

The main responsibilities of the Admissions and Pupil Place Planning Team

Briefing Note

Background:

The Admissions and Pupil Place Planning Team are responsible for delivering the Council's statutory duty to ensure that every Walsall resident child has an appropriate school place. This duty is fulfilled through the following functions which are performed by the team:

Admissions:

- Produce and arrange consultation on the admissions arrangements for all Walsall community and voluntary controlled schools on an annual basis;
- Produce and arrange consultation on the scheme for coordinated secondary and primary admissions on an annual basis;
- Collate consultation responses, write the cabinet report on the outcome of the consultation and refer to cabinet for the determination of the admission arrangements and of the scheme for coordinated admissions on an annual basis;
- Publish the determined admission arrangements for all Walsall community and voluntary controlled schools on an annual basis;
- Publish the determined scheme for coordinated secondary and primary admissions on an annual basis;
- Review the proposed admission arrangements of all foundation, voluntary aided schools and academies and provide comments and advice to the schools on any changes which should be made to aid clarity or which must be made in order to comply with the School Admissions Code (2014);
- Review the determined admission arrangements of all foundation, voluntary aided schools and academies and provide advice on any areas of non-compliance with the School Admissions Code (2014) and, if appropriate recommend referral of non-compliant admission arrangements to the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator;
- Produce and publish the composite prospectus of admission arrangements for all schools in the borough (published on line as information booklets on secondary and primary admissions) on an annual basis;
- Review the content and clarity of online application forms for secondary and primary admissions on an annual basis;
- Produce the common application forms for late secondary and primary applications on an annual basis;
- Produce information leaflets to inform parents about the secondary and primary coordinated admissions process and arrange distribution of these leaflets to nursery schools,

private nurseries, primary schools and directly to parents as appropriate at the start of each admission round;

- Produce the common application form for midyear admissions on an annual basis;
- Coordinate the annual secondary and primary admissions rounds. The coordination process includes:
 - Set up the admission rounds on the Capita One admissions database;
 - Provide advice and support to parents/carers and schools on the process of submitting an online application. This service is provided on the telephone and in person at the Civic Centre. The Parent Support Advisor for admissions is available to attend parents evenings at primary and secondary schools and holds workshops at primary schools, nursery schools and in the Central Library to help parents to complete their online applications;
 - Provide advice and support to parents/carers, schools and colleagues in other service areas on all aspects of the school admissions and appeals process;
 - Respond to enquiries from parents, schools and colleagues in other services made by telephone, email, in writing and in person. At certain times of the year (particularly in the period after the primary and secondary offer dates) the team receives an extremely large volume of telephone calls and email enquiries;
 - Import online applications to the Capita One admissions system;
 - Review all additional information provided by parents in support of primary and secondary applications;
 - Exchange preference data files with neighbouring local authorities on a regular basis until secondary and primary offers can be finalised;
 - Take action including liaison with schools, parents and the data team to resolve queries on application files and remove them from suspense (these queries occur when there is a discrepancy between the information which a parent submits in their online application and the data already held on the pupil's file – typical queries involve difference in address and can take some considerable time to resolve);
 - Collate evidence submitted in support of requests for priority for admission under the medical/social criterion and forward this to schools which are their own admission authority;
 - Collate evidence submitted in support of requests for priority for admission under the medical/social criterion in respect of applications for community and voluntary controlled primary schools, review the information and refer with a recommendation to the Director of Children's Services for the final decision. Communicate the final decision in writing to the parents/carers;
 - Provide preference lists to voluntary aided schools, grammar schools, two of the secondary academies and secondary schools with specialist places for ranking and voluntary controlled schools for allocation of church places;
 - Input ranking information into the Capita One database;
 - Notify neighbouring local authorities of offers for Walsall school places which can be made to out of borough applicants;
 - Make offers of places at Walsall schools to Walsall resident applicants and make offers of places at out of borough schools to Walsall resident applicants on behalf of neighbouring admission authorities;

- Release email notifications to online applicants who requested email notification of the outcome of their application;
- Create offer letters and liaise with the Print and Design Team and the Post Team to ensure these are posted to all applicants on the primary and secondary offer dates;
- Complete and submit the statutory annual returns on pupil preference/offer data for the secondary and primary admission rounds and submit to the DfE;
- Provide lists of offers made to schools;
- Notify schools of any changes to the offer lists as and when these occur;
- Compile and maintain Reception, Year 3 and Year 7 waiting lists for all Walsall schools (with the exception of the Ormiston Shelfield Academy and Walsall Academy who maintain their own waiting lists throughout the process) until 31 August and then transfer waiting lists to the schools;
- Produce admission appeal forms for community and voluntary controlled schools and send out to parents who wish to submit an appeal;
- Make offers to children from the waiting lists as places become available;
- Contact schools to obtain up to date information on pupil numbers and class organisation and a completed head teacher's impact statement to assist with the preparation of statements of case for admission appeals for community and voluntary controlled schools;
- Complete the statement of case and act as presenting officer at admission appeal hearings for all community and voluntary controlled primary schools;
- Investigate suspected fraudulent or misleading applications and act to withdraw places offered as a result of a fraudulent or misleading application as appropriate;
- Collate data for the Local Authority's annual report to the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator;
- Write the Local Authority's Annual report to the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator and submit it to the OSA by 30 June each year;
- Write detailed reports to respond to all complaints about the admissions process which are submitted to the Local Government Ombudsman;
- Write first line response to complaints from parents and schools;
- Provide information and draft responses to enquiries from local councillors and members of parliament;
- Collate midyear admission vacancy figures from all schools on a weekly basis in order to provide parents/carers with accurate information on the availability of places for midyear admissions purposes;
- Collate information submitted by schools on a weekly basis about midyear admission applications received and their outcomes;
- Produce locally agreed admissions protocols including the Walsall Council Admissions Policy, the Fair Access Protocol and the Managed Move Process, arranging consultation as necessary including working with task and finish groups as appropriate. Arrange for protocols and policies to be reviewed when appropriate and published;
- Maintain a database of primary managed moves and attend managed move meetings at schools when invited to do so;
- Maintain a database of children admitted to Walsall schools under the Fair Access Protocol;

