

## **Cabinet – 16 December 2009**

### **Scheme for co-ordinated midyear admissions to Primary and Secondary Schools 2010/11**

**Portfolio:** Councillor R Walker, Children's Services

**Service:** Walsall Children's Services - Serco

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** Yes

**Forward plan:** Yes

#### **1. Summary of report**

This report sets out the proposed scheme for coordinated midyear admissions to primary and secondary schools in Walsall for 2010/11.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the scheme for coordinated midyear admissions to primary and secondary schools 2010/11 as set out in **Appendix A** of this report.
- 2.2 That Cabinet asks Walsall Children's Services - Serco to inform all consultees that the scheme for co-ordinated midyear admissions to primary and secondary schools 2010/11 is approved.

#### **3. Background information**

The School Admissions Code, which came into effect on 10 February 2009 requires all local authorities to co-ordinate midyear admissions to all maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies from 1 September 2010. The Code requires all local authorities to have a scheme for coordinated midyear admissions in place by 1 January 2010. The proposed scheme for coordinated midyear admissions in Walsall is set out in **Appendix A**.

## **4. Resource considerations**

### **4.1 Financial:**

- 4.1.1 There will be additional staff costs associated with the requirement to coordinate midyear admissions for all maintained schools and academies from 1 September 2010. The employment of an officer at Scale 4 will cost approximately £20K p.a. (plus on costs). This will be managed within the current education contract cost.

### **4.2 Legal:**

- 4.2.1 The requirement to coordinate midyear admissions is set out in the School Standards and Framework Act, 1998, as amended by the Education Act, 2002 and the School Admissions (Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2008.
- 4.2.2 Walsall Council, as the local authority, is required to have a scheme for the coordination of midyear admissions in place by 1 January 2010 and is required to coordinate midyear admissions to all maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies from 1 September 2010.
- 4.2.3 The proposed co-ordinated scheme complies with the School Admissions Code.

### **4.3 Staffing:**

- 4.3.1 Walsall Children's Services – Serco currently manages midyear admissions to community secondary schools in Walsall and the requirement to coordinate midyear admissions to all maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies will increase significantly the workload of the Planning, Admissions and Transport Team, requiring additional staff.

## **5. Citizen impact**

The co-ordinated scheme will greatly simplify the midyear admission process for parents as it will enable them to apply for up to 3 schools on a common application form and it will no longer be necessary for parents to make separate applications for out of borough schools.

## **6. Community safety**

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

## **7. Environmental impact**

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

## **8. Performance and risk management issues**

### **8.1 Risk:**

- 8.1.1 The admission arrangements will be included in the *Information for Parents on Midyear Admissions* publication. The provision of clear information will help parents to decide upon their preferences when applying for a school place for their child and will contribute to a reduction in the number of appeals.

### **8.2 Performance management:**

- 8.2.1 Walsall Children's Services – Serco will monitor the midyear admissions process to ensure that children seeking midyear admission are offered a place as soon as possible at one of their preferred schools. Where it is not possible to offer one of their preferences, parents of children who are resident within the borough and who do not have a school place will be offered a place at a suitable alternative school.

## **9. Equality implications**

In line with the requirements of the School Admissions Code and in order to ensure greater equity and fair access, full consideration has been given to the possible impact, direct or indirect, of the proposed co-ordinated scheme on equal opportunities, and the scheme will operate in conjunction with Walsall's Fair Access Protocol.

## **10. Consultation**

- 10.1 Walsall Children's Services – Serco held formal consultation with all Walsall Schools, Grace Academy Darlaston, Shelfield Community Academy, the Walsall Academy, Diocesan representatives, professional association representatives and the Walsall Admission Forum between 13 October 2009 and 2 November 2009.
- 10.2 Consultation responses received from the Walsall Primary Heads Forum suggested that when a direct approach is made to a school for midyear admission the school may contact the admissions team to find out if there are any additional applications for that year group pending and if not, or if there are sufficient places available to accommodate all applicants, the school may admit the child immediately provided that they ensure that the parent completes the preference form and that the school forwards the form immediately to the admissions team; this will ensure that vulnerable children are not disadvantaged by the process.

