

Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

31 March 2022

School Admissions Update

Wards All

Service: School Admissions and Appeals Team, Access Service

Portfolio: Councillor Towe

1. Aim

The aim of this report is to provide the Education Scrutiny and Overview Committee with an update on School Admissions progress in relation to the September 2022 normal admission rounds.

2. Recommendations

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

4. Report detail

Following on from the paper brought to the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2021, this report provides an update on the ongoing work within the Admissions and Appeals Team.

4.1. 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 phased admissions round.

Phased admission rounds involve:

- **Reception Transfer Round** - admission to reception class.
- **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.

Applicants can express up to three preferences for Reception and Junior transfer rounds and up to five for Secondary transfer rounds.

Applicants 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.

Offers are sent to parents who submit an on-time application 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.

4.2 Phased Admissions - Secondary Round

There has been a growth in requirement for school places for September 2022 and an additional 129 applications were submitted on time to the LA than for the 2021 round.

Similarly, the requirement for places external to Walsall for Walsall residents has reduced from an average of 17% over previous years to 11% for September 2022. This has resulted in requests for additional places at secondary schools.

Schools have acknowledged the change of pupil preference and in large supported the LA with providing additional provision to ensure a high % of places offered to our children.

Table below shows a comparison of data for September 2022 and September 2021

	September 2022	September 2021
Offered 1st preference	3055	2835
Offered 2nd preference	400	482
Offered 3rd preference	122	123
Offered one of their top three preferences	3577	3440
Offered any preference	3628	3499
Not offered any preferred school and allocated an alternative	208	208
Total Walsall on-time applications	3836	3707

All children who submitted an on-time application to Walsall have been made an offer of a school place for September 2022.

There are approximately 120 late applications that need to be processed after the initial offer day – this will be done in April 2022 to allow time for any changes to allocated places to filter through the system – i.e., successful appeals, change of school preference due to obtaining independent school placement etc.

4.3. Phased Admissions – Reception/Junior Round

National Offer Day for children starting Reception and moving to a Junior school in September 2022 is on Tuesday 19 April 2022 due to the Easter Bank Holiday period.

Reception

Currently there has been 3457 applications received from Walsall residents applying for a reception place and a further 187 applications received for out of borough children who wish to apply for a Walsall school. There are 3997 places available across the borough for Reception children, suggesting there are ample places within the borough to accommodate all children.

Since closing day however the team has received approximately 100 late applications from Walsall residents. Offers for late applications will be made after 19 April 2022.

Junior

Currently there has been 718 applications received from Walsall residents applying for a junior school place and a further 47 applications received for out of borough children who wish to apply for a Walsall school. There are 792 places available in Walsall Y3 Junior schools.

On closing day all Walsall resident children who were on roll in a Walsall infant school had applied. Since closing date there has been a further seven late applications submitted. Offers for late applications will be made after 19 April 2022.

The team are currently exporting offers through our coordinated process for out of borough preferences and similarly importing offers from other Local Authorities for Walsall residents, the final transfer for both Reception and Junior rounds is 31 March 2022.

4.4 Mid-Year Admissions Process in Walsall.

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 most 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. In line with new admission code, several own admission authority schools have informed the Local Authority that they wish to co-ordinate their own mid-year admissions and for these schools' parents and carers need to make applications directly to these schools. Parents and carers are signposted to Walsall's school admissions webpages, where more information about the correct application process for each school is available.

Following consultation with the primary headteachers forum, a revised data return template was issued to all primary schools on 16 February which allows the Local Authority to discharge their statutory duties in advising parents of schools who have places available in a more effective and timely manner.

This data will also assist the Local Authority in monitoring pupils in accordance with the (Children Missing Education (2016) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021) statutory guidance. Additionally, this data is used to help inform the decisions of the Primary Fair Access panel in making allocations for school placements for those children who are new to the area where there are no places available locally.

- **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 code, 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 school days. 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.

5.0. Decide

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.

6.0. Respond

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

7. 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)

School Admissions Report – Education & Scrutiny Committee – November 2021

Pupil Place Planning Report – Education & Scrutiny Committee – February 2022

Contact Officer(s)

Alex Groom

Admission & Education Sufficiency Manager

✉ alex.groom@walsall.gov.uk

Rob Thomas

Head of Access

✉ rob.thomas@walsall.gov.uk