

## EDUCATION AND YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 20 <sup>th</sup> December 2018
<b>Report Subject</b>	School Admissions Policy Overview
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Education
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To provide an overview of the school admissions policy and an update regarding oversubscribed schools.

### RECOMMENDATION

1	That members note the contents of the report.
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### REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY</b>
1.01	The statutory School Admissions Code 2013 sets out the requirements of admission authorities relating to the discharge of duties in respect of school admissions. The Local Authority is the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools and governing bodies are the admission authorities for foundation schools and voluntary aided schools.
1.02	In accordance with the Code, the local authority must undertake a statutory consultation exercise on its admission arrangements for the following year. Consultation must be complete by 1 March and the admission arrangements must be determined by 15 April each year. Statutory consultees include all schools in the area, the diocesan authorities and neighbouring authorities. The main principles of admission arrangements are that they must be clear, objective, procedurally fair and equitable for all groups of young people and must comply with relevant legislation.

1.03	<p>The Council's admission arrangements comply with the mandatory requirements of the Code and sets out oversubscription criteria as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Looked after children (children in care) and previously looked after children;</li> <li>b) pupils for whom the preferred school is the nearest appropriate school to the pupil's home address;</li> <li>c) pupils who will have a sister or brother attending the preferred school on the expected admission date. The 'sibling rule' will only be applied for the statutory period of education i.e. up to Year 11;</li> <li>d) pupils for whom the preferred school is not the nearest to their home address. Pupils will be admitted in order of proximity to that alternative school and up to its Admission Number.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, where a school is named in a Statement of Special Educational Needs, the admission authority has a duty to admit the child to that school.</p>
1.04	<p>In addition to the Local Authority, admissions authorities within Flintshire are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governing Bodies of Voluntary aided Catholic Schools (6)</li> <li>• Governing Bodies of Church in Wales Schools (7)</li> <li>• Governing Body of Foundation School (Ysgol Derwen, Higher Kinnerton)</li> <li>• Colleges for Post 16 students</li> </ul> <p>Flintshire's Admissions Team consults with and assists all other admissions authorities in the processing of applications and appeals and provides advice and guidance to ensure they act in accordance with statutory Code.</p>
1.05	<p>Admission authorities must make arrangements to enable parents to express a preference for a school in their area and the Local Authority must comply with that preference and allocate a place if there are spaces available. The legal framework for Admissions does not recognise County boundaries and therefore all applications received are handled in the same way, irrespective of which County the pupil lives in.</p>
1.06	<p>The capacity of all schools in Wales is calculated in accordance with the National Assessment methodology provided by Welsh Government and all schools have an agreed Admission Number (AN), which is derived from the calculated capacity. The Admission Number is the maximum number of pupils that should be admitted to an individual year group. Therefore, irrespective of where a pupil lives, a preference must be complied with if the Admission Number has not been reached.</p>
1.07	<p>There is no automatic right to a school place at a particular school. If there are more applications received than there are places available, i.e. the number of applications exceeds the AN, places must be allocated in accordance with the agreed oversubscription criteria set out in the admissions policy. Within Flintshire, the current policy has been in place since 2003 and is based on the principle of "nearest appropriate school", i.e. after "Looked After Children", pupils living closest to a school are given first priority, followed by siblings. Any remaining places are allocated in distance order. Last year, the vast majority of parental preferences were met in</p>

