



Wirral Schools Forum

Date:	Wednesday, 6 July 2011
Time:	6.00 pm
Venue:	Council Chamber, Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES
2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 1 - 6)
3. MATTERS ARISING
4. SCHOOLS BUDGET OUTTURN 2010-11 (Pages 7 - 10)
5. SCHOOL BALANCES AS AT 31ST MARCH 2011 (Pages 11 - 12)
6. PUPIL PREMIUM PAYMENTS FOR THE WIRRAL HOSPITALS SCHOOL (Pages 13 - 14)
7. ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROVISION AT GILBROOK SPECIAL SCHOOL (Pages 15 - 16)
8. HARMONISATION IN SCHOOLS UPDATE (Pages 17 - 18)
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- 13. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT FINAL 2011-12 GRANT NOTIFICATION AND CENTRAL LIMIT (Pages 37 - 38)**
- 14. CONSULTATION ADMISSIONS - CODE OF PRACTICE (Pages 39 - 56)**
- 15. FORUM WORKPLAN (Pages 57 - 58)**
- 16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Suggested date 27th September 2011

Agenda Item 2

WIRRAL SCHOOL FORUM
12th APRIL 2011
MINUTES

Present: R. Longster (Chair)

Schools Group

S. Dainty	S. Peach
A. Baird	C. Penn
E. Cogan	E. Renshaw
I. Cubbin	S. Wall
P. Dixon	J. Weise
K. Frost	P. Sheridan
M. Kophamel	G. Zsapka
C. Mann	

Non-Schools Group

J. Kenny	G. Peters
D. McDonald	N. Reilly
S. McNamara	

In Attendance:

D. Armstrong	Cllr. S. Clarke
P. Ashcroft	Cllr. P. Hayes
J. Bevan	Cllr. C. Meaden
S. Blevins	M. Parkinson
	A. Roberts

Apologies:

B. Cummings	L. Ireland
I. Davies-Foo	J. Owens
S. Davies	M. Potter

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received as recorded above.

2. MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes from the meeting were accepted as a true record, however, K. Frost and S. Peach had been omitted from the attendance list

3. MATTERS ARISING

All matters arising are agenda items for this meeting.

4. TRADED SERVICES UPDATE – Education Quality (EQ)

Mark Parkinson gave a presentation on the development of the new Service Level Agreement (SLA), EQ, which has replaced the CPD SLA.

He explained why it needed to change, the consultation process, the cost and the next steps. The presentation is attached.



EQ Presentation.ppt

David Armstrong thanked Mark and his team for their work in developing EQ.

5. **TRADED SERVICES – WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

Steve Dainty summarised this report. The following points were highlighted:-

- Take up is generally the same level except for Grounds Maintenance, Metro Catering and Information Technology.
- Grounds Maintenance will no longer be provided directly from 1st January 2012
- Changes to Corporate HR & Organisational Development Service are yet to be defined and any changes to the delivery of the schools SLA will be subject to consultation.
- Hochtief has not renewed its contract with Wirral Community Patrol, so PFI schools requiring a service must buy directly from Community Patrol.

Paula Dixon highlighted the concern PFI schools have for day time security when the service provision changes.

David Armstrong thanked the Traded Services Group for their work in reviewing the SLAs.

6. **SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS – GREEN PAPER**

Paul Ashcroft briefed Forum on the DfE Consultation '*Support and Aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability*'. The consultation aims to overhaul and replace the current framework for identifying and meeting special educational needs and disability. The case for change is longstanding and has widespread support; it is seen as overly bureaucratic and adversarial with widespread variations in identification of needs and provision.

The consultation is proposing a new Education, Health and Social Care plan to replace statements of special educational needs that could apply to young people until they are 25 years of age, the offer of personal budgets by 2014 and greater choice of schools. The consultation is wide ranging with a breadth of questions designed to capture views and ideas that will provide new, long-term arrangements.

The consultation is open to all; schools, settings, parents, young people, voluntary groups, professional groups, etc. A number of these; Wirral Family Forum and Parent Partnership, Wirral Special Headteachers, authority officers, support services, SENCOs, etc. are meeting to discuss the paper and consider a response.

7. **DEPRIVATION UPDATE AND TABLED PAPERS**

Mark Parkinson briefly explained the number of papers attached:-

- Deprivation Funding Impact Report
- Narrowing the Attainment Gap at Key Stage 4 (appendix A)
- Work of the Deprivation Funding Consultation Group (appendix B)
- Comments on the Report on Deprivation Funding Impact
- Response to the comments received on the Report on Deprivation Funding Impact.

Gill Peters referred to 4.10 on the Response to the Comments paper which states:- “The funding change would not be successful if, as a consequence, standards fell in schools that received relatively small increases in their deprivation funding.” In some schools where there is little extra funding the Head teacher is working with children to maintain standards. Elaine Cogan felt that this was also relevant for secondary schools.

The Chair thanked the working party for their work.

8. **SCHOOLS REDUNDANCY UPDATE**

Andrew Roberts introduced Sue Blevins, Strategic Service Manager (Workforce Management), to the group and gave a brief outline of the report.

The table in 3.1 shows that two thirds of secondary schools and handful of primary schools have indicated that redundancies in schools may be necessary in 2011/12, many as a result of falling rolls. It is possible that 64 teachers and 19 support staff may be made redundant which is estimated to cost £1.8m, with resources of only £380k.

Falling rolls, 6th form budgets and reduced staffing levels are long term issues.

There are a number of ways redundancy costs may be met in the future:-

- Current budget of £380k
- Schools closure budget £300k
- Bid for permission to capitalise the statutory costs
- Some costs to be met by the school.

Neville Reilly asked if schools were to contribute, would this lead to further cuts and commented that we do not yet know the effect of a national formula on school budgets.

Ken Frost commented that if there were high redundancy costs associated with long term service schools may choose a cheaper option. Sue Blevins confirmed that there was no plan to change the redundancy policy. A skills analysis would be carried out if there were no volunteers. She also suggested that the introduction of an informal redeployment/internal job list would enable schools to reshape their curriculum needs and reduce the amount of redundancies.

Elaine Cogan commented that redundancies will continue as budgets are reduced in 2012/13 and 2013/14.

Morag Kophamel highlighted that a couple of special schools have outreach services attached to their schools and was concerned that the school budget would pick up redundancy costs of the outreach if the service was no longer required or afforded by schools.

Resolved:

- (i) Forum agreed that schools budget is used to match fund costs associated with an approved school deficit recovery plan

Deferred:

- (i) A decision on individual school contributions is deferred until the views of schools are known.

9. SCHOOLS JOB EVALUATION AND PAY HARMONISATION

Andrew Roberts briefly outlined the job evaluation and harmonisation paper and resolution that had been to cabinet recently.

There will be a £1m contribution towards the cost of implementing job evaluation from the local pay reserve along with a loan of £2m from the council to be repaid by 31st March 2015. £450K a year will be put aside to pay for the loan.

Sue Blevins informed the group that the main issue outstanding had been to address the anomaly of TA contracts. The new proposal has been put to Unison, who will hold briefings and a ballot for support staff. A dedicated helpdesk will be provided by HR after the Unison ballot. If the proposal is agreed implementation could be September 2011.

The back pay to staff up to 31st March 2011 will be met centrally. Back pay from 1st April 2011 will be met by schools. £1.1m has been put into the 2011/12 budget, against all formula elements, to meet some of these costs (including an amount for special schools).

