

Report To: Special Education & Lifelong Learning Committee

Date: 18 August 2009

Report By: Chief Executive

Report No: CE0015/JWM

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**Subject: Review of Admissions and Placing Requests Policy of Inverclyde Council
Independent Consultants Report**

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this Report is to advise members of the outcome of the independent review of the policies and procedures for school admissions and placing requests, and their operational implementation, commissioned in May 2009.

1.2 A copy of the Consultant's Review Report is attached (Appendix A).

2.0 Summary

2.1 The Policy and Resources (Executive) Sub-Committee on 21 May 2009 agreed to commission an independent review by an experienced consultant of the policies and procedures for school admissions and placing requests, and their operational implementation, following decisions made by the Council's Schools Appeals (Placing Requests) Committee.

2.2 The report is now complete. The findings are based on stakeholder interviews and discussions with reference to existing policies and the chronology of previous decisions taken by Council. In addition, research has been undertaken into the policies and approaches of other Scottish local authorities in the context of legislation and guidance from the Scottish Government on this matter.

2.3 The review into the arrangements for admissions into mainstream schools in Inverclyde identified a number of issues which require to be addressed. In summary these are:-

- The need for a single policy which is applicable to all schools
- The need for a policy which acknowledges the reduced availability of places and support the delivery of the Schools Estate Management Plan
- The need for a policy which reflects current legislation
- The need for a policy which clearly defines priorities in respect of placing requests
- The need for a policy which clearly defines the decision making process in place in respect of all admissions to main stream schools in Inverclyde.

2.4 In light of the findings of this review revised arrangements for admissions to main stream schools have been drafted and are attached to the report and subject to committee approval should be used as a consultative document to develop the revised policy for admissions and pupil placement into mainstream schools in Inverclyde.

2.5 Subject to approval by members of the recommendations contained in the Review Report the Chief Executive will take appropriate steps to ensure that these are implemented as a matter of urgency with further reports to Education and Lifelong Learning Committee as required.

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a. consider and comment on the independent Review Report;
- b. agree the recommendations detailed in section 5.0 of the Review Report;
- c. agree the Chief Executive takes appropriate steps to ensure that these recommendations are implemented as a matter of urgency incorporating appropriate changes identified as part of this consultative process; and
- d. that further reports on the implementation of these recommendations are submitted to Education and Lifelong Learning Committee as required.

John W Mundell
Chief Executive

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The Policy and Resources (Executive) Sub-Committee on 21 May 2009 agreed to commission an independent review by an experienced consultant of the policies and procedures for school admissions and placing requests, and their operational implementation, following recent decisions made by the Council's Schools Appeals (Placing Requests) Committee.
- 4.2 The Sub-Committee agreed that the scope of the review would primarily be to consider current policy and procedures, the incidents, decisions and communication surrounding this particular set of circumstances, but would not be restricted merely to the specifics of this case.
- 4.3 The independent consultant, Maggi Allan has now completed the work and has submitted the Review Report for consideration by elected members. A full copy of the Consultant's Review Report is attached (Appendix A).
- 4.4 In preparation of this report Maggi Allan had many discussions and conducted interviews with a range of stakeholders including Elected members, relevant members of staff, parents, representatives of parent councils and Head Teachers. Furthermore, a review was undertaken of reports, minutes of meetings held in Inverclyde and policies approved since 1996 in the context of appropriate legislation and guidance from the Scottish Government. Enquiries have also been made to establish the policies adopted within a range of Scottish Local Authorities.
- 4.5 In summary paragraph 1.4 of the Review Report makes the following recommendations:
- *The Council should take steps to put a single coherent policy on admissions and placing requests in place which reflects the strategic aims of the Council. This policy should be applicable across all schools. A draft policy is attached for consideration at Appendix 3. A comprehensive consultation exercise will be necessary, prior to the implementation of any new policy.*
 - *Education Services should take immediate action to physically reduce the capacity of secondary schools, where appropriate, to ensure that school rolls match the capacities of the newly built and refurbished schools by the start of session 2010-2011. This report identifies opportunities available to the Council in respect of Gourock High School and Greenock Academy.*
 - *The strategic management arrangements for the School Estate Management Plan should be reviewed and robust project management and scrutiny procedures adopted. As a minimum a School Estate Management Programme Board which takes responsibility for all aspects of the school building and refurbishment programme should be put in place.*
 - *The Council should require Education Services to review the specific management and operational issues identified through this process and take appropriate action where necessary.*
- 4.6 A draft policy on Admissions and Pupil Placement in Mainstream Schools is appended to the report and it is recommended that this is issued for consultation in accordance with the legislation applicable to such matters. It is essential that the Council takes into consideration the views of parents, Head Teachers and other stakeholders when developing and finalising this policy.
- 4.7 Subject to approval by members of the recommendations contained in the Review Report the Chief Executive will take appropriate steps to ensure that these are implemented as a matter of urgency with further reports to Education and Lifelong Learning Committee as required.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 Appropriate consultation with relevant stakeholders has been undertaken as part of the review process – detailed briefings have been provided to elected members and other relevant stakeholders on the outcome of the Review.

6.0 Implications

6.1 *Finance*

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report although further discussion will take place with regard to the recommendations contained within Section 5.0 in the context of the overall financial model for the Schools Estate Management Plan.

6.2 *Legal*

Legal and Administration were consulted and provided advice during the review. This service will continue to be of vital support to the continuing work required to implement the recommendations of the Review.

6.3 *Human Resources*

Human Resources were consulted and provided advice during the review. This service will continue to be of vital support to the continuing work required to implement the recommendations of the Review.

6.4 *Equalities*

There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

**Review of the Admissions and Placing Request
Policy of Inverclyde Council**

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August 2009

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Section 1 - Executive Summary

1.1 Background

The purpose of this report is to provide a set of comprehensive findings and recommendations regarding operational and management issue within Inverclyde Council's Education and Social Care Directorate.

The prime focus of the report relates to the implementation of the Schools Admission and Placing Request Policy in general and specifically to how it was applied to admissions to Gourock High School for session 2009 – 2010. The report also examines the implications of recent decisions on the School Estate Management Plan. Particular attention has been paid to the implications of recent placing request decisions on the plans for the amalgamated Clydeview Academy and other secondary schools.

1.2 Approach

The findings and recommendations contained in this report are based on:

- (i) interviews and discussions with elected members and relevant members of staff of Inverclyde Council (Appendix 2)
- (ii) interviews and discussions with parents and representatives of Parent Councils for schools in Inverclyde (Appendix 2)
- (iii) reference to reports and minutes of meetings held in Inverclyde Council since 1996 which are relevant to the subject matter of this report
- (iv) reference to policies from a range of Scottish local authorities
- (v) reference to appropriate legislation and guidance from the Scottish Executive and Scottish Government
- (vi) visits to Gourock High School and Greenock Academy
- (vii) visits to three other Scottish local authorities

1.3 Key Findings of the Review

The changes made by the Council to its School Estate Management Plan since 2005 have necessitated a complex series of consultation exercises. These have resulted in frequent alterations to school catchment areas and the association of certain primary schools with secondary schools.

There is no single coherent policy on admissions and placing requests which is applicable to all schools in Inverclyde.

Scrutiny processes which, as part of sound governance arrangements, would enable Education Services to assure parents of the integrity of the decision making process in respect of admissions and placing requests are not in place.

Information which was available within Education Services giving advance warning of potential difficulties was not acted on.

This information related to:

- placing requests
- roll capping targets
- school capacities

While senior management in Education Services acknowledge that pupil intake to new builds or refurbished schools needs to be managed to ensure that the pupil roll is in line with school capacities, operational decisions have been taken, the effect of which is to inhibit the achievement of this objective.

1.4 Next steps

As a minimum it is recommended that:

- The Council should take steps to put a single coherent policy on admissions and placing requests in place which reflects the strategic aims of the Council. This policy should be applicable across all schools. A draft policy is attached for consideration at Appendix 3. A comprehensive consultation exercise will be necessary, prior to the implementation of any new policy.
- Education Services should take immediate action to physically reduce the capacity of secondary schools, where appropriate, to ensure that school rolls match the capacities of newly built and refurbished schools by the start of session 2010 – 2011. This report identifies opportunities available to the Council in respect of Gourrock High School and Greenock Academy.
- The strategic management arrangements for the School Estate Management Plan should be reviewed and robust project management and scrutiny procedures adopted. As a minimum, a School Estate Programme Board which takes responsibility for all aspects of the school building and refurbishment programme should be put in place.
- The Council should require Education Services to review the specific management and operational practices identified through the review and take appropriate action where necessary.

1.5 Disclaimer

The findings presented in this report are based solely on information gathered during interviews, discussions, visits and document review. The author is unable to accept responsibility for any inaccuracies in information provided to the review, which has formed the basis of the findings.

Section 2 - Policy context

2.1 Admissions and Placing Request Policy

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 requires local authorities to publish arrangements for the placing of children in schools under their management. In complying with this requirement most local authorities combine their policies on the admission of pupils based on a residency criterion with their policies on how parents can exercise their right to make a placing request for their child in another school.

At the time of local government reorganisation, the Education Services Committee of Inverclyde Council, in February 1996, agreed to adopt the existing policy and procedures of Strathclyde Council in respect of admissions and placing requests. This policy and associated procedures were applicable to all schools in Inverclyde.

Since then a number of changes have been made to the policy and the situation now prevails where there is no single coherent policy on admissions and placing requests which is applicable to all schools in Inverclyde.

At the time of writing this report, the various iterations of placing request and admissions policy currently in use are:

- Information provided via Inverclyde Council's website (www.inverclyde.gov.uk) as at 16 June 2009.
- Information issued to parents in December 2008 for pupils transferring to secondary school referring to admissions in August 2009.
- Standard Circular 2.7 on Placing Requests as agreed by the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee on 9 September 2008.
- Information issued to parents of children entering Primary 1 in August 2009. (This information differs from that provided to parents of young people entering Secondary 1, despite referring to the same policy).

