

School Admission Arrangements and Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy 2021-22

Cabinet

Date: 5th February 2020

Author:	Cabinet Member for Children's Services Commissioner Education Place Planning and Admissions
Wards:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's agreement to approve for all admissions in Swindon from September 2021 – a) the co-ordinated scheme of admission arrangements for the normal point of entry for all primary schools and secondary schools; b) the co-ordinated In Year admission arrangements for all primary schools and secondary schools; c) the admission numbers and arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools for all admissions from September 2021. This reports also seeks Cabinet's agreement to approve the Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy for 2021-22.
- 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 (Appendix 1a and 1b) for the normal point of entry (Reception Year, Year 3 and Year 7) for all primary schools and secondary schools in Swindon for all admissions and are implemented from September 2021 for all applicants;
- 2.2 Approve the co-ordinated In Year admission arrangements (Appendix 4), for all primary schools and secondary schools in Swindon for all admissions and are implemented from September 2021 for all applicants;
- 2.3 Approve the admission numbers and arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools (Appendix 2) for all admissions and are implemented from September 2021 for all applicants and note that no opposition from Schools was received;
- 2.4 Approve the Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy (Appendix 5) for all admissions and is implemented for all applicants for 2021-22.

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3. Detail

Admission Arrangements

- 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, but the Local Authorities has added a coordinated approach to requests to delay for summer born children, which is in line with our neighbouring LA's. This is explained in more detail in the paragraphs below. There is also a proposed change with the timeframe and the way the Admissions Team will process in-year admissions through the in-year coordinated scheme, with further implementation of the admissions process online.
- 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 the Admissions Code December 2014.
- 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
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.

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- 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.

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 2020. The consultation ran between the 11th November and 30th December 2019.
- 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.
- 3.10 Schools were also asked to advertise the consultation on their websites, publish information in their school newsletters, and by displaying posters.
- 3.11 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 7 responses to the consultation, 1 in writing and 6 through the online survey.

Admissions Consultation responses:

- 3.12 In terms of the Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2021, 5 out of the 6 respondents agreed with the proposals. Please also note that the respondent who disagreed with the arrangements made the comment 'Haven't looked at them. I am here for the SEND Transport Policy'.
- 3.13 In response to the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for the point of entry for 2021 for all schools, 5 out of the 6 respondents agreed with this.
- 3.14 For the proposed In Year Co-ordinated Scheme, 5 out of the 6 respondents agreed with the proposal. We also received comments from St Joseph's Catholic College regarding the arrangements and the responses are set out in Appendix 3.

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Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for the Point of Entry

- 3.15 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 with.
- 3.16 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.
- 3.17 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.
- 3.18 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.
- 3.19 For September 2021 the LA has introduced a coordinated approach and process for parents of children who are summer born and wish to request for their child to delay their admission until the reception year when their child would be 5 years old and would normally enter Year 1. This can be confusing for parents and schools and the decision parents are making is significant for their child. The policy seeks to clarify the legal position, ensure there is as much information available for parents and schools in one place, and to ensure that parents also have on-time admissions applications at the same time as making a request to delay so that if the request is refused, they still have an on-time application form. The LA is asking all schools, regardless of the type of Admitting Authority, to participate in this process. In short, the LA will receive the request to delay at the same time as the admissions application form, and the LA will facilitate the process by passing the request on to the admitting authority for the school applied for, for them to make the decision.
- 3.20 The Delayed and Deferred Admissions Policy is attached as an Appendix to the Co-ordinated Admissions Arrangements (Appendix 1).

Admission Arrangements

- 3.21 All schools are required to set fair and transparent arrangements for assessing priority for admission.

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- 3.22 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.
- 3.23 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.
- 3.24 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

- 3.25 In Year Admissions in Swindon have been considered under the In Year Coordinated Admissions Scheme since September 2017. The scheme operates a shorter version of the co-ordinated scheme from paragraph 3.14 by opening and closing on average 14 admissions rounds during the course of the year.
- 3.26 The coordinated in year scheme 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.
- 3.27 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.
- 3.28 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 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 From September 2019 the Admissions Team receive on average 260 in year applications per month via the online process. As part of the coordinated process if parents are unsuccessful in gaining a place at one of their preferred schools and they do not have a school place, then we will allocate them a place the next nearest school with a place available. We have allocated over 450 places to

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children within this category, all of which otherwise would have been out of school for much longer whilst they reapplied for a school place.

- 3.30 One of the main proposed changes to the In Year Scheme is that from September 2020 the LA will be able to implement the Admissions Portal which is an online platform that will allow Swindon School that are part of the Scheme to see the entire online application form and be able to rank the applications. This will mean that the LA will no longer need to send the Schools lists of applications, which will speed up the admissions process. This will ensure the admissions cycles are more efficient and therefore more effective, and the time saved by this Portal will be used to reduce the length of the cycles from 30 school days to 25, and if possible to 20.
- 3.31 The LA has been informed by the Clifton Diocese of Bristol that they have recommended all their schools in each Local Authority area opt out of any in year coordinated scheme. This is because they are establishing a common admissions policy for all Catholic Schools to follow and they want all their schools to be responsible for their own admissions. The scheme is not a statutory requirement of the School Admissions Code and own admitting authority schools that are currently part of the scheme have to consult on opting out at the earliest opportunity. The LA has been notified by 4 schools (3 Primary and 1 secondary) that they will be opting out of the scheme from September 2021. In accordance with this, the LA has included a section in the In Year Scheme – Part 4. This proposes a process by which schools that opt out can work with the LA to ensure that we are still informed about any applications made to the school, and decisions made, to ensure that a child is not unknown to the Borough. This is paramount to ensure that the LA maintains safeguarding of all children in the Borough.
- 3.32 The proposal in this report is to agree the In Year Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for the 2021-22, taking into account the new online process.
- 3.33 The proposed In Year Coordinated Scheme is included as Appendix 4.

