

School Admission Arrangements 2020-21

Cabinet

Date: 6th February 2019

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Author: | Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Attainment Head of Education |
| Wards: | All |
| Parishes Affected: | All |

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's agreement to put in place co-ordinated admission arrangements for the normal point of entry (Reception, Year 3, Year 7) and In-year admission arrangements for all Swindon Schools and Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Swindon for September 2020.
- 1.2 This report particularly links to the Council's updated study of long-term school place planning. It also relates the Vision priority 2: "Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places."

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the co-ordinated scheme of admission arrangements for the normal point of entry (Reception Year, Year 3 and Year 7) for all primary schools and secondary schools in Swindon from September 2020;
- 2.2 Approve the co-ordinated In Year admission arrangements for all primary schools and secondary schools in Swindon from September 2020;
- 2.3 Approve the admission numbers and arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools from September 2020 and note that no opposition from Schools was received;
- 2.4 Approve the reduction of the published admission number for Bridlewood Primary School from 60 to 30 for Reception for September 2019,
- 2.5 Note that, if approved by Cabinet, these proposals are determined, and will be implemented by the Head of Education for Admissions from September 2019 for all applicants.

3. Detail

- 3.1 The admission arrangements and co-ordinated scheme are consulted upon annually. There have been no significant changes to the detail in the admission arrangements for point of entry or co-ordinated scheme for all schools within in Swindon. However, there has been a change in the way the Admissions Team

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Emily Heaton, 01793 46 5791, ehaton@swindon.gov.uk.

School Admission Arrangements 2020-21

Cabinet

Date: 6th February 2019

provide the application process for In Year Admissions with the introduction of all processes online, which is detailed below in paragraph 3.22 onwards.

- 3.2 The school admission arrangements are used for the purpose of allocating school places at the point of entry for children at age 4 (Reception), 7 (Infant to Junior) and 11 (Secondary).
- 3.3 There are a number of different elements relating to arranging an overall admissions process, especially with the rapidly changing education landscape and greater autonomy granted to schools. It is the responsibility of all admission authorities to ensure that admission arrangements are compliant with this Code.
- 3.4 The following table outlines where the responsibility lays for the different admissions processes.

| Type of School | Admission Authority |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Academies (including Free Schools) | Academy Trust |
| Community Schools | Local Authority |
| Foundation Schools | Governing Body |
| Voluntary Aided Schools | Governing Body |
| Voluntary Controlled Schools | Local Authority |

- 3.5 An admission authority is responsible for determining their admission policy, published admission number, oversubscription criteria including the determination of catchment areas. Individual admission authorities within Swindon are required to consult the Local Authority on their admission policy. However, the Local Authority is not responsible for the contents of their arrangements; this is the responsibility of the Academy Trust or Governing body as indicated in the above table.
- 3.6 In addition to the responsibilities set out in paragraph 3.4, the Local Authority is required to formulate a co-ordinated scheme for the point of entry to manage the application process for all schools within the Local Authority area.
- 3.7 This report outlines those policies written and consulted on by the Local Authority with regard to the allocation of school places. The document contains the following sections:
- 3.7.1 Co-ordinated admissions scheme (applicable to all schools);
- 3.7.2 In Year Admissions Scheme (applicable to all schools)
- 3.7.3 Admission Arrangements and oversubscription criteria (Community and Voluntary Controlled School), which also includes Published Admissions Numbers and School Catchment Areas.

School Admission Arrangements 2020-21

Cabinet

Date: 6th February 2019

Consultation

- 3.8 The School Admissions Code places a duty on the Local Authority and all admission authorities to consult upon its admission arrangements above for a minimum of 6 weeks, which must be completed by 31st January 2019. The consultation ran between the 19th November and 31st December 2018.
- 3.9 The School Admissions Code outlines the list of relevant bodies that must be consulted as outlined in section 6 below. The Local Authority publicised the consultation on its website and through all local schools and the pre-schools, neighbouring Local Authorities and the Diocesan Boards of Education. The Local Authority notified all ward councillors and parish councillors also.
- 3.10 Survey responses could be made in writing or by using an online survey tool. The survey tool allowed responses to all the arrangements. The Local Authority received a total of 4 responses to the consultation.

