

Leicester
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED
ALL WARDS**

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

**Cabinet
Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny**

**8th April 2002
25th April 2002**

Admission to school of children aged 3+ and 4+

Report of the Director of Education

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek members approval in principle for a policy providing an entitlement provision for three and four year olds which will help to raise standards of achievement further.
- 1.2 To seek approval in principle for a policy, which will raise standards, provide parental choice and enhance social inclusion.
- 1.3 To agree that further work is undertaken to find out what the costs would be incurred (revenue and capital) if the proposed policy were adopted.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Cabinet is recommended
 - i. to agree in principle to the establishment of an entitlement to Foundation Stage education for three and four year olds in Leicester City.
 - ii. to receive a further report at the end of the Autumn term identifying in greater detail the impact on school budgets, capital revenue, time-scales and any other significant issues.
- 2.2 The Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny is recommended
 - i. to note the content of the report
 - ii. to receive a further report at the end of the Autumn term identifying in greater detail the impact on school budgets, capital revenue, time-scales and any other significant issues.

3. Summary

Background

- 3.1 In May 2001 Cabinet agreed to further work on introducing a single date for admissions at 4+ by researching and modelling implications for school based nursery provision following a city wide consultation in the summer term 2000.
- 3.2 This report proposes a move to an entitlement of early year's education for three and four year olds in line with present Government policy. This would be structured around the framework for the Foundation Stage and recently published curriculum guidance. It will also reflect the current good practice in early year's education present across the city. The report outlines a possible financial model that could come into effect in September 2004.
- 3.3 The inequality of provision for summer born pupils across the city and the complicated pattern of admissions in most schools has been well documented in previous reports; together with the disadvantages these cause to children's educational progress. Research shows the clear link between quality pre-school and nursery education and children's later educational achievement throughout their school careers, including GCSE level. There is also a proven impact on individuals future life chances. National and international research studies identify structured play based nursery education, followed by formal education as the most effective educational experience. These proposals follow this model.

Entitlement of Education Provision

- 3.4 The report presented to Cabinet identified the difficulties of introducing a common admissions policy at 4+, while still retaining nursery provision for three-year-olds. The situation is complicated by summer-born, four-year-old children occupying nursery places that will be converted to reception places under the new system. A further issue impacting on the situation is the unequal distribution of nursery place funding. Because places rather than pupils are funded, some schools receive funding for unfilled places, while others have insufficient funding at present to allow them to adopt the new model.
- 3.5 In order to address these issues it is proposed to create the following Foundation Stage entitlement for all three and four year old children in Leicester City;

A year of full time foundation stage education in school for children in the year in which they are 4 and become 5. (called Foundation 2)

This will be the current reception, or 4+ year, and will be the point of entry to school for every child. This will be the four plus common admissions policy.

A year of part-time foundation stage education in the year in which they are 3 and become 4, in school or in a nursery education setting in the private, voluntary or independent sector. (called Foundation 1)

This will be the current nursery or 3+ year.

Benefits of the proposed policy

- 3.6 The entitlement for Foundation Stage education will for the first time address the issue of equity by offering all three and four year old children, regardless of their date of birth, a similar level of provision. This will contribute to raising standards.
- 3.7 The quality of Foundation Stage education across the City, both in schools and in the private, voluntary and independent sector, is in almost all cases very good and has been identified by OFSTED as such. These proposals will build on this, and ensure that the good practice is used to raise standards.
- 3.8 The establishment of a coherent admissions policy to enable all of Leicester's young children to access and benefit from educational experiences, will address the current inequalities of opportunities that can lead to social exclusion. The proposals contained within this report provide the best opportunity for young children to reach their full potential, to be fully included in their school communities and to make a successful transition to primary and secondary education.
- 3.9 Parental choice is widened by the availability of nursery education in recognized private voluntary and independent settings. For many working parents this will enable them to combine their child's day-care and nursery education when used as detailed in the current DfES regulations for nursery education grant.
- 3.10 By promoting and supporting Foundation Stage education for three year olds in the private, voluntary and independent sector along side that in schools, the proposals meet the demands of current Government policy to provide a range of different providers. It also gives an opportunity to acknowledge the willingness with which these providers have taken up training and guidance over the last three years to improve quality and meet the demands of OFSTED. Thus partnership is increased through the opportunities offered by a mixed economy.

