

Item No. 11.	Classification: Open	Date: 20 March 2012	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Admission arrangements for Community Primary Schools, Nursery Schools and Classes - September 2013	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Catherine McDonald, Children's Services	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR CATHERINE McDONALD, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The local authority is responsible for admission arrangements for all community primary schools in the Borough. We have a duty to ensure these arrangements are fair, clear and equitable to enable families to access the schools of preference for their children. Southwark's arrangements worked successfully last year and the criteria used are identical to that of our neighbouring boroughs, Lewisham and Lambeth. There are no changes proposed to the admission arrangements for 2013.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Cabinet agrees the community primary schools, nursery schools and nursery classes admissions criteria for 2013 attached as Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Council is the admission authority for community primary schools, nursery schools and nursery classes within the London Borough of Southwark.
3. Nursery schools and classes have admission arrangements which are completely separate from the coordinated admission arrangements in place for primary schools. Applications for places at nursery schools and classes are made to each school, assessed against the agreed admissions criteria and allocated directly to parents and carers for their children.
4. Local authorities have a duty to coordinate school admissions to all maintained schools in its area including academies and free schools. This provides families with a single point of application to schools where up to six preferences may be made on a common application form. The local authority is also responsible for confirming a single school offer to each child on offer date which is 18 April this year. The exception to this coordinated admissions process would be applications to any Free Schools currently being established for September 2012 which were unable to be included in the coordinated admissions process which began in September 2011. Families would be able to apply directly to the Free school after offer date and therefore, become eligible to receive a second offer. Should this situation arise, a separate process will be established between the local authority and the new school to coordinate the change of offers for families rejecting their offer through coordination and taking up a place Free school place.

5. A new School Admissions Code of Practice (the Code) which applies to all maintained schools and academies, came into force on 1 February 2012. Admission authorities are required to act in accordance with all mandatory provisions contained in the Code.
6. Admission arrangements must also 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 (the "Regulations").and the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012.
7. Admission authorities are now required to consult on their admission arrangements at least once every seven years if there are no changes - September 2013 is the starting point. There are no changes to the admission arrangements proposed for 2013 arrangements they can now remain in place (without change) until 2020 however, they must be confirmed to the Secretary of State by April 15 each year. Should any changes to these arrangements be proposed within the seven year period, consultation on these proposals will be required.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

8. Oversubscription criteria for schools must be clear, fair and objective. The Code provides guidance on what are and are not acceptable criteria to use in setting admission arrangements and prescribes which are mandatory or recommended as good practice.
9. Children in public care (Looked After Children) must be given top priority in their over-subscription criteria. The definition of looked after children has been extended in the Regulations and the Code to include children who were looked after at the time of their application but ceased to be so because they were adopted, made subject of a special guardianship order, or the subject of a residence order. The Code makes it very clear that this group of children is especially disadvantaged, often with low average levels of attainment' not least as a result of 'frequent changes of school because their care placements change. This year, six applications for admission to Southwark secondary schools were received for Looked After Children (in and out borough children). All have been allocated a place at the school of their first preference. By prioritising places for looked after children the local authority is able to provide important support to children in its care and contribute towards their educational achievement.
10. Southwark's admission arrangements for community primary schools have been updated to reflect the mandatory change detailed in 8, dates have been changed to reflect the 2013 academic year – no changes to the arrangements have been made other than to clarify information where deemed necessary to do so. These arrangements have been available for viewing on the School Admissions pages of Southwark Council's website. These arrangements will be confirmed to the Secretary of State by 15 April 2012 and published in the Starting Primary booklet for September 2013 along with details of the admissions criteria for all Southwark primary schools which is a statutory requirement. Many parents/carers will use this publication as a main source of information when selecting a nursery school, nursery class or primary school.

Coordinated primary admissions

11. The coordinated primary school admissions process is underway across London for children to be admitted to Reception class in September 2012. Families make a single application to their home borough for up to six schools of their preference England-wide seamlessly through the co-ordinated process. On National Offer day they will receive a single offer of a primary school place.
12. A total of 3,466 on-time primary school applications have been received, of this number, 2,122 (61.2%) applications were made online. This is an increase of 239 on time applications from last year where 3,229 were received (58% online). To help cater for this increase in demand, seven primary schools will have additional capacity which will supplement existing places across the borough. There will be 30 places each at Albion, Bellenden, Bessemer and Ivydale and 15 places each at Charles Dickens, Grange and Robert Browning. Parents and carers were able to express up to six school preferences on their application forms and will be offered the highest preference possible through the pan London system. Offer letters will be sent to parents and carers on 18 April 2012.

Community impact statement

13. The co-ordinated process for primary admissions is designed to produce fair and equitable access to school places for all children. Allocation of places is delivered through strict application of admissions and oversubscription criteria of each school across Southwark through a central (pan London) computer. Additional support is provided to families that find it difficult to navigate the admissions system through the School Preference Adviser and Parent Partnership service. This involves a significant amount of outreach support and drop in sessions throughout the year at schools and libraries, some for specific EAL communities with interpreters plus weekly drop in at a Southwark one stop shop.

Resource implications

14. All costs associated with the admissions process are chargeable to the Schools Budget and, are, therefore, met from Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance

15. Cabinet is asked to agree the Admissions Criteria for 2013 for Primary Community and Nursery schools and Nursery Classes, which is unchanged from the previous year save for changes made to the expansion of the definition of looked after children, and the inclusion of relevant 2013 key dates. The Department of Education on publication of its draft Code stated that the changes outlined above did not necessitate consultation. However, cabinet is asked to note that the arrangements have been published on the council's website since January 2012 subject to cabinet approval.
16. Cabinet is advised that all school admissions arrangements are governed by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and associated Regulations and the School Admissions Code of Practice 2012 as stated within the body of the document.

17. Having reviewed the document, the strategic director of communities, law & governance is of the opinion that the proposed criteria meet the Local Authority's statutory obligations in relation to the relevant legislation.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
The School Standards and Framework Act 1998	160 Tooley St London SE1 2QH DfE website	Glenn Garcia 020 7525 2717
The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-Ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012	160 Tooley St London SE1 2QH DfE website	Glenn Garcia 020 7525 2717
The School Admissions Code of Practice 2012	160 Tooley St London SE1 2QH DfE website	Glenn Garcia 020 7525 2717

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark Community Primary Schools, Nursery Schools and Classes Oversubscription Criteria for September 2013

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Catherine McDonald, Children's Services	
Lead Officer	Romi Bowen, Strategic Director of Children's Services	
Report Author	Glen Garcia, Head of Pupil Access	
Version	Final	
Dated	21 February 2012	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	No
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		8 March 2012