

Cabinet 9 February 2022

Determination of the Scheme for coordinated admissions, and the Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools for the 2023/24 academic year

Portfolio: Councillor Towe, Education and Skills

Related portfolios:

Service: School Admissions and Appeals, 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 2023/24 academic year and the proposed admission arrangements for primary community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2023/24 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 2023/24 by 28 February 2021

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That the proposed schemes as set out in **Appendix A** for inter-authority coordinated admissions for 2023/24 are approved.
- 3.2 That the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools for the academic year 2023/24, as set out in **Appendix B** of this report, are determined.

- 3.3 That Walsall Council informs all relevant stakeholders of the determination of its admission arrangements for the 2023/24 academic year in accordance with the provisions of the School Admissions Code 2021.

4. Report detail – know

Context

- 4.1. As a Local Authority, Walsall Council has the responsibility to draw up and agree schemes for secondary and primary admissions for the 2023/24 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 2023/24 school year by 28 February 2022.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.2. The admission arrangements for primary community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2023/24 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 2023 and throughout the 2023/24 academic year as part of midyear admissions process. 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

- 4.3 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.

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

- 4.5 None

Legal implications

- 4.6. 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.

Walsall Council, as an Admission Authority, has a statutory duty to determine the proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools.

Admissions authorities are statutorily required to complete consultation on any changes to their proposed admission arrangements for the 2023/24 school year by 31 January 2022, and must determine (or finalise) these by 28 February 2022. However, Walsall Local Authority is not proposing to make any changes to the re-arrangements that have been previously determined for the 2022/23 academic year. These arrangements were previously determined by Cabinet on 10 February 2021 and then re-determined on 21 July 2021 to include a mandatory variation to the arrangements. This was to ensure that the arrangements were compliant with the provisions of the new School Admissions Code which was published in May 2021.

In accordance with s.1.45 of the School Admissions Code 2021, there is no requirement for Walsall Local Authority to consult on its admission arrangements prior to determination given that there are no proposed changes to the existing arrangements that in are in place for the 2022/23 academic year.

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. Given that Walsall Local Authority consulted on its proposed admissions arrangements for the academic year 2021/22 then this is not applicable for the academic year 2023/24.

The proposed admission arrangements comply with the School Admissions Code (2021).

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.7 None

Property implications

- 4.8 None

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.9. 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.

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

4.10 None

Reducing Inequalities

4.11 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. In particular 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

4.12 There are no implications.

Consultation

4.13 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."

14.2. Walsall Local Authority previously consulted on its admissions arrangements for the 2021/22 academic year. Since there are no proposed changes to these admissions arrangements for the 2023/24 academic year then there is no requirement for Walsall Local Authority to undertake any consultation prior to determination.

5. Decide

- 5.1. Cabinet is asked to determine these admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools for the 2023/24 academic year in accordance with the recommendations as set out above in section 3 of this report.

6. Respond

The determined admission arrangements for 2023/24 will be published on the Walsall Council website once approved.

7. Review

The admissions arrangements for Walsall community and voluntary controlled primary schools, and the scheme for coordinated admissions are reviewed annually each summer term. The 2023/24 admission arrangements and coordinated scheme will be reviewed in summer term 2024.

Background papers

School Admissions Code (2021)

Author

Sharyn Duffey
Admissions Management Support (interim)

✉ sharyn.duffey@walsall.gov.uk



Sally Rowe
Executive Director, Children's and Customer
21st January 2022



Councillor Towe
Portfolio holder, Education and Skills
21st January 2022