

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**MAINSTREAM SCHOOL ADMISSIONS**

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides a brief outline of Mainstream Admissions during the most recently fully completed 2020-2021 admission year. A summary is given on changes resulting from the 2021 School Admissions Code, and information is given regarding the number of applications from overseas applicants in 2021-22, including refugees.

**2.0 Mainstream Admissions**

2.1 Statutory roles of the Mainstream Admissions team include the administration and allocation of places in all primary and secondary schools, and representing the Council in school place appeals.

For entry to primary/secondary school in September 2021 there were over 3,400 applications for primary school (Foundation 2) and 3,900 for secondary schools (Year 7). The team co-ordinates admission to school with all own admission authority schools within Wirral and other admission authorities in England.

|              | 1 <sup>st</sup> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> | Any Preference | None     | No Application offer |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------|----------------------|
| Foundation 2 | 3,126 (93%)     | 135 (4%)        | 24 (1%)         | 3285 (98%)     | 62 (2%)  | 65                   |
| Year 7       | 3181 (87%)      | 240 (7%)        | 63 (2%)         | 3487 (96%)     | 163 (4%) | 43                   |

On-time applicant offers by preference rank and non-applicant offers as at National Offer Day 2021. Wirral residents only, excludes late applications and pupils with an EHCP. "None" indicates a place was offered at a school not given as a preference.

2.2 The team produces appeal statements and presents appeals on behalf of all community and voluntary controlled (VC) schools as a statutory function. Academy, Aided and Foundation/Trust schools prepare and present their own appeals.

For information, the outcomes for the community and VC school appeals handled by the team are shown below.

|           | Withdrawn (%) | Refused (%) | Agreed (%) | Total |
|-----------|---------------|-------------|------------|-------|
| 2018-2019 | 51 (48%)      | 44 (42%)    | 11 (10%)   | 106   |
| 2019-2020 | 39 (42%)      | 53 (56%)    | 2 (2%)     | 94    |
| 2020-2021 | 44 (44%)      | 53 (53%)    | 3 (3%)     | 100   |

Outcome of appeals lodged for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools by academic year. Withdrawn includes resolved and withdrawn appeals.

The outcome of appeals was similar to previous years.

2.3 The team administers the grammar school selection tests on behalf of the four non-Catholic grammar schools. Around 1,900 children are tested each year. The team is responsible for disseminating the outcome of the selective tests to parents.

2.4 As well as admissions to Foundation 2 and Year 7, the team also processes around 2,000 in-year transfers between and into/out of Wirral schools.

2.5 The Council's Fair Access Protocol applies to "hard to place" young people in specific categories, principally children without a school place due to being new to

the area with no place available locally. 82 young people were placed at Wirral secondary schools and 2 in Wirral primary schools, through the Fair Access Protocol in 2021-2022, compared to 99 secondary and 1 primary in the previous year. This excludes placements into Alternative Provision, placements into mainstream schools from the Progress School, or Managed Move decisions.

2.6 The role of the Fair Access Panel, with a wide membership including officers with responsibility for alternative provision special educational needs and educational psychology, exclusions etc. include decisions on Managed Move destinations, and re-integration decisions for young people with a single permanent exclusion.

### 3.0 **School Admissions Code 2021**

3.1 The School Admissions Code 2021 (the Code) came into force from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021, the first update since 2014. Significant changes to the Code are highlighted here.

3.2 **In year transfers** - The Code now requires all own-admission authority schools to advise the Local Authority annually by the end of July whether or not they wish the Local Authority to continue coordinating in-year transfers for the following Academic year; opting out schools must take over the processes carried out by the Admissions team, keeping clear records, in addition to informing the Admissions team of every direct application and it's outcome. In the first year, only 1 school "opted out", this position has been maintained in the second year. The Code reinforces the requirement for all schools to respond to in-year transfer requests within 15 working days, and to provide vacancy information within 2 working days of a request.

