

## Comments received and responses on the consultation for school admissions in 2017/18

The consultation received seven responses from the following wards:

**Sutton Trinity** – 1 respondent (two comments)

**Sutton Vesey** – 5 respondents

The comments received are detailed below with Birmingham City Council's response to each.

<p><b>Comment 1 – Sutton Trinity Ward</b></p> <p>Applying for a reception place in Sutton Coldfield has become a terrifying lottery with few people knowing what school they will get into, if any locally, due to a lack of required places. This is due mostly to 'school tourism'.... it is obvious that large numbers of people continue to move in to Sutton Coldfield from outside of the area based on its reputation for "good schools", making any number of places unsustainable for the population on going. Young families disproportionately reside in highly concentrated numbers around the schools. I would ask that it is considered that all Admissions authorities would have "time living in area " as one of their priority criteria to support genuine locals and more importantly to serve as a deterrent to this increasing &amp; unsustainable practice, which pushes long-term local residents out of local schools all together.</p> <p>There are also a few local schools still with only a single form entry that must be able to be required to expand due to the overwhelming demand.</p> <p>We failed to get any of our preferences and of the 5 schools acceptable to us and suitable for us, within around 1.5 miles of our home it is hit and miss if we would get a place at any of them at all, so the preference system of 3 is totally pointless. If it's fair for long term locals to end up having to travel further a field and have no preference over their children's schooling at all then it is fairer that those who move in, only for school places, know that they will not get the same level of priority in their preferences as those children already in the area planning to attend local schools from birth. It has become a competition of who can buy the closest house to the school</p>	<p><b>Birmingham City Council Response 1</b></p> <p>There is a recognition that demand for places is increasing as a result of birth rate increase and cohort growth. The Local Authority's position is that schools will only be expanded if there is a need for additional places; we do not expand schools purely to meet parental preference but when we do expand schools, parental preference is a key consideration. There is an annual cycle of activity which sets out what places we expect to need on a 3-year planning horizon.</p> <p>A report was presented by the Education Link Officer to the Education &amp; Vulnerable Children Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2015 detailing an update regarding the sufficiency of places in Birmingham, plans to meet growth in demand and parental preference, and known areas of pressure. The report can be found at the following link:  <a href="https://birmingham.cmis.uk.com/birmingham/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/90/Committee/11/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx">https://birmingham.cmis.uk.com/birmingham/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/90/Committee/11/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx</a></p> <p>All schools across the City are invited to express interest in expanding and there are clear criteria for identifying preferred options for expansion through our approved Basic Need process (location in relation to Basic Need, standards in the school, capacity and feasibility of the school to provide suitable accommodation on site, popularity of the school and potential to create overprovision in the area). The Local Authority's overarching priority is to support every school on its journey to good or outstanding provision. When places are provided to meet growth in pupil</p>
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of choice and a sick lottery as to where there will be any places for us at all, this hits hard for those of us who have lived here all of our lives & would, if not for retaining our jobs and familial support network, be considering moving out of the town to find available school places elsewhere.

I also believe parents are not given enough information upon which to make their preferences. With such limited choices it is important to know where one stands a chance of getting a place, so as not to waste a vote on a school where you don't stand a chance. This could be helped by schools being required to make enquiries and then a best estimate of what siblings they will be likely to be getting in the next round.

A greater number of preferences per application are also required, at least then if you don't get any of your top 3 you stand some chance of getting a school you find acceptable and suitable for your child and your family. I would suggest 6 preferences would be more realistic. I would also find it useful if you could state 1 school which you would not accept, so if you know a particular schools environment or ethos doesn't fit with your values you can save wasted time of being offered a place somewhere where you would not wish to accept a place. When you don't get any of your preferences.

Regarding summer born admissions I would hope that Birmingham will be making positive changes to their previous prohibitive policies, to realign them

With Nick Gibb Schools Ministers proposed Admissions Code changes and open letter to LEAs, which encourages Admission Authorities and schools to make immediate proper use of the available flexibility for summer born for the protection of the children under their care.

numbers, the first priority is to ensure those places will be close to the increased demand.

Sutton Coldfield continues to be a popular area for families and demand on school places reflect this. However, in terms of sufficiency of places to meet resident population, Sutton Coldfield is well served. The following primary schools in Sutton Coldfield have been expanded to date.