Steve Peach commented that school staff are confused about the term time/full time contracts. Sue Blevins confirmed that if the proposal is agreed all TAs will move to a 39 week contract, however, schools will be able to define what they require.

10. SCHOOLS BUDGET UPDATE

Andrew Roberts summarised the report. The Dedicated Schools Grant is likely to be reduced by £143,500. The changes are summarised as follows:-

Academy recoupment (Contingency)	£244,700 cr
Early Years (ISB)	£240,000
Schools (ISB)	£283,500 cr
Advanced Skills Teachers (Central budget)	£42,100 cr
Carbon Reduction (Central budget)	£186,800
Total	£143,500 cr

This allows the carbon reduction costs to be met centrally rather than schools budgets being charged individually.

Sixth Form budgets from the YPLA have reduced by £246k, which is less than expected. This is a part year reduction and includes transitional protection.

Resolved:

(i) That Forum notes the report and budget changes.

11. EXCESS BALANCE MECHANISM

Andrew Roberts highlighted section 4.2 in the 2011/12 Summary of Scheme changes from the DfE. This recommends that the clawback mechanism for excess balances is removed or relaxed.

Steve Peach commented that with budgets being reduced or not increasing, greater flexibility with balances is required. Elaine Cogan stated that the balances are required at the moment to enable schools to manage cuts over the next few years.

Gill Peters requested that if the balance mechanism was removed Schools Forum would ensure that action would be taken against schools who continued to have very high balances.

Schools Forum agreed unanimously that the Excess Balance mechanism be removed with effect from 2011/12. However, Forum accepted that this should be reviewed if balances remained high.

12. SCHOOLS FINANCIAL VALUE STANDARD (FMSIS REPLACEMENT)

Andrew Roberts explained that the Schools Financial Value Standard will replace FMSiS.

The DfE consultation closes on 30th April 2011, if members wish to respond.

13. SCHOOL FINANCE REGULATIONS 2011 – CHANGES

The changes to the School Finance regulations 2011 papers are for noting.

14. LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA CHANGES WORKING PARTY

Andrew Roberts requested volunteers to review the local funding formula as there are a number of issues that need to be addressed.

The working party members are as follows:-

Elaine Cogan
Steve Dainty

Gill Peters
Steve Peach
Richard Longster
Ken Frost
Chris Mann

This group will also consider any proposals from the DfE to change the National Funding Formula.

15. FORUM WORK PLAN FOR 2011

A proposed workplan was attached for information

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 6th July 2011 at 6pm.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM - 6th JULY 2011

REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

SCHOOLS BUDGET OUTTURN 2010-11

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the year end position for the 2010-11 Schools Budget. At this time the accounts are provisional and subject to audit. The Forum are asked to note the report.

2.0 OUTTURN 2010-11

The Schools budget outturn is shown in the attached Appendix. There is a net underspend against the budget of £126,552. This represents a reduction in Area Based Grant expenditure of £308,200 and EVR / severance costs of centrally managed schools block staff of £181,648.

There are a number of significant variations at the year end that are briefly described below.

- i. School Meals - £228,000 CR
The overall trading position improved during the year. Paid meal income exceeded the budget target, indicating a recovery in numbers following resistance to the meal price increase in September 2009. In addition other ancillary (loss making) trading outlets have closed.
- ii. SEN costs £790,000 CR
The reduction in the number and value of statements has been previously reported as part of the budget for 2011-12. The underspends in support for SEN arise from reductions in Area Based Grant funded programmes, staff vacancies within SESS and expenditure controls.
- iii. Early Years £75,000
The number of children in Early Years settings exceeded the budget provision, costs have been offset by vacant Development Worker posts.

iv. Schools Specific Contingencies £137,000 CR
 Details of contingency expenditure are as follows:

	£
Closing School Costs	1,351,000
Pay Harmonisation	302,000
Special Trigger Mechanism	134,000
Gilbrook Outreach	65,000
School Salary Protection	23,000
Foundation School Rates	<u>(199,000)</u>
	<u>1,676,000</u>

The cost of redundancies and closing school deficits are significantly higher than originally anticipated (Rock Ferry and Park were in excess of £1m).

v. Standards Funds

These budgets include the final Standards Funds allocations for Early Years, School Lunch Grant, One to One Tuition, Extended Schools and Primary and Secondary Strategies. (In future where these budgets are continuing they are funded directly from DSG). In accordance with Standards Fund grant conditions grant totaling £1,836,983 has been carried forward to be spent by 31st August, 2011.

vi. Standards Fund Grant 5th Quarter

There has been discussion with the DfE regarding payment of the 5th Quarter grant installment the final £1.2m (4%) of the 2010-11 Standards Fund allocation. This has not been paid to authorities. However, after lengthy correspondence guidance advises Local Authorities that they can anticipate this grant from within the 2011-12 DSG allocations. The DfE will resolve this position without impacting on schools by 2012-13.

vii. Contribution to Pay Harmonisation Reserve £1,058,910

Harmonisation is a separate item on this agenda. The contribution to this reserve arises from all underspends in:

	£
- Schools budgets (re UAB)	17,190
- Centrally managed budgets (as described above)	1,005,020
- Final DSG/Census adjustment	<u>36,700</u>
	<u>1,058,910</u>

viii. Dedicated Schools Grant

DSG has been fully committed in the budget for 2010-11. A comparison between the budget and grant received during the year is as follows :-

	£
Budgeted Grant	193,995,400
Final census 8.5 additional pupils	36,700
Less deduction re	
University Academy of Birkenhead	(1,643,100)
	<u>192,389,000</u>
	=====

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 That the Forum note the report.

David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services

Schools Budget and Outturn 2010-11

Appendix 1

2009-10 Actual £		2010-11 Budget £	2010-11 Outturn £	Variation £
	Schools			
75,382,452	EA457 - Primary Schools	78,521,300	78,521,287	-13
78,109,299	EA459 - Secondary Schools	79,070,600	77,317,812	-1,752,788
13,783,304	EA461 - Special Schools	14,285,500	14,285,458	-42
1,106,752	EA463 - Nursery Schools	1,144,000	1,143,990	-10
168,381,807		173,021,400	171,268,547	-1,752,853
	Centrally Managed Budgets			
347,122	School Meals Service	346,800	118,761	-228,039
3,841,582	Statements	4,694,400	4,357,797	-336,603
2,655,701	Support For SEN	2,631,700	2,215,629	-416,071
319,598	OLEA	401,500	302,448	-99,052
2,962,943	Independent Special School Fees	2,902,000	2,963,278	61,278
1,143,074	Wirral Alternative Schools Programme	964,000	937,588	-26,412
266,793	Education Out Of School	243,700	281,238	37,538
4,497,284	Early Years and Childrens Centres	4,738,000	4,812,767	74,767
145,407	Minority Ethnic Achievement Service	178,800	164,058	-14,742
239,363	Library Service	195,300	160,093	-35,207
66,552	Licences & Subscriptions	57,100	66,769	9,669
46,323	Insurances	65,400	107,898	42,498
433,126	Admissions	459,300	459,300	0
1,086,210	School Specific Contingencies	1,813,600	1,675,924	-137,676
1,160,377	Special Staff Costs	928,900	983,474	54,574
2,439	Schools Forum	10,600	206	-10,394
146,806	Miscellaneous	177,300	160,730	-16,570
418,100	Contributions to Combined Budgets	442,100	442,100	0
126,441	Standards Fund	31,700	33,133	1,433
	Additional contribution to Harmonisation Reserve		1,058,910	1,058,910
19,905,242		21,282,200	21,302,101	19,901
-				
187,749,897	Dedicated School Grant	-193,995,400	-192,389,000	1,606,400
537,152	Net Schools Expenditure	308,200	181,648	-126,552

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 6th JULY 2011

REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

School Balances as at 31st March 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is for information only and advises the Forum of the school balances as at 31st March 2011. The balances have increased from £8.4m to £11.6m. This represents a year on year increase of £3.2m (38%).

