

Cabinet

9 April 2024

School Admission Arrangements 2025/26: Proposed Co-Ordinated Admission Schemes (Variation)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Tracy Coombs, Portfolio Holder for Education
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Summary

Each year the Local Authority is required to publish the co-ordinated admission schemes and arrangements for primary and secondary schools. If changes are made from the previous year, the Local Authority must undertake a consultation. The coordinated admissions schemes set out the detailed entry arrangements (oversubscription criteria) for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools as well as the detailed scheme for the administration of applications for all Medway primary and secondary schools.

Cabinet approved the 2025 admission schemes on 19 December 2023. Further to changes to the Medway Test model, the School Admissions Team is seeking a variation to the Medway Test results publication date.

1. Recommendation

1.1. The Cabinet is asked to agree a variation to the Medway Test results publication date from 8 October to 16 October 2024.

2. Suggested reasons for decision

2.1. To ensure Medway Council can fulfil its obligations on the published Medway Test results date. To avoid unexpected and disappointing delays for families.

3. Budget and policy framework

3.1. Medway's school admission arrangements are consistent with the requirements of the School Admissions Code, which is issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (SSFA 1998). There are no specific budgetary implications.

3.2. As the admission authority for Medway's Community and Voluntary Controlled schools the Local Authority is responsible for ensuring that its admission arrangements are lawful.

3.3. The aim of our admission arrangements is to ensure that the transition for children and their families is as smooth as possible, which supports the Council's priority of supporting Medway's people to realise their potential.

4. Background

4.1. School Services completed a six week consultation during October and November on changes to the secondary admissions scheme for September 2025 entry. This included changes to the Medway Test papers and the removal of the post-test academic review process.

4.2. The changes were approved by Cabinet 19 December 2023.

4.3. In the approved scheme, the Medway Test results day for the test due be sat in September 2024 is 8 October 2024.

4.4. Following further arrangements in early 2024 with the Medway Test provider, it has come to light that the provider cannot turn the results around within this timescale. This is because the changes to the Medway Test papers for September 2024 mean the test provider has an extra paper to mark per candidate.

4.5. If School Services continues with a published results day of 8 October, it is highly unlikely that Medway Council will be able to fulfil the promise of sending results on that date.

5. Options

5.1. Keep the date as it currently is (8 October) but risk not being able to provide results to families on that date.

5.2. Change the results publication date to 16 October.

5.3. Appendix 1 to the report provides details of the Local Authority's proposed co-ordinated admissions schemes for secondary admissions 2025.

6. Advice and analysis

6.1. It is not envisaged that the proposed variation would have any adverse effect on any of the protected characteristic groups.

7. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Own admission authority schools can change their admission arrangements (including their published admission number) by undertaking their own consultations	Own admission authority schools are permitted to change their arrangements through the annual consultation process	Medway Council can respond and/or object to the consultations of own admission authorities	Diii

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

8. Consultation

8.1. When formulating the original scheme we consulted all Medway schools, other local authorities, diocesan authorities and families in the area. The consultation was published on the Medway Council website for the duration of the consultation period. The consultation invited responses from the public. The results of the consultation were outlined in the Cabinet report for 19 December.

9. Climate change implications

9.1. Officers do not anticipate the admissions process outlined in the proposed scheme will have a negative impact on climate change.

9.2. In recent years, over 99% of admissions applications are submitted online and all applications are processed electronically. Other than the < 1% of applications received in hard copy, the admissions process is paperless.

10. Financial implications

10.1. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

11. Legal implications

- 11.1. The local authority is carrying out its duties set out in the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 and School Admissions Code 2021.
- 11.2. Medway Council and Schools must comply with obligations in regard to equalities under the Equality Act 2010, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by this Act. It must advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people. This involves removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people, including taking steps to meet the needs of people who have a “protected characteristic” in the terms of this Act (protected characteristics for these purposes are: disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). It must encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life and other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
- 11.3. An admission authority must not discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.
- 11.4. The Equality Act 2010 contains limited exceptions to the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and sex. Schools designated by the Secretary of State as having a religious character are exempt from some aspects of the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief and this means they can make a decision about whether or not to admit a child as a pupil on the basis of religion or belief. Single-sex schools are lawfully permitted to discriminate on the grounds of sex in their admission arrangements.
- 11.5. Admission authorities are also subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty and therefore must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations in relation to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 11.6. The Human Rights Act 1998 confers a right of access to education. This right does not extend to securing a place at a particular school. Admission authorities, however, do need to consider parents’ reasons for expressing a preference when they make admission decisions, though this may not necessarily result in the allocation of a place.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Secondary Admissions Scheme 2025-26
Appendix 2 – Diversity Impact Assessment

Background papers

None