

14th February 2017

To the Mayor and Members of the Cabinet

SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2018/19 ACADEMIC YEAR

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Children, Young People and Schools	All	Yes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report outlines the requirements for the adoption of schemes for Co-ordinating the Admission Arrangements for Primary and Secondary Schools and the approval of the Admission Arrangements for Community Schools in the 2018/19 School Year.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. This is not an exempt report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The Mayor and Members of Cabinet is asked to consider the following admission arrangements for the 2018/19 school year:
 - Community School Admission Arrangements
 - Community School Nursery Admission Arrangements (Sections 18 to 20 below.)
 - Primary Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements
 - Secondary Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements (Sections 21 to 23 below.)
 - Notification of parents of the arrangements for admission including those to the proposed University Technology College (section 16 below.)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER

4. The Co-ordinated Arrangements noted above are intended to provide an equal opportunity for all parents to apply for school places at the same time through a process co-ordinated by the Local Authority (LA).
5. The School and Nursery Admission Arrangements set out the process by which applications by parents for community schools are considered and ensure that they are administered consistently and in a fair and equitable manner.

BACKGROUND

6. The Local Authority (LA) has a duty under Section 86 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to make arrangements for enabling the parents of children in its area to express a preference for a maintained school and to give reasons for that preference.

7. By 28 February each year the LA is required to determine the admission arrangements that will apply to schools for which it is the admission authority i.e. community schools. This has been brought forward from previous years by the DfE to allow more time for any necessary objections to be lodged with the School Adjudicator.
8. By 1 January in the relevant determination year the LA is required to formulate schemes for co-ordinating the admission arrangements for all maintained schools and academies in the Borough and to seek the agreement of other admission authorities to the co-ordinated admission arrangements. These are intended to make school admissions easier, more transparent and less stressful for parents. They require parents to rank preferences on a single common application form which they must submit to their home LA. Parents will then receive a single offer of a school place for their child from the LA on a designated day.
9. In drawing up its arrangements the LA has to have regard to relevant legislation, the School Admissions Code (the Code) and guidance from the DfE. These contain a number of mandatory requirements which all admission authorities are required to follow and those requirements have been taken into account in the proposed arrangements.
10. The Private, Voluntary or Independent sector (PVI)s make their own arrangements for places within the Borough for 3 and 4 year old early years places. However the LA has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient accessible and affordable places for children across a range of provision types and provides support and guidance as necessary.

Admission Arrangements 2018/19

11. The LA remains the admission authority for community schools which represents 56 of the 117 mainstream schools in Doncaster. The arrangements are determined in relation to the Code and relevant regulations published by the DfE. The only changes proposed relate to changes to admission numbers for schools as a result of building modifications.
12. Whilst the Local Authority is not responsible for setting the arrangements for academies, voluntary aided or free schools it undertakes an important role to ensure that they are as compliant with any changes required of them.

Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements 2018/19

13. The Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements for the normal year of entry remain unchanged; parents will continue to apply to their home local authority from which they will receive their decisions.
14. Applications at each phase of education; nursery, primary and secondary are all available digitally through the Council's website. For the initial round of year of entry school applications the Local Authority continues to receive a high percentage of online applications. This has increased annually and for admission in September 2016 the online rates were 86% representing 2490 parents for secondary and 89% representing 2884 parents for primary. The main driver for change was removing the issuing of paper applications by default and the ability of parents to receive their decisions by email on national offer day.

15. Co-ordination remains an important arrangement between schools and local authorities in terms of safeguarding and good working relations. A key component of this is the identification of potential applicants from data held by Health and schools through appropriate data sharing agreements which contribute significantly to the success of the process.

Publication of Information for Parents

16. The Local Authority is required to publish information for parents detailing the arrangements for admission to schools by 12 September each year. Regulations to be published shortly will require the inclusion of details for future proposals to develop a local University Technology College and a requirement to write to parents of prospective pupils to explain the appropriate admission arrangements if confirmed.
17. In future years, the admissions and co-ordination arrangements will be included as part of a wider school organisation strategy, integrating education settings place planning, admissions arrangements/co-ordination and capital developments into a single overarching strategy aligned to the wider place plans and recommendations identified in the One Doncaster report.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Admission Arrangements

