

**Report to:** Children and Young People's Panel Cabinet

**Date:** 8.11.07 15.11.07

**Subject:** Admissions to primary and secondary schools 2007/08

**Report of:** Director of Children and Young People's Services

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**Purpose / summary:** The purpose of this report is to inform members of:

- the results of the admissions and appeals processes for the 2007-2008 intake into schools;
- the numbers of mid year admissions into schools in the 2006-2007 school year and the effect of the Fair Access Policy; and
- admission issues for 2008-2009.

**Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:** The recommended option complies with the guidance in the School Admissions Code of Practice

**Recommendation / decision:** Cabinet is recommended to approve that consultation on admission numbers for 2009-2010 and future years at community and voluntary-controlled schools reflects the net capacity assessments of schools.

**Key Decision:** This report does not involve a key decision. The decision made as a result of this report will be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until seven working days have elapsed, i.e. before 27 November 2007.

**Risks / Implications:**

Financial: None  
 Staffing: None  
 Policy: None  
 Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted? No  
 Wards affected: All

**Property – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?**

No

**Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?**

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

**Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?**

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Director of Legal and Property Services confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution? **YES**

Has the Director of Finance and IT confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget? **YES**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No**

\* delete which applicable

**For Cabinet reports only :**

Categorisation of the report:	
Discussion leading to a decision	
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

Discussion	
Decision	<b>X</b>
Information	

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**Tracking/Process:**

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
8.11.07		15.11.07	

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer



Date

24<sup>th</sup> October 2007

## 1. Background:

- 1.1 The LA is the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools. The governing body is the admission authority for voluntary-aided schools.
- 1.2 The LA and governing bodies work closely together to co-ordinate the admissions for the main intakes into primary and secondary schools.
- 1.3 For the 2007 intakes, the 'first preference first' system of allocating places was used. Parents were asked to give three preferences of school in order of priority. If none of the preferences can be met, the LA offers a place at the nearest school with a vacancy.
- 1.4 Parents who have been refused a place at one of their preferences have the right of appeal.

## 2. Secondary intake 2007-2008

### 2.1 Meeting parental preference

	Number	%	Local performance indicator
Total applications for Wigan schools	3658		
Allocated a place at 1 <sup>st</sup> preference school	3540	97	93% or better
Allocated a place at one of preferences	3618	99	
None of preferences met	23*	0.6	

(\*this number relates to pupils who reside in Wigan LA)

### 2.2 Application to secondary schools

School	Admission limit	No: 1 <sup>st</sup> preferences	Number admitted
Cansfield Community High	202	253	210
The Byrchall High	240	163	213
Golborne High	171	159	171
Hindley Community High	187	176	185
Rose Bridge High	180	107	117
Bedford High	242	156	171
Westleigh High	155	131	148
Lowton Community High	230	185	202
Abraham Guest High	178	200	191
Shevington High	178	116	123
Standish Community High	250	258	251
Fred Longworth High	255	242	254
Hawkley Hall High	192	146	160
PEMBEC at Kingsdown High	170	63	83
Hesketh Fletcher CE High	200	74	79

The Deanery CE High	270	282	281
St Mary's Catholic High	260	291	284
St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High	240	263	258
St Peter's Catholic High	190	206	190
St John Fisher Catholic High	200	187	198

### 2.3 On-line applications

The LA has a statutory duty to provide parents with an apply on-line facility. An E-Government target was set for all LAs to achieve between a 5% to 10% take up for the first year the service was made available. For secondary school applications, for 2007, the LA achieved a 17% take up.

### 2.4 Looked after children

In accordance with the Code of Practice, children in public care had priority for admission in admission arrangements in 2007-2008. A total of 14 looked after pupils were admitted into year 7 at various secondary schools this year.

## 3 Secondary school appeals

### 3.1 Number of secondary schools oversubscribed on first preferences:

2003-2004	9
2004-2005	5
2005-2006	6
2006-2007	7
2007-2008	7

### 3.2 Appeals heard for places at community and controlled secondary schools.

Year	Number of appeals	% appeals successful
2003-2004	146	42%
2004-2005	51	53%
2005-2006	56	71%
2006-2007	20	70%
2007-2008	50	66%

### 3.3 A number of voluntary-aided schools also held appeals. The appropriate Diocese administered these.

### 3.4 The Local Government Ombudsman has only informed the council of one complaint from a parent in respect of the admission or appeal process for the September 2007 intake. The appeal was in relation to a community high school. The Ombudsman decided that the evidence presented satisfied her that there was no maladministration in the decision of the LA or the Appeal Panel.

#### 4. Primary intake 2007-2008 (Admissions in September 2007)

##### 4.1 Meeting parental preference

	Number	%	Local performance indicator
Total applications for Wigan schools	3275		
Allocated a place at 1 <sup>st</sup> preference school	3133	95.66	96%
Allocated a place at one of preferences	3249	99.2	
None of preferences met	26	0.79	

##### 4.2 On-line applications

In line with E-Government targets, the LA received 11% of applications via the apply on-line service.

##### 4.3 Looked After Children

Six looked after children were admitted into Reception classes at Wigan schools.

4.4 Where children could not be offered a place at their preferred schools, they were all offered a place within 2 miles walking distance of their home address.

