

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 18 MARCH 2014**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

SUBJECT: **SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2015**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To advise members of the outcome of the statutory consultation exercise on the admission arrangements for September 2015 and to recommend approval.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 Members will be aware that the local authority is required each year to undertake a statutory consultation exercise on its admission arrangements for the following year. For September 2015, the authority must have determined its arrangements by 15 April 2013 and the consultation must be concluded by 1 March 2013. Statutory consultees are the governing bodies of all schools, admission authorities for all other maintained schools in the area, the diocesan authorities and neighbouring authorities.

2.02 Consultation must cover the full admission arrangements, including the admissions policy, over-subscription criteria, the timetable for admissions and the Admission Numbers for each school. This information is attached as Appendices 1 and 2.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The current admission arrangements have been in place since 2003 and the vast majority of parental preferences (98%) continue to be met in Flintshire. The number of admission appeals has increased in recent years, as detailed in the table below:

Year	Secondary	Primary	Total
2011/12	41	39	66
2012/13	21	97	118
2013/14*	46	66	112

* to date

However, based on projected numbers on roll, it is anticipated that the number of appeals in both the secondary and primary sectors will

decrease slightly in 2014/15. It is expected that over-subscription will continue at a small number of schools in some areas of the County, largely as a consequence of parental preference.

3.02 There are no changes proposed to the current admissions policy or oversubscription criteria. However, as a result of a revised School Admissions Code issued by the Welsh Government in July 2013, the opportunity has been taken to update the admissions arrangements to reflect these changes. These include the following:

- The inclusion of “previously looked after children” alongside “looked after children” as the first criterion in all instances;
- Where a school is over-subscribed, a waiting list must be maintained until 30th September as a minimum
- The date for the offer of places in Secondary schools (the common offer date) must be 1st March from 2015/16, and
- The common offer date for places in primary schools must be 16th April from 2018/19.

The Code also includes guidance on additional exceptions to class size legislation, the requirement for other admission authorities to send a copy of their “determined” arrangements to the local authority by 1st June at the latest, and more opportunities to vary existing admission arrangements without the need to seek approval from Welsh Ministers.

3.03 The admissions timetable has been drawn up in consultation with neighbouring authorities and takes in to account factors such as allowing parents sufficient time to visit schools and express their preferences, the time needed to process applications, chase up late applications, etc. The timetable takes on board the common offer dates referred to above.

3.04 Following consultation with all the Headteachers, there are changes proposed to several schools’ Admission Numbers (the Admission Number being the maximum number of pupils that should be admitted to an individual year group). These are:

Ysgol Glan Aber – increase from 15 to 20, in order to meet demand from the local area;

Lixwm Primary – increase from 9 to 10, as a result of a slight change in teaching space;

St Mary’s Catholic Primary, Flint – increase from 43 to 45, in order to meet demand from the local area.

Westwood Primary, Buckley – increase from 32 to 39, in order to meet demand in the Buckley area.

Pentrobin St John the Baptist School – increase from 12 to 15, in order to meet demand.

These changes are included in Appendix 2.

- 3.05 The statutory consultation exercise was carried out between 6 January and 14 February 2014. One comment was received from a Primary Headteacher expressing concern that in the light of Welsh Government's emphasis on transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools, the admissions criteria should include "feeder schools". Due to parental preference, it is often the case that pupils from outside the local area may attend a primary school and yet are not necessarily admitted to the secondary school with the majority of the cohort. The Headteacher points out that this is frustrating for the secondary school too in terms of the transition work carried out in Years 5, 6 and 7.

In response to this, it must be noted that in accordance with the School Admissions Code any transition arrangements agreed between primary and secondary schools are entirely separate from admissions. In addition, the reasons why the admissions policy was changed in 2003 from "feeder school" to one based on distance from home address to school was to address increasing over-subscription at certain secondary schools and this has been successful. Although there continues to be over-subscription at a small number of schools, the number of appeals is relatively low when compared to some other authorities. The current admissions criteria support the policy of pupils attending their nearest school.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That the proposed admission arrangements for 2015/16 be approved.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 None

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 The capacity assessments for schools ensure that the use of teaching space and other rooms is accurately and consistently calculated and provide useful information relating to surplus spaces or over-subscription.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 All parents have an opportunity to express a preference for a particular school and all applications are dealt with in an open and transparent manner in accordance with the School Admissions Code.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 No further consultation is required.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 All statutory consultees have been consulted regarding the admission arrangements for 2015/16.

12.00 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Admission Arrangements 2015/16

Appendix 2 - Admission Numbers

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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