

# **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING**

**Agenda Item 48**  
Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>School Admissions Arrangements - Outcomes and Issues 2008/9</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>8 September 2008</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Director of Children's Services</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Steve Healey</b>	<b>Tel: 293444</b>
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

## **FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

### **1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The report sets out the outcomes of the school admission arrangements for those starting school in September 2008, and the operation of key policies such as those for fair access to schools for those applying outside the main admission round. The admission year 2008/9 was the first year of operation for the new secondary school admission arrangements using catchment areas.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the outcomes of the school admission arrangements for 2008/9 are noted.

### **3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Following an extensive and well publicised consultation and working group process, new secondary school admission arrangements and priorities incorporating catchment areas were approved by the City Council and applied for the first time for pupils due to start secondary school in September 2008. Primary school admission arrangements were unchanged, and rather than catchment areas use home to school distance to give priority for school places once those with exceptional reasons for admission and siblings have been allocated places. Primary, secondary and junior applications were all processed using equal preference, now a legal requirement, whereby each preference listed, first, second or third is ranked against the admission priorities of the admission authority, and the highest offer possible is made.
- 3.2 Appendix 1 shows how Secondary School places were allocated on the initial allocation date of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2008. As the arrangements changed from the previous year data on 2007/8 admissions is included for comparison. Appendix 2 shows how the figures had changed by 30<sup>th</sup> July. The changes are accounted for by pupils moving from the area, taking up places at independent schools or changing their preference. A number of pupils will also have moved into the City

and been allocated a school place. The totals will also be affected by successful appeals. Overall the change in arrangements has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of pupils directed to a school that they did not give as a preference. Initially a number of children whose parents had not given their catchment area school as a preference were allocated a school place elsewhere in the City. The majority have now been offered local alternatives, so the number of directed pupils has reduced further to 39.

- 3.3 Varndean School has been extended to provide an additional form of entry (30 places) taking the admission number to 270. Building works will finish in autumn 2008. For the 2008/9 admission round only the admission number was increased to 300.
- 3.4 Primary school allocations (Appendix 3) are shown as they stood at 30<sup>th</sup> July. As a result of increased pupil numbers, particularly in the Hove area, an additional class (30 pupils) was added to the Davigdor Infants intake and another to the West Blatchington Infants intake. Consultation is going ahead on a permanent increase in the admission number at Davigdor.
- 3.5 Junior school allocations are shown in Appendix 4 as they stood at 30<sup>th</sup> July. These figures are inclusive of successful appeals.
- 3.6 The data in Appendices 2, 3 and 4 has been limited so that only totals are shown for pupils who are in the care of a local authority or who are regarded as having exceptional circumstances. This is to ensure that whilst data is put in the public domain, there is no question that individual pupils could be identified in either of those categories.
- 3.7 School admission appeals heard by independent appeal panels in the 3 main admission rounds took place between February and 30<sup>th</sup> July. These include a number of cases where the appeal request was received after the appeal deadline and some late admission applications where the application was made after the main admission round. In some cases parents/carers will have appealed for more than one school. Appendix 5 sets out the appeals with totals for each phase as of 30<sup>th</sup> July. Appeals information for Voluntary Aided Schools is also included, where the admissions priorities are set by the governing body and mainly relate to religious affiliation.
- 3.8 Appeal panels are limited in their discretion for Infant appeals because of the statutory maximum class size of 30. Appeal panels may only uphold infant appeals where the admission authority has either wrongly applied its admission arrangements or has acted unreasonably in reaching its decision. No infant appeals have been upheld this year.
- 3.9 The Schools Adjudicator received a number of complaints from parents and from the school itself about the size of the Patcham High School catchment area for the 2009/10 admission year, which the complainants believed was too small and should also contain the Westdene area. The Adjudicator did not uphold the complaints, but suggested that a consultation should take place with Westdene School, parents in that area and secondary schools that might be affected by a

change in the catchment area for Patcham. The consultation will take place in the autumn term 2008, and the outcome will be fed back to the Adjudicator.