School Name	Ward	First Year of Expansion	Type of Expansion, (if bulge in what year group)	Total places created / to be created
Maney Hill Primary School	Sutton Trinity	2015	Permanent	210 (1FE)
Mere Green Primary School	Sutton Four Oaks	2015	Permanent	210 (1FE)
New Hall Primary and Children's Centre	Sutton Trinity	2015	Bulge Y1-5	75
St Joseph's RC Primary School	Sutton Trinity	2014	Permanent	210 (1FE)
Whitehouse Common Primary School	Sutton Trinity	2012	Bulge R	30

The Local Authority feels it would be unfair to introduce a 'time living in area' priority as this would be unfair on families, who through no fault of their own, may have to move in or out of an area within Birmingham. Therefore in the event of a school receiving more applications than places available, Birmingham Local Authority remains committed to giving priority to looked after children, followed by siblings, then to those children who live closest to that school.

The Local Authority produces a composite prospectus each year detailing information on the final child admitted to a school in the previous three years. Following your suggestion, we will be asking all schools to write to parents/carers each summer term to establish how many siblings will be joining the school in the following September. This information will then be available to parent/carers during open sessions in the autumn term prior to

	<p>submitting preferences by 15 January in the offer year. Parents/carers are advised in the guidance to submit at least one preference where they would have met the admission criteria in previous years. However, parents are also advised that this is merely a guide and there is no guarantee that the same admission pattern will apply in future years.</p> <p>All local authorities must allow parent/carers to submit a minimum of three preferences in rank order. In Birmingham, parents are permitted to submit three preferences and the data for entry to Reception Class shows that almost 95% of parent/carers who applied by the final closing date were offered one of their three preferred schools.</p> <p>In addition, of those who were not offered one of their three preferred schools, there were a number of parent/carers who did not name a school where they would have been offered a place if they had included it as a preference.</p> <p>Birmingham City Council does not believe that increasing the number of preferences parent/carers can submit will have any benefit over the current three preference system.</p> <p>In accordance with the current School Admissions Code and DfE guidance 'advice on the admission of summer born children', all requests for children to be admitted outside of their normal age group must be considered by the admission authority concerned on a case by case basis and a decision made in the best interest of the child concerned. Following legal advice, Birmingham Local Authority cannot change the current system until such a time that there is a change to the School Admissions Code. However, to date, following consideration by admission authorities in Birmingham, all requests from parents of summer born children for deferred entry have been accepted.</p>
<p><b>Comment 2 - Sutton Vesey Ward</b></p> <p>There continue to be catchment hotspots that don't seem to be being tackled properly. Sutton Vesey is a particularly problematic ward with</p>	<p><b>Birmingham City Council Response 2</b></p> <p>Sutton Coldfield continues to be a popular area for families and demand on school places reflect this. However, in terms of sufficiency of places to meet</p>