A consultation response received from a secondary head suggested that it would be helpful to parents if the *Information for Parents on Midyear Admissions* handbook included a table which clarified the differences and similarities of the different types of school in Walsall.

A consultation response received from the professional association representatives suggested that the scheme should be amended to say that the *Information for Parents on Midyear Admissions* handbook should include information on how to appeal for a place at an oversubscribed school. The professional association representatives also suggested that information should be included in the scheme on who will hold waiting lists and how long they will be held for.

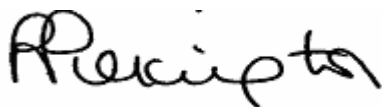
These amendments have been incorporated into the Scheme for Coordinated Midyear Admissions attached as **Appendix A**.

## Background papers

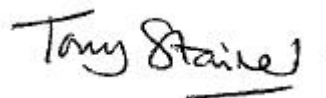
DCSF: School Admissions Code

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Signed:  
Executive Director: Pauline Pilkington  
Date: 27 November 2009



Signed:  
Managing Director, Walsall Children's  
Services – Serco: Tony Stainer  
Date: 26 November 2009



Signed:  
Portfolio Holder: Councillor R Walker  
Date: 7 December 2009

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**Scheme for Coordinated Midyear Admissions to Primary and Secondary Schools 2010-2011**

The scheme for coordinated midyear admissions is produced under the provisions of the School Standards and Framework Act, 1998 as amended by the Education Act, 2002 and the School Admissions (Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2008. The scheme will apply to all maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies in Walsall and will be effective from 1 September 2010.

**The Scheme**

1. Walsall Children's Services – Serco acting on behalf of Walsall Council will issue a Midyear Admission Preference Form which is a Common Application Form to be used by parents to apply for admission to any maintained mainstream primary or secondary school or academy other than at the point of entry to either primary (reception or year 3 when transferring from an infant school to a junior or primary school) or secondary school.
2. Parents will be able to express up to 3 preferences for admission on the Midyear Admission Preference Form and may express a preference for any primary or secondary school or academy located either within Walsall or in any other borough.
3. In conjunction with the Midyear Admission Preference Form the Local Authority will publish annually a composite prospectus, known as the Information for Parents on Midyear Admissions handbook, which will provide information on all maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies in Walsall, and will contain a table which clarifies the differences and similarities between the different types of school in Walsall. The Information for Parents handbook and preference form will be available on request from Walsall Children's Services – Serco and online at [www.walsall.gov.uk](http://www.walsall.gov.uk). The Information for Parents handbook will provide details of the admission criteria and admission numbers for all maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies in Walsall and for each school will identify whether it is the local authority or the governing body of the school who are the Admission Authority and provide details of how parents may contact neighbouring admission authorities to obtain details of schools outside the borough of Walsall. The handbook will also include information on how to appeal for a place at oversubscribed schools.
4. Some schools require parents to complete a supplementary information form at the time of application. Where a supplementary form is required this will be stated in the Information for Parents handbook and the form can be obtained from the local authority.
5. Where a parent completes a supplementary information form it will not be regarded as a valid application unless the parent has also completed a Walsall Midyear Admission Preference Form and the school is nominated as a preference on the form.
6. All Midyear Admission Preference Forms must be returned to Walsall Children's Services – Serco and applications may not be made directly to any maintained mainstream primary or secondary school or academy.

