

CASUAL ADMISSIONS

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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1. Purpose of report

To provide the Committee with an analysis of data relating to casual admissions.

2. Summary

2.1 The rate of casual admissions has reduced since January 2002, both in respect of pupils who have moved into Hertfordshire and those moving house within Hertfordshire.

2.2 There has been a reduction in the number of parents who have not moved house formally requesting a casual admission.

2.3 Casual admissions disproportionally affect the group of schools, which are not full to capacity in all year groups.

3. Conclusions

The Committee should discuss whether or not they wish to scrutinize the item and by what method.

1. Background

- 1.1 The current casual admissions process was introduced in March 2001 and involves allocations being made to community and voluntary controlled secondary schools every two weeks. This two-week cycle can result in some parents having to wait for over three weeks after moving into Hertfordshire before they are invited to visit a school.
- 1.2 Places are allocated according to the published admissions rules and headteachers are required to contact parents of children who are allocated via this process within five days of the allocation date. This can result in schools being asked to interview a number of families within a period of 5 days.
- 1.3 Scrutiny Committee considered the issue of casual admissions on 23 January and asked the Achievement Panel to consider casual admissions following exclusion as part of wider policy development.

2. Current Issues

- 2.1 An examination of requests for transfer by parents who have not moved address, in January and February 2002 is as follows:

Reason	Total number of children
1. Fresh Start	5
2. Bullying	23
3. Non Attendance	2
4. Fixed Term Exclusion	None
5. Unhappy with school (eg support/performance)	27
6. Distance/Transport	4
7. Changes in person circumstances	19
8. Preference not met at Secondary Transfer	4
9. Youth Programme	1

- 2.2 Since September 2001 there has been a greater focus to ask parents who have not moved house, to reconsider initial requests to transfer schools. This is, however, a very time consuming process and will often involve Student Service Managers liaising between parents and the current schools.
- 2.3 There has been a reduction in the number of casual admission requests in 2002 compared with those in 2001. The average number of requests per month in 2001 was 199 and in 2002 was 99.
- 2.4 The average number of new residents in Hertfordshire per months seeking school places in 2001 was 82, but this has dropped to 48 in 2002. This still affects disproportionately a relatively small number of schools with spare places.
- 2.4 Schools report that these children often require a great deal of support during their integration to the school, and frequently, where issues faced the child in the original

school, these re-occur in the next school. Commonly, the receiving schools are already those, which are facing particular challenges in raising standards.

2.5 Schools with available places take a disproportionate number of casual admissions, although those that do, receive additional funding.

2.6 This is an important issue, which requires careful consideration and the further development of policies which improve the situation in those schools which are particularly affected at present. These might involve:-

- restricting the number of pupils admitted casually into a particular year group.
- placing a moratorium on admissions to a particular challenging year group in a school.
- restricting the admission of pupils who have not moved house to certain times in the year, such as the start of term.
- requesting formally on the casual transfer form information from the current school about the reasons for the transfer and further background information.
- adapting the casual admission form to outline the disadvantages of transferring mid-stream.
- reviewing the two-week cycle for processing casual admissions and deal with each request from a family moving into the area without delay
- discontinuing waiting lists for casual admissions, so that each new request can be considered on its merits.

3. Financial implications

None

If you would like to know more about the issue referred to in this report please contact Alan Sapsford on 01992 588500 or Nick Powley on 01992 555933