

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services
2.	Date:	9th April, 2014
3.	Title:	Admissions Consultation outcome in respect of entry in the 2015/16 academic year. (All wards)
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young Peoples Services

5. Summary

This report seeks approval of the proposed School Admission Policy / Coordinated Scheme for the admission year 2015/16.

6. Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member:

Approves the Admission arrangements for the 2015/16 Academic Year following the completion of the annual consultation.

7. Proposals and Details

All Admission Authorities must consult by 1st March, in the determination year, on the admission arrangements for those schools for which they are responsible. The consultation must take place for a minimum of 8 weeks between 1st November and 1st March and a final determination made by 15th April 2014.

Admission Criteria for Community Schools

The current Admissions Policy for community schools for 2015/16 is attached as (**Appendix 1**). No changes are proposed to the **admission criteria** for 2015/16. Agreed Published Admission Numbers are attached as (**Appendix 2**).

Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements

The Authority currently co-ordinates admission arrangements during the normal admission round. The 2012 Code of Practice required this to be extended to cover in-year admissions for all year groups with effect from 2011/12. Our co-ordinated scheme has been amended to take account of the revised requirements. The co-ordination of schemes simplifies the admission process for parents which reduces the likelihood of a child being left without a school place

Waiting Lists

The Authority currently maintains waiting lists for children applying during the normal admission round. The Admissions Code of Practice requires that waiting lists are in place from September 2015 and continue for at least the first term of the academic year for both Primary and Secondary provision.

Catchment Areas

The Authority is required to consult on the details of any catchment areas to be used as part of the admission process. The current catchment areas are published on the RMBC website and available in hard-copy from the Admissions Team. No changes are proposed to the existing school catchment areas for 2015/16. Consultation will be undertaken to establish catchment area arrangements for the proposed new Central Primary School, a separate report will be submitted for approval at the outcome of consultations.

Fair Access Protocol (FAP)

The Admissions Code of Practice requires the Authority to have in place a Fair Access Protocol. The Fair Access Protocol exists to ensure that access to education is secured quickly for children who have no school place but for whom a place at a mainstream school is appropriate. It is also to ensure that all schools in an area admit their fair share of pupils with challenging behaviour, including children excluded from school. **This includes admitting children above the admission number to schools that are already full.** All schools and Academies in the authority must participate in the scheme. There are some exceptions and these are set out on the Code of Practice and LA Admission booklets. The scheme must be

monitored, include timescales and be included in the annual report to the School's Adjudicator. The Authority consulted on a revised FAP in March 2013 and this has been adopted from September 2013 and is published in both the Primary and Secondary School's Booklets. The Code of Practice also requires the Fair Access Protocol to include timescales, and also must include at a minimum the following categories:

- Children attending PRUs who need to be reintegrated back into mainstream education;
- Children who have been out of education for longer than one school term;
- Children whose parents have been unable to find them a place after moving to the area, because of a shortage of places;
- Children withdrawn from schools by their family, following fixed-term exclusions and unable to find another place;
- Children of refugees and asylum seekers;
- Homeless children;
- Children with unsupportive family backgrounds, where a place has not been sought;
- Children known to the police or other agencies;
- Children without a school place and with a history of serious attendance problems;
- Traveller children;
- Children who are carers;
- Children with special educational needs (but without a statement);
- Children with disabilities or medical conditions;
- Children returning from the criminal justice system; and
- Children of UK service personnel and other Crown Servants.

Statutory Closing Dates

The Code of Practice imposes national closing dates for both Primary and Secondary applications for the admission round in 2015/16. The date for Secondary is 31st October 2014 and the date for Primary is 15th January 2015. The date by which the Admission Booklet has to be published has been set for 12th September 2014.

Report to the Schools Adjudicator

The Admissions Authority is required to submit on an annual basis a report to the Schools Adjudicator by the 30th June on how the admissions arrangements have operated in the previous year. A template has been provided by the Schools Adjudicator for this purpose and reports submitted by the Authority meet this deadline annually.

8. Finance

The proposed changes are unlikely to have any significant effect in terms of the allocation of places to individual children. Some children may, under a Fair Access Protocol gain a place at a school which they otherwise would not have. Any implications for Schools would be subject to discussion between Schools, Schools Forum and the Local Authority.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

As in all admissions matters, there is always a risk of challenge. The new School Admissions Code has a stronger statutory basis than its predecessors and all admission authorities are now required **to act in accordance with** rather than simply **having regard to** the provisions, as was the case with earlier versions. The Code seeks to promote equity and fair access and the setting of fair oversubscription criteria.

There are always risks and uncertainties when school place provision is considered since future pupil numbers are based on estimations. Over provision at one school could influence pupil numbers at other schools. Local Authorities are obliged, however, to provide sufficient places, promote diversity and increase parental preference. (CYD0015/018 - Corporate risk register).

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The major theme supported by the proposal is 'to ensure that everyone has access to skills, knowledge and information to enable them to play their part in society'. Any changes to admissions criteria / co-ordinated schemes could have consequences for individual pupils. However, the proposed changes to admission numbers detailed seek to provide a fair, equitable and sustainable solution to the admissions process. It is unlikely that the proposed changes will have any significant impact on published performance indicators.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The School Admission Arrangements Regulations 2008. The DfE Admissions Code of Practice (February 2012). The Authority's current admissions criteria for community schools is shown in Appendix 1. There is annual consultation on admissions arrangements, which takes place with school governing bodies and other LAs each Autumn Term and up to 1st March. The Authority's website contains detailed information on admission arrangements.

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