

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE.		
DATE:	7 JULY 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	13
TITLE:	ACCESS TO SCHOOLS FOR SEPTEMBER 2014		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR ENNIS	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
SERVICE:	ADMISSIONS	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the allocation of places to pupils starting school in September 2014 in either primary (year R) or secondary (year 7) on the national offer day which gives rise to the published statistics.
- 1.2 The report also notes the position at 16th June 2014 after the normal turbulence and a stream of late applications.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the continuing high level of primary school demand which has been met for the third successive year by Reading's schools.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Admissions to school is covered by the national Admissions Code which sets out many of the regulations that all admission's authorities have to work within, when setting an admissions policy and oversubscription criteria.
- 3.2 Applications received after the national deadlines are considered "late" applications. Such applications are still ranked alongside all other applications when applying oversubscription criteria and they do cause changes in the order of waiting lists which are not application order dependent.

4. PROGRESS

Primary Schools

- 4.1 The 2,210 on-time applications for primary school places was the largest number ever received. All of those applicants received an offer on national offer day, 16th April 2014. The following table shows the breakdown of allocated preferences.

	1st Pref	2nd Pref	3rd Pref	4th Pref	Divert
Allocation by preference band	75.7%	10.8%	5.0%	2.9%	5.6%
Cumulative allocation	75.7%	86.5%	91.5%	94.4%	100%

- 4.2 The initial offers included 50 places at The Heights primary school following the Department for Education's decision to enter a funding agreement on April 8th 2014 for an opening date of September 2014.
- 4.3 While the overall demand was in line with the council forecast, there were variations across the five planning areas used to ensure that the council meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient spaces. There was lower than expected demand in the east and south of the borough while the demand in the north was higher than expected. This shift resulted in the provision of an additional class at The Hill in Caversham to ensure that all initial offers were made in line with planning areas or parental preference.
- 4.4 Since the initial offer day, there continues to be many parents seeking alternative offers and the independent appeals process is in progress.
- 4.5 There have also been a large number of late applications, and they continue to arrive. By Friday 13th June, the council have provided 71 offers for these late applications. Our reception year is now very full, with only five places left in Yr R. We know however that some children will not appear in September, there were 20 "no shows" last year, with 13 at one school alone.

Secondary Schools

- 4.6 The 1,496 on-time applications for secondary school places was an increase on the 2013 cohort and reflects the general rise in the population. All of those applicants received an offer on national offer day, 16th April 2014. The following table shows the breakdown of allocated preferences.

	1st Pref	2nd Pref	3rd Pref	4th Pref	Divert
Allocation by preference band	74.6%	15.4%	3.9%	1.2%	4.9%
Cumulative allocation	74.6%	90.0%	93.9%	95.1%	100%

- 4.7 The improved educational achievement of the schools has made many of them more popular than in previous years.
- 4.8 There continues to be a number of late applications, and while some schools are full, there are plenty of unallocated year 7 places across all of the schools which serve the area.

- 4.9 It is likely that pupils starting school in September 2015 will have even more choice as the Department for Education is planning to open two new secondary Academy schools in Reading. One will be in the central west area, sponsored by the WREN group and the other will be in the east, sponsored by Maiden Erlegh Academy. They are expected to provide another 360 places between them each year.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 This report directly contributes to a healthy population and the development of good educational attainment.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 Through the Let's Talk Education events, many communities have shaped the choice of schools being expanded on a permanent basis to meet the forecast level of demand. This programme should lead to increased predictability for parents about the availability of spaces.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This report does not require an EIA as school applications cannot consider protected characteristics and the LA duty is one of general sufficiency.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Schools Forum has confirmed the continued revenue funding for new classes from September 2014 through the approval of its budget line known as "Growth Fund".