

Cabinet – 7 February 2024

Determination of the Scheme for coordinated admissions, and the Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools for the 2025/26 academic year

Portfolio:	Councillor M. Statham - Education & Skills
Service:	Admissions & Education Sufficiency, Access Service
Wards:	All wards
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Aim

To ensure that Walsall Council meets its statutory duty to offer a school place to all Walsall resident children, and to determine the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in accordance with the requirements of Section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the School Admissions Code 2021.

2. Summary

- 2.1. This report sets out the proposed scheme for co-ordinated secondary and primary admissions and mid-year admissions for the 2025/26 academic year and the proposed admission arrangements for primary community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2025/26 academic year.
- 2.2 Walsall Council is not the Admission Authority for any of the secondary schools in the borough, all of whom must determine their own admission arrangements for 2025/26 by 28 February 2024

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That the proposed schemes for inter authority coordinated admissions for 2025/26 and that the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools for the academic year 2025/26 as per Appendix 1, are approved and determined.
- 3.2 That Walsall Council informs all relevant stakeholders of the determination of its admission arrangements for the 2025/26 academic year in accordance with the provisions of the School Admissions Code 2021.

4. Report detail – know

- 4.1 As a Local Authority, Walsall Council has the responsibility to draw up and agree schemes for secondary and primary admissions for the 2025/26 academic year. Walsall Council is the Admission Authority for all community and voluntary controlled Primary schools in Walsall. Section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requires admission authorities to determine the admission arrangements for the 2025/26 school year by 28 February 2024.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.2 The admission arrangements for primary community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2025/26 academic year set out a fair and equitable process for children wishing to be admitted to Walsall schools as part of the phased admissions transfer rounds in September 2025 and throughout the 2025/26 academic year as part of midyear admissions process.
- 4.3 These arrangements support the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities, specifically the priority that all children, especially those children who are looked after or have previously been in public care can have the best start and are safe, happy, healthy, and learning well.

Risk management

- 4.4 The admission arrangements will be included in Walsall's admissions booklet. This is the Council's composite prospectus, and this document will be published on Walsall Council's website. The provision of clear information will help parents and carers to decide upon their preferences when applying for a school place for their child and should contribute to a reduction in the number of admission appeals.
- 4.5 Children who miss education because they do not have a school place are at risk of failing to develop the skills necessary to enable them to enter the workforce. There are also significant safeguarding risks. The admissions arrangements and coordinated admissions process ensure that school places are offered fairly and equitably to applicants, and that children who cannot be offered one of their parent's preferred schools are allocated a place at an alternative school to mitigate against these risks.

Financial implications

- 4.6 None

Legal implications

- 4.7 All Local Authorities are required by section 88M of the School Standards and Framework Act and the Co-ordination Regulations, to have in place a scheme each year for co-ordinating admission arrangements for maintained schools and academies within their area.
- 4.8 Walsall Council, as an Admission Authority, has a statutory duty to determine the proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools.

- 4.9 Admissions authorities are statutorily required to complete consultation on any changes to their proposed admission arrangements for the 2025/26 school year by 31 January 2024, and must determine (or finalise) these by 28 February 2024.
- 4.10 Walsall Local Authority consulted on the proposed Admission Arrangements as set out in Appendix 1, in line with the School Admissions Code 2021.
- 4.11 In addition, all admissions authorities are required to consult on their admissions arrangements at least once every seven years even if there have been no changes during that period.
- 4.12 The proposed admission arrangements comply with the School Admissions Code (2021).

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.13 None

Property implications

- 4.14 None

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.15 The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that all children resident within the borough have a school place, and this contributes to their health and wellbeing by ensuring that they have the best start in life in a Walsall school. These admissions arrangements also ensure that all children who are looked after or have previously been in public care whether in England or outside of England are given the highest admissions priority for entry into preferred schools.
- 4.16 The admissions arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and the scheme for coordinated admissions ensure that, where possible, children are placed in one of their parents' preferred schools, and where this is not possible that they are allocated a place at a suitable school, enabling them to receive an appropriate education and maximise their opportunities.

Staffing implications

- 4.17 None

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.18 In line with the requirements of the School Admissions Code (2021), and in order to ensure greater equity and fair access to education provision full consideration has been given to the possible impact, direct or indirect, of the proposed admission criteria on equal opportunities. The challenges facing children and young people who have been in public care are well documented. The purpose of these changes is to ensure that all children who are looked after or who have been in public care are given highest admissions priority for their preferred schools. This is to ensure

that these children and young people are given the best possible opportunity to thrive and achieve the best possible educational outcomes.

Climate Change

4.19 There are no implications.

Consultation

4.20 In accordance with the provisions of the School Admissions Code 2021, s.1.45 where there are no proposals to make changes to the admission arrangements from the previous year “there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement that admissions authorities **must** consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years, even if there have been no changes during that period.”

5. Decide

5.1 Cabinet is asked to determine these admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools for the 2025/26 academic year in accordance with the recommendations as set out above in section 3 of this report.

6. Respond

6.1 The determined admission arrangements for 2025/26 will be published on the Walsall Council website once approved.

7. Review

7.1 The admissions arrangements for Walsall community and voluntary controlled primary schools, and the scheme for coordinated admissions are reviewed annually.

Background papers

School Admissions Code (2021)

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Signed

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26.01.2024



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