

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date:	23 March 2012
Title:	Determination of 2013/14 admission arrangements
Reference:	3741
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to inform the Executive Lead Member on the consultation carried out, following advice from Hampshire's Admission Forum, schools and other interested parties, regarding the admission arrangements for the main admissions round for entry to school in September 2013. Following recommendations of the Forum, the paper also presents the detail of the proposed admission arrangements. Arrangements include co-ordination of applications made outside the normal admission rounds in the school year beginning September 2012.

2. Contextual information

2.1. Revised School Admissions Code and School Admissions Appeal Code came into force on 1 February 2012, with effect for the normal admissions round for entry to school in September 2013, replacing previous Codes. References refer to the School Admissions Code (SAC).

2.2. The County Council is the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools within Hampshire and is therefore responsible for determining the co-ordinated admission arrangements for these schools. Regulations require all admission authorities (i.e. LAs and the governing bodies of academies and voluntary aided and foundation schools, referred to in this report as "admission authority schools") to determine their school admission arrangements for 2013/14 by 15 April 2012 and to have notified other admission authorities and published the admission arrangements on their website by 1 May 2012.

2.3. 'Admission arrangements' means the overall procedure, practices and oversubscription criteria used in deciding on the allocation of school places including any device or means used to determine whether school place is to

be offered (normally a supplementary information form used by own admission authority schools where priority for admission cannot be determined from the information on the LA's form).

2.4. Admission authorities must consult by 1 March in the determination year on their admission arrangements (SAC 1.42), apart from in circumstances which do not apply here. Consultations with schools, neighbouring local authorities and parents for 2013 admissions on the main policies, published admission numbers (PANs) and co-ordinated scheme for main round admissions have been carried out in three phases:

- October - November 2011: consultations with schools on PANs;
- October - December 2011: informal consultation with schools on proposed co-ordination scheme and admission policies, with reference to particular aspects of the policies;
- January - March 2011: statutory consultation with schools, other local authorities and parents on the intended arrangements. The publication of notices in newspapers covering Hampshire's administrative area is no longer required by legislation. Details available in the consultation documents include revised PANs and any revisions approved by Forum in response to the autumn term consultations; further consultation with schools on a particular aspect of the policy.

2.5. Throughout the consultations for 2013/14 admissions, particular attention has been paid to the consultations on PANs in order to find a proper balance between the effective management of school places and the successful expression of parental preference. The number of 4 year old pupils needing school places has continued to increase and this has led to pressures in certain areas of the county. The autumn consultation gathered information on individual schools' requests to change their PAN. The authority carried out a formal consultation on proposed PAN changes during the spring term.

2.6. The new School Admissions Code removes the statutory role of the Admission Forum in the decision making process. However, the Elected Lead member has committed himself to continuing to "have regard" to the recommendations of the Admission Forum. The Hampshire Admission Forum reflects the types of schools in the county and includes county councillors, Headteachers representing specific categories of school, representatives of the Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses, the armed forces, special educational needs, ethnic minorities, early years, *neighbouring LAs*, a school governor, a Choice Advisor and a *parent representative*. The Forum is advised by LA officers and meets 5 times a year to consider issues relating to school admissions. The statutory consultation responses for the 2013/14 arrangements were considered at the 8 March 2012 meeting of the Hampshire Admission Forum.

3. Outline of proposals being consulted upon

- 3.1. That the Executive Lead Member approve the proposed admission arrangements for the admissions round for applying for school place for admission during September 2013/14. The admission arrangements have gone through the approved consultation process and have been recommended by Hampshire's Admission Forum.
- the revised admission policies for community and voluntary controlled schools set out in Annexes A and B and the school specific criteria listed in Annexe C
 - the scheme for co-ordinating admissions to school in September 2013, set out in Annexe D;
 - the 2013 published admission numbers (PANs) for community and voluntary controlled schools set out in Annexes E and F;
 - the admission policy for Nursery Units attached to maintained schools set out in Annexe G;
 - the boarding policies listed in Annexe H.

4. Primary and secondary admissions policies for community and voluntary controlled schools 2013/14 (Annexe A and Annexe B)

- 4.1. Admission policies set out how applications for each school are prioritised and the time frame for the year in question.
- 4.2. The informal consultation carried out during the autumn term 2011 focussed initially on a request from a number of linked infant and junior school pairings to consider giving priority in junior schools' policies to those attending the linked infant school. At its October meeting, Forum considered all the arguments. Members were persuaded that in many cases such a criterion would support the objective of the policy: 'that each school should serve its local community, that as many children as possible attend their parents' preferred school; that siblings as far as possible can attend school together and that children can benefit from curriculum continuity between schools serving the same catchment area'. However, as this was not true in all cases, particularly those area with historical anomalies in linkings and mismatches between admissions numbers for infant and junior school pairings, Forum recommended that junior schools wishing to adopt the criterion should be encouraged to make a request for a school specific criterion. No change was therefore proposed in the wording of the policy in this respect for the purposes of the statutory consultation in the spring. Forum at its December meeting received an increased number of requests for school specific criteria from junior schools; these are all supported by Forum in its recommendations.
- 4.3. The revised School Admissions Code set before Parliament on 2 December 2011 included an expansion to the statutory priority given to looked after children to include 'previously looked after children', defined as those who have moved directly from being in the care of the local authority to a residence order or an adoption order. This amendment was therefore included in Hampshire's admission policies for the purposes of the formal consultation on admission arrangements. The finalised Code came into force on 1 February and includes the priority as consulted on. It is therefore a legal

requirement that the Hampshire admission policies should be amended to include previously looked after children.

