

ADMISSIONS POLICY 2018

Report by Service Director, Children and Young People

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

30 January 2018

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report proposes that the revised Scottish Borders Admissions Policy 2018 is approved by Members.**
- 1.2 The previous version was approved in 2012. The current version has been revised to take into account best practice across Scotland. The Policy now includes advice on class composition and establishes a date by which schools will not be expected to re-composite/re-timetable classes. It also updates procedures in terms of waiting lists when placing requests are refused.
- 1.3 The updated Policy is responsive in clarifying procedures in areas which have led to dispute with families in recent years. In particular the process to be followed when parents/carers make placing requests during the school year and when children are unable to get a space in their catchment school during the school year. The changes being made will provide clear guidance to Headteachers and ensure greater stability in class composition after census date in September each year. The changes also provide parents/carers with clear information and have been made in response to parental feedback during times of dispute.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee approve the revised Scottish Borders Council Admission Policy 2018.**

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Legislation

The Legislation relevant to this Policy is:

- (a) Education (Scotland) Act 1980;
- (b) Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 Revised.

3.2 Changes to Policy

The Service has been under pressure from an increasing number of parents enrolling their children after the school term starts in August. This is not an issue when there are available places, but in a number of schools a place only becomes available after the existing classes are re-composited, ie existing classes set up in August have to be re-organised. This causes disruption to the learners in the established classes and much angst amongst parents/carers. The later on in the term, the more disruptive the move becomes and the greater the number of complaints received from parents/carers. The amended Admissions Policy (Appendix 1) (section 7.17) establishes a date, Census day in September, by which schools would only have to re-composite classes at the request of the Director of Children and Young People's Services. There has to be some scope to make changes to class organisation in the first four weeks of the school term as numbers can change quite significantly with children moving into or out of the school catchment area, but beyond census date can have a significant impact on the teacher's planning for the children's learning and upon children's wellbeing. The amended Policy also provides parents/carers with more information regarding composite classes as this is an area that can lead to dispute at school level with parents often challenging the setting up of composite classes. The revised guidance provides greater clarity for all stakeholders. It is important to note that there is no evidence to support that composite classes create any form of detriment to children's learning or wellbeing.

- 3.4 In order to create fairness in placement requests that have been refused due to capacity in a school, the Standing List applies the placement request procedures to those on the waiting list instead of first refusal leading to first offer when a place becomes available, ie a full set of criteria is applied and is detailed within the amended Admissions Policy (Appendix 1) (sections 7.5 and 7.13).
- 3.3 To minimise the effect of re-compositing a class, the Policy states the minimum number of children that can be moved from one class to another. These changes have been made to provide clarification to parents/carers who often seek a change for their child only without consideration of other children in the age grouping.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Admissions Policy 2018 has been amended in consultation with Legal Services and in discussion with Headteachers and Quality Improvement Officers in response to activity in this area in recent years. All changes are

in line with best practice nationally. These changes also provide clarity of procedure linked to School Admissions and will provide a more consistent, fair and equitable approach which will benefit all children during Admission procedures.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

By accepting the recommendations, the cost of transporting catchment pupils will be minimised. The improved clarity of procedures in Admissions will also support Placing Request procedures and reduce the risk of additional teachers having to be placed in a school should a Placing Request Appeal be accepted.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The policy amendments go some way to mitigate risks of dispute between schools and families with particular regard to admissions during the school term, however, it is recognised that these amendments may not fully alleviate all areas of contention. The main risks that the amended policy seeks to mitigate are:

- (a) By not accepting the date by which schools are not required to re-composite classes, there is a risk that classes and pupils' learning may be disrupted all through the school year due to possible re-compositing. It could also lead to additional staff costs.
- (b) By not accepting the minimal number and gender mix of a grouping of young people who have to be moved, there is the risk of one child being moved and this could lead to isolation and parental complaint.

5.3 Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this proposal and it is anticipated that there are no adverse equality implications.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

By approving the revised Policy, the distance travelled by pupils will be minimised with resulting minimisation of travel costs and carbon footprint.

5.5 Carbon Management

By approving the revised Policy, we will minimise the carbon footprint due to children attending their nearest school.

5.6 Rural Proofing

By approving the revised Policy, and in particular the Standing List, all young people are treated equally in terms of admission to school and placement requests.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Donna Manson

Service Director, Children & Young People Signature

Author(s)

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Appendices: Appendix 1: Admissions Policy 2018

Background Papers: Scottish Borders Council Admissions Policy 2010

Previous Minute Reference: Education Executive, 2 November 2010

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. James Marshall can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Council headquarters, Newtown St Boswells TD6 0SA.