

BRIEFING FOR NURSERY ADMISSIONS WORKING GROUP ON COMPLAINT MADE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN

COMMENTS FROM OMBUDSMAN ON NURSERY ADMISSIONS

A parent made a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman when his child was not offered a place in any nursery class attached to a Harrow school. The basis of the complaint was that he had been advised by the school that he could only apply for one school, even though the form asks parents to list up to three preferences. Since nursery admissions were delegated to schools, headteachers have been responsible for all the arrangements and timescales for nursery admissions. However, over time some misconceptions appear to have arisen about the Council's policy and arrangements for allocating nursery places.

The Ombudsman decided not to pursue the complaint as, in his view, the action of the Council and school staff had not led to a different outcome than would otherwise have occurred. However, the Ombudsman raised some specific issues that he felt the Council should address in its review.

COMMENT	ACTION
Greater clarity over priority in date of birth order	Information on how places are offered in date of birth order to be expanded to make is absolutely clear that the oldest children are offered places first.
Greater clarity both in information and advice given to schools on the administration of the Council's admission policy	Clear written guidelines on administering council policy, including a timetable for applications and offers, to be provided annually to all nursery schools
Clarity on how places are offered from the waiting list and how information is shared between schools about outstanding applications and vacancies	The Council, In collaboration with Headteachers, to provide clear written on an annual basis to all nursery schools
The Council to correct the misconception that parents can only apply for one school	Clear written guidelines to be provided on an annual basis to all nursery schools
To invite the complainant to make a submission to the review of the Council's policy and procedures on admission to nursery	Any proposals to change the arrangements for admission to nursery classes will be included in the annual consultation on admission arrangements, which all parents, schools and community groups will be invited to comment on. A personal letter will be sent to the complainant drawing his attention to this consultation and asking for his comments.