



Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 13 February 2024

School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2025/2026 Academic Year

Report of Councillor(s) Guy Renner-Thompson, Cabinet Member for Inspiring Young People

Responsible Officer(s): Audrey Kingham, Executive Director for Children, Young People & Education

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

These proposals are most closely linked to the Council's priority for tackling inequalities (children and young people have the best start in life and grow up well).

2. Purpose of report

This report informs Cabinet of the outcomes of the consultation on School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2025/26 Academic Year as required by the School Admissions Code 2021. Approval (determination) of these admission arrangements is also sought.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Note the outcomes of the six week consultation undertaken in relation to the Council's proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2025/26 that took place between 10th November 2023 and 22nd December 2023.
- 3.2 Approve the proposed co-ordinated admission scheme for all maintained schools and academies, as provided in Appendix 1 of this report;
- 3.3 Approve (determine) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed oversubscription criteria and proposed admission numbers for First and Primary community and voluntary and controlled schools, as provided in Appendix 2 of this report;
- 3.4 Approve (determine) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed over subscription criteria and proposed admission numbers, for Middle, High and

Secondary Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, including sixth forms, as provided in Appendix 3 of this report.

- 3.5 Approve a reduction of the Published Admission Number at Seahouses Primary School from 21 to 15 with effect from September 2025, in view of current and future pupil numbers.
- 3.6 Approve a reduction of the Published Admission Number at Longhoughton Primary School from 30 to 15 with effect from September 2025, in view of current and future pupil numbers.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

Not applicable

5. Background

Key Issues

- 5.1 On an annual basis the local authority needs to determine its school admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. As the Council's decision-making body Cabinet is therefore asked to approve the arrangements for the academic year 2025/26.
- 5.2 There are no changes proposed to the current admission policies, including oversubscription criteria, for first, primary, middle, high and secondary schools for 2025/26. Full copies of these are contained in the appendices to this report.
- 5.3 Cabinet is asked to approve (determine) all the admission arrangements for 2025/26 in accordance with the Admissions Code 2021. Determination of the arrangements must be made by 28 February 2024 prior to publication on the Council's website and to allow for the submission of any objections regarding the arrangements to the School's Adjudicator by 15 May 2024.
- 5.4 Cabinet is asked to approve the draft admission arrangements for sixth forms, including the criteria for entry, the admission number (relating to external students to Year 12 only) and the over subscription criteria (that will be applied if there are more applicants than places available) for 2025/26.
- 5.5 A six-week consultation on the Council's proposed admissions arrangements for 2025/26 took place between 10th November 2023 and 22nd December 2023.
- 5.6 As required by the School Admissions Code, the full proposed admission arrangements were published on the Council's website for the whole of the consultation period, together with details of the person to whom comments could be sent. There were no areas specified on which comments could not be made.
- 5.7 Groups and persons consulted with as part of the consultation process were as follows:
- Parents of children between the ages of 2 and 18, via website and communication from schools and nurseries;
 - All Governing Bodies of voluntary controlled and community schools;
 - All Governing Bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools and academies, who are their own admissions authority;

- Neighbouring Local Authorities (Newcastle City Council; Cumbria County Council; Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council; North Tyneside Council; Durham County Council) and
 - The CE Diocese of Newcastle and Durham; the RC Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
- 5.8 Both schools affected by the PAN reduction proposals appreciate the rationale behind the proposals and they are aware that the pupil population in their catchment is decreasing over time. They have shared the consultation documents with parents/carers and responses can be found in Appendix 4.
- 5.9 There were two responses received in relation to Longhoughton; both did not support the proposed reduction in PAN, both stating that whilst current data may demonstrate the proposed reduction is adequate, being a predominantly military community, the population in Longhoughton is transient and this should be reflected in any proposal. The Council recognises this, and should there be a need for Longhoughton to admit military children we would support their admission. Where there are infant class size restrictions, schools can exceed the 30 limits for 'excepted pupils'; military children fall within this exception. We did not receive any feedback on the proposed reduction in PAN for Seahouses Primary School.

BACKGROUND

- 5.10 The School Admissions Code 2021 applies to all maintained mainstream schools, which includes voluntary controlled and community schools and schools that are their own admission authority. Academies are required to comply with the Code and the law relating to admissions as part of their funding agreements, although the Secretary of State may vary this requirement if there is a demonstrable need. The Local Authority does not have any decision-making powers when it comes to the admission criteria to academies.
- 5.11 Admission authorities must ensure that their determined admission arrangements comply with the mandatory provisions of the Code. In order to promote fair access to educational opportunities, admission arrangements are subject to scrutiny by the Schools Adjudicator who has the power to impose arrangements on those authorities that do not meet the requirements of the Code.
- 5.12 When changes are proposed, admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements that will apply for admission applications the following year. Where no changes to admission arrangements are proposed, admission authorities need only consult once every seven years. The admission arrangements must be formally approved each year.

6. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations

- 6.1 As the statutory decision maker Cabinet are required on annual basis to determine the admission arrangements as set out in the recommendations below.
- 6.2 Approve the proposed co-ordinated admission scheme for all maintained schools and academies, as provided in Appendix 1 of this report;
- 6.3 Approve (determine) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed oversubscription criteria and proposed admission numbers for First and Primary community and voluntary and controlled schools, as provided in Appendix 2 of this report;

- 6.4 Approve (determine) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed over subscription criteria and proposed admission numbers, for Middle, High and Secondary Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, including sixth forms, as provided in Appendix 3 of this report.
- 6.5 Approve a reduction of the Published Admission Number at Seahouses Primary School from 21 to 15 with effect from September 2025, in view of current and future pupil numbers.
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7. Implications

Policy	The Admissions Policy enables all applications for school places to be prioritised in an open and fair way, ensuring that all schools and academies adopt lawful admission arrangements.
Finance and value for money	There are no direct financial implications as a result of these arrangements.
Legal	The proposed admission arrangements comply with legislation.
Procurement	None have been identified
Human resources	None have been identified
Property	None have been identified
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	Yes - required and attached EIA attached at Appendix 5
Risk assessment	The level of risk involved in the proposed amendment to the admissions numbers is perceived to be minimal.
Crime and disorder	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
Customer considerations	Parents can express a preference for schools and give their reasons in the light of the criteria within the admissions policies. As far as possible under the policies, parents will be allocated a place for their child at the school for which they have expressed a preference. Where this is not possible, and

	where parents live in the Northumberland County Council area, a place will be offered at an alternative school.
Carbon reduction	It is not envisaged that this proposal would have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
Health and wellbeing	No implications
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

Not Applicable

9. Links to other key reports already published Not Applicable

10. Author and Contact Details

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