



Report to:	EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD
Date:	17 October 2023
Reporting Officer:	Catherine Moseley, Head of Access Services
Subject:	SCHOOL ALLOCATIONS AND ADMISSIONS UPDATE
Report Summary:	The following report informs the Board of the successful school allocations for Reception and Year 7 earlier in the year as well as in year transfers and children placed under the Fair Access Protocol. It also shares the annual report to the School Adjudicator.
Recommendations:	It is recommended that the Board: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the content of the report. 2. Agrees the content and submission of the 2023 annual report to be submitted to the Office of the School Adjudicator and its publication on the Tameside Council website as required by the School Admissions Code.
Corporate Plan:	The proposals contained within this report will support the theme of starting well, aspirations and hopes.
Policy Implications:	There are no policy implication arising from this report
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	This report provides an update in relation to school admissions and allocations performance. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	The annual report ensures the Council's compliance with its statutory responsibilities including its duties under the School Admissions Code 2021 as amended.
Risk Management:	All admission authorities are required to follow the School Admissions Code and to fail to do so would risk reputational damage to the Council.
Access to Information:	This report does not contain information, which warrants its consideration in the absence of the Press or members of the public.
Background Information:	The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Catherine Moseley, Head of Access Services
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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council is the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools in the borough but it is also responsible for coordinating the school admissions system for all schools in the borough.
- 1.2 The coordination scheme is published on an annual basis and is the agreed way that all applications for Reception, Year 3 (Stalyhill Junior School) and Year 7 places are allocated. This is a statutory responsibility of the local authority. The coordinated scheme also provides information on how in year transfers are dealt with.
- 1.3 All school admissions in England are guided by the School Admissions Code. As part of the responsibility, every local authority is required to submit an annual report to the School Adjudicator on how effectively the admissions systems works in their area and this needs to be submitted at the end of June each year.
- 1.4 Admissions to school can be a complex picture with a number of different admission authorities in the borough. Within the borough there are:

		Number of schools	Number of admission authorities
Secondary schools	Voluntary aided	2	2
	Academy	10	8
	Community	4	1
	TOTAL	16	11
Primary Schools			
	Voluntary aided	21	21
	Academy	35	14
	Community / voluntary controlled	24	1
TOTAL	80	36	

2. NATIONAL OFFER DAY FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- 2.1 The offer day for Tameside's primary school places was 17 April 2023. Other boroughs may have released their allocations on a different date due to the national offer date of 16 April being on a Sunday. This year, we received 2650 applications for a place in Reception for September 2023. This was similar to last year and in line with the predictions based on birth rates in the borough.
- 2.2 This year we have allocated 2656 places, which is 17 less places than last year reflecting the prevailing low birth rates we have seen in the borough over recent years. 91.9% (2440) of applicants received their first preference school, which was less than last year and reflects a reduction in the number of places available. Overall 98.3% of applicants were allocated one of their preferences compared with 99.1% last year and only 46 applicants did not receive any of their preferences.
- 2.3 The England average in 2023 for applicants getting their first preference primary school was 92.5%. The table below gives more detail over recent years.

OFFER DAY STATS - PRIMARY

	2023			2022			2021		
	No	%	England	No	%	England	No	%	England
Total applications (received by closing date)	2650			2674			2660		
1st preferences	2650			2674			2660		
2nd preferences	1216			1280			1225		
3rd and other preferences	1333			1542			1462		
Total applications from other boroughs (1st prefs)	87	3.3%		82	3.1%		69	2.6%	
Tameside residents applying extra district (1st prefs)	78	2.9%		84	3.1%		68	2.6%	
Total allocated (inc lates)	2656	100.0%		2673	100.0%		2666	100.0%	
1st preferences	2440	91.9%	92.5%	2495	93.3%	92.2%	2515	94.3%	91.8%
2nd preferences	145	5.5%	4.7%	121	4.5%	4.8%	92	3.5%	4.9%
3rd and other preferences	25	0.9%	1.4%	33	1.2%	1.5%	20	0.8%	1.8%
No preference	46	1.7%	1.4%	24	0.9%	1.5%	39	1.5%	1.5%

3. NATIONAL OFFER DAY FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

- 3.1 National offer day for secondary school places was 1 March. In 2023, we received 3374 applications compared to 3231 last year. We have offered 3315 places, which is over 100 more than last year (3207) and in line with our predictions. This is the last of the large year groups coming through from primary schools and numbers begin to drop from this point forward.
- 3.2 Our policy of adding places into our secondary schools continues to pay off and we have been able to offer a significant number of pupils their first preference this year with a slight increase in the percentage from last year. We have been able to offer 85.9% (2846 places) first preferences, which is an increase compared to 85% (2725) first preferences last year. The England average receiving their first preference school in 2023 was 82.6%.
- 3.3 129 pupils have not received one of their preferences but 96.1% of applicants have, the England average for children receiving one of their preferences last year was 95.6%. The table below gives more detail over recent years.