<p>nowhere near enough school places. A much higher percentage of parents don't get one of their preferred choices in Sutton Vesey compared with the rest of the city. There are now a couple of schools that are being considered for expansion but this is too little and plans are not forward looking enough. It feels as if decisions are being made in response to crisis rather than looking ahead and planning in order to avoid crisis. Families in these areas have no real options or choices and their preferences are almost irrelevant meaning they are offered whatever is left when all the places are offered.</p> <p>Parents who are not given one of their preferences are not given priority on waiting lists. This seems grossly unfair and mean that these families are given no choices and end up being given school places outside their communities a long way from their homes. Surely some kind of tiered system would be fairer where parents who are offered none of their preferences are kept at the top of the waiting lists for their chosen schools.</p> <p>The appeals process seems to be very stressful, difficult and unlikely to end in favour of the parents.</p> <p>We have been given conflicting and unhelpful advice from the LEA when asking for information about admissions "Just apply for your nearest 3 schools and we'll find you a place somewhere within Birmingham..." Not very reassuring as we know we're in a hotspot and are unlikely to be given a place at any of our closest schools.</p>	<p>resident population, Sutton Coldfield is well served.</p> <p>Our school place forecast represents the best estimate of the number and location of places that will be needed if most recent patterns of parental preference, cohort growth, housing proposals and supply of places were to remain constant. However, any of these variables can change considerably from one year to the next, sometimes with limited predictability. There is therefore always a level of expected variance between our forecasts and the actual demand.</p> <p>Appendix 3 of the Educational Development Plan (view at link below) provides information on how well parental preference is met in the 40 Birmingham wards. It shows that for 2015 entry, Sutton Trinity ward falls into the top 10 most served to meet first preference for Year 7 but in the least well served wards for Reception. The other 3 Sutton wards fall in the middle for both Reception and Year 7.  <a href="https://birmingham.cmis.uk.com/birmingham/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/90/Committee/11/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx">https://birmingham.cmis.uk.com/birmingham/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/90/Committee/11/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx</a></p> <p>In accordance with the School Admissions Code, waiting lists must be managed in line with a school's published oversubscription criteria. If a system was introduced to give priority to children who had not been offered any of their preferred schools, it may encourage more parent/carers to submit unrealistic preferences knowing that their child would remain at the top of the waiting list(s) ahead of another child who was offered a lower preferred school but meets the admission criteria better.</p> <p>All appeals must to be considered in accordance with the School Admission Appeals Code. The Code sets out minimum requirements which ensure fairness and transparency. For infant class appeals, regulations made under Section 1 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 limit the size of an infant class to 30 pupils per school teacher. This means that only in very limited circumstances can admission over the limit be permitted.</p>
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	<p>The Local Authority produces a composite prospectus each year detailing information on the final child admitted to a school in the previous three years. Following a suggestion from another responder, we will be asking all schools to write to parents/carers each summer term to establish how many siblings will be joining the school in the following September. This information should then be available to parent/carers during open sessions in the autumn term prior to submitting preferences by 15 January in the offer year.</p>																				
<p><b>Comment 3 - Sutton Vesey Ward</b> Not enough school places No realistic preferences for parents in B73 No policy around bulge year places and their allocation No school places available at nearest 6 schools for the past four years No decent advice for parents with no realistic preference, despite following guidelines No waiting list tier for parents who do not receive any preference No mention in admissions procedures that school waiting lists will be amended to day one on discovery of fraudulent applications.</p>	<p><b>Birmingham City Council Response 3</b> Sutton Coldfield continues to be a popular area for families and demand on school places reflect this. However, in terms of sufficiency of places to meet resident population, Sutton Coldfield is well served.</p> <p>Reception Numbers:</p> <table><tr><th>Ward</th><th>Number of Available Places Sept 2016</th><th>Resident Numbers May 2015</th><th>Variance</th></tr><tr><td>Sutton Four Oaks</td><td>300</td><td>251</td><td>+49</td></tr><tr><td>Sutton New Hall</td><td>300</td><td>215</td><td>+85</td></tr><tr><td>Sutton Trinity</td><td>375</td><td>286</td><td>+89</td></tr><tr><td>Sutton Vesey</td><td>270</td><td>235</td><td>+35</td></tr></table> <p>Both Sutton Four Oaks and Sutton Trinity wards have benefitted from investment into a school expansion commencing in 2015 by 1FE each at Mere Green Primary and Maney Hill Primary respectively. There is recognition that a majority of secondary schools in Sutton Coldfield are selective or denominational however the majority of these secondary schools have been through or are about to embark on expansion to increase numbers.</p>	Ward	Number of Available Places Sept 2016	Resident Numbers May 2015	Variance	Sutton Four Oaks	300	251	+49	Sutton New Hall	300	215	+85	Sutton Trinity	375	286	+89	Sutton Vesey	270	235	+35
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Sutton Coldfield	1385	889	+496

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<https://birmingham.cmis.uk.com/birmingham/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/90/Committee/11/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

A strategy explored over the last 18 months to create additional places where needed has been to open some “bulge” classes during the year and not at the start of a term. When a school opens a new class, all places have to be offered in strict waiting list order in accordance with School Admissions legislation. At times this has meant that children have moved from a neighbouring school based on parental preference particularly if places are offered before summer holidays.

