

DECISION-MAKER:	Cabinet
SUBJECT:	Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2025-26
DATE OF DECISION:	6 FEBRUARY 2024
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND LEARNING

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

N/A

BRIEF SUMMARY

All schools must have an admissions policy which lays out criteria for how they will decide which children secure places if more children apply than the school has spaces available for. Southampton City Council is the admissions authority for the Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in the city.

For 2025 admissions, the Council are proposing to add in the additional oversubscription criterion of 'children of staff', to bring this policy in line with others in the city also being consulted on. As such, a statutory public consultation must take place for a minimum of 6 weeks and is occurring from 15 December 2023 – 26 January 2024. The proposed policies have been shared with all local admission authorities, all schools, diocesan boards, other LA's and is available to view on the Council website.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

	(i)	To approve the Admissions Policies, the Published Admission Numbers (PANs) and the Supplementary Information Form (SIF) for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools and the schemes for coordinating Infant-Primary, Junior and Secondary admissions for the school year 2025-26 as set out in appendices 1 to 5.
	(ii)	To authorise the Executive Director - Wellbeing, Children and Learning to take any action necessary to give effect to the admissions policies and to make any changes necessary to the admissions policies where required to give effect to any Acts, Regulations or revised Schools Admissions or School Admissions Appeals Codes or binding Schools Adjudicator, Court or Ombudsman decisions whenever they arise.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	As a requirement of the Admissions Code 2021, all admission authorities must determine their admission arrangements by 28th February of the determination year. For 2025 entry, the determination year is 2024.
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED	
2..	To take no action. Rejected as would leave Southampton City Council remiss in its statutory duties.
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
3.	<p>The principles of Southampton’s Admission Policies are well established. They seek to fulfil the requirement to be “fair, clear and objective” (School Admissions Code 2021). The proposed policies seek to make this process as transparent as possible. In particular they enable the Local Authority, Schools, and parents:</p> <p>a) To protect the rights of vulnerable children.</p> <p>b) To meet significant medical or psychological needs of individual children.</p> <p>c) To develop, strengthen and support immediate family ties.</p> <p>d) To develop and strengthen links between designated feeder and receiver schools.</p> <p>To have access to reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair criteria that avoid ambiguity in the interpretation of the policy.</p>
4.	Apart from required changes of dates and wording changes for clarity, there are no material changes to the coordinated schemes for Infant-Primary or Secondary transfers, nor to the Supplementary Information Form (SIF).
5.	<p>The 2025-2026 Admissions policy proposes changes to that of the 2025-26 policy. Those changes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The addition of an oversubscription criteria for ‘children of staff’, in line with the parameters of the Admissions Code 2021 that states eligibility only for staff employed by the relevant school for 2 or more years or to fill a vacant position due to a demonstrable skills shortage. <p>Such ‘children of staff’ categories are in use at many other local schools and, while admission under this category is very rare, Southampton City Council seek to adopt this both for consistency between schools and in recognition of the recruitment and retention situation in education nationally.</p>
6.	We would also like to draw attention to the simultaneous consultations being held by schools in the Bridge Education Trust, the Aspire Community Trust, HISP Multi-Academy Trust, the REACH Cooperative Trust, Southampton Cooperative Learning Trust, Freemantle CE Academy, St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School and Saint George Catholic College. While not all schools listed are adopting the same policy, the proposed consultations will result in greater consistency among community, Voluntary Controlled, Voluntary Aided, foundation trust and academy schools throughout the city to aid parental understanding of the admissions process.
7.	A full public consultation has been held from 15 December 2023 – 26 January 2024. This has been published on the SCC website and circulated to all local and border schools, neighbouring local authorities and local Diocese.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	

<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
8.	There are no additional revenue costs arising directly from the approval of the admission policies for the school year 2025-26.
<u>Property/Other</u>	
9.	N/A
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>	
10.	The Education Acts, Regulations made pursuant to them and the School Admissions Code (2021) require Local Authorities to formulate coordinated schemes for dealing with applications to Infant-Primary, Junior and Secondary schools at the relevant age of transfer. Such schemes also include admission to schools where the Local Authority is not the Admission Authority i.e. Voluntary Aided, Foundation, Free Schools and Academies. The schemes must ensure that every parent is notified of one offer of a school place on the same day. A National Offer date of 1 March, or first working day thereafter, has been set for Secondary admissions and a National Offer date of 16 April, or first working day thereafter, for Primary sector admissions. The regulations also set National closing dates for applications of 31 October in the offer year for Secondary applications and 15 January in the offer year for Primary sector applications.
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>	
11.	Admission Arrangements must be fully compliant with the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equalities Act 2010. The Council's proposed Admission Arrangements meet the legislative requirements.
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
12.	The recommendation to agree these arrangements presents no financial risk. The proposals anticipate no changes to the current financial envelope.
13.	The recommendation presents no risks to the current service delivery.
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
14.	None.

KEY DECISION?	Yes
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	SCC Inf-Primary Admissions Policy 2025-26
2.	SCC Secondary Admissions Policy 2025-26
3.	SCC Supplementary Information Form
4.	SCC Infant-Primary Coordinated Scheme
5.	SCC Junior Coordinated Scheme
6.	SCC Secondary Coordinated Scheme

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	N/A	
Equality Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.		No
Data Protection Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.		No
Other Background Documents		
Other Background documents available for inspection at:		
Title of Background Paper(s)		Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.	N/A	