

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date: **6 April 2004**

Title of Report: **Admissions to schools in 2005/06**

By: **Director of Education and Libraries**

Purpose of Report: **To determine the admission arrangements for 2005/06**

Recommendation: The Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) agree that 17 Relevant Areas be adopted for consultation purposes;**
 - ii) agree the co-ordinated admissions schemes attached as annexes 1 & 2;**
 - iii) agree the admission numbers outlined in annex 3;**
 - iv) agree, in principle, to a class size policy at Key Stage Two (KS2) of 30 children to a class recognising there will be variations as outlined in annex 4;**
 - v) agree that the admissions criteria for 2005/06 will remain unchanged; and**
 - vi) agree that the community area for The Cavendish School, Eastbourne, covers the same areas as apply for Ratton School, Eastbourne.**
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1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are no direct financial implications, although in consultation with the School's Forum consideration will be given to the implications of enhanced KS2 funding to support the proposed change in class size policy for Key Stage 2. This would be in the context of the adverse financial impact of smaller classes for school budgets. Potential capital costs of enabling all schools to operate on the basis of a maximum of 30 pupils per class in KS2 would need to be considered in the context of the overall priorities for the capital programme.

2. Supporting information

2.1 Admission arrangements for 2005/06 for community and voluntary controlled schools must be determined by the Local Education Authority (LEA) by 15 April 2003 following consultation. A circular inviting comments on proposals for 2005/06 was sent to schools and neighbouring LEAs in December 2003. In particular views were invited on the following issues:

- The relevant area used for consultation purposes
- The proposed co-ordinated schemes for primary and secondary admissions
- Proposed admission numbers for each school
- Class sizes at Key Stage 2
- Any other issues schools might wish to raise

2.2 The content of the circular and the responses received have been considered by the School Admissions Forum.

2.3 Schools which are admission authorities in their own right (aided schools) are required to consult all schools in the Relevant Area. In East Sussex the Relevant Area is currently the whole of the administrative county. For aided schools consultation on this scale is unnecessary and unworkable since they must consult with every school in the county. It is therefore proposed to adopt 17 Relevant Areas in the county based on the community areas used for secondary admission purposes. There have been no objections to this proposal and it is recommended that the LEA adopt the proposed 17 Relevant Areas.

2.4 All LEAs are legally required to have co-ordinated admission schemes for 2005/06 although it is possible to defer the scheme for primary schools until 2006/07. In East Sussex a co-ordinated scheme for secondary admissions has operated in 2004/05, one year before the legislative requirement. The LEA has also administered admissions to primary schools for 2004/05 against a draft scheme. The proposed schemes for 2005/06 are attached as annexes 1 and 2. These are broadly the same as this year with minor adjustments to the wording and dates. No objections have been received to the schemes and the Cabinet is recommended to adopt the schemes attached.

2.5 Attached as annex 3 are the proposed admission numbers (PAN) for each school. If schools have requested variations wherever possible the PAN has been changed. For junior schools PANs have been amended so that classes of 30 can operate (except for Ocklynge, Eastbourne) – see paragraph 2.6. The Cabinet is recommended to adopt the PANs proposed in annex 3.

2.6 Class sizes in East Sussex at KS2 are amongst the largest in the country. Consultation has taken place on adopting a policy of classes of 30 from September 2005. The issues, including concerns raised by schools, are summarised in the attached paper (annex 4). The Cabinet is recommended to adopt the principle of KS2 classes of 30 but agree that there will be exceptions where the LEA requires admission to meet its duty to provide a place within a reasonable distance or where the LEA and schools agree that classes of more than 30 pupils are more appropriate in the delivery of the curriculum and raising standards and achievement.

2.7 During the course of consultation a request was received from William Parker School, Hastings, that the admissions criteria for the school be amended to permit selection by sporting aptitude. Given the significance of the proposal, views were sought from other schools. The issues and comments received are summarised in annex 5. The School Admissions Forum expressed the view that amending the admissions criteria for William Parker had far wider implications for admissions in the county and needed more discussion. I also believe the issue of selection by ability related to specialist school status is an important one which needs further and wider discussion. In the light of this I do not believe it is appropriate to change the admissions criteria for William Parker School at this time. I therefore recommend the Cabinet to make no change to the LEA's current admissions criteria for 2005/06.

2.8 One issue raised by secondary schools in Eastbourne requiring a variation of policy relates to the secondary admission areas in the town. This is explained in annex 6. The Cabinet is recommended to change the area for Cavendish School so that it is the same as for Ratton School.

3. Conclusion and Reason for recommendation

3.1 The County Council is required by law to determine by 15 April 2004 the admission arrangements for schools in 2005/06 to enable the admissions process to commence. The Cabinet is being asked to approve the arrangements on behalf of the County Council based on the content and recommendations contained in this report.

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Background Documents -Circular 245/2003: Agenda of the School Admissions Forum,
9 March 2004

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