1. Summarised Balances

Total balances are shown below and include Standards Fund carry forwards, which can be spent until August 2011. Balances have increased over all school phases. This appears to be in line with other North West authorities which reflect increased caution and uncertainty in schools regarding future funding.

	2009/10 Balances	2010/11 Balances	Increase
Nursery	£192,770	£309,967	£117,197
Primary	£3,638,837	£5,096,390	£1,457,553
Secondary	£3,439,997	£4,779,476	£1,339,479
Special	£1,155,959	£1,449,940	£293,981
Total	£8,427,563	£11,635,773	£3,208,210

The Standards Fund element of the carry forward above has increased from £3.0m to £4.5m as at 31st March 2011.

2. Deficit Budgets

There are a number of schools who were in deficit as at 31st March 2011; the table below details the number of schools in deficit and the total amount. The numbers in brackets detail the schools in deficit as at 31st March 2010.

	No. of Schools in Deficit		Total Amount	Average Deficit
Nursery	0	(0)	£0	£0
Primary	7	(13)	£129,773	£18,539
Secondary	5	(4)	£634,752	£126,951
Special	0	(0)	£0	£0
Total	12	(17)	£378,990	

A number of the schools with deficit balances in March 2011 have set balanced budgets for 2011/12 financial year. There are 3 schools that have or are seeking a licensed deficit in this financial year, compared to 14 last year.

4. Excess Balances

In the final year of the balance control mechanism 11 schools have an excess balance above the 5 or 8%. The table below details the amounts to be deducted, based on the agreed 8% levy.

	No. of Schools with an excess	Total Amount
Nursery	0	£0
Primary	4	£2,125
Secondary	3	£1,576
Special	4	£6,213
Total	11	£9,914

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Forum notes the report.

David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM – 6th JULY 2011

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PUPIL PREMIUM PAYMENTS FOR WIRRAL HOSPITALS SCHOOL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explains the impact on Wirral Hospitals' School of not receiving the Free School Meal Pupil Premium for 2011-12, and proposes the use of contingency to provide funding for eligible pupils.

BACKGROUND

The DfE introduced the Pupil Premium from April 2011 for children eligible for free school meals, looked after children and service children. The free school meals element of the Pupil Premium is an amount of £430 per child for the year, to be paid for each child from Reception to Year 11 known to be eligible for a free school meal as recorded in the January School Census.

Wirral Hospitals' School, as a general hospital school, does not have to complete the electronic pupil level census in January. Instead, the school completes a paper SLASC form (School Level Annual School Census), in line with DfE regulations. The SLASC does not include any information on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, and therefore the DfE will not make a Pupil Premium allocation to the Hospitals' School. Discussions are taking place at the DfE to see if this can be addressed for 2012.

CURRENT POSITION

In January 2011, Wirral Hospitals' School had 39 pupils eligible for Free School Meals. 23 pupils had single registration and the school should have received a Pupil Premium totalling £9,890.

The remaining pupils have their main registration at another school but spend all their time at the Hospitals' School. It is proposed that the Pupil Premium for these pupils be transferred from the main registered school to the Hospitals' School.

The LA has written to the DfE to express concern about their decision not to make a Pupil Premium allocation for Free School Meals to general hospital schools, and to ask them to consider making funding available for the 2011-12 financial year based on free school meal information which has been verified by the LA. No response has been received to date.

Wirral Hospitals' School should receive the Pupil Premium on the same basis as all other maintained schools in Wirral. The amount of £9,890 to provide the Pupil Premium for pupils with single registration at the school could be paid from contingency in the absence of any funding from the DfE.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

(1) the Schools Forum agrees to the use of contingency to provide a Pupil Premium payment of £9,890 to Wirral Hospitals' School.

David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM 6th July 2011

REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROVISION AT GILBROOK SPECIAL SCHOOL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper makes a temporary proposal for the use of the funding that the closure of Brookdale Education Inclusion Base (EIB) releases.

Background

The EIB is specialist provision for twelve pupils with statements of special educational needs. The major need of pupils attending the EIB are moderate learning difficulties (mld), that is, where pupils experience significantly greater difficulties learning at the same rate as the overwhelming majority of their peers. Currently Brookdale has four pupils and this includes three year six pupils who transfer to secondary school in September 2011. During this academic year no pupils have been admitted to Brookdale and the one remaining pupil will be transferring to an alternative placement.

The EIB has been open at Brookdale for over ten years and was previously known as a Special Needs Class. During this period the provision has been very successful in offering specialist teaching inclusion in an integrated setting where pupils have benefited from small group teaching and working alongside peers in mainstream classes. The number of primary EIBs (mld) in the Authority has reduced over recent years to five and will four on Brookdales' closure. The reduction is for number of reasons; because mainstream schools have become more inclusive, the primary population has fallen, and parents preference for mainstream education. Brookdale has worked hard to ensure that inclusive practices are at the heart of the school's ethos. Brookdale School has thoroughly investigated the feasibility of modifying their EIB to meet the needs of pupils with a social communication difficulty/autistic spectrum disorder. This has involved staff and governors visiting other schools and having discussion with authority officers. After much deliberation Brookdale decided not to become EIB provision for pupils with social communication difficulties.

During the current academic year pressure has been mounting on spaces for primary pupils with Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD). The Authority maintains two primary bases for pupils with a BESD and a primary special school, Gilbrook. Provision is full, and Gilbrook is oversubscribed, as it has been on occasions in the last few years.

It is therefore proposed that the in-year monies released by closing Brookdale EIB are temporarily transferred to Gilbrook for the acadmic year 2011-2012 to commission a pilot assessment class to cope with current demand and allow the Authority and school to examine future needs and plan to meet them. A report will be prepared for a future Forum about the use of these monies.

The cost of the Education Inclusion Base for the financial year 2011-12 (7/12) is £39,400 and for the financial year 2012-13 (5/12) is £28,192.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Forum is asked to:

- note Brookdale's decision to close the Education Inclusion Base;
- accept the proposal for the temporary use of the funding released by the EIB closure to pilot the use of an assessment class at Gilbrook School for the academic year 2011-2012 with a further report to a future Forum.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM - 6th JULY 2011

REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

HARMONISATION IN SCHOOLS - UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report summarises the current position and progress to date implementing job evaluation and harmonisation for school support staff.

2.0 UP-DATE

In line with the contractual requirement to job evaluate and harmonise conditions of service for all school support staff, the Council have been in consultation with the recognised unions. The proposed timeline for implementation of Job Evaluation and Harmonisation is:

- Completion of Consultation with Unions – July 2011.
- Prepare communication materials to be provided to school support staff – August 2011.
- Issue booklet and individual statement to school support staff of the individual impact of job evaluation and harmonisation on pay and conditions of service. Early Sept 2011.
- Provide the opportunity for school support staff to attend briefing/drop in sessions – Late Sept.
- UNISON to ballot school support staff on the proposal – Early October 2011.
- Result of UNISON Ballot – Mid October 2011.
- Implementation of Job Evaluation and Harmonisation – 1 November 2011.

