

School Admission Arrangements 2017-18

Cabinet

Date: 10th February 2016

Author: Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Head of Education

Wards: All

Locality Affected: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To agree and put in place co-ordinated admission arrangements for the normal point of entry (Reception, Year 3, Year 7 and Year 10 (UTC)) and In-year admission arrangements for all Swindon Schools and Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Swindon for September 2017.
- 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 Note the response to the public consultation on admission arrangements as set out below and at Appendix 3
- 2.2 Approve the co-ordinated scheme of admission arrangements for the normal point of entry (Reception Year, Year 3 and Year 7 and Year 10 (University Technical College)) and In Year admissions for all primary schools and secondary schools in Swindon from September 2017 as set out at Appendix 2;
- 2.3 Approve the admission numbers and arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools from September 2017 Appendix 1;
- 2.4 Note that, if approved by Cabinet, these proposals will be determined by 28th February 2016 and will be implemented by the Head of Education for admission from September 2017 for all applicants.

3. Detail

- 3.1 The admission arrangements and co-ordinated scheme are consulted upon annually, the changes which have been made to the policies since last determined are:
 - 3.1.1 Clarification concerning the definition when measuring the home to school distance, and

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Rebecca Mathis, 01793 46 5766, rmathis1@swindon.gov.uk.

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- 3.1.2 Further definition concerning when multiple applications are received from parents with joint parental responsibility.
- 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) and 14 (University Technical College (UTC)).
- 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 its admission policy, published admission number, and 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 its arrangements; this is the responsibility of the Academy Trust or Governing body as indicated in the above table.
- 3.6 In addition to 3.5, the Local Authority is required to formulate a co-ordinated scheme 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 Admission Arrangements and oversubscription criteria (Community and Voluntary Controlled School), this also includes:
- Published Admissions Numbers;
 - School Catchment Areas.

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- 3.8 The arrangements must be determined by the 28th February 2016 and published on the Local Authority's website by the 15th March in the determination year.

Consultation

- 3.9 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 2016. The consultation ran between the 9th November 2015 and 20th December 2015.
- 3.10 In February 2014, the Cabinet adopted a Consultation Policy to restate clearly the Council's commitment to effective and efficient public consultation and set the expectation that this commitment will be consistently applied, particularly in relation to the Council's key decisions (Cabinet Minute 89, 2013/14 refers)
- 3.11 The Policy shows how consultations meet the Council's legal requirements and adhere to a local standard of ten principles that will help ensure that consultation is undertaken effectively, in a timely manner, at an appropriate stage in the decision making process and that results are used to inform policy development and service delivery.
- 3.12 The School Admissions Code outlines the list of relevant bodies that must be consulted. These are outlined in section 6 below.
- 3.13 The Local Authority publicised the consultation on its website and through all local schools, nurseries and pre-schools. The consultation was also sent directly to Governing Bodies, neighbouring Local Authorities, pre-schools, children centres, nurseries, and the Diocesan Boards of Education. The Local Authority notified all ward councillor and parish councillors and Locality Teams.
- 3.14 In light of the School's adjudicator report in 2014 to increase promotion to parents of children aged between 2-18, the consultation was publicised direct using the Council's Twitter social media page and was featured during the #OurDay promotion of Council activities.
- 3.15 Schools were also asked to feedback how they were advertising the consultation. Feedback from 10% of schools received indicated that the information was published in newsletters, on the school website and by displaying posters.
- 3.16 Survey responses could be made in writing or by using an online survey tool. The survey tool allowed responses to both the admission arrangements. There were 21 responses to the proposed admission arrangements of which 14 (66.67%) were in agreement, 13 (61.9%) were in agreement, however there were 7 who did not respond to the question
- 3.17 There were 29 responses to the proposed admission numbers of which 27 were in agreement. A full analysis of the responses is set out within **Appendix 3**.
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- 3.18 Historically, responses to the consultation have been low, however this year there has been an increase in the number of responses made by parents (76%) which is encouraging.

Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme

- 3.19 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.
- 3.20 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.
- 3.21 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.
- 3.22 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. It also includes entry into Year 10 for the University Technical College (UTC). The proposed co-ordinated scheme and timescales for the 2017/18 academic year is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Admission Arrangements

- 3.23 All schools are required to set fair and transparent arrangements for assessing priority for admission.
- 3.24 The key part of the admission arrangements is to set criteria used to determine admission where more parents 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.
- 3.25 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.
- 3.26 One objection to the admission arrangements was on the grounds that children in catchment should be prioritised above siblings in relation to a village school because it disadvantaged those children who lived within the village because there could be fewer places available for them.

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3.27 Since 2010, admission arrangements have prioritised all siblings above those living within the catchment area because it was felt to be unfair that siblings could potentially be split by attending different schools.

3.28 The proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Published Admission Numbers (PAN)

3.29 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.

3.30 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.

3.31 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.

3.32 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.

3.33 The responses to the admissions numbers for community and voluntary controlled schools are shown in **Appendix 3**.

Catchment Areas

3.34 There have been no changes to the catchment area this time.

3.35 A number of responses objecting to the admission arrangements were in relation to the Chiseldon Catchment area. This is in relation to the Badbury Park Development and concern that there is an expectation because the houses fall within this catchment area that they would be expected to attend the school.

3.36 Whilst the development does fall within the catchment area, there are closer schools e.g. Liden and Eldene Primary Schools.

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- 3.37 A site as has been identified within the development for a primary school site. Under the "Free school presumption" this school would be outside of the control of the Local authority therefore in accordance with the definitions explained, it would be the Academy Trust who would be responsible for the determining of their admissions policy, including any catchment area should they wish to designate one.
- 3.38 Parents have the right to express which school they wish to apply for and this may include schools, which are not their catchment school and may be closer in distance to the new development.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Should the admission arrangements and co-ordinated scheme for 2017-18 not be determined by 28th February 2016, the Secretary of State would impose a scheme.

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 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 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 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)

- 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.

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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 made by the Admissions working party are agreed.

6. Consultees

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

In relation to the consultation carried out with Admission Authorities, etc. the following were consulted:

- Head Teachers of all maintained schools in Swindon application procedures;
- Chairs of Governors of all maintained schools in Swindon
- Secondary Admission Authorities within 8 km of the Borough Boundary
- Primary Admission Authorities within 3.2 km of the Borough Boundary
- Church of England Diocese of Bristol Board of Education
- Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton
- Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire Local Authorities
- Ward Members

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- Parish Councils within Swindon Borough
- Appeal Clerks
- Relevant parents and local interest groups as set out in the School Admissions Code
- School Admissions Forum.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 The School Admissions Code 2014
- 7.2 The School Admissions Appeals Code 2012

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - Proposed Co-ordinated Scheme 2017-18
- 8.2 Appendix 2 - Proposed Admission Arrangements for all Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2017-18
- 8.3 Appendix 3 - Consultation responses

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme / Forward Plan for February 2016.