

# **CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA**

## **AGENDA ITEM**

## **REPORT TO CABINET**

**11 MARCH 2010**

## **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 2011**

1. Summary

This report outlines the admission arrangements the Local Authority (LA) is proposing for primary and secondary schools in September 2011. In order to comply with legislation for admissions in 2011, the report includes the full Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for Primary and Secondary Schools for that year. The Co-ordinated admission arrangements also includes in year applications for schools which the LA now has to administrate from September 2010.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to agree:

1. the Admission Policy for 2011, which includes the proposed changes outlined below, for oversubscribed schools and the Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for 2011/12 which includes;
2. moving the 'sibling' criterion above applications from people living in the admission zone;
3. removing option zones and incorporating permanent admission zones for The Links, Egglecliffe CE, St. John's CE, Whitehouse and The Oak Tree;
4. amending admission zones for Thornaby CE, Bader and Harewood;
5. admission numbers for schools in September 2011 which includes reducing admission numbers in secondary schools in line with Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and the proposed amalgamation of Bewley Infant and Junior Schools to make one primary school;
6. In Year transfer procedures.

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. The LA is required to set admission arrangements accordingly and lodge a copy of the Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements with the Secretary of State by the 15 April 2010.

#### 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 (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must 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 (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.**

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**DETAIL**

**ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2011/12**

1. 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.

## Building Schools for the Future proposals

2. The LA has now brought forward the proposals to close **Blakeston School, The Norton School, and Thornaby Community School** in August 2010. It is proposed that an Academy in North Stockton and an Academy in Thornaby will be established in September 2010. Admission arrangements for the Academies would be determined and publicised by the Academy sponsors after consultation with local communities. The local authority would have no role in the admission of students to Academies. The Authority's current admission arrangements will continue to be applied at Blakeston, The Norton and Thornaby Community School until any closure proposals are approved and implemented.
3. It is proposed that the buildings of **Grangefield School** and **Northfield School** will be remodelled between 2011 and 2013. After remodelling, each school will have a reduced capacity and will require a reduced admission number. The Authority proposes to apply these reduced admission numbers from September 2011 (see Appendix 2) in order to ensure that the number of students on roll at each school does not exceed the capacity of the remodelled buildings.
4. It is proposed that the buildings of **Ian Ramsey Church of England School** and **Our Lady & St Bede's Roman Catholic School** will be remodelled between 2011 and 2013. After remodelling, each school will have a reduced capacity and will require a reduced admission number (**see Appendix 2**). The governing bodies of voluntary aided schools are responsible for setting admission arrangements for those schools. The Authority has invited these two governing bodies to consider setting these reduced admission numbers from September 2011 in order to ensure that the number of students on roll at each school does not exceed the capacity of the remodelled buildings.
5. No other proposed changes under BSF will impact on admission arrangements for 2011.

### **ADMISSION POLICY FOR SEPTEMBER 2011/12 – Primary and Secondary Schools.**

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. Pupils who have a brother or sister living at the same address and are still at the school when the pupil begins;
4. Pupils resident within the admission zone who have returned a School Admission Form by the due date.
5. 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.
6. Pupils who attend the nursery of the school they wish to attend on a full time basis.
7. Pupils who live closest to the particular school measured 'as the crow flies'.

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

## CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2011/12

6. 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. This also applies to in year transfers from September 2010.
7. 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 2011/12 which includes the timetable. **(Appendix 1)**

## ADMISSION NUMBERS

8. **Appendix 2** shows published admission numbers for Community and Voluntary Aided (VA) Primary and Secondary schools and includes a change in numbers for Ian Ramsey CE Grangefield, Northfield, Our Lady & Saint Bede 's RC and St. Michael's RC Schools in line with BSF proposals.
9. Admission numbers for the proposed Academies (Thornaby and North Stockton) due to open in September 2010 are currently being consulted on.

### Bewley Infant School and Bewley Junior School

10. After consultation with parents, school staff and governors, the Authority has published a proposal to amalgamate these two schools and create a single primary school with nursery on their shared site in September 2011. The proposal will be decided by an independent Adjudicator within the next two months. The Council will inform residents in the area of the Adjudicator's decision when it is received by the LA.

## IN YEAR TRANSFER PROCEDURE – SEPTEMBER 2010 (Appendix 3)

11. A recent update of the School & Standards Framework Act 1988 through The Schools Admissions (Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2008 means that there is a duty on the Local Authority (LA) to co-ordinate in-year admissions. This means that all applications for school places in all year groups, will be made through the 'home' LA, whether the school is a community or voluntary aided (VA) school, within Stockton on Tees or other nearby LA.
12. This procedure will form part of the LAs Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for the management of allocations of all school places, main rounds for primary and secondary and now all in-year transfer requests. The same principles will apply to all applications. Parents apply for a school through the LA that they pay their Council Tax to. LAs will then liaise with each other in relation to securing the preferred school for the parents. The LA will inform parents of the outcome.

