

<b>Item No.</b> 10.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 6 February 2024	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet
<b>Report title:</b>		Southwark coordinated admission schemes for primary, junior and secondary admissions 2025	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>		Councillor Jasmine Ali, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Refugees	

## **FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR JASMINE ALI, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, EDUCATION AND REFUGEES**

This report sets out the proposed Pan London coordinated admission schemes for primary, junior and secondary schools in Southwark for 2025 admissions.

The council has a statutory duty to coordinate admissions for Southwark residents on behalf of all maintained schools and academies in the borough. The report sets out arrangements for coordination, includes the timetable to be followed and confirms how local authorities will work together to ensure application information is received, processed and transferred between the authorities, the applicant and the schools.

According to the Council's constitution, these schemes must be agreed by Cabinet for implementation from September 2024 when the admissions application process commences for the September 2025 intake.

All of the details for agreed schemes for 2025 are now set out in this report. I would like to thank the Education Admissions team for their report and propose that Cabinet agree the coordinated admissions schemes as set out in the attached report.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Cabinet notes that the coordinated admission schemes for Primary (Reception), Junior (Year 3), Secondary (Year 7) and 14-19 University Technical College (UTC) transfer (Year 10) have worked effectively for Southwark residents during the last academic year and have not been changed for the 2025/26 admissions year.
2. That the Cabinet agrees the 2025/26 coordinated admission schemes for Primary (Reception), Junior (Year 3), Secondary (Year 7) and 14-19 UTC transfer (Year 10) admissions attached as Appendix 1, Appendix 2,

Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 of this report.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3. The coordination of admission arrangements must adhere to the requirements of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the School Admissions Code 2021. These arrangements apply to admission authorities of all maintained schools and non-maintained state funded schools.
4. At the Cabinet meeting on 19 March 2013, the Leader of the Council delegated authority to the cabinet member for children's services to agree the Secondary and Primary Admissions Schemes for 2015 admissions and onwards where there were no changes made from the previous year. Although there are no proposed changes to the admissions arrangements 2025 or the coordinated admission schemes for 2025, these reports are being brought to Cabinet for determination due to the proposed amendment of the primary Published Admissions Numbers (PANs) for September 2025.
5. The Council is the admissions authority for Southwark community primary schools only and also has a statutory responsibility for coordinating school admission applications on behalf of all Southwark residents applying for a place at a primary, junior, secondary and 14-19 UTC transfer at a maintained school/non maintained state funded school in England. This includes admissions at normal points of entry, e.g. to primary reception year including Year 3 transfer and secondary Year 7 including 14-19 University Technical College transfer. Arrangements for these coordinated admissions are negotiated and agreed across all 33 London local authorities to form a pan-London admissions scheme.
6. Coordination provides families with a single point of application to schools where up to six preferences may be made on a common application form. The Council is also responsible for confirming a single school offer to each child on offer date, which, for the September 2025 intake, is 3 March 2025 for Secondary including Year 10 and 16 April 2025 for Reception and Junior applications. The exception to this coordinated admissions process would be applications to any new free schools currently being established for September 2025 which are not able to be included in the co-ordinated admissions process which will begin in September 2024.
7. There are currently no new free schools due to open within Southwark for 2025. Should any new free school with an opening date of September 2025 be subsequently confirmed they will be expected to operate a separate application process alongside the Council's co-ordinated primary and secondary admission schemes. This will enable families to submit an expression of interest directly to the schools in addition to listing up to six preferences via Southwark's Primary (Reception) and Secondary (Year 7)

coordinated admission schemes. The Council would then work collaboratively with the free school after national offer day to contact families to determine a single school place i.e. (the offer through coordination or at the new school). This method worked successfully for Haberdashers' Aske's Borough Academy which opened in September 2019 and is the most recent free school to open in the borough.

8. Local authorities like all other admission authorities must determine their final admission arrangements and coordinated admission schemes (Primary -Reception, Junior, Secondary - Year 7 and 14-19 UTC transfer) by 28 February 2024 for September 2025 admissions, and notify the Secretary of State if a coordinated scheme has been secured also by this date.
9. There are no proposed changes to the council's coordinated admission schemes (Primary-Reception, Junior, Secondary-Year 7 and 14-19 UTC transfer) for September 2025.

