

School Placement Planning

City of York Council

Internal Audit Report 2016/17

Business Unit: Children, Education and Communities
Responsible Officer: Assistant Director, Education and Skills
Service Manager: Head of School Services
Date Issued: 31 May 2017
Status: Final
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	P1	P2	P3
Actions	0	0	0
Overall Audit Opinion	High Assurance		

Summary and Overall Conclusions

Introduction

Each address in the City of York is located in the catchment area of one York primary school and at least one secondary school. The local authority has a duty to arrange school places for each school age child within its area, and serves as admissions authority for many schools, not including academies and some faith schools. Parents are required to submit an application for a school place, and can submit up to 5 preferences for schools. For September 2016 entry, 91% of applications of secondary pupils were allocated to their first preference and 94.4% of primary pupils were allocated their first preference.

Objectives and Scope of the Audit

The purpose of this audit was to provide assurance to management that procedures and controls within the system will ensure that:

- There is a robust process in place to monitor the requirements for school placements and identify potential issues
- There is a robust process in place to allocate school places in accordance with admissions policies
- Where action is required suitable action is taken to ensure each school age child in York is offered a school place

Key Findings

The council produces detailed forecasting information for each Primary and Secondary planning area which allows for future planning in relation to the provision of school places. In the future these will be published on the council's website

Admissions are managed electronically and the admissions system has a full audit trail of every step of the process, from individual applications, admissions criteria to allocations, rejections and waiting lists.

The council, in conjunction with the schools in York, takes action to ensure that there are places for all pupils. As several York schools have converted to academies and more conversions are planned, as well as a new free schools being approved, the negotiations regarding how to address changing demand for school places may become more challenging, however the council is well placed to understand the requirements for school places across the city as much as is possible.

The council publish several different data sets regarding school places and allocations. It is suggested that the assessment of how accurate the predictions were for demand for school places also be published to complete the picture.

Overall Conclusions

It was found that the arrangements for managing risk were very good. An effective control environment appears to be in operation. Our overall opinion of the controls within the system at the time of the audit was that they provided **High Assurance**.

Audit Opinions and Priorities for Actions

Audit Opinions

Audit work is based on sampling transactions to test the operation of systems. It cannot guarantee the elimination of fraud or error. Our opinion is based on the risks we identify at the time of the audit.

Our overall audit opinion is based on 5 grades of opinion, as set out below.

Opinion	Assessment of internal control
High Assurance	Overall, very good management of risk. An effective control environment appears to be in operation.
Substantial Assurance	Overall, good management of risk with few weaknesses identified. An effective control environment is in operation but there is scope for further improvement in the areas identified.
Reasonable Assurance	Overall, satisfactory management of risk with a number of weaknesses identified. An acceptable control environment is in operation but there are a number of improvements that could be made.
Limited Assurance	Overall, poor management of risk with significant control weaknesses in key areas and major improvements required before an effective control environment will be in operation.
No Assurance	Overall, there is a fundamental failure in control and risks are not being effectively managed. A number of key areas require substantial improvement to protect the system from error and abuse.

Priorities for Actions

Priority 1	A fundamental system weakness, which presents unacceptable risk to the system objectives and requires urgent attention by management.
Priority 2	A significant system weakness, whose impact or frequency presents risks to the system objectives, which needs to be addressed by management.
Priority 3	The system objectives are not exposed to significant risk, but the issue merits attention by management.

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