

School Appeals

Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

March 2024

Presenters:

Laura Gittos

Head of Governance

Jaswinder Kaur

Democratic Services and Systems Manager

Recommendations for decision

The Scrutiny Board is recommended to note:

1. The improvements made within the School Appeals Unit.
2. The preparations underway for normal round of entry.

Purpose and Background

Last year an item was presented to Scrutiny on School Appeals, and we were recommended to present a further update in this municipal year.

Link to report from February 2023 for background and details: [School Appeals Update](#)

School admission appeals are crucial in that they seek to accommodate children who have not received their preferred choice of school.

In relation to appeals for year 3 and above, the appeal panel will consider whether the impact on the child in not attending the preferred school will outweigh the prejudice to the school in admitting an additional child.

In relation to children in key stage 1, the panel will consider whether the decision to refuse admission was one which a reasonable admission authority would have made in the circumstances of the case.

Only a small percentage of appeals are upheld but these appeals will be where there are serious and genuine concerns in relation to the child in question that cannot be addressed by the normal admission arrangements.

These upheld appeals therefore address concerns relating to some of most vulnerable children and families in the city.

The Guidance is clear that admission authorities must not limit the grounds on which an appeal can be made.

Improvements in 2023-24 Municipal Year

Development Area	We said in February 2023	We have done by March 2024
Structure of the School Appeals Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Detailed review and improvements of all job descriptions and person specifications for employees in the School Appeals Unit.• Two additional posts have been advertised to improve resilience and add extra capacity and assistance with peak periods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structure was fully implemented – Officers provide a good service to our residents and are passionate about young people getting the best outcomes.• Ensuring we have stability in the team has now meant we have also been able to plan for resilience in the team with Officers in Governance able to support at critical times should it be needed.
Training and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refresher training will be delivered to Clerks and Panel Members.• All employees will attend customer services, body language and how to deal with difficult situations training due to the emotional nature of the role, and to ensure the parent is supported during what is a difficult period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All employees in School Appeals Unit and Democratic Services have received training on School Admission Appeals to ensure there is resilience within the service.• All employees have also completed• Follow up refresher training scheduled for March 2024.

Improvements in 2023-24 Municipal Year

Development Area	We said in February 2023	We have done by March 2024
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating existing processes for administration and reporting of appeal activities. Focus on the customer, and as a result deliver a better overall service. Release resource to areas of priority. Build capacity within the service. Learn from and apply best practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed webpage content to ensure it is in plain English and provided clarification on which schools the council provides clerking service for. Reviewed school admission appeal form and provided further support and guidance to appellants. Reviewed all correspondence sent to appellants to ensure it is in plain English. Streamlined the number of attachments circulated to appellants. Systems have been updated to ensure data is captured accurately and in one place.
Independent Panel Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase number of panel members. On-going recruitment campaign of panel members. Developing a recruitment campaign plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 new panel members have been recruited. Ongoing recruitment campaign via Wolverhampton Today on Facebook. Existing panel members are offered annual refresher training. To thank our volunteer's afternoon tea with the mayor was arranged in October 2023.

Appeals Submitted – Overview of Data

Type of Appeal	Number Received		Withdrawn		Upheld		Not Upheld	
	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23
Year	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23
Secondary Transfer Year 7	363	405	70	78	45	46	248	281
Reception Intake	110	145	41	53	0	9	69	83
In year transfer*	528	731	80	142	34	88	414	501

*Data as of 26 February 2024 for 2023/24

Preparations for Normal Round of Entry 2024/25

	Secondary	Primary
Offer day	1 March 2024	16 April 2024
Deadline for Appeals to be lodged by:	12 April 2024	15 May 2024
Appeals to be heard by:	17 June 2024	17 July 2024

Appeals lodged after these dates will be heard within 40 school days of the appeal deadline or 30 school days of the appeal being lodged, whichever is the later date.

An indicative timetable has already been produced based on expected appeal numbers and schools have been contacted regarding dates for their appeals to be heard.

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