Report to the Learning, Culture & Physical Activity Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5th December 2018

School Admissions and Fair Access

Purpose of the Report

To brief the Committee on the current position of School Admissions and Fair Access including the modernisation programme, service performance and an update on the impact of the Fair Access protocol.

Recommendation

That members note the information contained in this report.

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School Admission and Fair Access

1. Introduction

The School Admissions and Fair Access Service is responsible for delivering the statutory duties outlined by the Department of Education within the following documents

- School Admissions Code (2014)

- School Admissions and Appeals Code (2012)

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

- Schools Standard and Framework Act 1998

- Education Act 1996

The School Admissions and Fair Access (SAFA) delivery plan 2018/19 is a single plan to encompass all the operational improvement and changes across the service from 1st September 2018 to 31st August 2019.

The Services priorities are directly linked to the Directorate Priorities and the Corporate Priorities as outlined in the BCC plan 2018 -2022.

SAFA particularly contributes to Outcome 2 'Birmingham is an aspirational city to grow up in' and the related priorities;

1. 'We will improve protection of vulnerable children and young people'
2. 'We will work with Early Years and all schools to improve educational attainment and standards'
3. 'We will inspire our children and young people to be ambitious and achieve their full potential'

The plan has four services strategic objectives:

1. We will improve our customer experience with new and improved systems to deliver a 100% end to end admissions process.
2. We will implement a newly designed School Admission and Fair Access service and work force strategy to ensure a more efficient, effective and modern service.
3. We will support education outcomes for and safeguarding of children and young people by ensuring all school admission, fair access, pupil tracking, admission arrangements and appeals statutory duties and responsibilities are met.
4. We will manage the School Admission and Fair Access budget, develop our commercial and commissioning approach to support efficiencies and Directorate and Corporate budget reduction targets.

2. Service Description

The School Admissions and Fair Access Service plays an integral role in the safeguarding of children and young people in Birmingham by ensuring every child is offered a school place and any child who is out of school, because their parent/carer has refused the school place offered, is identified, tracked and appropriate action is taken.

The School Admissions and Fair Access Service acts as a champion for families and children and offers advice, support and guidance to parents/carers in navigating the admissions system.

By ensuring children are offered a school place and engaged in education, the Service also helps improve attainment levels and exam results, which in turn contributes to the development of a skilled workforce for the City as well as improving their individual life outcomes.

By working in partnership with all Birmingham schools, we ensure that responsibility for children and young people in a local area is shared via local arrangements, such as the Fair Access Protocol and Panels and primary consortiums, therefore ensuring a democratic city.

The key elements of the service are:

- Normal admissions round (primary, junior, secondary and 14 – 19) managing approximately 30,000 applications per annum
- In-year admissions and activity related to up to an estimated 20,000 applications made directly to schools
- Fair Access
- School Appeals
- School Admissions Arrangements & the Local Authority Co-ordinated Scheme
- Pupil Tracking (including independent schools)

3. Performance in Partnership

The performance of SAFA is inextricably linked with key internal and external partners including:

- 384 publicly state funded schools (as of 1st November 2018) including academies, community schools, voluntary aided, foundation and voluntary controlled (see appendix A)
- Education & Skills Infrastructure (EDSI) service – school places and sufficiency
- SEN/SENAR – Education Health and Care Plan's and compliance
- Legal appeals team – appeals
- Capita/CACI – admissions IT systems and processes
- Contact centre (CS) – channel shift/tier 1 calls for the public
- Office of School Adjudicators/Department for Education – compliance and Fair Access
- Virtual School – Looked After Children and compliance
- Parents and communities – decisions and preferences!
- A range of different Admission Authorities

The table below sets out the admission authority for each type of school in England.

