

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Improving Lives Select Commission
2.	Date:	17th September
3.	Title:	Consultation – Changes to the school admissions code
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. **Summary**

The DfE is consulting until 29 September on proposed changes to the school admissions code. Members are asked to consider and comment on the draft response (attached)

6. **Recommendations**

- (i) **That members comment on the draft response and approve its submission to DfE**
- (ii) **That members be informed on the outcomes of the consultation and any further implications for school admissions in the Borough**

7. Proposals and Details

The DfE is consulting until 29 September on Changes to the school admissions code. The proposals include two changes of substance and a number of minor amendments designed to improve the clarity of the document without altering its intended effect. The significant changes are:

- To allow schools to give priority to applicants eligible for the Pupil Premium; and
- To bring forward the timetable for determining admissions arrangements so that objections can be resolved by the Schools Adjudicator before the start of the admissions round.

The stated aim of the consultation is to ensure that objections to admissions arrangements are resolved more quickly; so that a greater proportion of parents are able to apply for school places offered on the basis of lawful admission arrangements. School adjudicators are given more time to consider and resolve objections to arrangements. The new timetable will also address concerns that some admission authorities are taking too long to revise their admission arrangements to comply with Adjudicator decisions. This, in turn should mean that faulty arrangements are rectified before parents apply for places, and before arrangements have to be consulted on and determined for the next school year.

There are a number of “minor and technical changes” include: updating the Code to take account of other legal and technical changes (e.g. EHC plans replacing SEN statements, and the definition of ‘previously looked after children’); clarify some matters which had been found to be ambiguous (e.g. entitlement to a full-time place in reception following a child’s fourth birthday and the limitations on selection on ‘aptitude’); re-including some material where previous abbreviation had gone too far (e.g. strengthening the references to sixth form arrangements which had almost entirely disappeared); and, the addition of an index.

The consultation asks six questions. The draft response is attached as appendix 1.

8. Finance

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The proposals outlined are not considered to present any significant risk to current admission arrangements in Rotherham.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

In Rotherham approximately 90% of applicants consistently receive their 1st preference school and analysis shows that most pupil premium eligible children make a preference for their nearest and catchment area school. The armed forces covenant makes provision for the allocation of places to armed forces personnel children and is not an issue in Rotherham where the criteria applies.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/333419/Changes to the School Admissions Code Consultation Document .pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/333419/Changes_to_the_School_Admissions_Code_Consultation_Document.pdf)

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