

Primary Offer Day and School Admissions Update: Webinar Thursday 25 March 2021

Alan Michell

Head of School Admissions and Fair Access



Plan for today's session

- Arrangements for Primary offer day (16th April 2021)
- Appeals
- In-year admissions processes
- Pupil Movement Form and Schools Portal
- Fair Access
- Questions

Arrangements for Primary Offer Day: 16 April 2021

Background

- Last year new arrangements were successfully introduced for the acceptance and refusal of offers made on and after Primary offer day.
- The same approach was adopted for improved Primary offers made after offer day.
- This was in direct response to the first national lockdown and the impact on schools as well as families.
- The offer letters sent to families informed them that offers would be automatically accepted unless families emailed School Admissions to confirm they were refusing the offer.

Advantages of the new arrangements

- The new arrangements streamlined the process for parents/carers and moved the system away from parents/carers having to return paper reply slips to schools.
- This ensured that all parents/carers, particularly those living in more challenging circumstances, retained a school offer.
- There was a reduction in the numbers of children who were without a school place in September or who were at risk of becoming children missing from education.
- Parents/carers who wanted to refuse a school place were still able to do so by email.

Process for Primary Offer Day: 16th April 2021

- Offer letters will state that unless the offer of a place is refused, it will be assumed that the offer has been accepted.
- A dedicated email address (AdmissionOfferRefusal@birmingham.gov.uk) will again be provided for parents/carers to email us if they wish to refuse the place offered.
- All refusals received up to the stated deadline 30th April 2021 will be updated on our records, and places will be withdrawn accordingly.
- Schools will be able to view all processed withdrawals on the Schools Portal.
- The School Admissions and Fair Access Team will also provide schools with a weekly report showing any offers that have been withdrawn.
- Your allocated School Advisor will also be able to support with any related matters/enquiries.

IMPORTANT

- As parents/carers will be informed that they are not required to confirm acceptance of the place that was offered to their child, offers that have been made must stand unless a refusal is received from parents/carers.
- Schools should not withdraw any offer unless/until they are informed that a formal refusal has been received by School Admissions.
- Schools should follow-up with the parents/carers of any children who do not take up their place at the start of term in September through their normal attendance procedures.
- The above approach will also help schools and the School Appeals team to defend any appeals submitted as school places will be retained by families unless they confirm in writing that they want to refuse.

Appeals Process

- The 2020 transfer round appeals were delivered successfully in Birmingham using virtual panels accessible to all parties using any device with internet access.
- The process was supported by a strong partnership between School Admissions, schools and colleagues in Legal Services.
- The temporary appeals regulations, put in place by the DfE in April 2020 to support admission authorities to deliver appeals during the pandemic, have now been extended to September 2021, and therefore virtual appeal panels will continue.
- Reception appeals are anticipated to start taking place in mid July.
- **The refusal-only approach will strengthen schools' cases for non-admission at hearings, as appellants are less likely to be without a school place.**
- If you have any further questions about the appeals process, please feel free to email SchoolsAppeals@birmingham.gov.uk.

In-Year Admissions Process

- In Birmingham parents apply directly to schools for In-Year places
- Parents are able to apply to schools regardless of whether there are vacancies
- Schools should promptly process all In-Year applications and inform families of the outcome
- Where applications are not successful, children are added to the relevant waiting list and families are informed of their right of appeal
- Schools are required to inform BCC (via the Schools Portal) of all In-Year applications received and their outcomes, and provide details of places available for in-year admission
- When we notified that an application for a child who is without a school place has been refused, a place is allocated at the closest school to the child's home address which has places available in the relevant year group
- **Robust In-Year processes are crucial to ensure children are tracked and do not go 'missing from education'**
- If you have any questions relating to the In-Year admissions process you can contact the team by email at admissions@birmingham.gov.uk

Pupil Movement Form (PMF) and the Schools' Portal

- A Pupil Movement form should be completed each time a child is removed from a school's roll (other than if they are being removed at the end of the phase – these will be part of the normal transfer process between Infant/Junior, Primary/Secondary or end of Year 11)
- The PMF should be completed in full via the Schools Portal
- A child should not be removed from roll if you do not have all of the relevant information to support their removal see *Guidance on Deletion from Roll – 2019*
<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/school-attendance>
- The PMF contains all information required by the removal from roll regulations and is in place to allow BCC to track children to their new destination.
- The PMF is added to the child's record and provides a picture of their educational history, movements between schools and protects and safeguards the child.
- The Admissions team completes checks to ensure the child is confirmed to be at their new destination.
- These checks are necessary to ensure that children are safeguarded
- If schools have conducted all the necessary checks and have been unable to identify a destination for the child, a referral should be made to the Children Missing Education (CME) team. <https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/CME>

Fair Access Process

- The School Admission Code 2014 sets out the basic requirements for a Fair Access Protocol
- Each local authority must have a Fair Access Protocol, agreed with the majority of the schools in its area
- The purpose of the Fair Access Protocol is to ensure that outside the normal admission round, children without school places, especially the most vulnerable are admitted to school as quickly as possible
- All admission authorities and all schools are required to participate in the protocol
- The protocol supports a 'fair' distribution of children, who might have difficulty in securing a school place, across schools

Fair Access Process

- Fair Access Referrals should be completed via the Schools Portal
- We invite the six nearest schools to the child's home address to consider the referral for admission before submission to the Central Primary panel and if the school accepts the child they receive a Fair Access Credit and the case is closed
- Panel Paperwork includes: the referral, background information, any exceptional circumstances that the school have submitted, and the scoring matrix
- The Central Primary Panel is chaired by Head of Service and attendees include HT representatives and COBS
- After the panel decision has been made the nominated school is notified and asked to make arrangements for the child's induction
- If schools do not accept a child a clear escalation process is followed
- This may include a referral to the Secretary of State for their intervention
- If you have any questions relating to the Fair Access Protocol or the Schools' Portal please email admict@birmingham.gov.uk

Link to the Fair Access Protocol:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20119/school_admissions/587/in-year_school_admissions/3

Further information

Further information on school admissions can be found by visiting our website:

www.birmingham.gov.uk/schooladmissions

Statutory Guidance on Children Missing Education 2016 can be found at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

Parents/carers can obtain further advice and guidance by calling Children's Services on **0121 303 1888**