

## **CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA**

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**12 APRIL 2007**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION**

**Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Cunningham**

#### **PROCEDURE FOR ADMISSION OF PUPILS TO PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SEPTEMBER 2008**

1. Summary

This report outlines the proposed admission arrangements for primary and secondary schools in September 2007. In order to comply with legislation for admissions in 2008, the report includes the full Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for Primary and Secondary Schools for that year.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to agree:

1. the Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements which includes using the Equal Ranking System to allocated places to oversubscribed schools.
2. changes in circumstances for the 3 primary schools (item 7);
3. how the LA and other admission authorities deal with Crown Children of UK Service personnel and other Crown servants (including Diplomats) (Item 8.3);
4. the new Choice Advice Service which will be offered parents applying for school places;
5. the changes in the transport arrangements for low income families.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

Legislation requires the LA to publish information to be available for parents when they apply for a place at primary and secondary school. The information has to comply with the recently published School Admissions Code derived from the Education & Inspections Bill 2006.

4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (paragraph 8) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (paragraph 10 of the code of conduct).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held, whilst the matter is being considered; not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (paragraph 12 of the Code).

**Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc.; whether or not they are a member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting, and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room during consideration of the relevant item.**

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SEPTEMBER 2008**

**1. SUMMARY**

This report outlines the proposed admission arrangements for primary and secondary schools in September 2008. In order to comply with the Education and Inspections Bill 2006 and School Admissions Code, the report includes the relevant changes which are included in detail outlined in this report and in the Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for Primary and Secondary Schools for 2008.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to agree:

1. the Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for 2008/09 which includes using the Equal Ranking System to allocated places to oversubscribed schools.
2. changes in circumstances for the 3 primary schools;
3. how the LA and other admission authorities deal with Crown Children of UK Service personnel and other Crown servants (including Diplomats);
4. the new Choice Advice Service which will be offered parents applying for school places;
5. the changes in the transport arrangements for low income families to comply with new legislation.

**DETAIL**

**3. ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2008/09**

The Code of Practice for admissions determines that LAs, when drawing up admission arrangements, should ensure:

- Parents' preferences for schools are met to the maximum extent possible;
- Admission criteria should be clear and benefit all pupils including those with special education needs, disabilities or in public care;
- Admission authorities must publish admission arrangements to include admission numbers, criteria to be used for over subscription, timetables, co-ordinated arrangements and waiting lists.

With the passage through parliament of the Education and Inspections Bill 2006 and the new Code for School Admissions becoming law, it is now unlawful to allocate school places under the 1<sup>st</sup> preference 1<sup>st</sup> system, which this LA previously used. Therefore, for

admissions in 2008 the LA and VA admission authorities will use the Equal Ranking System to allocate school places.

Equal Ranking will give parents the opportunity of applying for their preferred school without the fear of being refused their admission zone school (as long as they list that school as one of their preferences). This system will give parents more confidence when applying for a popular school as they will have the fall back of still being allocated their local school.

#### **4. ADMISSION POLICY FOR SEPTEMBER 2008/09 – Primary, Junior, Infant and Secondary Schools**

There is no change to the LAs admission policy for 2008/09

##### **4.1 Admission Policy for 2008/09**

The proposed Admission Policy will give priority to applications for admission to a school if that school is oversubscribed, in the following order:

1. pupils who are in the care of the Local Authority;
2. pupils who have a statement of special educational need that names the school;
3. Primary pupils who have a brother or sister at the school when the pupil begins, where the parent requested a place at the admission zone school for their older sibling but the LA were not able to offer a place to the older sibling at that school.  
*(This applies to parents of primary aged children who, in the main round of admissions in respect of the older sibling, put the admission zone school as a 1<sup>st</sup> preference on the form provided by the LA and returned it on time.)*
4. pupils resident within the admission zone who have returned a School Admission Form by the due date.
5. pupils who have a brother or sister living at the same address and are still at the school when the pupil begins;
6. pupils who have social or medical reasons for being admitted to the school which would, should the child not be admitted, cause him or her to be seriously disadvantaged or put personal safety at risk.  
In all cases corroboration will be sought from independent sources such as a medical specialist who has had continuing involvement over a period of time, social worker, or other professional. It should be noted that places would not be allocated on the basis of aptitude or ability.
7. Pupils who live closest to the particular school as decided by the shortest convenient public access route.