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<p><b>Comment 4 - Sutton Vesey Ward</b></p> <p>Not enough school places</p> <p>No realistic preferences for parents in B73</p> <p>No policy around bulge year places and their allocation</p> <p>No school places available at nearest 6 schools for the past four years</p> <p>No decent advice for parents with no realistic preference, despite following guidelines</p> <p>No waiting list tier for parents who do not receive any preference</p> <p>No mention in admissions procedures that school waiting lists will be amended to day one on discovery of fraudulent applications.</p> <p>No thorough checks for fraudulent Address claims unless someone whistle blows</p>	<p><b>Birmingham City Council Response 4</b></p> <p>Sutton Coldfield continues to be a popular area for families and demand on school places reflect this. However, in terms of sufficiency of places to meet resident population, Sutton Coldfield is well served.</p> <p>Reception Numbers:</p> <table><tr><th>Ward</th><th>Number of Available Places Sept 2016</th><th>Resident Numbers May 2015</th><th>Variance</th></tr><tr><td>Sutton Four Oaks</td><td>300</td><td>251</td><td>+49</td></tr><tr><td>Sutton New Hall</td><td>300</td><td>215</td><td>+85</td></tr><tr><td>Sutton Trinity</td><td>375</td><td>286</td><td>+89</td></tr><tr><td>Sutton Vesey</td><td>270</td><td>235</td><td>+35</td></tr></table> <p>Both Sutton Four Oaks and Sutton Trinity wards have benefitted from</p>	Ward	Number of Available Places Sept 2016	Resident Numbers May 2015	Variance	Sutton Four Oaks	300	251	+49	Sutton New Hall	300	215	+85	Sutton Trinity	375	286	+89	Sutton Vesey	270	235	+35
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<p><b>Comment 5 - Sutton Vesey Ward</b></p> <p>For children who live in the Boldmere area, there are no realistic choices for parents to make for primary school place, particularly in the B73 5 area. I live in Sunnybank Road and this puts my son out of the catchment area for Boldmere School one year and in it another year - this has been the case for the past 5 years. I should be able to choose a school that my son and I can walk to. However, if we have to go to Yenton School, this will be impossible and he will be with children from another area. We are aware that Maney</p>	<p><b>Birmingham City Council Response 5</b></p> <p>In terms of B73 postcode area specifically:</p> <table><tr><th>Postcode</th><th>Number of Available Reception Places Sept 2016</th><th>Births 11-12 to commence school 2016-17</th><th>Variance</th></tr><tr><td>B73</td><td>330</td><td>195</td><td>+135</td></tr></table>	Postcode	Number of Available Reception Places Sept 2016	Births 11-12 to commence school 2016-17	Variance	B73	330	195	+135
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School and St Nicholas RC School will be providing additional places, but these are the wrong schools to do this for. Maney School is too far to walk and will increase vehicular traffic. St Nicholas is a Catholic school and so will give priority to Catholic pupils and I would not be happy with my son going to a Catholic School, although I would be happy with a Church of England or other church free school.

The arrangements do not account for issues where there may be a one-off increase in population and how places will be allocated.

There is a severe shortage of school places in Boldmere where the family population has increased and yet there is no real consideration being given to this and no sensible advice is being given to parents who live in the 'pockets' without school places.

Parents who do not receive any preference should be put to the top of the waiting list for schools rather than being a general part of that waiting list.

The system of catchment areas based on the closest addresses to schools works to a certain extent, but a percentage of places at schools should be available for those parents who have not been able to get into any local schools because they are in a 'pocket' that is not covered by the catchment areas. These places should be available to ensure that children can at least go to one of their 3 closest schools rather than having to travel several miles to an under-performing school that is under-subscribed.

Secondary school places are also a problem in Boldmere with the closest non-selective and non-VC school being Plantsbrook which is over-subscribed every year. There need to be more secondary school places available in the north of Sutton Coldfield for children to access.

I would urge those making decisions to look closely at the catchment circles (prior to appeals) and consider what should be done for those parents who are in 'pockets' that are not covered by their 3 closest schools and even more so for those who are in 'pockets' that are not covered by even more of their closest schools. It is no good shipping them out to a school 2 or 3

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Sutton Coldfield continues to be a popular area for families and demand on school places reflect this. However, in terms of sufficiency of places to meet resident population, Sutton Coldfield is well served.

