

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET

12<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2012

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND COORDINATED SCHEME FOR 2013-2014</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR SHEILA CLARKE</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>YES</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report invites the Cabinet to determine the Authority's admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools and the coordinated schemes for 2013-2014. This is a statutory requirement.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The Authority is required to determine admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools. The New School Admissions (England) Regulations (2003) also require the Authority to have in place a coordinated scheme for admissions to all primary and secondary schools in 2013-14. The proposed schemes are attached (Appendices 1 and 2), along with proposed admission numbers for community and controlled schools (Appendix 3). The Admissions Forum has considered the schemes.

- 2.2 A revised Draft School Admissions code was published on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2011, subject to parliamentary scrutiny and Royal Assent of the Education Bill 2010-11, after which it will become the new School Admissions Code, impacting on admissions to schools from September 2013 onwards.

#### **Consultation on changes to grammar test procedures**

- 2.3 On the 8th December 2011 Cabinet approved a public consultation on the proposed admission arrangements and coordinated schemes for primary and secondary schools for 2013-2014, and that this consultation should include the proposal to amend the timing of the grammar school selection process as recommended by the Wirral Eleven Plus Working Group, in line with the draft School Admissions Code.
- 2.4 On 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012, the final version of the School Admissions Code (2012) was published by the Department for Education. In relation to the grammar test procedures, the final Code now says (paragraph 1.3.1) that the authority must "take all reasonable steps to inform parents of the outcome of the selection tests before the closing date for secondary applications on 31<sup>st</sup> October so as to allow parents time to make an informed choice of school – while making clear that this does not equate to a guarantee of a selective place".

2.5 In total, 83 responses to the consultation were received. All were in relation to the proposed changes to the grammar test procedures. The individual responses are available for members to read on request. The outcome of this consultation was as follows:

	Agree % (number)	Disagree % (number)
<b>Total responses</b>	83	
Results before preferences?	92% (76)	8% (7)
Test in early September?	52% (43)	58% (40)
		OF WHICH
Test in Summer Y5		7% (6)
Test in late September or October Y6		11% (9)
No alternative suggested		30% (25)
Delay implementation to 2014 entry	18% (15)	

- 2.6 The majority of respondents (92%) agreed that results should be provided to parents before the end of the preference period (31<sup>st</sup> October).
- 2.7 Division between those who were in favour of testing in early September as proposed by the Wirral Eleven Plus Working Group, and those who disagreed with this proposal, were almost exactly equally split. Of those who did not agree with early September for practice and real tests, the majority (30%) did not suggest any specific alternative arrangement in their response. Just 7% of respondents specifically stated a preference for testing in summer term of Year 5, which was one of the options considered by the Working Group. A further 11% suggested tests could be carried out later in the Autumn term, however this option is not feasible due to the time required for processing tests, holding the Independent Assessment Board and returning results to parents prior to 31<sup>st</sup> October.
- 2.8 Objections to testing in September of Year 6 fell into the following general categories
- Children would be younger when taking the test
  - Too soon after the summer holidays
  - Stress during summer break
  - Disadvantage when compared with previous years
- 2.9 Regarding children's age at the time of the test, although the informal name "11 plus" is sometimes used for the selection tests, even under the current arrangements, three-quarters of those tested are not yet 11 years old. The Authority's tests are age-standardised, and this will continue under the new timing arrangements.
- 2.10 The potential impact of proximity to the summer holidays would be the same for all children. As all children taking the selection tests would do so at the same time, and test results are standardised within that years test group, there is no disadvantage compared with previous years. Some respondents felt that parents would be obliged to coach or tutor their children during the summer holiday. The Authority's tests are produced by GL Assessment, who advise 4 to 6 hours of preparation for the tests using the familiarisation pack provided by the Authority. Two practice tests are also provided to give children an opportunity to get used to the timings and test

environment. The tests have been designed to predict a pupil's potential performance at secondary school and so further preparation for the verbal reasoning test is not necessary. The familiarisation pack and practice tests will be retained under the new timings. Some parents choose to do additional preparation or tutoring with their children for the selection tests, but this is a choice, not a requirement and cannot be taken into account when revising the timing of the tests. One respondent said that children would have more time with the familiarisation pack under the proposed arrangements.