#### **5. CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS AND TIMETABLE**

The LA is responsible for administering a co-ordinated scheme for its area in relation to all maintained (community, voluntary controlled and voluntary aided) schools. The purpose of co-ordinated admission schemes is to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, every parent of a child living in the LA area who has applied for a school place in the normal admission round receives an offer of one school place on the same day.

Places will be allocated using the Equal Ranking Scheme for Primary, Junior and Secondary applications by all admission authorities within Stockton on Tees.

The LA will act as a clearing house for the allocation of places by the relevant admission authorities in response to the CAFs. The LA will only make a decision with respect to the offer or refusal of a place in response to any preference expressed on the CAF where

- it is acting in its separate capacity as an admission authority; or
- an applicant is eligible for a place at more than one school, or
- an applicant is not eligible for a place at any school that the parent has nominated.

Attached is a copy of the Stockton on Tees Co-ordinated Admission Scheme for admissions in 2008/09 which includes the timetable. **Appendix 1**

## **5.1 Timetable for co-ordinated admissions**

January/March 2007	Consultation with governing bodies, Admission Forum, parents and other admission authorities in accordance with legislation on admission arrangements for September 2008/09.
Spring Term 2007	Admission Forum held as part of the consultation process on Admission procedures for 2008/09.
April 2007	LA informs Secretary of State of the Stockton on Tees preferred co-ordinate primary and secondary admission scheme.
April 2007	Consultation reported to Members and policy agreed.

## **5.2 Secondary Co-ordinated Admissions 2007 – Determining offers in response to the Common Application forms received by the LA.**

August 2007	Primary & Secondary Admission Booklet 2008 published.  Advertisement in local press of LA's co-ordinated admission arrangements for September 2008/09
Week commencing 10 September 2007	Common application forms/information packs go out to parents through primary schools
26 October 2007	Closing date for return of common application forms.
14 November 2007	The LA will notify the admission authority for each of the schools of every application that has been made for that school. Where parents have requested a place at a school outside of the LA area, the information will be forwarded to the relevant authority/authorities.
By 10 January 2008	VA schools, other LAs inform Stockton on Tees LA of allocation of places for all applications received in the priority order of their admission policy. Any applications which are refused also need to be listed in order of priority.  The LA then compares lists for all schools treating all applications as equal. If a pupil is likely to be offered a place at more than one school, the LA then looks at the application to see what the parents highest ranked school is, that place is then allocated. The lists are then returned to the VA admission Authorities and other LAs for their approval before finalising allocations.  Information will be shared between VA admission authorities and other LAs until the allocation of places is resolved for each application, as required.

- 15 February 2008 Finally the LA will match ranked lists for all schools to ensure each pupil will be offered one place only. Where a child is not allocated a place at any of the parents ranked schools, they will be offered a place at the nearest appropriate school with a vacancy.
- All schools informed by own LA of final allocations, which may include offer to pupils living in other LAs
- 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008 Offers made to all parents living in the Borough by home LA – sent by 2<sup>nd</sup> class post (letters will be posted on the 29<sup>th</sup> February due to 1<sup>st</sup> March not being a working day).
- April 2008 Appeal hearings arranged.

### 5.3 Primary Admissions Co-ordinated Admissions

- November 2007 Advertisement in local press to inform parents they can apply for places in primary schools within the area for September 2008.
- Week commencing 3 December 2007 Packs for admission to Primary School in September 2008/2009 distributed to all parents. Applications are made on the common application form and all applications are sent back to the LA. The LAs system for online applications will become 'live' from 3 December to midnight on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2008.
- 26<sup>th</sup> January 2008 Closing date for return of parental preference forms.
- Week ending 8 February 2008 The LA will notify the admission authority for each VA school of every application that has been made for that school. Where parents have requested a place at a school outside of the LA area, the information will be forwarded to the relevant authority/authorities.
- After 8 February All VA schools make arrangements to gather any further information required from parents and set up admission committees to allocate places.
- 9<sup>th</sup> March 2008 RC VA schools inform LA of the allocation of places for all applications received in the priority order of their admission policy. Any applications which are refused also need to be listed in order of priority.
- 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008 VA schools inform LA of allocation of places for all applications received in the priority order of their admission policy. Any applications which are refused also need to be listed in order of priority.
- The LA then compares lists for all schools treating all applications as equal. If a pupil is likely to be offered a place at more than one school, the LA then looks at the application to see what the parents highest ranked school is, that place is then allocated. The lists are then returned to the VA admission Authorities and other LAs for their approval before finalising allocations.
- Information will shared between VA admission authorities until the allocation of places is resolved for each application, as required.

