

Cabinet

Report Title:	Determination of the Admission Arrangements to Schools in Suffolk for the 2018/2019 School Year
Meeting Date:	24 January 2017
Lead Councillor(s):	Clr Gordon Jones, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education & Skills
Local Councillor(s):	All Councillors
Director:	Sue Cook, Corporate Director, Children & Adults, Children & Young People’s Services
Assistant Director or Head of Service:	Adrian Orr, Assistant Director, Education & Learning, Children & Young People’s Services
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Brief summary of report

1. This report sets out the proposed changes to the Council’s admission arrangements for the 2018/2019 school year and the outcome of the consultation that was held between 1 November and 13 December 2016.

What is Cabinet being asked to decide?

2. To approve the overview of the proposed Admission Arrangements for the 2018/2019 School Year as set out in **Appendix 1, Section 1**.
3. To approve the proposed admissions oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled schools for the school year 2018/2019, as set out in **Appendix 1, Section 2**. This includes the change to the religious criterion to include children and/or families who are practising members of the Anglican churches within the Worldwide Anglican Communion.
4. To approve the notes to the oversubscriptions criteria in **Appendix 1, Section 2**. This includes the proposed change to close the waiting list for applications in the normal year of entry to 31 December 2018.
5. To agree that looked after children and previously looked after children should be referred to as children in care and children previously in care as set out in **Appendix 1, Section 2**.
6. To approve the proposed Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Schools in Suffolk 2018/2019, and related timetables, which sets out the admissions procedures for all maintained, academy, and free schools in Suffolk as shown in **Appendix 1, Section 3**.
7. To approve the proposed relevant areas which admission authorities would use to consult on their admissions policies, as set out in lists and maps shown in **Appendix 1, Section 4**.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">8. To approve the proposed Published Admission Numbers (PANs) for Suffolk's community and voluntary controlled schools. These are set out in Appendix 1, Section 5.9. To approve the Supplementary Information Form to support applications for admission under the religious grounds criterion to Church of England Voluntary Controlled Schools which can be found in Appendix 1, Section 6. |
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Reason for recommendation

10. The Council as the local authority, and admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, is required to comply with the School Admissions Code (December 2014) and relevant legislation. Admission arrangements for entry in September 2018 must be determined by 28 February 2017.

What are the key issues to consider?

11. This report seeks approval for the Council's Admission Arrangements for the School Year 2018/2019. It provides information to the Cabinet on the representations made to the consultation on the proposed admission arrangements for 2018/2019 which was held between 1 November 2016 and 13 December 2016. These are summarised in **Appendix 5**.
12. The representations made to the consultation have been considered and are detailed in the body of this report.
13. The Equality Impact Assessment has been updated to reflect the proposed changes to the Admission Arrangements for 2018/2019. This has been approved by the Policy Clearing House and has been published on the Council's website.

What are the resource and risk implications?

14. There are no anticipated risks associated with the proposed admission arrangements.
15. Should the School Admissions Code be amended prior to the 2018/2019 normal admission round which will open on 12 September 2017, there may be a requirement to change arrangements to comply with new legislation.

What are the timescales associated with this decision?

16. The School Admissions Code, published in December 2014, makes it clear that admission authorities are responsible for admissions and must act in accordance with the School Admissions Code, School Admission Appeals Code, other laws relating to admissions, relevant human rights and equalities legislation.
17. All admission authorities must set ('determine') admission arrangements annually. Where changes are proposed to admission arrangements, the admission authority must first publicly consult on those arrangements. If no changes are made to admission arrangements, they must be consulted on at least every 7 years.
18. The consultation on the Admission Arrangements for the 2018/2019 school year had to be open for a minimum of 6 weeks between 1 October 2016 and 31 January 2017. The consultation on the proposed 2018/2019 admission policies

for community and voluntary controlled schools in Suffolk commenced on Tuesday 1 November 2016 and closed on Tuesday 13 December 2016.

19. Changes to all school admission policies must be determined by the statutory deadline of 28 February 2017 and published by 15 March 2017. This timetable applies to all admission authorities in Suffolk.
20. Following determination, parents and others have the right to make representations to the Schools Adjudicator on any admission policy until 15 May 2017. The local authority is then responsible for publishing its admission policy, together with the admission policies for all own admission authorities in Suffolk in a composite booklet. This booklet must be published by 12 September 2017.

Alternative options

21. As proposed changes must be consulted upon, the alternative options would be to reject any or all of the recommendations made, and to revert to operating the admission arrangements that were determined on 23 February 2016.
22. We have considered the representation made in the consultation to widen the oversubscription criteria for entry to Church of England voluntary controlled schools to give this priority to those regularly attending churches in the Evangelical Alliance and Churches Together. However, we have no way of knowing how many applicants this would apply to or how this might impact on families living in a school's locality. Most voluntary controlled schools have catchment areas. Therefore, it is important there are sufficient places for local children and that they are not disadvantaged by families who live further away who do not attend Church of England churches. In these circumstances, we do not recommend further changes to this criterion.

Who will be affected by this decision?

