

Children's Services Committee

Report title:	Determination of Admission Arrangements – 2019/20
Date of meeting:	16 January 2018
Responsible Chief Officer:	Sara Tough Executive Director of Children's Services
Strategic impact Norfolk County Council (NCC) has a statutory duty to determine a co-ordinated scheme and timetable for administering around 29,000 applications for mainstream school places each year. NCC as admissions authority for all Community and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools must also determine the admission policy detailing how applications for these schools will be prioritised (currently 166 schools - approximately 40% of all mainstream schools). The admission authority for each Academy, Foundation and Voluntary Aided School (the trust for Academies and the governing body for all other own admission authority schools) must determine the policy for their school. All admission authorities must determine their arrangements for the academic year 2019/20 by 28 February 2018.	

Executive summary

This report summarises the statutory consultation outcomes and proposes no changes to Norfolk's admissions co-ordination scheme and timetable for the academic year 2019/20.

The co-ordination scheme details the process and timetable for administering the formal admission rounds (Reception, Junior transfer and Secondary transfer) for all mainstream schools in Norfolk including Academies and Free Schools. Whilst no longer a statutory duty, NCC also continues to co-ordinate in-year admissions and the scheme details how in-year applications are administered.

No changes are proposed to the admissions policy for Community and VC schools for 2019/20.

A separate statutory process deals with the placement of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans.

Recommendations:

- **Local Authority admissions co-ordination:**
The co-ordination schemes and timetables including in-year co-ordination are approved for 2019/20.

Admission arrangements for Community and VC schools:

That no changes are made to the current (2018/19) policies for 2019/20.

1. Proposals

- 1.1 Each year NCC is required to determine the admissions co-ordination scheme for all schools and to determine the admissions policy for all Community and VC schools as the admission authority for these schools.
- 1.2 The co-ordination scheme has been developed following annual consultations over a number of years and no changes are proposed for 2019/20. The proposed schemes and timetable meet the requirements imposed by the School Admissions Code and associated legislation to ensure a fair and consistent process for parents.
- 1.3 No issues were raised in the 2018/19 consultation so the current admission policies for Community and VC schools are proposed for 2019/20.
- 1.4 As required by legislation admissions consultation must run for at least six weeks. The consultation opened on 23 November and closed on 4 January 2018.
- 1.5 The consultation was highlighted on NCC's website under "current consultations" and in the school admissions section of the website.
- 1.6 As schools and governing bodies are key consultees a school management information sheet was sent to all Headteachers and Chairs of governing bodies on 10 November 2017 inviting them to respond with an online survey offered for convenience. Schools were also strongly encouraged to actively promote the consultation with parents via newsletters and websites.
- 1.7 Last year's committee report highlighted an anticipated DfE consultation proposing changes to the statutory school admissions code. This has still not yet been undertaken but the DfE indicate the review is ongoing.
- 1.8 Any statutory changes to the code could still impact on the proposed 2019/20 arrangements but any guidance to admission authorities seeking changes to admission policies would not apply before 2020/21.
- 1.9 As no changes are proposed for 2019/20 the response rate has been very low with 12 responses received. All respondents support the proposed arrangements for the admissions rounds, in year co-ordination and the timetable.
- 1.10 The statutory timescale for consulting on and determining arrangements and the limited scope for introducing changes may discourage parents and school leaders from engaging in the consultation. Discussions with colleagues from both the Eastern Region and the Department for Education (DfE) Admissions team confirm this remains a common feature of this statutory process. The DfE does receive a significant response when consulting on proposals to change the statutory school admissions code particularly when high profile proposals are consulted on.

2. Evidence

- 2.1 From the very limited consultation response there is support for the existing co-ordination arrangements and the admissions policy for Community and VC schools.
- 2.2 Parents who are refused admission are entitled to appeal to independent admission appeals panels. Since 2010 appeal panels have been required to consider the legality of admission arrangements as part of this process. Our

arrangements have not been referred by appeal panels to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) as part of this regular review.

- 2.3 Additionally parents can refer our determined arrangements to the OSA. This has not occurred since 2014 when our arrangements were confirmed as compliant.
- 2.4 Parents dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal can refer concerns to the Local Government Ombudsman but again no concerns have been expressed regarding the co-ordination scheme or admissions policies.
- 2.5 The vast majority of parents gain a place at a preferred school (2017 DfE data extract).

Admission Round	Nfk. – 1 st preferences met	Nfk. 1 st .-3 rd preferences met	Regional 1 st preferences met	National 1 st preferences met
Reception	93.0%	97.6%	90.8%	90.0%
Secondary transfer	95.0%%	98.4%	86.9%	83.5%

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The admissions function is funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant and all costs associated with the function are covered by this grant. The proposed admission arrangements do not add to the current costs.

4. Issues, risks and innovation

- 4.1 The School Admissions Code sets out statutory requirements to ensure a fair and equitable process for all families seeking a mainstream school place. The co-ordination scheme follows the model scheme set out in the School Admissions Code and admission policies for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools have been developed to fully comply with the School Admissions Code.
- 4.2 NCC is under a statutory duty to determine admission arrangements by 28 February each year. If this cannot be determined the Secretary of State has the power to impose a co-ordination scheme.

5. Background

Children's Services Committee, 24 January 2017, Item XX:- admission arrangements for 2018/19.

Full details of existing admission arrangements and policies for all Norfolk schools: - www.norfolk.gov.uk/admissions -

Norfolk's proposed 2019/20 arrangements: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools/school-admissions/norfolk-admission-arrangements-consultation-2019-20>

Officer Contact

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