### **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

10. The School Admissions Code 2021 sets out requirements for local authorities to provide a system to enable the efficient admission of pupils to schools at normal point of entry (Reception, Year 3, Year 7 and Year 10 transfer). A coordinated admissions scheme for 2025 admissions must be in place with details of how this will operate within each local authority.
11. Coordinated admissions schemes must enable parents in a home local authority to apply to any school in England. The coordinated admission schemes must set out how information will be received, processed and transferred between the local authority, the applicants, the schools and neighbouring boroughs for Primary (Reception), Junior, Secondary (Year 7) and 14-19 UTC transfer (Year 10). Any offer of a school place must be made by the home local authority.
12. Coordinated admission schemes provide a fair and efficient school admissions process whilst almost entirely eliminating the risk of multiple offers being made to individual families.
13. Local authority officers across London developed the key principles, including a mix of mandatory and optional clauses for each for coordinated scheme to be considered and implemented by individual local authorities. Coordinated admission schemes for Primary (Reception), Junior, Secondary (Year 7) and 14-19 UTC transfer (Year 10) which meet the PAN London requirements are attached respectively as appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4 of this report.
14. The current coordinated admission schemes for Primary (Reception), Junior, Secondary (Year 7) and 14-19 UTC transfer (Year 10) admissions have worked well and enabled successful management of school admissions. No changes have been made to these arrangements other

than dates throughout the documents to reflect the 2025 academic year.

### **Policy framework implications**

15. The Council's Delivery Plan 2022-26 presents a set of commitments, which will help the Council work towards a fairer, safer and greener Southwark. It is a requirement that reports to Cabinet explicitly refer to the Delivery Plan and how the report and or the actions outlined will help deliver key aspects of the plan. The school admissions process supports families to secure access to school places, thus enabling children and young people in the borough to thrive. This is in line with theme 7 of the Council's Delivery Plan – 'Supporting families'.

### **Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts**

#### **Community impact statement, including equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement**

16. The coordinated admissions process is designed to produce fair and equitable access to school places for all children. Allocation of places is delivered through the strict application of admissions and oversubscription criteria of each school through a central PAN London computer. All admission authorities are expected to implement clear admission arrangements that achieve equity and fair access for all pupils in line with the School Admissions Code 2021.
17. Support is provided to families that find it difficult to navigate the admissions system through our school admission officers, school staff and the Southwark Information, Advice and Support (SIAS) Team. This involves a significant amount of training, outreach support and drop in sessions for families throughout the year, all of which have been conducted virtually since the pandemic. SIAS officers also provide support to specific EAL communities with the use of interpreters as well as parents / parents of children, who may have a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. In addition, Southwark residents also have direct access to one to one telephone or video call support from the school admissions team during the application stage of the admissions process – this is on request and through referrals from schools and other agencies.
18. For families without access to a computer or internet at home, Southwark libraries and one stop shops also offered free internet usage with admissions staff on hand to help. The online application system enables a streamlined service to be delivered so officers are able to provide high quality direct assistance to families and advise on the admissions process in person, thus improving the service as a whole and in particular for those families who may have difficulty navigating the admissions system.
19. The Public Sector Equality Duty, at section 149 of the Equality Act, requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation

to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard when carrying out their activities to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and those with none. The Council's Approach to Equality ("the approach") commits the Council to ensuring that equality is an integral part of our day to day business.

20. "Protected characteristics" are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful - the characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In this case, the characteristics covering gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and sexual orientation are unlikely to be issues for consideration. Managing the post offer admissions process with the use of a timetable has the potential to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and those with none.
21. Comprehensive Equality impact assessments relating to the admissions service have been carried out, no negative impacts of the new co-ordinated admissions schemes have been identified, so no mitigating actions are required, and no equality objectives will derive from these specific proposals.
22. Officers have had due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act in preparing the co-ordinated admissions schemes and will have due regard when carrying out the proposed activities, to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and those with none. The provision of fair and equitable co-ordinated admissions schemes:
  - a) "advances the cause of the elimination of discrimination" by removing potential discrimination based on the protected characteristics
  - b) "advances equality of opportunity" by ensuring that all groups, irrespective of background, have equal access to school places
  - c) "fosters good relations" by implementing a demonstrably fair and equitable policy for the co-ordination of admissions across the borough for people with protected characteristics and those without.

### **Health impact statement**

23. There are no specific identified health impacts resulting from any of the proposals or recommendations, so a health impact statement is not necessary for this report.

## **Climate change implications**

24. Following the council assembly meeting on the 14 July 2021, the council has now committed to considering the climate change implications of any decisions made.
25. No direct measures have been taken to reduce or enhance the impact on climate change as part of this school admissions report, as no substantive negative effects have been identified. Additionally as no direct measures have been taken to reduce or enhance the impact on climate change as part of this admissions process, no monitoring will be required.
26. There are no substantive negative effects anticipated as a result of the recommendations and proposals.

## **Resource implications**

27. This is not applicable for this report.

## **Legal implications**

28. Please see concurrent from the Assistant Chief Executive of Governance and Assurance.

## **Financial implications**

29. All costs associated with the admissions process are chargeable to the Schools Budget and are therefore met from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). There are no direct financial implications for the council's revenue budgets.

