

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ADMISSIONS POLICY
Meeting: EDUCATION EXECUTIVE
Date: 28 APRIL 2015
Author: DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide:

- background information on why it is important that we review the current Falkirk Council Early Learning and Childcare Admission Policy; and
- details of the proposed changes to the current policy.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In a report to Education Executive on 3 February 2015, a review of the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy was proposed as part of plan to increase the availability of nursery places for children from the local catchment area by:

- introducing a reserved place policy (similar to that for primary and secondary schools); and
- setting appropriate tolerance levels that allow nursery class operational capacity to be increased to meet the catchment area demand but not to exceed the set physical capacity of the building.

2.2 This report follows that review and proposes changes to the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy as outlined above.

3. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ADMISSION POLICY

3.1 Reserved Places Policy for Nursery Establishments

It is proposed that a clause is added to the current "Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy" so that places can be reserved in nursery classes for 3-5 year olds that are likely to move into a school catchment during the forthcoming or current school session.

This would only apply to nursery classes that are attached to, or affiliated with, a primary school. The "Reserved Places" policy would not apply to our day nurseries and partner establishments managed by other agencies, as these establishments do not have set catchment areas as our primary schools do.

Nursery pupils are offered places in either the half-day morning or afternoon sessions. A "reserved place" can therefore be defined as a half-day place (amounting to the statutory allocation of 600 hours over the academic year) that could be either morning or afternoon, depending on availability.

3.2 Current policy

Falkirk Council currently allocate nursery places in April for children to commence in the following session, which starts from August.

Priority is given to pupils who live in the associated primary school catchment area and any remaining places in the nursery class are then made available to meet demand from pupils living outwith the catchment area.

Catchment and non-catchment area demand is met until the nursery class is full and all spaces are taken. If a pupil moves into the catchment area during the school year, and the nursery class is full, they will be offered a vacant place at a nearby nursery class and put on the waiting list for a place at their local catchment nursery class.

3.3 Proposed change to current policy

It is proposed that the number of reserved places for each nursery class will be calculated each year as follows:

- i. **1 reserved place for every 20 half-day places** based on the planned nursery class capacity for the coming school session.

For example, a nursery class with a capacity of 30 places can offer 60 half-day places - 30 in the morning and 30 in the afternoon. There would be 3 reserved places held at this nursery in total.

- ii. In areas that are experiencing a high level of house building, there will also be **1 reserved place for every 20 new houses** that are expected to be built up to and during the coming school session.

For example, if 80 houses are expected to be built in a particular area, a further 4 reserved places will be held in the local school's nursery class.

Note: 1 reserved place equates to 1 half day place in a nursery class.

It should be noted that The Allocations and Admissions Procedure will remain the same. Reserved places will only be applicable if a nursery class is almost full, ie where the allocated places in the nursery class exceeds 90% of operational capacity. If there are plenty of available places, then Reserved Places will not be invoked.

Conversely, if a nursery fills up completely with catchment pupils, then it will not be possible to reserve any places for further nursery pupils moving into the area.

The required changes to the wording of the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy are detailed in Appendix 1.

The table in Appendix 2 has details of the reserved places that have been calculated for each nursery for school session 2015/16. It is also proposed that this table is published alongside the primary and secondary reserved places each summer in the "Information Bulletin" for Elected Members (normally in June).

3.4 Benefits of the Proposed Changes

The benefits of this proposed change in policy will be:

- It will reduce the risk that families moving into a primary school catchment area after the allocation process is complete will be unable to get a nursery place for their child(ren) at the local school.
- This will, in turn, make it more likely that these pupils can commence nursery education at the same primary school that they will attend as a primary pupils.
- The introduction of reserved places will reduce the likelihood that additional staffing resources require to be allocated to increase capacity at nurseries to meet increased demand from catchment pupils before or during a school session.

3.5 Proposed Date of Change

It is proposed that this change in the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy will be effective for our 2015/16 intake.

4. **PROPOSAL TO SET TOLERANCE LEVELS FOR INCREASING NURSERY CLASS CAPACITY**

4.1 Nursery Capacity Assessment

The capacity of a nursery class is determined by two key limiting factors:

- **Physical Capacity:** of a nursery class is based on size (m²) of the accommodation available and the number of registered places is independently set by the Care Inspectorate
- **Operational Capacity** this is set within the constraints of the physical capacity of a nursery and should reflect the local demand for nursery places. Staffing resources are allocated, based on the operational capacity but they can increase during the school session as numbers increase, for example when more 3 year olds start in January and April.

4.2 Proposed Change

It is proposed that Education Services establish appropriate tolerance levels for when the operational capacity of a nursery class is increased to meet increased catchment area demand.

It should be noted that these tolerance levels are based on an a pupil:adult ratio of 10:1, so operational capacity will increase in increments of **10** pupils.

