

Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 12 October 2022
Executive – 19 October 2022

Subject: Admission Policies for 2024/25 for community and voluntary controlled primary schools and community high schools

Report of: Director of Education

Summary

To seek approval to commence consultation on revised admissions arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools and community high schools.

As the Admissions Authority for the community and voluntary controlled schools in Manchester, the LA is required to draft, consult on and determine their admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and community high schools.

Recommendations

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is requested to:-

- (1) Comment on the proposed revised admissions arrangements and the implementation of these new arrangements.
- (2) Note the formal consultation on changing the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools and community high schools will commence on 31 October 2022.
- (3) Endorse the Executive recommendations

The Executive is recommended to: -

- (1) Consider the recommendations of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (if any).
- (2) Agree in principle the proposed revised admissions arrangements.
- (3) Authorise the Director of Education to consult on the proposed implementation proposed revised admissions arrangements
- (4) Authorise the Director of Education to consider any responses received to the consultation and to agree to the implementation of the proposed arrangements
- (5) Adopt the proposed arrangements under delegated powers after consultation:

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Using less paper reduces the impact on forests, limits water use, less air and energy waste which all impact the current negative climate change pollution.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

Does not impact on different protected or disadvantaged groups.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Changes to the way parents apply for school places will not be affected. The ongoing growth of the City's education sector will continue to create opportunity for employment all business sectors.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	A sufficiency of high-quality education provision which is easily accessible to families at the application stage will provide future generations with the skills and behaviours to benefit from the City's economic success.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Schools are environments in which the diversity and talent of Manchester's children and young people is celebrated. Pupils are supported and encouraged to achieve their aspirations and Maximise their potential.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Investment in modern, energy efficient and high quality parental and back-office processes solutions which are easily accessible will reduce our carbon footprint
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Investment in existing and new ways of working initiatives will enhance the City's attractiveness to residents and stakeholders to contribute to high Quality services.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

No Revenue consequences

Financial Consequences – Capital

No Capital consequences

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

Not applicable

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 All schools must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than places at the school. Admission arrangements are determined by admission authorities.
- 1.2 Admission authorities must set ('determine') admission arrangements annually. Where changes are proposed to admission arrangements, the admission authority must first publicly consult on those arrangements. If no changes are made to admission arrangements, they must be consulted on at least once every 7 years. Consultation must be for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January of the school year before those arrangements are to apply (the determination year). For example: for arrangements which are to apply for entry in September 2024, consultation must be completed by 31 January 2023. This consultation period allows parents, other schools, religious authorities, and the local community to raise any concerns about the proposed admission arrangements.
- 1.3 Manchester City Council is the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled primary schools and for community high schools. Manchester's admission arrangements for Voluntary controlled and community schools were last consulted upon in January 2015. Manchester must now consult upon its arrangements as a requirement of the school admissions code.
- 1.4 This paper proposes that formal consultation on changing the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools and community high schools should commence on the 31 October 2022. The consultation will cover the following key proposal:
 - To change the reapplication process for parents applying for a school place in year from three times per year to one. This means when an application is made, and a lower preference or alternative school place is offered, applicant details will remain on the waiting lists for the higher preference school for the whole or remainder of that academic year only. Currently, waiting lists for schools are cleared at the end of each term and parents wishing to be replaced on a waiting list need to reapply each time.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council's arrangements (policies) for admission to community and voluntary controlled primary schools and to community high schools were last reviewed for the school year 2016/ 2017. During the last review, category 4 was introduced into the Council's admission arrangements for applications received in year, this is where applicants new to the city are placed in a higher category to a school place before another applicant who already has a school place. The arrangements also introduced a termly waiting list which meant that children are removed from waiting lists 3 times per academic year. This

means that when parents want their child to remain on a school waiting list, they need to reapply each term.

- 2.2 Both the primary and secondary school transition and in year arrangements are based on free expressions of parental preference, with oversubscription criteria applied to decide which children are offered places when there are more preferences expressed than places available.
- 2.3 The additional category to the in-year arrangements (category 4) has been an important aspect of the Council's criteria, as it provides priority admission for children new to the city who do not have a school place enabling them to access education more quickly.
- 2.4 The city council uses these arrangements for the one community secondary school for which it is the admission authority, and for 52 community and voluntary controlled primary schools.
- 2.5 Manchester has 167 schools within its local authority area. School admission service coordinates the In-Year waiting lists for all the different types of schools set out in the table below.

