

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

Date of meeting: 27 February 2023

By: Director of Children’s Services

Title: Admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in East Sussex 2024-25

Purpose: To determine the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools in East Sussex for the 2024-25 academic year (and 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:

- 1) Determine the attached admission arrangements for 2024-25 including the changes to give priority children of staff and to alter the community areas for Polegate and Willingdon Primary Schools and Willingdon Community School as set out in Appendix 1
- 2) Agree the PAN increase for Robertsbridge Community College and PAN decrease for Iford and Kingston CE Primary School, and the PANs for other schools as set out in Appendix 2
- 3) Agree the adoption of the co-ordinated schemes of admission as set out in Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

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 1 November 2022 and 15 January 2023 to satisfy the requirement to consult for at least six weeks and to end the consultation period by 31 January 2023 as set out 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 35 responses to the consultation were received via the consultation hub during this period. The results and comments are attached as appendix 6.

2 Admission arrangements for the year 2024-25

2.1 The Lead Member is advised that the consultation included three changes to the admission arrangements for Community and VC schools in East Sussex for admissions in 2024-25. These changes are set out in separate subsections:

Priority for children of staff:

2.2 During the consultation process for admission arrangements in East Sussex for 2023-24, several schools requested that priority be given to children of staff members, as a result of which the headteachers and governing bodies of Community and VC schools were asked to give their views on whether this priority should be introduced and if so, what the parameters should be.

2.3 The response to this was overwhelmingly that there should be priority for children of staff, where it is permitted by the Code. Of the options for what level of priority these children should be given, the highest number opted for children of staff to be placed after in area siblings, but before other children living in the area, which would make them priority 3.

2.4 This suggestion was adopted as part of the proposed admission arrangements for 2024-25, so it was included in the consultation described above. Of the 35 responses to this consultation, 22 were in favour of prioritising children of staff, while 13 were against. A full summary of the consultation responses is set out in Appendix 6 below.

Change to the community area for Willingdon and Polegate Primary Schools and Willingdon Community School (see Appendix 7- Map showing the proposed changes)

2.5 A new estate is being built on the former sites of Brodricklands and Hamlands Farm, which falls outside the Eastbourne borough boundary but is only accessible from within Eastbourne borough. Accordingly, it is proposed that the boundary between the community areas for Willingdon and Polegate Primary Schools, and the Eastbourne borough primary schools, be moved so that children living on this estate fall within the Eastbourne primary schools area.

2.6 It is proposed to move the boundary for Willingdon Community School to the same location.

2.7 It is also proposed that siblings of any children who are already living on the estate and have secured places at Polegate or either of the Willingdon schools prior to the introduction of this arrangement in September 2024 be treated as in-area siblings for the school their sibling attends.

2.8 There were 31 responses to the consultation around the area changes- for the primary change 29 agreed and two were against, while for the secondary change 28 agreed and three were against.

3 Changes to PAN

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

- Robertsbridge Community College- increase from 145 to 160
- Iford and Kingston CE Primary School- decrease from 30 to 20

Robertsbridge Community College

3.2 The headteacher and governing body of Robertsbridge Community College have requested a PAN increase from the current figure of 145 to 160, to make the organisational structure more efficient.

3.3 There is no in area demand for this and the leadership at the College have been advised that there will be no resources available to support this increase. They understand that they will have to accommodate the larger numbers within the existing buildings and that there will be no capital funding to provide additional space as pupil numbers grow. However the proposed PAN reflects the outcome of the net capacity calculation conducted by the DfE as a pilot for its new methodology, and the leadership have indicated that they wish to adopt it.

3.4 There were 30 responses to this question in the consultation: 30 agreed and 3 were against.

Iford and Kingston CE Primary School

3.5 The headteacher and governing body of Iford and Kingston CE Primary School have requested a reduction in PAN from the current figure of 30 to 20 to reflect the falling numbers of primary school aged children in the local area.

3.6 Forecasts show that a PAN of 20 will be sufficient to meet in area demand for the foreseeable future however, the accommodation at the school will remain sufficient to

accommodate a PAN of 30, so school can return to admitting this number of children without additional accommodation should the demand arise.

3.7 There were 29 responses to this question in the consultation: 26 agreed and 4 were against.

4 Co-ordinated schemes for admissions

4.1 The co-ordinated scheme for secondary admissions in 2024-25 (Appendix 3) is essentially unchanged from 2023-24 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 2024-25 (Appendix 4).

4.3 The co-ordinated scheme for in-year admissions to Community and VC schools in East Sussex in 2023-24 (Appendix 5) is likewise essentially unchanged from 2022-23.

4.4 There were 31 responses to this question in the consultation- 26 agreed with the proposed schemes and five were against. The only comment on the co-ordinated schemes received in response to the consultation disagreed with the secondary scheme as the closing date was too early in the year. As the closing date of 31 October each year is a legal requirement, this cannot be amended as a local arrangement.

5 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 The Lead Member is recommended to:

- Determine the attached admission arrangements for 2024-25 including the changes to give priority children of staff and to alter the community areas for Polegate and Willingdon Primary Schools and Willingdon Community School as set out in Appendix 1
- Agree the PAN increase for Robertsbridge Community College and PAN decrease for Iford and Kingston CE Primary School, and the PANs for other schools as set out in Appendix 2
- Agree the adoption of the co-ordinated schemes of admission as set out in Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

5.2 The determined admission arrangements for Community and VC schools in 2024-25 will be published on the East Sussex County Council website by 15 March 2023 as required under current legislation. Any objection to these arrangements can then be made to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator until 15 May 2023. The final arrangements will be published in the composite prospectus online (and available in hard copy on demand) by 12 September 2023 as required by the School Admissions Code 2021.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

