

**IMPLEMENTATION EXECUTIVE
26 FEBRUARY 2009**

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS 2010/11

Executive Summary

This report has been produced as part of the statutory process for the determination of admission arrangements to maintained schools. A Local Authority has a statutory duty to formulate and operate schemes to co-ordinate the admissions to all maintained or state schools within its area. We are proposing two co-ordinated schemes; one covers primary schools (including infants and juniors) and one for secondary schools. The co-ordination of admissions has been successful in past years and the schemes proposed for 2010/11 are substantially the same as those operating for the current academic year. A short glossary of different types of schools is set out at Appendix E to this report.

The Local Authority is the statutory admission authority for the Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools in its area. As such it is required to formulate admission arrangements which outline how it will admit children to those schools. There are two proposed schemes for secondary and primary (including infant and junior) schools.

The IE is required to approve the four documents which are appended to this report which then will become the determined admission policy for Wiltshire for 2010/11.

The admissions process for the intakes in September 2010 begins in September 2009.

Proposal

That the Implementation Executive:

- a) Approve and determine the proposed scheme for the co-ordination of admission to secondary schools for 2010/11.
- b) Approve and determine the proposed scheme for the co-ordination of admissions to primary schools for 2010/11.
- c) Approve and determine the proposed admission arrangements for VC & C secondary schools for 2010/11.
- d) Approve and determine the proposed admission arrangements for VC & C schools for 2010/11.

Reason for Proposal

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to have a determined admission policy for 2010/11 in place on or before 15 April 2009.

Carolyn Godfrey
Corporate Director, Children & Education

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS 2010/11

Purpose of Report

1. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to act in accordance with the School Admissions Code. There is a requirement to have in place schemes for the co-ordination of admissions to the schools within Wiltshire. The Local Authority is the Admissions Authority for all Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools within Wiltshire and as such is required to determine a set of admission arrangements for those schools. The report presents the four elements of the admissions policy which have to be determined by the Implementation Executive.

Background

2. The purpose of co-ordinated arrangements is to make the application process simpler for parents by ensuring that each child gets one offer for one school place. This requires the School Admissions team to work with colleagues in foundation and aided schools and in other local authorities.
3. Admission arrangements have been co-ordinated for secondary school intakes from September 2005 onwards and have been co-ordinated for primary schools since September 2006.
4. The co-ordinated process is accepted by schools and the scheme does not need substantial revision at this time. The proposed schemes are substantially the same as those currently being used.
5. A revised School Admission Code has been published and will come into operation in February 2009. Minor adjustments have been made to the schemes to ensure they are in compliance with the new Code. Further revisions will be required when the authority's policies for 2011/12 are drafted.
6. The LA is the admissions authority for all Community and Voluntary Controlled (C&VC) schools in the county. The governing bodies of aided and foundation schools are their own admissions authority.
7. Each admission authority has to determine the arrangements which are used when allocating school places. These proposed arrangements will be used solely for admissions to community and voluntary controlled schools. They incorporate the criteria used to prioritise applications in situations when a school is oversubscribed (i.e. when more applications are received than the school's admission number allows) as well as showing how all admissions will be processed.

Main Considerations for the Implementation Executive

8. The proposed co-ordinated schemes and admission arrangements have been sent out to all maintained schools and other neighbouring admission authorities for consultation. The documents were sent out in October 2008 and the consultation was extended to allow for comments to be received up until 30 January.

