

Education Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 12 December 2017

Strategic Management of School Places

Item number 7.15

Report number

Executive/routine

Wards

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the P1 and S1 admissions August 2017 and includes data relating to the number of out of catchment requests; the number of appeals lodged, the number of cases granted and individual cases won on appeal.

Strategic Management of School Places

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the content of the report.
- 1.2 Request an Admissions and Appeals update report in December 2018.

2. Background

- 2.1 The policies and procedures which underpin the admissions process for mainstream primary and secondary schools have been in place since the inception of Edinburgh City Council in 1996.
- 2.2 In January, each year as part of the annual P1 and S1 intake process a Communities and Families Working Group comprising of senior officers meet to agree proposed class organisations for primary schools. This ensures that a consistent and equitable approach is taken to accommodating catchment pupil numbers and where possible, placing requests across the school estate.
- 2.3 Each year in February the Pupil and Student Support Committee comprising an elected member from each political party, a religious representative and a Senior Manager from Schools and Life Long Learning meet to review selected placing requests and to decide the priority order for placement on the waiting list.
- 2.4 Primary Head Teachers organise a special Parent Council meeting in February to share classroom organisation and discuss any potential concerns.
- 2.5 Admissions for P1 and S1 in August are managed by the placements team. Headteachers are responsible for all admissions at all other stages and for P1 and S1 after the start of term in August.
- 2.6 Primary schools across the city hold Open Days in November to promote local schools for local children. There is also a sustained media campaign to encourage parents to visit their local school and to make clear that with rising school rolls there will be less likelihood of out of catchment places in the coming year, even for siblings.

3. Main report

Management of School Places

- 3.1 The admissions and appeals process is a high-profile area for Communities and Families and rising school rolls in Edinburgh will mean that fewer families will be successful in out of catchment requests.
- 3.2 It is vital that the admissions and appeals processes operate as efficiently and effectively as possible to ensure a consistent, transparent, and fair application of procedures always.
- 3.3 For August 2017 consideration was given to:
- 3.3.1 the necessity to prioritise, as in previous years, baptised Roman Catholic (RC) pupils at certain RC schools;
 - 3.3.2 the increase in demand for places at the Gaelic Medium Education (GME) primary school Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce;
 - 3.3.3 the requirement to increase reserved places in secondary schools.
- 3.4 Prioritisation of baptised Roman Catholic catchment pupils was necessary in 15 schools for August 2017. The table below details initial catchment registration and final numbers across the sector.

	Catchment registration January '17	Catchment registration August '17	Final number turned down
Primary	724	572	31 (non baptised)
Secondary	251	235	0

- 3.5 While the demand for places in P1 at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce were accommodated this year the capacity of the school will not sustain similar intakes in future years.
- 3.6 A long term strategy for the growth of GME would clearly be beneficial. It would allow sufficient time to consider well in advance any issues and provide certainty of what was possible.
- 3.7 The enrolment process for session 2018 /19 has now started. Given the increasing pressures on the school estate any variations to process or procedure would need to be considered next year at the earliest for implementation session 2019/20
- 3.8 Legal advice has indicated that any significant change to policy would require a full statutory consultation involving consulting with all parents.

Reserved Places

- 3.9 It is important for children and young people to be able to attend their local catchment school. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 allows the Education Authority to reserve places in schools for catchment children that move into the catchment area.
- 3.10 Last year 2016/17 only one place per school was reserved for incoming catchment pupils to S1. In some of our high demand schools reserving one place proved inadequate.
- 3.11 This year 2017/18 it was agreed to reserve one place per 60 pupils for incoming catchment pupils to S1 after the start of the session where it was possible to do so. This has proved helpful in managing requests so far.

Admissions and appeals processes

- 3.12 The number of final applications for out with catchment places is as follows:

Primary 1		Secondary 1	
2017	894	2017	699
2016	962	2016	723
2015	995	2015	787
2014	1141	2014	777

- 3.13 The number of appeals and the outcomes for the last three years is detailed below:

Primary

Appeals	2015	2016	2017
Number Lodged	236	268	283
Placed prior to being heard	56	107	98
Withdrawn by parents	1	7	13
Heard by Appeal Committee	180	154	172
Refused	98	107	114
Granted	81	47	58

Secondary

Appeals	2015	2016	2017
Number Lodged	53	74	109
Placed prior to being heard	0	23	19
Withdrawn by parents	2	1	6
Heard by Appeal Committee	51	50	84
Refused	41	43	68
Granted	10	7	16

- 3.14 It can be seen from the above figures that the number of out-with catchment requests decrease the number of appeals lodged and those refused continue to increase.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 There is a consistent and equitable approach to allocating places across the school estate.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 All work identified in this area is delivered within existing budgets.

6. Risk, policy, compliance, and governance impact

- 6.1 There are no risks, policy compliance or governance issues.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 There are no negative equality or human rights impacts arising from this report.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There are no sustainable issues.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 This will be shared through the head teacher executive and parents will be engaged through locality and Consultative Committee with Parents arrangements.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/TrendPupilNumbers>
- 10.2 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/PupilProjectionsDataset/PupilProjections2014>
- 10.3 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2010/326/contents/made>

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11. Appendices