13. The change to dealing with all In Year applications through the LA will not in anyway relinquish the responsibilities of Voluntary Aided (VA) admission authorities or Academies who manage their own admissions. After receipt of an application requests for places would be referred to the individual VA schools for a decision. The decision would then be relayed to the parent by the LA and offer the right to appeal if appropriate.
14. The purpose of this procedure is to work in partnership with schools and parents to make sure that pupils attend their preferred school. If difficulties arise, parents are encouraged to work with the school to resolve any issues rather than move schools. Research by the Department for Children Schools and Families has shown that pupil mobility effects academic achievement not only for the individual pupil but for the whole school.

#### **PROPOSED CHANGES TO PRIMARY ADMISSION ZONES**

15. The LA operates admission zones which gives parents some priority within the LAs Admission Policy should a school be oversubscribed. This does not affect a parents right to ask for a preferred school but would need to bear in mind how their circumstances fitted into the policy (or policy for a VA school) as to whether they would gain a place at the preferred school especially if the school has a history of being oversubscribed.
16. Due to the pressure on school places in some schools this year, a review of the current admission zones has been undertaken. The LA will amend admission zones in three areas of the Borough where either option zones exist or the route to school is not a reasonable one. These option zones have been in place for a number of years and it is felt that it will give clearer information to parents to have one specific admission zone.  
**(Appendix 4)**

#### **CONSULTATION**

17. The LA has consulted all school governing bodies, the Diocese, other neighbouring Local Authorities, Admission Forum, a 1% sample of parents across the Borough and special needs groups on the proposals for admissions in September 2011. The LA also held 5 public meetings across Stockton on Tees. The document was also displayed on the Stockton on Tees website and at the reception in Municipal Buildings inviting comments..
18. The Local Authority (LA) received over 800 submissions from parents and comments from Headteachers and Governing Bodies, local Member of Parliament and Councillors who were concerned about the original proposals to remove the option zone for Barley Fields and replace with an alternative split admission zone. Due to this the LA reconsidered its proposals, issued alternatives and extended the consultation period to enable comments and views to be put forward on these changes.
19. The original proposals involved removing the option zone for Barley Fields and replacing it with a split zone to give priority to families who live near to the school as well as giving priority to families who live on The Rings, which is some distance away. The reason for this proposal was due to the LA not being able to give parents living in certain parts of the Ingleby Barwick area any of their three preferences in the last admission round. It was felt that these changes to the admission zones would have at least give some priority for gaining access to a particular school.
20. However, when looking at the rise in projected numbers for primary pupils for that area, even if the LA changed the admission zones, may still not have been able to guarantee that all the families on The Rings and those living close to Barley Fields would be able to gain a place at the school. It could also cause many families undue stress about whether or not they would be able to get their siblings into Barley Fields.

21. The School Admissions Code, p 33 para 2.25 states:  
 '.....Families must be at the heart of the admissions system and the Government expects admission authorities for primary schools to take the needs of parents with young children into account in deciding which oversubscription criteria will be used. The admission authorities for primary schools **should** ensure in their oversubscription criteria that siblings (including twins, triplets or children from other multiple births) can attend the same primary school, as long as they comply with the Education (Infant Class Sizes)(England) Regulations 1998.'
22. Under these circumstances it was felt better to leave the admissions zones in Ingleby Barwick as they are but amend the LA admission Policy to give higher priority to siblings which will benefit all families in Stockton on Tees.
23. The LAs Choice Adviser will be available to give independent advice to parents in Ingleby Barwick and other areas of Stockton, on how best to use their preferences in order to gain a place in a school in Stockton.
24. There were no opposition to amendments to the admission zones in the other areas of Stockton on Tees. The LA has not received any negative feedback on the change in the proposals during the extended consultation period.

## **CONCLUSION**

25. 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.
26. 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.'
27. 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 2011/12
- Appendix 2 - Admission Numbers for Primary and Secondary Schools for September 2011
- Appendix 3 – In Year Transfer Procedures
- Appendix 4 –  
 Map 1 (b) showing proposed admission zones – Thornaby CE/Bader/Harewood  
 Map 2 (b) showing proposed admission zones-Whitehouse/St John'sCE/Whitehouse  
 Map 3 (b) showing proposed admission zones – Egglecliffe CE/The Links

## **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

28. The cost of the admissions arrangements have been included in the Council's Medium Financial Plan.
29. 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**

30. 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

31. 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.

### Children and Young People

32. 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, the smooth transition from primary to secondary school along with the development of in year requests for schools.

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

33. 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](http://www.stockton.gov.uk)

## **CORPORATE PARENTING**

34. 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**

35. Results of consultation included within the report, all Councillors consulted with.

**Jane Humphreys**

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

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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