

Report subject	School Admissions Arrangements 2023/24 for community and maintained schools
Meeting date	9 February 2022
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>BCP Council is legally required to determine its admissions arrangements for the school year 2023/24. Permission to publicly consult to change the arrangements was agreed by council members.</p> <p>The change that required consultation was the reduction of the published admission number at Burton Primary School from 60 to 45 to enable the school to organise classes efficiently.</p> <p>It is recommended that following the conclusion of the public consultation, the arrangements are determined by council members.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Cabinet consider any comments from Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, if any, concerning Schools Admissions Arrangements 2023/2024 for community and maintained schools; and (b) Cabinet support the determination of the arrangements as set out in Appendix 1 and 2 of this report.
Reason for recommendations	<p>The Council is legally required to have admission arrangements for its community and voluntary controlled schools. The governing body of Burton Primary School has asked that its published admission number be reduced to enable the school to organise classes efficiently.</p>

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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. The Council and those schools which are deemed to be an 'admission authority' are required each year to set arrangements explaining how and when they decide to whom they will offer a school place. The Council is admission authority for community schools and voluntary controlled schools. All other categories of school including academies, studio schools, foundation schools and voluntary aided schools are their own admission authority. The Council must also set an administrative scheme setting out for parents and schools how the application and offer process will be coordinated.
2. The Council and all other school admission authorities are required to operate their admission arrangements in accordance with the Department for Education's School Admissions Code (2021).
3. The Council is required to publicly consult on the arrangements that will apply across the whole area for the 2023/24 academic year.
4. The Council is required to have an admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools located in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Admissions Arrangements and Published Admission Numbers

5. The admissions policy must explain how to apply for a place and once an application is received how it will be processed. It must contain clear oversubscription criteria should there be more applications for places than there are places available. The number of places available at a main point of entry for each school – the published admission number (PAN) – must also be set and included in the policy for parents.
6. The proposed arrangements are attached at appendix one. There are no proposed changes to how the policy operates or its oversubscription criteria. Associated policies in relation to admission out of year group and admission of Looked After Children also remain unchanged.
7. The proposed published admission numbers (PAN) for 2023/24 for each of the maintained primary schools are attached at appendix two. The proposed change that has triggered the requirement to consult is a reduction in PAN at Burton CE Primary School. There are no changes to the PAN for other schools from those set for the 2022/23 year by the preceding local authorities as there are sufficient school places.

8. Reducing its PAN to 45 will enable Burton Primary School to organise its class groupings efficiently and ensure that the class size limit of 30 in Reception to Year 2 can be maintained. Forecasts show primary numbers dropping in West Christchurch over the next five years, so this will not result in a shortage of places.
9. The school governing body has requested that a reduction of PAN is consulted on.

Consultation

10. The admission arrangements are currently being consulted on. The consultation period is 1 December 2021 until 31 January 2022. The statutory period for consultation required by the School Admissions Code is a minimum of 6 weeks. Additional time has been provided as school holidays fall during the consultation period.
11. The consultation is available on Have Your Say and the School Admissions webpages. All schools in the Relevant Area, neighbouring local authorities and relevant dioceses have been notified. Schools and early years settings have been asked to inform families of the consultation and information is available at children's centres and libraries. Social media and newsletter emails have publicised the consultation.
12. As of 17 January 2022 there have been no responses received. Given the proposed change to reduce the PAN at Burton Primary School is supported by the school itself and will not impact on the availability of school places in the Christchurch planning areas, it is anticipated that there will be no objections to the proposal in the final two weeks of the consultation.

Options Appraisal

13. The reduction in the published admission number at Burton Primary School could have been rejected without consultation, however the school has made a case that a reduction would help it organise its classes more efficiently. It is therefore proposed that the reduction is put forward for consultation.
14. Other changes could be proposed to the admission policies for community and voluntary controlled schools, however there is currently no case for making such changes. It is therefore proposed that the existing admission policy is confirmed.

Summary of financial implications

15. There are no direct financial implications to this report. There is a cost to the administration of the admission system, however this will not be affected by confirming the admission policy. School budgets are driven by the number of pupils on roll to a considerable extent. The setting of published admission numbers assists schools in planning their budgets and organising class groupings.

Summary of legal implications

16. Sections 13, 13A and 14 of the Education Act 1996 require councils that are Education Authorities to: ensure that efficient primary, secondary and further education is available to meet the needs of their population; ensure that their education functions are exercised with a view to promoting high standards ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and learning, and promote the fulfilment of learning potential; and secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available for their area.

17. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires an Education Authority to publish any proposed alterations to existing school places provision and the process for consultation on such proposals is governed by Regulation.

Summary of human resources implications

18. There are no human resources implications to this report. No changes to the staffing of the admissions team will be required as a result of confirming the admissions policy

Summary of sustainability impact

19. The admissions policy gives high priority to parental preference, however the use of catchment areas and home to school distance tends to encourage parents to seek places in local schools, thus reducing home to school travel.

Summary of public health implications

20. There are no direct public health implications arising from this report. Children with education health and care plans naming a particular school and looked after children are given the highest possible priority in the admissions process.

Summary of equality implications

21. An EIA conversation has been completed and is attached at Appendix 3.
22. The admissions policy of all state funded schools, whether maintained by the local authority or by the Secretary of State for Education must be set in accordance with the School Admissions Code. This provides detailed guidance on what over-subscription criteria may be used.
23. No adverse impacts on applicants with protected characteristics under the Equality Act arise as a direct result of the proposed admissions arrangements.

Summary of risk assessment

24. There are few risks associated directly with this report. The school admissions process generally runs smoothly every year. An admissions policy is required by law. If a parent is not offered a place at a preferred school, there is an appeals process organised by the relevant admissions authority. Where there are complaints about admissions policies in general these may be referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, an independent official appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.
25. Pupil number forecasts indicate that there will be sufficient places in the primary phase for the Council to be able to fulfil its statutory duty to offer a place to all applicants in 2023/2024.
26. A bulge in secondary numbers will be at or just past its peak in 2023/34. Mitigation has already been put in place to ensure that the Council will be able to offer a place to all applicants as the bulge goes through the school system. All secondary schools in BCP are their own admission authority.

Background papers

School Admissions Code (Department for Education 2021)

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1001050/School_admissions_code_2021.pdf)

Admission of Children of Crown Servants (Department for Education 2021)

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/461481/Admission_of_children_of_crown_servants.pdf)

Fair Access Protocols Guidance for school leaders, admission authorities and local authorities (Department for Education 2021)

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1012993/FAP_Guidance.pdf).

Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Coordinated Admissions Scheme

Appendix 2: List of maintained schools in Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole and their published admission numbers (PANs)

Appendix 3: EIA Conversation