



ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Darlington Borough Council is responsible for administering school admissions at the normal age of entry for 3 infant schools, 24 primary schools (of which 6 are their own admission authorities) 7 secondary schools (3 of which are their own admission authorities) and 3 junior schools.

There are also three neighbouring local authorities, Durham, Stockton and North Yorkshire, which impact on the allocation of school places.

Darlington Local Authority works in co-ordination with all admission authorities in order that parents can express a preference and their reason for doing so and to ensure that every child is offered a single school place. That preference is met to the maximum extent possible.

Secondary Breakdown of preferences met in September 2008

There were 1112 secondary applications received by the closing date. The following table gives the breakdown:

Preferences received	Percentage	Allocated places (on time)
1st	87	969
2nd	5.6	61
3rd	2.6	29
Other	4.8	53

- The figure for Darlington compares favourably with the national average of 82% of families getting their 1st preference. For families gaining a place at one of their 3 stated preferences, Darlington met the national average of 94%.
- It could be said that there is some correlation between the GCSE results for the secondary schools and the number of preferences received.
- There were a total of 1210 children allocated places to start Darlington secondary schools in September 2008 of whom 184 children had either not made a preference for a school or had been allocated a school that was not a preference. This figure includes late applications. This is an area where the Authority's Choice Adviser is carrying out further exploratory work in an effort to reduce parents not expressing a preference for their children.

Primary Breakdown of preferences met in September 2008

There were 2057 primary applications received by the closing date, this figure includes applications made by families living in another local authority area. 97% of families got one of their stated preferences, with 90% of children gaining a place at a school ranked 1st.

School	Admission Numbers	Total Number of Preferences	1st Preferences Received
Abbey Infants	90	202	100
Alderman Leach Primary	60	79	44
Bishopton/Redmarshall Primary	15	13	9
Cockerton CE Primary	30	118	46
Corporation Road Primary	45	21	12
Dodmire Infants	70	79	52
Firthmoor Primary	45	52	32
Gurney Pease Primary	30	20	16
Harrowgate Hill Primary	75	147	96
Heathfield Primary	60	91	52
Heighington Primary	34	47	40
High Coniscliffe Primary	15	50	20
Holy Family RC Primary	30	90	31
Hurworth Primary	30	52	31
Mount Pleasant Primary	35	27	18
Mowden Infants	60	171	58
North Road Primary	60	73	32
Red Hall Primary	30	33	28
Reid Street Primary	60	100	45
Skerne Park Primary	45	50	48
Springfield Primary	30	56	18
St Augustine's RC Primary	30	86	39
St Bede's RC Primary	30	93	36
St George's CE Primary	45	52	48
St John's CE Primary	30	57	32
St Teresa's RC Primary	40	80	37
Whinfield Primary	90	118	59

- There were a total of 1199 children allocated a place to start at Darlington primary schools in September 2008, of whom 289 children had either not made a preference for a school or had been allocated a school that was not a preference. This figure includes late applications.
- For both primary and secondary schools, the majority of parents are being offered a school that they have stated a preference for. Trends show that parents who apply late or make an unrealistic choice will not be successful in gaining a local school.

- In discussions the Choice Adviser had with parents, there were some who found the application process complex. For this reason, a new "Guide for Parents" was issued this year with a tear out application form (Form A) and guidance notes to guide parents in completing the form. A separate tear-out form for parents applying for places at Carmel (Form B) was also included in the "Guide", with a submission date that matched that of Form A. In previous years having a different date for this extra form caused some confusion.

The number of appeals for entry in September 2008

There were appeals for the following schools after the initial allocation of places:

School Name	No. of multiple appeals submitted for 2008 entry		No. of successful multiple appeals	
	2007	2008	2007	2008
Carmel (VA)	19	21	6	8
Haughton	11	1	1	0
Hummersknott	37	17	8	5
Hurworth (Foundation)	36	19	8	8
Longfield	21	6	6	1
Branksome	-	-	-	-
Eastbourne (Academy)	-	-	-	-

School Name	No. of multiple appeals submitted for 2008 entry	No. of successful multiple appeals
Abbey Infants	6	0
Alderman Leach	1	0
Cockerton (VA)	5	0
Harrowgate Hill	11	1
Heighington	5	5
High Coniscliffe	2	2
Holy Family (VA)	2	0
Mowden Infants	6	0
Red Hall Primary	2	0
Skerne Park	4	0
St Bede's (VA)	5	0
St Teresa's (VA)	2	0

