



CABINET – 5TH FEBRUARY 2021

LEICESTERSHIRE'S POLICY ON ADMISSIONS TO MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS: DETERMINATION OF ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation on the reduction of the admission number at Martinshaw Primary School, Groby, for entry from September 2022 and to seek agreement to reduce the admission number from 45 to 30 pupils from reception which will work its way through the school.
2. The Cabinet is also advised there no changes or revisions to Leicestershire's School Admissions Policy, Leicestershire Oversubscription Criteria, the associated coordinated admissions schemes for first-time admissions, secondary transfers and mid-term transfers since these were agreed by the Cabinet in February 2020.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended:
 - (a) That the outcome of the consultation on changes to the admission number at Martinshaw Primary School be noted;
 - (b) That the admission number at Martinshaw Primary School be reduced from 45 to 30 pupils with effect from entry in September 2022;
 - (c) That the Leicestershire School Admissions Policy for entry from September 2022 and associated coordinated admissions schemes for first-time admissions, secondary transfers and mid-term transfers, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The School Standards and Framework Act 1988 places an obligation on the County Council to determine the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in Leicestershire. As the admitting authority the County Council is required to determine the admission arrangements for schools in Leicestershire from September 2022 by 28 February 2021.
5. The admission number reduction is sought owing to low birth rates from within Martinshaw Primary School's catchment; forecasts also show low intakes in the future. By reducing the admission number, it will help the school better plan the efficient provision of education and the efficient use of resources. If the change is not adopted the School will fall into a negative budget position.
6. Leicestershire's Admissions Arrangements must be determined by 28 February 2021 and be made available on the Council's website no later than 15 March 2021. This will then provide all parents and carers over a year's notice to allow them to make informed preferences when applying for a school place from 2022.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

7. The County Council's policy in this area is relevant to admissions to community schools, voluntary controlled schools, and those Academies (including Free Schools) that have adopted the Local Authority's Admissions Policy. The Policy must contain clear criteria for parents' requests for school places and all applications must be treated equally, regardless of whether or not the parents live in Leicestershire. To this end, the County Council must have regard to the Department for Education (DfE) School Admissions Code (December 2014) and School Admission Appeals Codes (February 2012). The County Council also has a statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure the availability of sufficient school places.
8. Leicestershire's Schools Admissions Policy (for entry from September 2021), was refreshed to ensure it flowed better; the 'belief' criterion was dropped from its oversubscription criteria; and several school catchment areas were amended in response to housing developments. This was approved by the Cabinet on 7 February 2020.

Resource Implications

9. There are no resource implications arising from this report. The cost of administering the admission arrangements is borne from within existing budgets.
10. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

11. This report has been circulated to Mr. O. O'Shea JP CC, local member for Groby and Ratby.
12. All Elected Members will be advised once the refreshed School Admissions Policy is published on the County Council's website.

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PART B

Background

13. Leicestershire's current Admissions Policy was agreed by the Cabinet in February 2020. It was at the time indicated by the DfE that a new National Schools Admissions Code was imminent as the current Code has not been revised since 2014. The DfE has (October 2020) now completed its consultation on the National Code, and once the new Code is released, now expected to be in summer 2021, Leicestershire's Admissions policy will be revised, and the mandatory changes will be adopted.

Proposed Admission Number Change at Martinshaw Primary School

14. The only change proposed to the current Admissions Arrangements relates to the reduction of the admission number at Martinshaw Primary School. The Local Authority is seeking to reduce the admission number from 45 to 30 pupils in response significant forecasted drop in births from within the school's catchment. Should the removal be agreed it is likely to greatly help the school manage its existing resources and will support the school from falling into a negative budget position.
15. The Council undertook a consultation exercise on the proposed change to amend the admission number, the results of which are set out in paragraphs 18 to 21 below.
16. The proposed reduction of the admission number is based on the local housing position and population projections. Forecasts show a general aging population in the Groby and Ratby areas, with births having dropped. Records show that all siblings of pupils currently at the School have secured places and forecasts indicated that there will be sufficient places for younger siblings to secure places.
17. If at any point in the future the admission number at Martinshaw Primary School needs to be increased the law allows the Council to make the change immediately if required.

Proposal to Reduce Admission Number at Martinshaw Primary School

18. Consultees were asked for views on the proposal to reduce the admission number for entry to the Primary School from 45 to 30 from September 2022. A total of 16 responses were received; 12 (75%) indicated support for the reduction, 3 responses (13%) objected, and 1 (6%) neither agreed nor disagreed.
19. Comments provided with the responses included
- *I believe that County and the school are probably doing what is right for them;*

- *Reducing the PAN [planned admissions number] to 30 would give the school more financial stability without the need to recruit and fund another teacher for slightly higher numbers above 30;*
- *The numbers have been considerably unstable over recent years and to enable the school to manage its finances it needs to stay within the 1 class entry. This will enable the school to stabilise its staff levels;*
- *It will improve the use of resources in the school and reduce uncertainty for staff in the future;*
- *The village is expanding all the time with new build developments. If all the spaces get filled between the 3 primary schools in Groby, we'll have to drive further away out of catchment to take our children to school. Please do not reduce.*

Officer Comment

20. Responses to the consultation were low, which could be an indication of the reduction not being a contentious proposal. Generally, most responses are 'strongly' in favour of the reduction and are in support. Of the three respondents that disagreed, two were concerned about future housing expansion in the village. There is still some capacity in other local schools to meet demand. It should be noted that any future large-scale housing development in the village (none is planned at present) would also be expected to secure funds for further school expansion. Officers will continue to monitor both births and housing gains and would raise the number at Martinshaw if required.
21. By reducing the admission number, the impact to current and future pupils will be minimal. It will nevertheless help to financially stabilise the school.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

22. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) screening questionnaire was completed to ensure the variation applied equally to all children, and that no local children would be disadvantaged by reducing the admission number at Martinshaw Primary Schools. A full EHRIA was not required.

Appendices

Appendix A - School Admissions Policy for entry from September 2022 and Leicestershire's Co-ordinated Admission Schemes for:

- (a) First Time Admissions Infant to Junior transfers
- (b) Secondary School transfers
- (c) Mid-Term transfers during the 2022-23 Academic Year

Appendix B - Consultation and Responses

Background Papers

National School Admissions Code December 2014 - <http://ow.ly/Waxbl>

Report to the Cabinet on 7 February 2020 - Leicestershire's Policy on Admission to Mainstream Schools: Determination of Admission Arrangements

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5992&Ver=4>