

<b>19 August 2010</b>		<b>ITEM</b>	<b>6</b>	Comment [s]: Please leave this for completion by Democratic Services
<b>Children's Services Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b>				
<b>Admissions Policy and Arrangements</b>				
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Diana Hale, Portfolio Holder for Education				
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b>		<b>Key Decision:</b>		Comment [s]: Please enter details of any Wards and Communities affected by the report. If this section is not applicable, you should enter "none".
ALL		N/A		Comment [s]: Yes/No/Not Applicable – a 'Key Decision' is generally one affecting more than 2 wards or above £50,000 expenditure – see Guideline 2.7
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Colin Stewart – Head of Service for Policy Performance and Support – Children Education and Families				Comment [s]: Please state Director's name and job title
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Jo Olsson - Corporate Director of Children, Education & Families				
<b>This report is public</b>				
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> To provide an overview of current admissions arrangements and an update on performance on admissions to schools across the borough.				

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The report sets out the key areas where the Local Authority has responsibility for co-ordinating and overseeing admission arrangements to schools. The Council's policy covers all the community and voluntary controlled schools, which in Thurrock are all within the primary sector. The policy describes the arrangements for admissions decisions and the criteria applied where comparisons need to be made between parents' applications for places for a particular school because there are more applications than there are places available. Where schools do not come under the Local Authority they are required to publish their own admissions policy and these are in place in Thurrock for all of the Secondary Schools, the Academies and a small number of primary schools.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**1.1 Overview and Scrutiny to note the admission arrangements for Thurrock's Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools**

## **2. PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMISSIONS:**

- 2.1 The Local Authority is responsible for co-ordinating the admission arrangements for reception age pupils within the borough every year. However while the Local Authority is responsible for co-ordinating the process for all schools, 35 of Thurrock's primary, infant and junior school's decision – making is under the criteria set out on the Local Authority policy on admissions.
- 2.2 For the other eight primary and junior schools, the Governing Bodies have their own admissions policies in place and decision-making on admissions is made in relation to those policies
- 2.3 For reception admissions, a child must, by law, be in full-time education at the beginning of the term after he or she turns five. A deferred entry until the term after a child's fifth birthday can be made through a prior arrangement with the school concerned.
- 2.4 Admission arrangements in Thurrock provide for children to be admitted earlier, either at the beginning of the term in which they turn five, or in some cases up to three terms earlier. Details of admission arrangements for individual schools are in the admissions booklets provided for parents prior to the beginning of each round of admission applications for the next academic year.
- 2.5 Of the eight schools which operate their own admissions policy, three are Foundation Schools (East Tilbury Junior, Kenningtons Primary and Horndon Primary) and the other five are Voluntary Aided Schools (Orsett CE Primary, Holy Cross RC Primary, St Josephs RC Primary, St Mary's RC Primary and St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary)
- 2.6 The LA booklet on admissions arrangements sets out process and timelines as well as information to parents on aspects such as home to school transport. A copy of the booklet for 2009-2010 accompanies this report.
- 2.7 The criteria for making awards of places under the LA Admissions Policy are set out in Appendix 1.

## **3. SECONDARY SCHOOLS:**

- 3.1 Since 2005, Local Authorities have been responsible for co-ordinating the admission arrangements for secondary schools. The intention behind this is to ensure every child receives a single offer of a secondary school place at the same time.

- 3.2 As well as co-ordinating the admissions to secondary schools within Thurrock, the Council also works with more than 40 other Local Authorities across the region and in London, to co-ordinate admissions to out of borough secondary schools at the same time.
- 3.3 All Thurrock's Secondary Schools and Academies have their own admissions policies and consequently Governing Bodies in these schools are the decision-making bodies about the provision of places to applicants in line with any parental preferences.
- 3.4 The Local Authority role within the process is to co-ordinate the process of applying and the compilation of preferences from parents, which it communicates to schools in Thurrock and beyond. Schools themselves use these lists to then make provisional offers of places in line with this and against the criteria in their admissions policy. The Local Authority then completes the co-ordination (for example it is responsible for ensuring there are no duplications in offers to the same family from different schools) and then the Local Authority is responsible for sending the offer of a place to all parents at the same time.
- 3.5 The LA booklet on admissions arrangements sets out process and timelines as well as information to parents on aspects such as home to school transport. A copy of the Secondary booklet for 2009-2010 accompanies this report.

#### **4. PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 Thurrock generally performs well in comparison with other authorities on offering parents places at school which match their preferences although this is not possible in every case.
- 4.2 For Reception pupils, 97% of parents were offered one of their three preferences and 89% of all applicants were given their first preference. The Reception first preference offers are 1% up on last year (there is no comparative info at the moment) and the numbers getting one of their three preferences is up 3% from last year and up 5% since 08-09.
- 4.3 At Secondary for Year 7 admissions for September 2010, 98% got offered one of their six preferences and 83% were offered their first preference. The Secondary first preference offers is up 2% on last year and is in line with the national average for last year. The numbers getting one of their six preferences is up 2% since last year and above the national average.