- 4.4. The draft of the revised Code issued in December 2011 also included a paragraph allowing children of staff to be included as a criterion in admission policies. (Such a criterion had previously been prohibited.) A request was received from a number of schools that a consultation with headteachers should be conducted on the possibility of including such a criterion in the County policy. This consultation was undertaken over a week in December prior to the December meeting of the Admission Forum. Strong views were expressed by schools both in favour and against the inclusion of such a criterion. Members of the Admission Forum expressed concerns about the compatibility of a Children of Staff criterion with the objectives of the County policies but in order that all the issues should be thoroughly explored, the draft policy included in the statutory consultation included such a criterion, positioned after out-catchment siblings in the oversubscription criteria.
- 4.5. Four responses were received to the public consultation on the County Council's proposed admission arrangements for 2013. The correspondence is on file, along with a summary of responses from schools, and available for Members' perusal in the Members Room on 16 March 2012 and throughout the week of the Cabinet meeting on Friday 23 March 2012.
- 4.6. At their meeting on 08 March 2012, the Admissions Forum considered all responses. They also referred to the Equality Impact assessment used to explore the implications of the proposed criterion for 'Children of Staff'. After a thorough airing of the issues for and against the introduction of a 'Children of Staff' criterion, a majority of Forum members were of the view that, in order to preserve adherence to the stated objectives of the policy, namely to serve the local community and to enable siblings to attend school together, the criterion, if recommended, should not be prioritised above catchment children or siblings. Members also acknowledged that the proposed position in the consultation (below out of catchment siblings) would not provide the benefit (i.e. to assist with recruitment and retention) that schools in favour of the criterion wished for, and therefore would not serve its intended purpose. The consensus reached was that, with 70% of schools not participating in the consultation, it would be precipitate to recommend adopting the criterion for 2013. Members felt that it would be best not to include a Children of Staff criterion in the 2013 policies and to review the proposal for 2014, taking more time to canvass all schools; this is Forum's recommendation to the Executive Lead Member.
- 4.7. The policies in Annexe A and Annexe B, therefore, are recommended with the support of the Admission Forum to the Executive Member for his agreement.
- 4.8. The revised School Admissions Code sets a national date, 16 April, for notifying parents of primary age children of their new school place for September 2014 and subsequent years. This date is therefore, for consistency, recommended as the primary notification date in the Hampshire admission arrangements for September 2013.

4.9. **Catchment area change in Farnborough:** The authority proposed a change to the catchment area of addresses on the Queensgate development on a disused airfield in Farnborough. The change is proposed to create a single set of catchment arrangements at both primary and secondary level for children on the development and to facilitate travel to school for families in the affected area. The change was supported by the schools affected: . A consultation was carried out with families living in the affected area: parents were contacted directly and invited to express their views. Eleven responses were received; concerns raised by respondents are being addressed by the LA. The correspondence is on file and available for Members' perusal in the Members Room on 16 March 2012 and throughout the week of the Cabinet meeting on Friday 23 March 2012. The revised catchment areas form part of the proposed 2013 arrangements.

5. School specific criteria (Annexe C)

- 5.1. The County Council's policy applies for admissions to all community and voluntary controlled schools within Hampshire. The Admission Forum has, in the past, recognised that there are some cases where a small amount of flexibility is advisable in relation to individual school policies. This is to avoid situations where rigid implementation of the LA policy would lead to unacceptable anomalies. The required flexibility is delivered through school specific criteria, which includes, for example, the use of walking route as the method for measurement of distance for tiebreaker purposes (as an alternative to the straight line method) to suit particular local circumstances, or a criterion giving priority to children attending the linked infant school (see 4.2 above).
- 5.2. The need to centralise the administration of the main admissions round makes it more difficult to accommodate school specific criteria. Schools are advised that continuing to operate a school specific criterion may require them to directly support the processing of applications to their school.
- 5.3. Annexe C lists all proposed school specific criteria for 2013, supported by the Admission Forum. Proposed new criteria are given in italics. For 2013 admissions, these were considered by the Admission Forum at their December meeting.
- 5.4. The list given at Annexe C, therefore, is recommended with the support of the Admission Forum to the Executive Member for his agreement.

6. Arrangements for co-ordinating admissions from September 2012 (Annexe D)

- 6.1. Co-ordination of main round admissions was first established for admission to secondary schools in September 2005 and at primary level in September 2006. In-year co-ordination was introduced as a requirement in September 2010. The New School Admissions Code removes the requirement for in-year co-ordination from September 2013.
- 6.2. The 2013 arrangements therefore cover co-ordination for applications in the normal admissions round and late applications for September entry, as

required by regulations, but do not cover the administration of in-year applications. Other than very minor changes, procedures follow the pattern of previous schemes.