There are therefore, four different versions of the admissions and placing request policy in circulation. There is contradictory information contained within these documents.

2.2 Other Local Authorities

To inform the review process, visits were made to three authorities and a detailed analysis was undertaken of the policy documentation relating to admissions and placing requests in twelve other local authorities.

On the basis of the foregoing, it has been possible to identify a number of features common to most policies. The following list provides examples of where there are explicit statements:

- On how to make a placing request
- Regarding eligibility to enter a secondary school without requirement to submit a placing request
- Advising parents of circumstances where a placing request must be submitted for a secondary school
- On the factors influencing the decision making process
- Indicating whether such factors are dealt with in priority order or not
- On the conduct of ballots, where these form part of the decision making process

- On the arrangements pertaining to pupils with additional support needs
- On reasons why requests are sometimes not granted
- On right to appeal refusal at an Appeal Hearing, and if appropriate, to the Sheriff Court
- Advising that a guarantee cannot be given that placing requests from siblings will be granted
- On where additional information on the authority's admission and placing request policy is available, including reference to choice of format and language

2.3 School Catchment Areas

Primary Schools have set boundaries generally known as catchment areas. Children living within these catchment areas will normally attend their local primary school.

In December 2001, the Education Services Committee established the first delineated catchment area for a secondary school in Inverclyde. The delineated area for the secondary school concerned, Notre Dame High School, was formed by the aggregation of all the catchment areas of the associated primary schools.

The Council's delineation policy means that the key factor influencing decisions on transfer from primary to secondary school is a pupil's address and not attendance at an associated primary school. Any child, resident in the delineated area of a secondary school is eligible to attend that school, regardless of whether they have attended an associated primary school or not. In an authority such as Inverclyde which operates denominational and non-denominational secondary schools, the effect of this policy is that at the end of primary school, children can opt to switch from one denomination to another without recourse to the placing request process, since every address is in the delineated area of two schools (one denominational and one non-denominational). The only exceptions to this situation are St Stephen's High School and Port Glasgow High School which are entirely outwith the delineation arrangements.

2.4 School Estate Management Plan

Like many other local authorities in Scotland, Inverclyde Council found itself at the start of the new millennium in the position of having inherited a school estate which fell far short of the Council's aspirations for its young people.

The main problems facing the Council were:

- A legacy of under investment meant that many buildings were not wind and watertight
- Disabled access was not available in many buildings
- The design of schools did not meet the demands of a 21st century curriculum
- The over provision of places in both primary and secondary sectors resulting in high levels of under occupancy in some schools.

In the report, published by HMIE on 25 September 2001, on the inspection of the education functions of Inverclyde Council, it was noted:

"That a significant amount of revenue funding which could have been used for improving the quality of pupils' experience, was being used to subsidise surplus places to carry out time and again basic maintenance work in old school buildings."

Council administrations since then have sought to tackle these problems through the development of a School Estate Management Plan which supports a range of corporate objectives.

Consideration of the papers available on the School Estate Management Plan indicate that the differing administrations in the Council shared a common desire to reduce the overall extent of school capacity for the purpose of directing funds towards teaching and learning and not in the maintenance of empty desks. Whilst they differed significantly in how they sought to achieve this goal the consequences of their aims have the effect of reducing the number of places available in both primary and secondary schools across the authority.

It is evident from papers submitted to the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee, regarding the roll of new build schools, that officers in Education Services wished elected members to be aware that one of the consequences of the reduction in school capacity would be that fewer placing requests could be accepted.

Section 3 - Findings of Review and Policies and Procedures

3.1 Admissions and Placing Request Policy

3.1.1 Policy and Governance: Current Position

It was evident from interviews and discussions with officers in Education Services, parents and headteachers that there is a distinct lack of clarity about what the admissions and placing request policy of the Council is.

Senior management in Education Services acknowledged that there is no clear statement about the status of the different categories of children described in the documentation on the transfer from primary to secondary schools. This has led to problems of interpretation. It was further acknowledged that this was a contributory factor in the situation which arose in relation to entry into S1 in Gourrock High School for 2009 – 2010.

In February 1996 Inverclyde Council adopted the policy on placing requests which was used by Strathclyde region. This policy enumerated the priorities to be accorded to placing request applications.

As part of this current review process the documentation issued to parents on how to make a placing request has been examined. The earliest version of this documentation which it has been possible to access is for academic session 2000 - 2001. The information on how applications will be dealt with indicates that priority will be given to children who meet certain criteria. The enumeration which characterised the 1996 documentation has been replaced by bullet points in the 2000 – 2001 guidelines. A further complicating factor is that the order in which the criteria are listed differs from one academic session to the next and even within the same session. For example, the order in which the criteria is laid out in the guidance for parents for 2009 – 2010 is different from the order listed on the Council's website, currently. This has led to a lack of consensus as to whether the criteria are all of equal status or not.

Where there are sufficient places available in a school for all children whose parents have made placing requests the absence of prioritisation has no impact. On the other hand, where there are fewer places than applications the process of selection for a limited number of places is of crucial importance to parents.

Parents wished it to be noted that the contradictory information available on admissions and placing requests results in confusion and uncertainty for them and their children. This point was reinforced by headteachers.

In the course of the review it has become apparent that this is a major source of concern for parents and there is some evidence to indicate that parents consider that the processes in place for dealing with placing requests lack transparency and consistency.

Some parents have raised concerns regarding the decision making process in correspondence with Education Services.

3.1.2 Placing Request Applications: Criteria and Process

The interpretation and implementation of policy rests primarily in the hands of senior management and the Planning & Resources Section of Education Services.

Applications from siblings are accorded top priority, despite there being no numbering system to the documentation which is used by staff to guide their actions. Where there are

places available in a school, priority is given to placing requests where there is an older sibling still in attendance at the school when the younger sibling (subject of placing request) transfers to secondary. Where there are fewer places than applications, a ballot is held. The names of unsuccessful siblings are retained and further ballots held if places become available. Thereafter there is no set pattern to how placing requests are treated.

At the Education Services Committee held in October 2001 it was accepted that in the case of secondary schools within a delineated area, priority will be given to those children who do not live in the delineated area, but do attend primary schools within it. The review of practice shows that this criterion seems to have fallen into disuse as these applications are accorded the same degree of priority as all others, after siblings.

There is some evidence to show that children whose applications are supported by a medical statement are normally accorded a higher priority, as on occasion, are applications made by single parents.

However, in general, there are few exceptions made and after applications from siblings have been dealt with all other applications are accorded the same degree of priority.

While some parents have argued that it is important that siblings be given priority over other categories of applicants, other parents have argued that in the absence of any clear prioritisation in the transfer documentation, there is no rationale for this approach.

3.1.3 The use of ballots to allocate places in schools

Where there are more placing requests than spaces available in a school, a ballot is held to allocate places. This practice is not unique to Inverclyde.

The use of the ballot process has been accepted by parents as a reasonable means of determining the allocation of places, until recently, when the integrity of the process has been challenged by some parents.

The major source of parental discontent regarding the ballot process relates to the ballot held to allocate places to pupils transferring from primary schools to Gourock High School in August 2009.

Concerns expressed include:

- Not being advised that a ballot was taking place
- The manner in which parents were advised of the outcome of the ballot
- The involvement, as a witness, of a person with a vested interest in the outcome of the ballot
- The perceived absence from the process of independent witnesses

3.1.4 Children with Additional Support Needs

In October 2001 the Education Services Committee of Inverclyde Council agreed that Children in Need as defined by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, be added as a specific criterion to the list of factors influencing decisions about placing request applications. The analysis of applications carried out as part of the review shows that the treatment of requests on behalf of children who might reasonably be described as meeting the definition of a child in need is inconsistent.

In relation to this group of children it was also found that the approach taken to the transfer of information about pupils between sections in Education Services is not systematic. The consequences of this are that the transfer arrangements for pupils with additional support

needs are prone to administrative error. Correspondence from parents shows evidence of their concerns about a lack of appropriate information about the future placement of their children and concerns about delays and uncertainty.

The QIO Inclusion (Special Needs) is not consulted on placing requests in respect of this cohort of children. Therefore the situation can arise whereby an Admissions Panel, set up to consider the transfer arrangements for pupils with coordinated support plans can agree a placement, while at the same time this child's placing request application, submitted by their parent, is being processed by the Planning and Resources section. The review has identified instances where a child's placing request has been subject to the ballot process and on one occasion refused, even though the Admissions Panel has previously approved the placement.

From discussions which took place, it is evident that the procedures for dealing with placing requests have not been reviewed for the purpose of taking account of the implications of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. This legislation places a duty on education authorities to operate effective arrangements to support young people with additional support needs at various points of transition.

The paper submitted to the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee on 9 September 2008 makes no reference to either Children in Need as defined by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 or the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. This paper has been circulated to schools as Standard Circular 2.7.

3.1.5 Catchment areas and delineation

The consultation exercise which was carried out by the authority in 2000 and which established the delineated area of Notre Dame High School from December 2001 spelt out the purposes and impact of the policy of delineation. Subsequent consultation exercises on the catchment areas for St Columba's High School, Gourrock High School, Greenock Academy and Inverclyde Academy, while resulting in the creation of delineated areas, do not contain information explaining the impact of delineation on admission procedures.

Only a minority of those interviewed understood that the purposes of delineation, as used by Inverclyde are to give priority to children living within the surrounding locale. Thereafter, the intake to secondary schools can be restricted by requiring pupils attending associated primary schools on a placing request to submit a further placing request at the point of transfer.

There is evidence of inconsistency in the approach taken to the application of the delineated areas policy across secondary schools and in one case within the delineated area of a secondary school.