By the 28 March 2008 – the LA will match ranked lists for all schools and:

- where the child is eligible for a place at any of the nominated schools, that school will be allocated to the child;
- where the child is eligible for a place 2 or more of the nominated schools, they will be allocated a place at whichever of these is the highest ranked preference.

Where the child is not eligible for a place at any of the nominated schools, they will be offered a place at the nearest appropriate school with a vacancy.

17<sup>th</sup> April 2008 Allocation letters will be posted (2<sup>nd</sup> class) to all parents informing them of their allocated school.

End of May 2008 Appeal hearings arranged.

#### **5.4 Primary and Secondary late applications and late changes – received after closing date**

The LA will accept late applications or changes if there is evidence of a good reason for the lateness and only if the application or change is received before offers of places are made. Where the late application or change is accepted and offers of places have not been made, they will be treated in the same way as all other applications.

In the event of a late application or change not being accepted or receipt is after the offer of places has been made and in the event of the school applied for being oversubscribed, then places will be offered at schools within the Borough which are not over subscribed.

#### **5.5 Waiting Lists – after the main round of admissions**

If the LA cannot offer a place at a parent's preferred school the child's name will be entered onto a waiting list. This does not affect a parent's right to appeal. If a pupil is given a place at a school through the result of an appeal, their name will be taken off the waiting list.

If places become available in schools after the allocations have been made the LA will refer to the waiting list to offer vacant places. The LA will give places on the waiting list in line with the admission policy.

The waiting lists will be disbanded for secondary schools two weeks after the term begins in September 2007. For primary schools, the waiting list remains open for two weeks after the start of the Spring term in January 2008.

### **6. ADMISSION NUMBERS**

**Appendix 2** shows published admission number for Community and Voluntary Aided Primary and Secondary schools.

### **7. Primary School changes**

There are three primary school where there are changes in circumstances for admissions in September 2008.

**7.1 Hardwick Primary School** – In line with the agreed proposals, Hardwick School will be Built and relocated on the site of the English Martyrs School, which has now been demolished, on the Hardwick estate. There will be no change to the capacity of the school and the admission number will remain at 30. The school is due to open in September 2008. The are not proposals to change admission zones at this stage but this will have to be considered for the future as the new Hardwick Primary School will be within Harrow Gate Primary school admission zone.

**7.2 Redbrook/Roseworth amalgamation** – It has been agreed that there will be a new school built on the Roseworth Primary school site and will be due to open in September 2008. Both Redbrook and Roseworth Primary schools will close on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2008. The new school, which has not yet been named, will open on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 and will have 420 places with a 39 place nursery, the admission number will be 60.

**7.3 Barley Fields Primary School** – the temporary admission arrangements agreed for the opening of Barley Fields in September 2006 will continue and become part of the LAs admission arrangements for all primary and secondary schools for 2008/09.

## **8. DRAFT SCHOOL ADMISSIONS CODE OF PRACTICE – NEW STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

There are some additions and one major change to the new code, which comes into force in February that should be reflected in admission arrangements for 2008:

**8.1 1<sup>st</sup> preference 1<sup>st</sup>** – The new School Admissions Code, which is now law, states that it will be unlawful to use 1<sup>st</sup> preference 1<sup>st</sup> for allocating school places.

The DfES feel that the Equal Ranking System is a fairer way of allocating school places even though in Stockton on Tees, we have always had a good record of being able to accommodate a high percentage of parental preferences, sometimes 100%. Consequently the LA and all admission authorities will now allocate school places using the Equal Ranking System, from 2008 this has become law. The Co-ordinated Admissions Procedure has been altered to accommodate this.

Equal Ranking means that parents can still submit 3 preferences as 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> but admission authorities must treat all preferences equally. The LA send applications to VA schools from parents applying for their school, schools then allocate places and return information to the LA. The LA then organise allocations to ensure that parents only get one offer of a place.

