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**Meeting:** CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE ADMISSIONS FORUM

**Date:** 28 June 2011

**Subject:** Admissions and Appeals September 2011

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services

**Summary:** The purpose of this report is to provide an update on admissions and appeals in respect of the September 2011 admissions round.

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#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. To note those schools where the published admission number has been exceeded and the reasons for this**
  - 2. To note those schools where it has not been possible to accommodate all catchment area children**
  - 3. To note the school preference and online application data**
  - 4. To note the appeals information**
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#### **Background**

1. Admission Forums have a role in considering how well admission arrangements serve the interests of children and parents within the local authority area. Within that role they should consider how actual admissions relate to the admission numbers published.
2. To enable the Forum to fulfil its role, this report lists those schools where the published admission number was exceeded, at the time of allocation, by 5 pupils or 10%, and the reasons for this. It provides school preference data and information on the number of online applications received as well information relating to admission appeals.

#### **Admissions above the published admission number**

3. The School Admissions Code states that once an admission number has been set by the admission authority, schools should not admit above that number unless the school and the local authority agree that admitting above that number will not adversely affect the school in the longer term and will not have a detrimental effect on neighbouring schools. In the case of maintained schools, the local authority, as

the strategic commissioner of school places, has the final decision over whether a school can admit above its published admission number. For academies the final decision rest with the Secretary of State.

4. The Central Bedfordshire Admissions Forum has agreed the following exceptions which may result in the admission number for a school being exceeded:
  - The admission of catchment area pupils, where the parent has expressed a preference (whether first, second or third), for the catchment school as part of the normal admissions round and in accordance with the published admissions arrangements. This is not, however, a guarantee of a place
  - The admission of pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs which names the school, when that pupil has either been assessed or moved into the area outside the normal admissions round
  - The admission of pupils in accordance with the Fair Access Protocol
  - The admission of pupils who have moved into the area, where there is no other suitable school within a reasonable travelling distance, or where the admission of an additional catchment area child would not prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources. Before admitting children under this exception, governing bodies that are their own admission authority should consult their Local Authority who will be able to advise whether the first of these conditions applies
  - The admission of a looked after child outside of the normal admissions round as a result of a direction by the local authority acting as corporate parent
  - The admission of a child in very exceptional circumstances in which the Local Authority and the headteacher are in agreement that not to agree to admit the child would be perverse
  - The admission of a twin or children from multiple births provided the admission would not cause a breach of infant class size limits.
5. The admission number at the following schools has been exceeded for the reasons stated.
6. Fairfield Park Lower School in Stotfold has a published admission number of 30. There were 57 applications for admission in September 2011, 56 of which were catchment applications. The local authority agreed that the school should admit all of the catchment area children. A temporary classroom will be provided for September 2011. The local authority is working with the school to address future accommodation needs.
7. Harlington Lower School has a published admission number of 30. There were 44 applications for places at the school, 32 of which were catchment applications. The local authority agreed to admit all of the catchment area children as it will be possible to accommodate those children within the mixed aged teaching groups in the school.

8. Shefford Lower School has a published admission number of 60. There were 72 applications for places at the school, 67 of which were catchment applications. The local authority agreed to admit all of the catchment area children as the school has sufficient accommodation in the short term for three forms of entry in the Reception year group. The local authority is working with the school to address future accommodation needs.
9. Stanbridge Lower School has a published admission number of 24. There were 37 applications for places at the school, 35 of which were catchment applications. The feasibility of admitting above the published admission number to accommodate catchment children was discussed with the headteacher. Although it has been possible to offer 30 places, it is not possible to admit all of the catchment children without breaching infant class size limits. For that reason 5 of the catchment children were not offered places. Those children were offered places at St. Georges Lower School (2 children) and The Mary Bassett Lower School (3 children), which are the next nearest schools with places available.

### School preference data

10. Table 1 shows the number of applications received and the percentage of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> preferences met for each school phase, at the time of allocation, for pupils living in Central Bedfordshire.

**Table 1**

Phase	Applicants	1 <sup>st</sup> preferences met	2 <sup>nd</sup> preferences met	3 <sup>rd</sup> preferences met	4 <sup>th</sup> preferences met	Total preferences met
Lower / Primary	2892	93.85%	3.67%	1.35%	0.62%	99.49%
Middle	2459	96.94%	2.64%	0.28%	0.00%	99.86%
Upper / secondary	2547	98.59%	1.33%	0.04%	0.04%	100%

11. Local authorities are required to submit to the Secretary of State, on National Offer Day, secondary preference data (which includes upper school data). The publication of preference data enables local authorities to compare the percentages of secondary preferences met against national and regional data. The published data relates to applications made by residents in each local authority area. Table 2 shows that the percentage of Central Bedfordshire parents offered a place for their child at their first preference secondary or upper school exceeds both national and regional averages. It should be noted that Central Bedfordshire achieved the highest percentage of first preference met in the eastern region and was one of only four local authorities where every secondary and upper school child was offered a place at one of their preferred schools.

**Table 2**

	Applicants living in the area	1 <sup>st</sup> preferences met	2 <sup>nd</sup> preferences met	3 <sup>rd</sup> preferences met	1 of 3 preferences met	Total preferences met
National Average	512,193	84.6%	8.1%	2.9%	95.6%	97.2%
Regional Average	55,974	86.9%	7.4%	2.7%	97.0%	97.7%
Central Bedfordshire	2547	98.59%	1.33%	0.04%	100%	100%

**Online Applications**

12. Table 3 shows the percentage of online applications received for each school phase for pupils living in Central Bedfordshire.

**Table 3**

Phase	Applicants	Percentage of online applications
Lower / Primary	2892	71.4%
Middle	2459	58.8%
Upper / Secondary	2547	56.2%

13. The secondary preference data submitted to the Secretary of State on National Offer Day includes the percentage of online secondary and upper applications. Table 4 compares the number of online applications received from Central Bedfordshire residents with national and regional data.

**Table 4**

	Applicants living in the area	Percentage of online secondary and upper applications
National Average	512,193	55%
Regional Average	55,974	64.6%
Central Bedfordshire	2547	56.2%

14. Although the percentage of online secondary and upper school applications has increased from the previous year and is slightly above the national average, it is still below the regional average. The local authority would wish to further increase the number of online applications to meet the regional level.

15. Neighbouring local authorities have reported a significant percentage increase in the number of online applications by removing or limiting the number of paper applications issued to parents / carers and by actively promoting online applications. The percentage of lower / primary school online applications is much higher than middle and upper / secondary schools. The local authority believes that this is because parents do not receive a paper application form, but are invited to apply online or to collect an application form from their local school.
16. It is proposed that for phase transfer in September 2012, parents are not automatically given a paper application, but will receive an information leaflet on how to apply online for a school place and other relevant information e.g. the catchment area school and dates and times of open evenings. A small supply of paper applications will be sent to schools for those parents or carers who do not have access to the internet.

### Admission Appeals

17. Table 5 shows, for Central Bedfordshire schools, the number of appeals heard and the number upheld for the period 1 September 2010 to 9 June 2011. It also shows the number of appeals still to be heard. All appeals have been processed within the required timescale. Appeals will continue to be received throughout the remainder of the academic year as late applications and in-year applications are processed.

**Table 5**

Phase	Appeal held	Appeals Upheld	Appeals Pending
Lower	17	7	69
Primary	0	0	3
Middle	44	42	14
Upper	29	20	9
Combined	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>95</b>

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June 2011

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