## The Process

1. All applications for midyear admission by Walsall residents must be made on a Walsall Midyear Admission Preference Form and must be submitted to Walsall Children's Services - Serco. Any supplementary information forms required by a school listed as a preference on the preference form must be returned to the relevant school.
2. On receipt of an application for midyear admission the admissions team will contact the schools listed as preferences to determine whether there are places available in the applicants year group, the application will also be assessed by the admissions team to determine if it meets the criteria for consideration under Walsall's Fair Access Protocol.
3. The local authority will offer a place at the school ranked highest on the preference form which has a place available in the applicant's year group.
4. Where an applicant meets one or more of the criteria for consideration under Walsall's Fair Access Protocol the applicant will be offered a place at the school ranked highest on their preference form provided that that school has not reached the limits on pupil numbers specified in section 3 of the Fair Access Protocol. If the school has already admitted its designated percentage of pupils under the Fair Access Protocol the local authority will offer a place at an alternative Walsall school. Should parents refuse the alternative place offered under the Fair Access Protocol a place will be offered at the highest ranked school nominated on the applicant's preference form which has a place available in the relevant year group. Exceptionally where a child meets the definition of challenging behaviour given in paragraph 4.6 of the Fair Access Protocol and a school nominated as a preference on their application form falls under the exceptions listed in paragraph 3.22 of the School Admissions Code the governing body may refuse admission where they consider that the child's behaviour would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources at the school.
5. Where a preference is expressed for a school outside the borough of Walsall details of the application will be passed on to the relevant LA to determine whether a place can be offered at the preferred school.
6. Where an application is received for a place in a Walsall school from a resident of another local authority who has applied for a place on their home authority's preference form the application will be assessed in accordance with the published admission criteria for the school and the Fair Access Protocol and where a place can be offered this information will be communicated to the applicant's home authority.
7. Schools who wish to hold a stock of midyear admissions preference forms to give out to parents when they are approached directly may do so. When a school is approached directly by a parent for midyear admission and has a place available in the appropriate year group they may contact the admissions team to find out if any additional applications for that year group are pending. If there are no pending applications, or sufficient places available to accommodate all applicants the school may admit the child immediately provided that before admitting the child they ensure that the parent completes the preference form and that the school forwards the form to the admissions team immediately. This will ensure that vulnerable children such as travelling pupils are not disadvantaged by the process.
8. Once an application has been assessed in accordance with the published admission

criteria of the preferred schools and, if appropriate the Fair Access Protocol, the local authority will write to the applicant to indicate one of the following outcomes:

- where the child is eligible for a place at one or more of their preferred schools they will be offered a place at the highest ranked preference;
  - where it is not possible to offer the highest ranked preference where possible a place will be offered at a lower ranked preference and the offer letter will contain details of how the parent may appeal against the decision to refuse a place at the higher ranked school, and where there is a waiting list their child's name will be added to it;
  - if it is not possible to offer the applicant a place at any of their preferred schools and the child is currently without a school place a place will be offered at an alternative Walsall school which has places available.
9. Where the school is not a Walsall school, a copy of the letter to parents offering or refusing a place, and where appropriate advising them of their right of appeal, will be sent to the appropriate local authority.
10. Where the local authority is the admission authority, the letter will be sent on behalf of the local authority. Where the admissions authority is the governing body the letter will indicate that it is being sent on behalf of the governing body.
11. In the event that the applicant is resident in another local authority, the offer letter will be sent by the applicant's home authority.

## **Waiting Lists**

All admission authorities will maintain waiting lists for entry to Reception and Year 3 or Year 7 until the end of the autumn term in the year of admission. Waiting lists for Walsall community and voluntary controlled schools will be maintained by Walsall Children's Services – Serco until the end of the autumn term in the admission year. Midyear admission applicants for admission to Reception, Year 3 or Year 7 whose applications are received before the end of the Autumn Term in the year of admission will be added to the waiting list for their highest preference where the school is oversubscribed and will remain on the list until it is discarded. Waiting lists for places in Walsall community or voluntary controlled schools will not be maintained for other year groups.

Details of the policy regarding the waiting lists for schools in other local authorities or for those for which the governing body is the admissions authority after the end of the autumn term in the year of admission will be included in the admission arrangements for those schools.

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