#### 5. Primary appeals

5.1 The number of community and voluntary-controlled primary schools oversubscribed with first preferences.

2003-2004	9
2004-2005	10
2005-2006	10
2006-2007	6
2007-2008	8

5.2 12 appeals were heard for places at primary schools and 3 were successful.

5.3 A number of voluntary-aided schools also held appeals. The appropriate Diocese administered these.

5.4 The Local Government Ombudsman has informed the council of two complaints from a parents in respect of the admission or appeal process for the September Reception 2007 intake.

5.5 The complaints were in relation to a community primary school and a voluntary aided primary school. The Ombudsman decided that the evidence presented satisfied her that there was no maladministration.

## 6. Mid year admissions 2006-2007

6.1 We continue to receive a considerable number of applications for admission to community and voluntary-controlled schools outside the normal admission round.

6.2 The number of mid year applications processed by the LA over the past 5 years is as follows:

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Primary	347 (1.28%)	316 (1.20%)	351 (1.30%)	376 (1.52%)	366 (1.54%)
Secondary	518 (2.45%)	565 (2.64%)	586 (2.76%)	593 (2.83%)	632 (3.37%)
Total	865	881	937	969	998

6.3 The figures in brackets show mid year applications as a percentage of the total school population in the primary and secondary sectors.

6.4 The LA is not aware of all mid year admissions. Some parents approach community primary schools direct and voluntary-aided schools deal with their own admissions.

6.5 Not all mid year applications result in admission to school as some parents make multiple applications or withdraw their requests.

6.6 The reasons parents apply for school places outside the normal admission round are varied and include:

- moving into the Borough;
- moving a considerable distance within the Borough;
- child unhappy at a school;
- parents unhappy with the current school, for example educational standards or the way an issue has been dealt with; and
- personal reasons, for example problems with other family members at a school.

6.7 We aim to admit pupils into school within 10 school days of receiving an application. The Pupil Registration Regulations 2006 require schools to put pupils on the school roll by the expected date of admission. The length of time taken to admit pupils in 2006-2007 was:

Length of time to admit	Number of pupils	
	Primary	Secondary
Under 10 days	246	299
Over 10 days	20	93

6.8 These figures include pupils who have been out of school because their parents had to appeal for a place. In these cases we aim to admit pupils within 10 days of a successful appeal. Appeals must be heard within 30 days of being lodged.

6.9 Delays in admission to school can be caused by schools delaying admission of pupils they consider to be difficult because of behaviour or attendance issues. Schools sometimes insist on pre-admission meetings or referring parents back to the original school.

6.10 The LA has a Fair Access Policy to ensure all hard to place pupils are placed in schools without delay. Pupils can be offered a local school place under the policy if a school is full and the LA cannot offer a place a reasonable distance from the pupil's home address. During 2006-2007, pupils were admitted to community and voluntary-controlled schools under the policy as follows:

	Permanently excluded pupils admitted	Other pupils admitted	Total
Primary		4	4
Secondary	4	22	26

6.11 In September 2007 it became mandatory for all schools within the LA to be part of the Fair Access Policy. From the start of the 2007-2008 academic year, voluntary aided schools are required to admit their share of children under the Fair Access Policy.

6.12 Senior officers from the LA meet regularly to track pupils out of school. They work closely together to ensure these children are placed in school as quickly as possible. This work links into the Children Missing Education agenda.

## **7. Mid year admission appeals 2006-2007**

7.1 A large proportion of secondary schools in the Borough are oversubscribed in some year groups and many parents who request a place mid year must appeal.

7.2 63 appeals were heard for mid year places in community and voluntary-controlled secondary schools and 50 were successful. The number of appeals has reduced since 2005 which may be due to the success of the Fair Access Policy.

7.3 19 appeals were heard for places in community and voluntary-controlled primary schools and 10 were successful. Two of the successful appeals allowed breached the class size 30 rule.

## **8. Referrals to Schools Adjudicator**

8.1 Following annual consultation on admission arrangements, the LA objected to the determined admission arrangements of two voluntary aided schools.

8.2 Governors at St Mary's Catholic High School had determined an admission number of 260. This was lower than their admission number as indicated by their net capacity assessment. The LA referred this to the Schools Adjudicator. The Adjudicator determined that the admission number should remain at 260.

8.3 Governors at St James' Catholic Primary School, Orrell determined admission arrangements that did not comply with the mandatory provision of the Code of Practice. The LA referred this to the School Adjudicator. The School Adjudicator upheld the LA objection.

## **9. Admission numbers**

9.1 In January 2006, members agreed that the admission numbers for community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2007 intake should reflect the net capacity of the school. For the 2007 admissions round the new admission numbers were used. The detail of the admission numbers for secondary schools is shown in section 2.2 of this report.

## **10. Proposals**

10.1 It is recommended that members agree that the LA consult on admission numbers for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2009/2010 and subsequent years which reflect the net capacity assessment of the school.

## **11. Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:**

11.1 That the LA allow schools to determine an admission number different to that based on their net capacity assessment. If admission numbers are kept artificially low, it limits parental preference which contravenes the Admissions Code.

11.2 The preferred option would maximise parents' opportunity to secure a school place at a school of their preference.

## **12. Conclusions**

12.1 As a result of falling rolls and some voluntary aided secondary schools allocating places above their published admission number, the number of first preferences met for 2007 intakes was high.

12.2 The number of mid-year admissions of pupils to schools continues to grow. The Fair Access Policy has reduced delays in admission caused by families needing to appeal.

