

**REPORT:** Children & Young People's Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2007

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Children and Young People

**SUBJECT:** Out of Borough School Admissions Scrutiny Topic

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To report on the findings from the Out of Borough School Admissions Overview & Scrutiny Group.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Policy & Performance Board:**

- 1) **Receives the report;**
- 2) **Requests an annual monitoring report on out of borough admissions at the primary to secondary transfer stage to include:**
  - **The impact of School Organisation on out of borough admissions at primary to secondary transfer**
  - **The financial impact on Halton LA each year of out of borough admissions**
  - **The impact of other Local Authorities admissions arrangements**
  - **The impact upon out of borough admissions following the implementation from September 2008 of the “equal preference” model of allocation of school places against the “first preference first” model;**
- 3) **Notes the Building Schools for the Future Secondary School proposals; and**
- 4) **Agrees to the issuing of an annual questionnaire to those parents seeking out-borough school places.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Under the Education Act (1996) and the School Standards & Framework Act (1998) parents have the opportunity to express a preference for their child's school. Not all parents express a preference for a Halton School and the purpose of the review was to identify the current position, which would then inform strategic thinking on School Reorganisation, the Building Schools for the Future Programme, and the Primary Capital Strategy.

- 3.2 Building Schools for the Future is a national programme to transform secondary education. It is a strategic area-wide solution that provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to modernize the secondary school physical and learning environment. BSF aims to rebuild or renew secondary facilities and provide high quality safe and secure accommodation, which is both flexible and inclusive. In order to access sums of up-to £100 million capital investment local authorities are required to ensure that when considering school organization they have planned to remove surplus places, will provide diversity and choice, expand popular and successful schools and address under-performance. From 2009 increased capital funding will also be available to support the renewal of primary stock in Halton. Although the sums involved are not yet known, these are likely to be very small by comparison with the secondary levels of investment.
- 3.3 From the period October 2006 to April 2007 a wide range of quantitative data was compiled and analysed (attached as Appendix A) which helped to inform the Group on parental preferences for Halton Schools, parental preferences for out-of-borough schools, total number of pupils imported to the authority (secondary phase), total number of pupils exported from the authority (secondary phase), ethnic minority details, key stage 2 attainment data, English as an additional language data and geographical data identifying Halton resident pupils attending out-of-borough schools (secondary phase).
- 3.4 Following analysis of the data provided it was agreed that a questionnaire should be issued to parents whose children had been admitted to the 5 most popular out-of-borough secondary schools. The results of these findings are attached as Appendix B. 95 questionnaires were issued and 34 were returned (a 36% return rate). The principal findings were that 62% of parents advised that out-borough schooling was a joint decision between parents and the child, the main reason for selecting an out-of-borough school was based on OfSTED reports, and school reputation/performance (where religious affiliation was not a factor).

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Halton's 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 DfES Code of Practice on School Admissions. Losing pupils to out-of-borough schools has financial implications for the authority. Future strategic projects including School Reorganisation, the Building Schools for the Future Programme, and the Primary Capital Strategy will need to ensure that they address the retention of Halton pupils in Halton schools, and attract pupils from neighbouring authorities.
- 4.2 Officers from the Children & Young People's Directorate continue to work closely with schools (both primary and secondary) in analyzing their performance data and supporting schools to continually improve. Evidence of continuous

improvement can be seen through the year on year increase in percentage of pupils attaining 5+ A\*-C grades (44.2% in 2004 rising to 52.3% in 2006).

- 4.3 In 2006 Halton lost 130 pupils to out-borough secondary schools, in 2007 this number reduced to 125. A further issue for consideration is the number of pupils seeking out-borough Church of England secondary school provision (Halton lost 35 pupils to out-borough CE schools in the 2007 admissions round). The lack of Church of England secondary provision is being considered within the proposals for the Building Schools for the Future secondary school reorganization.
- 4.4 Within Warrington Borough Council's Composite Prospectus (Admissions Booklet to Parents) Warrington LA continue to name two Halton Primary Schools (Daresbury and Moore) as partner primary schools to Bridgewater High School in Warrington, which can give Halton resident parents a false expectation of a place at that school. As part of Halton LA's formal response to Warrington LA on their proposed admission arrangements for 2008 a letter was sent requesting the removal of these schools as partner primary schools. A copy of Halton's letter, and Warrington's response are attached within Appendix A.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Currently Halton's Dedicated Schools Grant Allocation is based on the number of pupils in Halton schools on January PLASC return. For each pupil Halton received a Guaranteed Funding Level (GFL) of £4,053.81. A loss of 125 pupils to out of borough provision equates to a loss of £506,726.

## **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 6.1 The current admission arrangements and coordinated schemes in Halton are in place to maximise parental preference for Halton schools. In identifying why parents sought out-borough school placements, the Local Authority is now in a position to respond to the findings.

## **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 7.1 N/A

## **8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Overview & Scrutiny Toolkit	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Municipal Bldg	Alex Villiers
Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Group	3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor Grosvenor House	Martin West