- 6.3. Local authorities are required to co-ordinate admission arrangements for maintained schools within their area, including boarding schools and academies (but excluding special schools and nursery schools).

7. Published Admission Numbers (PANs) for primary and secondary schools (Annexe E and Annexe F)

- 7.1. Every year, the LA must, as part of its admission arrangements, publish on its website the number of pupils who will be admitted to each school. This is known as the published admission number (PAN). (If a school has specialist resourced SEN provision, the pupils to be admitted to this provision are usually, but not always, included within the PAN.) The LA annually consults governing bodies of community and voluntary controlled schools on the proposed PAN for their school. Admission authority schools are not required to consult on their PAN where they propose either to increase or keep the same PAN. All admission authorities must consult where they propose a decrease to the PAN. Own admission authorities are responsible for setting their own PAN and must inform the LA of their decision. Annexe E and Annexe F include 2013 PANs for own admission authority schools as notified currently.
- 7.2. Objections to a decision by an academy or other admission authority school to increase its PAN or keep it the same cannot be brought; nor can the decision by a local authority to increase or keep the same PAN at a community or voluntary controlled school, except where the objection is brought by the governing body of the school. A variation to the determined admission number may be made by an admissions authority school without being referred to the Schools Adjudicator.
- 7.3. The governors of community and voluntary controlled schools are able to object to the independent Schools Adjudicator if they consider that the PAN proposed by the LA is not appropriate for their school.
- 7.4. The revised School Admissions Code no longer makes reference to the indicated capacity of a school in relation to the setting of its PAN. An objection to the lowering of the PAN may be made to the School's Adjudicator, by a parent or other interested party.
- 7.5. At its meeting in December 2011, Hampshire Admission Forum considered all PANs where a change from the 2012 figure was proposed. The enclosed tables for primary schools (Annexe E) and secondary schools (Annexe F) give the PAN for 2012 and the proposed PAN for 2013. The indicated PAN based on the DfE's recommended capacity for the school is also provided for information.
- 7.6. It should be noted that admission arrangements for academies are approved by the Secretary of State as part of an academy's Funding Agreement, and require compliance with admissions legislation and relevant Codes. An academy is required to consult in the same way as any other admission

authority: at least once every 7 years and annually unless there are no changes to arrangements . An objection to a variation from the School Admissions Code agreed by the Secretary of State in relation to the admission arrangements for an Academy cannot be brought; objections to any other aspect of a school's admission arrangements will be considered by the Schools Adjudicator. (SAC 3.3). Local authorities must refer an objection to the Schools Adjudicator if they are of the view or suspect that the admission arrangements that have been determined by other admission authorities are unlawful.

- 7.7. As in previous years, it is recommended that for 2013/14 admissions the Director of Children's Services, having regard to any advice from the Admission Forum, be empowered to lodge an objection to the Schools Adjudicator in respect of any aspect of an admission authority school's or another LA's admission arrangements which appear to be at variance with legal requirements or the School Admission Code, taking into account factors at the school, the possible effect on admissions to other schools and the outcome of further consultations, if any.

8. Nursery Policy (Annexe G)

- 8.1 Admissions officers annually attend a meeting with maintained Nursery Schools and maintained schools with a Nursery Unit to discuss the proposed nursery admissions policy. The 2013 policy was discussed at such a meeting in January 2012, and it was proposed by headteachers that, for consistency with policies for admission to schools, priority for looked after children should be expanded to include previously looked after children as an amendment to the policy included in the statutory consultation.

9. Boarding Policy (Annexe H)

- 9.1. Hampshire has boarding provision for six boys at Kings' School for six girls at The Westgate School each year. Proposed policies were included in the statutory consultation. Specific guidance on admission policies for admissions to boarding provision in mainstream schools (SAC 1.40-1.41) has been followed. *[Hampshire County Council is seeking permission to consult on the closure of both boarding provisions.]*

10. Impact Issues

The following issues have been identified as potential impact issues the County Council would need to be aware of if it were asked to implement the proposals in this paper:

- 10.1. No adverse impact in regard to race, culture, gender or disability arising from this report has been identified. However, to ensure that the admission arrangements allow for the best interests of all children to be properly taken into account when applying the published policy an equality impact assessment has been undertaken.

11. Risk Issues

The following have been identified as possible risk issues for the County Council to consider if it were asked to implement the proposals in this paper:

11.1. n/a

12. Conclusions

12.1. Having followed the processes detailed above the various proposed constituents of Hampshire County Council's 2013/14 admission arrangements are recommended by Hampshire's Admission Forum for determination by the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services.

13. CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
OR	
This proposal does not link to the Corporate Strategy but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:	
<i>NB: Only complete this section if you have not completed any of the Corporate Strategy tick boxes above. If it is not applicable, please delete.</i>	

NB: If the 'Other significant links' section below is not applicable, please delete it.

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?