Type of School	Who is the admission authority	Who deals with complaints about arrangements?	Who is responsible for arranging/ providing for an appeal against refusal of a place at a school?
Academies	Academy Trust	Schools Adjudicator	Academy Trust
Community Schools	Local Authority	Schools Adjudicator	Local Authority
Foundation Schools	Governing Body	Schools Adjudicator	Governing Body
Voluntary aided schools	Governing Body	Schools Adjudicator	Governing Body
Voluntary controlled schools	Local Authority	Schools Adjudicator	Local Authority

4. Service Modernisation Programme

The School Admissions & Fair Access Service Change Programme has three principle strands:

- New Service Structure; the consultation process for the proposed new structure was formally launched with staff and Trade Unions on the 18th July 2018. All posts have been 'Job Evaluated' and all staff will be invited to express an interest in the/a new post(s). Full implementation is scheduled for end March 2019.
- Software; important and urgent work is underway to upgrade and improve the service's IT infrastructure and software including moving to a 100% end to end on-line application process. The move to a predominantly electronic admissions system will support service efficiencies and the effectiveness of the service. As well as an increase in electronic application we expect an increase in the percentage of on-time application and those that can be 'automatically processed'.
- Culture Change; on-going education and support to staff alongside appropriate challenge is being deployed to improve behaviour across the team and to develop a set of minimum professional standards. This will help support the IT changes and an increasingly customer focussed service.

There will inevitably be the risk of some teething problems over the next cycle of admissions activity (from September 2018) as these significant changes are implemented and the new culture, system and structure are embedded.

The wholesale change required to modernise and professionalise the service is taking place whilst maintaining business as usual in an operational context of the strict deadlines of the annual cycle of School Admissions activity. Related risks and mitigation have been identified and where appropriate mitigation measures have already been implemented.

5. School Admissions Performance and Targets:

5.1 Reception & Secondary Preferences and Offers made at Offer-Day (2017-2018) for Birmingham Pupils

5.1:1 On-Time Reception Offers (15 April 2018)

Nationally (England) at primary level, 91.0% of applications received an offer of their first choice school and 97.7% received an offer of one of their top three preferences.

13,977 parent/carers submitted an application requesting a reception place for their child for September 2018 (down 1,207)

38,483 preferences were expressed (down 1,211)

13,551 (99.2%) applications were made on-line* (applications up 1280 / Up 18.2%)

Total Pref Offers	NO.	%	% Difference from 2017
First	12,488	92.9	+5.5
Second	699	5.2	-1.5
Third	249	1.9	-0.5
Total	**13,436**	**96.1**	**-0.4**

493 (3.5%) were offered a school outside Birmingham (up 0.5%)

*103 SEN applicants cannot apply online

376 pupils who live in another local authority applied for a place at a Birmingham school

5.1:2 On-Time Secondary Offers (16ᵗʰ April 2018)

Nationally (England) in 2018 82.1% of applicants for a secondary place received an offer of their first preference school. 93.8% (90.16% in Birmingham) received an offer of one of their top three preferences

14,775 Birmingham pupils applied to transfer to secondary school (down 464)

63,677 preferences were expressed (down 2,140)

13,980 (98.1%) applications were made on-line* (up 14.6%)

Total Pref Offers	NO.	%	% Difference from 2017
First	10563	71.42	+2.82
Second	2072	14.01	+1
Third	848	5.73	-0.37

Fourth	529	3.58	-0.38
Fifth	281	1.90	+0.3
Sixth	199	1.35	+0.25
Total	**14,492**	**97.99**	**+4.2**

1,619 (11%) were offered a school outside Birmingham (up 0.5%)

*518 SEN applicants cannot apply online

1,744 pupils who live in another local authority applied for a place at a Birmingham school (down 42)

5.2 We will improve the customer experience.

Performance indicator and target 2018/19/20	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19/20
1. We will improve our customer experience with new and improved systems to deliver a 100% end to end admissions process. i. 99.5% of on-time secondary applications submitted on-line (end October 2018)	83.5%	98.1%	Tbc
ii. 99.5% of on-time reception applications submitted on-line (January 2019)	81%	99.2%	Tbc
iii. 95% of schools signed up to and using the new in-year on-line pupil data reporting arrangements (January 2019)	N/A	N/A	On target, currently at 95%
iv. 99.5% of schools signed up to and using the new in-year on-line pupil data reporting arrangements (January 2020)	N/A	N/A	On target

5.3 The Numbers and Outcomes of Reception and Year 7 Appeals 2016-208

Applicants can lodge appeals for any school they have not been awarded a place in.

In 2017-2018 both locally and nationally, the highest percentage of appeals heard was at secondary level (at 4.1% of new admissions nationally).

