

# BRIEFING PAPER

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**SUBJECT:** ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR THE 2015/16 ACADEMIC YEAR

**DATE:** 10 APRIL 2014

**RECIPIENT:** OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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## THIS IS NOT A DECISION PAPER

### SUMMARY:

A report is scheduled to go to Cabinet on 15 April seeking the approval of admissions arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools for the 2015/16 academic year. The paper is also seeking approval to increase the Published Admissions Number of four schools.

### BACKGROUND and BRIEFING DETAILS:

1. Every year the Local Authority is required to consult on the admissions arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. These need to be confirmed 18 months before they are implemented (i.e. for the 2015/16 academic year a decision is required by April 2014). As well as consulting on oversubscription criteria, we have also consulted on proposals to increase the Published Admission Number (PAN) of four schools in 2015/16. This is in response to the increased demand for places during that year. 2015/16 will be the peak year for demand and pupil numbers are forecast to drop back down closer to current levels in 2016/17. As such, officers believe it prudent to expand schools for one year only. This can be done via the admissions consultation and due to the relatively small size of the proposed expansions, no statutory school organisation consultation process is required.
2. The expansion proposals relate to the following schools:
  - Bitterne Park Primary** – PAN increase from 90 to 120 (it is proposed that the extra classroom will be achieved by the reorganisation of existing space within the school)
  - Bitterne Manor Primary** – PAN increase from 30 to 60 (it is proposed that the music room will be converted into a staff room, the staff room into a pre-school and the pre-school into a classroom)
  - Mansbridge Primary** – PAN increase from 30 to 60 (it is proposed that the library will be converted into a classroom)
  - Thornhill Primary** – PAN increase from 45 to 60 (the school has historically accommodated up to 420 pupils so the school has enough classrooms to admit up to 60 pupils in one year group. It is also planned that they will admit up to 60 Year R pupils in 2014/15)

We are also in discussions with Portwood Primary School about increasing their PAN from 60 to 90 with the use of a modular classroom. As an academy it will be for the school to decide whether or not to take this forward.

The table below shows the number of Year R places available compared to the forecast number of Year R pupils:

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Academic Year	Number of Pupils	Number of Places
2014/15	3,060	3,135
2015/16	3,245	3,255 (subject to cabinet approval)
2016/17	3,100	3,120
2017/18	2,940	3,120

We plan to have a limited amount of surplus places available as to have a large number would be financially detrimental to the schools and the Local Authority.

## Admissions Arrangements for Academies

- Academies determine their own admission arrangements and oversubscription criteria. The subject of “vulnerable children” was discussed in detail at the meeting of the Southampton Admissions Forum on 26 February. It was noted that most of the Academies consulting on arrangements for 2015/16 were reinstating a category of “children subject to a child protection plan” albeit not in exactly the same place as the LA has the category of “children subject to a child protection plan or otherwise deemed vulnerable by the Senior Officer with responsibility for Safeguarding”. It was pointed out in the discussion that none of the “faith schools” (i.e Holy Family; Springhill; St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School; Highfield C of E Primary and St Anne’s and St George) have ever had such a criterion; nor have they had a medical criteria either.
- It was clear from the discussion at the Forum that Academies would not have access to information that the LA (as admission authority) would have in its role as the agency responsible for safeguarding. Indeed a governor of an academy asking for information about a child would be most unlikely to be given it for confidentiality reasons. This meant that an Academy could not have “otherwise deemed vulnerable” as part of its arrangements. It was also felt that perhaps the Local Authority’s criterion needed to be amended to reflect better the aim of meeting the needs of vulnerable children in the city without extending too widely so that it applied to hundreds of children. The outcome of the discussion was that the Local Authority would hold discussions with other admission authorities in the city to see if a universal definition could be agreed, although it was accepted that this could only be adopted for 2016/17 entry. The Local Authority will start discussion with heads of all schools, and others, in the summer term.

## RESOURCE/POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

### Financial

- There will be some capital costs arising from the need to expand the four schools for one year. Approval for the addition of the capital projects to the Education Capital Programme will be requested at the June Council meeting. It is anticipated that the costs of these projects will be funded from Department for Education Basic Need capital grant, subject to the relevant authorisations being given by full Council.

School revenue budgets are funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant and there are therefore no additional revenue costs to the general fund arising directly from the

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approval of the admissions policies for the academic year 2015-16.

## Legal

6. As the size of the expansions are not large enough to trigger the requirement for full statutory consultation, as per School Organisation guidance, the consultation has been in line with the admissions code. The consultation on admissions arrangements ran from November 2013 to February 2014. The proposals were published on the council websites and key stakeholders were also informed (e.g. local dioceses, all schools, neighbouring Local Authorities). A significant number of responses were received, the majority of which were in relation to the proposed expansion of Bitterne Manor Primary. All responses will be published with the Cabinet papers. The main concerns were:

Issue raised	LA Response
Loss of ancillary space (e.g. music room)	Several other schools have less ancillary space and a greater number of pupils than Bitterne Manor and provide a high standard of education. As such, it is not felt that the loss of this space will have a detrimental impact on education standards.
Increased traffic levels	While acknowledging that there is traffic congestion at the site this is a common problem at many schools. The LA advise that the school produce/update a school travel plan and that parents refrain from parking near the school entrance.
Impact on future admissions – some parents are concerned that siblings will be offered places ahead of local children in the future.	Those with a sibling at the school will get a place ahead of those that live in the catchment area. We estimate that 1-4 extra year R pupils in any one year could be eligible for a place via sibling criteria. If we didn't expand the school there will be some children that currently live in the local area that may not get a place.

A paper is due to go to Cabinet on 15 April 2014 seeking approval for the 2015/16 admissions arrangements, including the proposed PAN increases.

## Policy

7. The proposed expansions are in line with the School Organisation Plan 2013-2022.

### **Appendices/Supporting Information:**

None

### **Further Information Available From:**

**Name:** James Howells  
**Tel:** 023 8091 7501  
**E-mail:** James.Howells@southampton.gov.uk