23. Families who will be seeking school places for their children in the 2018/2019 school year and schools in Suffolk will be affected by the decisions made.

Main body of report

Admission Authorities in Suffolk

24. Suffolk County Council is the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools in Suffolk. Governing bodies are responsible for admissions to voluntary aided schools in Suffolk, foundation/trust schools, academies and free schools (which are, in effect, academies) and are therefore the admission authorities for their schools, and referred to in this report as own admission authorities (OAA). All OAA schools deal directly with their in-year applications.
25. There is currently one foundation secondary school in Suffolk.
26. At the time of writing there are 111 academies, including free schools, in Suffolk. This doesn't include any special schools or pupil referral units. It is known that other schools are actively seeking academy status.
27. OAAs are responsible for carrying out consultations on their admission arrangements, but to assist them in doing so the Council has published their policies on our website, where requested to do so. The academy trusts or governing bodies of these schools are required to consider any representations

made and to determine their own admission arrangements for 2018/2019 by 28 February 2017.

Secondary School Admissions Statistics for entry in September 2016

28. The overall percentage of online applications for Years 7, 8 and 9 has increased slightly from 71% in 2015 to 73.27% in 2016.
29. Suffolk County Council sent offers for secondary school places to parents/carers who applied by the closing date on 1 March 2016, as required by law. The Council received 7134 on time applications from parents for places in Year 7 at high Schools, 371 for Year 8 and 608 for Year 9 in upper/high Schools - altogether a total of 8113 applications. This year, applications have been made for places in Year 8 as the reorganisation of schools in the Bury St Edmunds area takes effect.
30. The total number of parents/carers who received offers for their first preference school was 7576, or 93.4% of the total number of applicants. This is a high percentage, although it is slightly lower than last year's figure of 93.6%. The percentage of preferences met for Year 7 was 93% (93.7% last year), Year 8 was 92.4% (98% (last year) and Year 9 is 98.8% (98.7% last year).
31. The number of parents/carers who received offers for one of their first, second or third preferences this year was 7942, or 97.9% of the total number of applications. The figure for last year was 97.5%. Any applicant who is refused an offer of a place at one of their preferred schools has the right of appeal to an independent panel and would be placed on the waiting list.
32. Suffolk compared favourably to the national statistics for entry to secondary schools in September 2016. We met 93.4% of first preferences whereas the national average was 84.1%. We also met 97.9% of first, second and third preferences compared to the national figure of 95%.
33. Statistical information about the proportion of parental preferences met for entry to secondary schools for the 2016/2017 school year is contained in **Appendix 2**, with comparative data for 2015/2016.

Primary School Admission Statistics for entry in September 2016

34. The overall percentage of online applications for the reception year, Years 3 and 5 has increased slightly from 75.33% in 2015 to 82% in 2016.
35. Suffolk County Council sent offers for primary school places to parents/carers who applied by the closing date on 18 April 2016, as required by law. The Council received 7920 on time applications from parents/carers for places in the reception year at primary schools, 326 for Year 3 in junior schools and 220 for Year 5 in middle schools - altogether a total of 8466 applications.
36. The total number of parents/carers who received offers for their first preference school was 7711, or 91.1% of the total number of applicants. This is a high percentage and an increase on last year's figure of 90.5%. The percentage for reception year was 90.7% (90.2% last year), Year 3 was 96% (95.8% last year) and Year 5 was 96.3% (89.6% last year).
37. The number of parents/carers who received offers for one of their first, second or third preferences this year was 8266, or 97.6% of the total number of applications. The figure for last year was 97.2%. Any applicant who is refused

an offer of a place at one of their preferred schools has the right of appeal to an independent panel and would be placed on the waiting list.

38. Suffolk compared favourably to the national statistics for entry to primary schools in September 2016. We met 91.1% of first preferences whereas the national average was 88.4%. We also met 97.6% of first, second and third preferences compared to the national figure of 96.3%.
39. Statistical information about the proportion of parental preferences met for entry to primary school for the 2016/2017 school year is contained in **Appendix 2**, with comparative data for 2015/2016.

Representations to the consultation survey on Admission Arrangements for 2017/2018

40. The Council received 143 representations in total. These included 142 surveys and one email. The email related to a catchment area query in Ipswich. This has been investigated and a reply sent directly to the parent who made this representation.
41. The quantitative data is summarised in **Appendix 3**.
42. Seventy-one of the 142 surveys did not include any responses to the survey.

Question 1 Do you find the oversubscription criteria for admissions to community and voluntary controlled schools easy to understand?

