

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Education
Date:	20 January 2016
Title:	Determination of 2017/18 admission arrangements
Reference:	6936
Report From:	Interim Director of Children's Services

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to inform the Executive Member on the consultation carried out regarding the admission arrangements for the main admissions round for entry to school in September 2017, following advice from Hampshire's Admission Forum, schools and other interested parties. The paper also presents the detail of the proposed admission arrangements.

2. Contextual information

2.1. The existing School Admissions Code came into force on 19 December 2014 and School Admissions Appeal Code came into force on 1 February 2012. Further 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 admission arrangements for these schools. Hampshire provides a co-ordinated and centralised main round process. For in-year admissions, schools and the authority support parents in making an application. 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 "own admission authority" (OAA) schools) to determine their school admission arrangements for 2017/18 by 28 February 2016 and to have notified other admission authorities and published the admission arrangements on their website by 15 March 2016.

2.3. The term '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 a school place is to be offered (normally a supplementary information form is used by OAA schools where priority for admission cannot be determined from the

information on the LA's form). In the case of the LA, this includes a County admission policy with which community and voluntary controlled schools' policies must comply. A list of school specific criteria also form part of the admission arrangements. In Hampshire there is a separate policy for entry at Year R, Year 3 and Year 7 and for nurseries. The admission arrangements also include the published admission number (PAN) for each school.

2.4. Admissions authorities must consult by 31 January in the determination year on their admission arrangements, unless there are no changes proposed. Consultation with schools, neighbouring local authorities and parents on the County's 2017 admission policies and PANs have been carried out in two phases:

- 24 September – 23 October 2015: consultations with schools on PANs and the proposed admission policies;
- 17 November 2015 - 04 January 2016: statutory consultation with schools, other local authorities and parents on the intended arrangements, including any revised PANs. Consultation documents included any revisions advised by Forum and recommended by senior management in response to the informal consultation with schools.

2.5. Throughout the consultation for 2017/18 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 four year old pupils needing school places has continued to increase and this has led to pressures in certain areas of the county. The consultation in September gathered information on both individual schools' requests to change their PAN and schools' responses to proposals by the LA to change the PAN. All proposed changes are shown in the consultation documents, with proposed reductions highlighted since any reduction to a PAN requires wider consultation. For all proposed PAN changes the authority carries out the required statutory consultation.

2.6. The Admission Forum no longer has a statutory role in the decision making process, however, the Elected Lead Member has committed himself to "have regard" to the advice of the Admission Forum. The Hampshire Admission Forum is made up of advocates for children, schools and families from a variety of settings including county councillors, Headteachers representing the range of schools in the County, representatives of the Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses, the armed forces, special educational needs, ethnic minorities, early years providers and school governors. The Forum is advised by LA officers and meets four times a year to consider issues relating to school admissions. The statutory consultation process for the 2017/18 arrangements was considered at the November and January meetings of the Hampshire Admission Forum.

3. Outline of proposals being consulted upon

3.1. That the Executive Member approve the proposed admission arrangements for the school year 2017/18. The admission arrangements have undergone

the required consultation process and are based on the following three dimensions:

- the revised admission policies for community and voluntary controlled (VC) schools set out in Annexes A, B and C and the school specific criteria listed in Annexe D;
- the 2017 published admission numbers (PANs) for community and VC schools set out in Annexes E and F;
- the admission policy for Nursery Units attached to maintained schools set out in Annexe G.

