



Committee and Date

Shropshire Council Cabinet

Date: 13 February 2019

Item

Public

DETERMINATION OF ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2020/21

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1. Summary

In accordance with the School Admissions Code, consultation on our admission arrangements for 2020/21 must be completed by 31 January 2019 and arrangements must be determined before 28 February 2019. The admission arrangements are therefore brought to this Cabinet.

Shropshire Council's admission arrangements for 2020/21 are largely unchanged, other than an amendment recommended by the Minister of State for School Standards and the Department for Education (DfE). That is that in light of proposed changes to future legislation, admission authorities are encouraged to give children adopted from overseas the second highest admissions priority in their oversubscription criteria. The amendment must be subject to the statutory process for consultation on admission arrangements.

Consultation on Shropshire Council's admission arrangements for 2020/21 took place between 12 December 2018 and 25 January 2019. The Local Admissions Forum has recommended the proposed arrangements. Cabinet is therefore requested to approve the change to the Council's admission arrangements for the 2020/21 academic year.

2. Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approves the proposal to amend Shropshire Council's admission arrangements, namely:
 - To give children adopted from overseas the second highest admissions priority in their oversubscription criteria.
2. That Cabinet approves the admission arrangements for 2020/21 without further amendment to those determined in February 2018.
3. That Cabinet, by agreeing to the above, determines the school admission arrangements for Shropshire Council for the academic year 2020/21 and to the required publication of the arrangements in accordance with the School Admissions Code 2014.

4. That officers notify the Secretary of State by 28 February 2019 that Shropshire Council has determined its school admissions arrangements for the 2020/21 academic year.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

If determination of admission arrangements does not take place before the specified date, Shropshire Council would not be compliant with the appropriate legislation as an admission authority. This determination will ensure that parents have sufficient time to plan for their children's schooling and to consider the fairness of admission arrangements, which they can challenge if they consider them to be unlawful or unfair. Any objections to admission arrangements for 2020/21 must be made to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by 15 May 2019 for adjudication to be complete prior to the application year.

4. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for Shropshire Council connected with the determination of admission arrangements.

5. Background

The only change proposed to Shropshire Council's arrangements is recommended by the DfE to introduce a high priority in oversubscription criteria to children who have been adopted from state care outside of England.

Currently the highest priority in the admissions criteria must be given to looked after children and all previously looked after children. (A looked after child is defined as a child who is in the care of a local authority in England, or is being provided with accommodation by a local authority in England in the exercise of their social services functions.)

In December 2017, the Minister of State for School Standards wrote to all local authorities and admission authorities urging them to give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children who have previously been in state care outside of England, and have ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. Advice has been produced by the DfE to help admission authorities implement the change and the proposal has formed part of the consultation on Shropshire Council's admission arrangements.

No further changes are proposed to Shropshire Council's admission arrangements.

Prior to the start of the formal consultation period, a parent made contact with Shropshire Council to raise his objection to the use of child benefit to determine which is the child's home address where care is shared equally between parents on school nights. Appropriate responses were sent to the parent to explain that this determinant was only applicable in a small number of cases, that it was standard practice by local

authorities across the country, and that fathers and grandfathers were recipients of child benefit as well as mothers. The parent was informed of the steps required to formally determine admission arrangements and the options open to him to make a formal objection.

The issue was discussed and considered by the Local Admissions Forum prior to the start of consultation on the proposed admission arrangements, but Forum members recommended that no amendment should be made to this policy. No response has been made by the parent during the formal consultation period and this part of the policy is therefore recommended to Cabinet without amendment.

One objection to the admission arrangements was received on 16 December 2018, which was two-fold. First, an objection to the proposal for schools to give second priority to children adopted from care outside of England because this would give priority to children outside of the area over children of parents who live locally and have contributed and paid taxes in the area. Second, an objection to giving priority to children living in the catchment area over those who have moved to live outside the designated catchment area who may have a sibling at the school.

In considering the first part of the objection, it should be noted that the number of pupils who fall into this category is extremely small. Furthermore, this change has been promoted by national government as an equality measure, to ensure that children who are the most vulnerable and whose needs are exceptional are given the same advantage as children who have been adopted from within England.

The second part of the objection has long been a topic of debate and has been considered at length by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. In the *Office of the Schools Adjudicator Annual Report* published in February 2018, the Chief Adjudicator said:

“It is common for priority to be given to some or all siblings. Arrangements were likely to be found to be reasonable and fair when they struck a balance between giving a high priority to siblings, especially in primary schools (where it can be very difficult for parents to have to take children to different schools), and the needs of first born or only children to be able to attend a local school. This can be challenging for admission authorities. An approach which works well in many situations is to give priority to in catchment siblings, then other catchment children, then out of catchment siblings and finally other children.”

