls Academy – 120 places

Eden Boys Academy – 120 places

Officially these are planned to open in September 2019.

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 every year and if the Local Authority wishes to make an objection to the policy it must be made to the Schools Adjudicator by 30th June. 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 and we continue to raise awareness with schools and remind them of their duties.

- 3.7.2 The Local Authority continue to include social and medical reasons in its admission criteria for those applications that require specific schools and as a result of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in 2016, the Strategic Director for Children's Services has written to all non-community and voluntary controlled schools, requesting that they consider consulting on the inclusion of this priority in their own admission policy for 2019/20. This was a recommendation of the Panel.
- 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; 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 used as the admission criteria, children are randomly allocated a place within each ability band. However, it does mean that local children are unlikely to secure a place. In addition some policies are postcode specific, however this doesn't deter parents who do not live in those postcodes from applying. Parents who use the majority of their preferences on schools with these admissions policies are leaving themselves open to allocation against preference and as the number of secondary children increase there are very few schools with places in local areas.

It is important as we move forward and work with sponsors on opening new free schools that the proposed admissions policies compliment current policies and meet the needs of the families in Bradford.

3.8 Update on the Admissions Team

- 3.8.1 The Admission Team introduced an IT Project in 2016 which has several strands that have been introduced and will continue 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.

In a bid to raise our on-line application rate, paper forms were not available for applicants in 2016 unless there was an exceptional need. Primary schools were asked to sign up to our online system to enable parents to apply through the primary school, if they had been unable to use the online system themselves. Admissions staff were available to attend schools to assist parents to apply on-line and parents were also able to make appointments with Admissions staff, at the office, for assistance.

An IT Project was launched in January 2017 in collaboration with IT services the sole aim of which was to ensure that the Local Authority could send all online applicants their school offer and all the additional legal and relevant information they required, one email on national offer day, rather than the process of emailing them the name of the school and then writing to every applicant with the additional

information they require sent either through the school or through the post.

This was a very successful collaborative project which was completed in a very short period of time and without the possibility of a trial run. It decreased the number of processes officers needed to perform and the lead up timeframe to offers on National Offer Day. We are currently evaluating the lessons learnt from last year's 'live' project and working with IT to improve this year's rollout and embed the process for future years.

The Admissions Team have recently been through a restructure to enable additional capacity to be built in and to realign some of the vacant posts and duties. We are currently going through a recruitment drive and believe that by Christmas we will be staffed by additional full time, permanent staff. This will enable us to embed new processes and improve customer service and outcomes for children, by processing applications quicker.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 The Admissions Team are totally funded by Dedicated Schools Grant. The introduction of the National Funding Formulae has now been released and there is no negative impact on the Team's funding at this time.

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 reminds all schools, regardless of status, their requirement to be compliant with the Code of Practice regarding consultation of their admission policy every seven years and to comply with the requirement to send their policy, every year to the Local Authority by the deadline of 15th March.
- That the Strategic Director ensures that all new educational establishments comply with the Code and their admissions policies compliment the policies of the current educational establishments already in operation within Bradford.
- That the Strategic Director considers the role of the BACs and how it aligns with the Fair Access Protocol to ensure the legal rights of parents are met.

11. APPENDICES

None

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None