

Subject: Admission Arrangements for Brighton & Hove Schools 2016/17

Date of Meeting: 9 March 2015

Report of: Executive Director of Children's Services

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Ward(s) affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 Each year local authorities must consult upon school admission arrangements and school admission numbers with community schools and voluntary aided schools, neighbouring Local Authorities and with parents living in the city. This process includes the proposed admission priorities for community schools and those proposed by the governing bodies of own admission authority schools (voluntary aided schools, free schools and Academies). This consultation takes place approximately 18 months in advance of the school year in which pupils will be admitted under the proposed arrangements. The consultation papers for the 2016/17 admission year for Brighton & Hove are attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Local authorities must also set out schemes for co-ordinated admissions, including key dates in the admission process, and also the arrangements for consultation with own admission authority schools in the city and with other local authorities. They also establish the area (the "relevant area") within which the admission consultation should take place.
- 1.3 The consultation process must have been concluded by 1st March 2015, with a minimum of 8 weeks consultation time. This requirement has been fulfilled and the consultation period ended on 28 February 2015. The City Council must have reached its decisions and confirmed its admission arrangements for 2016/17 by 15th April 2015 in order to conform to the requirements of the School Admissions Code.
- 1.4 At the time of drafting the report, the consultation process had not been concluded. Any further responses will be reported to the Committee at its meeting. All recommendations should be read with this in mind.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the proposed school admission numbers set out in the consultation documents be adopted for the admissions year 2016/17.

- 2.2 That the admission priorities for Community Schools set out in the consultation documents be adopted for all age groups.
- 2.3 That the Council should review the final version of the Cardinal Newman Catholic School and King's School admission arrangements (as amended in light of the Diocesan response and parental and school responses) to decide whether it should comment further.
- 2.4 That the co-ordinated schemes of admission be approved.
- 2.5 That the city boundary be retained as the relevant area for consultation for school admissions.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The admission numbers in the consultation reflect those previously agreed for 2015/16, with the exception of King's School, whose admission number has reduced by 25 to 100 due to the delay in finding a permanent site, Patcham High School, whose admission number has increased by five to 215, and the Bilingual Primary School, whose admission number has increased by 30 to 90 due to the school's move to a larger site.
- 3.2 The proposed admission arrangements and priorities for community primary and secondary schools are set out in detail in the attached Appendix 1, the consultation document sent to schools, neighbouring local authorities and the diocesan authorities. The Brighton Aldridge Community Academy and Portslade Aldridge Community Academy will retain the same admission priorities as community secondary schools for the admissions year 2016/17, although they act as their own admission authorities. City Academy Whitehawk will likewise retain the same admission priorities as community primary schools for the admissions year 2016/17.
- 3.3 In the course of the school and governor consultation process the Council asked schools to use their newsletters and other forms of regular parental communications to inform parents of the parental consultation process via the Council website (and hard copy if required). A letter was also sent to local early years providers asking them to draw parents' attention to the consultation. The parental consultation was published on the website and was available via a link to the Council's consultation portal. This is attached as Appendix 3.
- 3.4 The co-ordinated schemes of admission for primary and secondary schools (Appendices 4 and 5) set out the admission arrangements and relevant dates for each part of the school admission exercise and the arrangements for coordination between admission authorities. The overall purpose of co-ordination is to ensure that each pupil receives one offer of a school place, so that different admission authorities are not holding open places for pupils that will not be taken up. It also ensures that the admission process takes place in a timely fashion. The in-year arrangements (Appendix 6) are not subject to set time scales, so the same document can be used from year to year, although annual consultation will still take place.
- 3.5 Periodically the local authority must determine what is known as the "relevant area for consultation". This area will include the schools and other admission authorities (such as voluntary aided schools) that should be consulted on admission arrangements. A relevant area may be either the local authority area, less or more than that, or may