	Flintshire (approximately 96%). This was despite a very large cohort moving from Year 6 to 7.
1.08	Distances are measured for admissions (and transport) purposes using a Geographical Information System (GIS) to calculate the shortest home to school distance in miles, to several decimal places. It is integrated into the school admissions software. The coordinates of an applicant's home address are determined using the Local Land and Property Gazetteer and Ordnance Survey Address data and the route assessment is measured from the main entrance of a property to the centre point of a school building. This method is used for all applications in order that distances are measured in a consistent manner using the same measuring tool. The route used is shared with applicants if necessary and when distances have been disputed by parents, this method of measurement has always been accepted by independent appeal panels.
1.09	<p>Applications for places are made using the Council's online system and this is working well. Assistance is provided by Council staff for any parents experiencing difficulties completing or submitting the online form. Access to computers is also available at Flintshire Connects offices and staff there are trained to assist customers complete the form if necessary. 100% of applications are now received online.</p> <p>Parents may express as many preferences for schools as they wish, in a preferred order, and parents are strongly encouraged to express more than one preference. By law, parents who express a preference are given priority for admission over those who do not. Only the highest preference that can be met will be used to offer a place.</p>
1.10	<p>It is important that applications for admission are returned by the published closing date as any late applications are dealt with after those received on time. This means that if a preferred school is full (i.e. places are allocated up to the Admission Number), even if the school concerned is closest to the child's home address, a late application will be refused and the parent offered a right of appeal. This process must be followed in accordance with the published admission arrangements.</p> <p>The Admissions Team liaises closely with schools to try and minimise the number of late applications. Lists of pupils from whom an application has not been received are sent to schools in order that they can chase parents. In addition, social media is used to publicise the closing dates and urge parents to apply on time.</p>
1.11	If an application for admission is refused, the parent has a right of appeal to an independent appeal panel. Last year, for entry in September 2018, admissions into Year 7 and Reception, despite there being enough school places overall, there was oversubscription as a result of parental preference, resulting in appeals at the following schools:

School	No. of refusals	No. of appeals	No. upheld
Castell Alun	22	10	3
Elfed	33	12	10
Flint High	25	12	11
Mold Alun	53	30	18
Total	133	64	42

School	No. of refusals	No. of appeals	No. upheld
Cae'r Nant, Connah's Quay	8	4	0
Cornist, Flint	1	1	0
Golftyn, Connah's Quay	1	1	0
Hawarden Village	2	2	0
Wepre, Connah's Quay	13	6	3
Ysgol Derwen, Kinnerton	4	4	2
Total	29	18	5

Although it is too early to predict with any confidence for admission in to Year 7 in September 2019, it is anticipated that there could be oversubscription at the same secondary schools once again, and also at a small number of primary schools. However, oversubscription does not necessarily result in appeals as parents may accept a second or third preference school or an alternative school with a space available.

1.12 For information, the total number of admission appeals in recent years is detailed in the table below. These figures include appeals for Year 7 and Reception and also mid-term appeals which are held when individual year groups are full.

Year	Secondary	Primary	Total
2013/14	46	81	127
2014/15	20	54	74
2015/16	66	71	137
2016/17	43	77	120
2017/18	20	61	81
2018/19	70	29	99

\*to date

## 2.00 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

2.01 All applications for community and voluntary controlled schools are handled by the Admissions Team, along with presentation of cases at independent appeal hearings.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	None required.

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	The annual determination of admission arrangements must be carried out in accordance with the framework and timetable in the School Admissions Code. Adherence to the Code minimises the risk of challenge to the Public Services Ombudsman or by judicial review.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 – School Admission Arrangements 2018/19

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<p><a href="http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130715-admin-codes-en.pdf">http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130715-admin-codes-en.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Gill Yates, Admissions Manager  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 704187  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:gill.yates@flintshire.gov.uk">gill.yates@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<p><b>School Admission Arrangements</b> – the overall procedure and practices about how to apply for a school place, including the criteria to decide how places are allocated, application procedures, the timetable for the admissions process, how late applications are handled, waiting lists and the appeal process.</p> <p><b>School Admissions Code</b> – a Code issued by Welsh Government in respect of the discharge of admissions functions. All admission authorities have a statutory duty to act in accordance with the Code.</p> <p><b>Oversubscription criteria</b> – a list of criteria which an admission authority must adopt to be used for the allocation of places if there are more applications received than there are places available.</p> <p><b>Admission Number</b> - the number of school places that an admission authority can admit in each year group</p>