Following a consultation exercise, the Council agreed in January 2001 to delineate the catchment area of Notre Dame High School. The effect of this is that all children in attendance at a primary school associated with Notre Dame High School, on the basis of a placing request accepted after April 2001, are required to submit a further placing request at the end of Primary 7 if they wish to attend Notre Dame High School for their secondary education. The primary schools affected by this policy decision are St Kenneth's, St Laurence's, St Patrick's and St Mary's.

In January 2005 as part of the consideration of the provision of secondary denominational education it was agreed, following consultation, that St Laurence's Primary School and St Kenneth's Primary School should be associated with St Stephen's High School. Up until that time, following the closure of St Mungo's Primary School approximately 70% of these pupils had gone to Notre Dame High School with the remaining 30% going to St Stephen's

High School. The effect of this policy was that there was an expectation that the first cohort of 100% of P7 pupils to transfer to St Stephen's High School would do so in August 2008.

In June 2007, a further consultation exercise took place. The purpose of which was to determine the association of certain primary schools with secondary schools for the purposes of securing a greater degree of equalisation of school rolls across the secondary school estate. The outcomes of this exercise were reported to the meeting of Education & Lifelong Learning Committee held on 11 October 2007. At that meeting, the decision taken in 2005 to associate St Laurence's Primary School and St Kenneth's Primary School in their entirety with St Stephen's High School was reversed. This decision meant that all children, as opposed to a proportion of the pupils from St Kenneth's Primary School and St Laurence's Primary School would be eligible to attend Notre Dame High School from August 2008.

The situation now prevails whereby, pupils attending St Patrick's Primary School and St Mary's Primary School on the basis of a placing request require to submit another placing request before they can be admitted to Notre Dame High School. On the other hand, pupils who are in attendance at St Laurence's Primary School and St Kenneth's Primary School on a placing request are not required to submit a further placing request but transfer automatically to Notre Dame High School. Therefore, atypically, they are accorded the same status as children who live in the school's delineated area.

The consequence of this interpretation of the Committee's decision is that placing request applications, from the four schools associated with Notre Dame High School, are not given equitable treatment. Inevitably, this has emerged as a source of discontent amongst parents whose children are in attendance at St Patrick's Primary School and St Mary's Primary School which are perceived to be disadvantaged.

An additional source of annoyance to parents is the perceived covert nature of the application of this interpretation of policy. The published guidance notes outlining the transfer arrangements for children in attendance at all four primary schools associated with Notre Dame High School imply that the criteria apply equally to all four primary schools. In practice this is not the case.

3.2 Policy Review: School Estate Management Plan

3.2.1 Introduction

There are a number of findings from the review which indicate that in fulfilling the strategic responsibility for delivering the School Estate Management Plan, Education Services may not have given sufficient attention to the requirement to ensure that existing policies did not conflict with the Council's aspirations for its school estate.

In particular, it is possible to conclude that consideration was not given to reviewing existing policies for the purposes of ensuring that they supported the key objectives of the School Estate Management Plan. It can also be concluded that sustainable measures to ensure that pupil intake was in line with the capacities of the new build and refurbished schools were not considered thereby making it more difficult to achieve the objective of having a spread of pupil population across secondary schools.

3.2.2 Roll Projections and School Capacities

The Project Management Team for the School Estate Management Plan has responsibility for reviewing roll projections for schools on a regular basis. Rolls are calculated using

relevant demographic statistical data such as birth rates, patterns of inward and outward migration and planned house building projects.

It is acknowledged that the calculation of roll projections and school capacities is not an exact science.

In December 2004 the Scottish Executive Education Department issued guidance on determining school capacities to all authorities. This guidance sets out the statutory framework relevant when considering school capacities and highlights the factors to be taken into account when determining capacities.

In Inverclyde, Standard Circulars 3.1 and 3.2 describe the methodology to be used to determine capacities in primary and secondary schools.

For the purposes of designing and commissioning new and refurbished schools, as part of the Council's School Estate Management Plan, design capacities have been drawn up. These now require to be recalculated as working capacities in order that the schools can function as educational establishments serving their communities and delivering a 21st century curriculum.

In relation to the measurement of school capacities it should be noted that officers in the School Estate Management Plan team have alerted senior management in Education Services to the advisability of reviewing and updating approaches in the light of curricular changes and the availability of up to date software packages.

The statistics provided by the School Estate Management Plan team on roll projections and school capacities have informed the decisions taken in respect of the future of the school estate.

It is understood that the design capacities of the new and refurbished school have been premised on the assumption that pupils will transfer into the secondary school of their associated primary schools.

3.2.3 Impact of admissions policy on School Estate Management Plan

The effect of the admissions policy for those secondary schools with delineated areas is that pupils have the right to attend the secondary schools associated with their address. This means they have the right to attend either the denominational or non-denominational school in their delineated area. The authority must therefore plan for there being sufficient provision for pupils moving from one sector to another, normally at S1. It is immediately obvious that this means that the authority must have more places available in secondary schools than it has pupils.

Since one of the key drivers of the School Estate Management Plan is to strip wastage out of the system by reducing the inefficiency which surplus places represent, it is not surprising that the new build and refurbished schools are being designed in accordance with the projected population for Inverclyde.

While it is common for most children to continue their secondary education in the sector in which they began, it has become evident during this review that movement between sectors is not unusual.

So long as the authority had surplus places available in its secondary schools this particular aspect of the admissions policy had no impact. However, as soon as the policy of reducing S1 intakes to meet targets for school capacities became operational the two policies became incompatible with each other.

From interviews held with Heads of Service and scrutiny of documentation it is possible to conclude that strategic approaches designed to address the tension between the objectives of these two separate policies were not developed by Education Services.

The impact of this tension in policy objectives is most obvious in relation to Clydeview Academy which will open in August 2011 as a result of the merger between Gourock High School and Greenock Academy,

The design capacity of the new school is 950. This figure is based on the policy objective of matching secondary school provision to the needs of the school's catchment area. Inverclyde Council agreed in January 2005 to cap the S1 intakes of Gourock High School and Greenock Academy at a combined roll of 180, to ensure that when the school opens in August 2011 the roll will be in line with the school's capacity.

However, as a consequence of a number of factors which are dealt with in paragraph 3.3 of this report the roll cap targets have not been met.

The table below shows the projected roll for Clydeview Academy.

The roll projections are based on the following assumptions:

<u>2010</u> S1 intake to Gourock High School S1 intake to Greenock Academy	100 100
<u>2011</u> S1 intake to Clydeview Academy All pupils currently in S1 – S4 of the merging schools transfer to Clydeview Academy, with reduction for school leavers factored in	180

Clydeview Academy

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	TOTAL
2009	216	194	279	258	235	183	1,364
2010	200	216	194	278	233	170	1,291
2011	180	200	216	194	250	168	1,208
2012	180	180	200	216	174	180	1,130
2013	180	180	180	200	195	126	1,061
2014	180	180	180	180	180	142	1,043
2015	162	180	180	180	162	131	996
2016	177	162	180	180	162	118	979
2017	177	177	162	180	162	118	976
2018	169	177	177	162	162	118	964
2019	175	169	177	177	146	118	961

The chart shows that when the school opens in August 2011 the roll will be 1,208. This means that the school will be operating at approximately 22% over capacity. While it is not uncommon for schools to operate over their capacity, functioning at this level is likely to create difficulties of an operational nature.

The chart also shows that the school roll will drop by some 70 pupils in 2012 and by a further 70 pupils in 2013. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the potential operational difficulties will constitute a short-term problem.

A curriculum modelling exercise has been carried out using proportionally aggregated data from Gourock High School and Greenock Academy. The purpose of carrying out this exercise is to attempt to assess the extent of the operational difficulties and to identify potential solutions.

It should be noted that curriculum modelling of this type is not an exact science and it will be necessary for further exercises to be carried out prior to the school opening in August 2011 when more information about the curricular choices made by pupils is available to the senior management team of the new school.

A number of issues have been identified by the recent curriculum modelling exercise. In summary these are:

1. The general classroom provision for subjects such as English, Mathematics, Modern Languages and Social Subjects should be adequate through the efficient use of the accommodation available.
2. Similarly, through flexible usage of the accommodation available for practical subjects, other than Science, provision can be made.
3. It is anticipated that there will be pressure on the accommodation designed for science subjects because of the high level of uptake for these subjects in both Gourock High School and Greenock Academy. The situation may arise whereby it may be necessary to transport pupils to another school with available capacity during session 2011 – 2012.
4. While the overall provision for P.E. is considered adequate there could be pressure on indoor provision during inclement weather. In such circumstances, the new school's management may choose to use sports facilities outwith the school.

Although further analysis is required, it is considered that pupils attending Clydeview Academy from August 2011 should have the opportunity to access the full range of curricular opportunities appropriate to their needs. It will be appropriate that the new school's management ensure that where subject areas are outsourced, arrangements are such as to minimise disruption to the education of pupils.

3.3 Case Studies

3.3.1 Case Study on Greenock Academy and Gourock High School

As a means of trying to ensure that the rolls of newly built schools match the capacities of the schools the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee has agreed to a policy of roll capping the S1 intake of a number of schools.

In preparation for the merger between Greenock Academy and Gourock High School, scheduled to take place in August 2011 the decision was taken to roll cap the S1 intake of the former establishment at 80 and the latter at 100. This constitutes a reduction of 60 in the S1 intake at Greenock Academy and 20 at Gourock High School each year. Since in any one year approximately 40% – 50% of the intake to Greenock Academy comprises placing requests it might reasonably be predicted that the impact of this policy would be considerable.

At the same time as agreeing the figures for roll capping, in January 2005, it was also agreed to delineate the catchment areas of both schools. This had the effect of giving priority to those children living within the delineated areas of the schools and requiring that as from December 2007, pupils in attendance at one of the associated primary schools on the basis of a placing request would require to submit a placing request to gain entry to Greenock Academy or Gourrock High School.