3.0 FUNDING

Previous reports have indicated that the backdated costs of harmonisation and job evaluation up to 31st March 2011 are £5.5m. The exact costs will be subject to decisions taken in schools when agreement is reached.

The on-going costs are anticipated to be £1.8m pa. Of this amount £1.1m has been included within schools delegated budgets. An average school has received the following :-

Primary	£5,200
Secondary	£22,700
Special	£8,900

However, there is no separate element within the funding formula and so these amounts cannot be identified within School Budgets.

Back Pay

The agreed proposals to fund back pay costs of £5.5m were :-

Schools Budget	£4.5m
Local Pay Reserve	£1.0m

The Schools Budget contribution of £4.5m was discussed as part of the budget for 2011-12. £2.5m was identified in school budget reserves / underspends, requiring the balance to be funded by a loan of £2m from the Council, to be repaid over 4 years

The School Budget Harmonisation Reserve at 31st March 2011 is as follows:-

	£
Accumulated Harmonisation Contributions @ £300,000 pa	900,000
DSG reserve carried forward from 2008	784,951
Schools budget underspend 2010-11	1,058,910
Excess balance reserve	138,444
Harmonisation Reserve @ 31.03.2011	<u>2,882,305</u> =====

Taking account of the contribution of £1m from the Local Pay Reserve, the Council loan required is £1,617,695. This is an improved position resulting from an increased school budget underspend at the year end. The loan would be repaid (£450,000 pa) in 3.6 years.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the report be noted.

David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM - 6th JULY 2011

REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

SCHOOLS REDUNDANCIES - UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the views of schools following a recent consultation exercise on redundancy costs, up-dates members on the current position for 2011-12 and makes recommendations in line with the outcome of the consultation.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Previous reports in April and January have outlined the scale of difficulties in schools which lead to a requirement to reduce staffing levels after a period of time. These include :

- school closure / merger / federation
- falling school rolls
- changes in school funding
- changes in school curriculum

The costs of redundancies arising from these decisions are significant. They can be funded from :-

- LEA budget for premature retirement costs
- A central Schools Budget (where the costs of redundancy are offset by greater efficiency).
- Individual Schools (this model seems to be increasingly adopted by other authorities).
- capitalisation (the Secretary of State may permit the capitalisation statutory redundancy costs).

The anticipated number and costs in 2011/12 are summarised below :-

	Number of Teachers	Number of Support Staff	Costs in 2011-12 £000
Primary	7	4	160
Secondary	45	27	84
TOTAL	52	31	1,000

The agreed budgets to fund these costs are :-

£000

LEA	375
School Budget (closures)	325
	700

The cost pressures (and budget shortfall) in this area therefore is in the region of £300,000.

3.0 SCHOOLS CONSULTATION

3.1 Following the last meeting a short questionnaire was sent to schools to seek views about redundancy costs.

Overall responses were received from :-

25	Primary Schools	(27%)
8	Secondary Schools	(40%)
3	Special Schools	(25%)

Q1. Should the Authority seek approval to capitalise costs?

Yes – 28 No – 3 Not Sure – 5

A number of comments were expressed that this is not a long term solution, and that it would have an impact on the overall capital resources for schools.

Q2. Should delegated school budgets be top sliced ?

Yes – 6 No – 28 Not Sure 4

A top slice (and increased) central budget was seen by most to be unfair, however decisions do have broader implications on all schools in the longer term.

- Q3. What contribution should be made by schools?
25% - 21 30% - 1 Not Sure 14

This question was asked in terms of if there is no additional top slice. Most comments indicated that 25% should be the maximum and recognized the additional financial difficulties that this would place on schools. A number of responses requested that this change is not introduced in 2011-12, since budgets have already been set.

- Q4. What other changes should be considered to make redundancies more affordable.

There were only a few responses to this question, which mostly identified a need for better planning.

- Q5. Which redundancy costs are the highest priority.

Falling Rolls	-	18
Budget Deficit	-	3
Curriculum Changes	-	7

Whilst falling rolls are seen by most as the urgent priority, there were a number of comments about planning.

- Q6. Is a redeployment scheme a reasonable response to this issue?
Yes – 26 No – 6 Not Sure 4

Many responses indicated that a voluntary scheme would be helpful where all vacancies are advertised in schools, subject to down sizing prior to an external advert, giving opportunities for all staff in schools to be considered.

4.0 LOCAL AUTHORITY SURVEY

- 4.1 North West Authorities have recently been surveyed about funding for redundancy costs. Whilst the initial findings show there continues to be a mixed position, there is a growing trend in neighbouring authorities to charge these costs to schools, particularly where schools receive the overall benefit.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Taking account of the views expressed in the consultation a schools contribution to redundancy / severance costs of 25% is introduced from 2012.
- 5.2 That a voluntary staff redeployment scheme is drawn up and introduced in schools from September 2011.

David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM – 6th JULY 2011

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS - DELEGATED BUDGETS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explains the Government's intention to extend delegated budgets to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), and outlines the proposed approach for Wirral.

BACKGROUND

The White Paper announced Government intentions to give more delegated powers to PRU management committees, including over finance. The Government will make regulations under powers in existing legislation (Schedule 1 to the Education Act 1996) to apply provisions which apply to maintained schools in relation to staffing and finance. This will give PRU management committees a delegated budget and control over staffing.

From 2012-13, the School Finance Regulations will apply to PRUs, who will have delegated budgets.

WIRRAL FORMULA FOR PRU

Wirral Alternative School Programme (WASP) caters for Key Stage 3 and 4 students, most of whom have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools, and has a centrally held budget totalling £1,047,400 which is not part of the schools funding formula.

Initial proposals are that the PRU should be funded under the same funding formula as other Wirral Special Schools. They would be funded for 80 places at the same value as other Special Schools supporting children with emotional and severe behavioural difficulties. In addition, they would continue to be supported financially by the secondary exclusions mechanism that is already in place for in-year exclusions.

Discussions will take place over the summer with the secondary consultant head and the headteacher and management committee of WASP. Proposals for funding the PRU will then go out to wider consultation with schools before coming back to the Forum for agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

- (1) the Schools Forum notes the report

David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM - 6TH JULY 2011

REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PLACES IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS RE: SURPLUS FUNDING APPLICATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2011 the Schools Forum received a report describing a reduction in demand for places in some of our special schools. This reduction in demand has resulted in £1,276,989 been identified as surplus funding. (Appendix One, Wirral Special Schools Places and Funding 2011-12). The Forum agreed to pilot an approach that would respond to this issue. This approach had been consulted on with both special school headteachers and governors. The approach involved those schools with surplus funding submitting proposals for the use of this funding in year one of the scheme and the following year having a reduction in five places of funding if the proposals could not be supported. If the downward trend in demand continued, further reductions in the admission numbers would follow. Five schools submitted an application with one proposal fully supported and four other schools being informed that in September 2012 funding would be reduced by 5 places each. The reduction in funded places would realize £286,685 with a recommendation that £100,000 should be added to the exceptional needs budget with £120,000 being reserved to commission up to 8 places for children with social and communication difficulties in either a special school or mainstream school and the balance being used to fund a growth in demand for other special school provision.

