



Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 2 February 2022

To the Chair and Members of the
CABINET

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2023/2024 ACADEMIC YEAR

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Lani-Mae Ball, Education, Skills and Young People	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 2023/2024 School Year.
2. The co-ordinated admission arrangements for the year of entry to all types of mainstream schools are a statutory responsibility of the Council and must be determined annually.
3. Separately, each admission authority is required to set its own admission arrangements. The various bodies, responsible for admission to schools in Doncaster, are summarised below:

Type of School	Community Schools	Church Schools	Free Schools	Academies	Total
Responsible Body	Doncaster Council	Governing Body	Trust	Trust	
Infant Schools	3	0	0	6	9
Junior Schools	2	0	0	5	7
Primary Schools	19	10	0	53	82
Secondary Schools	0	0	3	17	20
TOTAL	24	10	3	81	118

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The Mayor and members of Cabinet is asked to approve the following admission arrangements for the 2023/2024 school year:
 - Community School Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 13 to 14 below).
 - Community School Nursery Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 13 to 14 below).

- Primary Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 15 to 17 below).
- Secondary Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 15 to 17 below).
- Notification of parents of the arrangements for admission including those to the Doncaster University Technology College (paragraph 18 below).

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

6. 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 Council.
7. 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

8. The Council 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.
9. By 1 January in the relevant determination year the Council 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 Council. Parents will then receive a single offer of a school place for their child from the Council on a designated day.
10. By 28 February each year the Council 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 Department for Education to allow more time for any necessary objections to be lodged with the School Adjudicator.
11. In drawing up its arrangements the Council has to have regard to relevant legislation, the School Admissions Code (the Code) and guidance from the Department for Education. 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.
12. The Private, Voluntary or Independent sector make their own arrangements for places within the Borough for 3 and 4 year old early years places. However the Council 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 2023/2024

13. The Council is required to set arrangements for admission to community schools. Community schools are maintained schools for which the Council employs the school's staff, is responsible for the school's admissions and owns the school's estate. This represents 24 of the 118 mainstream schools in Doncaster. The arrangements are determined in relation to the Code and relevant regulations published by the Department for Education. The only

changes proposed relate to changes to admission numbers for schools as a result of building modifications and to comply with changes made to the Code in September 2021.

14. Whilst the Council 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 and that they adhere to the guidance set within the Code. The Council holds those schools to account and robustly challenges non compliance, initially through the schools governance structure and when necessary by requesting support from the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Secretary of State.

Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements 2023/2024

15. 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.
16. 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 Council continues to receive a high percentage of online applications. For September 2021, the online rates for all applications increased again to 99% up from 98% in the previous year. The benefit to parent/carers is the ability for them to receive their decisions by email on national offer day (1 March 2023 for secondary schools and 16 April 2023 for primary schools). Paper applications are available for parents on the Council's website and this will remain the case until the Council is satisfied that all parents will have equal access to the admission process.
17. 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.
18. The success of the arrangements can be seen in increases in each of the last three years where a consistently high rate of pupil preference has been met. Most recently, for September 2021, offer rates for any preference made by parents stood at 96.6% (secondary) and 98.8% (primary), above local and national outcomes for those parents who have applied by the national closing dates. This success is replicated for first preferences which were again above local and national outcomes at 88% (secondary) and 97.1% (primary).

Publication of Information for Parents

19. The Council is required to publish information for parents detailing the arrangements for admission to schools and local University Technology Colleges by 12 September each year. In addition, the Council is required to write to parents of prospective pupils of Technology Colleges directly to explain the appropriate admission arrangements and makes reference to the Doncaster University Technology College.
20. The admissions and co-ordination arrangements are included as part of a wider Learning Provision Organisation Strategy, integrating education settings place planning, admissions arrangements/co-ordination and capital developments into one area.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Admission Arrangements

21. The Council is required to set arrangements for admission to community schools. It must include in its 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.
22. 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.
23. 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 Council has undertaken to offer each child a place together.

Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements

24. The Council 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.
25. 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.
26. Although the mandatory requirement to co-ordinate in year was removed from September 2013 it is proposed that the Council 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 OPTION

Community School and Nursery Admission Arrangements

27. The Council 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.
28. 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 the majority of those schools which have become academies and so determine their own arrangements.

29. 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

30. 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.
31. The mandatory requirement to co-ordinate in-year applications was removed for admission from September 2013. However the Council, 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 Council'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 Council of applications it receives and their outcomes. It would also mean parents would have to contend with differing arrangements at each school.
32. The Council 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

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

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	
	<p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	<p>The proposal supports the Council's key Outcomes in terms of:-</p> <p>Encouraging local schools to work together in a co-ordinated way;</p> <p>Supporting ease of access for all residents to school places;</p> <p>Prioritising places for local pupils and their siblings;</p>
	<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life 	<p>Improve attendance and reduce risk for students out of</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	<p>school;</p> <p>Raising education standards and aspirations of young people;</p> <p>Improving services for Children, Young People and their families.</p> <p>Provide better value for money in simplifying the admission process;</p> <p>Raise the awareness of parents to future proposals for the Doncaster University Technology College.</p>
	<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

34. 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 Council or schools.
35. If schools do not wish to take part in the in-year co-ordination process the Council will put in place appropriate processes and safeguards to monitor the movement of pupils.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (HP 7/12/21)

36. 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.

37. 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.
38. 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.
39. 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 came into force on 14 February 2017. This requires local authorities to include details of local University Technology Colleges (UTCs) in the prospectus and to write to parents of prospective pupils to confirm the appropriate admission arrangements to UTCs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (SB 03/12/21)

40. 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.
41. As such there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (KW 06/12/21)

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

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS (PW Date 06/12/21)

43. There are no specific technology implications arising from this report. The Synergy Schools Admissions Management solution supports the admission arrangements outlined in this report, with parents encouraged to make their applications on line via the Parent Portal.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS (RS 02/12/21)

44. Learning outcomes and health outcomes are intrinsically linked. Evidence shows that education, training and employment are key socio-economic factors in determining health status (Marmot, 2010). The admission arrangements described should be mindful of the impact on ease of access to education and in particular for those families who suffer disadvantage. Programmes that aim to improve attendance and reduce the gap in educational attainment are likely to impact positively on reducing long-term health inequalities in Doncaster.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS (NMc 02/12/21)

45. 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. It obliges public authorities, when exercising their functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to:
- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation 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.

46. 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.
47. In addition to the requirements of the Equalities Act, the Code, published by the Department for Education, makes 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.
48. 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.
49. 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 Department for Education 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

50. The following stakeholders are being consulted in accordance with the appropriate regulations and have been informed that the draft arrangements have been placed on the Council's website:-
- i) Community School Admission Arrangements (School and Nursery)
 - Community schools
 - Public and interested parties
 - Free Schools
 - Voluntary Aided Schools
 - Neighbouring local authorities
 - Academies
 - ii) Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements
 - Voluntary Aided Schools
 - Academies
 - Free Schools
 - Neighbouring local authorities
51. The deadline for consultation was 1 December 2021. No comments were received.

52. Following approval of the determined admission arrangements the Council 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 2022.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

53. The following background papers are available:-

- Draft Community Schools Admission Policy 2023/24 - www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/admission-arrangements
- Draft Community Schools Nursery Admission Policy 2023/24 - www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/admission-arrangements
- Draft Qualifying Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary Schools in Doncaster 2023/24 - www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/admission-arrangements
- Draft Qualifying Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Secondary Schools in Doncaster 2023/24 - 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
- 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
- The Education (Relevant Areas for Consultation on Admission Arrangements) Regulations 1999 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/124/contents/made>

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The Code	The School Admissions Code
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REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

Neil McAllister, Learning Provision Organisation Service Manager

Telephone: 01302 735283

Email: neil.mcallister@doncaster.gov.uk

Riana Nelson
Director of Learning Opportunities, Skills & Culture