(This policy had operated since 2001 for admission into Notre Dame High School and had been applied retrospectively. In other words, children who were in an associated primary school before 2001 were required to make a placing request on reaching P7.)

The intention behind the policy is to restrict entry to the secondary school by means of managing placing request applications.

It is understood that officers, in the Planning & Resources Section, responsible for the preparation of the documentation for parents of children transferring from primary to secondary had not been alerted to or reminded of the fact that this policy was due to be implemented for admissions for 2008. Consequently, no reference is made to it in the transfer documentation for 2007 – 2008 issued to schools in December 2007.

As a consequence of a decision taken by the Senior Management Team of Education Services in February 2008 to implement the policy on delineation, a letter was sent to all parents of pupils at the primary school associated with Greenock Academy advising them that if their child was in attendance at the school as a result of a placing request then they would require to submit a further placing request for Greenock Academy. It is understood that a similar letter was not sent to parents of pupils at the primary schools associated with Gourrock High School because the roll capping did not present any problems for the school.

In response to concerns from the parents at Greenock Academy's associated primary school, who felt that this change of policy should have been communicated to them earlier, a decision was taken within Education Services to overturn the requirement that placing requests be submitted for children living outwith the delineated area for Greenock Academy. A letter to parents advised that this decision had been taken because the policy on delineation had not been communicated to parents and that the children in P7 on placing requests had entered the school prior to the committee decision on delineation being made.

The decision taken by Education Services has a number of implications:

- The first of these is that the application of the delineation policy in respect of the requirement to make placing requests at the point of transfer from primary to secondary school is not being applied consistently across the authority. Whereas the delineation policy for Notre Dame High School had been applied retrospectively, the policy as applied to Greenock Academy and Gourrock High School means that it is applicable only to children who have entered one of their associated primary schools after December 2007.
- A further implication is that had the policy been introduced as it had been to Notre Dame High School the decision making process applied to applications for admission to Gourrock High School in August 2009 would have been different from that deployed in March this year. The effect of the application of the delineation policy would have been that the number of pupils eligible to transfer to Gourrock High School in August 2009 without the submission of a placing request would have been 89, that is 11 under the roll cap of 100. Placing request applications would have been required from those in attendance at the associated primary schools on the basis of an earlier placing request and these would have been subject to the application of the criteria for selection in use by Education Services.

- The third implication has consequences for the future roll at the new Clydeview Academy. The design capacity set for this school is 950. Concerns have been expressed from a number of quarters that when the school opens in 2011 it will be operating above its capacity. As a result of the decision regarding the implementation of the delineation policy for Greenock Academy and Gourrock High School, the first year that the policy will come into force, and a pupil be required to follow their primary placing request with a subsequent secondary request is 2015. As applied, the policy has no impact, therefore, on the authority's ability to limit S1 intake during the crucial period prior to the merger of the two schools.

The opportunities afforded to Education Services as a consequence of forward planning in 2005 to use the delineation policy to prevent the pupil roll at Clydeview Academy exceeding its functional capacity have not been taken.

3.3.2 Admissions to Greenock Academy 2008 - 2009

It is evident from interviews held with officers in Education Services that the need to adhere to the roll capping figure placed on a number of secondary schools drives decisions on placing requests.

This is most apparent in relation to the situation which arose at Greenock Academy in respect of admissions to S1 for August 2008.

The S1 intake established as part of the School Estate Management Plan was 80, a reduction of 50% from previous years. As of end of March 2008, the number of pupils transferring from the associated primary school was 72, resulting in there being 8 places available for placing requests. 39 placing requests had been received, of which 18 were in respect of pupils who had a sibling at Greenock Academy.

The legislation covering placing requests stipulates the reasons which an authority may cite if it wishes to refuse an application.

When the decision was taken to refuse applications for Greenock Academy, the reasons cited were:

That the S1 roll at the school is at maximum capacity set for this year and to grant your request would:

- (i) make it necessary for the authority to take an additional teacher into employment
- (ii) give rise to significant expenditure on extending or otherwise altering accommodation at or facilities provided in connection with the school

When a parent used the right of appeal to the Sheriff Court granted to parents under the legislation, the Sheriff found against the authority on both counts.

The authority had argued that the capacity at the new Clydeview Academy would be insufficient to accommodate more than 180 in S1 and that it would incur costs if additional accommodation were required.

The Sheriff's ruling points to the legislation which states that parents make an application for a specified school, in this case, Greenock Academy and since the school had admitted 160 pupils in 2007 it could accommodate more than allowed for by the capping limit of 80.

The outcome of the decision on placing requests at Greenock Academy was that 100 pupils instead of the School Estate Management Plan target of 80 were admitted to S1 in August 2008. Therefore, the target figure of a joint intake of 180 for the merging schools

was breached by 20 pupils, with the consequence that additional pressure has been placed on the capacity of the new school.

3.3.3 Impact of the decision of the Sheriff Court August 2008

Since the only mechanism being used by Education Services to maintain the roll capping targets is the management of placing requests, this review sought to establish how Education Services had responded to the significance of the Sheriff's decision. This involved consideration of minutes of meetings and interviews with Heads of Service in Education Services and also the Managing Solicitor. This review was unable to identify actions which demonstrate that this legal decision has had any strategic impact within Education Services.

There is evidence of a PPP Project Board having been set up in support of the School Estate Management Plan. It is understood that the Board which was chaired by the Corporate Director had strategic responsibility for taking forward the procurement of the PPP project, the Council's flagship policy designed to deliver outcomes across a number of Council objectives. The minutes of this group show that the last occasion on which this group met was August 13 2008. While it is acknowledged that the remit of this group required it to focus on the procurement process, it might reasonably be expected that it would give consideration to developments which might impact on the School Estate Management Plan in the longer term. There is no evidence to suggest that this group considered the potential impact of the Sheriff's decision on the Council's aspirations for its school estate.

A risk register is maintained as part of the process of managing the School Estate Management Plan. In the examples of registers available for scrutiny no reference is made to the risks associated with failure to secure the targets for roll capping in secondary schools where new builds are planned. The last occasion on which the risk register was updated was June 2008.

On 9 September 2008 the Corporate Director submitted a factual report on the court case in respect of placing requests in Greenock Academy to the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee. At that time, it was noted that a further paper would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

The paper which was submitted to the meeting of 4 November 2008 did not draw any conclusions of a strategic nature from the Sheriff's decision. The paper from Education Services recommended that the S1 intake at Greenock Academy be roll capped at 100 for session 2009 – 2010 instead of 80. It can be implied from the recommendations that the roll cap of 80 should be reintroduced for session 2010 – 2011. No indication is given as to how this is to be achieved.

3.3.4 Admissions to Gourock High School 2009 - 2010

When the admissions into Gourock High School for August 2009 were considered the officers were aware that the S1 intake had to be reduced from 120 to meet the roll capping target of 100. Education Services categorised the admission statistics as follows:

- 101 delineated pupils (i.e. pupils living at an address within the delineated area of Gourock High School).
- 13 placing request applications

From discussions with Heads of Service it is evident that discussions on legitimate grounds for refusing the additional 14 pupils did not take place and a decision was taken to hold a reverse ballot for the 101 children and to refuse the 13 placing requests.

When parents received a letter advising that a ballot had taken place to determine entry to Gourock High School in August 2009, this was the first occasion on which parents were aware of this being a problem with admission to S1. The parents of the 13 placing request pupils received letters advising that their application to attend Gourock High School had been refused on the grounds that:

The S1 roll at the school is at the maximum set for this year and to grant your request would:

- (i) give rise to significant expenditure on extending or otherwise altering accommodation at or facilities provided in connection with the school
- (ii) be likely to be seriously detrimental to the educational wellbeing of the pupils attending the school

When parents decided to appeal against the decision to refuse entry to S1 Education Services had no alternative but to grant places to the pupils concerned because it was apparent that there were no legitimate reasons for refusing access to Gourock High School in August 2009.

The use of reason (i) in respect of Gourock High School which had been shown to be unsustainable in relation to Greenock Academy supports the finding that a strategic assessment of the impact of the Sheriff's decision was not conducted in Education Services.

In the course of this review, senior management in Education Services were invited to describe any alternative routes to meeting the targets for roll capping, in secondary schools, considered by the Senior Management Team. The responses indicate that opportunities to consider sustainable alternative solutions were not taken at team meetings and subsequent actions show that the mechanism of refusal of placing requests continued to be used in 2009 to control entry to S1 classes, despite the shortcomings of this approach.

3.4 Steps which might have been taken to support roll capping

The requirement to reduce the S1 intake to Gourock High School from 120 to 100 from August 2008 to take account of the capacity of the new merged school has been Council policy since 2005.

3.4.1 Gourock High School

It has become evident during the course of this review that when proposals were prepared for the replacement of modular classrooms at Gourock High School, the assessment of need did not include the consideration of the planned reduction in the school's intake. Four modular classrooms were installed at Gourock High School in summer 2007, after the decision had been taken to reduce the S1 intake.

From discussions with the Headteacher at Gourock High School it has been ascertained that the school could accommodate 100 pupils at the S1 stage with only 2 modular classrooms. The decision taken to replace all four classrooms is not without its consequences. The existence of the additional two classrooms means that it was not sustainable to argue that placing requests into the school for August 2009 be refused on the grounds that to grant the request would require additional expenditure on accommodation.

The outcome of the school having a surplus of accommodation is that the target to roll cap Gourock High at 100 for session 2009 – 2010 has not been achieved and it is anticipated

that 118 pupils will start in S1 in August, thereby increasing the overall number of pupils who will enter Clydeview Academy in 2011.