Previously identified issues

Nursery provision

- 3.11 The proposed model meets concerns previously expressed about nursery provision in schools. It ensures that there is a similar entitlement for all children. It is hoped that there will be some nursery provision in every school where it exists at present.

Redistribution of funding

- 3.12 The move from historic place funding to a new model of pupil funding will affect some schools dramatically. In some instances a small number of schools could lose up to £100,000 from their annual budget, and transitional arrangements would need to be in place for some years to accommodate this. However a number of schools would receive increased budgets of up to £60,000 in order for them to provide appropriate Foundation Stage education for their pupils. In addition there are potential capital implications for new build which may be required where there is insufficient capacity as a result of the change in intake.

Concerns expressed by the Teaching Unions

- 3.13 As described more fully in the Supporting Information, the most recent consultation shows that Union members fully support the proposed entitlement model and the principles that have guided this work.

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership

- 3.14 Members of the Partnership representing private and voluntary providers have been active participants in the working group for over two years. The proposed model will benefit nursery education providers as the increased stability will ensure that they retain funded children for longer. Other benefits are detailed in the Supporting information.

Further investigation

- 3.15 The report and the Supporting Information contain outline proposals. It will be necessary for detailed investigation to be carried out on an individual school basis to identify schools where circumstances demand more individual arrangements. It will be essential for officers to work with individual schools to identify budget, building and other issues.

Deferred entry

- 3.16 Alongside these proposals, options for deferred entry to school can be considered. The Government expects every LEA to offer deferred entry to school if requested by parents. Information from other LEA's on this issue will be included in the feasibility study. This will provide us with some useful background information.

Time-scale

- 3.17 A detailed time-line has been devised to include all the necessary statutory consultations in addition to the work programmes for each of the appropriate Education Department sections. This will encompass statutory consultations for Admissions, Published Admission Numbers, and LEA budget consultations. It will not be possible to complete the process finally until September 2004. However it will be possible to work with most schools before that date, to help them move to the new system within their existing budgets by September 2003. Many schools are actively seeking to begin this work now. Headteachers on the steering group have made strong representations to move towards a 2004 implementation date, with a longer planned transition and preparation time throughout 2002-2003. This will allow LEA officers to work with schools on an individual basis. The time-scale will also allow the Early Years Development and Child-care Partnership to work towards sufficient high quality provision at neighborhood level.

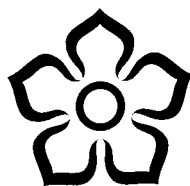
4. Financial and Legal Implications

- 4.1 At present, nursery age children are funded in schools at an agreed number of places. It has been shown that the actual number of children in those places can be lower. The 4+ model of funding currently being reviewed moves from place funding to pupil funding with additional buffer support to ensure that the staffing levels are maintained at a ratio of 1 to 15.

- 4.2 The preliminary costings indicate that this will be a cost neutral exercise, which recycles the funding released from place funding and the present nursery top up buffer. However this position is based upon historic data as there are no forecasts undertaken on nursery numbers and needs constant revision as current information is received.
- 4.3 As stated in paragraph 3.12 there will be significant changes to some school budgets as a result of this proposal. The maximum loss is approximately £100,000 and the maximum gain is approximately £60,000. Due to the level of loss, the steering group are working to identify a suitable transition arrangement that may need to be in place for a number of years.
- 4.4 Any change to the admission arrangements for the City's schools will need to comply with the statutory framework contained with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Guy Goodman, Assistant head of Legal Services – ext. 7054)

5. Report Author/Officer to contact:

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Admission to school of children aged 3+ and 4+

Report of the Director of Education

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Report

1.1 In arriving at the proposed full-time entitlement for 4 year-olds and the part-time entitlement for 3 year-olds, the following principles have guided the work.

- The quality of Foundation Stage education in the majority of nursery and reception classes is good. Any new arrangements need to enhance and build upon this strength.
- LEA schools have benefited from qualified nursery nurses working alongside teachers. Any future funding structure and reorganisation needs to ensure that nursery nurse posts are retained in school, and that a one to fifteen ratio of adults to children is achieved in Foundation Stage classes.
- Any proposals need to take into account the impact on private, voluntary and independent sector settings.
- Proposals, as far as possible, need to be cost neutral to the LEA although there will be considerable redistribution of funding across the City.

Structure and school organisation

1.2 The proposed entitlement is based on the following proposal. Each school will admit up to their planned admission number of 4+ children. This will be the formal admission to school, and replicates the present system in the seven current four plus schools. All children will be admitted in September.

