

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET		
SUBJECT:	ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/15		
DATE OF DECISION:	19 MARCH 2013		
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES		
<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY			
None.			

BRIEF SUMMARY

The Council is required by statute to approve its admission policies for the academic year starting September 2014 (including Published Admission Numbers – PANs) by 15 April 2013 to meet the statutory requirement. This allows for the admissions process to begin for all schools in September 2013. This report seeks approval for the 2014 admission policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) To note the responses from the admissions consultation with Southampton Admissions Forum, schools, other relevant admission authorities, and the Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses.
- (ii) To approve the admissions policies and the published admission numbers (PANs) for community and voluntary controlled schools including Bitterne Park, selection by aptitude and 6th form arrangements; the schemes for co-ordinating primary and secondary admissions for the academic year 2014-15 as set out in Appendices 1- 6;
- (iii) To authorise the Executive Director for Children's Services and Learning to take any action necessary to give effect to the admissions policy, and to make any changes necessary to the Admissions Policies where required to give effect to any Acts, Regulations or revised Admissions or Admissions Appeals Codes or binding Schools Adjudicator, Court or Ombudsman decisions whenever they arise.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to determine the admission criteria on an annual basis and ensure all rising 5's have an allocated education place.
2. The proposed policy is at Appendix 1. This has been consulted on and the

responses are available at Appendix 2.

3. Implementation of the policy is dependent on these schemes:-

- admissions policy for Infant, Junior, Primary, Secondary and Sixth Form pupils to community and voluntary controlled schools, see appendix 1;
- the outcomes of the annual consultation with school governing bodies and the relevant Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses, see appendix 2;
- published admission numbers (PANS) for community and voluntary controlled schools, see appendix 3;
- the co-ordinated scheme for year R entry to infant/primary schools, see appendix 4;
- the co-ordinated schemes for entry to junior school, see appendix 5;
- the co-ordinated scheme for primary to secondary transfer, see appendix 6;

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

4. The two alternative options considered were:

- (i) To not determine local admission arrangements. This was rejected on the basis that it would result in the imposition of admissions arrangements upon local schools by the Secretary of State for Education, and the failure of the Council to have met its statutory obligations to children and parents under the Admissions code.
- (ii) To not change admissions arrangements in relation to the relative status of children attending an infant school linked to a junior school. This was rejected on the basis that this change was felt to give parents more confidence that their child's primary education would follow a natural progression more similar to that of children attending a Primary school.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

- 5. School admissions authorities are required by law to determine a School Admissions policy each year which sets out how school places will be fairly allocated. It should apply to both Southampton resident pupils and to pupils applying for a place in a Southampton school living outside the city. The City Council is the admissions authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools within Southampton and is therefore responsible for determining the admission arrangements for these schools. Under regulations admission arrangements for the school year 2014-15 must be determined by 15 April 2013. Other admissions authorities affected by these should be notified within 14 days of the date of these arrangements being set.
- 6. Schools covered by the admissions authority's admissions policy cannot refuse admission to any applicant up to the limit of its Published Admissions Number, except in the case of a few legitimate legal exceptions. When the number of applications a school receives is greater than the number of places available there has to be a mechanism in place to enable the school to prioritise those applications. In practice, the criteria set out in the admissions policy only provides the manner in which school places are allocated in this scenario.

7. The principles underlying Southampton's admissions policies are well established. They seek to fulfil the requirement that they be 'fair, clear and objective' (School Admissions Code, 2012). The proposed policies seek to make this process as transparent as possible. In particular, they enable the local authority, schools, and parents:
 - (a) to protect the rights of vulnerable children;
 - (b) to meet significant medical and psychological needs of individual children;
 - (c) to develop, strengthen and support immediate family ties;
 - (d) to develop and strengthen links between designated feeder school(s);
 - (e) to have access to clear, objective, and fair criteria that avoid ambiguity in the interpretation of the policy.
8. If an admissions authority wants to change its arrangements to better meet these principles it must consult with schools, other admissions authorities, the local dioceses, the admissions forum and the public. For 2014 -15, the City Council has consulted on making one change to the admission arrangements. The proposed change only relates to the admission arrangements for children transferring from an infant school to a junior school. The proposed change would amend the order of criteria for admission to community and VC Junior schools to give higher priority to children attending the linked infant school. It is intended that this will give greater certainty to parents of children in infant schools that their child's education will continue, if a parent so wishes, as far as possible as if they were attending a primary school.
9. Consultations with schools and other admission authorities (Catholic and Church of England Dioceses, Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, and schools that are Foundation, Voluntary Aided, and Academies) started on 3 January 2013 and ended on 28 February 2013. The proposed policies for 2014 were discussed at the School Admissions Forum meeting in February 2013.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