In 217-2108, infant class appeals reduced both locally and nationally.

For all schools nationally, the 2017-2108 success rate for appeals was 21.8% of appeals held. Birmingham's success rate is substantially less, (for all schools that BCC provide its appeals service for which includes community schools and academies).

	On time	Upheld	Percentage
2016			
Reception Appeals	531	6	1.1%
Year 7 Appeals	840	27	3.2%
2017			
Reception Appeals	504	7	1.4%
Year 7 Appeals	1575	49	3.1%
2018			
Reception Appeals	152	1	0.6%
Year 7 Appeals	701	29	4.1%

6. **Impact of the Fair Access Protocol**

The New Fair Access Protocol was implemented in January 218.

A Fair Access Governance Board has been established to ensure challenge to and oversight of the arrangements.

The board includes Head Teacher representatives and other partners and is chaired by Councillor Diane Donaldson.

Below is a summary of the key data findings as reported to the Governance Board for the period April – 24 July (end of academic year 2017-2018), the last full term.

A Summary of Key Data Findings:

- Out of the 142 cases that were received we were able to place 119 children 59 in Primary and 60 in Secondary
- We have confirmed that 76 of these children have started school
- 43 of the 119 children are awaiting start dates (confirmation is being sought by the schools)
- Of the 23 non admissions 2 schools have been referred to the Secretary Of State.
- There has been an increase of referrals from last term of 43 (70% increase). The biggest increase in referral has been children out of education for two months or more (Category C) which has risen from 31 to 59 (increase of 53%)
- Year 8 has had the biggest increase of referrals which has risen from 16 last term to 31 this term

Average time taken from referral to pupil accepted on roll for period 1ˢᵗ January 2018-31ˢᵗ July 2018;

- 19 school days on average for a Primary (Citywide Panel) child to be accepted on a school roll.
- 27 school days on average for a Secondary (Citywide Panel) child to be accepted on a school roll.
- 43 school days on average for a Local Sharing Panel child to be accepted on a school roll.

7. **Report summary**

The School Admissions and Fair Access Service (SAFA) is currently undergoing a significant change programme to improve its effectiveness and efficiency including the quality of its data collection and reporting.

The performance of the admission's system reflects a range of dependencies and partnerships not least with schools and own admission authorities in Birmingham.

The council as reflected in Birmingham's agreed Co-ordinated Scheme oversees the child's transition in and between schools in the normal transfer round.

The council does not co-ordinate in-year admissions where parents are required to apply directly to individual schools depending on their preference(s).

Appendix A Types and Number of Birmingham Schools

LA Owned and Maintained Schools

Primary - Community	115
Secondary - Community	11
All Through - Community	1
Special - Community	12
Nursery	27
PRU (COB School)	1
Total LA Owned and Maintained	**167**

LA Maintained Schools (not owned by BCC)

Primary - Voluntary Controlled	5
Total LA Maintained (not owned by BCC)	**5**

Voluntary Aided Schools (not owned by BCC)

Primary - Voluntary Aided	55
Secondary - Voluntary Aided	7
All Through - Voluntary Aided	1
Total Voluntary Aided	**63**

Foundation Schools (not owned by BCC)

Primary - Foundation	9
Secondary - Foundation	5
Special - Foundation	9
Total Foundation	**23**

Academies (owned by BCC and leased to Academy)

Primary - Academy Converter	45
Primary - Academy Sponsor Led	42
Secondary - Academy Converter	11
Secondary - Academy Sponsor Led	16
All Through - Academy Converter	2
All Through - Academy Sponsor Led	1
Special - Academy Converter	5
Special - Academy Sponsor Led	1
Total Academies (owned by BCC and leased to Academy)	**123**

Academies (not owned by BCC)

Primary - Academy Converter	14
Primary - Academy Sponsor Led *	10
Secondary - Academy Converter	20
Secondary - Sponsor Led	1
All Through - Academy Sponsor Led	1
Total Academies (no lease)	**46**

Free Schools (not owned or maintained by BCC)

Primary	2
Secondary	8
All Through	2
Alternative	6
Total Free	**18**

All Schools Total	**445**