Reception Numbers:

Ward	Number of Available Places Sept 2016	Resident Numbers May 2015	Variance
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<p>miles away. Something should be done to ensure that children can be admitted to a nearby school and not be let down by a failing 'circles' system.</p> <p>The admissions system must address children who are unable to get into their 3 closest schools and include a mechanism for enabling them to get into one of those schools.</p>	<p>Year 7 Numbers:</p> <table><tr><th>District</th><th>Number of Available Places Sept 2016</th><th>Resident Numbers May 2015</th><th>Variance</th></tr><tr><td>Sutton Coldfield</td><td>1385</td><td>889</td><td>+496</td></tr></table> <p>There is recognition that a majority of secondary schools in Sutton Coldfield are selective or denominational however the majority of these secondary schools have been through or are about to embark on expansion to increase numbers.</p> <p>In accordance with the School Admissions Code, waiting lists must be managed in line with a school’s published oversubscription criteria. If a system was introduced to give priority to children who had not been offered any of their preferred schools, it may encourage more parent/carers to submit unrealistic preferences knowing that their child would remain at the top of the waiting list(s) ahead of another child who was offered a lower preferred school but meets the admission criteria better.</p> <p>In previous years, all children in the Sutton Vesey ward who were not offered one of their preferred schools were offered a school within 1.5 miles of their home address.</p>	District	Number of Available Places Sept 2016	Resident Numbers May 2015	Variance	Sutton Coldfield	1385	889	+496
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<p><b>Comment 6 – Sutton Trinity Ward</b></p> <p>Summer born children arrangements need to be brought into line with Nick Gibbs open letter to admissions authorities. Parents who need / choose to send their children to start school at the legal starting age of 5 should not have their children's education shortened or be penalised with loss of the child's important reception year of education. All children should receive the full course of education available, as per the flexibility already prescribed for summer borns and in line with Nick Gibbs advice.</p>	<p><b>Birmingham City Council Response 6</b></p> <p>In accordance with the current School Admissions Code and DfE guidance ‘advice on the admission of summer born children’, all requests for children to be admitted outside of their normal age group must be considered by the admission authority concerned on a case by case basis and a decision made in the best interest of the child concerned. Following legal advice, Birmingham Local Authority cannot change the current system until such a time that there is a change to the School Admissions Code. However, to</p>								

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<p><b>Comment 7 – Sutton Vesey Ward</b></p> <p>Not enough places available for the amount of children in our area.</p> <p>No realistic preference for B73 - a pointless exercise, our house is outside the catchment of any school.</p> <p>No priority on the waiting list for parents that don't get any of their preferences.</p> <p>Over the last three years, we would have had to go to our seventh nearest school to have a realistic chance of getting a place.</p> <p>No realistic advice available for anyone in our position.</p>	<p><b>Birmingham City Council Response 7</b></p> <p>Sutton Coldfield continues to be a popular area for families and demand on school places reflect this. However, in terms of sufficiency of places to meet resident population, Sutton Coldfield is well served.</p> <table><tr><th>Ward</th><th>Number of Available Places Sept 2016</th><th>Resident Numbers May 2015</th><th>Variance</th></tr><tr><td>Sutton Four Oaks</td><td>300</td><td>251</td><td>+49</td></tr><tr><td>Sutton New Hall</td><td>300</td><td>215</td><td>+85</td></tr><tr><td>Sutton Trinity</td><td>375</td><td>286</td><td>+89</td></tr><tr><td>Sutton Vesey</td><td>270</td><td>235</td><td>+35</td></tr></table> <table><tr><th>District</th><th>Number of Available Places Sept 2016</th><th>Resident Numbers May 2015</th><th>Variance</th></tr><tr><td>Sutton Coldfield</td><td>1385</td><td>889</td><td>+496</td></tr></table> <p>Both Sutton Four Oaks and Sutton Trinity wards have benefitted from investment into a school expansion commencing in 2015 by 1FE each at Mere Green Primary and Maney Hill Primary respectively.</p>	Ward	Number of Available Places Sept 2016	Resident Numbers May 2015	Variance	Sutton Four Oaks	300	251	+49	Sutton New Hall	300	215	+85	Sutton Trinity	375	286	+89	Sutton Vesey	270	235	+35	District	Number of Available Places Sept 2016	Resident Numbers May 2015	Variance	Sutton Coldfield	1385	889	+496
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In previous years, all children in the Sutton Vesey ward who were not offered one of their preferred schools were offered a school within 1 mile of their home address.