NATIONAL OFFER DAY STATS - SECONDARY

	2023			2022			2021		
	No	%	England	No	%	England	No	%	England
Total applications (received by closing date)	3374			3231			3396		
1st preferences	3374			3231			3396		
2nd preferences	2192			2174			2191		
3rd and other preferences	2123			2108			2270		
Total applications from other boroughs (1st prefs)	262	7.8%		293	9.1%		309	9.1%	
Tameside residents applying extra district (1st prefs)	209	6.2%		211	6.5%		168	4.9%	
Total allocated (inc lates)	3315	100.0%		3207	100.0%		3323	100.0%	
1st preferences	2846	85.9%	82.6%	2725	85.0%	83.5%	2837	85.4%	81.1%
2nd preferences	253	7.6%	8.7%	255	8.0%	8.3%	254	7.6%	9.0%
3rd and other preferences	87	2.6%	4.5%	88	2.7%	4.6%	91	2.7%	5.4%
No preference	129	3.9%	4.4%	139	4.3%	3.6%	141	4.2%	4.5%

4. IN YEAR TRANSFERS

- 4.1 Alongside admitting pupils during the normal admission round, the School Admissions Team also administer in year admissions. The new School Admissions Code, that came into force in September 2021, required all schools to opt into a local authority administered in year admissions scheme. For the school year 2022/23, all schools bar one (Fairfield High School for Girls) in the borough opted in.
- 4.2 The process has been streamlined in that all applications are online and there is now an online portal for all schools to be able to see applications for places at their school immediately. This has speeded up the process of being able to make offers of places for children, particularly those moving into the borough without a school place. One unintended consequence of that is that schools can be unaware that a parent wishes to move their child from a school until after the transfer has occurred. This means that schools are unable to work with the family to try to persuade them to remain at their school. This has been highlighted as an issue for some schools and the School Admissions Team are looking to see if there is anything that can be done from within current resources to mitigate this issue.
- 4.3 The School Admissions Teams aims to process applications within 20 school days but the peaks and flows of applications mean that this deadline is sometimes missed due to volume of applications. This is particularly the case in the run up to the end of school terms, particularly the last half term of the year.

- 4.4 The last school year was an extremely busy year for in year admissions as illustrated in the table below, which compares data to the previous year:

	Applications received (with up to 3 preferences stated):		Requests (school stated as preference) processed:	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
Primary	1605	1529	2529	2647
Secondary	979	982	1385	1416
TOTAL	2581	2511	3914	4063

- 4.5 To give some context, there are approximately 33,000 pupils in Tameside schools meaning that around 7% of pupils are moving schools annually.

5. FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOL PLACEMENTS

- 5.1 The School Admissions Code requires all local authority areas to have a Fair Access Protocol that is agreed with the majority of schools that all schools including academies and free schools must participate. The Protocol is to ensure that, outside the normal admissions round, unplaced pupils, especially the most vulnerable, are found and offered a place quickly, so that the length of time any pupil is out of school is kept to the minimum.

- 5.2 The Fair Access Protocol ensures that no school or academy, including those with available places, is asked to take a disproportionate number of children and young people who have been excluded from other schools or academies or who have challenging behaviour. The following groups of children can be placed under Fair Access:

- a. children either subject to a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan or having had a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan within 12 months at the point of being referred to the FAP (information may be sought from the previous LA).
- b. children living in a refuge or in other Relevant Accommodation at the point of being referred to the FAP.
- c. children from the criminal justice system.
- d. children in alternative provision who need to be reintegrated into mainstream education or who have been permanently excluded but are deemed suitable for mainstream education.
- e. children with special educational needs (but without an education, health and care plan), disabilities or medical conditions.
- f. children who are carers.
- g. children who are homeless.
- h. children in formal kinship care arrangements (as evidenced by either a child arrangements order not relating to either birth parent or a special guardianship order).
- i. children of, or who are, Gypsies, Roma, Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers.
- j. children who have been refused a school place on the grounds of their challenging behaviour and referred to the FAP in accordance with paragraph 3.10 of the Code.
- k. children for whom a place has not been sought due to exceptional circumstances (the local authority will decide whether a child qualifies to be placed via the FAP on this basis, based on the circumstances of the case).
- l. children who have been out of education for 4 or more weeks where it can be demonstrated that there are no places available at any school within a *reasonable distance of their home. This does not include circumstances where a suitable place has been offered to a child and this has not been accepted. (*The reasonable distance will be the statutory walking distance between home and school that the Government thinks a child should be able to walk: three miles for pupils aged 8–16 years).
- m. previously looked after children for whom the local authority has been unable to promptly secure a school place (In most cases, use of the FAP should be unnecessary

for a previously looked after child. The LA is expected to secure a school place promptly for such children and for admission authorities to cooperate with this.

- 5.3 The number of children placed under the Protocol in the last school year compared to the previous school year are as follows:

Type of school	Number of Primary aged children admitted		Number of Secondary aged children admitted	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
Community and voluntary controlled	18	13	2	5
Foundation, voluntary aided and academies	31	58	24	39
Total	49	71	26	44

6. ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SCHOOL ADJUDICATOR

- 6.1 The School Admissions Code requires the Council to produce an annual report on admissions for all the schools. The Report must be published locally and sent to the School Adjudicator by 31 October each year following the admissions round.
- 6.2 The School Adjudicator has a template for the report and the report must cover as a minimum:
- Information about how admission arrangements in the area of the local authority serve the interests of looked after children and previously looked after children, children with disabilities and children with special educational needs, including any details of where problems have arisen.
 - An assessment of the effectiveness of fair access protocols and coordination in their area, including how many children were admitted to each school under them.
 - The number and percentage of lodged and upheld parental appeals.
 - Any other issues the local authority may wish to include
- 6.3 The 2023 report is attached at **Appendix 1** for information. It highlights that the school admissions system in Tameside is effective at placing pupils, particularly our most vulnerable pupils.
- 6.4 The School Adjudicator uses the information submitted by all local authorities as the basis for her annual report.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 As set out at the front of the report.