Admissions Consultation responses:

- 3.11 In terms of the Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, 100% of respondents agreed with the proposals.
- 3.12 In response to the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for the point of entry for 2020 for all schools, 100% of all respondents agreed with this.
- 3.13 For the proposed In Year Co-ordinated Scheme, 75% agreed with the proposal, and 25% disagreed. We also received the following comment and response as set out below:

| Comment | LA response |
|---|---|
| We have concerns about the way in which in year admissions are undertaken when this leaves children without a school place (especially for those who have moved into the country/area and are not in school) for a considerable amount of time. It seems contradictory that a child not be allowed to have holiday during school time and a fine is issued when there are children not in school for maybe up to 6 weeks with no consequences as they have not been issued a place in a school because they have missed or are unable to meet the application deadline and therefore have to wait for | The coordinated in year admissions has process periods in which parents have clear timeframes to apply within and a date for when they will receive an offer of a school place. Parents who are moving into the area are able to apply in advance of moving into the area, which could speed up their application. This coordinated system considers all preferences on a single application at the same time, which speeds up the consideration of an application from approximately 2-3 months under the old process, to just 30 days. This new process also allows significantly more applications to be |

School Admission Arrangements 2020-21

Cabinet

Date: 6th February 2019

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| the next round of allocations. | considered at the same time in each process period, thus ensuring many more children are allocated school places much more quickly – in September 2018 alone the Admissions Team processed 1175, which would have been impossible under the old system. |
|--------------------------------|---|

Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for the Point of Entry

- 3.14 The Local Authority is legally required to consult on the co-ordinated admission arrangements that all the schools and admissions authorities in their area must comply.
- 3.15 The Education Act 2002 introduced the statutory requirement for every Local Authority to draw up a scheme for co-ordinating admission arrangements to cover every maintained school in its area. The regulations also require Local Authorities to co-ordinate arrangements across Local Authority boundaries. Therefore, the scheme sets out the admissions timetable and the responsibility to exchange information between schools and Local Authorities to ensure Swindon makes one fair offer to all residents of the Borough.
- 3.16 The purpose of the co-ordinated scheme is to ensure that every parent of a child living in Swindon who has applied for a school place receives the offer of one school place on the same day.
- 3.17 This applies to admission for the point of entry for Reception, Year 3 and Year 7 for all categories of schools including Community, Voluntary Controlled, Voluntary Aided, Foundation and Academies. The proposed co-ordinated scheme and timescales for the 2020-21 academic year is attached in Appendix 1.

Admission Arrangements

- 3.18 All schools are required to set fair and transparent arrangements for assessing priority for admission.
- 3.19 The key part of the admission arrangements is to set criteria used to determine admission where more parents / carers have expressed a preference for a particular school than it has places available in a particular year. The published oversubscription criteria must be applied to decide which preferences should be met.

School Admission Arrangements 2020-21

Cabinet

Date: 6th February 2019

- 3.20 The oversubscription criteria must be set out clearly and unambiguously, making clear not only what the criteria are but also the way and order in which they will be applied.
- 3.21 The proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools are set out in Appendix 2. A full analysis of the response is set out within Appendix 3.

In Year Coordinated Admissions

- 3.22 Following a number of complaints during the 2016/2017 academic year on delays in dealing with in year applications, the Local Authority consulted and implemented a scheme outside of the normal admissions round in July 2017 to co-ordinate applications for schools.
- 3.23 The in-year co-ordinated scheme operates a shorter version of the co-ordinated scheme from paragraph 3.14 by opening and closing 12-13 admissions rounds during the course of the year.
- 3.24 The new scheme has been in operation since September 2017 and has helped the school admissions team deal with the high demand for applications to change schools during the year and assisted schools with managing the induction of new pupils through a controlled process.
- 3.25 In the first process period (admissions round) in September 2018 the admissions team processed 1175 applications alone from applicants moving into Swindon or to change school during the first part of the year.
- 3.26 Since September 2018, the School Admissions Team implemented the In Year Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme as an online process. This has meant that parents / carers have to apply for school places using the online portal via the Swindon Borough Council website instead of submitting paper applications. This is in line with two of the priorities of the Swindon Programme: moving customer contact online and to reduce the amount of paper used by the Council.
- 3.27 At present, the applications for the point of entry allocations for Reception and Secondary school places are already available on line with success in terms of take up with 90% of all applications made online for these processes. This process has now been applied to In Year Admissions from September 2018. If parents / carers are unable to access a computer or smart phone to make an application, the Admissions Team encourages them to make the application at the child's current school, local library or to come into the Council offices for one of the team to help them directly and to support them through the process.
- 3.28 This online process has a number of benefits for the user and includes parents / carers being able to make their applications in the comfort of their own home day or night, receive an automatic email to confirm receipt of the application and

School Admission Arrangements 2020-21

Cabinet

Date: 6th February 2019

receive notifications of the offer of a school place via email. This also allows the offers to be accessed instantly instead of waiting 2-3 days for a letter in the post and has reduced printing costs of the team significantly, as the LA no longer sends any hard copy letters.

3.29 The proposal in this report is to agree the In Year Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for the 2020-21, taking into account the new online process.

