



Proposed arrangements for admission to community and controlled schools 2017/18

Decision to be taken by: Executive/Assistant City Mayor

Decision to be taken on: 19 February 2016

Lead director: Frances Craven

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All

■ Report author: Rob Thomas - Head of Children's Capital Planning, Isabel Clark - Interim Admissions Manager

■ Author contact details: rob.thomas@leicester.gov.uk 0116 454 6203
isabel.clark@leicester.gov.uk 0116 454 3977

■ Report version number plus Code No from Report Tracking Database: 2.4

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To report on the outcome of consultation on proposed admission arrangements for 2017/18 and to seek approval to determine the proposed arrangements.

1.2 To consider the impact of a potential change to the admission arrangements for 2018/19 to give priority to the children of teachers to support the recruitment and retention of staff in Leicester City schools.

2. Summary

2.1 Leicester City Council, as the admission authority for community and controlled schools must determine its admission arrangements annually and, where any changes are proposed, must first consult publicly on those arrangements. Consultation must take place for a minimum of 6 weeks between 1 October and 31 January.

2.2 Admission arrangements include the authority's scheme for coordinating admissions at the normal times of transfer, setting published admission numbers for the intake year for community and controlled schools and setting oversubscription criteria to be applied where schools receive more applicants than there are places available.

2.3 The council consulted with a range of stakeholders between 26 October and 6 December 2015. The arrangements consulted on were those determined for 2016/17 by the Council's Executive on 27 August 2015 (infant to junior transfer and the coordinated scheme) and by the Schools Adjudicator on 13 October 2015 for first time admission. The proposed arrangements extended the higher priority for out of catchment siblings to the primary phase.

2.4 Four responses were received, three from schools and one from a parent. All were in support of the higher priority for out of catchment siblings. One school commented that they wished to see a reversion to paper application forms. Another school asked about the possibility of including priority for the children of teachers to be included, to support the recruitment and retention of staff.

2.5 The Local Authority must determine (i.e. formally agree) admission arrangements by 28 February. Once determined, they must notify the appropriate bodies (other admission authorities, governing bodies and religious bodies in relevant area), publish a copy on the website for the whole offer year.

2.6 Following determination of the arrangements, any objections must be made to the Schools Adjudicator by 15 May.

3. Recommendations

Executive is recommended to approve the determination of the 2017/18 admission arrangements as published for consultation (see Appendices)

4. Report/Supporting information including options considered:

Consultation

4.1 On 26 October, the council opened consultation on proposed admission arrangements for 2017/18 for community and controlled schools. The arrangement included:

1. the Coordinated admissions scheme (Appendix 1)
2. oversubscription criteria for infant, junior, primary and secondary schools (Appendices 2, 3 & 4)

These included giving priority to children living outside the catchment area but with siblings at the school (or linked school) over those living in the catchment area of a school but without a sibling at the school to keep siblings together wherever possible.

For consistency, the proposed arrangements included secondary schools for siblings in Year 7 to Year 10 only.

4.1.2 children of families fleeing domestic violence, where this is substantiated by a senior social worker or council procedures for housing reallocation were also given a higher priority.

4.1.2 Published Admission Numbers (PANs)

The list of proposed admission numbers consulted on is set out in Appendixes 2, 3 and 4.

4.1.3 Consultation took place with all schools and academies in Leicester via the council's website, with a notice in the schools' Extranet bulletin; with the Admissions Forum; with Leicestershire County Council and with both the Church of England and Catholic Dioceses.

4.2 Consultation response

4.2.1 The arrangements consulted on were those that had been the subject of previous consultation which may explain the low level of response. The four respondents (three schools and one parent) were in favour of the proposals to give out of catchment siblings higher priority than in catchment pupils with no siblings. Two other comments were received:

1. One comment was to give priority to the children of staff to support the recruitment and retention of staff in Leicester city schools. It is recommended to consider the potential impact of this addition on recruitment and retention and on local children prior to possible consultation for 2018/19. This recommendation is made to be able to gauge whether the addition of this

criteria is desired by school and staff. It has been listed in the latest version of the School's Admission Code as a permitted criterion and may have a positive effect on schools and staff and little effect on local children.

