

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

16 April 2009

REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

CHILDREN, EDUCATION & SOCIAL CARE

PROCEDURE FOR ADMISSION OF PUPILS TO PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SEPTEMBER 2010

1. Summary

This report outlines the proposed admission arrangements the Local Authority (LA) is proposing for primary and secondary schools in September 2010. In order to comply with legislation for admissions in 2010, the report includes the full Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for Primary and Secondary Schools for that year.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to agree:

- (i) the Admission Policy, which includes the proposed changes outlined below, for oversubscribed schools and the Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for 2010/11;
- (ii) 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;
- (iii) 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;
- (iv) the changes to the admission zones for Hardwick and Harrow Gate Primary Schools to accommodate the move of site of Hardwick School.

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).

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DATE: 16 April 2009

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MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & SOCIAL CARE

**PROCEDURE FOR ADMISSION OF PUPILS TO PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
SEPTEMBER 2010**

1. SUMMARY

This report outlines 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 includes the proposed changes, amendments to the timetable and the Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for Primary and Secondary Schools for the academic year 2010/11.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to agree:

- (i) the Admission Policy, which includes the proposed changes outlined below, for oversubscribed schools and the Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for 2010/11
- (ii) 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;
- (iii) 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;
- (iv) the changes to the admission zones for Hardwick and Harrow Gate Primary Schools to accommodate the move of site of Hardwick School.

3 ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2010/11

The Code of Practice for admissions determines that LA's, 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.

4. Building Schools for the Future proposals

In February 2009 the Authority submitted to government a BSF Strategy for Change document agreed by Cabinet. The strategy includes proposals to establish an Academy in Stockton to replace Blakeston School and The Norton School, and an Academy in Thornaby to replace Thornaby Community School. Any proposals to close existing schools and establish Academies would be subject to a statutory process of consultation and decision-making under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Matters for consultation would include the capacity of each Academy, its admission arrangements (including the number of students to be admitted into Year 7 each year) and the proposed date for the first admission of students. These are all matters requiring further discussion with potential Academy sponsors and government agencies before statutory consultation can take place. Any Academy in the borough would be required to take part in the co-ordinated admissions scheme for maintained schools in Stockton-on-Tees. For that reason, descriptions of the schools covered by the scheme in this report include the words “any Academies established following statutory consultation.”

5. ADMISSION POLICY FOR SEPTEMBER 2010/11 – Primary, Junior, Infant, Secondary Schools and possibly any Academies established following statutory consultation.

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 with complex needs who have been discussed at the Moderating or Statements Panel and been identified as needing a ‘named’ primary or secondary mainstream 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 1st 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 attend the nursery of the school they wish to attend on a full time basis.
8. Pupils who live closest to the particular school measured ‘as the crow flies’.

NB Definitions of these criteria are explained in more detail within the published information for parents.

6 CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS AND TIMETABLE FOR 2010/11

The LA is 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 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.

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 2010/11 which includes the timetable. (Appendix 1)

6. ADMISSION NUMBERS

Appendix 2 shows published admission numbers for Community and Voluntary Aided (VA) Primary and Secondary schools. Admission numbers for any Academies established following statutory consultation will be published by the LA in time for information to be sent out to parents about admissions for 2010.

7. Criterion 2 – Inclusion of children with Complex Needs

Over the last few years there has been a move to include all children, including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), within mainstream schools if the school is able to meet their needs. There are now an increasing number of SEN pupils who are managed within mainstream schools, having the appropriate level of support in place to ensure that they develop appropriately. Due to this management of SEN pupils within mainstream, these pupils may not necessarily be put forward for an assessment of their needs as they are already being met within the school setting.

Consequently there will be a number of children in our schools with SEN without statements, who will need places in 'named' mainstream secondary schools that can offer the relevant support and resources. Equally, there are also very young children attending the Early Years or mainstream nurseries that have been identified with SEN but will not have an assessment of their needs undertaken until they commence at primary school. Due to their needs and so that the children can continue with the work already started in their nursery, it is important for them to continue to attend a 'named' primary or secondary mainstream or special school. In both the primary and secondary transitions, LA and/or health professionals, in discussion with parents and appropriate schools, will be supporting any applications for a 'named' school.