Published Admission Numbers (PAN)

- 3.34 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.
- 3.35 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.

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- 3.36 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.
- 3.37 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.
- 3.38 Schools were asked to inform the LA if they disagreed with the proposed PAN for 2021-22 and the LA received no opposition to these.

Catchment Areas

- 3.39 All existing catchment areas remain the same. The catchment areas were available on the Council's website for comments.

Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy 2021-22

- 3.40 The Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy was consulted upon at the same time as the Admissions Arrangements and was sent to the same bodies as listed in 3.9. It was also sent to Specialist provision in Swindon and Swindon SEND Families Voice. All 6 respondents were in agreement with the policy. The Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy is attached as Appendix 5.
- 3.41 Please note that the SEND Transport Policy was also consulted upon but due to information received during the consultation it has been agreed that this policy should undergo further development and consultation. This will be undertaken in the Summer Term to ensure that it be determined by Cabinet at its meeting in July 2020.
- 3.42 The Local Authority has a legal duty, following consultation, to publish by September of each year its transport policy, which will apply 12 months later. The previous Education Transport Policy was made up of both the Mainstream and SEND policies, but these have now been separated into defined policies in order to make it clear to parents / carers and children which policy applies.
- 3.43 Free home to school transport is set out within the Education Act 1996, as amended, and provides for free home to school transport to be offered to all pupils who meet the following criteria:

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- 3.43.1 Are of statutory school age (5-16);
 - 3.43.2 Attend their designated appropriate area school (or another school at which the Local Authority has offered a place); and
 - 3.43.3 Live more than three miles from their catchment area school (or two miles if under eight years of age) or do not have a safe walking route when accompanied by an adult to their catchment area school.
- 3.44 In addition, the Education & Inspections Act 2006 widened statutory home to school transport for pupils from low-income families, in certain circumstances. Low-income families are defined as those who are entitled to free school meals or are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit. These provisions are therefore, as follows:
- 3.44.1 Primary – to the nearest suitable school if more than two miles from home;
 - 3.44.2 Secondary – to any of the three nearest suitable schools if between two and six miles from home (which, in practice, applies to all Swindon pupils who travel beyond two miles);
 - 3.44.3 Primary/Secondary – to the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (as defined by the Equality Act 2006) if between two and fifteen miles from home.
- 3.45 As mentioned above in paragraph 3.2, children must currently be attending the 'designated appropriate area school' and live over the 2 or 3 mile statutory distances, in order to qualify for assistance with transport.
- 3.46 The Education Transport Policy 2014 introduced "designated transport areas" which defined the designated transport area for a school
- 3.47 If a parent chooses to send their child to a school other than the designated appropriate area school, then (apart from the provisions of the Education & Inspections Act 2006) free school transport is not normally provided and the parent is responsible for any travel costs.
- 4. Alternative Options**
- 4.1 The School Admissions Arrangements and Transport Policy 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 2021-22.

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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 2021-22 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. 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 the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended, particularly section 89B and associated regulations, the Council, in its role as a Local Authority, is required to determine a qualifying scheme for co-ordinating admission arrangements.

Climate Change Impact

- 5.4 The proposals would not bring a change in service delivery and Officers believe that there is no expected effect on the Council's carbon footprint

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

- 5.5 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

- 5.6 A Diversity Impact Assessment was undertaken and a copy can be obtained from the report author.
- 5.7 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.

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- 5.8 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

- 5.9 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 Corporate Director of Finance and Assets (s151 officer) and Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

6.1.1 The Corporate Director of Finance and Assets (s151 Officer) cleared this report for publication on: 28th January 2020.

6.1.2 The Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) cleared this report for publication on: 24th January 2020.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1:

8.1.1 a - Proposed Co-ordinated Scheme 2021-22 (The appendix is available online at the Council's website or on request from Committee and Member Services committeeservices@swindon.gov.uk)

8.1.2 b - the Delayed and Deferred Admissions Policy. (The appendix is available online at the Council's website or on request from Committee and Member Services committeeservices@swindon.gov.uk)

- 8.2 Appendix 2 – Proposed Admission Arrangements for all Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2021-22 (The appendix is available online at the Council's website or on request from Committee and Member Services committeeservices@swindon.gov.uk)

- 8.3 Appendix 3 – Consultation responses (The appendix is available online at the Council's website or on request from Committee and Member Services committeeservices@swindon.gov.uk)

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- 8.4 Appendix 4 – Proposed In Year Coordination Scheme for 2021-22 (The appendix is available online at the Council's website or on request from Committee and Member Services committeeservices@swindon.gov.uk)
- 8.5 Appendix 5 – Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy 2021-22 (The appendix is available online at the Council's website or on request from Committee and Member Services committeeservices@swindon.gov.uk)
- 9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan**
- 9.1 This is Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for February 2020.