

School Admissions

Children's Health, Social Care and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 13th April 2016

Author: Head of Education
Wards: All
Locality Affected: All
Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report outlines the responsibilities of the Admissions Team throughout the year regarding their statutory duties
- 1.2 The report is informative and reports to the Committee the recent work of the Admissions Team
- 1.3 The Admissions Team works under the Vision Priority "Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places."

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within the report

3. Schools in Swindon

- 3.1 There are 74 mainstream schools within Swindon which are broken down by type and phase below

Phase	Academy	Community	Voluntary Aided	Voluntary Controlled	Grand Total
All Through	1	0	0	0	1
Infant	2	3	1	0	6
Junior	2	3	1	0	6
Primary	27	20	1	2	50
Secondary	9	1	0	0	10
UTC	1	0	0	0	1
Grand Total	42	27	3	2	74

- 3.2 Swindon Borough Council is the admissions authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools. It is the governors/academy trust who are responsible for admissions into schools which are their own admitting authorities

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4. Admissions Team

- 4.1 The Admissions Team consists of 5 members of staff, Admissions Manager, 2 x Admissions and Appeals Officers and 2 x Admissions Officers.

5. Responsibilities of the School Admissions Team

Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordinated Scheme

- 5.1 The Local Authority has a duty to write, consult upon admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools. This is then determined by Cabinet in the year prior to admission in accordance with the School Admissions Code.

Point of entry admissions

- 5.2 The Admissions Team is responsible for co-ordinating the admission into schools for the first time for all Swindon residents; this includes

5.2.1 Entry to primary/infant schools (Reception Year Group)

5.2.2 Transfer from junior schools (Year 3)

5.2.3 Transfer from junior/primary schools to secondary schools (Year 7)

5.2.4 Transfer to the University Technical College (Year 10)

In-year admissions

- 5.3 The Admissions Team is the first point of contact for admissions for children moving into Swindon during the academic year and for those wishing to transfer to a different Swindon school. As stated above admissions into community and voluntary controlled schools are considered by the Local Authority.

Admission Appeals

- 5.4 When a child is refused a place at a school, the parent has the right of appeal. The Admissions Team write and present the case as to why a child has been refused a place at the respective school. This and the parent's case are heard by an independent panel to determine whether the application was considered correctly and whether the child's case is exceptional to allow a place at the school.

6. Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordinated Scheme

- 6.1 All schools must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more

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applications than places at the school. Admission arrangements are determined by admission authorities.

- 6.2 The Admissions Code requires that oversubscription criteria must be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation. Admission authorities must ensure that their arrangements will not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational needs. Admission arrangements must include an effective, clear and fair tie-breaker to decide between two applications that cannot otherwise be separated.

- 6.3 Admissions criteria must include criteria which prioritises children as follows

6.3.1 Children who have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan where the school is named on the statement or plan;

6.3.2 Children who are in the care of local authorities as defined by Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 or previously in care immediately prior to the issue of a special guardianship; child arrangements or adoption order.

These criteria are always first in any admissions criteria

- 6.4 Other criteria may also include a sibling already attending the school; living within the catchment area or attending a feeder school.
- 6.5 The admission arrangements also determine the "published admissions number" i.e. the number of places to be offered in the relevant year group. This is determined by the capacity and space of the school and the resources available at the school. The Admissions Code in 2012 introduced that academies can exceed their published admission number if they wish.
- 6.6 It is the responsibility of the admission authority to consult upon their admission arrangements whenever there is a change to their policy or at least every seven years. The School Admissions Code determines the statutory consultees, when the consultation should take place and for how long.
- 6.7 The Admission Arrangements for 2017-18 for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools were consulted upon during November and December and the results reported to Cabinet on 10th February 2016. Cabinet agreed the admission arrangements.
- 6.8 The Co-ordinated Scheme is also formulated by the Local Authority. This determines the key dates within the admissions process including the closing date for applications; dates that information is exchanged and the offer date.

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Some of these dates are statutory which means e.g. that all councils conform to the same closing and offer dates.

7. Point of entry admissions

- 7.1 Each year the admissions team consider the applications for point of entry according to the dates within the co-ordinated scheme.
- 7.2 A parent can make an application for a school place, stating up to three preferences on their application form for schools either within or outside the Swindon Borough Council area.
- 7.3 Applications are considered according to equal preference which means that in the first instance, all preferences expressed on the application are considered at the same time regardless of the rank indicated. All the preferences for each school are ranked according to the oversubscription criteria as set in the admission arrangements and places allocated up to the published admission number.
- 7.4 If through this first determination, a child can be offered a place at more than 1 school, it is then when the order of the schools listed on the application form is taken into consideration and the highest rank will be offered.
- 7.5 Equal preference is the fairest approach when allocating school places, as it means that it is done according to the oversubscription criteria, however it can mean that a child who has ranked the school as their second preference may be allocated a place rather than a child who has ranked it as their first preference because they are higher within the oversubscription criteria.
- 7.6 The table below show the ontime offer of school places for Swindon residents for the past five years for Primary offers.