9. From consultations it is clear that the general issue of co-ordinating arrangements is not questioned. There is confidence that with suitable communication systems being in place the co-operation between the admissions team and the foundation and aided schools which is essential for the smooth operation of a co-ordinated scheme will be forthcoming.
10. During the consultation period the two selective schools within the county suggested amendments to the secondary co-ordinated scheme as it relates to in-year admissions. These suggestions have been incorporated in the attached documents.
11. The proposed timetables in the co-ordinated schemes are based on those used in previous years and are those which are familiar to schools and the admissions team in DCE.
12. The co-ordinated schemes include the provision to co-ordinate all admissions to schools. The new School Admissions Code requires this – which extends co-ordination to cover all in-year applications as well as those for the normal (September) intakes. This is the one change from existing policies.
13. From consultations it is clear that there is widespread agreement with the proposed admission arrangements for VC&C schools which are considered to be fair and objective as required by the School Admissions Code.
14. There have been no objections at all to the proposed oversubscription criteria which have worked well for many years. These give priority to children in care as required by the School Admissions Code. Children living within a school's designated area are given priority over children from outside that area. The tie break used if a school is oversubscribed within any criterion is that of distance from the school.
15. A particular area for discussion at the Admission Forum and on which a specific response was requested from head teachers during consultation was the issue of the admittance of rising fives. These are children who are born during the summer term, in this case between 1 April 2006 and 31 August 2006. The vast majority of foundation and aided schools retain the arrangement used by the LA whereby summer born rising fives are not admitted full time into schools until January. Having taken professional advice from the Early Year Team in DCE, the proposed arrangements retain the phased admission of children into the reception year of primary schools. In particular it offers part time education for summer born children up until December following their fourth birthday. This stance was supported by members of the Admission Forum in January 2009.
16. The governors of Harnham Infants School responded to the consultation seeking more flexibility to enable them to admit summer born children full time from September. This view was supported by five other schools and five similar responses were received from individual parents. Three schools wished to keep to the proposed arrangements indicating that in their view summer born children were too young for full time education in September. Whilst all views are appreciated, there is clearly no significant majority of schools wishing to change the admission arrangements at this time.

17. The returns from the consultation period were presented to the Admission Forum at their meeting on 27 January. After full consideration the Forum recommends that these schemes and admission arrangements be agreed.
18. The proposed co-ordinated schemes and admission arrangements are in accordance with the requirements of the School Admissions Code.
19. The admission arrangements for VC & C schools will be operated within the appropriate co-ordinated scheme for admissions within Wiltshire and are compatible with the timetables laid down by the co-ordinated schemes.
20. Once determined the schemes and admission arrangements will be circulated to all schools in Wiltshire and to our nine neighbouring local authorities. They will be implemented from September 2009 when the process of admitting children to the intake year in 2010 starts.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

21. The admission policy of the local authority is to give local children priority when applying for their local school. This policy of 'local schools for local children' has been maintained for many years and is a way of encouraging parents to consider the environmental impact of long journeys to school.

Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal

22. Although not part of the proposed co-ordinated schemes or admission arrangements, it should be noted that all application forms can be and are produced in different languages.
23. The online system for applications to be made has developed since it was introduced in 2006. Approximately 40% of applications for September intakes are now received electronically.

Risk Assessment

24. Were the Local Authority not to determine co-ordinated schemes for its maintained schools, the Secretary of State would impose a scheme on us.
25. The Office of the Schools Adjudicator has a monitoring role to play in regard to admission arrangements and it is a statutory duty to have these in place by 15 April 2009 for admissions to schools in 2010.

Financial Implications

26. There have been additional costs associated with co-ordinated admission arrangements. These have been recognised by the Cabinet on a previous occasion. Additional staffing and software has been provided for the school admissions team.
27. There will also be increased printing costs since the required forms will be produced and printed by the central admissions team rather than by individual admission authorities. These costs have been added to the working budget.

28. The needs of in-year co-ordination and the requirement to co-ordinate across county boundaries for primary schools in the future will increase the pressure on the School Admissions Team. Additional clerical and allocations staffing (2 posts) may be required.

Legal Implications

29. There are no specific legal implications in respect of these proposals.

Options Considered

30. It is a legal requirement to have these policies in place and so no alternative has been considered.

Conclusion

31. The Implementation Executive is asked to approve the appended schemes which will become the determined admission policy for Wiltshire for 2010/11.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report: None

Appendices

- A Proposed Scheme for the Co-Ordination of Secondary Admissions 2010/11
- B Proposed Scheme for the Co-Ordination of Primary Admissions 2010/11
- C Proposed Admission Arrangements for VC&C Secondary Schools 2010/11
- D Proposed Admission Arrangements for VC&C Primary Schools 2010/11
- E Glossary