

SECTION B

POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES SUPPORTING PLAN

- 1) This School Organisation Plan is not a “stand alone” document, it forms part of the local planning framework, both of the LEA and other agencies and bodies and also is part of the local delivery of national policy initiatives and priorities.
- 2) The most important planning element is to set out the factors which the Committee will take into account when considering proposals to add, remove, relocate or re-organise places and maintain the balance between the management of surplus place removal and additional place provision with the maintenance of maximum parental choice.
- 3) Within the requirement that overall provision is effective and efficient i.e. an appropriate balance between school places available and pupil numbers, the School Organisation Committee when considering proposals referred to it under the Education (School Organisation Proposals) Regulations 1999, will consider each proposal against the following principles, weighted as appropriate to the proposals under consideration.
 - i) The desirability in considering any proposals of matching school places to patterns of parental preference for relevant schools as expressed over a reasonable period of time which would normally be five years.
 - ii) The duty upon schools to provide the National Curriculum and so far as it has been adopted by the school, the curriculum of the Education Authority.
 - iii) The duty on schools to secure infant class sizes of no more than 30 pupils; the Committee should in addition have regard to the desirability of achieving similar provision in junior and secondary classes taking account of the desirability in certain areas of the curriculum for smaller class sizes in accordance with health and safety guidance.
- iv) The desirability of diversity of provision (for example by gender, religious or denominational conviction or for special educational needs), consistent with the efficient and effective use of resources and that there should be no reduction in the proportion of denominational places. Note: diversity in this context does not include the issue of selection since the Schools Standards and Framework Act makes separate provision for considering the position of grammar schools. The question of selection therefore, lies outside the competence of the Committee.
- v) The desirability of actively promoting the integration of pupils with special educational needs into mainstream schools wherever this is appropriate and can be adequately resourced. Whenever possible, the option of mainstream denominational school provision should be available for pupils with special educational needs whose parents would prefer this.
- vi) The promotion of high standards in relevant schools as reflected in external inspection evidence and in end of Key Stage and post 16 performance data as appropriate.
- vii) The accessibility to suitable schools for children resident in the area taking into particular account the Local Education Authority’s home to school transport policy.
- viii) The desirability of providing a range of opportunities for pupils at 16+ so far as this is consistent with the efficient and effective use of resources.
- ix) The desirability of schools meeting the needs of the wider community, in particular the impact upon facilities available to the local community which may be provided in the schools concerned.

4) The above principles are those adopted in the School Organisation Plan previously. It is proposed, in the 2004/5 academic year that the LEA consider further the implications of an increasing number of primary schools with less than one form entry – 30 pupils and therefore primary schools of fewer than 210 pupils ie. 7 x 30, with the same entry size applied to separate infant and junior schools. The LEA review will consider a range of issues, including curriculum provision, class and year group organization, staffing structures, financial efficiency and parental attitudes, as well as the surplus places issue. It is intended that any proposals arising from this review will be brought to the School Organisation Committee as part of the annual plan review in June 2005.

5) Denominational Provision

Voluntary aided provision made by Churches is normally related to a particular parish or parishes. In respect of the Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury the principles underpinning such denominational provision are as follows:

Catholic schools exist to meet the needs of parents of baptised Catholics in fulfilling promises and responsibilities accepted by them during their child's baptismal ceremony. It is the purpose of those schools to offer a distinctly Christian education in accordance with gospel values and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is the policy of the Diocese to provide a place for every baptised Catholic child within a Catholic Primary and Secondary School. Such provision for schools within the trusteeship of the Diocese is based on a parish network and each parish has a designated Diocesan Primary and Secondary School which serves it. Catholic Secondary Schools under the trusteeship of Religious Orders serve all geographical areas within Wirral LEA.

Catholic schools are an integral part of the mission of the Church and that mission is held to be valid and valued through all stages in the education system. Within each of those stages the aim of the Diocese is to maintain a distinctive Catholic education and environment.

The Church of England Diocese of Chester will make decisions regarding the provision of school place with reference to the following principles:

- promoting high quality education demonstrating Christian beliefs as expressed in the worship and practices of the Church of England;
- recognising the role of all Church of England schools in the mission of the Church and the life of the communities;
- seeking to meet the aspirations of parents and serve communities by providing education in the voluntary aided category within the framework of the Church of England;
- seeking to maintain the historic position of the Church of England in serving all communities by working in partnership with all those who provide or are employed in education.

6) This School Organisation Plan links closely to the LEA Asset Management Plan (AMP) and the linked Statement of Priorities. These were most recently updated and approved by the DfES in November 2002. The Statement of Priorities sets out the links to national priorities, this School Organisation Plan, the LEA Education Development Plan and a number of other plans, including the Early Years and Childcare Plan, the Access Strategy, the Security Plan and the post OFSTED Action Plan.

7) The AMP Statement of Priorities identifies the following key links with this School Organisation Plan:

- Early Years - national target of universal provision for all three and four year olds already achieved.
- Primary - the main challenge over the next five years in respect of provision of places is the projected continued and significant fall in pupil numbers. Area reviews are proposed in those geographical areas with the lowest projected occupancy rates for 2008/9.
- Secondary - Currently a very efficient position, with very high occupancy rates and no school in excess of the 25% plus surplus places benchmark. The September 2002 transfer cohort represents the peak number, with a secondary roll peaking at January 2004 and then declining year by year.

Special - Future developments are linked to the LEA SEN plan, which is included as Appendix B of this Plan. The establishment of more bases in mainstream schools for pupils with moderate and complex learning difficulties and the provision of a second secondary school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are the main links to this plan. These proposals in principle match well with the opportunities presented by increased levels of “spare” accommodation in mainstream schools.