18. The LA is required to include in its admission arrangements, information on the order in which places will be offered when a year group is oversubscribed. These are usually referred to as the admission criteria.
19. In Doncaster, each school serves a local community, usually referred to as the 'catchment area'. This reflects the philosophy that 'efficient education' is particularly fostered by closely associating a secondary school and a group of linked primary schools, in a pyramid. In this way, each school becomes part of the provision for a community and the education of the community's children benefits greatly from the association of its schools.
20. The admission criteria for admission to community schools and community school nurseries reflect the requirement to give first priority to children in care. The next criterion gives priority to those who live within a particular catchment area. The remaining school admission criteria also recognise the importance of children attending the same school as siblings and a school which is linked to their present school in the pyramid structure. In circumstances where a place is only available in any of the criterion for one child from a multiple birth i.e. twins, the LA has undertaken to offer each child a place together.

Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements

21. The LA is required to determine arrangements which co-ordinate the admission process to all schools and academies for the year of entry. They must allow for parents to express up to three preferences and require them to apply to their own local authority. These must be considered equally and the eligibility for places will be determined using each schools admission criteria.

22. A pupil will be offered a single place which is the highest ranked school for which they are eligible. Where no place is available the child will be offered an alternative place.
23. Although the mandatory requirement to co-ordinate in year was removed from September 2013 it is proposed that the Local Authority reaffirms its commitment to continue to co-ordinate the admission arrangements during the school year and to seek the agreement of other admission authorities to continue to do so.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTIONS

Community School and Nursery Admission Arrangements

24. The LA must ensure that its arrangements take into account the relevant regulations and comply with the mandatory provisions of the Code. They include guidelines in setting oversubscription criteria which ensure that the arrangements are fair to all children and their families, and promote social equity. They must also be consistent with the co-ordinated arrangements for the area.
25. The proposed arrangements are based upon those currently in place and have been subjected to the required consultation. The admission criteria and the retention of Catchment areas, which gives the majority of children in the Borough priority though not a guarantee to an individual school, have been reaffirmed annually. To date, this principle has also been adopted by those schools which have become academies and so determine their own arrangements.
26. The admission arrangements contain details of the admission number for each school. These are reviewed annually and where necessary are revised to take into account changes in the net capacity assessment and variations in the number of pupils expected.

Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements - Primary and Secondary

27. Minor changes have been made to the relevant dates currently in place. These dates are within statutory timescales and have been agreed with the majority of our neighbouring authorities.
28. The mandatory requirement to co-ordinate in-year applications was removed for admission from September 2013. However the Local Authority, in agreement with schools, has previously determined that this should continue and this position is reaffirmed in the proposed arrangements. Continuing to co-ordinate in-year admissions strengthens the Local Authority's safeguarding role by continuing to monitor the movement of pupils and manage the Children Missing Education database. To do otherwise would rely on schools notifying the Authority of applications it receives and their outcomes. It would also mean parents would have to contend with differing arrangements at each school.
29. The Local Authority experiences a large number of in-year applications, the majority of which are due to changes of address, both into and around the Borough.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

30. The main impact of the proposals set out in this report on the Council's key priorities are set out below:

	Outcome	Implications
	<p>All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans.</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services.</i> 	<p>The proposal supports the priority outcomes in terms of:-</p> <p>Encouraging local schools to work together in a co-ordinated way; Supporting ease of access for all residents to school places; Prioritising places for local pupils and their siblings; Improve attendance and reduce risk for students out of school; Raising education standards and aspirations of young people; Improving services for Children, Young People and their families. Provide better value for money in simplifying the admission process; Raise the awareness of parents to future proposals for University Technology College provision in Doncaster.</p>
	<p>People live safe, healthy, active an independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding and Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living.</i> 	
	<p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> 	
	<p>All families thrive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> 	
	<p>Council services are modern and value for money</p>	
	<p>Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance.</p>	

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

31. If the arrangements fail to comply with the regulations and the Code they may be subject to challenge from parents through objections to Schools Adjudicator or the Local Government Ombudsman. This may have a detrimental impact on other pupils in a school or a financial impact on the Local Authority or schools.
32. If schools do not wish to take part in the in-year co-ordination process the Authority will put in place appropriate processes and safeguards to monitor the movement of pupils.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

33. Section 88C of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended, requires, before the beginning of each school year, the admission authority for a maintained school in England to determine the admission arrangements which are to apply for that year. Before determining the admission arrangements that are to

apply for a year, the admission authority must carry out such consultation about the proposed arrangements as is prescribed in the Regulations below.

