

**LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM
THURSDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2025**

Present:- Mrs. I. Hartley (in the Chair); Mrs. M. Gambles, Mrs. R. Hibberd, Mrs. J. Hudson, Mrs. K. Peart, Mr. D. Shenton, Mrs. N. Towers. and Ms. A. Wing.

Also in attendance were:- Ms. S. Gilbert, Mr. C. Stones, Mrs. S. Whitby and Mrs. J. Unwin.

Apologies for absence were received from:- Councillor Cusworth, Mrs. K. Beresford, and Ms. M. Jordan.

34. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Agreed:- (1) That Mrs. I. Hartley be appointed as Chair of the Rotherham Local Admissions Forum for the 2025/26 academic year.

(Mrs. I. Hartley assumed the Chair)

35. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Agreed:- That Mrs M. Gambles be appointed Vice-Chair of the Rotherham Local Admissions Forum for the 2025/26 academic year.

36. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13TH FEBRUARY 2025

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 February 2025.

Agreed: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 February 2025 be approved as a correct record.

37. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

With regards to Minute No.26 (Membership Review) it was confirmed that a letter of appreciation was issued to Anne Gyte in recognition of her contribution to the Local Admission Forum.

38. MEMBERSHIP OF THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Consideration was given to the membership of the Local Admissions Forum. It was noted that several vacancies remained, and the Forum agreed to continue efforts to secure suitable appointments to fill those positions.

39. LOCAL ADMISSION FORUM TERMS OF REFERENCE, CONDITIONS AND CONSTITUTION

Consideration was given to the Forum's Terms of Reference, which were deemed appropriate and fit for purpose.

The Forum also discussed attendance concerns, noting that some members had missed three consecutive meetings. It was agreed that the Clerk would issue a communication to those members to confirm whether they wished to continue their membership.

Agreed: (1) That the Terms of Reference, as submitted, be considered appropriate and fit for purpose.

(2) That the Clerk issue a communication to members who had missed three consecutive meetings to ascertain if they wished to remain part of the Forum.

40. SCHOOL ADJUDICATOR REPORT FOR 2025

Consideration was given to the Annual School Adjudicator Report for 2025.

Clarification was sought regarding the term "children are admitted in a timely manner." It was explained that schools must respond to admission requests within 15 school days, with referral to the Fair Access process if a child remained unplaced after that period, in accordance with the School Admissions Code.

Allocation through Fair Access must occur within 20 school days, and schools are expected to arrange admission as soon as feasible. The team monitors allocations and follows up where necessary. Where admission is delayed due to parental difficulties or refusal, cases are referred to the Children Missing in Education process.

The Forum was assured that statutory timescales are being met and that a robust tracking and follow-up system was in place.

Agreed: That the Annual School Adjudicator Report 2025 be received and the contents noted.

41. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR ENTRY IN THE 2027/2028 ACADEMIC YEAR

Consideration was given to a report seeking approval to consult on proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools within RMBC's admission authority.

The proposed RMBC admission arrangements for 2027-28, detailed in

Appendix 1 of the report have been redrafted to reflect three recent school academisations (Anston Park Junior, Bramley Sunnyside and Brinsworth Manor Infant Schools).

There were no proposed changes to the Published Admission Number of any Community or Voluntary controlled schools and no changes to proposed catchment areas.

Changes were proposed to the oversubscription criteria for Community and Voluntary controlled schools to remove the medical and social oversubscription criteria, previously specified at criteria 2 and 3. The decision to consult on this change was ratified by the CYPs DLT on 2nd September 2025 and the rationale for this proposed change was set out in Section 2.5 of the report.

It was explained that the School Admissions Code did not require these criteria statutorily and there had been no evidence to suggest any recent need for their inclusion. Any child with such significant medical or social reasons making attendance at a specified school essential would typically have an Education, Health and Care Plan naming a school.

Retaining these criteria could also raise parental expectations and create ambiguity, as there was no defined benchmark for assessment.