4. Infant/primary, junior and secondary admissions policies for community and voluntary controlled schools 2017/18 (Annexe A, Annexe B and Annexe C)

- 4.1. Admission policies set out how applications for each school are prioritised and provide key dates for the year in question. The current policy was referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) for scrutiny, in April 2014 and in November 2014 was subsequently approved as being fair and meeting the mandatory requirements of the School Admissions Code, issued in 2012. In December 2014, the DfE published a revised School Admissions Code that introduced the possibility for maintained schools to have admission criteria that gave priority for pupils eligible for the early years pupil premium (EYP), the pupil premium (PP) and also children eligible for the service premium (SP). (Previously, only academies and Free schools have been able to prioritise admissions for children eligible for these premiums.) Guidance on eligibility and funding is provided at Annex H.
- 4.2. The informal consultation with schools carried out during the autumn term 2015, followed the Admission Forum's recommendation to consult on the introduction of a priority for pupils eligible for all or some of these funding streams on the basis that it was now permissible in the new SAC and to provide an opportunity for Hampshire schools to express a view as to whether they would support their inclusion in Hampshire's admissions policies for 2017.
- 4.3. There were 171 responses from schools in total, from a mix of lone headteacher opinion and governing body agreed collective responses. In summary, approx. 75% of respondents were **not** in favour of introducing any level of priority for children on any pupil premium funding stream eligibility. Forum considered the responses to each type of premium separately to ensure schools' responses were fully considered and understood:
- 4.4. School responses indicated that they did **not** support the inclusion of a criterion for Early Years Premium or Pupil Premium, with many indicating their concern that although it might benefit disadvantaged families it would be divisive in their community and that they would not wish to displace catchment families. Forum considered the make up of the pre-school sector in Hampshire and recognised that there are very few maintained settings with the majority being private or voluntary sector providers. Thus far there is only

one school that has established a pre-school as part of its primary provision. This position may change and in the future individual schools may seek approval for a 'School specific criterion' in which they could prioritise children attending their pre-school setting eligible for EYP.

The Forum raised the following concerns about including a priority for children eligible for pupil premium funding:

- It may result in lots of families seeking to change schools and the temptation for families to opt for a non local school could create financial pressures for them, some of whom are already very disadvantaged.
- Due to the political nature of this funding stream, there are no guarantees that funding will not disappear in the future; it could leave some schools with a disproportionately high (for the area) number of PP children on roll but no additional funding to support their needs.

Forum considered how 'eligible for' under the criterion would be established and concluded that it would add complexity to the admissions process for parents and would be problematic to administer. They questioned what the timescales would be and how parents' who had a change to their financial circumstances would be dealt with. For example, it was noted that a lot of parents of primary age children who do not work, do so once their child starts secondary school but at the time of making their Year 7 application, would still benefit from the PP priority.

Forum recommends, based on school responses, that priority for children with EYP or PP should **not** be included within the County Council's policy for 2017.

- 4.5. Forum is always mindful of the large Service community based in Hampshire and even though, overall, the majority view from schools was **not** to include a SP priority, members looked specifically at the responses from schools situated in areas with a high service family population. The responses from those schools were inconsistent, in equal measure: supporting and against a priority for Service Premium children. On occasions there were infant/ junior pairings with opposing views.

It was noted that a SP priority would have most impact on applications received in the main admissions rounds, as Hampshire already has mechanisms in place (Fair Access Protocol and 'excepted pupil' in the Infant Class Size regulations) to admit vulnerable service children in-year. It was also noted that the majority of schools who would like to include SP priority felt that it should not have higher priority than catchment children.

Forum concluded that SP priority is **not** required in Hampshire's admission policies as the service community does not have difficulties in securing local school places quickly for their children. The Admissions Team identify service families and support them in securing school places using Fair Access and Infant Class Size exception when necessary. The response from schools is

therefore not a surprise and Forum's recommendation is **not** to include a SP priority in the County Council's policy for 2017.

- 4.6. Forum therefore concluded that no changes should be made to the County Council's admission policies for 2017.
- 4.7. There have been no responses to the public consultation on the County Council's proposed admission arrangements for 2017.
- 4.8. The policies in Annexe A, Annexe B and Annexe C, therefore, are recommended by Admission Forum to the Executive Member for his agreement.
- 4.9. The SAC sets the national dates for notifying parents of their children's new school place for September 2017: 18 April for primary age children (being the first working day after and 16 April) and 01 March for secondary age children.