1.2 It is hoped that some nursery provision will remain in every school where there is nursery provision at present. (i.e. all schools except the previously mentioned seven four plus schools).

We would expect nursery classes to admit up to half their planned admission number for each part time session. So a school with a PAN of 60 will admit 60 children at 4+ full-time (2 classes of 30 each) and 60 part-time 3+ (1 class of with 30 morning children and 30 afternoon children). However this will depend on individual school's appropriate available accommodation.

- 1.4 In schools where the planned admission number is lower than 60, and nursery classes have lower numbers of children, it is intended that the funding proposals will allow for appropriate staffing.
- 1.5 It is hoped that there will be no reduction in the number of schools with nursery provision, and that each nursery class will have a maximum of 30 children and two members of staff.
- 1.6 Some children may receive their entitlement for part-time Foundation Stage education in the private, voluntary and independent sector. Some working parents may opt for their child to receive their part-time foundation stage education in the private sector as part of their child-care arrangements.
- 1.7 At present these are outline proposals. Once detailed investigation is carried out for individual schools, it will be possible to identify those schools where circumstances demand more individual arrangements.

Current work in schools

- 1.8 Many schools have used the implementation of the Foundation Stage curriculum to review their current organisation of reception and nursery classes. Factors requiring a more flexible approach in school include
 - Fluctuating numbers in nursery and reception
 - Key Stage 1 class size pledge requirements
 - Retrospective funding
 - Need for summer-born children to access the Reception objectives in the Literacy and Numeracy National Strategies.

Some schools have already adopted a 3+ and 4+ type arrangement within their existing budget structure. Many are using the terminology Foundation Stage 1 and 2 instead of nursery and reception. Schools feel that it is more straightforward for parents to understand. It also promotes the appropriate ethos of a continuous pre-school education, with its own principles and learning goals as identified in the Government guidance.

Creating an equality of entitlement

- 1.9 In schools where circumstances have allowed a proportion of the 3+ cohort to have an enhanced full-time provision there will be a reduction to part-time for future years. Figures for the last three years show between 150-200 three-year-olds receiving full-time provision in September.

Under the proposed system these children would only be entitled to part-time provision.

The exact nature of any enhanced entitlement to overcome social or linguistic disadvantage for 3 year-old children is being considered.

- 1.10 Figures for the last three years show between 680- 790 four-year -olds in part-time provision who under the new system would be entitled to full-time provision
- 1.11 The proposed changes and the redistribution of resources will move funding from the previous historical need to a position of current need. This will ensure that the overall picture reflects the current population changes across the city.

Supporting Quality provision across all sectors.

- 1.12 Previously the frequent movement of children into school at a time when they attract Government funding has disadvantaged settings in the private and voluntary sector. The proposed system will benefit this sector by
- Providing stability to enable settings to work more effectively with children and their families.
 - Assist with financial and curriculum planning, as they will retain funded children for longer.
 - Create opportunities for more effective liaison between schools and settings.
- 1.13 The Government is funding the LEA and the Early Years Development and Child-care Partnership to increase the support and challenge to all Foundation Stage settings and classes in all sectors, but particularly in the non-maintained sector. This is reflected in the focus on Foundation Stage standards in both the Education Development Plan and the Early Years Development and Child-care Plan, Activities have been identified to:
- Support nursery education providers by increasing the number of LEA advisory staff to give training and guidance.
 - Run a pilot scheme of schools and pre-schools working together
 - Identify a common transfer document to ensure effective transition between sectors.
 - Identify leading Early Years teachers to provide models of good practice across the City

Consultations with teaching and associated unions

- 1.14 Leicester teaching unions recently held a meeting for their members to give early years teachers and support staff the opportunity to comment on admissions and other relevant issues. The key points are detailed below. Generally they are in line with the principles in the proposed changes and also endorse the best Early Year's practice across the City. The union's response included support for:
- An entitlement to a year part-time at 3+, followed by a year full-time for 4+.
 - The important role of nursery nurses and a ratio of 1:13 (This is the national recommendation. This LEA and the previous authority funds at 1:15)
 - That pre-statutory schooling should be known as the Foundation Stage with the 4+ year known as Foundation 2 and the 3+ year known as Foundation1.
 - The value of continuity across all sectors
 - The importance of learning through constructive play activities