- Advise parents and schools and colleagues in other services on the operation of locally agreed admissions protocols;
- Provide briefing notes to advise senior managers and elected members on admissions issues;
- Provide briefings to elected members, head teachers and other professionals and service areas on admissions issues as required;
- Where complaints about the admission arrangements of Walsall schools are submitted to the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator, the team will collate and provide any data requested by the OSA and the Service Manager will attend meetings with the Adjudicator and the schools concerned as required;
- The Service Manager attends the regional Black Country Admissions Group meetings on a termly basis and the West Midlands Admissions Group's annual meeting;
- Respond to DfE consultations (for example, consultations on revised School Admissions Codes) on behalf of the Local Authority;
- Review all new School Admissions Codes and provide information for senior managers, councillors and schools on key changes.

Children Missing Education:

- The Service Manager fulfils a number of roles in relation to Children Missing Education (CME): named contact for Children Missing Education, Lead Officer for CME, chair of the multi-agency CME Panel and member of the West Midlands Regional CME consortium;
- The Admissions and Pupil Place Planning team:
 - Maintain a list of potential CME pupils;
 - Collate and prepare cases for referral to the CME Panel;
 - Undertake casework in relation to CME cases;
 - Produce the agenda and new case notes for the CME Panel meetings;
 - Produce and distribute minutes of the CME Panel meetings;
 - Liaise with CME colleagues in neighbouring local authorities and other local authorities nationwide on matters concerning children missing education and tracking off roll pupils;
 - Identify schools to be named in School Attendance Orders;
 - Maintain a database of children missing education;
 - Prepare statistical reports in relation to children missing education;
 - Maintain a database of off roll pupils (pupils who have been removed from the roll of a Walsall school and whose whereabouts is unknown);
 - Undertake pupil tracking activities to locate off roll pupils (for example, contacting previous schools, other local authorities, the Benefits Agency, the National Health Service, housing associations, estate agents, the UK Border Agency);
 - Prepare cases for referral to the Walsall Inclusion Partnership and present cases at WIP meetings;
 - Prepare cases for referral to Fair Access Panels in other boroughs and present cases at out of borough Fair Access Panel meetings when necessary;
- The Service Manager attends multi agency meetings, child in need meetings and child protection conferences relating to children missing education as required.

Pupil Place Planning:

- Undertake net capacity assessments for schools;
- Produce projected pupil numbers on an annual basis (using birth data from the Office of National statistics and Public Health, pupil data from the January census, information on pupil yield from planned housing developments, pupil migration trends, pupil retention trends and information from neighbouring authorities on proposed school organisation changes);
- Complete regular audits of pupil projections using final offer data from the primary and secondary admission rounds and actual pupil numbers from the October and May school census;
- Complete and return the statutory annual SCAP (School Capacity) return to the EFA;
- Analyse pupil projections and forecast trends to identify potential shortfall and surpluses in school places within primary and secondary planning areas and across the borough as a whole and provide recommendations on measures which can be taken to address shortfalls and excessive surplus in pupil places;
- Manage the statutory process to make school organisation changes to maintained schools (including opening, closing and expanding schools). The statutory process includes managing informal and formal consultation, writing consultation documents and presentations, and letters, presenting proposals at public consultation meetings and at consultation meetings with school staff, student council members and school governors, receiving and collating consultation responses and producing consultation reports; writing complete statutory proposals and the associated statutory notices and ensuring that these are correctly displayed throughout the formal consultation period, writing associated cabinet reports, notify consultees of the final decision on proposals;
- Attend regional school organisation groups and the Educational Building and Development Officers Group (EBDOG) meetings as appropriate;
- Attend Development Team Meetings as appropriate;
- Attend the Capital Asset Programme Board;
- Produce details of estimated pupil yield and calculate levels of developer section 106 education contributions for proposed housing developments;
- Produce an education sufficient strategy document for Walsall;
- Provide briefing notes to advise senior managers and elected members on school organisation issues.

Freedom of Information Requests:

- Respond to freedom of information requests relating to areas covered by the service.

Press Enquiries:

- Produce information and write draft responses to enable the communications team to respond to requests for information on matters related to the service area which are received from the local and national press.

School Term Dates:

- The Service Manager manages the annual consultation process to set term dates for Walsall schools including:
 - Attending the annual regional term dates consultation meeting;
 - Liaising with professional associations and school representatives to produce proposed term date models;
 - Arranging consultation on the proposed models;
 - Producing a report on the outcome of the consultation;
 - Publishing the agreed term dates.

Walsall Link website:

- The Service Manager is responsible for maintaining the Admissions and Pupil Place Planning pages on the Walsall Link website.

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December 2015**