

Report to: Lead Member for Education, Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability

Date of meeting: 22 February 2022

By: Director of Children’s Services

Title: Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools for 2023-24

Purpose: To determine the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools in East Sussex for the 2023-24 academic year (and on the proposed co-ordinated schemes of admission for the same year), as required by the School Admissions Code 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Lead Member is recommended to agree the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools for the 2023-24 academic year as consulted, including:

- 1) the proposed admission arrangements (appendix 1);
 - 2) the proposed published admission numbers (appendix 2), with the exception of one of the proposed changes as set out in the report; and
 - 3) the proposed co-ordinated schemes of admission (appendices 3 - 5).
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1 Background

1.1 East Sussex County Council (“the Council”) is the Admission Authority responsible for the admission arrangements for Community Schools and Voluntary Controlled (VC) Schools within the East Sussex area. The School Admissions Code 2021 (“the Code”) states that admission authorities must determine their admission arrangements annually. Provided the relevant admission authority is not proposing any changes to their admission arrangements, there is a duty to consult only every seven years. However, the Council consults on an annual basis for the avoidance of doubt.

1.2 The Published Admission Number (PAN) for a school is the number of places available in each ‘relevant age group’ which a school has agreed with the admission authority it can provide. The ‘relevant age group’ is the age group in which pupils are or will normally be admitted to the school.

1.3 Consultation on the proposed admission arrangements (as set out in Appendix 1) was carried out between 15 November 2021 and 15 January 2022 so as to satisfy the requirement to consult for at least six weeks and to end the consultation period by 31 January 2022 as stated in the Code. Schools were alerted to the consultation and asked to publicise it to parents by circulating the link to the relevant page on the Council’s website.

1.4 Three responses to the consultation were received via the consultation hub during this period. Two found the proposed admission arrangements acceptable and one did not. The results and comments are attached as Appendix 6. A further response was received by email from the Principal of Uckfield College, which is attached as Appendix 7.

1.5 The consultation was also carried out on behalf of Priory School, Lewes and Hailsham Community College, whose arrangements mirror those of East Sussex County Council.

2 Admission arrangements for the Year 2023-24

2.1 The Lead Member is advised that the consultation included no changes to the admission arrangements for Community and VC schools in East Sussex for admissions in 2023-24.

2.2 The only parts of East Sussex to which the exemption for out of area siblings (see Appendix 1) applies are now Polegate/Willingdon and Newhaven/Denton as children admitted prior to 1 September 2017 will now all have left the relevant school by September 2023.

2.3 The exception for Eastbourne children admitted to Polegate and Willingdon before the area was separated will continue for admissions in 2023-24 but will then cease.

2.4 The exception for Newhaven children admitted to Denton and vice versa will continue until all siblings admitted prior to September 2022 have left the school.

2.5 The exception for out of area siblings in secondary school will no longer apply as all students admitted before 1 September 2017 will have left school by 1 September 2023.

2.6 The relevant area for Admissions consultation will continue to be the county of East Sussex.

3. Changes to PAN

3.1 The governing bodies of two schools requested PAN changes as set out in Appendix 2:

- Southover CE Primary School - reduce from 45 to 30
- Willingdon Community School - increase from 200 to 210

Southover CE Primary School

3.2 None of the respondents to the consultation mentioned this PAN change, which was requested by the headteacher and governing body of the school to reflect the continuing decline in birth rate in the local area.

3.3 Both Southover CE Primary School and Wallands Community Primary School reduced their PANs for September 2022, and the results of this reduction of 45 reception places across the town has not yet taken effect.

3.4 Reducing the PAN for Southover again before the results of the previous reduction take effect may be premature, as the school is likely to admit more than 30 children to Reception in September 2022. The Lead Member is advised that as at January 2022 school census there were 37 children on roll in reception at Southover, and 35 at Wallands (PAN reduced to 30 from September 2022).

