

Cabinet

1 March 2022

School Admissions Arrangements and Coordinated Scheme 2023-2024

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

A) That the following policies that make up Dorset Council's School Admissions Arrangements and Coordinated Scheme for school place allocations from September 2021 be adopted:

1. Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Timetable 2023-2024
2. Primary Co-ordinated Scheme 2023-2024
3. Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme 2023-2024
4. In Year Co-ordinated Scheme 2023-2024
5. Admissions Arrangements for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools 2023-2024.
6. Admissions to Maintained Nursery Units Policy 2023-2024
7. Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2023-2024
8. Guidance on Placement Outside of Normal/Chronological Age Group 2023-2024
9. Armed Forces Policy 2023-2024

Reason for Recommendation:

- To determine admissions arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements including the Schools Admissions Code September 2021.
- To ensure compliance with the latest legislation and any subsequent regulation/statutory guidance

1. Executive Summary

As a result of successive Acts and associated Regulations, admission authorities are required to consult on proposed admissions arrangements prior to determination. A consultation has to be carried out by the 31st January 2022, with the outcomes to be determined by the 1 March 2022, published by the Local Authority by the 15 March 2022 for admissions into schools in September 2023.

The Department for Education September 2021 Admissions Code requires admission authorities to consult for a minimum period of 6 weeks between 1 October and 31 January in any given year and to include relevant parents and other groups in that consultation.

The consultation on Dorset's Admissions Arrangements for September 2023 was completed on 23 January 2022 after a 6-week period. This report summarises the consultations that have taken place and invites members to approve the policies as a result of those consultations in order to meet the Local Authority's statutory duties.

All Admissions Authorities, of which Dorset Council is one, are required to 'determine' their admissions arrangements on an annual basis.

All policies have been updated with regard to the latest guidance as a result of the UK leaving the European Union as of the 31 December 2020.

2. Financial Implications

None

3. Well-being and Health Implications

The admissions arrangements and pupil place planning strategy for Dorset is focused on ensuring sufficiency and easy access to local school places, generating close local attachments and promoting the walking to school agenda.

4. Climate implications

The underlying premise of the School Admissions Arrangements and the criteria for the allocation of places focuses on local schools for local children, minimising where possible families having to undertake driven journeys to access a school place

5. Other Implications

None

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

A full EQIA has been undertaken and is attached.

8. Appendices

1. Admissions Arrangements for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools 2023-2024.
2. Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Timetable 2023-2024
3. Primary Co-ordinated Scheme 2023-2024
4. Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme 2023-2024
5. In Year Co-ordinated Scheme 2023-2024
6. Admissions to Maintained Nursery Units Policy 2023-2024
7. Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2023-2024
8. Guidance on Placement Outside of Normal/Chronological Age Group 2023-2024
9. Armed Forces Policy 2023-2024
10. Full EQIA for the Admissions Arrangements and Coordinated Scheme

9. Background Papers

DFE Schools Admissions Code - *September 2021*

[School admissions code - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(https://www.gov.uk\)\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92122/school-admissions-code-2021.pdf)

DFE Guidance on Summer Born Children - *September 2020*

[Summer-born children: school admission - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/summer-born-children-school-admission)

DFE Guidance on Admissions and The Armed Forces Covenant – *April 2013*

[Armed Forces Covenant: guidance and support - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/armed-forces-covenant-guidance-and-support)

[\[Withdrawn\] Armed forces covenant: admissions to schools in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/armed-forces-covenant-admissions-to-schools-in-england)

Co-Ordinated Schemes – Primary, Secondary and In Year.

- 1.1 The new timetable for the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme meets with the requirements of the Schools Admissions Code of Practice and is attached in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The scheme co-ordinates with neighbouring local authorities and the national offer dates as set out in the Code of Practice. There have been no responses to this consultation.

Elected members are asked to support the adoption of the co-ordinated scheme in order to meet statutory requirements.

2. Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2023-2024 including The Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2023-2024 and the Nursery Admissions Policy 2023-2024

- 2.1 Admissions arrangements for all maintained schools are bound by the DFE Schools Admissions Code, which was revised and updated in December 2021.
- 2.2 Dorset Council (DC) has made no changes to the oversubscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools.
- 2.3 DC has made no changes to the Sixth Form Admissions Policy nor The Nursery Admissions Policy.
- 2.5 There were no responses to the consultation.

Elected Members are asked to adopt the Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2023-2024 and note that Local Authority Sixth Form Admissions Policy, Local Authority Nursery Admissions Policy are unchanged.