3.4.2 Greenock Academy

The fact that the S1 intake for Greenock Academy comprises at least 40% of pupils entering on the basis of a placing request is an indication that the accommodation available to the school is far in excess of the needs of the population in the school's delineated area. As evidenced by the Sheriff's decision in August 2008, the authority is unable to use school capacity as a ground for refusing placing requests at Greenock Academy, currently.

In light of this decision, it would not have been unreasonable for Education Services to take steps to reduce the capacity available at Greenock Academy. Such action could have resolved two difficulties facing the service.

The first is the extent to which the school's capacity is greater than current needs.

The second difficulty relates to the fact that, as a consequence of changes taking place in the primary school estate, operational functions within Education Services have been displaced. Surplus accommodation at Greenock Academy could be identified for use by these services whilst a strategic review of accommodation needs is carried out. Two specific areas of need which have been identified, as part of the review process, are Community Learning and Development and Continuing Professional Development for teachers.

Initial discussions with the Headteacher indicate that a reduction in the school's capacity would not have a detrimental effect on the school's ability to continue to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum.

3.4.3 Reserved Places

On 20 February 2001 a paper was presented to the Education Services Committee advising that the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 granted local authorities the right to reserve places in schools for the purposes of retaining places for pupils moving into a school's catchment area. At that time, it was agreed to adopt a policy of reserving places in P1 of a number of primary schools and to reserve two places at the S1 stage in Notre Dame High School, Gourrock High School and Greenock Academy. This is a useful mechanism, whereby the requirement to redirect pupils to schools outwith their catchment can be reduced. This mechanism could also be used quite legitimately to support the objective of meeting roll capping targets in the secondary schools. In the course of interviews with senior officers in Education Services it emerged that this policy has fallen into disuse and is no longer applied to any of the primary or secondary schools referred to in the Council's policy. It was further established that many headteachers were unaware of the existence of this policy or its intended outcomes.

The examples outlined above are indicative of opportunities which have been available to Education Services to take positive action to support the delivery of the Council's School Estate Management Plan.

3.5 Policy Review – Parental Viewpoint

3.5.1 Parental Views

During the course of the review, the opportunity was taken to read correspondence from parents regarding admission to schools for August 2008 and August 2009. The opportunity was also taken to listen to the views of a small number of Parent Council representatives who participated in a focus group meeting.

While it is acknowledged that this does not constitute a representative sample, a number of issues regarding communications have emerged from scrutiny of documentation relating to admissions and the meeting with representatives from Parent Councils. These relate primarily to:

- Difficulty in speaking to members of staff with decision making responsibility
- The tone of correspondence
- Length of time taken to respond to correspondence
- Complaints not being followed up

3.5.2 Parent Representatives of Greenock Academy

Parent representatives of Greenock Academy wished their views on the subject of roll capping at Greenock Academy to be brought to the attention of this review. Parents of pupils currently attending the school on the basis of a placing request are concerned about the impact of capping on access for siblings of existing pupils. It has been pointed out that this matter is referred to specifically in the letter from the Scottish Executive, dated 17 January 2006, confirming that Scottish Ministers have given consent to the Council's proposal to discontinue Greenock Academy and Gourock High School.

The letter notes that the "authority has indicated that for a period, it will endeavour to safeguard the position of siblings currently attending Greenock Academy".

The situation which has prevailed is that the Council has raised the capping limit for the S1 intake to Greenock Academy from 80 to 100 for sessions 2008 – 2009 and 2009 – 2010.

There is no indication in the letter from the Scottish Executive Education Department that the authority's position, as outlined in the consultation leading up to January 2006, was the determining factor in the Ministerial decision to grant consent to the proposal to merge Greenock Academy and Gourock High School.

Section 4 - Summary of Key Findings of the Review

The following is a summary of the key findings from the review into the policy and procedures in respect of admissions and placing requests to schools in Inverclyde:

- There is no single coherent policy on admissions and placing requests which is applicable to all schools in Inverclyde.
- Currently, there are four different versions of such a policy and related procedures in circulation in the authority.
- The decision making process in respect of placing requests is described differently in various relevant documents in circulation.
- The decision making process used to determine the allocation of placing requests to schools, used in 2008 and 2009, is different from that described in the documentation.
- The admission arrangements for each of Inverclyde's secondary schools are addressed separately within the documentation for 2009 – 2010.
- Education Services acknowledge that the absence of clear prioritisation between different categories of pupils transferring from primary to secondary school, within existing documentation, has led to problems of interpretation in decision making.
- The advice of Legal Services is not normally sought prior to decisions on the refusal of placing requests being sent to parents.
- The advice from Legal Services is not always requested or provided in writing.
- In relation to placing request applications for Gourock High School in August 2009, justifications to support reasons for refusal were sought only after Education Services received notification that appeals had been lodged.
- Parents have concerns about the conduct of the ballot which was held in March 2009 to allocate places to Gourock High School for session 2009 - 10. Parents expressed concerns about the lack of consideration for the emotional well – being of the children whose names were entered in the ballot. The manner in which the outcome of the ballot was communicated to parents was also a cited as a source of concern.
- Scrutiny processes which, as part of sound governance arrangements, would enable Education Services to assure parents of the integrity of the decision making process in respect of admissions and placing requests are not in place.
- The QIO Inclusion (Special Needs), in conjunction with Psychological Services, has put in place arrangements for the transition of young people with additional support needs from primary to secondary school which are in accordance with legislative requirements. The positive benefits of these arrangements are sometimes outweighed by the negative impact of the absence of sound internal communication channels and systems for exchanging management information. There are occasions where this has resulted in anxiety and uncertainty for parents and their children.
- The examples of management information on admissions and placing requests, made available to the review, indicate that the information is not broken down

according to the specific categories in the documentation issued to schools and parents. Management information reports are not produced in a standardised format.

- The interpretation and implementation of policy rests in the hands of a small number of Education Service's staff.
- The changes made by the Council to its School Estate Management Plan since 2005 have necessitated a complex series of consultation exercises. These have resulted in frequent alterations to school catchment areas and the association of certain primary schools with secondary schools.
- There is a difference of opinion within Education Services regarding where responsibility lies for the management of information relating to catchment areas. This has implications for the communication of decisions to schools about changes to catchment areas. The situation exists currently where some primary headteachers are unsure of the boundaries of the catchment areas for their schools.
- With regard to catchment areas for secondary schools there is no shared understanding of the term delineation. There is a lack of clarity as to why the catchment areas of some secondary schools are delineated and some are not.
- The approach taken to the application of the delineated areas policy across secondary schools, and in one case within the delineated area of a secondary school, is characterised by inconsistent practice.
- The Project Management Team for the School Estate Management Plan reviews roll projections for schools on a regular basis. The team is aware that it requires to revisit projections in the light of recent decisions on placing requests.
- Senior management in Education Services have been alerted to the advisability of reviewing and updating approaches to the calculation of school capacities.
- An assessment of the strategic impact of information provided to senior management in Education Services giving advance warning of potential difficulties was not carried out.

This information related to:

- placing requests
 - roll capping targets
 - school capacities
- The review process was unable to establish that senior management in Education Services engaged in a comprehensive assessment of the strategic implications of the decision reached by the Sheriff Court in respect of a placing request appeal in August 2008.
 - The potential for the Sheriff Court's decision to have a negative impact on the Council's aspirations for the School Estate Management Plan is not reflected in the risk assessment documentation managed by the Project Team.
 - There are indications that senior management in Education Services may not have given sufficient attention to the requirement to ensure that policies and procedures, in operation in Education Services, are not in conflict with the Council's objectives for its school estate. As a consequence, it may be more difficult to achieve the objective of equalising pupil population across secondary schools.

- While senior management in Education Services acknowledge that pupil intake into new builds or refurbished schools needs to be managed to ensure that the pupil roll is in line with school capacities, decisions have been taken, which may inhibit the achievement of this objective. The refusal of placing requests is the only mechanism used by Education Services to control pupil intake into secondary schools.
- A consequence of the breaching of the roll capping targets for Gourock High School and Greenock Academy is that the roll of Clydeview Academy will be greater than previously projected, when it opens in August 2011.
- Parents consulted as part of the review process indicated they have a high regard for schools and are appreciative of the work carried out by headteachers and teachers.

Section 5 - Recommendations arising from the Review

On the basis of the findings of the review of the admissions and placing request policy in Inverclyde it is recommended that consideration be given to the following actions:

The Council should take steps to put a single coherent policy on admissions and placing requests in place which reflects the strategic aims of the Council. This policy should be applicable across all schools.

- (i) The revised policy should be subject to consultation in accordance with legislative requirements.
- (ii) The revised policy should be implemented for admissions to schools in Inverclyde for academic session 2010 – 2011.

The Council should take steps to ensure that its aspirations for the School Estate Management Plan are supported fully by the policies and procedures within Education Services.

- (i) Parents should be made aware of the educational benefits arising from the School Estate Management Plan.
- (ii) Education Services should act to reduce the capacity at Greenock Academy and Gourrock High School in advance of admissions to these schools for academic session 2010 – 2011.
- (iii) Parents of young people who will attend Clydeview Academy should be made fully aware of the roll projections for the school.
- (iv) The strategic management arrangements for the School Estate Management Plan should be reviewed and robust project management and scrutiny procedures adopted. As a minimum, a reconstituted School Estate Programme Board which takes responsibility for all aspects of the school building and refurbishment programme should be put in place.

The Council should require Education Services to review the specific management and operational practices identified through the review and take appropriate action where necessary:

- (i) The role of the Directorate Team in promoting knowledge and awareness of staff at all levels within the service of the relationships of the School Estate Management Plan to the wider activities of the service.
- (ii) The role of the Directorate Team in ensuring that systematic communications and liaison arrangements are in place to ensure that information is circulated to all relevant members of staff, including where appropriate, headteachers.
- (iii) The extent to which performance review and the introduction of scrutiny arrangements in respect of key aspects of service delivery may be used to improve practice.
- (iv) The management and administrative arrangements for school admissions and placing requests, based on a revised policy being put in place.
- (v) Communications policy with particular reference to standards for responding to correspondence and telephone calls.
- (vi) The use of information technology to support the calculation of school capacities and roll projections.