3.5 The numbers of children on roll in Lewes schools will continue to be monitored closely to ensure that there are enough school places where they are needed, but the number of surplus places does not create difficulties for schools.

Willingdon Community School

3.4 The headteacher and governing body requested this increase in the PAN to reflect local demand following the completion of a number of new housing estates in its community area.

3.5 The headteachers of other schools in the Eastbourne area have agreed that this change would not negatively impact their own ability to provide for their students.

3.6 Two of the consultation responses mention this proposed increase - one supports it and the other does not.

3.7 The Lead Member is advised that the accommodation at Willingdon Community School is sufficient to accommodate year groups of 210 throughout the school without the need for further building work.

4 Co-ordinated schemes for admissions

4.1 The co-ordinated scheme for secondary admissions in 2023-24 (Appendix 3) is essentially unchanged from 2022-23 as the changes are only to dates to reflect the new academic year.

4.2 The same applies to the co-ordinated scheme for primary and junior admissions in 2023-24 (Appendix 4).

4.3 The co-ordinated scheme for in-year admissions to Community and VC schools in East Sussex in 2022-23 (Appendix 5) is likewise essentially unchanged from 2021-22.

4.4 The only comment on the co-ordinated schemes received in response to the consultation was 'No' from one respondent. The respondent did not explain what they meant by this.

5. Consultation responses from Community Secondary headteachers

5.1 The Principal of Uckfield College responded to the consultation via email (Appendix 7) on behalf of the headteachers of Community Secondary Schools in East Sussex.

5.2 The email response requested a change to the admission priorities to include priority for children of permanent members of staff, to improve staff recruitment and retention and to create a level playing field with Academies, whose admission arrangements almost all have this priority.

5.3 The Lead Member is advised that prioritising children of staff is permissible under the School Admissions Code 2021 in certain circumstances, and that this has to be clearly defined in the admission arrangements.

5.4 The consultation response suggested a meeting to discuss the parameters of the change and the process for consultation.

5.5 As a result, a working group is being established to canvass the headteachers and governing bodies of Community and VC schools in East Sussex to ascertain the level of support among schools for a priority for children of staff for admission to the school where their parents work (as permissible in the School Admissions Code 2021), and if so, what level of priority these children should be afforded.

6. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

6.1 The Lead Member is recommended to:

- Determine the attached admission arrangements for 2023-24 as unchanged from 2022-23.
- Agree to retain the current PAN of 45 at Southover CE Primary School for the 2023-24 reception intake to enable the previous change to take effect.
- Agree the PANs for all the remaining Community and VC schools as set out in Appendix 2, including the increase to Willingdon Community School.
- Agree the adoption of the co-ordinated schemes of admission as set out in Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

6.2 The Lead Member is also asked to note that should the working group outlined in 5.5 above recommend a change, permission to consult on this change will be sought in Autumn 2022 for admission arrangements for 2024-25.

6.3 The determined admission arrangements for Community and VC schools in 2023-24 will be published on the East Sussex County Council website by 15 March 2022 as required under current legislation. Any objection to these arrangements can then be made to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator until 15 May 2022. The final arrangements will be published in the composite prospectus online (and available in hard copy on demand) by 12 September 2022 as required by the School Admissions Code 2021.

ALISON JEFFERY
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Jo Miles
Tel. No. 01273 481911

Email: jo.miles@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Wendy Maples – Southover CE Primary School

Councillor Stephen Shing – Willingdon Community School

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The proposed admission arrangements

Appendix 2: The proposed admission numbers

Appendix 3: The proposed co-ordinated scheme of secondary admissions for East Sussex Schools

Appendix 4: The proposed co-ordinated scheme of primary admissions for East Sussex schools

Appendix 5: The proposed co-ordinated scheme of in year admissions for 2022-23 for community and VC schools in East Sussex

Appendix 6: A summary of the results of the consultation.

Appendix 7: Transcript of the email consultation response from the Principal of Uckfield College on behalf of the headteachers of Community Secondary Schools in East Sussex.