Background

The issue with regard to the funding of surplus places in special schools has been the subject of previous discussion at the Forum. Appendix One sets out the position with regard to places and funding in January 2011 and Appendix Two Numbers on Roll at January Census sets out the trend in recent years. Those special schools with surplus funding were invited to submit a written explanation of their circumstances to a panel and a proposal for how any surplus funding could be used. This proposal was in addition to what the school ordinarily would be providing. The panel was chaired by the Vice Chair of the Forum, other members of the panel were the Chair of the Wirral Association of Special Headteachers a Senior Officer with Responsibility for SEN and a Senior Officer with responsibility for Finance. The panel met twice to consider applications with the second meeting being called to consider additional financial information that had not been provided as part of the initial submission. The schools that submitted were: Foxfield School, Stanley, Lyndale, Hayfield and Orrets Meadow. Schools were informed that if unsuccessful they had the right of appeal to a panel Chaired by the Chair of the Forum with primary and secondary headteachers and governors completing the group. No appeals were received.

After due consideration it was agreed to support the innovative proposal to convert funding for stated places at Orrets Meadow into places for children without statements for up to 12 months. The submissions from the other four schools were declined for one or a combination of the following reasons:

?

- Schools were not offering activity above and beyond what they should ordinarily provide.
- The funding they were requesting should be accessed through the exceptional needs budget.
- The service they were offering could be bought in from schools if they so wish.
- The proposal for places for children with social and communication difficulties should be part of a commissioning process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To convert the £196,665 of funding at Orrets Meadow in to part-time places for non-statemented children with severe literacy difficulties with effect from September 2011.
- To allocate £100,000 to the exceptional needs budget in September 2012.
- To reserve £120,000 to commission 8 places for children in the growing area of demand of social and communication difficulties in either a special school or primary school for September 2012
- To use the balance of £66,685 to fund additional demand for places in over-subscribed special schools and to meet the cost of primary provision in Wirral Hospital School.

David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Lyndale	40/43	<i>34/39</i>	<i>33/38</i>	<i>26/32</i>	<i>27/32</i>	<i>26/31</i>	<i>29/31</i>
Foxfield	<i>126</i>	<i>128</i>	138	136	<i>129</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>117</i>
Stanley	86/89	88/89	85/88	82/90	78/87	<i>73/75</i>	<i>73/74</i>
Orrets Meadow	53	58	63	71	<i>60</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>45</i>
Hayfield	<i>111</i>	115	120	<i>114</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>107</i>
Kilgarth	56	49	51	46	51	48	<i>42</i>

Numbers in italics show those years when the school had more than 5 surplus places based on its current admission number.

**Wirral Special Schools
Place and Funding 2011-12**

Appendix One

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School	Places	January Census	Surplus Places	Average Funding per place	Surplus Funding	School Budget	Surplus
				£	£	£	%
Orrets Meadow	66	45	21	9,365	196,665	775,818	25
Hayfield	120	107	13	11,004	143,052	1,550,419	9
Claremount	189	203					
Lyndale	45	30	15	15,782	236,730	847,637	28
Elleray Park	75	80					
Stanley	90	73.5	16.5	15,115	249,398	1,358,574	18
Meadowside	75	75					
Foxfield	138	117	21	15,436	324,156	2,382,378	14
Gilbrook	50	49	1	13,148	13,148	987,902	1
Kilgarth	50	42	8	14,230	113,840	951,138	12
Observatory	50	50					
Total	948	871.5	95.5		1,276,989		

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM – 6th JULY 2011

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA 2012-13

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the likely changes to the school funding formula for the 2012-13 financial year.

NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA

In the White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, the Government set out its view that the current funding system is opaque, full of anomalies and unfair and therefore in need of reform.

The DfE published 2 consultation documents in April 2011, one relating to school funding and the second to academy funding. These documents were the first stage in the consultation process and invited views on the aims and objectives of the school funding system and the high level principles for any potential reforms. The Schools Forum submitted responses to both consultations (see attached).

The DfE expect to publish the outcome of these consultations and more detailed proposals for consultation in the summer.

LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA

Given the timescales involved, it seems unlikely that a national funding formula will be implemented by April 2012. Decisions need to be taken on the local funding formula for the 2012-13 financial year in the following areas:

1. Mainstreamed grants

In 2011-12, the specific grants that were mainstreamed from April 2011, totalling £32million, were allocated using the same methodology as in previous years, to provide some stability in school budgets. As this was agreed for 1 year only, a decision is needed on whether to extend this arrangement for a further 12 months.

2. Formula Factors

In 2011-12, factors that were previously fixed, such as free school meals, IMD score and prior attainment, were recalculated using the most recent data. As this was agreed for 1 year only, a decision is needed on whether to recalculate these factors again for the 2012-13 budgets.

3. PRU Funding

As detailed in a separate paper, the PRU will receive a delegated budget for the first time in April 2012. Arrangements for this will need to be incorporated into the funding formula for 2012-13.

4. Wirral Hospitals School

There is a requirement for Wirral Hospitals' School to make full time provision for education from September 2011 and to consider provision for primary age children in National Curriculum Years 5 and 6. The formula will need to be amended to fund these changes.

5. Special School Surplus Places

The trigger mechanism to accommodate a reduction in Special school places is likely to impact from September 2012 (see separate paper).

6. City Learning Centres

The current funding and use of City Learning Centres will be reviewed.

Schools will be consulted on any proposed changes in the autumn term.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

(1) the Forum notes the areas for consultation within the funding formula for 2012-13.

David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services

Academies Pre-16 Funding: Options for the 2012-13 Academic Year

1. Do you agree with our analysis that the current system is not appropriate to fund an increasing number of academies in a fair and transparent way?

Yes - as the number of Academies increases, the funding system becomes less fair and transparent. The LACSEG is particularly opaque.

2. Do you agree with the principles for an alternative method of funding Academies in 2012-13?

Yes – agree with all principles

3. Are there other aims we should have for the Academy funding system in the absence of cross-system reform, such as a Fair Funding Formula? If yes, what are they?

The Academy funding system should not financially disadvantage other schools. Academies should not gain at the expense of maintained schools.

4. Do you agree with the broad analysis of how each option might work?

No comment

5. Which option do you think is the best way of funding Academies on 2012-13?

Because Academy funding is allocated for the academic year and school funding for the financial year, the DfE would either have to roll forward the 2011/12 funding amounts or implement a national formula for academies before implementing it for schools.

Whichever option is chosen, it should be fully costed and affordable.

6. Are there potential advantages and disadvantages in implementing each option that we have not considered? If yes, what are they?

No comment

7. Are there any changes you think we should consider to the way the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) is calculated for FY2012-13? If yes, what are they?

The way the LACSEG is calculated should be transparent.

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A Consultation on School Funding Reform: Rationale and Principles

1. Do you agree with the stated characteristics of an ideal school funding system? (Section 2)

Yes – Wirral has adopted these characteristics in the local formula.

2. Are there further characteristics the system should have? (Section 2)

- SEN – should be a specific factor to represent some of the most vulnerable children.
- Stability/continuity and some degree of predictability. Three-year funding periods would provide this
- A focus on raising standards

3. Do you agree with the analysis of how the current system falls short of these aims? (Section 3)

In terms of Wirral's local formula, the Schools Forum does not agree with this analysis. Schools funding has been made less opaque this year with the mainstreaming of grants, making it easier to see all funding streams available to schools.

However in terms of the National formula, the Schools Forum does agree. The current system is seen to be unfair, particularly when schools which are compared in league tables have very different levels of funding. This is not only due to different local formulae but also to the different amounts per pupil allocated to local authorities.

4. Do you agree with the case for reforming the system?

Nationally yes, locally the case is less clear.