- 4.4 Targeted work with families with Year 6 pupils ready to transfer to secondary and with parents of children in Early Years settings continues to have a good positive impact on the number of late applications. Over 93% of applications for secondary were on time (94% last year) and 92% of Reception applications were on time (87% last year)
- 4.5 However we need to do more to encourage on-line applications where performance remains weak and this will be a target for the service over the next three years. Only 8.5% of secondary applications and only 25.5% of primary applications were made via the on-line process. This is well below the regional/national levels and will be the key performance target for 11-12.
- 4.6 We will also look to supplement this with improvements to the electronic application system and a more effective and efficient way of schools admissions data being linked into the overall admissions database held by the LA.
- 4.7 There is an inevitable correlation between admissions offers and individual schools where the proportion of preferences compared to places available can impact on the number of parents who are unsuccessful in securing a place at their highest preference school and by contrast there are schools where the application of criteria is not necessary because there are less preferences than there are places available.
- 4.8 In the last admissions round of applications for Reception places the most oversubscribed schools and therefore those where a higher than average proportion of parents did not get a place even though it had been their highest preference were Warren Primary, Corringham Primary, Woodside Primary, Dilkes Primary, Somers Heath Primary, Tudor Court Primary, Little Thurrock Primary and Bulphan Primary.
- 4.9 At the end of the process there were 35 reception appeals for 13 community schools (including for all of the above oversubscribed community schools). The majority were appeals on applications for “out of catchment” requests and the remainder were appeals because of late applications
- 4.10 After the initial round of applications for Reception places a small number of schools still had capacity and so the level of preferences for them was well within the number of places available. At the end of the initial admissions process, three schools had approximately 27% capacity (Arthur Bugler Infants, Stanford-Le-Hope Primary and Thameside Infants), Manor Infants in Tilbury had 19% capacity and East Tilbury Infants had 18% capacity

- 4.11 At the end of the original round of applications, the most oversubscribed secondaries in terms of preferences to places and therefore those with higher proportions of parents who could not secure preference for a place in these schools were Gateway Academy (originally 94 on waiting list for 180 places), Chafford Campus (76 on waiting list originally for 180 places) William Edwards (72 originally on waiting list for 240 places) and Gable Hall (64 originally on waiting list for 240 places)
- 4.12 Most of those originally on waiting lists after preferences actually accepted places elsewhere. The only two secondary schools with significant numbers of appeals were Chafford Campus and Gateway
- 4.13 Ormiston Academy had the only substantial number of surplus capacity after the initial admissions round at secondary with 48% of its places unallocated.
- 4.14 Within the primary sector there was again considerable demand for places within the primary schools on Chafford Hundred, though the overall pressure on places was less than last year. To meet demand a further 30 places above the standard number to admit has been required at Chafford Primary for September 2010. This is the third time in the last four years that extras places have been needed and as this is clearly a trend rather than variations in demand, Cabinet agreed earlier this month to consult on changing the standard number to admit in Chafford Primary permanently from 60 to 90. The Capital Strategy also priorities investment to meet this demand for provision All of the VA Roman Catholic Primary schools have appeals pending but as far as we are aware, these are all non-Catholic applicants
- 4.15 The pressure for places from admissions applications for secondary is largely focused on Chafford and Tilbury.
- 4.16 Another key area for future development within the service, from September 2010, is the new responsibility for the Local Authority to co-ordinate all 'in-year' admissions and hold waiting lists for all year groups of oversubscribed schools. We estimate this will increase the number of applications being processed by the admissions service by around 500/600 applications annually. We will create the capacity to meet the demand from targeting greater use of on-line systems, reallocation of roles and responsibilities within the team and moving to streamline and strengthen the management arrangements for the service. In delivery terms the on-going issue, as in previous years, is likely to be in-year admissions to secondary because most of the vacant places are in the same school, Ormiston Park Academy. There are protocols in place around fair access and around "local schools for local children" and these continue to be the key mechanism for negotiation on admissions between the Local Authority and secondary schools.

4.17 The other major development next year will arise from potential changes to the number of academies in Thurrock. The Academy Funding Agreement requires Academies to adopt practices and arrangements that are consistent or in line with the School Admissions code.

4.18 Similarly academies are required to consult on their arrangements in the same way as other Admission Authorities. In light of the recent challenges in securing appropriate provision for some pupils because of the lack of secondary school places in some parts of the borough, it is important to note an Academy can only alter its admissions number through local consultation. However if an Academy disagrees with the Local Authority on any proposal to increase its number, the final decision rests with the Secretary of State, rather than with the Local Authority, as is the case for maintained schools.

4.19 All LA's must have a Fair Access Protocol which all schools including academies must participate in. However in the case of academies that have been open for less than two years, the governing body can refuse to admit outside the normal round of admissions (e.g not reception & Year 7) if it feels the admission of a child with challenging behaviour would prejudice the provision of efficient education . Again admissions could be faced with a number of challenging pupils where the school has the right to refuse.

## 5. **IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

5.1 The admissions service will indirectly support schools to provide a quality educational provision fit for the 21st century and Council policy on admissions will continue to link into the delivery of an agreed Capital Strategy and into the delivery of the Children's Plan.

## 6. **IMPLICATIONS**

### 6.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Yannick Stupples-Whyley**  
Telephone and email: **01375 652532**  
**ystupples-whyley@thurrock.gov.uk**

There are no direct financial implications within the report.

### 6.2 **Legal;**

Implications verified by: **Lee Bartlett**  
Telephone and email: **652167**  
**lbartlett@thurrock.gov.uk**

There are no legal implications arising.

Comment [a]: Please refer to Section 5.7 of the Report Writing Guidelines

### 6.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Simon Black**  
Telephone and email: **01375 413962**  
**sblack@thurrock.gov.uk**

All children of compulsory school age in the UK have the right of access to education and the Local Authority is required to ensure that this is done in way which is fair and equable for all students regardless of race, gender or disability.

### 6.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

None

## 7. **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The report is intended to inform members about the admissions policy and practice and provide an opportunity to discuss overall strategic and policy issues around admissions and the allocation of pupil places.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:**

- N/A

### **APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

- Appendix A – Council Admissions Policy
- Appendix B – Primary Education in Thurrock Booklet
- Appendix C – Secondary Education in Thurrock Booklet

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**Comment [s]:** See Guideline 8. If any Papers are to be placed in the Members room that relate to this report, you should also list them here