

25 November 2021

School Admissions Update

Ward(s) All

Portfolio: Councillor Chris Towe – Education & Skills

1. Aim

The aim of this report is to provide the Education Scrutiny and Overview Committee with an update about the outcomes from the September 2021 normal admission rounds and progress in relation to the September 2022 normal admission rounds.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of this report and decides whether any further information or updates are required

3. Report detail - know

3.1. Admissions Authorities

An admissions authority is the responsible body for determining the admissions criteria of a school and for ensuring that all admissions to that school take place in accordance that published criteria.

Walsall Local Authority is the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled primary schools in the borough. The governing bodies are responsible for voluntary aided and foundation primary schools and academy trusts are responsible for any academy primary school.

All secondary schools in Walsall are their own admission authorities – again through their governing bodies or academy trusts. Given this, Walsall Local Authority is not the admitting admission authority for any of the secondary schools in Walsall.

3.2. Normal/Phased Admission Rounds.

In accordance with the provisions of the School Admissions Code (2021) Walsall Local Authority is required to work in conjunction with its neighbouring Local Authorities (Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Dudley), to co-ordinate the 'normal' admissions rounds. These rounds are also referred to as 'phased' admission rounds and are distinct from the mid-year admissions process that parents and carers need to follow in they wish to apply to change school outside of the year groups and timescales that are covered by the 'normal' admission rounds.

In Walsall, the normal admission round process includes the following three phased admission rounds:

- **Primary Transfer Round** - admission to reception class.
- **Infant to Junior Transfer Round** - transfer from Year 2 to Year 3, for those children that are on roll at an infant school and need to transfer to a junior school to continue their primary education.
- **Secondary Transfer Round** – admission to Year 7.

In the normal admissions round parents or carers must apply to their home local authority for a school place. Parents or carers must be able to express a preference for at least three schools, although in Walsall parents can express up to five preference for a secondary school place and three preferences for a primary (reception or year 3 place). Parents or carers can express preferences for schools outside their home local authority and the purpose of the co-ordinated arrangements between Local Authorities is to ensure that all parents who submit applications receive a **single** offer of a school place from the local authority at the highest preference school at which a place is available. The offers are sent to parents on National Offer Day – this is 1 March for secondary schools or 16 April for primary schools (or the next working day where 1 March or 16 April fall on a weekend or bank holiday), in the year in which the child will be admitted.

3.3 Update on Normal Admission Rounds for September 2021

The following tables provide data about the number of applications received and offers made by Walsall Local Authority in relation to the normal admissions rounds for September 2021. Table A refers to the Secondary Transfer Round, Table B refers to the Primary Transfer round and Table C refers to the Infant Junior Transfer round.

Table A: Secondary Transfer Round for September 2021*

Number of Applications Received	3566	
Number Offered First Preference School	2719	76%
Number Offered Second Preference School	464	13%
Number Offered Third Preference School	114	3%
Number Offered 1 of Top 3 Preferences	3297	93%
Number Offered Any of Their Preferred Schools	3353	94%

*this data is taken from the statutory return that the Local Authority was required to submit to the Department for Education following secondary 'national offer day' on Monday 1 March 2021 and refers to 'on time' applications only. Please note that % figures have been rounded up or rounded down.

Table B: Primary Transfer Round for September 2021*

Number of Applications Received	3521	
Number Offered First Preference School	3217	91%
Number Offered Second Preference School	158	4%
Number Offered Third Preference School	49	1%
Number Offered 1 of Top 3 Preferences	3424	97%
Number Offered Any of Their Preferred Schools	3424	97%

*this data is taken from the statutory return that the Local Authority was required to submit to the Department for Education following secondary 'national offer day' on Thursday 16 April 2021 and refers to 'on time' applications only. Please note that % figures have been rounded up or rounded down.

Table C: Infant to Junior Transfer Round

Number of applications received	752	
Total Number of Offers Made	752	
Number Offered First Preference School	743	
Number Offered Second Preference School	8	
Number Offered Third Preference School	1	
Number Offered 1 of Top 3 Preferences	751	
Number Offered Any of Their Preferred Schools	751	

* The Local Authority is not required to submit to a statutory return to the Department for Education in respect of the infant junior transfer round so this template has been populated from the Local Authority own data snap shot following offer day on Thursday 16 April 2021.

