

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDRENS SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	22 OCTOBER 2020	AGENDA ITEM:	14
TITLE:	SCHOOL ADMISSIONS		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	ASHLEY PEARCE	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
SERVICE:	BFfC	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is to update the Committee on School Admissions for 2020

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the report be noted.
- 2.2 That the 2022/23 School Admissions policies and coordinated schemes in February 2021 be considered.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 School admissions are subject to detailed requirements, set out in law and particularly the School Admissions Code 2014, published by the Government and approved by Parliament. As part of those requirements, local authorities must draw up schemes for coordinating admissions to all maintained schools in their area. The purpose of coordinated schemes is to ensure that every parent/carer of a child living in Reading who has completed and submitted an on time application receives one offer of a school place at the conclusion of the normal admissions round. The schemes set out a process and timescale to enable the offer of a single school place. They do not affect the right of individual admission authorities to set and operate their own admission arrangements but they do include arrangements for resolving multiple offers, where a place can be offered at more than one school. Reading Borough Council is the admitting authority for community and voluntary controlled schools within the borough.
- 3.2 Reading Borough Council deliver its school admissions service through Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC). BFfC is an independent, not-for-profit company, wholly owned by Reading Borough Council, set up in December 2018 to deliver children's services, early help, education and SEND services in Reading

- 3.3** In 26 June 2020, the DfE issued a consultation on a revised version of the School Admissions Code. The consultation ran for 16 weeks until 16 October 2020. The School Admissions Code imposes mandatory requirements and includes guidelines setting out aims, objectives and other matters in relation to the discharge of functions relating to admissions.

Ministers are not proposing a wholesale review of the admissions system. They say that it is clear from feedback that the main round of admissions largely works well, but that there are problems with the in-year admissions processes and Fair Access Protocols. The proposed changes therefore seek to clarify these responsibilities and introduce a more robust process for their management. They also respond to the recent Children in Need Review and the Home Office White Paper on Domestic Abuse.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION Academic year 2020/21

4.1 Primary

The number of applications for places at Reading’s primary schools has increased this year, and slightly less parents (83.44%) have been allocated their first choice for their children than in previous years. This year a new Primary School Green Park Village Academy is opening in Green Park.

The table below shows the number of applications for the last 3 years:

	2020	2019	2018
Number of applicants	2042	1882	2102
Percentage of 1st Preference offers	83.44%	87.35%	84.02%
Percentage of Second Preference offers	8.85%	6.75%	8.80%
Percentage of Third Preference offers	2.76%	2.66%	2.47%
Percentage of Fourth Preference offers	1.19%	0.85%	1.05%
Percentage of pupils offered a divert	3.33%	1.19%	3.62%
Percentage of pupils allocated to other LA schools	10.63%	11.16%	9.61%

Overall 96.24% of children were offered one of their 4 preferences.

4.2 Secondary

This year saw 72.67% children allocated their first preference which was higher than the previous 2 years.

Overall 92.13% of children were offered one of their 4 preferences.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1** The admission schemes contribute to the aims of Ensuring that there is good education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading

- 5.2** It also contributes to the aims to establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit

6 ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019.
- 6.2 In order to support the Council's commitment, children are placed as near as possible to their local school. Parental choice and the need to divert children to other schools that are not their preference, means that some children are placed in schools outside their local community. This can have an impact on travel by public transport and in cars.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".
- 7.2 This duty has been met. We have a statutory duty to consult every 7 years on the coordinated scheme for school admissions. We last consulted between 17 October 2018 and 10 December 2018. The outcome from that was report to ACE on the 14 February 2019.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Compliance with School Admissions Code (2014)

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None arising directly from this report

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.