

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

21 January 2014

SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2015/16

Report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Members’ views on the response to the consultation on proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the academic year 2015/16 and their approval to recommendations to the County Council for determination.

2.0 ISSUES AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The local authority is required to determine its admission arrangements, which includes admission policy and admission limits, by 15 April each year. When changes are proposed to admission arrangements, all admission authorities must consult by 1 March on their admission arrangements. Where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement that admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years, even if there have been no changes during that period. As the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools in North Yorkshire the local authority consults annually on admission arrangements.
- 2.2 Consultation must last for a minimum of 8 weeks and must take place between 1 November and 1 March in the determination year. This means that schools are first consulted in autumn term each year for admissions nearly two years later. The process is, therefore, based to some degree on schools’ best estimates of the numbers of requests for places informed by the local authority’s forecasting model, which takes into account the patterns of parental preference over the years. Since the Council is the only body that may determine the matter, it falls to the Council in February each year. This means that in order to meet the deadline of the February County Council meeting and comply with the statutory and corporate deadlines for the process, the consultation on admissions arrangements needs to commence early in November and be completed by the following January.
- 2.3 The Education (Relevant Areas for Consultation on Admission Arrangements) Regulations 1999 (SI 1999 No. 124) require local authorities to determine relevant areas for consultation on admission arrangements. The Relevant Areas for schools maintained by North Yorkshire County Council are as follows:

For Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, the Relevant Area is the entire County of North Yorkshire, plus the City of York and the area of Bradford Metropolitan Authority served at secondary level by South Craven School.

For Voluntary Aided, Foundation, Trust Schools and Academies the relevant area for consultation is North Yorkshire County Council and admission authorities within a radius of 3 miles of the school, including admission authorities in neighbouring local authority areas. It is proposed that relevant areas for consultation remain unchanged.

- 2.4 It is proposed that catchment areas for all community and voluntary controlled schools in North Yorkshire remain unchanged.
- 2.5 Consultation has taken place with the headteachers and governors of 3 nursery, 316 primary and 36 secondary (including middle) schools, the academy trusts of the ten converter academies, parents and other groups in the local area, the 13 neighbouring authorities and also with the relevant diocesan authorities.
- 2.6 There are five key areas to the consultation details of which are set out below.

3.0 ADMISSIONS POLICY

- 3.1 **Admissions policy [criteria for determining admissions where schools are oversubscribed]:**

The proposed admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools and the proposed admission policy for nursery schools, schools with nursery and pre-reception classes is attached (Appendices 1& 2 respectively).

The proposed admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools, and the proposed policy for nursery schools and schools with nursery and pre-reception classes remain unchanged from 2014/15 arrangements.

- 3.2 Responses to the proposed admission policy to Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

The closing date of this consultation was 10 January 2014.

By the closing date a total of three online responses have been received, all of which express agreement with the proposed policy.

- 3.3 Responses to the proposed admission policy for nursery schools, schools with nursery and pre-reception classes

By the closing date a total three online responses have been received, all of which express agreement with the proposed policy.

4.0 ADMISSION LIMITS

- 4.1 The proposed published admission numbers [PAN's] for 2015/16 are attached at appendices 4&5. The County Council sets the admission limits of Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in consultation with the governing body of the school.
- 4.2 From the academic year 2013/14 an own admission authority school (VA, Foundation, Trust Schools, Academies or Free Schools) is not required to include a proposal to increase or keep the same admission number in any consultation on admission arrangements. Conversely all admission authorities must consult if they propose a decrease in PAN. As the admission authority for a community or voluntary controlled school the local authority **must** consult the governing body of each school whether it proposes to increase, decrease or

keep the same admission number. Community and voluntary controlled schools have the right to object to the Schools Adjudicator if the PAN set for them is lower than they would wish.

- 4.3 The Authority has consulted with the governing bodies of all community and voluntary controlled schools as part of this annual consultation process. Agreements have been reached with the majority of schools.
- 4.4 The governing body of Brayton High School requested a reduction in the proposed published admission number [PAN]. The proposed PAN of 241 is in line with the net capacity of the school. The governing body requested a PAN of 120 on the basis that over the past three years the number of pupils admitted each September into year 7 has averaged 70. The school shares a joint catchment area with Selby High School. Pupil forecast data indicates that longer term there will be a need for more places across the joint catchment area. The Selby High School site is constrained and unlikely to take significant further expansion. Officer views are that the proposed PAN of 241 should be maintained since it is in line with the net capacity of the school and it would be inappropriate to reduce the PAN knowing that demand for secondary school places in the catchment area will increase.
- 4.5 The School Admission Code 2012 states that all schools that are popular with parents are to be free to increase their PAN without the need for local consultation but they must notify their local authority of their intention to increase the school's PAN and reference to the change should be made on the school's website.
- 4.6 Objections to the Schools Adjudicator about an increase in PAN [or the PAN remaining the same] may only be made by the governing body of a community or voluntary controlled school. The rationale behind this is to enable all schools to take advantage of some of the freedoms enjoyed by own admission authority schools. In respect of such an objection there will be a strong presumption in favour of increase. It is difficult to reconcile this with the local authority's strategic role in planning school places.

