



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

ADMISSIONS FORUM 5
MARCH 2008

ITEM 8

In-Year Admission Processes in Derby City.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 To note the contents of the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 A number of Headteachers were enquiring about the processes for in-year admissions to Derby City in comparison with Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council. After investigation it was found that there is no difference between how Derby City processes applications to schools and the other local authorities.
- 2.2 The report was initially discussed with Headteachers, and has subsequently been issued to all schools.

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Background papers: None

List of appendices: Appendix 1 – Implications
Appendix 2 - In-Year Admission Process

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. None arising from this report.

Legal

2. None arising from this report.

Personnel

3. None arising from this report.

Equalities impact

4. All admission authorities' admission criteria are scrutinised to ensure that they comply with equality legislation.

In-Year Admission Process

Parents seek information about the schools in the area either from the Council, schools or the Internet. Parents can be advised of the likelihood of places being available, but as school rolls can change daily, availability of places is decided only at the time of application. Parents are provided with a common application form from the Council, school or Internet – www.derby.gov.uk/admissions and then click on 'admissions information'.

The application form allows parents to express, in priority order, three preferences for a Secondary School, and two for a Primary School – there are more Primary Schools within walking distance than Secondary Schools, hence lower preferences. The form should be returned to the Admissions Team, Middleton House, 27 St Mary's Gate, Derby DE1 3NN, fax number 01332 717985. The form provides the opportunity to identify any issues associated with the pupil, asks for nationality and whether the child speaks or understands English. The form is available in other languages on the website. This information, if completed by parents, is passed on to schools but is not always provided by parents.

The Admissions Team considers the application against the school's admission criteria. As the admission authority for Community schools, the Council takes the decision on admission to these schools. For Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools, the governing body is the admission authority. If schools have not reached their Published Admission Number, a place will be offered by the Council, in line with the School Admissions Code and the agreed Co-ordinated Admission Scheme. If any school is over its Published Admission Number, the application will be refused and the right of appeal offered. If an appeal is lodged for a community school, a copy of the appeal acknowledgement is sent to the school to inform them.

For Admission purposes, there is no requirement that proof of name should be produced before an application is dealt with, and for educational purposes anyone who has care of a child has 'parental responsibility'. Admission cannot be refused because this information has not been produced.

The Admissions Team writes to the parents informing them of the outcome of their application, together with the notification of the right to appeal if applicable. The school is also sent notification that a place has been allocated by the Admissions Team and the pupil **must** be admitted by the date stated on the letter – between two to three weeks for those without a school place, and at the start of the next half term for those who have a current school and who can continue at the current school whilst admission is processed. Further details on these two categories of applicants are given below.

In-Year applications who already have a school place elsewhere in the city

For both Primary and Secondary applications, schools are given until the start of the next half term to admit, and during this period the current school should arrange to meet parents / carers in order to ascertain whether the move is in the child's best interests or not and whether the school can do anything to prevent the move by persuading the parents to withdraw their application. The drawbacks of moving schools mid-year are already highlighted in the Admissions booklets. For Primary applications, Gaynor Whitbread emails

the schools concerned with any comments the parents have made. For Secondary Schools, the current school receives a copy of the letter that is sent to parents. When offers are made to parents, the schools' letters are sent via the 'green bag' post, and parents' letters are posted second class on that day. In this way schools are informed prior to parents about the allocation of a school place. If any school is over its Published Admission Number, the application will be refused and the right of appeal offered. If an appeal is lodged for a community school, a copy of the appeal acknowledgement is sent to the school to inform them.

In-Year applications who do not have a school place elsewhere in the city

For both Primary and Secondary applications, schools are given 2 weeks to admit the pupil. This time is to allow the new school to contact with the previous school and request information on ability and groupings etc. When offers are made to parents, the schools' letters are sent via the 'green bag' post, and parents' letters are posted second class on that day. Therefore schools are informed prior to parents about the allocation of a school place. If any school is over its Published Admission Number, the application will be refused and the right of appeal offered. If an appeal is lodged for a community school, a copy of the appeal acknowledgement is sent to the school to inform them.

Total Number of Applications Processed: September 06 – July 07

Primary	1685 (x2 preferences)
Secondary	1257 (x3 preferences)

Each application can generate a maximum of 7 letters.

There are 1.6 FTE posts. 1 full time Assistant Primary Admissions Officer. 6 FTE Assistant Secondary Admissions Officer. The remainder .4 post is taken up by Choice Advisor admin, Appeals admin and GIS admin.

When the SAM software is installed – by the end of this term – schools will be able to generate reports showing how many applications have been made to their school within a specified period. Schools will be able to keep track of requests to their schools, and for secondary and junior transfer applications, see which school has been allocated. For this system to work, it is important that the data entered by schools is up-to-date and accurate. Ben Lysaczenko will be contacting relevant School Administrators shortly to organise training.

Financial Penalties.

The Scheme for Funding Schools allows school budgets to be charged, without governors' authorisation, the costs to the Council of discharging its duties consequential to a governing body not complying with the School Admissions code or admissions legislation. This means that, should a school with places available refuse to admit a pupil by the stated deadline, the full costs of providing alternative education will be charged to that school's budget. The full costs also include administration and processing of the request for alternative education.

Admissions in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council.

Background

It had been indicated by some Derby City Secondary Head teachers that both Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council operate a different Admissions process to Derby City. The information given was that both Councils only admitted pupils on the first day of a term, ie three times a year, for all admissions.

Nottingham City.

The Admissions Section, Exclusions Section and the Education Welfare Service of the Council have supplied the following information.

The Council does not operate a 'start of term only' admission for applicants. If a school has places the child is admitted immediately, or within 2 weeks at the latest. For schools that are oversubscribed, the application is refused and the right of appeal is given. Advice is then given on schools with places available. Should a school with places refuse to admit, the matter is referred immediately to the Secretary of State. This stance is taken because places within the city are 'so tight', as 'there is no room to manoeuvre within the law, as it's very clear cut'.

Nottinghamshire County Council

The process for Admissions is similar to Nottingham City. Schools with places must admit immediately. When asked what happens if they refuse, it was simply stated 'they can't refuse'. Excluded pupils are admitted in the same way as Nottingham City, however extra time is allowed for their admission ie between two and four weeks maximum. The main difference is for those parents that haven't changed address but want to change schools. It is these admissions that happen on the first day of each half term ie 6 times a year. The child is expected to continue attending their old school until the admission to the new school. This is the same process employed by Derby City, as outlined above.

Conclusion

Derby City Council operates the same processes as other Councils in the area. The new School Admissions Code which came into force on 28 February 2007 states that admission authorities must 'act in accordance' with the code. This strengthens the provisions in the code, which are contained in primary and secondary legislation. Deviation from the code can result in damages being awarded in civil cases, with the school, the governing body and the Council being liable.