
2012-2013 SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Cyndi Hughes,
Children and Young People Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of People Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Members' approval for the Local Authority's admission policy for the 2012/13 academic year and the co-ordinated arrangements for all schools in the Borough.

Summary

2. In line with the School Admissions Code, the Local Authority is required to annually review the admission criteria used to allocate places for maintained primary and secondary schools in Darlington. **Appendix A** details the Co-ordinated Admission Schemes for both primary and secondary applications to be considered for the 2012/13 academic year.
3. Consultation has been undertaken in line with the Code. Details of the consultation undertaken are included in this report and the comments received are attached at **Appendix B**.
4. Once approved, there is a statutory duty on the Local Authority to forward the co-ordinated Admissions Schemes to the Department of Education (DfE) before 15 April 2011. The changes proposed in this report are set out in paragraphs 6 – 9 below.
5. The Office of the Schools Adjudicator requested that the local authority revise its oversubscription criteria for children living in rural areas. The adjudication is set out in **Appendix C**. The revised oversubscription criteria for primary schools are set out in **Appendix D**.
6. The only change in admission numbers proposed is a reduction from 40 to 38 from 2012 for Heighington Church of England Primary School. This change was requested by the school as a result of remodelling. This change is recommended but with the proviso that a future reassessment may increase the admission number.
7. Following the ruling by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator and further discussion with the office of the Local Government Ombudsman, two changes in the admissions policy are recommended.

8. The first is that a new criterion is introduced to deal with oversubscription of primary school places, giving a new criterion of children living in rural wards a preference over those other children who are being assessed for a place based on distance from the school.
9. The second change is to recommend that transport assistance be provided to children living in rural wards who qualify for a place at a school on distance but where the route they take is not lit.

Recommendation

10. It is recommended that Members consider and approve the changes required to the Local Authority's Co-ordinated Admission Schemes for both primary and secondary applications for the 2012/13 academic year.
11. It is recommended that Members accept the determination of the schools adjudicator and amend admissions criteria as described in **Appendix D** attached.

Reasons

12. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
 - (i) The Authority is under a statutory duty to consult and adopt an admission scheme for both Primary and Secondary school places for the academic year 2012/13.
 - (ii) If a scheme is not approved and returned to the DfE by the 15 April 2011 the Secretary of State may impose a scheme on the Authority.

Murray Rose
Director of People

Background Papers

School Admissions Code – issued on 10 February 2010

Melanie Stainthorpe: Extension 2067

S17 Crime and Disorder	Not relevant to this report
Health and Well Being	Offering a school place to meet parental preference and close to a child's address enhances safeguarding and provides security for the child.
Carbon Impact	School Admissions endeavour to place at their nearest school which should, in effect, reduce the impact on the environment.
Diversity	There are a range of schools in Darlington with Governance ranging from Community Schools to Voluntary Aided, Foundation and an Academy. Parents have a wide choice of schools to match the diverse needs of a pluralistic community.
Wards Affected	The admissions criteria affects children living in all wards across Darlington
Groups Affected	Parents, Pupils, Schools, Neighbouring Authorities, other Admission Authorities.
Budget and Policy Framework	There are no budget implications. This paper proposes an admissions policy to be adopted for the 2012-13 academic year.
Key Decision	This is a key decision as it affects more than one ward in Darlington.
Urgent Decision	For the purposes of call in this matter does not represent an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Provision of an Admissions Policy ensures sufficient places are available in each community so that children can attend a school of their choice.
Efficiency	The Admissions Policy and management of school places ensures that the Local Authority complies with statutory guidance on Surplus Places. This enables parents to have a choice in a school place but ensures resources are not wasted and school budgets are not overcommitted.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

13. The Local Authority acts as a 'clearing house' for all applications for a place at a school in Darlington at the normal point of entry (September). This is part of a co-ordinated scheme where the Local Authority is the admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools and acts on behalf of the admission authority of voluntary aided schools, foundation and St Aidan's Church of England Academy in the Borough. Co-ordination also includes the offering of places to children who are resident in Darlington but have stated a preference for a school in another LA area. The Authority will make a single offer of a school place each academic year, to parents who have expressed a preference for their child to be admitted to a maintained school within Darlington. Although all applications will be considered on an equal weighting basis, should a child be eligible for a place at more than one school, parents/carers are requested to rank their order of preference on the 'Primary/Secondary School Application Form 2012/13' in order that only one offer will be

made. The relevant admissions oversubscription criteria will be applied to all schools that are oversubscribed.

14. The equal preference system operates to give parents choice in their selection of schools, allocating their highest ranked preference wherever possible.
15. Attached at Appendix A is the Co-ordinated Admission Scheme for both primary and secondary school applications.
16. Attached at **Appendix C** is the determination from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, which was in response to an objection from a Darlington resident. The determination means that the council needs to adopt new admissions criteria for rural wards, members are invited to adopt criteria as described in **Appendix D**.
17. As in the previous year the admissions oversubscription criteria for community secondary schools will be:
 - (i) Looked After Children
 - (ii) Medical Reasons
 - (iii) Family Links
 - (iv) Associated Transport
 - (v) Distance

Full details of each criterion are provided in Appendix A.

18. Following the determination of the Schools Adjudicator the admissions criteria for primary schools will be
 - (i) Looked After Children
 - (ii) Medical Reasons
 - (iii) Family Links
 - (iv) Associated Schools
 - (v) Rural
 - (vi) Distance
19. Full details of each criterion are provided in **Appendix A**. The rural wards of Darlington are Heighington and Coniscliffe, Sadberge and Whessoe, Middleton St George and Hurworth. For children in these wards, if they are not successful in obtaining a place at one of their preferred schools and for whom the nearest alternative school would otherwise be more than 2 miles from their home, then they will be given priority for places over other children at designated schools. A clear description of these areas and the designated schools will be available in the Admissions booklet and on the website.
20. Where a child has undergone statutory assessment and a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) has been issued, the statement will name the school the child should attend. All schools are obliged to admit the child in accordance with the statement.
21. Children with SEN are therefore placed in schools outside the admissions round for pupils who do not have a statement.

22. Once approved, there is a statutory duty on the Local Authority to forward the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfE) before 15 April 2011. If this does not happen the Secretary of State may impose a scheme on the Authority.

Outcome of Consultation

23. The Authority is legally obliged to consult with relevant admission authorities by 1st March in the year of entry. Consultation has taken place with all neighbouring authorities, admission authorities within the Borough, Headteachers and Governing Bodies, Local Admissions Forum and parents.
24. The Local Authority has acted where appropriate upon comments on its proposed co-ordinated scheme for 2012/13. The comments and the Local Authority response to these comments are attached at Appendix B.