3.4. Progress on Normal Admission Rounds for September 2022.

Secondary Round September 2022

The deadline for the Secondary 2022 Admission Round passed on 31 October 2021. To date Walsall Local Authority has received 3,704 on-time applications for Walsall resident children. In the run-up to the closing date, the School Admissions Team worked intensively to chase up as many outstanding applications as possible. This included:

- Liaison with Walsall's Communication Team to ensure that both the opening and closing dates of the round were highlighted via press releases and regular updates on Walsall Council's social media sites.
- Liaison with Walsall primary schools to identify those parents or carers that required additional support to make an application.
- Liaison with those out of borough schools with Walsall resident children on roll to try to identify those parents or carers that required additional support to make an application.
- Reminder telephone calls and emails directly to parents and carers in the run up to the closing date.

The LA's records show that there are still 215 Walsall resident children on roll at Walsall schools, for whom an application has not yet been received. The team are in the process of following up with both schools and parents and carers about these applications and all late applications will be processed in accordance with the Local Authority's late application process.

The first inter-LA Data Transfer is scheduled to take place between 9 and the 13 November 2021 when application data will be exchanged with neighbouring LA's. Offer day will be on Tuesday 1 March 2022 and all 'on time' applicants will receive email notification of their offer on this day.

Primary and Infant to Junior Transfer Rounds

The primary and infant to junior transfer rounds will open on Monday 15 November 2021 and will close on 15 January 2022. Work is ongoing to promote the opening dates for the primary with parents, schools, early years settings and other relevant agencies so as to maximise the number of applications that are submitted by the closing date.

3.5. The Mid-Year Admissions Process in Walsall.

As set out in paragraph 4.1 above parents and carers need to follow the mid-year admissions application process if they wish to apply to change schools outside of the year groups and timescales that are covered by the 'normal' admission rounds.

In Walsall, the process for making a mid-year admission application is as follows:

- **Primary Mid-Year Admission Application Process:** The Local Authority co-ordinates the mid-year admissions applications for the majority of primary schools in Walsall so applications for these schools need to be made directly to the Local Authority via the School Admissions and Appeals Team. However, in line with new admission code in 2021, as of 1 November 2021 a number of own admission authority schools have informed the Local Authority that they wish to take co-ordinate their own mid-year admissions and for these schools parents and carers need to make applications directly to these schools. Parents and Carer should be sign posted to Walsall's School Admissions webpages for more information about the correct application process for each school.
- **Secondary Mid-Year Admission Application Process:** In line with the School Admissions and Appeals Code (2021) all Secondary Schools in Walsall have opted to co-ordinate their own mid-year admissions application process. Therefore, parents need to approach each school directly to make an application for a secondary school place.

As set out in the School Admissions Code (2021) all admissions authorities, should aim to notify applicants of the outcome of their mid-year application within 10 school days and they must notify applicants of the outcome of their application in writing within 15 schools day. Applicants must be informed, in writing, of the reason for refusal and their right to appeal the decision of the admission authority. Applicant must not be refused the opportunity to make an application or be advised

that they can be placed on a school's waiting list instead of making a formal application.

3.6. The School Admissions Appeals Process.

In accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021, all admission authorities must inform a parent in writing of a decision to refuse their child a place at a school for which they have applied. The letter must include the reason why the admission was refused, details about the right to appeal the decision, the deadline for lodging an appeal and the contact details for making an appeal.

All admission authorities are responsible for arranging their own appeals and ensuring that they are conducted in accordance with the School Admission Appeals Code (2012).

The purpose of this Code is to ensure the independence of admission appeal panels and to ensure that all admission appeals for maintained schools and Academies are conducted in a fair and transparent way. This Code is designed to give admission authorities the freedom they need to run the appeals process efficiently, whilst maintaining minimum requirements, which will ensure fairness and transparency.

Appeal panels must either uphold or dismiss an appeal. Under Section 94(6) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, a panel's decision that a child shall be admitted to a school is binding on the admission authority concerned.

4 Decide

- 4.1. The Committee may decide to note the current position and request further information or assurance in respect of the progress of the School Admissions process.

5 Respond

- 5.1. Any recommendations made by the Committee will be assessed against the Access and Inclusion planned work and performance board programmes.

6. Review

The work of the School Admissions and Appeals team is subject to constant monitoring and assessment via the Children's Services Performance Board process.

Background papers

School Admissions Code (2021)

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