

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 27 March 2014

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children & Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

SUBJECT: School Admission Arrangements 2015

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report fulfils the Local Authority's statutory requirement to consult upon and then determine Halton's School Admissions Policy for Local Authority maintained community and voluntary controlled schools, and Coordinated Admission Schemes for all primary and secondary schools in Halton, for the September 2015 intake.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board

- 1) approves the attached School Admissions Policy, Admission Arrangements and Coordinated Schemes for admission to primary and secondary schools for the 2015/16 academic year; and**
- 2) endorses the Department for Education School Admissions Code, and requires all Halton Schools, including Academy and Free Schools to ensure that their admissions criteria are reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all legislation.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In January 2014 Halton Local Authority issued a statutorily required consultation paper on the proposed admission arrangements and co-ordinated admission schemes for the September 2015 intake (attached as Appendix 1). The full consultation was available on the Council's website and were also issued via the Strategic Director's Spring Term 2014 Report to Governors, and sent to the four Diocesan Authorities responsible for voluntary aided schools in Halton, and to neighbouring authorities.
- 3.2 The consultation ran until 14th February 2014 and no changes were proposed to the current oversubscription criteria for admission to Local Authority maintained community and voluntary controlled primary schools, and no change to the current oversubscription criteria for

admission to Local Authority maintained community secondary schools.

- 3.3 For Primary School admissions no changes are proposed to the current arrangements. For secondary school admissions, Members will be aware that Wade Deacon High School is now an academy, and as such is responsible for its own admission criteria and the School's Governing Body have consulted upon their proposed arrangements separately. With regard to secondary schools, the Local Authority remains responsible for admission to The Grange School in Runcorn (an all through school), with no proposal to amend the current arrangements, and The Bankfield School in Widnes, and is proposing to retain the existing catchment zone for The Bankfield School.
- 3.4 Members will recall that the proposal to introduce zoning arrangements in Widnes arose from the extensive public consultation exercise undertaken by the Local Authority in regard to closing Fairfield High School and expanding Wade Deacon High School as part of the School Organisation process, thereby ensuring that those residents in the east of Widnes (previously served by Fairfield High School) did not have to pass two secondary schools to access educational provision in the west of Widnes (the zoning arrangements are attached as Appendix 2). Wade Deacon, as an academy, and responsible for determining their own admission arrangements, have proposed different arrangements to those previously determined, and the Strategic Director – Children & Enterprise, has written to Wade Deacon objecting to those proposed arrangements. At the time of writing Wade Deacon had not communicated the outcome of their 2015/16 consultation arrangements, but are required to do so by April 15th 2014. A copy of Wade Deacon's proposed admission arrangements are attached to this report.
- 3.5 The Local Authority's consultation advised that there would be no individual response to any submission made, but any responses submitted would be considered by the Council's Executive Board. One response to the consultation was received from Cheshire East Council querying the admission arrangements for The Grange All Through School (attached as Appendix 3). However the responder has misunderstood the status of The Grange School which is a 3-16 All Through School, and meets all statutory admission requirements, approved by the Department for Education.
- 3.6 The Local Authority as commissioner of school places must ensure that the admission arrangements are fair, clear and objective, and fully comply with all statutory requirements. The arrangements proposed for the 2015/16 academic year reflect those requirements.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Admissions Policy has been drawn up to maximize parental preference for Halton Local Authority maintained community and voluntary controlled schools, and responds to the parental representations made at the time of the initial School Organisation and Building Schools for the Future consultations. The oversubscription criteria contained within the Policy reflect the criteria which are considered good practice and acceptable by the Department for Education.
- 4.2 The continued use of a catchment zones for The Bankfield does not remove the right of parents/carers to express a preference for any school. Parents/carers must complete an application form regardless of which catchment zone they live in, which allows them the opportunity to express a preference for any school. If the school of preference is undersubscribed then all applications will be successful. If the school is oversubscribed then the oversubscription criteria will be applied and places allocated in accordance with the criteria.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The proposed policy complies with statutory requirements in ensuring that the admission arrangements are fair and do not disadvantage, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with disability or special educational needs, thereby ensuring that the educational provision for children & young people in the borough is inclusive and accessible.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Educational achievement is critical to the life chances of all children in the borough and the School Admissions Policy detailing school admission arrangements in Halton underpins the requirement to promote fair access to educational opportunity.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The School Admissions Policy is aligned to the Council's Sustainable School Travel Policy which promotes and supports measures that encourage local communities to use environmentally sustainable forms of travel, especially walking, cycling, and public transport.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The alignment of the School Admissions Policy and the Sustainable School Travel Policy promotes the safe travel and transfer of pupils to school.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The proposed admissions policy reflects the school reorganisation programme intended to ensure that 21st century provision is in place across both the primary and secondary sectors.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The admission arrangements and co-ordinated schemes are proposed to maximise parental preference for Halton schools. Any amendment to the current arrangements at this time may reduce parental preference and lead to an increased number of admission appeals, adversely affecting the intake at some schools. Furthermore, any amendments may affect the Local Authority's School Organisation planning.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The proposed admission arrangements reflect any requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

- 9.1 The decision is statutorily required and any revision to the proposed arrangements may adversely affect school place planning as detailed in 7.1 above.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 10.1 Other options considered and rejected include the allocation of places through random allocation (lottery) as this method could be seen as arbitrary and random.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

- 11.1 The Policy applies for the September 2015 academic intake.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
School Admissions Code 2012	Children & Young People's Directorate	Martin West
School Standards & Framework Act 1998	Children & Young People's Directorate	Martin West
Education Act 2002	Children & Young People's Directorate	Martin West
Education & Inspections Act 2006	Children & Young People's Directorate	Martin West