43. There were 71 responses to the first question. Of these, 56% agreed, 32% did not agree and 11% did not know.
44. Those who agreed considered the oversubscription criteria to be clearly written and easy to read and understand. However, those who disagreed found the document lengthy and complicated, a legal document, not user-friendly and difficult to understand for families who have English as an additional language. Another parent thought that the amendment to the religious criterion for voluntary controlled schools was complicated. This respondent also suggested that the criterion should be widened further to include the Evangelical Alliance and Churches Together. This has been considered in the Alternative Options section in paragraph 22 above.
45. In response to these comments, we will provide information for parents/carers about the application process in September 2017. This will include the Admissions to Schools in Suffolk guide to help parents/carers through the application process, and Directories of Schools in Suffolk. This information will also be published on the Council's website.
46. We will also, for the first time, provide leaflets in a number of languages to support those families who do not speak English as a first language.
47. The change to the oversubscription criteria for admission to voluntary controlled schools under religious grounds is to remove any disadvantage to families who have recently moved to Suffolk from other countries and who attended their national church. The amendment has been made in agreement with the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocese and is expected to have very low impact. The Worldwide Anglican Communion churches are listed on the www.anglicancommunion.org website to remove any doubt about which churches are eligible within the criteria.

Question 2 The co-ordinated scheme sets out the full details of the admission arrangements. Does this give you enough background information about how to apply for a school place and how we will deal with applications?

48. There were 66 responses to the second question. Of these, 65% agreed, 14% disagreed and 21% did not know.
49. Those who agreed believed it was clearly written and easy to read, though acknowledged there is a vast amount of information. Those who disagreed thought it was confusing and not easily understood for anyone who is not involved in policy writing. Another parent who has an autistic child did not think there was enough information to help decide what is best for children with special educational needs. Of those who did not know, the Co-ordinated Scheme seemed too wordy and not written for parents.
50. The Council is required to have a Co-ordinated Scheme for the normal admissions round. This sets out the statutory admission arrangements and is mainly used by admission authorities in Suffolk. As explained in paragraph 45 above, admissions information will be provided in a user-friendly way for parents/carers in September 2017. This will include information to support families of children with special educational needs.

Question 3 Do you agree with the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the school(s) in your area?

51. There were 65 responses to the third question. Of these, 51% agreed, 23% disagreed and 26% did not know.
52. Those who agreed thought that numbers were standard, based on previous numbers and that there was no point in having too many places. However, those who disagreed thought there were more applications than places available and that schools cannot accommodate any population growth arising from new housing developments.
53. In response, the Cabinet is asked to note that the pupil forecasts are reviewed each year, taking account of planned developments and the number of school places available in localities. There has been an increased demand for primary school places over recent years although forecasts show that this number is beginning to fall. However, the increased primary school population will impact on admissions into Year 7 in secondary schools in September 2018. Whilst we expect secondary pupil numbers to increase by in the region of 200 places, there is still capacity across the secondary schools to accommodate these additional pupils. Furthermore, school place planning and admissions officers will continue to review this and will work with schools to make additional places available should this be required. The most recent pupil forecasts are shown in **Appendix 4**.

Further comments to the Admissions Consultation

54. In addition to the three specific questions asked in the consultation, we also asked for any other comments on the proposed admissions policy for 2018/2019.
55. We received 12 further representations and these are set out **Appendix 5**. There were some comments from families who had been unable to secure a

place in their catchment area school and the implications of having to travel further. There was also some concern about oversubscription in certain areas.

56. One consultee incorrectly believed that the closing date for applications was changing. This is not correct as we are required to follow the national closing dates for primary and secondary applications. The closing date for applications to secondary schools will be 31 October 2017 and the primary school closing date will be 15 January 2018. This will be made very clear in the information for parents/carers.
57. Information about how to apply for a school place for the 2018/2019 school year will be sent via schools to parents/carers with children in the relevant year groups. This will also be sent to other establishments such as nurseries, pre-schools and libraries. Admissions information for 2018/2019 must be made available on the Council's website by 12 September 2017 so that details are available to parents/carers. The online service also opens on this date.

Fair Access Protocol

58. Each Local Authority must have a Fair Access Protocol, agreed with the majority of schools in its area.
59. There are no proposed changes to the Fair Access Protocol which supports the admission of unplaced young people who live in Suffolk, especially the most vulnerable, so that they are offered a suitable school place as quickly as possible. This protocol is published on the Council's website.

Sources of further information

- a) The School Admissions Code (December 2014)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389388/School_Admissions_Code_2014_-_19_Dec.pdf
- b) The Equality Impact Assessment for the Determination of Admission Arrangements for the 2018/2019 school year
<http://pandp.suffolkcc.gov.uk/>
- c) The Fair Access Protocol
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/Children-families-and-learning/schools/2016-03-11-Fair-Access-Protocol.pdf>

Appendices

Appendix 1 Proposed Admission Arrangements to Schools in Suffolk for the 2018/2019 School Year

Section 1 – Overview of proposed policy changes for the School Year 2018/2019

Section 2 – Proposed Admissions Oversubscription Criteria

Section 3 – Proposed Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Schools in Suffolk 2018/2019

Section 4 – Suffolk’s Proposed Relevant Area

Section 5 – Proposed Published Admission Numbers (PANs) for 2018/20188Section

Section 6 – Suffolk County Council’s proposed Supplementary Information Form (SIF) 2018/2019

Appendix 2 Admissions statistics relating to applications made on time for the normal admission rounds

Appendix 3 Summary of Online Survey responses

Appendix 4 Pupil Forecasts

Appendix 5 Summary of Consultation Survey Representations