The LA's oversubscription criteria as it stands does not prioritise these children, only those who have a statement of SEN that names the school. As it is a statutory duty for the LA to place children with a statement of SEN within named schools, this criteria does not need to be included within the policy. Admissions, liaising with the SEN section, place children with statements naming the school before any others and then the remainder of the places are allocated to other children according to the admissions criteria. SEN numbers are not large.

Consequently, children who have complex needs and who live outside of the admission zone of a potentially oversubscribed school and do not have a statement may not get a place under the current admission policy. The proposed change will ensure this does not happen.

8. Criterion 7 – Giving priority to children who have been attending a school nursery above out of zone admissions

For admissions in September 2008 there was an increase in the numbers of appeals for primary schools. Many of the parents refused places at their preferred school lived outside of the admission zone but their children had attended the nursery.

Under the current admission policy, the LA does 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 LA has had many disappointed parents this year who felt let down by the policy due to not taking into account nursery attendance.

All schools make it clear when children are registered at the nursery that places cannot be guaranteed in reception, however many children are able to be allocated places at their preferred school. The problems arise when the school has more applications than places.

In addition, many schools integrate nursery and reception children, so it could be argued that there is more need for children to progress from nursery to reception.

The School Admissions Code of Practice p. 59 states:

'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 is proposed to add an additional criterion to the policy just above the last criteria, which are those living outside of the zone. This will allow priority to children living outside of the zone who attend the nursery above other out of zone applications.

9. Change of admission zones for Hardwick and Harrow Gate Primary Schools

The new building for Hardwick School should be ready in the summer of 2009 which means that the school will then be situated on Tithe Barn Road in Hardwick. Both of the schools will then be within the Harrow Gate Primary admission zone. (Map attached – Appendix 3).

Up until this year of admission, there has not been a problem with oversubscription for either school which indicated that parents were able to get into their preferred school anyway. However for admissions in 2008, Harrow Gate Primary School was significantly oversubscribed resulting in parents being refused places.

It is important that parents are clear when they apply for a school that they know which school admission zone they live in. The attached map (Appendix 4) is the proposed change to the admission zones which is supported by parents and schools, through the consultation.

10. 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 2009 and the 2 changes in policy. The document was also been displayed on the Stockton on Tees website inviting comments from other users.

The consultation period was extended this year until the 1 March to comply with the new statutory requirements for consultation derived from the new School Admissions Code. The new duty involves consulting with relevant parents and any groups that have an interest in the local area (eg community groups).

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.

Although there have been a number of comments from colleagues within governing bodies and the diocese which were responded to, no objections have been received in relation to the Admission Arrangements for 2010/11.

11. CONCLUSION

The new Admissions Code underpins the Governments aim to create a schools system shaped by parents which delivers excellence and equity, developing the talents and potential of every child, regardless of their background; a system where all parents feel they have the same opportunities to apply for the school they want.

The Code states: '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 we aim to ensure that the admission arrangements are in line with the principle of fair access to educational opportunity. The proposed changes to the LA's current policies should support this.

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Co-ordinated Admission arrangements for 2010/11
- Appendix 2 - Admission Numbers for Primary and Secondary Schools for September 2010
- Appendix 3 – Map showing current zones for Hardwick and Harrow Gate Schools when Hardwick school moves to the new site.
- Appendix 4 – Map showing proposed zones when Hardwick school moves to the new site.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

The cost of the admissions arrangements have been included in the Council's Medium Financial Plan.

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 School Admission Code published in February 2009 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 IMPLICATIONS

Economic Regeneration and transport

Sustainable School Travel Strategy is now in place and is a statutory duty. This has been developed closely with Road Safety Team and Travel Plan Co-ordinator, to provide added information for parents when applying for schools.

Safer Communities

No significant impact

Children and Young People

Admission Arrangements are in accordance with School Admissions Code, Admission Authorities have a duty to comply with the Code to ensure that the admission arrangements are fair and equitable. 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.

Healthier Communities and Adults

No significant impact

Liveability

No significant impact

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and the score is 71, no negative impacts have been identified. A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment can be viewed on the Stockton on Tees website www.stockton.gov.uk

CORPORATE PARENTING

It is a statutory duty for all Admission Authorities (Community and Voluntary Aided admission authorities) to prioritise Looked After Children within their oversubscription criteria as set out within the School Admission Code. All admission authorities within this borough comply with that duty.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

Results of consultation included within the report, relevant Councillors informed in relation to the change in admission zones for Hardwick and Harrogate primary Schools.

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<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