

**LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORT
TO
THE SCHOOLS ADJUDICATOR
FROM**

Harrow Council

30 JUNE 2009

Report Cleared by: Madeleine Hitchens, Manager, Place Planning & Admissions Service

Date submitted: 30 June 2009

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SECTION 1

FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR IN WHICH THE REPORT IS MADE - 2008 - 2009

Please complete using data/information for the period 1 September 2008 to date of report

Code 4.9 a) (i) how well the Fair Access Protocol has worked and how many children have been admitted to each school in the area under the protocol;

The Code at 3.44 requires (1) each local authority to have a Fair Access Protocol and (2) all schools and Academies to participate in their LA area's protocol

- a) Please confirm that the LA has a Fair Access Protocol that has been agreed with all the relevant schools in its area. YES

Protocol not yet agreed by all schools and academies?

NO

- b) Give your assessment of how well the Fair Access Protocol has worked since 1 September 2008:

- a. in placing children in schools;

Very Good. As can be seen from the attached spreadsheet, some schools have received more referrals than others. This relates to the overall level of subscription in each school. Also that some pupils referred through the FAP have subsequently left the schools and other have been referred.

- b. the co-operation of schools and Academies in implementing the protocol; and

Good

- c. any issues you have had in implementing the protocol.

Placement of managed move/permanently excluded pupils can sometimes be slow.

- c) In Appendix A, please record for each school the number of children directed to (column O) and admitted (column P) to the school under the protocol between 1 September 2008 and date of report.

Code 4.9 a) (ii) whether primary schools are complying with infant class size legislation

Please include in your comments the number of schools where qualifying measures are being taken.

St John Fisher RC First & Middle School – 1 over in Year 1
Child admitted Jun 08 with a LAC status
No qualifying measures taken

St George's Primary Catholic School – 1 over in Year 1 (child won an appeal in Reception). School has a Polish support teacher working with the class to achieve teaching groups of 30.

Code 4.9 a) (iii) the number of admissions appeals held for each and every school in the area, and the number of appeals that were upheld.

Please insert the data covering the period 1 September 2008 to the date of the report in Appendix A to show for each school:

- column Q - the number of appeals held;
- column R - the number of appeals upheld; and
- column S - the number of appeals pending from the date of the report onwards.

Code 4.9 a) iv the extent to which the local authority and appeal panels in the area complied with the requirements of the Appeals Code, with reference to ensuring the timeliness and transparency of appeals, effective communications with parents and any other relevant matter.

Please include in your comments, where there is evidence of non-compliance, what action have you taken.

Harrow Council is aware of the requirements of the School Admission Appeals Code and has ensured up to date training of its admission appeal panel members. All persons involved in the running of the Appeals Hearings are fully trained and arrangements are in place to train clerks separately from panel members in line with the new Code requirements.

Appeals are organised in accordance with identified timelines and paperwork is provided to all parties as required, with any additional information circulated to all upon receipt.

The clerks brief the panel members and the parents separately. Clerks and Panel members are trained to ensure that parties are fully aware of the appeals process and the effect of determination.

Three complaints were received in the last year regarding the outcome of an appeal, via the Local Government Ombudsman. One of the complaints was treated as premature and the other two found no maladministration in respect of the conduct of the appeal hearing

4.9 d) iii any other matters which affect the fairness of admission arrangements for schools for schools in the area.

Please complete with reference to Choice Advice provided to parents applying for a secondary school place for the 2009/2010 school year.

Appendix 5 of the Code requires local authorities to provide an independent Choice Advice service that is focused on supporting the families who most need support in navigating the secondary school admissions process (paragraph 5). Choice Advice must be independent and free from any potential conflict of interest between the need of the local authority to allocate places and the advice that parents receive (paragraph 8). As a minimum, local authorities must ensure that Choice Advisers are not in the same management chain or reporting lines as the local authority's admissions staff (paragraph 9).

- a) Please confirm that your local authority has an independent Choice Advice service in place.

YES

- b) Please explain how you ensure the independence of the Choice Advice provided (for example, the Choice Advice service may be situated in the Parent Partnership service or Family Information Service).

