

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	14 April 2005
Subject:	Determination of Admission Arrangements for the 2006/2007 academic year
Responsible Officer:	Director of Strategy (People First)
Contact Officer:	Madeleine Hitchens
Portfolio Holder:	Education and Lifelong Learning
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Public

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

The Cabinet is requested to determine the admission arrangements to apply to Harrow community primary and high schools for the school year 2006/2007, as set out in the attached appendix.

Reason for report

There is a statutory 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 2005).

This report and Cabinet decisions will satisfy this statutory requirement.

Benefits

- The Council will meet its statutory obligation under the School Standards and Framework Act 1988 to determine admission arrangements.
- The Council will be in a position to publish details of admission arrangements as required by regulations made under section 92 of the 1998 Act, which requires every LEA to publish information annually about admission arrangements for the following year for maintained schools in its area.

Cost of Proposals

None

Risks

It is a statutory requirement to determine and publish admission arrangements annually.

Implications if recommendations rejected

The Council will not meet its statutory obligations under the School Standards and Framework Act.

Section 2: Report

Brief History

Under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 Harrow is required to consult before determining its admission arrangements. The 1988 Act (as amended by the Education Act 2002) also requires each LEA to establish an Admissions Forum to provide a vehicle for admission authorities and other key interested parties to get together to discuss the effectiveness of local admission arrangements.

At its meeting on 19 October 2004 the Harrow Admissions Forum considered the current admission arrangements to assess how well they served the interest of local parents and children. The following issues were brought specifically to the Forum's attention and after careful consideration the Forum agreed to consult on a number of minor amendments.

Options considered

Sibling definition

To support an application on behalf of twins where one twin has a statement of Special Educational Needs that names a particular school. Forum Members considered this and agreed to consult on amending the definition of children that qualify for a sibling link to include the following:

“Where twins are concerned and one twin has a Statement of Special Educational Needs that names a specific school, the other twin will be treated as having a sibling link for that academic year”.

Medical claims

Single sex / co-educational preference

To support parental preference for single-sex or co-educational schooling where parents are seeking a place in a particular school on medical grounds. The current rules only allow such requests to be considered for the school nearest to the child's home. After discussion and deliberation, the Forum proposed to consult on adding the following to the definition of medical claim:

“..... parents will have the opportunity of choosing either co-educational or single sex schooling” provided this is the school nearest to home.

Long-term disability

Currently medical claims for the child or parent(s) require a letter from a Consultant confirming the medical condition and why, in view of this, the child should attend the closest school to home. Forum Members considered whether to amend this requirement to include those in receipt of long-term incapacity benefit where they had been discharged from the hospital and are unable to obtain a Consultant's letter.

Following careful consideration, the Forum agreed not to change the current arrangements. In order for a medical claim to be agreed all applicants will be required to provide a consultant's letter in support of their claim.

Reduction to Planned Admission Number for Rooks Heath High School

The Admission Forum agreed to consult on reducing the Planned Admission Number from 260 to 210. The reasons for this proposal relate to the major impact that casual entrants are having on the School's ability to deliver a stable, quality-learning environment. The School consistently accommodates a very large intake of casual students during the year. This has an increasingly challenging impact on the school and its capacity to achieve its goal of raising the quality of teaching and learning. The proposed reduction to admission numbers will assist the School in its continuing endeavours to deliver high quality education and aid forward planning.

If this proposal is agreed, as the Planned Admissions Number is lower than the net capacity formula, Harrow will follow the necessary statutory procedures to implement this change for the 2006-7 academic year.

Consultation

Copies of the current admission arrangement, plus details of the proposals from the Harrow Admissions Forum have been circulated to all other admission authorities in the relevant area and neighbouring Local Authorities as required under The Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) Regulations 1999. The consultation document was also sent to all Harrow schools.

Only one Governing Body (Grange Schools) made a response to the consultation. The Governors identified some errors with dates, which have been corrected, and requested the inclusion of details of schools and admission numbers to which the admission arrangements apply.

Financial Implications

There are no financial observations.

Legal Implications

Section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 makes it a statutory obligation for each admissions authority to determine the admission arrangements annually. Regulation 3(2) of the Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) Regulations (SI 1999/126) specifies that such determination should be before 15 April in any given year.

Equalities Impact

Harrow's oversubscription criteria have been developed in line with guidance in the School Admissions Code of Practice in order to be objective, clear, fair and compatible with admissions and equal opportunities legislation.

The proposed changes respond to the needs and wishes of service users from Harrow's diverse communities.

The changes are linked to the corporate strategic priority to promote Harrow as a centre of lifelong learning, by offering the highest quality education services, by raising aspirations and outcomes of achievement and by providing activities for cultural, artistic and leisure pursuits which reflect the profile and the interests of all local communities.

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

Appendices

Admission arrangements for the 2006/2007 academic year (circulated in the Cabinet Supporting Documents Pack).

Background reports:

Cabinet report – 16 March 2004 -Determination of Admission Arrangements for 2005/2006

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers should telephone 020 8424 1398