

School Admissions – Allocation of Reception Places

Ambitious Scrutiny – 11 November 2013



BACKGROUND

The School Admissions Team deals with applications for school entry from all age groups excluding nursery and sixth form admission requests.

By law, children have to be provided with full time education by the term following their fifth birthday. In Plymouth, full time places are offered to children for the September preceding the fifth birthday.

The City Council operates a co-ordinated scheme of admission at the Reception intake as required in law and receives and makes offers on behalf of all admission authorities in the City.

The predicted intake continues to rise in line with national trends and provision is provided on a rolling plan for an increase in place provision to meet this need. The peak birth rate is predicted for September 2025.

Year of entry	Predicted birth rate	School places available	Year of entry	Predicted birth rate	School places available
2013	3026	3167	2016	3133	3302
2014	3008	3212	2017	3200	3317
2015	3144	3287	2025	3369	3542

APPLICATION PROCESS

Under the City's Co-ordinated scheme of admissions, all parents resident in Plymouth will apply for their school place through the City Council. We offer an online application which is well received by parents with a 98% uptake by this method.

Parents are requested to list three schools in their order of preference and are considered for a place at all of the schools that they list. First preference allocations remain high – 89.7% for 2013 entry. 3.83% of the applicants did not receive an offer at any of their preferred schools.

ONGOING ISSUES

(i) Rise in birth rate

The City is making provision through the Basic Need programme to cope with the predicted increase in the birth rate. However, the City is an expanding City and has a transient population. Movement to and from the City is difficult to predict. The increase in the number of applications impacts on the function of the School Admissions Team due to the increase in workload.

(ii) Shortage of places in specified areas of the City

Whilst there is a good 'bank' of available places at the Reception intake, the availability is not always in the areas that the applicant prefers. There are capacity issues in the Efford area and the topography of the area hinders young families walking to alternative schools. There are also issues in Plympton although these were alleviated to some extent by the opening of a free school in Sparkwell. There are also capacity issues in some of our more popular schools – Compton CE Primary School, Hyde Park Junior and Infants Schools, Boringdon Primary School and High View Primary School.

There are capacity issues generally in KSI (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2) in Efford, Plympton and Plymstock and issues in the City Centre in Years 1 and 2.

(iii) Publicity

Parents need to be informed of the need to apply for a school place. A database is built from data from the Early Years finance returns and from data received from the health authority in an attempt to catch those families that do not send their children to an early years setting. Many of the addresses are however out of date as some children no longer resident in the area will be included from the health import.

A letter is sent to every family on the database early in September with a leaflet explaining the application process and timetable. Due to the erroneous address data, there is an anticipated 11% returned 'not known at this address' rate.

All of the information for parents is published on the City website at the start of the September preceding the entry date.

(iv) Infant class size regulations

In law, infant class size is restricted to a maximum of 30 children per class if there is only one qualified teacher in the class. If parents are not allocated a place at their preferred school for their child, they have the right of appeal to an independent panel. The panel are however legally restricted in the information that they can take into account of in an infant class size appeal. Whilst we do issue information to parents to explain this, the information is often not read or understood. This can be particularly upsetting for parents at the appeal hearing.

Parents are offered support either through the School Admissions Team or through Parent Partnership who offer Choice Advice.

Daryl Wallace

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October 2013