include part of neighbouring local authority areas. The whole of the local authority must be included in one or more relevant areas. Some larger authorities sub-divide into smaller areas for consultation purposes. In Brighton & Hove the relevant area has been set as the city boundary. Whilst there is some cross-border movement of pupils, it has not been seen as significant enough to warrant a cross-border relevant area. The proposal in this year's consultation is to retain a relevant area coterminous with the city boundary.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The City Council is required in law to review its school admission arrangements every year, although following the Education and Skills Act 2008 this changed to once every three years if no changes are made. The consultation is intended to identify alternative proposals for admission arrangements. Issues raised by schools and parents will be set out in the appendices to this report.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Council scrutinised the voluntary aided (VA) and free schools' proposed admission arrangements for 2016/17. VA schools are required to consult their religious authority (in this case the Diocesan Authority) before consulting others. The Council will review the final document published by the governing bodies before deciding whether it should comment or act further.
- 5.2 Parental responses to the consultation will be set out in Appendix 7.
- 5.3 School responses to the consultation will be set out in Appendix 7.
- 5.4 No responses to the Council's proposed arrangements for community schools had been received at the time of writing this report from neighbouring local authorities or the Church of England or Roman Catholic Diocesan authorities.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6 The City Council must conform to legislative requirements on the publication of admission arrangements which reflect the requirements of the Admissions Code. The recommendations ensure the City Council's compliance, and reflect the body of debate and consultation which has taken place around admission arrangements in Brighton & Hove this year and in previous years.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 It is not possible to quantify in detail the financial implications of these recommendations. However, any changes to admission arrangements or patterns may impact on the numbers of pupils at individual schools and therefore individual school budget allocations which are largely driven by pupil numbers.

Finance Officer Consulted: Andy Moore

Date: 17/02/15

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 Section 88C of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by the Education and Skills Act 2008 requires admission authorities to determine before the beginning of the school year, the admission arrangements which are to apply for that year. The determination must be preceded by consultation with a prescribed list of individuals and bodies, including governing bodies of schools within the LA, parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen, and neighbouring admission authorities. Consultation must be completed by 1st March in the year preceding the admission round, and should be for a period of no less than 8 weeks. Admission arrangements must conform to the Admissions Code which sets out acceptable and unacceptable admission arrangements and priorities. Admission Authorities must determine their admission arrangements following that consultation by 15th April.

Any person or body who considers that any admission arrangements are unlawful or not in compliance with the Admissions Code or the relevant law can make an objection to the Schools Adjudicator, although an objection about an admissions authority's decision to increase or keep the same PAN cannot be brought. .

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date: 18/02/2015

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Planning and consultation for school admissions procedures and school places and the operation of the admission process are conducted in such a way as to avoid potentially discriminatory admissions priorities or planning processes. The city council and own admission authority schools' governing bodies must be mindful of bad practice with regard to equalities issues as described in the School Admissions Code.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4.1 School admission arrangements are intended so far as it is possible to provide pupils with local places where they have asked for them. The planning of school places for the City takes into account the changing population pattern and resultant demand for places. The current pattern of parental preference is reflected in different schools operating both over and under capacity. In planning for school places the Council will have regard to sustainability priorities and seek to provide local places and places which are accessible by safe walking and where possible cycling routes and public transport wherever this is possible.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 Any change to school attendance patterns and pupil numbers will impact directly on resource allocation both revenue and capital, and on the Council's ability to meet parental expectations on school places. Pupil data and broader population data are used to identify the numbers of school places required and where they should be located. This feeds into the capital programme so that resources are allocated where they will have the most beneficial effect.
- 7.6 The allocation of school places affects all families in all parts of the city and can influence where people choose to live. Failure to obtain the desired choice of school

can create a strong sense of grievance. The process of expressing a preference and if disappointed, entering an appeal can create intense anxiety for many families in the city. Admission arrangements together with school place planning are framed in such a way as to be mindful of supporting the needs of communities.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Admission consultation document for schools including proposed admission numbers.
2. Proposed Admission Numbers
3. Parental consultation document.
4. Coordinated scheme of admissions – secondary.
5. Coordinated scheme of admissions – primary.
6. Coordinated scheme of admissions – in year
7. Summary of school and parental responses to the consultation (to follow)

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. Consultation responses from schools and parents (to follow)

Background Documents

1. Consultation documents from schools and parents (to follow)