- The national average for appeals allowed in favour of parents is 36%
- Overall there has been a reduction in the number of secondary multiple appeals heard for 2008 entry, this is thought to be due to the move away from 1st preference first, to equal ranking.
- For 2008 entry, out of the 27 infant and primary schools in Darlington, parents were only successful at appeal at 3 schools. Only 1 of the 3 appeals exceeded the KS1 legislation. In reaching its decision, the appeal panel considered the

two elements for a KS1 appeal (see page 8). In the case of the successful appeal, the panel agreed that the Authority had implemented its arrangements correctly but felt its decision was unreasonable because of the family's personal circumstances.

- The two remaining schools had mixed aged classes of less than 30 pupils per class; the panel were minded to allow these with no prejudice, and on personal circumstances.
- The number of appeals heard for primary schools was higher for 2007 due to the shortage of places in the primary sector. However, the Authority was able to comply with Key Stage 1 Legislation in all but 2 schools where the legislation was applicable.
- Before the start of the academic year 2008/09, only one of the two schools had to take qualifying measures in order to comply with the legislation.
- There is no evidence to say that families who are entitled to Free School Meals or those from different ethnic backgrounds do not use their right to appeal.
- All appeal panels have three members who must be trained so that they are familiar with the latest Appeals Code of Practice.
 - One member must have experience in education; be familiar with educational conditions in the Admission Authority's area; or be a parent of a registered pupil at a school
 - One member must be a layperson, that is, someone without personal experience in the management of any school or the provision of education in any school (disregarding experience as a school governor or in any other voluntary capacity)
 - The third panel member will be from either of the above two categories
- The last training the Local Authority undertook for panel members used in maintained school appeals was in February 2008. Specific attention was given to the Equal Preference Scheme, which allowed panel members the opportunity to question the process and have an understanding before they resided on the multiple appeals heard in May/June.
- It is the role of the Clerk from Democratic Services to ensure that all panel members have received their training and have no connection with the appellants or the schools involved.

Ethnic and Social Mix

- The BME population tends to be higher in certain schools, with a large number of Bangladeshi pupils attending Corporation Road, and a larger Traveller cohort at North Road, Dodmire, St Teresa's and Eastbourne. Cohorts of pupils classed as White Other (which include Eastern European pupils), are increasing in Catholic schools in the Borough.
- The inside covers of the Guide for Parents offers families the opportunity to have the guide translated into 7 different languages, Braille, large print and audio cassette. In the academic year 2007/08 the Local Authority received a request for a translation into Polish and for an audio version.

Admission arrangements and Looked After Children

All admission authorities in Darlington give top priority to children who are in the care of the local authority in their oversubscription criterion.

The number of Looked After Children admitted at the start of the academic year 2007/08 was a number less than five.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabled Children

- In accordance with statutory regulations all admission authorities in Darlington admit children with a Statement of Special Educational Need where the school is named in the statement.
- Since 2003, schools have been expected to have an accessibility plan which complements the local authority's accessibility strategy. In order to help schools identify objectives for their plan it is expected that all schools in Darlington will have an "**accessibility rating**". This rating system will reflect not only the physical environment but also the additional arrangements that the school will make to increase the extent to which pupils with a disability can participate in the curriculum. The grading system identifies, within each category of special educational need (SEN) and disability, the basic standard or baseline, that schools within the Borough of Darlington are expected to achieve.
- The rating system is a reflection of the school's accessibility in relation to the impairments, which may be experienced by current or future pupils. It is not a method for rating schools in relation to the ability to meet the special educational needs of the generality of pupils who may experience barriers to their learning.
- The standard of the baseline "**universal**" rating, shows the level expected from all schools in relation to accessibility of the building, curriculum and methods of communication.