Appendix 1 – Summary of Policies and Guidelines on Admissions and Placing Requests

1996

Education Services Committee 19 February 1996

Approval of arrangements for placing requests. For entry to secondary schools, where there are places:

- (i) To those cases which include medical grounds supported by the family doctor and by the community medicine specialist, and
- (ii) The presence of older siblings in the school

Other factors:

- (i) Single parent families, where, for example, proximity of school to the parents place of work would be advantageous for the care and well being of the child
- (ii) Distance between home and school
- (iii) The suitability of particular teaching methods to the child's needs or the availability of subjects which he/she was previously studying

2001

Education Services Committee 30 January 2001

Amendment to criteria for prioritising placing request applications approved.

- (a) Children in need as defined by Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- (b) In the case of secondary schools within a delineated area, priority will be given to those children who do not live in the delineated area, but do attend primary schools within it

2004 - Documentation issued to parents Autumn 2004 for admission 2005

Transfer arrangements
Primary / Secondary Education (General)

All primary schools not associated with Notre Dame High School

- To the presence of older siblings still in attendance at the school when younger sibling transfers to secondary
- To those children defined by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 as children in need
- To those cases which included medical grounds supported by the family doctor AND the community medical specialist
- In the case of secondary schools with a delineated area, priority will be given to those children who do not live in the delineated area, but who attend primary schools within it
- To those pupils who live within the Inverclyde authority area

All primary schools associated with Notre Dame High School:

- (i) Those children who live within the delineated area and who are transferring from an associated primary school
- (ii) Those children who live within the delineated area of an associated primary school but have been unable, for whatever reason, to be accommodated in the area school to date
- (iii) Those children who do not live within the delineated area but who are in attendance as a result of a placing request at an associated primary school but from which they are transferring

Placing request applications will be dealt with under the existing Council policy on placing requests as intimated below:

- To the presence of older siblings still in attendance at the school when younger sibling transfers to secondary
- To those children defined by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 as children in need
- To those cases which include medical grounds supported by the family doctor AND the community medical specialist
- To those pupils who live within the Inverclyde authority area

Other factors:

- Single parent families, where, for example, proximity of school to the parents' place of work would be advantageous for the care and well being of the child
- Distance between home and school
- The suitability of particular teaching methods to the child's needs or the availability of subjects which he/she was previously studying

Appendix 1 – Summary of Policies and Guidelines on Admissions and Placing Requests

2006 - Documentation issued to parents October 2006 for admission August 2007

Sending your child to school
The enrolment of children in primary and secondary schools and placing requests

For entry to secondary schools, where there are places:

- Those children who live in the delineated area of an associated primary school but who have been unable to be accommodated in the area's secondary school to date

General:

Thereafter, where there are more placing requests for primary or secondary than there are places available, priority will be given to:

- To those children defined by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 as children in need
- Those cases which include medical grounds supported by the family doctor and the community medicine specialist
- The presence of older brothers or sisters in the school
- In the case of secondary schools with a delineated area, priority will be given to those children who do not live in the delineated area, but who attend primary schools within it
- To those pupils who live within the Inverclyde area

Other factors:

- Single parent families, where, for example, proximity of school to the parents' place of work would be advantageous for the care and well being of the child
- Distance between home and school
- The suitability of particular teaching methods to the child's needs or the availability of the subjects which he/she was previously studying

2007 - Documentation issued to parent November 2007 for August 2008

Information booklet for parents/guardians of pupils transferring from primary to secondary schools

Priorities for admission to Notre Dame High School:

- Those children who live within the delineated areas and who are transferring from an associated primary school
- Those children who live within the delineated area of an associated primary school but have been unable, for whatever reason, to be accommodated in the area school to date
- Those children who do not live within the delineated area but who are in attendance as a result of a placing request at an associated primary school from which they are transferring

Priorities for admission for secondary schools (excluding Notre Dame High School)

- Those children who live in the area of an associated primary school but who have been unable to be accommodated in the area's secondary school to date

Placing request applications will be dealt with under the existing Council policy on placing requests as intimated below:

- To the presence of older siblings still in attendance at the school when younger sibling transfers to secondary
- To those children defined by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 as children in need
- To those cases which include medical grounds supported by the family doctor and the Associate Specialist – Community Child Health
- To those pupils who live within the Inverclyde area

Other factors:

- Single parent families, where, for example, proximity of school to the parents' place of work would be advantageous for the care and well being of the child
- Distance between home and school
- The suitability of particular teaching methods to the child's needs

Appendix 1 – Summary of Policies and Guidelines on Admissions and Placing Requests

September 2008 - Education & Lifelong Learning Committee 09.09.08

Guidelines on Placing Requests – Std Circular 2.7

Where there are places available in a secondary school priority will be given in the granting of placing requests to:

- Those children who live in the delineated area of an associated primary school but who have been unable to be accommodated in the area's secondary school to date

General:

Thereafter, where there are more placing requests than there are places available priority will be given to:

1. Those cases which include medical grounds supported by the family doctor and by the community medicine specialist
2. The presence of older siblings in the school
3. Those pupils who live within the Inverclyde Authority area

Other factors:

1. Single parent families, where, for example, proximity of school to the parents' place of work would be advantageous for the care and well being of the child
2. Distance between home and school
3. The suitability of particular teaching methods to the child's needs or the availability of subjects which he or she was previously studying

November 2008 - Documentation issued to parents in November 2007 for admission August 2009

Transferring from primary to secondary school – A Guide for Parent and Carers

Placing request applications will be processed in accordance with Council policy:

- The presence of siblings still in attendance at the school when younger sibling transfers
- Those children defined by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 as children in need
- Those cases which include medical grounds supported by the family doctor and the Associate Specialist – Community Child Health. Arrangements will be made by the Council for a medical assessment by the Associate Specialist
- Those pupils who live within the Inverclyde area

Other factors:

- Single parent families, where, for example, proximity of school to the parents' place of work would be advantageous for the care and well being of the child
- Distance between home and school
- The suitability of particular teaching methods to the child's needs

INVERCLYDE COUNCIL WEBSITE

Placing request information for parents Date downloaded 16 June 2009

Where there are places available in a secondary school, priority will be given in the granting of placing requests to:

- Those children who live in the delineated area of an associated primary school but who have been unable to be accommodated in the area's secondary school to date

General:

Thereafter, where there are more placing requests for primary or secondary than there are places available, priority will be given to:

- Those children defined by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 as children in need
- Those cases which include medical grounds supported by the family doctor and the community medicine specialist
- Children with older brothers or sisters in the school
- In the case of secondary schools with a delineated area, priority will be given to those children who do not live in the delineated area, but who attend primary schools within it
- Those pupils who live within the Inverclyde area

Other factors:

- Single parent families, where, for example, proximity of school to the parents' place of work would be advantageous for the care and well being of the child
- Distance between home and school
- The suitability of particular teaching methods to the child's needs or the availability of the subjects which he/she was previously studying

Date	Interview / Discussion
26.05.09	Discussion with Albert Henderson, Head of Schools
27.05.09	Interview with Colin Laird, Head of Lifelong Learning & Educational Support
	Interview with Kenneth McNamara, Principal Officer (Planning & Resources)
	Interview with Wendy Campbell, Administration Officer
28.05.09	Interview with Colin Struthers, Head of Support & Development
	Interview with Tom Reid, Head of Schools Estate
	Interview with John Ferrie, Quality Improvement Officer
29.05.09	Interview with Mark Airlie, parent of pupil attending Moorfoot Primary School
	Interview with Kenneth McNamara
01.06.09	Interview with South Lanarkshire Council
03.06.09	Interview with Howard McNeilly, Managing Solicitor
	Interview with Moira McColl, Headteacher of Greenock Academy
	Interview with Chris Robertson, Leadership Development Officer
	Interview with Moira Niven, West Lothian Council
04.06.09	Interview with Fiona Brown, East Lothian Council
	Interview with Willie Todd, Headteacher of Gourrock High School
09.06.09	Interview with Councillor Stephen McCabe, Leader of the Council
	Interview with Albert Henderson
10.06.09	Interview with Councillor Iain McKenzie, Convener of Education & Lifelong Learning Committee
	Interview with Colin Laird, Howard McNeilly and Kenneth McNamara
11.06.09	Interview with Councillor Blair
16.06.09	Interview with Maureen Irving, Quality Improvement Officer
	Interview with Chris Robertson and John Ferrie
17.06.09	Focus group meeting with Early Years / Primary Headteachers
18.06.09	Focus group meeting with Primary Headteachers
	Focus group meeting with Secondary Headteachers
	Interview with Albert Henderson and Colin Laird

Date	Interview / Discussion
23.06.09	Visit to Greenock Academy with Albert Henderson
	Visit to Gourock High School with Albert Henderson
24.06.09	Interview with Graeme Brooks, Parent Council Chair of Greenock Academy
	Focus group meeting with Parent Council Chairs
30.06.09	Interview with Kenneth McNamara and Wendy Campbell
07.07.09	Interview with Moira McColl

INVERCLYDE COUNCIL: EDUCATION SERVICES

**Draft policy on Admission and Pupil Placement in
Mainstream Schools**

August 2009

Policy on Admissions and Pupil Placement in mainstream Schools

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Inverclyde Council: Education Services

Policy on admissions and pupil placement into mainstream schools

Section A – General Information

1. Core Principles

- 1.1 The admissions and pupil placement policy is applicable to all mainstream schools in Inverclyde.
- 1.2 The admissions and pupil placement policy recognises the right of parents to choose to have their children educated in either a non-denominational school or a denominational school.
- 1.3 The admissions and pupil placement policy recognises the right of parents to make a placing request to have their child educated in a school of their choice. Parents in turn should recognise that they do not have an automatic right to have their request granted.
- 1.4 For the purposes of determining which school a pupil should attend the authority is divided into defined catchment areas.
- 1.5 There are 4 defined catchment areas for the non-denominational secondary schools and 3 defined catchment areas for the denominational secondary schools.
- 1.6 Primary schools are allocated to a defined catchment area.
- 1.7 Each address in Inverclyde is assigned to a non-denominational and a denominational primary and secondary school.
- 1.8 At the point of entry to primary school parents may choose the primary school of either educational sector, (non-denominational or denominational) assigned to their home address, which they wish their child to attend. This policy is premised on the assumption that having made a choice about the educational sector (denominational or denominational) at primary stage, a pupil will remain in that sector for the duration of their education in Inverclyde.
- 1.9 There are no denominational primary schools in Quarriers Village, Kilmacolm, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay. Parents often choose to send their children to the local non-denominational primary school because of the travelling distance to their nearest denominational primary school. In such circumstances the following admission arrangements will apply:
 - children whose parents have selected to send their child to the non-denominational school serving the defined catchment area assigned to their address rather than to their assigned denominational primary school because of travelling distance, will have the choice at primary 7 of seeking admission to either the non-denominational or denominational school assigned to their address. The Council's policy in respect of school transport will apply.

