

REPORT: Executive Board

DATE: 29th March 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children and Young People

SUBJECT: School Admission Arrangements 2008/9

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report fulfils the requirement under the School Standards & Framework Act 1998, the Education Act 2002, The Education & Inspections Act 2006, and associated regulations, to determine Halton Local Authority's (LA's) School Admissions Policy for LA maintained community and voluntary controlled schools, and coordinated admission schemes for all primary and secondary schools for September 2008 following statutory consultation (attached as appendices A and B respectively).

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Executive Board

- 1) Approve the Admissions Policy and co-ordinated schemes for primary and secondary admissions for the 2008/9 academic year and,**
- 2) Note the National and Local Performance Indicator targets set/achieved for meeting first preference applications and on-line applications.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Halton LA issued a statutorily required consultation paper on the proposed admission arrangements and coordinated admission schemes in January 2007 to chairs of governors, head teachers and governing bodies of all nursery, infant, junior, primary and secondary schools, the four Diocesan Authorities responsible for voluntary aided schools in Halton, and neighbouring authorities.

3.2 The consultation paper proposed no changes to the current oversubscription criteria for admission to LA maintained community and voluntary controlled schools. These criteria follow Department for Education & Skills (DfES) recommendations contained within the revised School Admissions Code of Practice (i.e. Looked After Children, Siblings, and Distance). However, the revised School Admissions Code of Practice, which came into force on 28th February 2007, precludes the use of a first preference first system as previously operated in Halton, and requires all admission authorities (LA's for community and voluntary controlled schools, and governing bodies for voluntary aided schools) to operate an equal preference system. Within the equal preference

scheme all preferences are considered against each school's published admission criteria. After all preferences have been considered if only one school named on the preference form can offer a place the LA will send out an offer of a place. If more than one school can offer a place parents will be offered a place at whichever of those schools is ranked highest on the preference form.

- 3.3 Responses received from the consultation are attached as Appendix C, and the Student Services Officer will respond direct to those schools where particular issues have been raised. Details of the responses have also been circulated to the Halton Admissions Forum.
- 3.4 Following an audit by Halton Borough Council's Internal Audit Section of the Authority's Admissions process it was recommended that Local Performance Indicators (LPIs) were introduced for meeting first preference applications for 2006/7 and subsequent years. The Halton Admissions Forum agreed targets of 96% for primary and 94% for secondary for 2007. Actual preferences met were 92% for primary and 95% for secondary, and the Forum will be considering LPIs for 2008 at its next meeting (to be scheduled).
- 3.5 On-Line Admissions: For applications for admission to primary and secondary schools in September 2007 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister set targets for Local Authorities regarding the number of on-line applications for secondary schools. Halton's target was 5% and the Authority achieved 6.5%. Although no targets were set for primary on-line applications, the Authority achieved 5.1% on-line applications. Further enhancements to the on-line application process and integration of parental preferences directly into the main pupil database are now ongoing in preparation for the 2008/9 admissions round.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Admissions Policy has been drawn up to maximize parental preference for Halton LA maintained community and voluntary controlled schools, and reflects the recommendations contained within the Revised DfES Code of Practice on School Admissions and associated Acts of Parliament and Regulations.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 The current admission arrangements and coordinated schemes are in place to maximise parental preference for Halton schools. Any amendment to the current arrangements may reduce parental preference and lead to an increased number of admission appeals, adversely affecting the intake at some schools, and may also affect the LA's School Place Rationalisation Strategy currently being undertaken.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 6.1 Halton's current school admission arrangements comply with the requirements of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, Human Rights Act 1998 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Discrimination Act 2001.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Code of Practice on School Admissions	CYPD	Martin West
School Standards & Framework Act 1998	CYPD	Martin West
Education Act 2002	CYPD	Martin West
Education & Inspections Act 2006	CYPD	Martin West