

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 th March 2019
Report Subject	School Admission Arrangements 2020/21
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To advise on the outcome of the statutory consultation exercise on the admission arrangements for September 2020 and to recommend approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the proposed admission arrangements for 2020/21 be approved.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS																																			
1.01	In accordance with the School Admissions Code, the local authority is required to 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.																																			
1.02	Consultation must cover the full admission arrangements including the admissions policy, over-subscription criteria, the timetable for admissions and admission numbers (ie the maximum number of pupils to be admitted by the admissions authority in to each year group). This information is attached as Appendices 1, 2 and 3.																																			
1.03	<p>The current admission arrangements have been in place since 2003 and the majority of parental preferences continue to be met (approximately 96%). For information, the number of admission appeals in recent years is detailed in the table below:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Secondary</th> <th>Primary</th> <th>Total</th> <th>Total appeals upheld by Panel**</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2013/14</td> <td>46</td> <td>81</td> <td>127</td> <td>62/48%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2014/15</td> <td>20</td> <td>54</td> <td>74</td> <td>47/63%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015/16</td> <td>66</td> <td>71</td> <td>137</td> <td>73/53%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016/17</td> <td>43</td> <td>77</td> <td>120</td> <td>68/56%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017/18</td> <td>20</td> <td>61</td> <td>81</td> <td>40/50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018/19</td> <td>75</td> <td>31</td> <td>106*</td> <td>62/58%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>*to date ** ie appeal lost by parent</p> <p>It is anticipated that oversubscription will continue particularly at secondary level in some areas of the County as a consequence of a larger cohort in Year 6 and parental preference.</p>	Year	Secondary	Primary	Total	Total appeals upheld by Panel**	2013/14	46	81	127	62/48%	2014/15	20	54	74	47/63%	2015/16	66	71	137	73/53%	2016/17	43	77	120	68/56%	2017/18	20	61	81	40/50%	2018/19	75	31	106*	62/58%
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1.04	The consultation process took place between 11.12.18 and 01.02.19. Comments were received from the Secondary Heads Federation regarding the process for changing schools during the school year (paragraphs 15 and 16 of the School Admissions Policy refers). In particular, Head teachers were concerned about the number of requests to transfer schools which are made during a school year and the disruption these can cause to a Learner's education. In 2017/18, there was a total of 1228 transfers processed by the Admissions Team, 831 primary and 397 Secondary. This is a similar number to other authorities in Wales. Many transfers are, for example, as a result of house moves in to and within the local authority area but some are not. In order to ensure that parents have given serious consideration to all options prior to requesting a transfer, it is suggested that the following wording as agreed with Secondary Head teachers, be included in the policy:																																			

	<p>“The Local Authority does not encourage transfers between schools, and a change of school mid-term can seriously disrupt the continuity of a child’s education. If parents feel that a problem at school is so serious as to necessitate a change they are urged to take all reasonable steps to resolve the issue with the school first and then to seek advice from the Admissions Team if necessary before applying for a transfer. In cases involving school transfer requests that do not involve a house move the Local Authority reserves the right to arrange for the child to start the new school at the beginning of the next half term to minimise disruption to their own and other children’s education. All secondary schools have mid-year transition programmes that will support pupils who are undertaking a mid-phase transfer. The programmes include extended visits to school by parents/carers and pupils”.</p> <p>Some Welsh local authorities already include similar wording in their policies. All applications will continue to be considered on their merits in consultation with Head teachers, parents and young people to minimise disruption to education. The effect of this amendment to the policy will be monitored.</p> <p>There are no changes proposed to the admissions oversubscription criteria themselves.</p>
1.05	<p>There are currently between 1600 and 1700 applications each year in each of the 3 admissions phases, ie for Year 7, Reception and Nursery places (including those from out of County). Therefore there is a total of 4800-5100 applications made each year for Flintshire schools, in addition to the 1228 applications to transfer schools referred to in paragraph 1.04.</p>
1.06	<p>The opportunity has also been taken to amend admission numbers in respect of two schools to reflect changes in accommodation. These are Ysgol Derwenfa, Leeswood and Ysgol Bryn Gwalia, Mold. In both cases the admission numbers have been decreased following consultation with the respective Head teachers.</p>
1.07	<p>The proposed admissions timetable has been drawn up in consultation with neighbouring authorities and takes into account factors such as allowing parents sufficient time to visit schools and express their preferences, the time needed to process applications, etc. The timetable also incorporates the “common offer dates” prescribed by the School Admissions Code (ie 1 March for secondary and 16 April for primary).</p>
1.08	<p>All applications for places are made using the Council’s on line system and this is continuing to work well for applicants. 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 to complete the form if necessary. 100% of applications in the main admissions round and for transfers are now received online. However, hard copies of application forms will continue to be made available on request to any parent who cannot gain access to an on line facility.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Numbers of appeals will continue to be monitored to ensure sufficient capacity to present and clerk appeals in a timely manner.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	All statutory consultees have been consulted in accordance with the School Admissions Code.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	<p>The annual determination of admission arrangements must be carried out in accordance with the framework and timetable in the School Admissions Code. Consultation has been completed and approval is being sought within the deadlines set out in the Code. Adherence to the Code minimises the risk of challenge to the Public Services Ombudsman or by judicial review.</p> <p>There are no direct anti-poverty, environment or equalities issues arising from this report. The admissions policy is applied consistently in all cases in accordance with the statutory Code.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 – Admission Arrangements 2020/21. Appendix 2 – Primary School Admission Numbers. Appendix 3 – Secondary School Admission Numbers.</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>https://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130715-admin-codes-en.pdf.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Gill Yates, Admissions Manager Telephone: 10352 704187 E-mail: gill.yates@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	School Admission Arrangements – 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.

School Admissions Code – 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.

Oversubscription criteria – 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.

Admission Number - the number of school places that an admission authority can admit in each year group.