5. School specific criteria (Annexe D)

- 5.1. The County Council's policies apply to 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 advised 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.
- 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 the school.
- 5.3. Annexe D lists all proposed school specific criteria for 2017, supported by the Admission Forum who considered these at their November and January meetings.
- 5.4. The list given at Annexe D, therefore, is recommended with the support of the Admission Forum to the Executive Member for his agreement.

6. Published Admission Numbers (PANs) for infant/primary, junior and secondary schools (Annexe E and Annexe F)

- 6.1. 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 (the PAN). The LA consults governing bodies of community and voluntary controlled schools annually on the proposed PAN for their school. At its meeting in November 2015, Hampshire Admission Forum considered all PANs where a change from the 2016 figure is proposed. The enclosed tables for primary phase schools (Annexe E) and secondary schools (Annexe F) give the PAN for 2016 and the proposed PAN for 2017. (Annexe E and Annexe F also

include 2016 PANs for OAA schools as notified currently, but these may be subject to change – see section 8). 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.

- 6.2. It should be noted that there is a proposal to reduce the PAN at one school: Orchard Junior School, in Dibden Purlieu, (from 102 to 90). The schools' governing body has made cogent educational and curricular arguments in favour of the reduction and it is the LA's view that the proposed reductions do not compromise the LA's duty to provide school places for local residents.
- 6.3. The governors of community and voluntary controlled schools are able to object to the Schools Adjudicator if they consider that the PAN proposed by the LA is not appropriate for their school. An objection to a decision by the LA to increase or keep the same PAN at a community or voluntary controlled school cannot be brought, except where the objection is brought by the governing body of the school. An objection to the lowering of a PAN may be made to the Schools Adjudicator by a parent or other interested party.

7. Nursery Policy (Annexe G)

- 7.1. One additional element relating to children eligible for the 30 hours free childcare for working families (Subject to confirmation of the eligibility from the DfE and any identified priority groups within this); has been included in the policy. Maintained nursery units have been advised and no responses have been received.

8. Material changes from the 2016/17 arrangements are as follows:

- (i) introduction of a School specific criterion into the Bursledon Junior School admission policy to give higher priority to children living in the catchment area and attend Bursledon Infant School, after in-catchment children with a sibling at the school but before other catchment children; [*Bursledon Infant and Junior Schools are federated.*]
- (ii) changes to some schools' Published Admission Numbers (PAN) including a reduction in the admission number of Orchard Junior School, in Dibden Purlieu, from 102 to 90.

9. Objecting to admission arrangements determined by schools which are their own admission authority (OAA schools)

- 9.1. 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 requires compliance with admissions legislation and relevant Codes. Academies and other OAA schools are required to consult in the same way as any other admission authority: at least once every seven years or annually if there are changes to arrangements.
- 9.2. OAA schools are responsible for setting their own PAN and must inform the LA of their decision. They are not required to consult on their PAN where they

propose either to increase or keep the same PAN. A variation to the determined admission number may be made by an OAA school without being referred to the Schools Adjudicator.

- 9.3. 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 OAA schools in its area are unlawful. 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 a decision by an academy or other OAA school to increase its PAN or keep it the same cannot be brought. Objections to any other aspect of an OAA school's admission arrangements will be considered by the Schools Adjudicator.

10. Impact Issues

- 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 and is attached to this paper.

11. Risk Issues

- 11.1. 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:

11.2. N/A

12. Recommendations

- 12.1. That the Executive Member for Education approve the proposed admission arrangements for the admissions round for applying for school place for admission during September 2017/18. The admission arrangements have gone through the approved consultation process and have been recommended by Hampshire's Admission Forum and are summarised in:

- the revised admission policies for community and voluntary controlled schools set out in Annexes A, B and C, and the school specific criteria listed in Annexe D
- the 2017 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.

- 12.2. That the Director of Children's Services, having regard to any advice from the Admission Forum, be given delegated authority to amend the list of school specific criteria as appropriate during the course of the academic year; in consultation with the Executive Member.

(ii) CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Corporate Strategy

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

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. 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.

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?