

The main responsibilities of the Admissions and Pupil Place Planning Team

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 purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the key functions, which the team undertakes on a regular basis in order to fulfil this statutory duty:

The Admissions Process:

Admission Arrangements:

- Produce and arrange consultation on the admission arrangements for all Walsall community and voluntary controlled schools on an annual basis;
- Produce and arrange consultation on the scheme for coordinated 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 admissions on an annual basis;
- Review the proposed admission arrangements of all foundation and 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;
- 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 will attend meetings with the Adjudicator and the schools concerned as required.

The Primary, Secondary and Midyear Admission Rounds:

- Review the content and clarity of common online application forms for secondary and primary admissions and midyear 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 and publish the 'Parents' Guide to Online Admissions' booklet and review on an annual basis;
- Coordinate the annual secondary and primary admissions rounds and the midyear admissions process. The coordination process includes:
 - Set up the admission rounds on the Capita One admissions database to reflect the up to date admission arrangements for all Walsall schools;
 - Provide advice and support to parents/carers and schools on the process of submitting an online application. A Parent Support Adviser for admissions is always available in the First Stop Shop at the Civic Centre to provide advice to parents on the admissions and appeals process and to help them to complete online applications, members of the team will also take applications from parents over the telephone. Parent Support Advisers can also attend parents evenings at primary and secondary schools and at nurseries to provide advice and support to parents as required;
 - 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, secondary and midyear applications;
 - Collate midyear admission vacancy figures from all schools on a weekly basis;
 - Exchange preference data files with neighbouring local authorities on a regular basis until secondary and primary offers can be finalised;

Agenda Item 9

- 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 differences in addresses 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;
- Collate evidence submitted in support of requests for deferred admission to Reception for summer born children, review the information provided and refer with a recommendation for the final decision and communicate this decision to parents and schools as appropriate;
- Provide preference lists to voluntary aided schools, grammar schools, Walsall Academy 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 in the primary and secondary admission rounds;
- 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 in the primary and secondary admission rounds;
- Release email notifications to online applicants who requested email notification of the outcome of their primary or secondary admission round 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;

- Investigate suspected fraudulent or misleading applications and act to withdraw places offered as a result of a fraudulent or misleading application as appropriate;
- Compile and maintain Reception, Year 3 and Year 7 waiting lists for all Walsall schools (with the exception of Walsall Academy who maintain their own waiting lists throughout the process) until the end of the Autumn term and then transfer waiting lists to the schools;
- Compile and maintain waiting lists for all year groups for midyear admission.

Admission Appeals:

- 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;
- Provide information on applications and offers to foundation and voluntary aided schools and academies to enable these schools to defend admission appeals.

General Admissions Duties:

- 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;
- Produce locally agreed admissions protocols including the Walsall Council Admissions Policy and the Primary and Secondary Fair Access Protocols, 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;

- Advise parents, 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;
- Attend 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;
- Update the school admissions, school organisation and term dates pages on the Walsall Council website;
- Prepare cabinet and scrutiny reports as required.

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-service CME Panel and member of the West Midlands Regional CME consortium;
- The Admissions and Pupil Place Planning team:
 - Produce a CME referral form which professionals can use to refer a child to the CME Panel;
 - Maintain a database 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, other service areas 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);

- Attend multi agency meetings, child in need meetings and child protection conferences relating to children missing education as required.

Fair Access Protocol:

- Produce and publish the Primary and Secondary Fair Access Protocols, arranging consultation as necessary including working with task and finish groups as appropriate;
- Produce and publish procedure notes for the operation of the Primary and Secondary Fair Access Protocols and circulate to all schools;
- Administer the Fair Access Protocols including:
 - Set up the Primary and Secondary Fair Access Panels, including recruitment of panel members;
 - Produce referral forms;
 - Collate managed move and Fair Access Referrals to each panel;
 - Collate information on each Fair Access Referral including measuring distances from home to all schools within statutory walking distance and prepare a decision sheet;
 - Circulate referral documents to all panel members;
 - Prepare minutes and agendas for each panel meeting;
 - Draft decision letters and forward to the panel members;
 - Maintain databases of Fair Access referrals and managed moves and circulate data to all secondary head teachers;
 - Attend Fair Access Panel meetings and provide updates on existing cases and advice to the panel on the operation of the protocol and the requirements of related legislation.

Walsall Inclusions Partnership (WIP):

- Provide administrative support for the inclusion partnership including:
 - Collate referrals;
 - Prepare and distribute the agenda for partnership meetings;
 - Prepare and circulate minutes of the partnership meetings;
 - Maintain a database of referrals and outcomes;
 - Prepare cases for onward referral to the Fair Access Panel.

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 school 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 EFSA;
- 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, notifying 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;
- Produce and publish the Council's 5 year strategy document which illustrates the demand for pupil places across the borough and outlines the Council's plans to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet the projected demand;
- Prepare cabinet reports and scrutiny reports as requirement.

Freedom of Information Requests:

- Respond to freedom of information requests relating to areas covered by the service;
- The Service Manager acts as Information Asset Owner for the service area.

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 that are received from the local and national press.

School Term Dates:

- Manage the annual consultation process to set term dates for Walsall schools including:
 - Attend the annual regional term dates consultation meeting;
 - Liaise with professional associations and school representatives to produce proposed term date models;
 - Arrange consultation on the proposed models;
 - Produce a report on the outcome of the consultation;
 - Publish the agreed term dates.

Walsall Link website:

- Maintain the Admissions and Pupil Place Planning pages on the Walsall Link website.

Kate Mann

Service Manager, Admissions and Pupil Place Planning

November 2018