Year	1 st preference rate	1 st – 3 rd preference rate
2016	To be allocated on 18 th April	To be allocated on 18 th April
2015	93%	98.1%
2014	91.8%	98.2%
2013	91.0%	97.0%
2012	91.0%	98.8%

- 7.7 In 2015, Swindon Borough Council was placed 2nd in the South West for the 1st preference rate and 18th nationally
- 7.8 The table below show the ontime offer of school places for Swindon residents for the past five years for Secondary offers.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Rebecca Mathis, Direct Dial 01793 465766, rmathis1@swindon.gov.uk.

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Year	1 st preference rate	1 st – 3 rd preference rate
2016	94.6%	99.3%
2015	95.6%	99.2%
2014	93.8%	99.0%
2013	97.2%	99.7%
2012	98.8%	99.8%

7.9 In 2015, Swindon Borough Council was placed 4th in the South West for the 1st preference rate and joint 11th nationally.

7.10 There are many factors which determine whether a child is given one of their preferences. Where a child is not offered one of their preferences they are offered the nearest school with a place available, therefore the decision as to which preferences to record is important.

7.10.1 The Local Authority encourage parents to use all preferences to give the best opportunity to be offered a preference, this message is published with all the allocation information including on the application form, however this messages is not always heeded.

7.10.2 The application should be submitted before the closing date in order for it to be considered as an ontime application. Applications received after the closing date are not considered until all ontime applications have been allocated a place.

7.10.3 It is important to ensure that there are enough places for the number of children expected to apply within the relevant cohort and in the right places. Information is collated from child health data from the year of birth and updated each year to predict the number of places needed across the Borough.

7.10.4 In addition to the above, academies can decide to admit over their admission number and often make this decision after they are given information regarding the number of applications made.

7.10.5 Where a school is popular and therefore more oversubscribed, whilst this means that the school will be full, it also means that more children may not be successful in gaining a place. The Admissions Team ensure that the allocation information for all schools in the area are published within the composite guide to give parents the opportunity to understand the likelihood of gaining a place at the school.

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- 7.11 The Admissions Team are always available to offer impartial advice regarding which preferences a parent may wish to consider, given the history of allocation in the past. The team also hold drop in sessions throughout the allocation period.

8. In year admissions

- 8.1 A significant period of time is spent considering applications made to transfer during the academic year. Applications are made for a number of reasons but mainly are because of a house move or that the child is not happy in the current school.
- 8.2 For the academic year 2015-16 until the end of February 2016, 1446 applications have been received at an average of 40 applications per week.
- 8.3 In 2012, the Department for Education removed the co-ordination of in year applications which was introduced 2 years previously. At this time all of the schools in Swindon agreed that the Local authority would remain to be the first point of contact for all in-year admissions into Swindon schools. The principle reason for this was to ensure that for safeguarding purposes the LA was aware of all applications and could monitor their status.
- 8.4 The LA remains the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, but the responsibility for considering applications for academies and voluntary aided schools are now with the school. The Admissions Team do offer a traded service which schools can buy into whereby the governors delegate responsibility and administrative function to the admissions team. At the current time 16 schools buy into this package.
- 8.5 During this academic year, 286 applications were made by those moving into Swindon without a Swindon School (approx. 20%), of which approximately 47% are offered one of their expressed preferences and 53% were allocated an alternative school not of their original preference.

9. Alternative Options

- 9.1 The School Admissions Team has statutory responsibilities concerning the allocation of school places and the determination of admission arrangements and the co-ordinated scheme.

10. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 10.1 The admission budget is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2017-18 and therefore no corporate funding is required to support this service. However, changes to the admissions policy may have direct impact on the

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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

- 10.2 The Council is required to comply with the statutory provisions referred to in the report. All other legal and human rights implications are considered in the preparation of this report. The recommendations are considered compatible with Convention Rights.
- 10.3 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 that are to apply in their area for September 2017-18 and notify the Secretary of State by 28th February 2016. Failure to do so will lead to a scheme being imposed.

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

- 10.4 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.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 10.1 A Diversity Impact Assessment is undertaken when presenting the admission arrangements report to Cabinet.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 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

- 10.4 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

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or out of the Borough. This will continue if the proposals for in year admissions made by the Admissions working party are agreed.

11. Consultees

- 11.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 None.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 None.