

Meeting:	Harrow Admissions Forum
Date:	3 November 2008
Subject:	To respond to a query from an Admission Forum member about a child not allocated a local school
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Heather Clements, Director Schools and Children's Development
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Anjana Patel, Schools and Children's Development
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1: Summary

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Recommendations:

To note the information provided in response to a request for information from a Member of the Harrow Admissions Forum

SECTION 2 - REPORT

Background

Parent made an application for a Rising 5 place as follows:

APPLIED FOR	HOME TO SCHOOL DISTANCE
School A	0.502 miles
School B	0.327 miles
School C	0.780 miles

When making their application parents are strongly advised to name four schools in order of preference. This family only gave three preferences. If family had included Norbury on their application they would have been offered a place. The distance from home to Norbury School is 0.452 miles. We were able to offer up to a distance of 0.525 miles.

The reason place at Roxeth Manor was offered is at that time it was the closest school with a vacancy to the family's home.

Admissions Officers appreciate how disappointing it when it is not possible to offer a more local school for a child. We also understand families' concerns about the availability of primary school places. Earlier in the year there were a number of media reports that this was an issue across London. Harrow was one of only 13 London councils able to offer a school place for all primary school children. More than 7 out of 10 pupils in Harrow were offered a place in their parents' preferred community primary school for September 2008. Only 143 out of 2050 (ie 7%) were in the same situation as this family, in that they were offered a school that parents had not named on the application form.

The parents exercised their right of appeal. At the Independent Appeal Panel hearing they were given every opportunity to tell the Members of the Panel why:

1. Their child would have been offered a place if the admission arrangements had been properly implemented;
and / or
2. The decision to refuse admission was not one which a reasonable admission authority would have made in the circumstances of the case.

The Independent Appeal Panel did not allow the appeal.

Although the family had not applied for other schools, officers in the Admissions Services were aware of their situation. Later in the year the Admissions Service contacted the family about the availability of places at two schools closer to their home than Roxeth Manor, which is 1.901 miles from home to school. These were Longfield First (1.053 miles) and Grange (1.092 miles). The family was asked if they would like to make an application for these schools. At that time the family did not feel either of these schools was acceptable due to the distance from home to school and therefore declined to apply. If they had chosen to apply they would have had 14 working days in which to accept or reject the offer.

The Admissions Service is not aware of other families who have refused to accept an alternative school offer and who not found a suitable alternative school either at the start of term or currently.

The child concerned is on the waiting for four Harrow community primary schools.

Waiting list

Under the current Code of Practice on Admissions, admission authorities are not required to maintain a waiting list for oversubscribed schools. Where waiting lists are kept, then this information must be included in the published information about admission arrangements. The published information should make it clear that children will be ranked in the same order as the published oversubscription criteria. Waiting lists **must** be clear, fair and objective and **must not** give priority to children based on the date either their application was received or their name was added to the list. For example, if a child moves to an area outside the normal admissions round and has higher priority against the published oversubscription criteria, they **must** be ranked above those with lower priority already on the list. Admission authorities **must** notify parents of where their child has been placed on a waiting list but **must not** give any indication of the likelihood of being offered a place as their position may change.

The practical impact of this is that a child's position on the waiting list is not static. S/he can move up the waiting list if a family who has been offered a place advises this is no longer required. The place is then available to offer to the child at the top of the waiting list and all other children move up the list. However, s/he can also move down the waiting list if another family with a higher priority under the admission rules ask for their child to go on the waiting list.

The Department for Children, Schools & Families has just closed consultation on a new Code of Practice (COP), likely to come into force sometime in 2009 for the 2010-11 admissions round. The new COP makes it a duty for all admission authorities to maintain a waiting list for oversubscribed schools. There is no other proposal to change the operation of waiting lists in the new draft COP.

Waiting lists and appeals are two separate processes. Children are offered a place from the waiting list when a vacancy occurs and the child who is first on the list is offered that place. The appeal process is where a school is full and parents are appealing for a child to be admitted over the school's planned admission number. Legally there is no role for Independent Appeal Panels to change a child's position of the waiting list. Their only role is to consider and decide on the parent's appeal.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Performance Issues

There are no performance issues arising from this report.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: John Stansfield	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 22 October 2008		
Name: Rosemarie Martin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 24 October 2008		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Madeleine Hitchens, Manager Place Planning & Admissions – 020 8424 1398 madeleine.hitchens@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: N/A: