

When it comes to schools – choose local

Parents are being advised to visit and learn more about their catchment primary school before applying for a place at a school in a different area. The registration process for the new P1 intake begins in November and, with school rolls rising, there is likely to be less choice for parents this year and into the future.

Statistics released today show a record number of refused out of catchment requests for the 2011/12 school year at nearly triple the previous year's number. Council officials have warned that refusals are likely to increase in coming years.

City Education Leader Councillor Marilyne MacLaren said:

“Edinburgh has an education service to be proud of, with great schools and a fantastic staff team which extends right across the city. Unfortunately we are finding that many parents don't always see what is on offer at their local school, instead opting to apply for a school in a different catchment area.

“We know the opportunities to grant placing requests in coming years will reduce even further so parents need to consider their choices carefully, particularly those who expect to have younger brothers and sisters in need of places in years to come.

“As this year's application process begins, we're calling for parents to go to their local school, talk to the head teacher, to staff and to other parents to see what's on offer. All of our schools provide a high quality educational experience and we think parents will be impressed.”

The Council plans school and class provision around population levels and predictions and the general policy is to provide local school places for local children. Children are normally guaranteed a place at a school within their catchment area but, if parents want, they can apply for a place at a school in a different area. A place is only granted if one is available.

The overall school intake has increased over the past three school years but there are still empty places across Edinburgh. In recent years seven primary schools with decreasing rolls and a high number of expensive empty places have been closed. This is to make best use of the resources available across the school estate and has enabled us to provide extensions and school which are full, for example, Corstorphine and Towerbank Primaries.

Whilst there are plenty of places for all new P1 pupils in Edinburgh there is pressure in certain catchment areas because of the popularity of certain schools. This pressure has increased following the government's introduction of the P1 class size limit of 25 and it is becoming apparent that some parents who may have previously sent their child to private school are choosing a Council run school instead.