5. Do you agree that the aim of ensuring all deprived pupils get the same level of funding no matter where they live is the right one? (Section 4)

The Schools Forum discussed this area and recorded 2 views:

1. Allocations for deprivation should take account of local circumstances. An allocation based solely on Free School Meals is too simplistic
2. Yes, all deprived children should get the same level of funding no matter where they live. This should be based on Free School Meal eligibility as this is the most up-to-date, accepted, straightforward and simple measure of deprivation.

.6. Do you agree the underlying formula needs to change to meet this aim more quickly and effectively?

The Schools Forum again recorded 2 views which link to those expressed in question 5:

1. We need to understand what works by looking at the way deprivation funding has been allocated and the outcomes that this has produced. Changes in deprivation funding take time to show their effect.
2. Yes, the Pupil Premium and amounts paid for deprivation in the formula should be aligned.

7. Do you think the school funding system should be based on a purely national formula? Or should there be flexibility for local decisions about funding levels? (Section 5)

The Schools Forum discussed this area and recorded 2 views:

1. Local flexibility is important in targeting specific needs. We need to retain local flexibility to enable us to respond quickly to local circumstances. Local knowledge is essential in ensuring that all needs are met.

2. There should only be a national formula with no local flexibility. We need to look forward. Having local flexibility will reinforce the inequalities of the past. If the national formula is designed properly and is sufficiently resourced to meet wide ranging needs then local flexibility should not be necessary.

8. If so, should that flexibility be limited, and if so how?

Local flexibility should be clearly defined. The minimum funding guarantee and the central expenditure limit are existing controls that are effective.

9. If there is local flexibility, what should the roles of local authorities, schools and the Schools Forum be in decision making? (Sections 5 & 6)

The current system works well. The Schools Forum operates as an advisory body, informed by responses from schools to consultation documents. The Council takes final policy decisions.

Regardless of whether there is local flexibility or not, the Schools Forum should remain as an advisory body. School representatives still need to meet to discuss shared interests and funding issues.

10. If there is local flexibility for maintained schools, how should Academies and Free Schools be funded?

It seems likely that Academies will be funded according to a national formula. If maintained schools are funded differently, there is a risk of creating a 2 tier system and LA schools may suffer as a result.

11. How do you think SEN support services might be funded so that schools, Academies, Free Schools and other education providers have access to high quality SEN support services?

A central team within the LA to support SEN is essential. Specialist services cannot be delivered as effectively by schools.

Currently, some services are funded at school level and some by the LA. The balance that currently exists is the right way of working. Schools must continue to be adequately funded.

12. How do you think a national banded funding framework for children and young people with SEN or who are disabled could improve the transparency of funding decisions to parents while continuing to allow for local flexibility?

The process of banding SEN would be very complex. More information and explanation of how this would work is needed before a response can be made.

13. How can the different funding arrangements for specialist provision for young people pre-16 and post-16 be aligned more effectively to provide a more consistent approach to support for children and young people with SEN or who are disabled from birth to 25?

The DfE need to look closely at the existing divide in funding and why it exists. Funding should be continuous to support person-centred care.

14. How successfully has the EYSFF been implemented? How might it be improved?

In Wirral, the EYSFF has been successfully implemented across all sectors, although nursery schools have needed a long transition period. The move to 15 hours in the maintained sector has worked well. Flexible provision has been less successful – in the maintained sector it has been difficult to deliver a

service that meets parental demand and is affordable; in the PVI sector it is not considered cost-effective to deliver a flexible entitlement.

15. How important is an element of local flexibility in free early education funding? What might alternative approaches look like?

A flexibility supplement may not be cost effective , some schools have been unable to make this work.

16. How should we identify the total amount of funding for early years and free early education for three year olds and four year olds not in reception from within the overall amount of 3-16 funding?

Early Years funding should be a separate identified block.

17. Should the formula include only pupil led factors or also school led factors?

The formula should include mainly pupil led factors. There may be exceptional circumstances where school led factors are necessary, but we would need to see evidence of the need for these factors.

18. What factors should be included?

An amount per pupil plus deprivation, SEN, EAL and high mobility.

19. What is the right balance between simplicity and complexity?

Simple doesn't mean better. What we need is transparency and effectiveness. A formula should be transparent, fair and logical. It is also likely to be complex if it is to meet a wide range of needs.

20. What level of change in budgets per year can a school manage?

This depends on the individual circumstances of the school. Schools cannot cope with significant changes in budgets at a time when funding is "flat cash". The MFG has provided essential protection in previous years, and this is the measure of change that schools are used to managing.

21. How much time do schools need to plan for changes in their funding?

No school should significantly gain or lose during a funding period. The ideal funding period would be 3 years.

22. When is the right time to start moving towards a fair funding formula?

Not this year – September 2012 at the very earliest.

23. Have you any further comments?

If a national formula is introduced, it should be a fair system that covers the 3-19 age range. If post-16 funding remains separate and continues to change, this could result in unmanageable budget turbulence for schools with 6th forms.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 6TH JULY 2011-06-27

REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

DSG, FINAL 2011-12 GRANT NOTIFICATION AND CENTRAL LIMIT

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report confirms the likely level of unallocated Dedicated Schools Grant within the Schools Budget. The additional amount of £21,622 will be carried forward and included in the budget for 2012-13. In addition the report confirms that there was no breach in the Central Expenditure Limit for 2011-12.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The Forum agreed to carry forward any DSG grant balances until the end of the 2008-11 funding period. At the 31st March 2011 this totalled £0.8 m plus a £1 m underspend in year. A report elsewhere in this pack shows this sum being earmarked for Harmonisation back pay in schools.

DSG for 2011-12 is calculated from January 2011 PLASC and Early Years Census Data. This information can not be finalised before the budget process has been completed and is not finally confirmed by the DFE until June/July.

The Schools Budget was set using an expected level of DSG of £229,260,200. This represented estimated pupil numbers (including Early Years) of 45,621.7. The pupil data will now been agreed nationally for all authorities, allowing the DFE to set final DSG allocations.

3.0 DSG 2010-11

The census data for Wirral is likely to increase the pupil count used for DSG by 4.3 from 45,621.7 (budget) to 45,626. These changes will result in £21,622 more grant.

4.0 Central Limit

The Central Expenditure Limit is the limit the authority can retain from the Schools Budget and spend centrally on behalf of schools. The increase (or decrease) should match overall increases or decreases in delegated school budgets, unless a change has been agreed by the Schools Forum.

In the 2011 -12 budget the limit has not been exceeded, the budget for central costs have reduced in areas such as SEN and School Meals. Overall there has been a net percentage decrease as follows:

Schools Budget -0.09%
Central Expenditure -0.42%

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

The additional DSG of £21,622 is carried forward and included in the budget for 2012-13.

David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 7TH JULY 2011

REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDRENS SERVICES

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE ADMISSIONS FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

On 27th May 2011, Michael Gove announced a 12 week consultation on a new Draft School Admissions Code. If approved the new Code would impact on admissions to schools from September 2013 onwards.