- A pupil funded formula rather than a place funded formula.
- The needs for schools to work flexibly to meet children's needs
- Opportunities for deferred entry to school
- Further opportunities for consultation

Proposed Consultation programme

- 1.15 Once changes have been agreed, there will be a need for a programme of on-going consultation and briefing with a wide variety of stakeholders. It is essential for the success of any changes that the various groups are kept informed, and to make sure there are opportunities to give feedback and comment. This could include:
- Up-dates and briefings for Headteachers and Governing Bodies through the regular channels.
 - Briefings for the private and voluntary sector settings through the Early Years Development and Child-care Partnership
 - Briefing sessions for front line staff who will be required to answer public queries.
 - Invitation to brief Development Groups, Governing Bodies and school staff by invitation.
 - Work with the Unions, Governors Association and other special interest groups to ensure all interested parties are kept informed and have opportunities to comment

Update on previous recommendations

Steering group

- 1.16 A steering group was set up immediately following the last report to Cabinet. Membership now includes; LEA officers from Standards and Effectiveness, Finance, Policy Unit, Information Services, Admissions; representative from Teachers' Consultative Committee; three Headteacher representatives; three representatives from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (1 officer, 1 voluntary sector, 1 private sector) and 2 Diocesan representatives. The steering group held a day seminar to bring every one up to date with progress so far, to identify issues and to propose the models for the feasibility study to examine in more detail. A presentation was made to the group by an Early Years Consultant seconded to the DfES. The steering group has met regularly and has worked with the External researcher.

Feasibility Study

- 1.17 Following the May Cabinet meeting, approaches were made to five institutions inviting expressions of interest in undertaking the study. The work has been undertaken by Anglia Polytechnic University who presented a very clear proposal from Professor Janet Moyles. Professor Moyles is a national figure in the field of early education and has a strong Leicester connection. The feasibility study is to include details of the following;
- Identification and collation of up to date national and international research relating to full and part-time quality early education.
 - Identification of issues relating to young children for whom English is an additional language and who live in areas of high deprivation.
 - Propose a detailed model indicating ways in which provision for three year olds might operate effectively in the city and link with a 4+ admissions policy. There will be a

verbal report to the steering group at the beginning of February followed by a full written report with a series of recommendations.

The steering group will presently study the recommendations and findings of the study. In general these support the proposed changes and give clear rationales for decisions made. From the recommendations, the steering group would hope to investigate further areas of work for the future. This is in addition to the programme of work identified in the time-scale. These include:

- Models of deferred entry to school.
- What forms of enhanced provision best supports children with English as an additional language, and children affected by socio-economic disadvantage
- Parental involvement in Foundation Stage education.

A further report will present in detail the findings and recommendations contained in the study. Appendix 1 contains an outline of the study findings.

1. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

1. Financial Implications

- 1.1 In order to identify the financial implications of moving to a 4+ common admissions policy, the number of F.T.E. pupils currently in the nursery of each school have been analysed into 3+ and 4+ age groups.
- 1.2 The staffing requirements for these age groups have been considered and this forms the basis of the new funding model. The staffing ratio used is based upon one member of staff per 15 children and would reflect one teacher and one nursery nurse per group of 30.
- 1.3 Schools would receive a buffer allocation where the number of children fell below a multiple of 15. For example if a school had 55 children it would receive funding for an additional five children to allow the school to fund two teachers and two nursery nurses.
- 1.4 As the new funding model changes from a place funding to a pupil led model schools which do not have a full nursery will see a fall in funding made available through the budget. The Steering Group is considering ways in which such schools could be supported and the possibility of needing transitional funding in the most severe cases.

2. Legal Implications

- 2.1 Any change to the admission arrangements for the City's schools will need to comply with the statutory framework contained with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Guy Goodman, Assistant head of Legal Services – ext. 7054).

3. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	Yes		
Policy	Yes		
Sustainable and Environmental	No		
Crime and Disorder	No		
Human Rights Act	No		
Elderly/People on Low Income	No		

4. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

The Primary Review: Report of the Director of Education to Education Committee. April 1998.

Improving Primary Education: Report of the First Phase of the Primary Review. Report of the Director of Education to Education Committee. June 1999

Review of Primary Education: Report of the Director of Education to Cabinet. April 2001

School Organisation Plan 2000-5

5. Consultations

6. Reason Report Marked Not for Publication

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