34. The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended, state that every admission authority must determine their admission arrangements on or before 28 February in the determination year.
35. The Regulations also require a local authority to formulate, in relation to each academic year, a qualifying scheme in relation to each primary and secondary school in their area. The local authority must formulate a qualifying scheme by 1 January in the relevant determination year and must inform the Secretary of State on or before 28 February in the relevant determination year whether they have secured the adoption of a qualifying scheme or not.
36. The School Information (England) Regulations 2008 require that local authorities publish a composite prospectus for parents by 12 September each year which contains the admissions arrangements. An amendment has been published to the regulations which comes into force on 14 February 2017. This requires local authorities to include details of local University Technology Colleges in the prospectus and to write to parents of prospective pupils to confirm the appropriate admission arrangements to UTCs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

37. This report refers to the schemes for admission arrangements to schools but has no effect on either the total number of pupils admitted or on the resources required to administer these admissions.
38. As such there are no financial implications rising directly from this report.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

39. There are no HR implications arising from this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

40. In line with Digital Council Parents are encouraged to make their applications on-line. However a paper form is available to download or can be provided on request if they do not have use of facilities on-line.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

41. In taking this decision, the decision maker must be aware of their obligations under section 149 Equality Act 2010. This section contains the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). It obliges public authorities, when exercising their functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to:
 - a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct which the Act prohibits;
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity; and
 - c) Foster good relations between people who share relevant protected characteristics and those who do not.A Due Regard Statement has been completed and is included at Appendix 1.

42. The relevant protected characteristics under the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The duty also covers marriage and civil partnerships, but only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination.
43. In addition to the requirements of the Equalities Act, the School Admissions Code published by the Department for Education make it clear that all admission authorities, including Doncaster Council must not discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.
44. In accordance with the Code, the arrangements and admission criteria, must be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation. The Council must ensure that the arrangements do not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational needs.
45. Special provision has also been made within the In Year Fair Access protocol to prioritise applications for service personnel and crown servants in the line with the requirements of the Code and the Service Forces Covenant. The arrangements also include provision for applications from service personnel and crown servants moving to Doncaster will be considered one term in advance of a change of address in accordance with the guidance from the DfE providing that the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date and a Unit postal address or quartering area address.

CONSULTATION

46. The following stakeholders were consulted in accordance with the appropriate regulations and were informed that the draft arrangements had been placed on the Council's website:-
 - i) Community School Admission Arrangements (School and Nursery)

Community schools	Voluntary Aided Schools
Public and interested parties	Neighbouring local authorities
Free Schools	Academies
 - ii) Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements

Voluntary Aided Schools	Free Schools
Academies	Neighbouring local authorities
47. The deadline for consultation was 12 December 2016. No comments were received.
48. Following approval of the determined admission arrangements the Local Authority will publish a copy of those arrangements on its website. An appropriate person or parents may object to the arrangements by writing to the Schools Adjudicator by 15 May 2017.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

49. The following background papers are available:-
- Draft Community Schools Admission Policy 2018/19 - www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/admission-arrangements
 - Draft Qualifying Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary Schools in Doncaster 2018/19 - www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/admission-arrangements
 - Draft Qualifying Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Secondary Schools in Doncaster 2018/19 - www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/admission-arrangements
 - Department for Education - School Admissions Code - www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2
 - Department for Education - School Admissions Appeal Code - www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-appeals-code
 - The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 – www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/8/made
 - The Education (Relevant Areas For Consultation On Admission Arrangements) Regulations 1999 - www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/124/pdfs/uksi_19990124_en.pdf
 - The School Admissions (Admissions Appeals Arrangements) Regulations 2012 - www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/9/pdfs/uksi_20120009_en.pdf
 - The School Admissions (Infant Class Size) England Regulations 2012 - www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/10/pdfs/uksi_20120010_en.pdf
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Due Regard Statement (Appendix 1)
 - The School Information (England) Regulations 2008 - www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2008/3093/pdfs/uksi_20083093_en.pdf
 - Cabinet Report 10 December 2008 - Discretionary Transport Efficiency Savings

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