The proposed tolerance level would be as follows:

- Operational tolerance - where catchment area demand will exceed the planned operational capacity of a nursery class by at least **8** places (and where physical capacity exists) then the planned operational capacity of the nursery class may be increased to meet catchment demand in increments of 10 places from the start of the following school term/session.

4.3 Benefits of the Proposed Change

In the event that increased demand for places from catchment children requires an increase in operational capacity before or during the school session, this proposal provides the methodology and transparency as to how it can be delivered.

4.4 Proposed Date of Change

It is proposed that these tolerance levels are set for the start of the 2015/16 Academic Year.

5. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 **Education Executive is asked to agree:**

- (i) that the Early Years Admissions Policy is changed as outlined in Section 3 and detailed in Appendix 1;
- (ii) that Education Services set and apply tolerance levels for increasing nursery class capacity as outlined in Section 4; and
- (iii) that the Operational Capacity levels and Reserved Places for Nurseries are reviewed and published annually in the Information Bulletin alongside the Reserved Places for Primary and Secondary schools.

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Director of Children's Services

Date: 15 April 2015

Contact Officer: Eileen Hutton, ext 6631

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

Proposed Changes to the Current Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy

It is proposed that the following section is amended as follows:

SECTION 6 – ADMISSION PROCEDURE
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The current Section 6.5 to be re-numbered as section 6.6 and the following Section to be added:

6.5 Reserved Places

Requests for a nursery place from pupils living outwith the primary school catchment area will not be granted where this would prevent the education authority from retaining reserved places at the specified nursery.

Reserved places means the number of places, in the opinion of the education authority, which are reasonably required to accommodate nursery pupils likely to become resident in the catchment area of the school.

Reserved places will be defined annually on an individual nursery class basis, taking into account the planned operational capacity of the nursery for the coming school session and the projected number of new houses to be built in the school's catchment.

Reserved places will only be applied to nursery classes that are attached to primary schools. They will not apply to standalone day nurseries and partner provided nurseries.

Reserved Places for Nursery Classes (School Session 2015/16) (Draft)

The number of reserved places calculated for each nursery for school session 2014/2015 is as follows:

Session 2015/16 PS Nursery Class	Operational Capacity			Core Reserved Places	Additional Reserved places for New Housing	Total Reserved Places
	am	pm	Total Places			
<i>Falkirk</i>						
Bainsford	20	20	40	2	1	3
Bantaskin	30	30	60	3	0	3
Carmuir	20	20	40	2	0	2
Comely Park	30	30	60	3	0	3
Easter Carmuir	20	20	40	2	0	2
Langlees	30	30	60	3	0	3
St Francis	30	30	60	3	1	4
<i>Denny</i>						
Antonine	30	30	60	3	0	3
Bankier	30	30	60	3	0	3
Bonnybridge	30	30	60	3	2	5
Denny	30	30	60	3	1	4
Dunipace	30	30	60	3	0	3
Head of Muir	30	30	60	3	0	3
Nethermains	30	30	60	3	0	3
St Joseph's	20	20	40	2	0	2
St Patrick's	30	30	60	3	0	3
<i>Larbert</i>						
Airth	20	20	40	2	0	2
Carron	30	30	60	3	0	3
Carronshore	40	40	80	4	0	4
Kinnaird	50	50	100	5	5	10
Ladeside	30	30	60	3	0	3
Larbert Village	30	30	60	3	0	3
Stenhousemuir	20	20	40	2	0	2
St. Bernadette's	20	20	40	2	1	3
<i>Braes</i>						
Avonbridge	20	0	20	1	0	1
California	20	0	20	1	0	1
Maddiston	57	57	114	6	2	8
Shieldhill	30	30	60	3	0	3
Wallacestone	60	60	120	6	0	6
<i>Graeme</i>						
Hallglen	40	40	80	4	1	5
Laurieston	20	20	40	2	0	2
St Andrew's	30	30	60	3	1	4
St Margaret's	40	40	80	4	0	4
Victoria	30	30	60	3	0	3
Westquarter	40	40	80	4	4	8
Whitecross	20	0	20	1	0	1

Continued overleaf...

Reserved places list for nurseries continued...

Session 2015/16 PS Nursery Class	Operational Capacity			Core Reserved Places	Additional Reserved places for New Housing	Total Reserved Places
	am	pm	Total Places			
<i>Bo'ness</i>						
Bo'ness	30	30	60	3	0	3
Deanburn	30	30	60	3	0	3
Grange	30	30	60	3	0	3
Kinneil	20	20	40	2	0	2
St Mary's	30	30	60	3	0	3
<i>Grangemouth</i>						
Beancross	30	30	60	3	0	3
Bowhouse	20	20	40	2	0	2
Moray	30	30	60	3	0	3
Sacred Heart	30	30	60	3	0	3

All Nurseries	1337	1277	2614	131	19	150
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