- 1.10 At the point of entry to primary school parents may exercise their right to make a placing request for their child should they wish the child to be educated in a primary school other than that assigned to their home address.
- 1.11 At the point of transfer from primary to secondary school, priority will be accorded to pupils transferring into the secondary school serving their chosen denomination within their defined catchment area.
- 1.12 At the point of transfer from primary to secondary school, pupils who wish to transfer to a school serving a different defined catchment area from that within which they live will require to submit a placing request to the authority.
- 1.13 At the point of transfer from primary to secondary school, pupils who wish to transfer to a school of a different denomination, regardless of whether or not it serves the defined catchment area assigned to their home address will require to submit a placing request to the authority.
- 1.14 At the point of transfer from primary to secondary school, pupils who are in attendance at primary school on the basis of a placing request will require to submit a further placing request, if they wish to attend any school other than the secondary school within their catchment area and chosen denominational sector.
- 1.15 In circumstances where parents wish to submit placing requests for younger children to join older siblings in schools which are outwith their geographical and/or chosen denominational sector, it should be noted that no guarantees of successful placement will be made.
- 1.16 Where a school is oversubscribed the Council's arrangements for over-subscription will be applied. These arrangements describe the priorities for admission as they apply to applications for entry to a primary or secondary school at the start of a new session from pupils living within the defined catchment area of their chosen school and to applications made at other times of the year.
- 1.17 These arrangements also describe the priorities for admission as they apply to placing request applications for entry to a primary or secondary school from pupils living outwith the defined catchment area of their chosen school or who wish to change from one educational sector to another, at the start of a new session and to such applications made at other times of the year.
- 1.18 The decision making and appeals processes as described in this policy are intended to be transparent and fair and are applicable to all applications for entry to a primary or secondary school.

2. Choice of School

Inverclyde Council provides both denominational and non-denominational education. Most parents choose to send their children to the school of their chosen denomination in their catchment area.

Education legislation also allows parents to choose a school other than in their catchment area. The Council must grant placing requests unless there is a legal reason not to. Any child living outside a catchment area who has been allocated a place in a school will keep that place even if another child moves into the school's catchment area.

Although every effort is made to grant places to children who have older brothers or sisters in attendance at a school on the basis of a placing request, places cannot be guaranteed.

Details of primary and secondary schools in Inverclyde can be found on the council's website at www.inverclyde.gov.uk. In addition all schools in Inverclyde have school handbooks. These handbooks provide useful information for parents about the school and copies are available directly from headteachers.

3. Catchment Areas

For the purposes of determining which school a pupil should attend the authority is divided into defined catchment areas.

Presently, there are four defined catchment areas for the non-denominational schools; this will change to three in 2011, and three defined catchment areas for the denominational secondary schools. Primary schools are allocated to a defined catchment area. Each home address in Inverclyde has a catchment non-denominational and catchment denominational school assigned to it for both primary and secondary education. The catchment schools are dependent on the home address of the parents. While every effort is made to provide enough places for all children in their catchment school of their chosen denomination, living within a catchment area does not guarantee a child a place.

4. Priorities for Admission

The core principles contained in the admissions policy will be applied to all admissions to schools.

4.1 Catchment Schools

Inverclyde Council gives priority to placing in catchment schools as follows (with children in category 1 being the first priority, children in category 2 being the second priority and so on):

1. All children who reside in the defined catchment area that the school serves within their chosen denomination;
2. Children who reside in the defined catchment area which the school within their chosen denomination serves who, for whatever reason, have been unable to be accommodated to date;
3. Children who have moved to an address outwith the defined catchment area which the school serves whilst attending the school and have completed request to remain documentation;
4. Children who have been identified by the QIO (Inclusion) as requiring placement on the basis of their additional support needs.

Where there are more children in any one category than there are places available, the distance of the home address from defined catchment area school that serves the school within their chosen denomination will be the determining factor i.e. the child living closest to the school having the highest priority.

Distance refers to the shortest safest walking route to school from the pupil's home address to the school gate.

If the distance is more than two miles then the shortest driving route will be used. Distance measure will be based on all the information the Council has at its disposal at the time of measurement.

4.2 Placing Requests

Inverclyde Council gives priority to placing requests as follows (with children in category 1 being the first priority, children in category 2 being the second priority and so on):

1. Children of school age residing within Inverclyde who have additional support needs and who are requesting a place within a school which has provision specific to the child's needs.
2. Children of school age who have older brothers or sisters attending the school according to distance of home address from chosen school.
3. All other children of school age residing in the defined catchment area of the school according to distance of home address from chosen school.
4. All other children of school age residing in Inverclyde according to distance of home address from chosen school.
5. Children of school age residing outwith Inverclyde whose additional support need is supported by significant input by education and another appropriate agency and who are requesting a place within a school which has specialist provision to meet the child's needs.
6. Children of school age residing outwith Inverclyde according to distance of home address from chosen school.
7. If a placing request is submitted then the catchment area place that pupil is entitled to will be kept until the placing request application has been resolved.

A guide for parents and carers on the Council's admission policy can also be obtained from the Council's website.

5.0 Oversubscription of catchment schools

The situation may arise whereby the number of pupils in a defined catchment area who are eligible to enter a school is greater than a number of places available in the school. The way in which this situation will be resolved for entry into Primary 1 or Secondary 1 is by reference to a Pupil Placement Panel. The Pupil Placement Panel will comprise the Corporate Director of Education & Social Care, the Head of Legal & Administration and a Head of Service from another council service selected from a rota.

It will be the role of the Pupil Placement Panel to scrutinise recommendations on entry made by the appropriate Head of Service in Education Services to ensure the criteria have been applied appropriately and to determine which applications should be granted and which should be refused. Where decisions on entry are referred to the Pupil Placement Panel, parents and headteachers will be notified. Where an application for entry to a catchment area school is refused parents will be advised in writing of the grounds for refusal.

6.0 Children with additional support needs

Inverclyde Council has a policy on inclusion and equality which incorporates the assumption that all children will routinely be educated within their own community. Transitional arrangements for children with additional support needs, moving from nursery

to primary or primary to secondary, are discussed at a child's Review Meeting. Working in partnership with parents and headteachers, the Educational Psychologist will make recommendations to Education Services on the most suitable provision for pupils.

7.0 Reserved places

The circumstances can arise whereby a child moving into the catchment area of a school is unable to be accommodated in that school because it has reached its full capacity by accepting placing requests. In such circumstances pupils are normally placed in the nearest appropriate school until such times as a place becomes available in the local school, with all transport costs being met by the authority.

The Education (Scotland) Act 1996 granted local authorities the power to reserve places for children moving into an area part way through the school session. Under the terms of this policy the Corporate Director of Education & Social Care has the delegated powers to reserve up to a maximum of 4 places per year for entry into P1 and S1 in schools. Reserved places will normally be released between October and December of each session.

8.0 Appeals Procedures

As required by law, Inverclyde Council has set up an Education Appeal Committee to consider appeals from parents/carers against its decision to grant a place in one of its schools. Parents/carers can present their case to the Appeal Committee in person, or with the assistance of a representative.

If the Education Appeal Committee refuses an application for a place parents/carers have the right of a further appeal to the Sheriff Court.

9.0 Families who move to a new address

Where a family moves to a new address which is outwith the catchment area of the school their child currently attends, they have two options:

- Enroll their child in the school serving their new defined catchment area for their chosen denomination.
- Complete a form requesting that their child remains in the school they currently attend. If this option is selected the Council will not provide school transport. In the case of primary pupils, parents should check which secondary school is assigned to their new home address. A placing request may be required for their child to attend the secondary school assigned to their previous home address.

10.0 School Transport

Inverclyde Council provides school transport for pupils who live more than one mile from their local primary school or two miles from their local secondary school by the shortest safe walking route.

Children who attend a school as a result of a placing request are not entitled to school transport.

Section B – Admission Procedures

1.0 Registering in catchment school

1.1 Arrangements for registering a pupil in Primary 1

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended by the 1981 Act, requires education authorities to secure the adequate and efficient provision of school education including arrangements for the admission of children to schools.

The process of registration records a child as eligible for education to be provided by the authority. The procedure of enrolment commits the authority to providing that education in a particular school.

The **process for enrolling** is as follows:

On a date or dates in January each year intimated and publicly advertised by Education Services, parents/carers should register their children with their catchment area school of their chosen denomination if their children:

- (i) have attained the age of 5 years before that date;
- (ii) will attain the age of 5 years on or before the last day of February of the following year.

