

CABINET
7 FEBRUARY 2023

SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS 2024/25

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Jon Clarke, Children and Young People Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -
James Stroyan, Group Director of People**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Members' approval for the Local Authority's admission arrangements for the 2024/2025 academic year for maintained schools in the Borough.

Summary

2. In line with the School Admissions Code 2021, an Admission Authority is required to annually determine the admission arrangements used to allocate places for schools for which it is the admission authority by 28 February in the determination year - **Appendix A**.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that Members approve the admission arrangements for the 3 maintained primary schools in Darlington for entry in 2024-2025 and for the administration of in-year applications thereafter.

Reasons

4. The recommendation is supported as all admission authorities are under a statutory duty to determine admission arrangements for schools for which it is the admission authority every academic year.

**James Stroyan,
Group Director of People**

Background Papers

School Admissions Code - Issued September 2021

Melanie Dickinson: Extension 5908

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| S17 Crime and Disorder | Not relevant to this report |
| Health and Wellbeing | 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 and Climate Change | Not relevant to this report. |
| Diversity | Parents have a wide choice of schools to match the diverse needs of a pluralistic community. |
| Wards Affected | The admission criteria affects children living in all wards across Darlington. |
| Groups Affected | Parents, Pupils, Schools, Neighbouring Authorities, other Admission Authorities. |
| Budget and Policy Framework | 'This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework'. |
| 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. |
| Council Plan | The admissions systems supports the ambition in the council plan to increase educational achievement across the borough. |
| Efficiency | The Admissions Policy and management of school places ensure 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. |
| Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers | Looked After Children are the highest priority in the oversubscription criteria, however this report does not impact on Care Leavers. |

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. 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 (**Appendix B**). 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.

Financial Implications

6. The Local Authority acting in its capacity as an admission 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 are requested to rank their order of preference on the 'Primary School Application Form 2024/25' in order that only one offer will be made.

The admissions oversubscription criteria will be applied should the school be oversubscribed. The equal preference system operates to give parents choice in their selection of schools, allocating their highest ranked preference wherever possible. Where a maintained school is not oversubscribed parents who have applied will be offered a place for their child.

Legal Implications

7. As an Admission Authority, Darlington Local Authority must determine its admission arrangements each academic year and would be in breach of its statutory duty in accordance with the School Admissions Code, issued in September 2021.
8. The Authority would be in breach of its statutory duty if it did not co-ordinate the application process for all schools within its authority in accordance with the School Admissions Code, issued in September 2021.

Consultation

9. All Admission Authorities are required to consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years. Consultation must take place between 1 October and 31 January of the school year before the arrangements are to take place and must last for a minimum of 6 weeks. This consultation period allows parents, other schools, religious authorities and the local community to raise any concerns about the proposed admission arrangements. In line with the requirements, Darlington Local Authority consults with the appropriate bodies within the timescales.
10. Every 7 years Local Authorities must consult on a co-ordinated scheme. Consultation must take place if there is a substantial change before that time. Each year all Local Authorities are required to formulate and publish on their website a co-ordinated scheme for all publicly funded school within its area by 1 January in the relevant determination year. Darlington LA last consulted on a scheme in 2022.

Outcome of Consultation

11. No comments were received on the co-ordinated scheme.