2. Another comment related to the re-introduction of paper application forms. It is not recommended to re-introduce paper application forms. The move to online applications was introduced in September 2015 for all applications as part of the council's "channel shift" policy, following similar moves in housing benefits and housing options. Online application has been facilitated by staff at the Customer Services Centre, in local libraries, by the Choice Adviser and various support services for specific groups of service users. Further help and support is being rolled out through the introduction of further "floor walkers" at local Customer Services Centres. In addition, Capita are rolling out a version of the ONE application system which will enable parents to apply via mobile phones and tablets.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Martin Judson, Head of Finance, Education and Children's Services

5.2 Legal implications

The timetable and procedures for admissions are set out in the Admissions Code 2014 (The Code) and (currently) the School Admissions Regulations 2012 (The Regulations). The Code and The Regulations provide the requirements and the timelines for Local Authority's to consult, change and confirm their arrangements.

The aim is to ensure that nationally there is a coordinated offer day and that admission arrangements are fair.

With regard to paragraph 1.1 and 3.1: Because there are proposed changes to the admission arrangements (in connection with advancing the sibling link as a higher criterion) the LA must have consulted on its arrangements.

The correct process for consultation is that it must have begun on or after 1 October 2015 and have been completed by 31 January 2016; additionally it must have been for a minimum of six weeks. The LA must formally agree the arrangements by the 28 February 2016.

Officers need to be satisfied that consultation has been in accordance with paragraph's 1.44 and 1.45 of the Code so as to ensure minimising the risk of a challenge/objection.

Once determined by the LA the arrangements have to be published on the LA's website by 15 March and the details of how to refer an objection to the Schools Adjudicator given. Objections must be made by 15 May 2016.

There is a risk that the change to the order of the oversubscription criteria (re sibling link) may result in objections to the Schools Adjudicator. However, officers have previously applied for and been granted a change to the arrangements in year and have evidence to support the reasons behind advancing sibling link as a higher criterion.

The Schools Adjudicator did comment that it would be for the LA to monitor and consider any unforeseen adverse effects that the change may cause – for example the effect on first born children living in the catchment area of a school. It is recommended that steps are taken to ensure monitoring is carried out.

In respect of paragraph 1.2 and 3.2: If there is to be a change for 2018/2019 entry to include adding the children of staff as a criterion to the oversubscription criteria then it will be necessary to consult between 1 October 2016 and 31 January 2017 and to follow the process as above.

Caroline Woodhouse, Supervisory Solicitor, Legal Services.

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

There are no significant climate change implications associated with this report.

Mark Jeffcote, Environment Team (x37 2251)

5.4 Equalities Implications

The proposed priority for children outside the catchment area with siblings in the school will greatly benefit parents/carers who would otherwise face multiple journeys to ensure their children get to school in a timely manner. This will potentially contribute to the quality of family life before and after school hours by removing the above burdens parents whose children are in different schools, face – but this anticipated benefit will differ for each family. This will assist in removing any inequity arising because of these arrangements, between children within classes and across the school population. As parents affected do not fall into one particular set of protected characteristics, all protected characteristics will benefit from this proposal.

Irene Kszyk, Corporate Equalities Lead, ext 374147.

6. Background information and other papers:

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1: Coordinated admissions scheme 2017/18

Appendix 2: Arrangements for admission to infant and primary schools 2017/18

Appendix 3: Arrangements for admission to junior schools 2017/18

Appendix 4: Arrangements for admission to secondary schools 2017/18

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”?

Yes

10. If a key decision please explain reason

The determination of admission arrangements will affect pupils and families in community and voluntary controlled schools across the City.

In determining whether it is a key decision you will need consider if it is likely:

- to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates.
- to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working *in two or more wards in the City*.

Expenditure or savings will be regarded as significant if:

- (a) In the case of additional recurrent revenue expenditure, it is not included in the approved revenue budget, and would cost in excess of £0.5m p.a.;
- (b) In the case of reductions in recurrent revenue expenditure, the provision is not included in the approved revenue budget, and savings of over £0.5m p.a. would be achieved;
- (c) In the case of one off or capital expenditure, spending of over £1m is to be committed on a scheme that has not been specifically authorised by Council.

In deciding whether a decision is significant you need to take into account:

- Whether the decision may incur a significant social, economic or environmental risk.
- The likely extent of the impact of the decision both within and outside of the City.
- The extent to which the decision is likely to result in substantial public interest
- The existence of significant communities of interest that cannot be defined spatially.