- 8) The LEA Education Development Plan (EDP) links to this plan in the efficient use of funding for both existing accommodation and any reductions or increases in accommodation to achieve the best match to pupils’ numbers and changing curriculum needs. In the Early Years and Primary setting this means the removal of accommodation wherever possible to allow re-direction of revenue funding into curriculum priorities and only a modest capital programme to enhance ICT, resource, library and dining provision and ease overcrowding at a very small number of schools. In the secondary sector, the raising of Attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 is linked through the removal of surplus places – now completed at St Benedict’s and the major capital investments through PFI Capital Challenge, Targeted Capital, Aided Capital, Excellence in Cities funding and NOF funding to address a range of Suitability issues and when viewed as a whole, provide the most significant uplift in the Suitability and quality of secondary school accommodation for a generation. In addition the Specialist School initiative is fully supported by the LEA with around 50% of secondary schools already granted specialist status and others proposed.

This major investment is also supporting the EDP national priorities of narrowing attainment gaps, tackling under achievement and providing support for schools operating in challenging circumstances or which are causing concern.

As well as the national priorities outlined above, there are also links between this plan and the local priority targets in the EDP.

- 9) The capital investment in secondary schools and the current very efficient match between pupil numbers and overall capacity support the raising of standards and raising participation post 16 as well as enhancing specialist facilities to contribute to raising standards in Creative, Cultural, Emotional, Spiritual and Physical well being of pupils – both local priority targets. The projected reduction in secondary numbers over the next five years will also provide headroom for the greater inclusion principles set out in the LEA Special Education Needs plan attached as a appendix to this plan, which is the third local priority in the EDP. This plan also links with the post OFSTED Action Plan, which required the LEA to ensure that “the growth of surplus places in primary schools is controlled” and “reduce out of borough placements in special schools by expanding current provision which in turn links to the LEA Behaviour Support Plan”.
- 10) There are also implications arising from the School Organisation Plan for the LEA Access Strategy, the Security Plan, the LEA ICT Plan, the LEA Physical Education Plan, the Excellence in Cities Plan and the PFI Project Plan, in that careful decision making is required to ensure best long term returns from capital investment decisions.
- 11) In 2003/4 the LEA received a specific capital allocation of £251,000 to be used for the expansion of popular schools. This funding has been allocated to provide a three/four general classroom extension at Woodchurch High School, the most heavily over subscribed secondary school in respect of parental preferences in the LEA.
- 12) The LEA makes different arrangements for the following groups of vulnerable children:

- i. Children who are out of school because of illness and injury are provided for through Wirral Hospital School and Home Education Service. The LEA will shortly have finalised our policy on the education of children who are ill.
- ii. Pupils who are looked after by local authorities. Most children who are looked after attend a mainstream or special school. They are supported by the Looked After Children Education Support Team which is part of the Pupil Access Support Service. A small number of these children are in children's homes where education is provided on site. Sometimes these homes will be outside the Borough.
- iii. The LEA do not make arrangements for school aged pupils to attend college directly but many schools and the Pupil Access Support Service will arrange for placements at Wirral Metropolitan College and sometimes at colleges outside the Borough.
- iv. The Authority keeps a record of those children who are educated at home by their parents provided their parents have informed us that they are educating their children at home. The Authority's inspectors pay regular visits to children's homes to ensure that their education is sufficient.
- v. There are no psychiatric units or secure provision in Wirral but children with psychiatric difficulties may be educated in conjunction with the Child and Family Service which is the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service through the education provided at Wirral Hospital School. A base at Adcote House, which is the headquarters of the Child and Family Service, provides education for primary and secondary aged pupils. If necessary, following a period of assessment there, children may transfer to the main base of the Hospital School.

13) The Authority adopted in 2002 a Plan for the development of special educational needs which promotes the development of opportunities for children with special needs to be educated in a mainstream environment for some if not all of the time. The Authority also has ten successful special schools, in addition to the Hospitals School, which are developing strong links with mainstream schools to the benefit of pupils in both sectors. The objectives in the SEN Plan are complemented by the Accessibility Strategy adopted in 2003. This sets out the Authority's strategy to make all schools more accessible to

children with disabilities. The LEA plan is attached as Appendix B of this plan.

14) Post 16 Provision

The percentage of young people remaining in learning in Wirral post 16 is above the national average. The percentage in learning at age 17 is lower than the national average. There is an intention to increase the proportion of young people aged 16-19 in learning, although they need not necessarily be in learning in LEA provision.

Post 16 provision for learners in Wirral differs in different parts of the borough.

Birkenhead secondary schools do not provide post 16 education opportunities. Birkenhead students are able to apply for post 16 learning to the sixth form of a secondary school in another part of the borough, or to provision in the colleges or other training providers.

Maintained secondary schools in Birkenhead do not provide post 16 education opportunities. Birkenhead students are able to apply for post 16 learning to the sixth form of a secondary school in another part of the borough, or to provision in the colleges or other training providers. Catholic secondary schools which serve the Birkenhead area do offer sixth form education.

Secondary schools in Wallasey, Deeside and Bebington have sixth forms. Students are able to apply to either remain in their own school, join another school sixth form, or move to provision in the colleges or other training providers.

A 16-19 area-wide inspection took place in Autumn 2002; inspecting provision for 16-19 year olds in schools, colleges, training providers and Connexions. The findings relevant to this plan relate to equality of access the learning opportunities and retention rates in learning, particularly at age 17 years. The Area-Wide Inspection (AWI) Action Plan addressing these issues has been submitted to the Department for Education and Skills. An agreed action plan to improve these issues will be implemented from September 2003.