In line with requirements of the School Admission Code, the consultation period for the proposed admissions arrangements was due to run from 1 December 2025 to 19 January 2026. Consultation would be shared with schools and identified stakeholders and made available on the Council's website and publicised through RMBC social media channels.

A parallel consultation on the 'relevant area' was also planned, with no changes to this proposed.

Analysis of the consultation responses would take place between 20-31 January. The proposed admission arrangements would then be presented for formal approval at the Forum's next meeting in February.

During discussion, it was noted that during some admission appeals, the criteria relating to social and medical reasons had caused confusion for parents in the past and the Forum were supportive of the proposed approach to remove those criteria.

Agreed: (1) That consultation commences on the proposed RMBC admission arrangements 2027-28, as detailed in Appendix 1.

(2) That consultation also takes place on the relevant area remaining the whole of Rotherham.

42. SCHOOL ORGANISATION UPDATE

Consideration was given to an update on school organisation where it was noted that Rotherham's Section 106 Education Contributions Policy had been refreshed in August 2025 to align with updated DfE multipliers and cost assumptions.

Agreed: That the update be received and the content noted.

43. ADMISSIONS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the latest admissions update. It was noted that the application window for secondary admissions for the 2026/27 academic year had now closed and the allocation process was now underway.

Despite multiple reminders being issued, 134 applications remained outstanding, including 26 electively home-educated pupils and a small number currently in private education.

For primary admissions, the closing date for applications was confirmed as 15 January 2026, with reminders and follow-up actions being progressed.

In-year applications continued to be received but remained stable, with no major concerns reported.

The Forum discussed barriers to application completion and noted that schools had supported parents through reminders, emails, and assistance with paper applications and online links. Staff had also provided telephone support. Despite these measures, some parents had still not responded

Agreed: That the update be received and the content noted.

44. SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEALS AND PRIMARY & SECONDARY FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOL UPDATE

The Panel considered the submitted report outlining the latest position regarding admission appeals received and the number of appeal hearings taking place. Statistics included data for the full academic years 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25.

Appeal Panel Members were recognised for their continued commitment in supporting the appeal hearing process. Panels had now been secured for November and December, with recruitment ongoing for January appeals. Recruitment of new Panel Members continued to present a challenge. Panel Members had been issued reminders regarding training obligations and the need to complete additional online training as required.

Work was underway to secure an additional Clerk and Panel Members to assist with Group appeals scheduled for next year, following previous difficulties in securing Clerks and Panel Members for consecutive days.

Discussion ensued regarding the comparative position of upheld appeals, focusing on how the current percentage compared to national figures. It was noted that the position remained above the national average and that work was ongoing to address this.

Guidance relating to Infant Class Size appeals had been added to the appeal forms to provide greater clarity for parents regarding the nature and criteria of those appeals.

The Fair Access Protocol for 2024/25 recorded 226 referrals, a reduction from 332 in the previous year. Of the 207 cases required, 137 were secondary age and 70 were primary age.

Movement typically occurred outside normal admission points, where families move into areas where schools are already oversubscribed.

The reduction in referrals may indicate fewer families moving into the area and improved understanding among schools, with emphasis on admitting where possible.

A year-on-year reduction in school appeals may reflect more effective placement through the Fair Access process. Monitoring and review will continue to ensure the process remains robust.

The Chair acknowledged the importance of this function and thanked all involved for their continued efforts.

Agreed: That the update be received and the content noted.

45. ACADEMIES UPDATE - SEPTEMBER 2025

The Forum noted the updated list of Rotherham schools which had converted/about to convert to academies as of October 2025.

It was confirmed that fourteen schools remain maintained. The most recent conversion was Saint Pius X Catholic High School (Playing Field) which took place in September 2025. A small number of other schools were scheduled to convert, although specific dates were not yet known.

Agreed: That the information be received, and the contents noted.

46. TERM DATES CONSULTATION FOR 2027/28

Consultation on the school calendar for the 2027/28 academic year would take place with all schools in January 2026.

It was noted that Rotherham would be consulting on both a traditional calendar, which aligns with Good Friday and East Monday, and a fixed calendar.

Agreed: The calendar update be received and the contents noted.