- In addition to the universal rating there will be two levels of enhanced access rating (“**Enhanced**” and “**Enhanced Plus**”) in respect of each type of SEN and disability. A specific school may have a universal rating for most areas of disability but enhanced access in one area (e.g. special provision for pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder giving rise to significantly high levels of need for special arrangements). The local requirements for enhanced provision will be informed by a regular audit of need and be decided by Children’s Services following consultation.
- The SEN Monitoring and Evaluation Team has collected ratings from all schools and highlighted where the universal level is not met. They have also checked that up to date access plans have been written showing how gaps will be addressed.
- The School Place Planning Team is using the access ratings from schools to enhance the information available in the Local Asset Management Profile. The School Improvement and Development Team is working with the SEN Inclusion Service to remind schools to keep their rating under review and inform the Local Authority of any changes.
- Currently we know that 80% of all schools have an up to date access plan. Senior staff in 10% of schools are aware that their plan needs to be reviewed and brought up to date and data is still being sourced in 10% of schools.

Current Provision

The table below shows which school the Local Authority additionally resources so that provision is enhanced.

SEN Primary Need/Disability	Universal	Enhanced	Enhanced Plus
Cognition and Learning	All mainstream schools	Heathfield Primary <i>(Resourced provision for 18 children)</i>	Education Village
Social Communication Needs	All mainstream schools	Mount Pleasant Primary <i>(Resourced provision for 14 children)</i> Hurworth Maths and Computing College <i>(Resourced provision for 12 children)</i>	Education Village
Speech, Language and Communication Needs	All mainstream schools	North Road Language Base <i>(Resourced provision for 10 children)</i>	Education Village

Behaviour Emotional and Social Difficulties (including Mental Health)	All mainstream schools		Education Village
Visual Impairment	All mainstream schools		Education Village
Hearing Impairment	All mainstream schools		

- Local Authorities and schools are also required to publish a Disability Equality Scheme that must show how they have consulted with disabled children and young people, parents, staff and disabled people in the community. They also need to monitor the impact of their policies, including reporting on the achievements of children and young people.
- The Local Authority has offered advice and support to schools in the development of their Disability Equality Schemes and a number of schools have taken advantage of this service.
- The SEN Monitoring and Evaluation Team has asked all schools if they have a Disability Equality Scheme. All but four of the schools have a scheme and lead officers from the School Improvement and Development Service are working with those schools at the time of writing.
- All schools are expected to provide for children and young people with additional needs and there is no school in Darlington that does not do this.
- Staff from the SEN Monitoring and Evaluation Team visit all schools on a regular basis to challenge, advise and support SENCOs in tracking progress, developing provision and evaluating effectiveness.
- Actual progress information is compared with predicted progress and benchmarked against other schools in Darlington and a neighboring local authority. This analysis for 2008 is not yet available but in 2007 the Key Stage 2 results show that pupils with SEN made just over 2 levels progress, achieving a Value Added Average Points Score (VA APS) of 12.5, the same as their non-SEN peers. In 67% of mainstream primary schools the VA APS for pupils with SEN was greater than 12.5.
- In 2007 Key Stage 3 pupils with SEN achieved their highest Value Added Average Points Score, 4.2, for at least four years. This represents just over two thirds of a level progress.
- In 2007 the KS2 – KS4 Contextual Value Added (CVA) for pupils with SEN was 1005.2 compared to that of their non-SEN peers, which was 995.5. The

KS3 – KS4 CVA for pupils with SEN was 1010.6, for non-SEN pupils it was 1001.6.

- Ofsted Inspection judgments over the last four years show that all schools have been rated as at least satisfactory for the progress made by pupils with SEN/LDD, with 78% being rated as good or better. All schools have achieved a rating of at least satisfactory for meeting the full range of learners' needs with 76% being rated as being good or better.
- All SENCOs have completed a self evaluation of SEN Standards in their schools and are able to rate themselves from outstanding to inadequate in six areas of practice. No school has recorded an "Inadequate" judgment and where "Satisfactory" judgments have been made conversations have taken place about appropriate action. These judgments have been shared with the School Improvement and Development Service.

Fair Access Protocol

- All schools within the Local Authority area have agreed to admit a child identified as 'hard to place'.
- In the academic year 2007/08, six children were admitted to a school using the fair access protocol.