3.30 The proposed In Year Coordinated Scheme is included as Appendix 4.

Published Admission Numbers (PAN)

3.31 All schools must have an admission number for each age group. The admission number is the upper limit of pupils that will be offered places in the particular year. Admission numbers should be set with regard to the capacity assessment for the school.

3.32 Once an admission number has been set, the Admission Authority must respect that number. Pupils should not be admitted above the published admission number unless exceptional circumstances apply.

3.33 As above, Governing bodies of Academies and Voluntary Aided Schools are responsible for setting their own PAN and the Local Authority is a stakeholder in their consultation. This section relates to the PANs set by the Local Authority in consultation with schools as the Admission Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools.

3.34 The proposed published admission numbers have been included as part of Appendix 2. Under the School Admissions Code 2014, the Local Authority, as the Admitting Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, is not required to consult on the admissions number as part of the consultation on admission arrangements if they are requesting the school to increase or keep the same PAN. However, they must consult the Governing Body of the school. Consultation would be required where it is intended to reduce the published admission number.

3.35 As part of this consultation, the LA consulted on the proposal to reduce the PAN for the Reception intake in September 2019 for Bridlewood Primary School from 60 to 30. This is due to a lower than expected allocation of pupils to the reception class in September 2018 and the school could be at a financial risk if they are required to organise the year group into two classes.

3.36 Schools were asked to inform the LA if they disagreed with the proposed PAN for 2020-21 and the LA received no opposition to these.

School Admission Arrangements 2020-21

Cabinet

Date: 6th February 2019

Catchment Areas

- 3.37 All existing catchment areas remain the same with the exception of the proposed area for Chiseldon Primary School. The catchment area for this school previously included the area now known as Badbury Park, but as there is a school opening in this area in September 2019 to serve this community, the LA has proposed that Badbury Park be omitted from Chiseldon Primary Schools catchment area.
- 3.38 The catchment areas were available on the Council's website for comments.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The School Admissions Arrangements must be determined annually for parents / carers applying for school places in the following year. In relation to the arrangements proposed there are no alternatives proposed that differ from the arrangements for 2020-21.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The admission budget is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2020-21 and therefore no corporate funding is required to support this service. However, changes to the admissions policy may have direct impact on the number of pupils in each school, which will affect the level of funding which they receive from the DSG. There are also implications more generally for the DSG of creating additional school places in terms of both set up funding and on-going revenue funding.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 The Council is required to comply with the statutory provisions referred to in the report. All other legal and human rights implications have been considered in the preparation of this report. The recommendations are considered compatible with Convention Rights.
- 5.3 Under Section 89b of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and associated regulations, and the Education Bill 2011 the Council, in its role as a Local Authority, has to determine the co-ordinated scheme and other admission arrangements.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.4 The proposals for additional school places comply with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to develop school policy to maximise school attendance.

School Admission Arrangements 2020-21

Cabinet

Date: 6th February 2019

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment was undertaken and a copy can be obtained from the report author.
- 5.6 The admission arrangements in the report are used for the purposes of prioritising individual applications for admission to school based on family arrangements and the distance they reside from a school. The admission criteria set out in the report are based on published guidance from the Department for Education to ensure that they are arranged and operated in a clear, fair and transparent way according to a nationally imposed timescale.
- 5.7 It is considered that the admission arrangements set out in the report do not discriminate against disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status or pregnancy/maternity

Risk Management

- 5.8 The co-ordinated admissions scheme, including in year admissions, has strengthened the measures in place for safeguarding children as the Admissions Team are aware of every child in Swindon and are aware of transfers coming into or out of the Borough. This will continue if the proposals for in year admissions are agreed.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all Cabinet reports.
- 6.2 In relation to the consultation carried out with Admission Authorities, etc. the following were consulted:
 - 6.2.1 Head Teachers of all maintained schools in Swindon application procedures;
 - 6.2.2 Chairs of Governors of all maintained schools in Swindon via the Head Teachers of the School
 - 6.2.3 Secondary Admission Authorities within 8 km of the Borough Boundary
 - 6.2.4 Primary Admission Authorities within 3.2 km of the Borough Boundary
 - 6.2.5 Dioceses of Education
 - 6.2.6 Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire Local Authorities
 - 6.2.7 Ward members and Parish Councils within Swindon Borough

School Admission Arrangements 2020-21

Cabinet

Date: 6th February 2019

6.2.8 Relevant parents / carers and local interest groups as set out in the School Admissions Code

6.2.9 School Admissions Forum.

7. Background Papers

7.1 None

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 - Proposed Co-ordinated Scheme 2020-21

8.2 Appendix 2 – Proposed Admission Arrangements for all Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2020-21

8.3 Appendix 3 – Consultation responses

8.4 Appendix 4 – Proposed In Year Coordination Scheme for 2020-21

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme

9.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme for February 2019.