- 2.11 It should be noted that 18% of respondents felt that the introduction of the earlier test dates should be delayed for one academic year. This was principally due to concerns about a reduction in time to prepare for the tests for current Year 5 pupils. However, as in 2.10 above, there is no requirement for any additional preparation beyond the familiarisation pack and practice tests which are maintained under the proposed arrangements. The published Admission Code 2012 came into force from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012, and requires the Authority to provide parents with their child's test results for the 2013 entry cohort, with no scope to delay the Code's introduction
- 2.12 Some respondents suggested complying with the Code by extending the preference deadline to November or December, however 31<sup>st</sup> October is a fixed national preference deadline date which cannot be amended locally.
- 2.13 St Anselms College and Upton Hall School (FCJ) have advised the Authority that they intend to bring their test date forward to 17<sup>th</sup> September for entry from 2013 onwards in order to comply with the Code.
- 2.14 18 of the 24 authorities outside London with grammar selective testing would not have been compliant with the 2012 Admissions Code requirement that parents must have test results prior to the preference deadline. A sweep of available data on proposed co-ordinated schemes for 2013-2014 indicates that 19 authorities will carry out testing during September, the remaining 5 will have completed their testing by 8<sup>th</sup> October. The earliest test dates were scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup> September.
- 2.15 Wirral's test procedures for the non-Catholic grammar schools currently include two practice tests, followed by two real tests. Many other admission authorities appear to carry out a single real test without practice tests. The 11 Plus Working Group discussed reducing the number of practice tests from two to one in order to allow the testing process to begin slightly later in September, but their consensus view was that retaining two practice tests gave the best opportunity for pupils to acclimatise to the venue and the style of the test, particularly those children who had not received extensive tuition.
- 2.16 As parents will be provided with the outcome of the grammar selection tests prior to the preference deadline, the 2013-2014 scheme indicates that the number of preferences on the common application form will be reduced from 5 to 3 accordingly.

### **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 3.1 None.

### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 An option considered by the 11 Plus Working Group was for testing to take place in Summer term of Year 5. This was suggested by 7% of respondents to the consultation. Respondents in favour of this option said that it would avoid a drop in performance over the summer holiday, that late tests could then be held in September, it would follow on more immediately from the familiarisation pack

preparation, and that children were more used to being tested in the Summer term. The view of the working group was that this would not be a viable option.

## **5.0 CONSULTATION**

5.1 Consultation has taken place with all schools and other relevant admission authorities.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

6.1 None.

## **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

7.1 On average 40% of the total Year 6 cohort are tested by the Authority for entry to non-Catholic grammar schools each year. With testing taking place in September, this could lead to approximately 1500 applications compressed into the final two weeks of the preference period which would increase pressure on staff in the Mainstream Admissions team.

## **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The arrangements comply with all statutory guidance.

## **9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review will be published on the web site, hyperlink below.

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/children-young-people>

## **10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 None.

## **11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 None.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

12.1 That Cabinet agree the proposed admission arrangements and coordinated schemes for 2013-2014.

## **13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

13.1 There is a statutory requirement to determine admission arrangements.

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## **APPENDICES**

*Appendix 1 – Scheme for the coordination of admission arrangements for maintained primary schools 2013-2014*

*Appendix 2 – Scheme for the coordination of admission arrangements for maintained secondary schools 2013-2014*

*Appendix 3 – Proposed admission numbers for Community and Controlled schools 2013-2014*

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

*School Admissions Code 2012*

*School Appeals Code 2012*

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> December 2011</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup> April 2011</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March 2010</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> April 2009</b>