- 3.10 The Council operates an in-year fair access protocol as required by the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This is to ensure that vulnerable pupils or pupils who might otherwise have difficulty securing a school place are allocated a suitable place as soon as possible. As part of the protocol secondary headteachers agree to go over published admission numbers where necessary to ensure that pupils moving into established year groups from outside the City can be offered a reasonably local school place. In the 2007/8 academic year 146 secondary age pupils were accepted into year groups which were already full or beyond the published admission limit. A further 10 cases are still pending. The Infant class size maximum of 30 to a teacher means that placing new arrivals into primary schools can be more difficult, as class size numbers cannot be exceeded except in very limited circumstances. The larger number of infant, primary and junior schools means that in most cases local places can be offered to younger children moving into the City, although this is not operated through a formal arrangement at present.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 No consultation process was undertaken in the preparation of this report. However, the school admission process works within a legal framework of consultation which is set out below in the legal implications.
- 4.2 Before the secondary admission arrangements used for the 2008/9 admission year were agreed by the Council there was a substantial period of public meetings and consultation. The admission arrangements were then devised and proposed by a working group which included school governors, Council Members and parents. There was also a parent stakeholder group representative of different areas of the City, which nominated the parent members of the working group and was directly involved in the discussion and preparation of the proposals for change.

#### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

- 5.1 Financial Implications:  
Any changes to admission arrangements or patterns may impact on the numbers of pupils at individual schools and therefore individual school budget allocations which are largely driven by pupil numbers.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Steve Williams*

*Date: 06/08/08*

- 5.2 Legal Implications:  
Section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requires admission authorities to determine before the beginning of the school year, the admission arrangements which are to apply for that year. The determination must be preceded by consultation with the Governing Bodies of Schools within the area of the LA for which the LA is the admission authority, and with neighbouring

admission authorities. Consultation must be completed by 1<sup>st</sup> March in the year preceding the admission round. Admission arrangements must conform to the Admissions Code which sets out acceptable and unacceptable admission arrangements and priorities. Admission authorities, diocesan authorities, the Admission Forum and parents may refer any admission arrangements that they believe to be contrary to the provisions of the Admissions Code to the Schools Adjudicator.

*Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston*

*Date: 06/08/08*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Planning for school admissions procedures and school places and the operation of the process are conducted in such a way as to avoid potentially discriminatory admissions priorities or planning processes. School admissions will be the subject of an equalities impact assessment in the coming year. The city council and voluntary aided school governing bodies must be mindful of bad practice with regard to equalities issues as described in the School Admissions Code of Practice.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 School admission arrangements are intended so far as it is possible to provide pupils with local places where they have asked for them. The planning of school places for the City takes into account the changing population pattern and resultant demand for places. The current pattern of parental preference is reflected in different schools operating both over and under capacity. In planning for school places the Council will have regard to sustainability priorities and seek to provide local places and places which are accessible by safe walking and where possible cycling routes and public transport.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

Balanced school communities with firm parental support contribute to orderly and harmonious communities.

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

Any change to school attendance patterns and pupil numbers will impact directly on resource allocation both revenue and capital, and on the Council's ability to meet parental expectations on school places. Pupil data and broader population data is used to identify the numbers of school places required and where they should be located. This feeds into the capital programme so that resources are allocated where they will have the most beneficial effect.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

The allocation of school places affects all families in all parts of the City and can influence where people choose to live. Failure to obtain the desired choice of school can create a strong sense of grievance. The process of expressing a preference and if disappointed, entering an appeal can create intense anxiety for many families in the City. In its first year of operation the new secondary admission arrangements have reduced the number of applicants who did not secure any of their preferred school places, although the proportion of first preferences allocated has reduced slightly

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Secondary Admissions for 2008/9 as of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2008.
2. Offers at Secondary School (Year 7) September 2008 as at 30 July 2008.
3. Offers Primary and Infant School (Reception Class) September 2008 as at 30 July 2008.
4. Offers at Junior School (Year 3) September 2008 as at 30 July 2009.
5. Appeal Statistics for Secondary Admissions, correct as of 30 July 2008

### **Documents In Members' Rooms**

1. None

### **Background Documents**

1. None