Harrow's Transition Support Service is based at the Harrow Teachers' Centre, under the management of the Head of Harrow's Tuition Service.

- c) Please confirm that your Choice Adviser(s) are in not in the same line management chain or reporting lines as staff on the admissions team.

NO (See above)

Choice Advice must be targeted at those parents who most need support with the secondary school admissions process (paragraph 10). Local authorities and Choice Advisers should market their service to ensure that they reach the families most in need of their support and that other relevant agencies and professionals are aware of the service they provide (paragraph 11). Choice Advisers should be proactive in reaching 'hard to reach' parents and should develop good links with organisations that may be able to refer parents to them (paragraph 12).

- d) Please explain how you ensure Choice Advice reaches those parents who are most in need of it.
- Use of data regarding deprivation (eg FSM) and targeting at the most deprived areas.
 - Good links with schools to identify children and families in most need.
 - Developing good links and relationships with internal services (e.g. Ethnic Minority Achievement Service(including Traveller Education Service), Admissions Service, Education Welfare Service, etc) and external agencies (e.g. community and voluntary groups, churches, mosques, etc.) to identify and support Hard to Reach groups.
 - Quarterly network meetings with 4 neighbouring boroughs, Ealing, Hertfordshire, Hillingdon and Hounslow, to share good practice, ideas and information.
 - Leaflet drops in schools, children's centre, libraries, and community centres to ensure public knowledge of service
- e) Describe how has Choice Advice contributed to the fairness of the admissions process.
- By targeting the most hard to reach groups (see above).
 - Ensuring as many parents as possible make on-time applications.
 - Meetings with groups of parents
 - Providing individual advice and support as appropriate.
 - Providing independent, up to date and accurate advice.
 - Translators arranged for those parents who have English as a second language.
 - Use of school-based parent ambassador to identify and support parents in understanding of the admission process and to help them make informed decisions.
 - Q & A sessions for parents only.
 - Assemblies held for year 7 pupils to explain transition process

Local authorities may provide Choice Advice at the primary school admission stage and for in-year applications (paragraph 5).

- f) Choice Advice is offered at the primary admissions stage?

YES

- g) Choice Advice is offered for in-year applications?

YES

It is good practice for Choice Advisers to provide support during the appeals process, particularly to those parents who accessed Choice Advice at the application stage.

- h) The Choice Adviser provides support during the appeals process?

YES.

- TSOs provide full support throughout the appeals process.
- Individual cases are assessed to determine the level of support required and if necessary a TSO would accompany a parent into an appeal purely to support but not to deliver the appeal.

- i) We plan to provide support during the appeals process in future?

We plan to continue with support as above.

SECTION 2

FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR WHICH STARTS AFTER THE REPORT IS MADE – 2009-2010:

Code 4.9 b) (i) the extent to which admission arrangements for schools in the authority's area serve the interests of children in care, children with disabilities, children with special educational needs and service children.

Note: You may wish to point out if specialist staff from within the Council has contributed to this report.

Contributors to the report:

- Legal services
- Democratic services
- Transition support officers

Code 4.9 b) (ii) the effectiveness of co-ordination.

Note: You may wish to report on the authority's assessment of the effectiveness of any scheme for co-ordinating:

- a) the admission of pupils to relevant schools in the authority's area in the next academic year to begin after the date of the report, and
- b) the admission of pupils in the authority's area to other relevant schools in that academic year.

Secondary transfer to Harrow community high schools is at 12+ (ie Year 8) and to Harrow voluntary aided schools is at 11+ (ie Year 7). Harrow therefore has two schemes of co-ordination one for pupils transferring to Harrow community high schools and one for pupils transferring to Harrow's voluntary aided schools and other schools outside the authority where pupils transfer in Year 7.

Harrow's 12+ transfer scheme accepts applications from Harrow residents and applicants who live in other council areas. This scheme has run effectively since the introduction of co-ordinated admissions. Applicants have found it simple and easy to use.