Information regarding the consultation can be found on the DFE website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1744&external=no&menu=1>

KEY CHANGES SUMMARY

The key changes in the draft Codes are as follows:

Draft Code	Existing Code
“Popular and successful” schools can increase their admission number by notification only (p1.42), with no requirement to consult. Objection on this is to the Adjudicator with a strong presumption to approve. (p1.2, 1.3, 3.4)	Increasing admission number requires consultation with all admission authorities
LA no longer required to co-ordinate in-year admissions (p2.21). Parents applying for in-year places apply directly to the school they are interested in, who must notify the LA of the application and it’s outcome	All in-year applications are made via the LA.
All schools allowed to give priority to children of school staff (as defined by the school) as an over-subscription criterion (p1.33)	Schools can offer places to children of school staff to aid in recruitment in areas of skills shortages
Additional Infant Class Size limit exempt categories created: (p2.15) Children of military personnel Twins and multiple births	
Requirement to reduce to 30 in an Infant Class with Excepted pupils within 12 months is removed. (p2.15)	Excepted pupils may exceed 30 for 12 months – after this an additional teacher is required if class still over 30
LA no longer allowed to operate area-wide “lottery” method of allocation, although individual school admission authorities can do so (p1.28)	All admission authorities able to use lotteries to allocate places
Required to consult every 7 years. If changes	Required to consult every 3

Draft Code	Existing Code
are made must consult – although increasing the admission number does not constitute a change requiring consultation. (p1.36)	years, or in any year if any change is made including increasing the admission number
Academies and Free schools to be able to use deprivation (FSM) as an oversubscription criterion.(p1.7)	
Anyone can object on admissions arrangements to the Adjudicator. (p3.3 Admissions Code) Deadline on objections on arrangements brought forward to 30 th June each year.	Prescribed list of objectors. Objections to be made by 31 st July.
APPEALS CODE	
Parents have 30 days to appeal against admissions decisions (p2.4)	Parents have 10 days to appeal.
Schools to be able to hold appeals in any suitable premise (including the school) (p2.12)	Neutral non-school venues must be used.
Appeals panel members can sit on the same school panel for an indefinite period (p1.3)	Panel members can sit on the same school panel for a maximum of three years
Schools no longer obliged to train appeals panel members other than initial training (p1.6)	Panel members must be retrained every two years, with annual updates
Only remaining appeals to be reheard at a later date if a panel member drops out part-way through the hearing (p1.5)	All appeals must be rescheduled to be reheard in this situation
Two stage appeal process renamed three stage process (Section 3)	Two stage process

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

A proposed response to the consultation is attached in Appendix 1. The response is required by 19th August. It is suggested that the Schools Forum review the Draft Code and the proposed consultation response and consider a formal response from the Schools Forum to the DFE.

ELEVEN PLUS TESTING – NOT PART OF THE CONSULTATION

The new Draft Admissions Code also includes proposed changes to Eleven Plus testing, these changes are not included in the consultation document however if adopted in the new Code they will impact on current arrangements in Wirral. The Schools Forum may wish to consider responding to the DFE regarding these proposed changes to the Code. Before his departure from the Council John Bulmer wrote to the Headteachers of Grammar Schools alerting them to the proposed changes to the code.

The requirement introduced in the 2007 Code for parents to have test results before completing the preference forms has been retained and escalated to MUST rather than SHOULD. Paragraph 1.26 says:

“inform parents of the outcome of selection tests before parents make applications for other schools – while making clear that this does not equate to a guarantee of a selective place.”

Research indicates that as in Wirral the majority of local authorities where grammar schools still exist, testing takes place in November or December, after the deadline for expressing secondary school preferences has passed. In order to meet the national secondary allocation day of 1st March, all preference forms must be returned by 31st October each year.

In 2007 when this item was first introduced into the Admissions Code, the Wirral Admissions Forum considered whether 11 plus testing could be carried out in the Summer term of Year 5 in order for parents to have the results when preference forms were distributed in September, but members felt this would bring the process including practice tests forward to February of Year 5, increasing pressure on pupils at a younger age, and demotivating pupils who had not reached the grammar standard. At an administrative level, carrying out testing arrangements on Year 5 whilst still dealing with the admission of the Year 6 cohort would put pressure on local authority staffing levels.

A working party in 2008 examined the possibility of testing in September of Year 6, and reducing the number of practice tests from two to one, but even with these changes, the preference form deadline would have to be extended to the end of November. This would cause significant co-ordination issues with neighbouring authorities, in particular Cheshire West with whom there is considerable cross- boundary traffic. The solution agreed at that time was to continue with the current system of testing and increase the number of preferences available to parents from three to five which resolves the issue effectively due to the equal preference system.

The equal preference scheme means that an application for a grammar school that is unsuccessful is not a wasted preference, providing there are a sufficient number of preferences to allow grammar and non-grammar preferences to be chosen. In Wirral’s case, the maximum number of grammar schools any parent can apply to is three. Five preferences allows two non-grammar preferences to be selected. Under equal preference, no-one is disadvantaged by expressing a first preference for a grammar school as the place offered will be for the highest available.

It is of concern that this item has been changed in the Draft Code but without an official route to respond to the change from should to must. If the change is confirmed in the new code the arrangements for testing will require change for admissions in 2013 which requires consultation in the spring term 2012 on possible arrangements. It is suggested that a working party is convened in the autumn term to consider the options for Eleven Plus Testing in Wirral.

Recommendation

That the Forum considers a response to the new admissions framework.

David Armstrong

Interim Director of Children’s Services

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Consultation on the Changes to the Admissions Framework

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 19 August 2011
Your comments must reach us by that date.

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online response facility available on the Department for Education website www.education.gov.uk/consultations

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Reason for confidentiality:

Name

Organisation (if applicable)

Address:

Contact Details

If your enquiry is related to the content of the consultation, you can contact the PCU telephone help line on: 0370 000 2288.

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Consultation Unit by e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288.

Please tick the box below that best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent Governor
<input type="checkbox"/> Governor	<input type="checkbox"/> National Representative Group	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Representative Group
<input type="checkbox"/> Headteacher/teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Faith Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)		

Please Specify:

We have sought to remove all duplication and sections of the Codes that were open to misinterpretation, so it is clearer what admission authorities must and must not do within the new Codes as well as making them easier to read and understand.

One of the aims of reviewing the Codes was to reduce the burdens and bureaucracy that schools face by removing unnecessary prescription and elements that drove cost into the process.

The revised Codes should ensure that all school places can continue to be offered in a fair and lawful way, and that school admission appeals can be administered in a more effective way and at lower cost.

Q1) Do you agree that the new Codes achieve these aims?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Q2) Do you agree with the proposals to allow all popular and successful schools to increase their Published Admission Number?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

No. Schools can already increase their PAN in consultation with the local Authority and in-line with Net Capacity and the local authority's assessment of the demand for places in the area served by the school. A clear and objective set of measurable criteria need to be provided for what constitutes "popular and successful".

Allowing schools to increase their PAN without this dialogue sets up the following possibilities:

- Governing body increases the PAN well above the Net Capacity of the building, then operates in overcrowded conditions detrimental to education. School will then demand capital investment from the local authority or other central government funding source without any opportunity for forward or strategic planning. Capital investment will either be unavailable, with pupils continuing to be educated in an undersize school for a considerable period, or will be redirected from planned projects, causing disadvantage to all other pupils. This circumstance has already arisen in a Wirral primary school.
- Even if the increase in PAN is within the Net Capacity band, the Authority retains an obligation to plan pupil places across the area, an ability which will be reduced by single-handed decisions by individual governing bodies.
- Increasing a school's PAN with no reference to the strategic planning of pupil places by the Authority risks degrading the long-standing support networks and excellent relationships between Wirral schools, as without the backing of the Authority for an increase in PAN, there is a likely perception of "poaching" pupils from other schools, with ensuing resentment.

