

Meeting:	Harrow Admissions Forum
Date:	23 February 2009
Subject:	Proposed Admission Arrangements 2010/11
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Heather Clements, Director Schools and Children's Development
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Anjana Patel
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1: Current admission arrangements Appendix 2: Arrangements made by schools to consult parents Appendix 3: Summary of responses by governing bodies Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Appendix 5: Risk Management Implications Appendix 6 (on additional separate document): Parental response to consultation

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Harrow is required to consult before determining its admission arrangements. At its meeting on 1 December 2008 the Harrow Admissions Forum recommended that Harrow Council consult on the admission arrangements for 2010, including changes to the oversubscription criteria for Harrow community co-educational schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To consider the feedback on consultation on admission arrangements for the 2010/11 academic year.
- To make recommendations to the Cabinet in order that the admission arrangements can be determined by the statutory deadline of 15 April 2009.
- To consider changing to a random computer selection as the tie-breaker in cases where applicants live equidistant from the school or in cases of multiple births.
- To consider the comments from Legal Services regarding the criteria for nursery admissions.

REASON: There is a requirement under the School Standards and Framework Act 1988 for admission authorities to determine admission arrangements by 15 April in the determination year (ie by 15 April 2009).

SECTION 2 - REPORT

Under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (as amended by the 2002 Schools Standards and Framework Act) Harrow is required to consult before determining its admission arrangements. The current admission arrangements for co-educational high schools are given at Appendix 1.

In October 2008 the Cabinet agreed the strategic approach to school re-organisation and established a Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) to provide advice and guidance on proposals and options for school organisation. A range of Focus Groups were engaged to work in conjunction with the Reference Group.

The Harrow Admissions Forum set up a Working Group specifically to review community co-educational high school admission arrangements. The Working Group met on a number of occasions and developed a set of underlying principles for the review. They considered a number of different options, including revised models for linked high schools.

An early soundings exercise was carried out in July 2008. The purpose of this exercise was to gather views from parents and schools on options for changes to high school admission arrangements. Lottery and banding were ruled out following the outcome of this exercise. The Working Party agreed to pursue two options: namely, a revised system of linked school and distance from home to school. After very careful deliberation the Working Party concluded that it was not possible to develop a model for linked schools that would gain the support of parents and schools. The Working Party was concerned about the disruptive impact of changes and the knowledge, based on previous experience, that any change to long established links was going to be extremely unpopular. Members of the Working Party felt that distance offered a fair, equitable and stable option both for now and the future.

At its meeting on 1 December 2008 the Harrow Admissions Forum considered the current admission arrangements to assess how well they served the interests of local parents and children. Forum Members also considered the report from the Working Party and gave particular consideration to the position of families with children in both the 11+ and 12+ transfer groups in the 2010 academic year. Forum Members agreed to recommend to the Portfolio holder that Harrow consults on the following:

1. Revised admission arrangements for community co-educational high schools, as follows:
 - 1st priority Children Looked After
 - 2nd priority Agreed medical claims (for parent / student)
 - 3rd priority Siblings who will be attending the school at the same time (excluding students at the sixth form)
 - 4th priority For families with children in both the Year 6(11+ transfer) and Year 7(12+ transfer) transfer groups who indicate they want their children to attend the same school, the following will apply: Where one child is offered a place because they best meet the admission rules at a preferred school, the other child will be given the sibling priority for that school.
 - 5th priority Distance from home to school measured in a straight line

2. The admission arrangements for Bentley Wood High School for Girls
3. The admission arrangements for Harrow community primary schools
4. The Schemes of Co-ordination for 2010-11.
5. Harrow's relevant area
6. Harrow's Fair Access Protocol

Consultation

Full details of the proposed schemes of co-ordination, the proposed admission arrangements for 2010, Harrow's relevant area and Fair Access Protocol were circulated to:

- Governors and headteachers of all Harrow schools
- All other admission authorities in the relevant area
- Neighbouring Local Authorities as required under The Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) Regulations 2002.
- Local community groups.

Notices / posters were provided for schools, nurseries, pre-school playgroups, libraries, community notice boards, medical centres, doctors' surgeries, supermarkets, etc. to display in order to inform parents about the consultation.

Schools were provided with an A4 flyer and response pro-forma and were asked to use their normal channels of communication to consult with parents (eg school newsletters, parents' evenings, school notice boards, etc.). Appendix 2 details the arrangements schools made to consult. A powerpoint presentation giving details about the consultation was made available to headteachers.

Additionally, a notice advising of the consultation was placed in the local press, an article and response form were published in the January edition of the Harrow People magazine, which is delivered to all households in Harrow, and the consultation documents and a survey were posted on the Harrow website.

The consultation responses have been analysed and are summarised below:

Response from parents

Parents can comment on any area of the admission arrangements. However, responses received concentrated mainly on increases to the PAN of two primary schools and the admissions criteria to high school.

752 individual responses were received from parents (including 21 website responses). A summary of the responses is as follows:

In favour:

PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS		HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS				
Increase Elmgrove PAN	Increase Roxeth PAN	Agreed Medical Claims	Sibling link	Sibling link for 2010 only	Remove linked School/Use distance	Other areas of Admission Arrangements
60%	58%	81%	88%	77%	54%	See below

Against:

PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS		HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS				
Increase Elmgrove PAN	Increase Roxeth PAN	Agreed Medical Claims	Sibling link	Sibling link for 2010 only	Remove linked School/Use distance	Other areas of Admission Arrangements
22%	27%	8%	6%	15%	37%	See below

No specific comments were made about other areas of the admission arrangements but detailed below are some themes that arose from the response pro-formas:

1. Overcrowding / need for smaller class sizes in primary schools
2. Phased introduction of the proposals, as otherwise unfair to children already in the system.
3. Parental choice should be paramount
4. Benefits of the current linked system.
5. Impact on housing and house prices of change to distance.
6. Excluding 6th form students from the sibling link.
7. Benefits of distance – especially for children of walking to school and impact on environment.