Harrowgate Hill Primary = 1

North Road Primary = 1

Haughton Community School = 1

Hurworth Maths & Computing College = 2

Carmel RC College = 1

Infant Class Size Legislation

- Admission authorities and schools in Darlington are mindful of KS1 legislation and in the academic year 2007/08 all but two schools were compliant. (See appeals information for explanation). In both cases (Whinfield Primary and Abbey Infants) the DCSF were satisfied with the explanation given and the action taken by the remaining school to take ‘qualifying measures’.
- In order to remain as compliant as possible with KS1 legislation, when a family moves into Darlington, should a school places(s) not be available at the nearest school to the parental address and the next nearest school should be over 2 miles, the Local Authority will provide transport to another school. Parents will however, always be advised of their right to appeal.
- Appeal panels have received training and are aware that they can only allow an “infant class size” appeal if one of the two factors stated below applies. Either:
 - the child would have been offered a place if the published admission arrangements had been properly implemented; or
 - the decision was not one which a reasonable admission authority would make in the circumstances of the case

Are Admission Arrangements Fair and Promote Parental Choice?

- At the end of August 2008 the DCSF wrote to the Director of Children’s Services informing him of the contraventions to the Admissions Code of Practice for schools within the local authority. These proved to be minor and easily rectified (e.g. defining the term ‘sibling’). There are now no Darlington schools contravening admissions regulations.
- The LA is proposing to invite parents of children going into Reception and Yr7 to meetings in December/January at local venues, the purpose of which is to obtain their views on the brochure and their understanding of the process so far.
- The current duty on a local authority is to provide or arrange free transport to and from a school for a pupil of statutory school age who lives in its area, if the shortest walking route to the nearest suitable school is over 2 miles.
- At secondary phase from September 2008 new regulations gave parents the opportunity to consider further their choices when stating a preference in the knowledge that free transport may be provided. Should a child have been offered one of their 3 nearest appropriate schools that was over 2

miles and the family be in receipt of free school meals or full working tax credit, they were entitled.

- The new regulations are in addition to the ‘associated’ areas, where the Local Authority already provides free transport from certain schools.
- All parents are given the opportunity to attend ‘open’ evenings at all secondary schools in Darlington, this information was included in the pack given to all Year 6 pupils at the start of the academic year.
- Admission arrangements for children starting school at the normal point of entry are compliant with the School Admissions Code of Practice and make allowances for consideration of applications received late because of circumstances (e.g. moving into the Local Authority area or the death of a close family member). However, the Authority does not make reference to the needs of special groups of children, such as HM Forces children, Traveller children, children with additional needs, etc.
- Yr6 parents are issued a guide on secondary school admissions for all secondary schools in Darlington in September of each academic year. The composite prospectus gives parents information that is required by regulations set out in the School Admissions Code of Practice.
- Children starting education at Reception phase are also given a guide in September of each academic year. This is also code compliant.
- Both brochures are reviewed annually in order to improve the information given to parents in clear, concise text and also to be code compliant. Both are available on the Council’s website.
- The number of secondary applications received online (107) met the government target of 10% for 2008 entry. Currently 2009 applications stand at 282. Information and advice on how to apply is contained in the brochure in a step-by-step guide, this is taken from the format accessed on the Council’s website. Information given in the guides advises parents that where they are not in a position to access a computer of their own, they can go to a library in the town and staff there will be able to assist them to set up an e-mail address.
- In line with government guidance both primary and secondary ‘schemes’ are available to access on the Council’s website. This allows parents the right to object to the proposed proposals for the forthcoming academic year within the timescale for objections.
- Between September 2006 and July 2007 a national pilot evaluation was conducted by Sheffield Hallam University, commissioned by DCSF, of the first operational year of the Choice Advice service. The study was small and its main purpose has been to inform a larger evaluation of the second year of operation. The report is due in the late autumn of this year. On a local level, there is evidence that the Choice Adviser, through supporting

all parents in Year 6, is influencing the number of completed application forms which were returned.

- A total of 1166 application forms were issued to Darlington resident Year 6 pupils with a total of 1112 returned before the closing date. A return of 95.4% of applications. In the corresponding period in the previous year, a total of 1145 forms were issued with a return of 998 within the deadline. A return of 87.2%. Clearly, the targeting of parents at Y6 drop-in sessions at primary schools, and attending and addressing secondary school open evenings, has increased the number of families submitting timely application forms.
 - The Local Authority takes every opportunity to keep abreast of current legislation and will address any issues raised through the Schools Adjudicator, the Courts, and any directions by the Secretary of State in relation to the Local Authority area. For cases where a parent has raised an objection to the Ombudsman, timescales dictate a swift response. In the academic year 2007/08, one Ombudsman appeal was made, this was in relation to Carmel RC College. The Ombudsman found that there was no maladministration.
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