

Item No. 8.	Classification: Open	Date: 19 March 2013	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Admission Arrangements for Community Primary Schools - September 2014	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle, Children's Services	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR DORA DIXON-FYLE, 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. To ensure sufficient reception year provision is available for local families we have created additional places across ten primary schools for September 2013, primary school capacity will be reviewed each year. Southwark's arrangements worked successfully last year and the oversubscription criteria used is in keeping with the arrangements of our neighbouring boroughs, Lewisham and Lambeth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation for the Cabinet

1. That Cabinet agrees the Southwark Community Primary Schools Admission Arrangements for September 2014 attached as Appendix 1.

Recommendation for the Leader of the Council

2. That the Leader of the Council delegates authority to the cabinet member for children's services to agree the Southwark Community Primary Schools Admission Arrangements for September 2015 admissions and onwards where there are no changes made from the previous year.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. Southwark Council ("the Council") is the admission authority for community primary schools within the London Borough of Southwark.
4. The 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.
5. 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.

6. Admission authorities are required to consult on their admission arrangements at least once every seven years if there are no changes - September 2013 is the starting point. The Council did not consult on its community primary school arrangements for 2013 admissions, but as there is a proposed change to the 2014 admissions arrangements, a consultation must take place.
7. Consultation on admission arrangements must run for a period of at least eight weeks and be completed by 1 March in the year preceding the year the change is to be effected (i.e. 1 March 2013 for September 2014 admissions). Final admission arrangements must be confirmed by 15 April 2013 for September 2014 admissions. Once the proposed change is determined, the Council's community primary school admission arrangements for 2014 can remain in place (without the requirement to consult if there is no change) until 2021.
8. Southwark Council's consultation on its Community Primary School Admission Arrangements 2014 took place between 17 December 2012 and 11 February 2013, in line with the Code and is attached as Appendix 1. The consultation was available for viewing on the school admissions pages of Southwark Council's website and circulated to all maintained primary and secondary schools within Southwark, neighbouring local authorities and both the Anglican and Roman Catholic diocesan boards. One comment was received.
9. Admission arrangements will be confirmed to the Secretary of State by 15 April 2013 in line with the Regulations. Details will be included in the Starting Primary booklet for September 2014 as well as the admissions criteria for all other (non community) primary schools in Southwark. Many families will use this booklet as a main source of information when selecting a primary school and are able to download the brochures on the school admissions web page or view a hard copy at any Southwark school, nursery, library or one stop shop.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

10. 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 those which are mandatory or recommended as good practice.
11. 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, 31 applications for admission to Southwark secondary schools were received for looked after children (in and out borough children). 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.

Proposed change to Southwark's community primary school admission arrangements for September 2014

12. The local authority has a duty to ensure that admission arrangements are clearly set out and fairness is maintained throughout the admissions process. In order to clarify the way community schools' waiting lists are currently managed, the statement below is proposed for inclusion within paragraph 1.4 of Southwark's community primary admission arrangements for 2014. Please note the word 'automatically' has been included for clarification purposes following a comment made by a parent during consultation:

"Children will only automatically be placed on the waiting lists of those schools which have been stated as higher preferences on their application unless there are exceptional circumstances which will be considered by the LA..."

Coordinated primary admissions

13. The coordinated primary school admissions process is underway across London for children to be admitted to reception class in September 2013. Families make a single application to their home borough for up to six schools of their preference through the co-ordinated process. On National Offer day they will receive a single offer of a primary school place.
14. Parents and carers are 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 2013.
15. A total of 3,397 on-time primary school applications have been received. Of this number 3,338 (98.2%) were received online which is an increase of 37.0% in online applications compared to last year. This increase is due to Southwark's online admissions campaign encouraging families to apply for their child's primary and secondary school place on the internet instead of completing a paper application. This was very successfully achieved by working in collaboration with Southwark schools, libraries and nurseries to arrange a number of 'apply online' information sessions during the autumn term.
16. In order to ensure that there are sufficient reception places in September 2013, ten primary schools in Southwark will have additional capacity which will supplement existing places across the borough. There will be 30 additional places each at Albion, Bessemer Grange, Crawford, Dog Kennel Hill, Ivydale, John Donne and Langbourne. Additionally, there will be 15 additional places each at Camelot, Charles Dickens and Grange. The published admission numbers for all Southwark primary schools for the September 2014 intake are attached at Appendix 2.

Community impact statement

17. 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.

18. Additional support is provided to families that find it difficult to navigate the admissions system through the School Preference Adviser, Admission Officers and the Parent Partnership service. This involves a significant amount of outreach support and drop in sessions throughout the year at schools and libraries, in order to engage English as an Additional Language (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. There is also a weekly drop in to provide support on admissions issues at a Southwark one stop shop.

Resource implications

19. 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

Director of Legal Services

20. Cabinet is advised that it is enabled to agree the recommendation under matters reserved to full Cabinet in Part 3C of the Council's Constitution.
21. Cabinet is advised that 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. Cabinet is advised that the consultation and consequent proposed community primary school admission arrangements for 2014, comply with the requirements set out in the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, the School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Code of Practice.
22. Cabinet is asked to note that the Local Authority is not required to consult on proposed admission arrangements so long as they remain unchanged, for the period of up to 7 years from the last consultation.
23. Under the Code of Practice, Cabinet will still be required to determine future admission arrangements on an annual basis, even if there has been no consultation.
24. In consideration of the recommendation, Cabinet is reminded of the public sector equality duty under s.149 Equality Act 2010. 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.

Strategic Director of Finance Corporate Services (FC13/012)

25. The Strategic Director of Finance Corporate Services confirms that all costs will be met from the Dedicated Schools grant. There are no direct financial implications for the council's revenue budgets.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
The School Standards and Framework Act 1998	www.education.gov.uk	Glenn Garcia 020 7525 2717
The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012	www.education.gov.uk	Glenn Garcia 020 7525 2717
The School Admissions Code of Practice 2012	www.education.gov.uk	Glenn Garcia 020 7525 2717

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark Community Primary Schools Admission Arrangements for September 2014
Appendix 2	Southwark Primary Schools – Published Admission number for September 2014 intake

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Dora Dixon Fyle, Children's Services	
Lead Officer	Romi Bowen, Strategic Director of Children's and Adults Services	
Report Author	Glenn Garcia, Head of Pupil Access	
Version	Final	
Dated	7 March 2013	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	7 March 2013	