3.3 **Fair Access Protocol** – The Code expands the existing categories to include children subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, children in a refuge; children in formal kinship care arrangements, children out of education for four or more weeks; and previously Looked After Children without a school place. The Code clarifies that locally agreed categories, such as poor attendance, are no longer able to be used and the Wirral Fair Access Protocol has been updated accordingly.

3.4 **Looked After Children** – The Code expands the definition of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children to include children who are or appear to have been in state care outside of England and have been adopted. Children adopted from overseas are now subject to the same priority for admission as children adopted in the UK.

3.5 **Published Admission Number** – The Code clarifies that for in-year admissions, simply reaching PAN is not by itself grounds to refuse admission, however schools may refuse where admission of another child would prejudice the provision of efficient education or efficient use of resources. The Infant Class Size limit still applies to Foundation 2, Year 1 and Year 2, and remains grounds to refuse, subject to the permitted exceptions.

### 4.0 **Overseas applications and refugees**

4.1 In May 2022, the Department for Education instigated a new monthly data collection from Local Authorities in England to examine the number of new to the UK applicants for school places. This is divided into Afghanistan, Ukraine and Hong Kong (published) and any other country of origin (unpublished).

4.2 The survey is voluntary to complete, leading to gaps in the national dataset. The DfE estimate that between 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 and 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022 in the North West region, there were 1,300 Ukrainian applications, 2,100 Hong Kong applications and 900 Afghanistan applications for school places.

4.3 The Council's Refugee and Homes for Ukrainians teams have been working closely with the Wirral Admissions team to ensure that children and young people are placed

quickly and appropriately in local schools. The Wirral Admissions team has now put in place a process which will enable the Authority to identify pupils not only from the three main countries of interest, but also other refugee and asylum seeking families from the point of application. This is so grant funding can be targeted to those schools which children and young people attend.

- 4.4 Schools Forum may be interested in how Wirral compares to other authorities in terms of intake.

|                           | Ukraine   |           | Afghanistan |           | Hong Kong |           | Other      |           |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
|                           | Primary   | Secondary | Primary     | Secondary | Primary   | Secondary | Primary    | Secondary |
| <b>Wirral</b>             | <b>31</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>10</b>   |           | <b>34</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>130</b> | <b>13</b> |
| Calderdale                | 12        | 9         | 7           |           | 3         |           |            |           |
| Sefton                    | 31        | 11        | 0           |           | 0         |           |            |           |
| Wigan                     | 20        | 10        | 23          | 21        | 64        | 25        |            |           |
| Stockton on Tees          | 20        | 15        | 12          | 6         | 7         |           |            |           |
| Durham                    | 74        | 39        | 1           |           | 1         |           |            |           |
| Redcar and Cleveland      | 13        | 4         | 0           |           | 0         |           |            |           |
| Cheshire West and Chester | 79        | 89        | 4           |           | 44        | 35        |            |           |

Children from outside the UK (DfE, July 2022) for Wirral, statistical neighbour authorities and Cheshire West and Chester, applications made by country of origin and phase. Statistical neighbours St Helens, Lancashire, North Tyneside and Darlington did not participate in the voluntary Data Collection, "0" may mean the Authority did not collect this information. Small numbers (5 or fewer) aggregated. Excludes new arrivals who are post-16, transitioning directly into Year 7 or Foundation 2 in September 2022, or who are pre-school age. Applications received 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 to 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022. "Other" is all other countries of origin regardless of immigration status.

## 5.0 Finance

- 5.1 The overall budget for School Admissions in 2022-2023 is £387,581. The costs include:

|                             |                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Staffing (8.6 FTE)          | £291,902        |
| Software and implementation | £54,479         |
| Selective tests             | £40,000         |
| Overheads                   | £44,600         |
| Income/recharges            | (£43,400)       |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>£387,581</b> |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Forum notes the report.

**Simone White**  
Corporate Director for Children and Families