



CLLR BERNIE MOONEY

CABINET

Monday, 25 February 2019

**ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY
AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY AND
SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE
COORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEMES FOR
2020-2021**

Councillor Bernie Mooney Cabinet Member - Children & Families, said:

“Making sure your child gets into the right school is incredibly important for every family in the borough. It is important we have a fair, equitable policy to determine school admission arrangements. This report provides that policy for Wirral parents.”

REPORT SUMMARY

This report invites the Cabinet to determine the Authority’s admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools and the co-ordinated schemes for 2020-2021. This is a statutory requirement.

RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet agree the proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and the Wirral co-ordinated schemes for 2020-2021.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 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 co-ordinated scheme for admissions to all primary and secondary schools including Academy schools, in 2020-21. The proposed schemes are attached along with proposed admission numbers for community and controlled schools (Appendices 1 and 2).

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 None.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The consultation on the co-ordinated scheme for admissions took place according to guidance (see 8.0 below). Two responses to the consultation were received. Both were from headteachers of Wirral primary schools.
- 3.2 Both responses commented on the proposed removal of the Independent Assessment Board. One was in favour of this, the other expressed some concerns. These concerns were regarding the possibility that parents of children who were a few marks below the standard with mitigating circumstances, who the school might previously have referred for consideration by the IAB, might not feel confident in following the formal appeals procedure.
- 3.3 As in the previous report on this subject, the removal of the IAB will mean that the number of pupils reaching the standard will be increased at the initial stage by the test provider, which should mean that those pupils who would in previous years have been just below the qualifying standard, would reach the standard.
- 3.4 The selective tests are by their nature intended to be challenging. The qualifying standard is set in order to track the overall population demographic and to ensure that the grammar schools are neither very over-subscribed nor undersubscribed, although the popularity of individual schools, including the separate Catholic grammar schools, fluctuates from year to year.

There will always be pupils whose standardised score is just below the qualifying standard. The Independent Appeal is parents' opportunity to give all their reasons why they believe their child should attend a particular school, including any mitigating circumstances in relation to the test, such as illness or family circumstances. The Appeal Panel's decision is then legally binding.

- 3.5 In relation to the respondent school who has concerns about parents not taking up their right of appeal, it is of course open to schools to speak individually to parents of children to ensure they understand the appeal process, and to provide factual information about attainment etc. for use in an appeal. This should mitigate any impact

of the removal of the Independent Assessment Board. It is recommended that this item be removed accordingly for 2020-2021 and onwards.

- 3.6 One of the responses also commented on the proposed removal of the medical criterion from the policy for community and voluntary controlled primary schools, and was in favour of this.
- 3.7 As set out in the report of 2nd October 2018, the original rationale for the medical criteria has long ceased, and given the low level of usage and applicability, as well as the excellent support available to children in Wirral's primary and infant schools, it is therefore recommended that the in-zone and out of zone medical criteria be removed from the policy for community and voluntary controlled primary schools. This will simplify the policy and improve clarity for parents about the admission criteria to these schools.
- 3.8 Members should note that children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) naming a school would not be affected by this change to the co-ordinated scheme. This is a legal document and these children must be admitted.
- 3.9 For information, the Wirral Fair Access Protocol referred to in the Wirral Co-ordinated Schemes was updated in Autumn 2018 to reflect various alterations, including: the broader composition of the Fair Access Panel; the amended definition of "serious attendance problems" as agreed by Wirral's secondary headteachers (below 95%); and the elimination of an exception in 3.1(c) of the Protocol relating to pupils transferring between Wirral schools during the first term of Year 7.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It should be noted that the relevant co-ordinated schemes and the Fair Access Protocol apply to all Wirral primary and secondary schools, including Academy schools. A Voluntary Aided primary school and a Community primary school have already made the conversion to Academy status. There is additional emphasis on the importance of school governing bodies to understand and apply the Admissions Code, Wirral co-ordinated scheme and FAP correctly and fairly, otherwise schools will be open to challenge both at parental appeal and by the Schools Adjudicator and/or Secretary of State.
- 5.2 Section 8.20 of the secondary co-ordinated scheme and 7.8 of the primary co-ordinated scheme refers to overseas applications. This section may need to be further revised in the light of upcoming changes to the United Kingdom's position in relation to the European Economic Area. If so, amendments will be made at the time.
- 5.3 The guiding principles for a fair consultation are, in summary: it should be at a time when proposals are at a formative stage; sufficient reasons for the proposal should be given to permit intelligent consideration and response; those consulted should be made aware of the factors that are of decisive relevance to the decision; adequate time should be given for consideration and response and the product of the

consultation should be conscientiously taken into account by the decision makers in finalising their proposals.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 The Fair Access Protocol requires a Local Authority Clerk to organise Fair Access Panels, prepare paperwork and disseminate Panel decisions to parents and schools. The cost of this is met from the Council's budget.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 Failure to determine the admission arrangements by 28th February of the preceding year would contravene the 2014 Admissions Code and associated guidance.

7.2 See also 5.1 above.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION

8.1 Consultation on the co-ordinated scheme has taken place with all Wirral schools, other relevant admission authorities and all statutory consultees.

8.2 The consultation period took place for 6 weeks between 17th October and 28th November 2018, which complies with requirements set out in the School Admissions Code 2014.

8.3 The date by which the arrangements must be determined is 28th February. These admission arrangements must then be published on the Council's website by 15th March. The deadline for objections against the admission arrangements to the Schools Adjudicator is 15th May.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed and can be found at:
<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2017-1>

REPORT AUTHOR: **Sally Gibbs**
Senior Manager, School Admissions and Place Planning
telephone: (0151) 666 4487
email: sallygibbs@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Primary co-ordinated scheme for admissions 2020-2021
Secondary co-ordinated scheme for admissions 2020-2021

BACKGROUND PAPERS

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Delegated Authority	2nd October 2018
Cabinet	26th February 2018
Delegated Authority	17th October 2017
Cabinet	27th February 2017
Delegated Authority	6th October 2016
Cabinet	22nd February 2016