## **Consultation**

30. A full consultation on 2025 school admission arrangements for Southwark community primary schools was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out in the School Admissions Code, 2021 between 14 December 2023 and 24 January 2024.
31. Although Southwark's coordinated admission schemes for Primary (Reception), Junior, Secondary (Year 7) and 14-19 UTC transfer (Year 10) for September 2025 remain the same as the previous year with no proposed changes, for the purposes of consistency these schemes were included in the Council's consultation on admission arrangements. The consultation was published on the Council's online consultation hub and on the school admissions web page. The consultation was circulated by email to all maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in the borough, neighbouring local authorities, the diocesan boards and Southwark Councillors and MPs. A formal notice about the consultation was published in Southwark News and the consultation was also publicised on the Council's social media pages alongside the resident

newsletter. Six responses were received by 25 January 2024 confirming agreement/disagreement to each of the proposals set out in the consultation document. Responses from the consultation are summarised in Appendix 5 of this report.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Head of Procurement**

32. As no services are being procured, no comment is required.

### **Assistant Chief Executive of Governance and Assurance**

33. The recommendations in this report are included in the matters reserved to full Cabinet in Part 3C of the Council's Constitution.

34. Cabinet is advised that the legal framework surrounding the admissions schemes is set out in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the School Admissions Code 2021, as stated within the body of the report. Cabinet is advised that the proposed admissions schemes for 2025 comply with the applicable law.

35. Cabinet is asked to note that the Council is required to consult on admission arrangements at least once every 7 years or should any changes be proposed. The last consultation in respect of Southwark's coordinated admission schemes for Primary (Reception), Junior, Secondary (Year 7) and 14-19 UTC transfer (Year 10) was carried out for the 2023 arrangements. Although the Council's coordinated admission schemes for 2025/26 remain the same as the previous year with no proposed changes, for the purposes of consistency these schemes were included in the Council's consultation on admission arrangements which opened on 14 December 2023 and closed on 25 January 2024. Responses to this consultation are set out in Appendix 5 to this report to which Cabinet should have regard when making this decision.

36. Cabinet is reminded of the public sector equality duty under section 149 Equality Act 2010 when making this decision. This requires that, when exercising any of the council's functions, due regard be given to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and those with none. In particular Cabinet will note the adjustments in place to enable full access to support and information for all communities in Southwark, outlined in the Community Impact Statement. That Statement also makes clear that whilst an equality impact assessment has been carried out in relation to the coordinated admission scheme, no negative impacts on people with a particular protected characteristic have been identified. Cabinet is referred to the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 5.

**Strategic Director of Finance REF: [CAS23/42]**

37. This report seeks approval from Cabinet to the Primary (Reception), Junior, Secondary (Year 7) and 14-19 UTC transfer (Year 10) coordinated admission schemes for 2025 admissions attached as appendix 1, appendix 2, appendix 3 and appendix 4 of this report. Paragraph 29 confirms that the costs associated with the admissions process are met from the Dedicated Schools Grant, and that there is no direct financial implication on the council's revenue budgets.

**Other officers**

38. There have been no other officers appropriate to advise.

**REASONS FOR URGENCY**

39. The consultation on admission arrangements must run for a period of at least six weeks and be completed by 31 January in the year preceding the year the change is to be effected (i.e. 31 January 2024 for September 2025 admissions).

**REASONS FOR LATENESS**

40. Results from the consultation will be available from week commencing 22 January 2024 (approximately) and no later than 31 January 2024.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Held At</b>	<b>Contact</b>
1. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998	Children and Families Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> floor, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Neil Gordon-Orr 020 7525 5234
<b>Link:</b> <a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents</a>		
2. The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) Regulations 2012 (England)	Children and Families Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> floor, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Neil Gordon-Orr 020 7525 5234
<b>Link:</b> <a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents</a>		
3. The School Admissions Code	Children and Families	Neil Gordon-Orr

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
2021	Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> floor, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	020 7525 5234
<b>Link:</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2</a>		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark coordinated admissions scheme - Reception 2025-26
Appendix 2	Southwark coordinated admissions scheme - Junior 2025-26
Appendix 3	Southwark coordinated admissions scheme – Year 7 2025-26
Appendix 4	Southwark coordinated admissions scheme – Year 10 2025-26
Appendix 5	Summary of responses to Southwark Council's Admissions consultation 2025-26

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Jasmine Ali, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Refugees	
<b>Lead Officer</b>	David Quirke-Thornton Strategic Director of Children and Adult Services	
<b>Report Authors</b>	Rizwana Natha, Compliance Officer, Education Access and Statutory Services Neil Gordon-Orr, Assistant Director, Education Access and Statutory Services	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	30 January 2024	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Assurance)	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance	Yes	Yes
List other officers here	N/A	N/A
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>		30 January 2024