Response from Governing Bodies (See Appendix 3). One high school and 9 primary school governing bodies responded to the consultation. Their responses are as follows:

Schemes of Co-ordination	Primary School Admission Arrangements	High School Admission Arrangements Medical	High School Admission Arrangements Siblings	High School Admission Arrangements Siblings 2010	Change from linked school to distance
IN FAVOUR					
5	6	7	7	6	6
AGAINST					
					2

The Governing Body of Roxeth F&M School raised concern that they were not approached prior to the consultation. Having now had the opportunity speak to officers about capital development they feel they may well be able to increase class sizes with the support of the LA but that it unlikely to be the position in 2010.

Community groups

A letter and consultation response pro-forma was sent to a number of community groups. No responses were received.

Other LEAs and admission authorities

A copy of the consultation report and schemes of co-ordination were sent to neighbouring LEAs. No responses were received.

A full analysis of responses is provided at Appendix 6. The response pro-formas are available at the Admissions Service office.

The School Admissions Code of Practice

A new School Admissions Code came into force on 10 February 2009 and applied with immediate effect. This code gives a list of prohibited oversubscription criteria, which includes giving priority to children according to their date of birth. As a tie-breaker, in cases where applicants live equidistant from the preferred school and places cannot be offered to both children, Harrow currently gives priority to the oldest child. This also applies in the case of multiple births. Members of the Admissions Forum are requested to consider changing to random computer selection (similar to that used for Bentley Wood) as the tie-breaker in circumstances where applicants live equidistant or in cases of multiple births.

The new Code also introduces a requirement for the Local Authority to report to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator about admission arrangements for schools in the area by 30 June each year.

Equalities Impact

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. A copy is at Appendix 4. There is no identified detrimental impact on any of the equality groups. Overall the proposed change in admission arrangements brings Harrow more in line with neighbouring boroughs (only one of the 33 London boroughs uses links schools) and will enhance the equality of opportunity and choice for young people.

Legal comments

The Forum's attention is drawn to the tie-breaker which is part of the oversubscription criteria for Nursery class places. If there are more children with the same date of birth than there are places in the nursery, then places are offered in the following order:

- First Children whose first language is not English.
- Next Children whose parents are in receipt of Income Support / Income Based Job Seekers Allowance.

The above tie-breaker been in place since 1997 and was introduced following consultation with Governing Bodies of Harrow schools during the Autumn 1996 Term.

The rationale behind the first criterion was to support children within the most disadvantaged sections of the community. The basis of this lay in research undertaken by HMI which pointed to the need to address a deficit in educational attainment amongst those young children who do not speak English as a main language at home.

Forum Members may wish to consider whether they wish to consult during the next admissions round on continuing with this as a tie-breaker.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report

Performance Issues

A fair and transparent admissions process is crucial to the local school system and to maintaining high standards found in Harrow's schools. The relevant national indicators include:

- NI 72 - 74 Key stage attainment
- NI 92 -93 Progression at key stages
- NI 102 Narrowing the gap - free school meals
- NI 104-5 Narrowing the gap - Special Educational Needs
- 107 Key stage 2 attainment for BME groups
- 108 Key stage 4 attainment for BME groups

Challenging targets have been set for for of these indicators and the first set of results will be available at the end of 2008/9.

Risk Management Implications

There is a risk register for the school reorganisation project that is reviewed by the School Organisation Officer Group. It contains a high level risk for each of the workstreams, including review of admission arrangements, and is subject to on-going review and development. An extract is provided at Appendix 5.

Environmental Impact

The proposed change from linked schools to distance should mean that more children will attend a local high school. This should reduce the number of car journeys to school and help reduce the per capita carbon emission in the Borough . Each school is required to have a school travel plan to:

Improve Safety

- Through highway engineering measures on local streets around schools
- Through improved driver behaviour
- Through developing pupil skills and understanding

Improve Health

- Reducing car dependency and promoting active travel
- Reducing pollution in the immediate vicinity of the school

Protect and Enhance the Environment

- Reduce emission from road traffic
- Improve amenities for pedestrians and cyclists

Enhance access and opportunities

- Pupils develop skill for safe, independent travel eg: route planning, cycle training, pedestrian training and personal safety
- Pupils are provided with facilities that enable their opportunity to travel to school sustainably eg; cycle storage, lockers

Support and Funding

School Travel Plan Grant

Schools receive a School Travel Plan Grant to spend on capital works in the school grounds. The grant should be spent on items identified in the School Travel Plan that will encourage sustainable transport.

How much is the Grant?

- Primary Schools receive £3,750 + £5 per pupil on the school roll
- Secondary Schools receive £5,000 + £5 per pupil on the school roll

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:.....Emma Stabler.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date:17 February 2009.....		
Name:Helen White.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date:18 February 2009.....		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name:.....David Harrington.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Divisional Director (Strategy and Improvement)
Date:18 February 2009.....		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date: 18 February 2009		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Madeleine Hitchens, Manager, Place Planning & Admissions – 020 8424 1398