Harrow's 11+ transfer scheme deals with application for Harrow resident's only. Because there are no 11+ community schools in Harrow, applicants who are not successful in gaining a place in a Harrow voluntary aided school or a school outside the borough are given full information to ensure their children have a place in year 7 in a Harrow community primary school, where there is sufficient capacity to accommodate all demand.

SECTION 3

FOR ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN DETERMINED IN THE APRIL IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE DATE OF THE REPORT IS MADE (determined by 15 April 2009 for admission in September 2010):

Code 4.9 c) (i) a statement of whether or not admission arrangements for maintained schools in the area complied with the mandatory requirements of this Code and admissions law.

Are you satisfied that the admission arrangements for all maintained schools in your area are fully compliant with the Code?

YES

If NO, please specify what action you are taking – please see paragraph “Referring objections to the Schools Adjudicator” on page 10.

Following the compliance exercise in 2008, the Chief Adjudicator wrote to all local authorities with details of where the admission arrangements for schools in their area may not be compliant with the Code. Subsequently, local authorities were asked to report on the action that had been taken to amend the arrangements.

Are you satisfied that all the necessary action that was said to be needed has been taken for the arrangements determined by 15 April 2009?

YES

If you are not completely satisfied, what further action are you taking?

The Schools Adjudicator and local authority reports

*Code 4.10 local authority reports play an important part in monitoring schools’ compliance with this Code and ensuring an open and fair admissions system. The Schools Adjudicator **must** ensure that admission arrangements which come to his attention via local authority reports, and any Admission Forum reports that he receives comply with this Code and admissions legislation. This will form the basis of an annual report to the Secretary of State which will also include how fair access is being achieved locally. The Schools Adjudicator’s annual report to the Secretary of State on fair access replaces the biennial report of the Schools Commissioner.*

*Code 4.11 where a local authority report, under section 88P of the SSFA 1998, states that admission arrangements for maintained schools do not or may not conform with statutory requirements or the mandatory requirements of this Code, the Schools Adjudicator **must** decide whether the arrangements are compliant. In the case of Academies he may advise the Secretary of State on whether he considers the arrangements are compliant and the Secretary of State will reach a decision on any changes that are necessary.*

Referring objections to the Schools Adjudicator

*Code 4.12 local authorities **must** refer an objection to the Schools Adjudicator if they consider, or are made aware of any admission arrangements proposed by any other admission authority that are unlawful, that do not comply with the mandatory requirements or guidelines in this Code, or that appear to be unfair, unclear and subjective or encouraged social segregation. Local authorities **must** refer the objection as soon as such admission arrangements come to their attention. Local authorities may refer such an objection with their report or separately.*

*Code 4.13 local authorities **must** also consider carefully any representations they receive from parents about the admission arrangements for schools for which they are not the admission authority and whether they will use their power to make an objection to the Authority.*

Using Appendix A, please identify any schools (column U) that you have referred to the OSA, or may be referring to the OSA by the 31 July 2009.

SECTION 4

OTHER MATTERS:

Code 4.9 d) (i) details about the current membership of the Admission Forum for the area

Local Authority Members:

3 Councillors

Community Schools Representatives:

1 Primary Headteacher
1 Secondary Headteacher

Others:

1 Jewish School Representative
1 Roman Catholic School Representative
1 Church of England School Representative
1 Church of England Diocese Representative + Chairman
1 Catholic Schools Diocese Representative
1 Primary Elected Parent Governor Representative
1 Secondary Elected Parent Governor Representative
1 Temporary representative for Harrow Council for Racial Equality
1 Early Years Development Partnership Representative

School Members

12 Representatives from Primary/Secondary/VA Schools

Democratic Services are in the process of reorganising the membership in line with the regulations which came into effect on 10 February 2009. A report is being submitted to the June Cabinet to address the provision of Councillors on the Forum. After this has been resolved we will be seeking nominations for all groups.

Please list the bodies represented and the number of representatives in each category. Do **NOT** give the names of members.

Please add any comments on the transition from the previous to the new constitution of the Forum; the effectiveness of the Forum in challenging non-compliant admission arrangements; the contribution of the Forum in promoting fair access.