**8.2 School 6<sup>th</sup> Form Policy** – admission arrangements for school 6<sup>th</sup> forms must include separate entry requirements and over subscription criteria for year 12, showing clearly the number the school 6<sup>th</sup> form will admit from outside applicants. Both Conyers and Egglecliffe schools are working on their admission policies for entry in 2008 and will be publishing the completed policies in their prospectus. This will be in line with the new code of practice.

**8.3 Children of UK Service personnel and other Crown servants (including Diplomats)**  
Local authorities and admission authorities must ensure the needs of these families are taken into account. If necessary allocate a school place in advance of the family returning to the area (as long as they meet the criteria stipulated in the code of practice). As this LA does not receive many applications from this group, individual applications would be considered under criteria 6 (medical/social grounds) of the LAs admission policy.

**8.4 Choice Advice** – Section 40 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 amends section 81 Of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to place a duty on LAs to provide advice and assistance to the parents of children in their area when they are in the process of deciding which school they want to send their children to.

To help families make the best of the options available to them the Government is introducing a network of Choice Advisers who will target those parents who need the most help during the admissions round. Funding has been provided to LAs to enable them to set up Choice Advice in their own areas.

Work has already started within this LA on Choice Advice, to ensure that this service is offered to parents.

## **9. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT – CHANGES IN LEGISLATION**

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 extends the entitlement to free school travel for pupils entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit:

- At secondary age, with effect from the start of the academic year 2008, pupils attending one of their three nearest suitable schools where the school is between 2 and 6 miles from the child's home will be entitled to free school transport.
- wants their child to attend a school of their preference based on their religion or belief they will be entitled to free school transport to the nearest such school where the school is between 2 and 15 miles from their home. These measures will remove lack of affordable transport as a barrier to choice.
- At primary age, with effect from the start of the academic year 2007, transport will be provided to the nearest school more than 2 miles from their home (current limit is 3 miles for pupils over 8).

The current statutory walking distances still apply ie for primary aged pupils who are under 8 years of age but live more than 2 miles away from their home to school. Pupils between 8 and 16 years are eligible if they live more than 3 miles away from their home to school.

The additional entitlement will be included in the LAs Home to School Transport Policy.

## **11. CONSULTATION**

The LA has consulted all school governing bodies, the Diocese, other neighbouring Local Authorities and the Admission Forum on the proposals for admissions in September 2007. The document was also been displayed on the Stockton on Tees website inviting comments from users. Although governing bodies have commented on the change to the Equal Ranking System, it has been accepted that this is now the way that places have to be allocated. No objections have been received with regard to any of the items within the report.

The LA also consult with parents to get their views on the admissions process, the results of which are published in the Admissions Booklets which are available to them when they apply for a primary or secondary school place. The responses give an average of 98% satisfaction levels from parents and the comments/suggestions help the LA to develop new practices to continue to improve our service.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

The new Admissions Code strengthens the need for parents to have clear, fair and objective admission criteria for the benefit of all children without discrimination. The changes, outlined in this report, in relation to school admissions and home to school transport, conform to government guidance and legislation and meets the needs of all parents. Equally the LA have sought to prioritise children within the most vulnerable groups or who have been disadvantaged in some way because of previous policies.

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 – Co-ordinated Admission arrangements for 2008/09
- Appendix 2 - Admission Numbers for Primary and Secondary Schools

## **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial**

The cost of the admissions arrangements have been included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. Extra funding has been received until July 2008 to provide the Choice Advice Service to parents.

### **Legal**

The framework for admissions was introduced in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 but a number of important changes were implemented through the Education Act 2002 and the Education and Inspections Bill 2006. The new Admissions Code of Practice takes account of those changes, and of associated regulations. The consultation and information within this report complies with the relevant legal requirements.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

A risk assessment has been carried out and this proposal is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

## **COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

### **Education and Lifelong Learning**

This is a statutory requirement and is essential information for parents to assist them in their decision making regarding their preferred school. It is also essential to the organisation and planning for entry to reception and the smooth transition from primary to secondary school.

## **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

None

**Ann Baxter**  
**Corporate Director Children, Education & Social Care**

Contact Officer : Betty Johns  
Telephone No. 526610  
Email Address: betty.johns@stockton.gov.uk

<u>Environmental Implications</u>	None
<u>Community Safety Implications</u>	None
<u>Background Papers</u>	None
<u>Education Related Item?</u>	Yes
<u>Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:</u>	Not Ward specific
<u>Property Implications</u>	None