

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

DATE: 15th March 2017

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PART I

FOR INFORMATION

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

1. **Purpose of Report**

To provide information about school admissions in Slough.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Committee is requested to note the report

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Priority 1 - Protecting vulnerable children

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

Outcome - Our children and young people will have the best start in life and opportunities to give them positive lives.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no financial implications.

(b) **Risk Management**

There are no risks in relation to the recommendation

(c) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

There are no Human Rights Act or other legal implications relating to the recommendations of this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for the completion of an EIA in relation to this report

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 All schools and Local Authorities (LAs) have to follow the School Admissions Code. The Code is reviewed regularly by the DfE and the current version was issued in December 2014.

5.2 The main areas that the Code covers are:

- How school admission policies are agreed, including the consultation process.
- How parents apply for places and the deadlines.
- How LAs co-ordinate the admission process when parents live in one LA and apply for a school in another.
- How place offers are made.
- The appeals process.

5.3 All schools must publish details about how they prioritise applications when there are more applicants than places. These admissions arrangements are reviewed each year and all schools except community schools agree their own admissions arrangements. The LA decides for community schools.

5.4 The LA must then publish a parents' booklet before the application process begins. The latest version is available on SBC's website.

5.5 Reception Applications

- Schools admit children to their reception year group each September. The children admitted have their 5th birthday during the reception year.
- Each LA provides a common application form (CAF) for parents who want to apply for a reception place.
- Parents apply on the CAF provided by their home LA, even if they want to apply for places in other LA areas. Parents can express a preference for 3 schools and they put these in order on the CAF.
- For admissions in September 2017, parents completed their application between the 1st September 2016 and 15th January 2017. These are national dates.
- Between January 2017 and April 2017 LAs work with schools in their area and neighbouring LAs to process the applications.
- Each LA is responsible for offering every applicant resident in their LA one school place on the national offer day, which is 16th April 2017. The LA must offer a place at the highest preference school at which a place is available.
- Parents have the right to appeal if they have not been offered a place at their preferred school(s).
- The Admissions Team has no discretion in how places are offered. It must follow the national guidance and the admissions arrangements for each school. Parents often contact the Admissions Team, their Councillor or their MP about the outcome of the process if they are dissatisfied about

not being offered a place at their preferred school. The advice parents are given is that their child will be added to the waiting list of their preferred school(s) but there is no guarantee that a place will become available, so they should consider accepting the place offered. Parents are also advised that they can appeal to an independent panel if they wish. Appeal hearings take place during the summer term and only an appeal panel has the power to offer a place at the preferred school.

5.6 The table below shows the number of reception applications received and the proportion receiving an offer at one of their preferred schools

	2013 Number	%	2014 Number	%	2015 Number	%	2016 Number	%
1 st Preference	2016	88	1978	86	2114	86	2034	85
2 nd Preference	165	7	180	8	212	9	200	8
3 rd Preference	52	2	58	2	60	2	76	3
Other	71	3	90	4	79	3	87	4
Total	2304	100	2306	100	2465	100	2397	100

5.7 Secondary Transfer Applications

- Schools admit children to year 7 each September. The children admitted have their 12th birthday during year 7.
- Each LA must provide a common application form (CAF) for parents who want to apply for a year 7 place.
- Parents apply on the CAF provided by their home LA, even if they want to apply for places in other LA areas. Parents can express a preference for 6 schools and they put these in order on the CAF.
- For admissions in September 2017, parents completed their application between the 1st September 2016 and 31st October 2016. This is the national closing date for year 7 applications.
- Between October 2016 and February 2017 LAs worked with schools in their area and neighbouring LAs to process the applications.
- Each LA is responsible for offering every applicant resident in their LA one school place on the national offer day, which is 1st March 2017. The LA must offer a place at the highest preference school at which a place is available.
- Parents have a right to appeal if they have not been offered a place at their preferred school(s).
- As with reception applications the LA has no discretion in how places are offered. It must follow the national guidance and the admissions arrangements for each school. Parents have the right of appeal and the advice given to parents is the same as above for reception applicants.

5.8 The table below shows the number of year 7 applications received and the Proportion receiving an offer at one of their preferred schools

	2014 Number	%	2015 Number	%	2016 Number	%	2017 Number	%
1 st Preference	1089	61	1366	72	1399	71	1488	69
2 nd Preference	268	15	258	14	246	12	273	13
3 rd Preference	120	7	106	6	118	6	135	6
4 th -6 th Preference	179	10	82	4	132	7	136	6
Other	131	7	82	4	74	4	131	6
Total	1787	100	1894	100	1969	100	2163	100

5.9 In-Year Applications

- These are applications received from parents of pupils who are either moving into Slough during the school year or wish to transfer between schools in Slough. The Admissions Code does not require LAs to co-ordinate this process. LAs can allow parents to apply directly to schools. However it would be very difficult to monitor the number of applications received and the outcome and ensure there were sufficient school places without this data.
- In Slough the process is fully co-ordinated and parents apply through the LA. Slough LA has an agreement with its schools to give priority to applicants without places before those transferring between schools, as the LA has a duty to provide education. The in-year application process is below
- The Admissions Team provides a primary and secondary in-year application form.
- Parents complete the form and return it to the Admissions Team as soon as possible. There are no closing dates as this process runs throughout the year.
- The Admissions Team offers each applicant a place either at their preferred school or if this is not possible at the nearest school with a vacancy. Vacancy data is collected from schools each week.
- There are no offer dates as the process runs throughout the year. Most applications are processed within 4 weeks although complex applications may take longer. For example a pupil may have moved into Slough without any school history.
- The LA has no discretion in how places are offered. It must follow the national guidance and the admissions arrangements for each school. Parents are given advice about accepting the place offered and they also have the right of appeal. Appeals are held regularly throughout the year.

5.10 The table below shows the number of in year applications received each month during 2016. These were pupils who had arrived in Slough and required school places.

Month	Primary	Secondary
January 2016	60	23
February 2016	59	9
March 2016	72	23
April 2016	58	18
May 2016	66	8
June 2016	80	14
July 2016	115	22
August 2016	93	34
September 2016	193	83
October 2016	100	34
November 2016	82	26
December 2016	59	18
Total	1037	312

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

The School Admissions process relies on sufficient places being available for all applicants. There are close links with place planning and a detailed report on school place planning will be presented to Cabinet on 20th March 2017.

7. **Conclusion**

The school admissions process in Slough follows the Admissions Code and involves processing almost 6000 applications each year. The number will grow as the school population increases. The process is fully co-ordinated by the LA which ensures that there is reliable data available for school place planning.

8. **Background Papers**

- '1' - School Admissions Code
- '2' - Primary and secondary Schools in Slough – A parents' guide to admissions 2017