10. There are no additional revenue costs to the general fund arising directly from the approval of the admissions policies for the academic year 2014-2015.

Property/Other

11. Property Services have no comments on these proposals.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

12. Admissions Authorities are legally required to undertake a consultation on admissions policies each year in order to determine their admission arrangements including PANs, under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by the Education Act 2002 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 if there are changes from the previous years arrangements. They need only consult every 7 years thereafter unless they propose changes be made to them.

13. In accordance with the above, the deadline for determining admission arrangements is 15 April 2013. Following determination (the date of the relevant Cabinet meeting) the local authority has 14 days to notify all schools in writing of the outcome of its decision. Schools' governing bodies then have six weeks to object to their respective Published Admissions Numbers (but no other aspect of the admissions policy).
14. Notice of the change must be published in a local newspaper setting out appeal arrangements.
15. Where the Council approves a Published Admissions Number which is below the indicated admission number set by the net capacity assessment, it is required to publish an appropriate notice in a local newspaper. This notice must include an explanation of why a lower number has been set and that any parent affected by the setting of the Published Admissions Number has a right of objection to the Schools Adjudicator.

Other Legal Implications:

16. The Education Acts, Regulations made pursuant to them and the School Admissions Code (February 2012) require local authorities to formulate co-ordinated admissions schemes for dealing with applications to infant, primary, junior and secondary schools at the relevant age of transfer. Such schemes should also include admissions to schools where the local authority is not the admission authority e.g. voluntary aided schools, Foundation School and Academies. The schemes must ensure that every parent receives an offer of one, and only one, school place on the same day. A national offer date of 1 March has been set for secondary admissions and local authorities are required to implement a single offer date for primary sector admissions as well. The Regulations specify closing dates for applications for entry into Year R and for entry into secondary school. These dates are 15 January in the offer year for applications for year R, and 31 October in the offer year for applications for secondary school.
17. In drawing up co-ordinated admissions schemes, the City Council must consult with other relevant admission authorities, i.e. the governing bodies of voluntary aided schools, trust and foundation school, Academies, and Hampshire County Council. Other legally binding requirements upon the Council in coordinating an admissions scheme are set out in the National School Admissions Code (2012).
18. It is a statutory requirement that the local authority must have consulted on its proposed admission arrangements, and have made a determination on them, by 1 March and 15 April respectively, in the year prior to the new admission arrangements coming into effect. Other admission authorities in Southampton's area, i.e. the governors of voluntary aided schools, foundation schools, trust schools and Academies must also have consulted on, and determined, their admission arrangements by the same dates.
19. It is also a statutory requirement that, within 14 days of the admission arrangements being determined, admission authorities notify consultees (i.e. other admission authorities and all community/controlled schools) of their determined admission arrangements.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

20. The recommended admissions arrangements proposed in the report are consistent with the Children's and Young People's Plan.

KEY DECISION? Yes

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1.	Admission policy for Infant, Junior, Primary, Secondary and Sixth Form pupils to community and voluntary controlled schools 2014-15
2.	The outcomes of the annual consultation with school governing bodies and the relevant Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses
3.	Proposed published admissions numbers for all community and voluntary controlled schools 2014-15
4.	Co-ordinated scheme for year R entry to infant/primary schools 2014-15
5.	Co-ordinated admissions scheme for entry to Junior Schools 2014-15
6.	Co-ordinated admissions scheme for entry to Secondary Schools 2014-15

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.	No
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Other Background Documents

Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at: Children's Services and Learning, One Guildhall Square.

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 Admissions Code of Practice 2012	http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/school%20admissions%20code%201%20february%202012.pdf