School Name	Governance						
	Academy	Community	Foundation	Free School	Vol Aided	Vol Controlled	Total
All-through	1	1					2
Primary	38	39	2	7	37	13	136
Secondary	19			6	4		29
Total	57	40	2	13	41	13	167

- 2.6 There are 93 schools which use the category 4 criteria, of these 40 schools are responsible for determining their own admission arrangements and currently use criteria which mirror those set by the City Council, these are below.

School Name	Governance						
	Academy	Community	Foundation	Free School	Vol Aided	Vol Controlled	Total
All-through		1					1
Primary	27	39		3		13	82
Secondary	9			1			10
Total	36	40		4		13	93

- 2.7 Overall, Manchester's well established admission arrangements work well and are understood by schools and parents and carers. This is evidenced through the high percentages of children who are allocated their preferred school as illustrated in the recent transition rounds below.

- 99% of applicants for places in reception received a 1st to 3rd preference offer.

- 91% of applicants for places in year 7 received a 1st to 3rd preference offer.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 In 2021 the Department for Education introduced changes to the School Admission Code. It advises that upon receipt of an in-year application, the admission authority, or the local authority if it is co-ordinating the admissions authority's in-year admissions, must notify the parents of the outcome of their application in writing within 10 school days. Where an offer of a place cannot be made within 10 school days, the code mandates that these applications must be presented through the LAs In Year Fair Access protocol.
- 3.2 In Year Fair Access is a statutory requirement, the Protocol is in place because the School Admissions Code 2021 states that 'each local authority must have a Fair Access Protocol, agreed with the majority of schools in its area to ensure that – outside the normal admissions round – (in year Admissions) unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible.
- 3.3 The In Year Fair Access protocol is a statutory requirement for all LAs. The School Admissions Code 2021 states that 'each local authority must have a Fair Access Protocol, agreed with the majority of schools in its area to ensure that – outside the normal admissions round (In Year Applications) unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible.
- 3.4 Manchester currently co-ordinates places for all in year applications for all types of schools within the city. Application forms can be found on-line, or paper copies are available upon request to the council and can also be obtained from any school in the city
- 3.5 The admissions service produces weekly waiting lists on a Monday and provide this information to each school. Schools return the lists complete with any school place vacancies they hold. Admissions then notify the parent/applicant of the offer of a school place. Should the schools be unable to make the offer of a place, a place at an alternative school will be identified by Admissions and the parent will be notified.
- 3.6 Manchester continues to receive high volumes of applications requesting places for school places within the school year and outside of usual school transition rounds at Reception and Year 7. These are referred to as in year school admission applications. Since the introduction of new national In Year guidance to the school admissions code in May 2021, the admissions service have identified and referred significantly high numbers of applications through its in year fair access process to identify school places within a reasonable time.
- 3.7 During the 21/22 academic year, 8500 in year applications were received requesting a school place. Of these, 5801 were offered a school place. The remaining applicants were parents applying for a transfer from their current

school to a higher preferred school during the academic year. Only 1415 pupils were removed from school registers, due to leaving the city, in the same period of time.

- 3.8 The net increase of children coming into the city has resulted in capacity within some year groups being significantly low, especially in the high school sector. This means that the majority of preferences, made in year, cannot be met as the preferred school is already full. When this happens, an alternative school place is identified, and the applicants' details remain on the waiting list for their preferred school until the end of term, when all applicants are removed.
- 3.9 The table below shows that a high percentage of both primary & secondary school places offers are made to an alternative school when the application is received during the school year.

In Year 2021-22	Places Offered	Alternative Offer
Manchester Primary	3976	1691
Manchester Secondary	1825	971
Total offers	5801	2662

- 3.10 The process to remove applicants from waiting lists for the start of the new term is lengthy and time consuming for parents and the admissions service, parents have also reported that they find the current system confusing. The process of re-application has become ineffective and is causing unnecessary re-application tasks for parents and the council.
- 3.11 The current arrangements of re-application every term have also meant that parents are often reluctant to accept an alternative offer of a school place as this process heightens expectations that they may gain a place at the school of preference at the beginning of each new term when they re-apply. Consequently, it sometimes means that children are not accessing education while parents are waiting for a place at a preferred school.