Schools should also not be able to set a PAN below Net Capacity, then use the appeals process to "select" pupils up to the Net Capacity indicated PAN.

Q3) Do you agree that Academies and Free Schools should be able to give priority to children attracting the Pupil Premium in their admission arrangements?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

In the interests of fairness and equality, if deprivation is to be used as an over-subscription criteria, it should be accessible for use by ALL school admission authorities, not just be Academies and free schools.

Q4) Do you support the proposal to remove the requirement for local authorities to co-ordinate in year applications?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

It is Wirral's position that the benefits of operating co-ordinated in year admissions **within the borough** outweigh the costs, although significant.

Ensuring Fair Access and Managed Moves

Prior to co-ordinated in year admissions being introduced, a minority of schools approached directly by parents for places were found to be refusing to admit pupils with prior behavioural or other issues, even when there was space in the year group, in contravention of the Fair Access Protocol. The Authority would find out about these failures to comply with Fair Access when the parent made a complaint to the Authority, nevertheless, schools continued to attempt to avoid admitting such pupils. Co-ordinated in-year admissions protocols enable the Authority to ensure that no parent is subject to unfair treatment by schools, and also where necessary to identify pupils who would benefit from the authority's Managed Move scheme for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion, which has a proven track record of maximising the success of fresh starts for pupils in this category and reducing the number of permanent exclusions.

Child Protection

Local Authority staff always check applications from parents/carers of children in public care with the child's social worker to establish whether the transfer has been approved as suitable. In many instances the transfer has not been discussed with the child's social worker and would have been potentially detrimental if allowed to proceed. Schools cannot be expected to carry out this level of due diligence.

Previously when parents approached schools directly for an in-year place for their child and were rejected by the school due to lack of space in the year group, there was no mechanism for ensuring that parents were directed to another school, risking parents keeping their child out of school for extended periods or indeed indefinitely, with all the ensuing child protection issues. Under the co-ordinated in year scheme, the Authority is immediately aware that a place has not been allocated, can advise parents on spaces at alternative schools, consider the Managed Move service if relevant, and make a referral to Education Social Workers within a short time period.

Inter-Authority in-year co-ordination

In relation to the perception of delays in admitting pupils in year, it should be noted that different authorities operate their in-year admissions to very different timelines at present, which can cause delays for inter-authority transfers, and as such the inter-authority in-year system would benefit from rationalisation to a uniform single set of guidelines on timescales, or for the mandatory element to be removed.

Q5) Do you support the proposed change to the use of random allocation?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Wirral has never used random allocation as a method of allocating places across all schools, and consequently this change has no effect on admissions in this area. The principle of limiting random allocation to individual schools oversubscription criteria appears sound, although why the local authority as an admission authority should be treated any differently to individual schools as admission authorities is not clear, and may cause parental confusion.

Q6) Do you support proposals to add twins (and multiple births) and children of service personnel to the list of excepted pupils?

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

Wirral Local Authority has always operated an informal protocol of admitting twins and multiple births as excepted pupils, this would formalise the existing arrangements. Service personnel moves are not a particular issue for Wirral – those of medical professionals are in fact more so. We have no objection to the item being included on the excepted pupil list.

Q7) Do you agree with the proposal that admission authorities who are making no change to their arrangements year on year should only be required to consult once every seven years, rather than once every three years?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

With the increasing number of schools becoming their own admission authority, the importance of consulting on admission arrangements increases.

Wirral has no objection to this item in principle, other than to state that an increase in PAN should be considered as a “change to admission arrangements” just as a decrease in PAN would be.

Q8) Do you agree with the proposal to allow schools to give priority to applications for children of staff in their over-subscription criteria?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Wirral strongly disagrees with this reversion to the pre-2007 Code. If the purpose of the admission code is to ensure that places are allocated in a fair way, that the composition of schools reflects their local area and that pupils are not disadvantaged by unfair oversubscription criteria, then giving preference to the children of staff, who may very well live some distance from the school, over children living closer to the school, should not be encouraged.

It is also open to abuse by parents attempting to circumvent the admissions system. Anecdotal accounts on on-line forums following the publication of this draft code indicate that some parents are prepared to take support posts (cleaning, catering etc.) at their preferred school or schools in order to qualify for preferential treatment for their child on admission.

Q9) Do you agree that anyone should be able to raise an objection about the admission arrangements they consider unfair or unlawful, of any school?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

No objection to this change.

Q10) Do you agree that the deadline for objections to the Schools Adjudicator should be moved to 30 June from 31 July?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

No objection to this change.

Q11) Do you agree with the less prescriptive requirements around the operation, governance and training of appeals panels?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Wirral Authority does not agree with the removal of the requirement to provide training for appeal panel members every two years, nor with the removal of the requirement to change appeal members every three years. How can any admission authority “ensure that panel members retain their independence”, if not by regular training, and by ensuring that particular panel members do not become overly closely associated with a particular school?

Regarding holding appeals in school premises it should be noted that Appeals panels are, and must be perceived to be by parents, independent of the school. If school buildings are to be used to maintain this independence the code may reflect the holding of appeals in the premises of another school other than that subject of the appeals in question.

Q12) Do you agree that the proposed appeals timetable will give more certainty to parents and reduce the number of appeals overall?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Wirral does not agree with increasing the timescale for submitting an appeal from a 10 day minimum to a 30 day minimum. This will significantly extend the appeals process, which could result in appeals not being heard before the end of Summer term, significantly increasing, not decreasing, parental uncertainty.

Q13 Do you agree that the proposed new timetable for lodging and hearing appeals will reduce costs and bureaucracy for admission authorities?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Withdrawal of appeal panel members – No objection to this, although there is no obvious cost saving to this item.

Parental evidence – Wirral agrees that parents should be subject to time limits for the production of evidence, but believes that in reality panels will be forced to consider late evidence, as to do otherwise could leave either the panel or the admission authority open to referral to the Ombudsman, which has a significant administrative burden.

Three year rule – Removal of this rule leaves admission authorities open to accusations of lack of impartiality of appeals panel members. (See Q11).

Training – Removal of the requirement to train appeals panel members regularly beyond their initial training course is not acceptable, regardless of any potential cost saving (see Q11.)

Venues – This is acceptable only if the Code specifies that school appeals can be heard only at a different school to that subject to the appeals. The

Authority provides a clerking service to a number of admission authority schools under a Service Level Agreement. Travelling to multiple appeal venues would increase the costs (both financial and environmental) of operating this service (see Q11)

Q14 Do you agree that the new three stage process will provide a more effective process for appeals panels to consider multiple and individual appeals?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Wirral has no objection to this item.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 438060 / email: carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 19 August 2011

Send by post to:
Consultation Unit
Area 1C
Castle View House
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 2GJ

Send by e-mail to: admissions.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk

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WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM – 6th JULY 2011

WORKPLAN

Meeting Date

September 2011

December / January 2012

March 2012

June 2012

Elect Chair and Vice Chair
Membership

Finance

Schools Settlement
Schools Budget
Pupil Premium

Budget update

Schools Outturn
School Balances
Final DSG Calculation
Central Limit

Updates

School redundancies
Academies
Special school agreements
SEN / PRU / Home Tuition
16-19 SEN Notional Allocations
Hospital School Primary Provision

School Finance Regulations
Scheme for Schools Update

Consultation

Funding formula changes

Outcome of Local Formula Consultation
Outcome of National Formula Consultation
School Finance Regulations

Working Groups

Traded Services
Funding Formula

Early Years Formula review

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