This is the approach that Shropshire Council has taken in determination of the admission arrangements for Shropshire community and voluntary controlled schools.

6. Additional Information

Some Shropshire schools for which the local authority is not the admission authority are also proposing the change recommended by the DfE to give second priority to children adopted from care outside of England. Those schools are listed below:

Barrow 1618 Primary School
Baschurch CE Primary School
Bishop's Castle Primary School
Bitterley CE Primary School
Burford CE Primary School

Church Stretton School
Claverley CE Primary School
Clee Hill Community Academy
Coleham Primary School
Condover CE Primary School

Crowmoor Primary School
 Grange Primary School
 Greenacres Primary School
 Greenfields Primary School
 Lacon Childe School
 Lakelands Academy
 Longden CE Primary School
 Longlands Primary School
 Ludlow CE School
 Ludlow Primary School
 Market Drayton Infant & Nursery School
 Market Drayton Junior School
 Morville CE Primary School
 Mount Pleasant Primary School
 Oldbury wells School
 Prees CE Primary School
 Radbrook Primary School
 Shrewsbury Academy
 Sir John Talbot's School

St Edward's CE Primary School
 St Martin's School
 St. George's CE School, Clun
 St. George's Junior School
 St. Mary's Bluecoat CE Primary School
 St. Peter's CE Primary School
 Stokesay Primary School
 Stottesdon CE Primary School
 The Community College
 The Corbet School
 The Grove School
 The Marches School
 Tilstock CE Primary & Nursery School
 Whixall CE Primary School
 Wilfred Owen School
 William Brookes School
 Woodfield Infant School
 Woodside Primary School
 Worfield Endowed CE Primary School

When proposals are made to alter admission arrangements of Shropshire schools for which the local authority is not the admission authority, Shropshire Council must be consulted. Given that this proposed change is one recommended by the DfE, and one that is proposed to the Council's own arrangements, there would be no grounds to object to the amendment.

Where schools propose increases to their Published Admission Number (PAN), the current School Admissions Code makes it clear that these requests should be approved without the need to consult on changes. However, where a reduction is proposed to PANs, the admission authority must consult on the proposed changes and their admission arrangements in entirety. Shropshire Council responds as appropriate to proposed reductions to PANs by schools that are an admission authority in their own right (e.g. foundation schools, academies etc.).

The following admission authorities have proposed reductions to their PANs to facilitate more effective class organisation. The schools in question will still be able to meet forecast demand of places from their catchment residents. Classroom accommodation that has been re-designated to facilitate the PAN reduction can be brought back into use if there should be a requirement for additional places and so there is no basis on which Shropshire Council should object to this proposal:

Proposed <u>reductions</u> to PAN	School Type	Existing PAN	Proposed PAN	+ / -
Alveley Primary School	Academy	17	15	-2
Bridgnorth Endowed School	Academy	174	120	-54
Church Stretton School	Academy	124	96	-28
Ludlow CE School	Academy	174	140	-34

- The Bishop Anthony Educational Trust is standardising their policy for all its schools: (**Bishop's Castle Primary School, Bitterley CE Primary School, Burford CE Primary School, Condover CE Primary School, Ludlow Primary**)

School, Morville CE Primary School, St Edward's CE Primary School

Dorrington and **St. George's CE School** Clun).

- **Bridgnorth Endowed School** have proposed a closure of its sixth form.
- **Oldbury Wells School** have proposed an increased admission number of 50 for their sixth form and updated sixth form course requirements.
- **Coleham Primary School** have added staff criteria.
- **St John's Catholic Primary School** have proposed changes to their oversubscription criteria.
- Severn Bridges Academy Trust (**Greenfields Primary School, Mount Pleasant Primary School and Radbrook Primary School**) have added exceptional medical criteria to their policy.
- **Woodside Primary School** have prioritised applicants with a sibling in the out of area category.

No other proposals have been received.

Where admission authorities in Shropshire have proposed changes, the Local Admissions Forum has recommended a response, if considered appropriate, to ensure the needs of pupils within the Local Authority's area are met.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

School Admissions Code 2014 (available from www.education.gov.uk)

Letter from Minister of State for School Standards to local authorities and admission authorities dated 4 December 2017 (available from http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-0147/to_admission_authorities_admission_of_children_adopted.pdf)

Shropshire Council Determined Admission Arrangements 2019/20 (available from www.shropshire.gov.uk/schooladmissions)

Parents' Guide to Education in Shropshire 2019/20 (available from www.shropshire.gov.uk/schooladmissions)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Nick Bardsley

Local Member

All local members

Appendices

Appendix A – Shropshire Council Admission Arrangements 2020/21