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**Meeting:** CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE ADMISSIONS FORUM  
**Date:** 27 March 2012  
**Subject:** School Open Days / Evenings  
**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services

**Summary:** The purpose of this report is to determine whether the local authority should continue to publish middle and upper school open evening information and to consider whether co-ordinated dates for lower / primary school open days should be introduced and published.

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Contact Officer: Rosa Bonwick

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#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. To agree that the local authority continues to publish the dates for middle and upper school open evenings**
- 2. To note the reasons why the introduction of co-ordinated dates for lower / primary schools would not be feasible**

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#### **Background**

1. At the last meeting of the Forum on 1 November 2011, members discussed and agreed the dates of the open evenings for the September 2013 middle and upper school admission rounds.
2. Members discussed also the possibility of introducing dates for lower school open days as part of the September 2014 admissions round or as an alternative consider whether the local authority should continue to publish details of the middle and upper school open evenings.
3. Officers were asked to consider these options and to report back to the Forum.

#### **Middle and Upper School Open Evenings**

4. The School Information Regulations require local authorities to provide parents with information as to where and by what means parents may access sources of general information relating to schools in their area, including school open days and evenings. Although there is no requirement to publish the dates in the composite prospectus, the local authority has traditionally provided the information at phase transfer, even though many schools place their own advert in the local press advising parents of the dates.

5. The local authority currently co-ordinates the dates of middle and upper school open evenings to ensure that there is no conflict of dates between schools in a local area. Having co-ordinated the process, the publication of the dates in the school transfer booklet requires very little additional resource.
6. Although the school transfer booklet is no longer sent to parents, information about the transfer process which includes the dates of the open evenings is provided for every child in Year 4 and Year 8. Advance notice of the dates enables parents to plan their visits accordingly. If the local authority were to no longer provide the information, parents would be required to contact individual schools or access the school websites for the information.
7. The local authority believes that the benefits of providing the information at phase transfer outweigh the minimal input required to co-ordinate and publish the dates.

### **Lower / Primary School Open Days**

8. In order to assess the feasibility of introducing open days for lower and primary schools, the local authority has surveyed schools to determine whether or not open days are held and to seek their views on introducing a co-ordinated approach.
9. Of the 96 schools with a reception year intake, 39 responses were received (41%). Of those schools that responded 23 hold open day or evening events. However, many of those schools hold open days several times a year rather than at a specific time, others also offer parents individual appointments. Four of those schools would not support a co-ordinated timeframe with open days being held during November to December but would prefer to continue with their current arrangements. Others, whilst supporting a co-ordinated approach, would also want to continue to hold additional events throughout the year.
10. Of the 16 schools that do not currently hold open days, eight would not support a co-ordinated timeframe for the following reasons:
  - Regular tours already take place, which are flexible and work well
  - Very limited uptake at past open days
  - Prefer 1:1 visits
  - November / December not a good time with Christmas productions
11. The remaining eight would support a co-ordinated timeframe, but some had concerns about those events being held in November / December and others would still arrange individual visits.
12. Given the range of options currently offered to parents by some schools, a co-ordinated timeframe would appear to be over-prescriptive and could disadvantage schools that do not wish to hold open day events, but would prefer the individual approach of 1:1 visits.
13. The co-ordination and publication of open day events would provide the local authority with a significant challenge given the number of lower / primary schools. There would also be resource implications in terms of managing the process and publishing the information.

14. For these reasons the local authority believes that it would not be feasible to introduce a co-ordinated timeframe for lower / primary school open days.
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March 2012

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