3. Dorset Admissions of Armed Forces Community Children Policy

- 3.1 This policy applies to all schools where DC is the admissions authority (community and voluntary controlled schools) – it is also promoted for adoption with Dorset Schools which are their own admissions authorities (academies, foundation, voluntary aided, studio and free schools). A copy of the policy is found in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 This policy recognises the Armed Forces Covenant and reflects the spirit of DFE Guidance issued in April 2013 that has been withdrawn but Dorset continues to maintain the principles.
- 3.3 The Guidance from the DFE and DC's policy is designed to ensure that admissions arrangements do not disadvantage service families, and the policy provides the admissions authority flexibility in how they may process applications from service families.
- 3.4 The policy ensures that an admission authority has flexibility in determining main residence when managing place allocations using base and future addresses where a family is subject to a new posting/rotation.
- 3.5 There is flexibility in the application of the Infant Class Size (ICS) legislation, which allows admissions authorities to place over number as an 'exception', though it is still incumbent on the admissions authority to respect the philosophy of ICS and not to necessarily make an 'exception' of every service family.
- 3.6 The policy also allows and requires an admission authority to act flexibly when an allocated school place through a future service or base address is then not appropriate to the residential address that the service family has, once they are finally settled.
- 3.7 There have been no responses to the consultation including the Ministry of Defence who were consulted.

Elected members are asked to adopt the attached policy in order to support military families and to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant.

4. Guidance on the Placement of a Pupil Outside His or Her Normal Age Group.

- 4.1 This policy applies to all schools where DC is the admissions authority (community and voluntary controlled schools) – it is also promoted for adoption with Dorset Schools which are their own admissions authorities

(academies, foundation, voluntary aided, studio and fee schools). A copy of the policy is found in Appendix 1. There have been no changes to this policy other than wording to reflect changes in September 2020 DFE guidance. This policy will go live from the 1st July 2022.

- 4.2 There were no external responses to the consultation, though through discussions with the Office of the Schools (OSA) and the DFE, further clarification was required on this policy around how families manage transition applications if their current school has agreed to place the child in a year group other than their chronological year group. The policy has thus been updated with the appropriate advice detailing steps families and parties need to take and when these need to be taken. Section 7 has been added.

Elected members are asked to adopt the attached guidance in order to comply with existing DFE Guidance on the admissions of Summer Born children and where children are placed outside of their chronological year group.

General Responses to the Consultation:

1. Received from Cllr. Northam – Weymouth Town Council – Wey Valley.

The response raised a number of queries around pupil place planning in the Wey Valley Ward, and particularly around catchment areas and the ability of local families to gain places at their local schools.

School Admissions is liaising with Cllr. Northam and the relevant County Councillors to explore these further and ensure that Dorset Councils commitment to local places for local children is fulfilled.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

APPENDIX A:

Cllr. Northam's Response to the Consultation:

I have several issues with catchment areas, class sizes, and problems for parents unable to place their children in the nearest school and from other residents on the way that Radipole lane is blocked by parents dropping off and collecting children which seems to be a common problem around primary schools.

I wrote some while back, in support of a residents appeal and never received an answer about the problems within my ward (Wey Valley ward part of the DC ward Upwey & Broadway) regarding the shortage of places within my ward for local residents. But received no reply! One of my residents (in Nottingham) applied to both St Nicholas & St Laurence and to Radipole Primary schools for her reception class child. Her application was unsuccessful. She appealed, I wrote supporting her appeal. She was unsuccessful with her daughter now forced to enrol at St John's requiring a car trip rather than a walk to either of the nearby schools.

I note that Radipole Primary has the largest catchment area in Weymouth and is 2 form entry. I also note that currently St Nicks is 1 form entry.

There has been a significant increase in housing in the area in the last few years and more is scheduled with extant permission for 350 homes in Land South of Nottingham Lane and a further 150 homes included in the draft Local Plan for Redlands Farm. These developments total 500 new homes and are nearby to St Nicks and Radipole.

I contrast the Littlemoor development which is for 500 homes and includes provision of a new school. Yet the combined Wey Valley developments total 500 and there is no mention of schools at all.

I believe there is a need to ensure that local children can go to their local school and would ask what it being planned to ensure this can happen and would like to see the plan?

I might suggest the following:

- Reducing the catchment area for Radipole School to reflect the new houses within 1 to 1½ miles, and/or
- Increasing the intake at St Nicks by ½ a class (as was done when my son and daughter attended the school in the 1980's) – funded by S106/CIL from the Wey Valley developments.
- Encouraging schools to gain a commitment from parents for Active Travel (ie walking/cycling or taking the bus to school)
- Encouraging schools to open their back gates to allow access avoiding the main roads (St Nicks do this but Wey Valley do not!)

I approve of the scheme to introduce segregated cycle lanes on Dorchester Road to improve road safety – which will I hope encourage even more children to cycle to school and note the general encouragement on your website.

More generally I think the catchment areas across Weymouth and Chickerell need to be reconsidered to reflect the changing demographic and that the focus should be on neighbourhood schools with priority given to those within walking distance or safe cycling distance.

Please could you explain how you are planning for schools in the future in Wey Valley and more widely across Weymouth with its planned (new LP) 3225 homes which exclude 950 homes on the North of Littlemoor and West Of Southhill sites which are outside the town boundary.