Where a school does increase its PAN it is likely to stay at the higher level which will make for significant growth over time and may have an impact on the demands on capital funding as well as creating surplus places elsewhere.

5.0 CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

- 5.1 Under the 2012 School Admissions Code the local authority's role in co-ordination of the normal admissions round is to continue and all admission authorities must participate in co-ordination for the main round of admissions. There is no longer a mandatory requirement that local authorities undertake in year co-ordination on behalf of all schools within their area and in liaison with their neighbouring LA's. This does not mean that local authorities cannot propose to continue to do so within their own local area. The Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements Scheme (appendix 3) proposes the retention of in year co-ordination of admissions by the local authority. As the number of own admission authority schools increases parents may find it increasingly difficult to navigate a system which is fragmented in terms of numbers of admission authorities, proliferation of different admissions criteria and a lack of clarity about where accountability sits for securing their rights.
- 5.2 It is proposed that within North Yorkshire the local authority will continue to co-ordinate in – year admissions for all community and voluntary controlled schools. In order for the scheme to operate effectively across all schools, including own admission authority schools, it is proposed that the local authority will also continue to co-ordinate in-year admissions on behalf of the governing bodies of own admission authority schools which elect to be party to the scheme. Officer views are that as the admission authority for community and voluntary

controlled schools we would want to retain responsibility for in year co-ordination within these schools and in the interests of parents and children we will continue to deal with in year admissions for all own admission authority schools which request us to do so. If an academy trust would like us to undertake this function on their behalf this can be managed as a chargeable service.

5.3 Between September 2012 and 5 June 2013 the local authority dealt with 3557 in-year admissions, 1002 of which were for secondary school places and 2555 for primary school places.

5.4 At the closing date of the consultation there were three responses on the proposed co-ordinated admission arrangements which include the In Year Fair Access Protocol, managed moves protocol and primary fresh start policy (appendices 3, 3a, 3b and 3c). All three responses were from schools and were in agreement with the proposed arrangements. No responses have been received from any of our neighbouring LA's or other consultees.

6.0 GENERAL COMMENTS

6.1 Consultees were given the opportunity to submit any general comments regarding the proposed admission arrangements for 2015/16. No responses were submitted.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no specific financial implications attached to the actions within this report, although the careful management of admissions is key to the efficient use of both capital and revenue resources.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The consultation on proposed admission arrangements is in accordance with the statutory requirements of the School Admissions Code 2012. Failure to comply with admission arrangements as determined can lead to challenge by way of objections to the schools adjudicator or complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman.

9.0 COMMUNICATION

9.1 Consultees will be notified of the County Council's determination and the arrangements will be published on the County Council website as normal.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That the proposed Admission Arrangements be recommended to the County Council for determination on 19 February 2014 these include:

- i) the proposed admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools; and
- ii) the proposed admission policy for nursery schools, schools with nursery and pre-reception classes, appendices 1 & 2.

- the proposed published admission numbers [PAN's] for community and voluntary controlled schools as shown in appendices 4 [primary] and 5 [secondary] and note the limits for voluntary aided, foundation and trust schools and academies.

- the proposed co-ordinated admission arrangements which include in-year co-ordination, the In Year Fair Access Protocol, Managed Moves Protocol and Primary Fresh Starts Policy (appendices 3,3a, 3b and 3c).

Pete Dwyer
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Background documents

The School Admissions Code 2012

The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012

The Education (Relevant Areas for Consultation on Admission Arrangements) Regulations 1999 (SI 1999 No. 124)

Key to appendices

Appendix 1 - proposed admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools

Appendix 2 - proposed admission policy for nursery schools, schools with nursery and pre-reception classes

Appendix 3 - proposed co-ordinated admission arrangements scheme

Appendix 3a - proposed in- year fair access protocol

Appendix 3b - proposed managed moves protocol

Appendix 3c - proposed primary fresh starts policy

Appendix 4 - proposed PAN's – primary

Appendix 5 - proposed PAN's – secondary

Appendix 6 - table of consultation responses