The transition to the new constitution has gone smoothly. Forum Members were provided with copies of admission arrangements for all own admission authority schools and a table detailing where they met or did not meet the code of practice. The Forum wrote to a number of own admission authority schools highlighting areas of non-compliance (most of which were of a very minor nature).

The Admission Forum may make a report to the Schools Adjudicator. If the Forum wishes to make such a report it would be helpful to include the report with the report from the local authority. Please indicate:

At the next meeting of the HAF, Members will be requested to indicate which of the OSA options they wish to pursue.

Whether or not the Admission Forum is making/submitting a report, please confirm that the Forum has seen, or will see, this LA report.

A copy of this report will be presented to the HAF at their next meeting.

Code 4.9 d) (ii) the proportion of children currently on free school meals at each school in the area.

The data provided by the Local Authority to the DCSF in January 2008 has been “cleaned” and is included in Appendix A at the end of this template.

If the data for 2009 is significantly different please state how it differs.

Please see Appendix B

Using and interpreting the data, please comment on any features associated with Fair Access to allocation of school places and meeting parental preferences.

None

Code 4.9 d) (iii) any other matters which affect the fairness of admission arrangements for schools in the area.

Please provide evidence about or any information, that in your view affect the fairness of admission arrangements by improving or reducing the fairness for schools in your area.

None

SECTION 5

RANDOM ALLOCATION OF SCHOOL PLACES

1. Was random allocation being used in any way by the local authority in allocating places at community and/or voluntary controlled schools for September 2009:

(a) infant/primary/middle deemed primary schools?

NO

If yes, please specify how?

(b) in secondary/middle deemed secondary schools?

YES

If yes, please specify how?

Random allocation has been used for over twenty years to allocate places at Harrow's only single sex community girls' school. However, historically this school has not been oversubscribed by first preference applications.

2. Do the determined admission arrangements for admission in 2010 use random allocation in the same way as 2009 arrangements?

YES – for single sex girls' school

NO – for all other community schools.

If no, please specify the changes that have been made.

3. What are your views on whether the outcomes of random allocation as used by the local authority result in fair outcomes for parents?

It works well in the circumstances used for the only community girls' school.

4. What evidence do you have of parental reaction to the use of random allocation and parental understanding of how the system works?

General conversations with parents indicate that they find the idea of random allocation unfair as a means of allocating schools places. Two things that come up frequently are:

Parents have no way of judging their likelihood of getting a place at a particular school

Parents are unhappy that they do not know their child's waiting list position.

5. For all foundation and voluntary aided schools in your area, please indicate in Appendix A (column T), those schools that use random allocation in any part of its admission arrangements.

SECTION 6

ADMISSION OF TWINS TO THE SAME SCHOOL

1a). What is your policy on the admission of twins (and multiple births) to primary schools?

Places are offered to twins, triplets and other multiple-birth children in the parent's preferred school provided that the school has places.

Where twins are concerned and one twin has a statement of SEN that names a specific school the other twin will be treated as having a sibling link for that academic year.

b). What is your policy when the last place of the admission number is allocated to one twin (or fewer than all born in a multiple birth)?

In the event that the school cannot accommodate all children, places will be offered in another school unless specifically instructed to do otherwise by parent/carer.

2a). What is your policy on the admission of twins (and multiple births) to secondary school?

Places are offered to twins, triplets and other multiple-birth children in the parent's preferred school provided that the school has places.

Where twins are concerned and one twin has a statement of SEN that names a specific school the other twin will be treated as having a sibling link for that academic year.

In the event that the school cannot accommodate all children, places will be offered in another school unless specifically instructed to do otherwise by parent/carer.

b) What is your policy when the last place of the admission number is allocated to one twin (or fewer than all born in a multiple birth)?

In the event that the school cannot accommodate all children, places will be offered in another school unless specifically instructed to do otherwise by parent/carer.

3) Please indicate below, those Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools within your area, that do not have a policy on admission of twins (and multiple births).

One VA primary school does not specifically refer to multiple births but a default definition is included in the primary booklet by the LA to advise there were no information is given by school(s) the default definitions will apply.