Birth Certificates and proof of residence (Council Tax letter, plus a recent utility bill or other acceptable evidence must be produced).

At the point of registration parents will be issued with a handbook containing information about the school. Parents will also receive information on how to make a placing request should they decide not to send their child to their catchment school.

If a parent wishes to defer entry to primary school they still must register at the appropriate school to be advised on the Council's deferred entry procedures.

If a child has not reached the age of 5 years by the last day in February they would not be eligible to register at this time. A formal request for early entry should be submitted to Education Services for consideration.

1.2 Arrangement for transferring from primary to secondary school

On completion of their primary education, pupils will normally transfer to the secondary as set out in the Council's Admission Policy unless they have been granted a placing request to another secondary school.

Pupils will transfer from primary school to secondary school once per year on the date of the start of the new session for pupils. Transfer will normally take place at the end of Primary 7.

The Head of the primary school will advise parents/carers in December each year that their children are due to transfer to secondary school in the following August. Intimation will be made of the name of the secondary school to which the child should transfer and details of liaison meetings with parents will be provided.

There are no denominational primary schools in Quarriers Village, Kilmacolm, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay. Parents often choose to send their children to the local non-denominational

primary school because of the travelling distance to their nearest denominational primary school. In such circumstances the following admission arrangements will apply:

- children whose parents have selected to send their child to the non-denominational school serving the defined catchment area assigned to their address rather than to their assigned denominational primary school because of travelling distance, will have the choice at primary 7 of seeking admission to either the non-denominational or denominational school assigned to their address. The Council's policy in respect of school transport will apply.

1.3 Arrangements for registering a pupil into primary and secondary school after the start of the school session in August

In the first instance parents should make contact with the school directly (preferably in writing) to enquire if they have space for their child in the relevant stage or year group. In the letter the parent should include the name and address of the child, date of birth and contact telephone number.

In addition, for secondary school placements, parents will need to provide details of the subjects that the child has studied, particularly at stages S3 and above. It may not be possible to match all subjects previously studied and children may need to choose new subjects to make a full timetable.

During school holidays, parents should submit their application to Education Services who will then forward the letter to the preferred primary/secondary school for the start of the school term.

1.4 Arrangements for oversubscribed schools

The situation may arise whereby a school is oversubscribed at either the primary 1 or secondary 1 stage. In these circumstances, the Pupil Placement Panel should convene to determine the allocation places as described in Section A, paragraph 5.

Applications for all other stages of schooling should be dealt with by headteachers. Where a headteacher declines an application for reasons other than there being no places available in the school, the application will be referred to the Pupil Placement Panel for decision.

While every effort is made to provide places for all children in the school in their defined catchment area within their chosen denomination, places cannot be guaranteed. In such circumstances, pupils will be offered a place in the school of their chosen denomination nearest to their home address, until such times as a place becomes available in their catchment school. Inverclyde Council will meet transport costs incurred due to attendance at the non – catchment school.

1.5 Grounds for refusal of place

If Inverclyde Council refuses an application to one of its schools it must explain the reasons why to parents in writing. The following are the reasons why a Council may refuse an application for a place in one of its schools.

- (a) if placing the child in the specified school (that is, the school specified in the application), would:

- (i) make it necessary for the Authority to take an additional teacher into employment;
 - (ii) give rise to significant expenditure on extending or otherwise altering the accommodation at or facilities provided in connection with the school;
 - (iii) be seriously detrimental to the continuity of the child's education;
 - (iv) be likely to be seriously detrimental to order and discipline in the school;
 - (v) be likely to be seriously detrimental to the educational well-being of the pupils attending the school;
 - (vi) assuming that pupil numbers remain constant, make it necessary, at the commencement of a future stage of the child's primary education, for the authority to elect either to create an additional class (or an additional composite class) in the specified school or to take an additional teacher into employment at that school;
 - (vii) though neither of the tests set out in sub-paragraphs (i) and (ii) above is satisfied, have the consequence that the capacity of the school would be exceeded in terms of pupil numbers.
- (b) if the education normally provided at the specified school is not suited to the age, ability or aptitude of the child;
 - (c) if the education authority has already required the child to discontinue his attendance at the specified school;
 - (d) if the specified school is a special school and the child does not have an additional support need requiring the education or special facilities normally provided at that school;
 - (e) if the specified school is a single sex school (within the meaning given to that expression by Section 26 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975) and the child is not of the sex admitted or taken (under that Section) to be admitted to the school.
 - (f) if accepting the request would prevent the Authority reserving a place at the school for a child likely to move into the area of the school.

(All references to the 'specified school' are to the school specified in the application.)

1.6 Appeals Procedure

1. If parents/carers are aggrieved by a decision of the Education Authority to refuse a placing request then the parent/carer may refer the decision to the Education Appeal Committee set up by the Council;
2. The Education Appeal Committee hearing an appeal shall have a membership of three, one Councillor and two members of Parent Councils. The Councillor shall not be a member of the Council's Education & Lifelong Learning Committee. The Parent Council members shall not be members of the Parent Council of the school affected by the appeal;
3. The Education Appeal Committee shall be administered by the Council's Head of Legal & Administration from whom details of the appeals procedure may be obtained. Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Head of Legal &

Administration;

4. The Head of Legal & Administration shall maintain a rota to be used in selecting members to sit in hearings of the Committee.

2.0 Arrangements for making a placing request

2.1 Procedures for dealing with placing request applications for the start of a school year

Parents who wish their child to attend a school other than their defined catchment school are entitled to make a placing request for the school of their choice.

Information on how to make a placing request is distributed to parents/carers by headteachers in the case of pupils who are starting Primary 1 or are transferring from primary to secondary school.

Parents/carers may make only one placing request at a time for a pupil. If the initial request is refused the opportunity will be available to parents to make another request should they so wish.

Where applications are being made for the start of a new session these should be submitted to Education Services no earlier than 1 January and no later than 1 February prior to the start of the session in August.

Applications will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt of each application.

Parents/carers will be advised in writing of the decision made in respect of their application no later than 30 April.

Applications which are received outwith this period will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt of any application. Parents/carers will be notified of the decision made in respect of their application within 8 weeks (exclusive of school holidays).

When a placing request is granted the previously allocated place at the catchment school will be withdrawn. The newly allocated place will not be withdrawn unless the place was obtained on the basis of false information.

While every effort is made to grant placing requests, circumstances can arise whereby there are more applications than places available. In such cases the priorities for admission as described in Section A, paragraph 4.2, will be applied.

The Pupil Placement Panel should convene to determine the allocation of places. It will be the role of the Pupil Placement Panel to scrutinise recommendations on placing request applications made by the appropriate Head of Service in Education Services to ensure the criteria have been applied appropriately and to determine which applications should be granted and which should be refused. Where a placing request application is refused parents will be advised in writing of the grounds for refusal.

2.2 Arrangements for making a placing request at other times of the year

Parents who wish to make a placing request during the school year or school holidays should contact the school of their choice or Education Services to obtain an application form.

Placing request applications which are submitted to Education Services during the school year or school holidays will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. Parents/carers will be notified of the decision made in respect of their application within 8 weeks (exclusive of school holidays).

Such applications will be referred to the headteacher of the school concerned who will advise the Planning and Resources section if there are places available in the school. Where a headteacher declines an application for reasons other than there being no places available in the school the application will be referred to the Pupil Placement Panel for decision. While a placing request application is refused parents will be advised in writing of the reasons for refusal.

2.3 Grounds for Refusal

If Inverclyde Council refuses a placing request application to one of its schools it must explain the reasons why to parents in writing. The following are the reasons why a Council may refuse a placing request application for a place in one of its schools.

- (a) if placing the child in the specified school (that is, the school specified in the application), would:
 - (i) make it necessary for the Authority to take an additional teacher into employment;
 - (ii) give rise to significant expenditure on extending or otherwise altering the accommodation at or facilities provided in connection with the school;
 - (iii) be seriously detrimental to the continuity of the child's education;
 - (iv) be likely to be seriously detrimental to order and discipline in the school;
 - (v) be likely to be seriously detrimental to the educational well-being of the pupils attending the school;
 - (vi) assuming that pupil numbers remain constant, make it necessary, at the commencement of a future stage of the child's primary education, for the authority to elect either to create an additional class (or an additional composite class) in the specified school or to take an additional teacher into employment at that school;
 - (vii) though neither of the tests set out in sub-paragraphs (i) and (ii) above is satisfied, have the consequence that the capacity of the school would be exceeded in terms of pupil numbers.
- (b) if the education normally provided at the specified school is not suited to the age, ability or aptitude of the child;
- (c) if the education authority has already required the child to discontinue his attendance at the specified school;
- (d) if the specified school is a special school and the child does not have an additional support need requiring the education or special facilities normally provided at that school;
- (g) if the specified school is a single sex school (within the meaning given to that expression by Section 26 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975) and the child is not

of the sex admitted or taken (under that Section) to be admitted to the school.

- (h) if, accepting the request would prevent the Authority reserving a place at the school for a child likely to move into the area of the school.

(All references to the 'specified school' are to the school specified in the application.)

2.4 Appeals Procedure

1. If parents/carers are aggrieved by a decision of the Education Authority to refuse a placing request then the parent/carer may refer the decision to the Education Appeal Committee set up by the Council;
2. The Education Appeal Committee hearing an appeal shall have a membership of three, one Councillor and two members of Parent Councils. The Councillor shall not be a member of the Council's Education & Lifelong Learning Committee. The Parent Council members shall not be members of the Parent Council of the school affected by the appeal;
3. The Education Appeal Committee shall be administered by the Council's Head of Legal and Administration from whom details of the appeals procedure may be obtained. Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Head of Legal and Administration;
4. The Head of Legal & Administration shall maintain a rota to be used in selecting members to sit in hearings of the Committee.

August 2009