4.0 Proposals

4.1 The Council is proposing to change the re-application process from three times per year to one. This means when an application is made, and a lower preference or alternative school place is offered, applicant details will remain on the waiting lists for the higher preference school for the whole or remainder of the academic year. All details of every application will then be removed yearly over the summer break rather than every term.

4.2 The benefits of this change will provide

- Assurance that all school preferences are being considered for longer
- Applicants not having to reapply termly
- It is clearer for parents, and they will be more likely to accept a place at an alternative school place in the meantime which will reduce the time children are missing education.

- Officer time used more effectively and reduce officer process time in responding to parental queries on the receipt of termly applications
- An improved customer experience for families

5.0 Oversubscription Criterion

5.1 It is proposed that the oversubscription criteria for in year applicants **remains unchanged** and will continue to be applied for applications received during the academic year for all year groups for primary and secondary school and is as follows:

Category 1 - children who are looked after by a local authority and children who were previously looked after by a local authority UK or from overseas. Previously looked after children are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted, UK or from overseas (or became subject to a residence order or special guardianship order);

Category 2 - children with exceptional medical/social needs;

A panel of Local Authority officers will consider Category 2 applications on behalf of the Director of Children's Services. If a parent has chosen a particular school because the child has exceptional social or medical circumstances or the parent is disabled, this should be indicated with the reasons for choosing the school. Parents must also provide a letter from a doctor or social worker as supporting evidence. The LA will then send a category 2 application form allowing the parent to state in full the exceptional social/medical reasons why the child should attend this school. If supporting evidence is not supplied with a category 2 application the application will be refused.

Category 3 - children with a sibling at the school;

A sibling is defined as a brother or sister attending the applied for school when the applicant will take up the place and living at the same address. This includes adopted siblings, stepsiblings and foster children;

Sibling criteria, as specified above will be applied with the exception of siblings who are attending the 6th form of a secondary school or academy.

Category 4 - children who are new to the city

Category 5 – all other children

5.2 Within each category, applicants will be prioritised according to the distance between the child's permanent address and the school. Distance will be measured in a straight line from the centre point of the child's permanent home address to the centre point of the school as defined by Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG), and using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system, with those living closer to the school receiving higher priority.

5.3 It is proposed that the oversubscription criteria for applicants at transition points **remains unchanged** and will continue to be applied for applications received for both primary reception and secondary year 7 transition application rounds school and is as follows:

Category 1 - children who are looked after by a local authority and children who were previously looked after by a local authority. Children who were looked after or in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

Previously looked after children are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangement order or special guardianship order). A child is regarded as having been in state care in a place outside of England if they were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or another professional provider of care;

Category 2 - children with exceptional medical/social needs;

Category 3 – children with a sibling at the school;

Category 4 - all other children

6.0 Consultation

6.1 For the 2024/ 2025 admission arrangements an eight-week period of statutory consultation will begin on 31 October 2022, with the consultation period ending on 16 December 2022. The following stakeholders, as required by the admissions code, will be invited to make comments:

- a) parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen;
- b) other persons resident in the city who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions (including local Members of Parliament in affected areas);
- c) all other admission authorities in the city
- d) all neighbouring local authorities
- e) in the case of faith schools, the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination.

6.2 All the above stakeholders will be provided with the consultation documentation which is reproduced at appendix A. Consultees will be invited to submit their views on the issues raised and on any other issues which they consider to be relevant.

7.0 Other admission authorities

- 7.1 Each individual governing body is the admission authority for primary and secondary schools with voluntary aided, foundation or academy status. The same requirements for consultation apply to these schools/academies, when governors wish to change their admission arrangements (policy). The Local Authority has to be consulted as part of the review process.
- 7.2 For those schools who wish to continue to mirror the new arrangements proposed by the Council, a joint consultation process will be undertaken where this is preferred by the governing body.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 The recommendations are set out at the front of this report.