

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting16th April 2009

1. Title of Item/Report

Procedure for Admission of Pupils to Primary & Secondary Schools in September 2010

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that outlined the proposed admission arrangements for primary and secondary schools in September 2010. In order to comply with the Education and Inspections Bill 2006 and the new School Admissions Code, the report included the proposed changes, amendments to the timetable and the Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for Primary and Secondary Schools for the academic year 2010/11.

The Code of Practice for admissions determined that LA's, when drawing up admission arrangements, should ensure:

§ Parents' preferences for schools were met to the maximum extent possible;

§ Admission criteria 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.

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

1. Pupils who were in the care of the Local Authority.
2. Pupils with complex needs who had been discussed at the Moderating or Statements Panel and been identified as needing a 'named' primary or secondary mainstream school.
3. Primary pupils who had 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 applied 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 1st preference on the form provided by the LA and returned it on time..)

4. Pupils resident within the admission zone who returned a School Admission Form by the due date.
5. Pupils who had a brother or sister living at the same address and were still at the school when the pupil begins;
6. Pupils who had 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 would be sought from independent sources such as a medical specialist who 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 attended the nursery of the school they wished to attend on a full time basis.
8. Pupils who lived closest to the particular school measured 'as the crow flies'.

The LA was responsible for administering a co-ordinated scheme for its area in relation to all maintained community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided schools and any Academies established following statutory consultation. The purpose of co-ordinated admission scheme was to ensure that, as far as was reasonably practicable, every parent of a child living in the LA area who had applied for a school place in the normal admission round received an offer of one school place on the same day.

The LA would act as a clearing house for the allocation of places by the relevant admission authorities in response to the CAFs. The LA would 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 was acting in its separate capacity as an admission authority; or
- an applicant was eligible for a place at more than one school, or
- an applicant was not eligible for a place at any school that the parent has nominated.

The Admission numbers for Community and Voluntary Aided Schools for

September 2010 were noted.

The inclusion of children with Complex Needs at criterion two was noted. Over the last few years there had been a move to include all children, including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), within mainstream schools if the school was able to meet their needs. The LA's oversubscription criteria as it stood only prioritised those who had a statement of SEN that named the school. As it is a statutory duty for the LA to place children with a statement of SEN within named schools, this criteria did not need to be included within the policy.

However, there were an increasing number of SEN pupils who were managed within mainstream schools, having the appropriate level of support in place to ensure that they developed appropriately. Due to this management of SEN pupils within mainstream, these pupils were not necessarily put forward for an assessment of their needs as they were already being met within the school setting. Consequently, children who had complex needs and who lived outside of the admission zone of a potentially oversubscribed school and did not have a statement may not get a place under the current admission policy. The proposed change would ensure this did not happen.

The inclusion of pupils who attended nursery at the school they wished to attend at criterion seven was also noted. There was an increase in primary admissions in September 2008, and many of the parents refused places at their preferred school lived outside the admission zone, however their children had attended the nursery. Under the current admission policy, the LA did not give priority to children who attend the preferred school nursery. So the allocation of the remaining places coming from the last criterion which is based on distance.

The School Admissions Code of Practice p. 59 stated:

'2.62 Admission authorities that propose to give priority to children who attend the nursery of the co-located children's centre for nursery education should ensure that families that live nearer the school, those who choose to take up other nursery options or the free entitlement at an alternative local provider, or those who have recently moved to the area, are not disadvantaged compared to other families.'

To comply with the school admissions code, it was proposed to add an additional criterion to the policy just above the last criteria, which were those living outside of the zone. This would allow priority to children living outside of the zone who attend the nursery above other out of zone applications.

The new building for Hardwick School was due to be ready in the

summer of 2009 which meant that the school would then be situated on Tithe Barn Road in Hardwick. Both of the schools would then be within the Harrow Gate Primary admission zone. The proposed change to the admission zones, which was supported by parents and schools through the consultation, was noted.

The new Admissions Code underpinned the Government's aim to create a schools system shaped by parents which delivered excellence and equity, developing the talents and potential of every child, regardless of their background; a system where all parents felt they had the same opportunities to apply for the school they want.

The Code stated: 'A fair system needs to provide parents with access to good information about admissions in order to support those parents who find it hardest to understand the system.'

Within Stockton on Tees it was aimed to ensure that the admission arrangements were in line with the principle of fair access to educational opportunity. The proposed changes to the LA's current policies should support this.

RESOLVED that:

1. the Admission Policy, which included the proposed changes, for oversubscribed schools and the Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for 2010/11 be agreed
2. the change of criterion 2 within the LA's admission policy to include pupils with complex needs who need a 'named' primary or secondary mainstream school be agreed;
3. an additional criterion to include a higher priority to children who live outside of the admission zone but have attended the school nursery of the parents preferred school be agreed;
4. the changes to the admission zones for Hardwick and Harrow Gate Primary Schools to accommodate the move of site of Hardwick School be agreed.

3. Reasons for the Decision

Legislation required the LA to publish information to be available for parents when they applied for a place at primary and secondary school. The information had to comply with the recently published School

Admissions Code derived from the Education & Inspections Bill 2006.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillors Mrs Beaumont and Nelson each declared personal, non-prejudicial interests in respect of this item as a result of their role as Governing Body members on schools contained within the report.

Councillor Cook declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of this item on the grounds of his grandson's attendance at one of the schools contained within the report.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday 24th April 2009

Proper Officer
20 April 2009