

## **Briefing on Secondary School Admissions**

### **Introduction**

Wednesday 1 March 2023 is National Offer Day for secondary school places. Parents and carers of current year 6 primary pupils who applied online (over 99% Shropshire applicants) will receive an email notification on Wednesday and/or are able to log on to the Shropshire Council website to view the outcome of their application. If parents can only be contacted by letter, these are posted by second class post on Wednesday, arriving in subsequent days. Due to a high birth rate for this year's intake, there is exceptional increased demand for secondary school places this year in Shropshire and across the West Midlands. Parents unsuccessful in obtaining their first preference of school might contact their local Member or MP to try and change the decision. This is not possible under the School Admissions Code, which provides the legal framework within which admissions have to be managed. Shropshire's admissions processes must meet these legal requirements. This document sets out background information which may be of use in discussions with parents.

**89.7% Shropshire applicants who applied on time could be offered their first preference school. 96.5% could be offered a place at one of their preferred school(s).**

### **Executive Summary**

#### **General Points**

**Closing date** – The closing date for applications was 31 October 2022. Late applications were considered after all applications received on time had been allocated. This is in accordance with the published admissions arrangements.

**Admissions Number** – Every school has a set number of places in each year group based on their buildings and calculated according to a Department for Education (DfE) formula or the Academy Funding Agreement. This number is only exceeded in exceptional circumstances. To help with the allocation of school places this year, Shropshire secondary headteachers have worked with Shropshire Council officers to find a solution to this exceptionally large transfer group. This has resulted in many of the schools exceeding their Published Admissions Number (PAN) prior to National Offer Day on 1 March and has enabled as many on-time applicants as possible to be offered a school place within as reasonable a distance from their home address.

**Oversubscription Criteria** – If there are more applications than places, allocations are made to those with highest priority under the oversubscription criteria for each school (pp 41-45 of the parents' guide). All Shropshire secondary schools have their own admission policy. The Parents' Guide to Education in Shropshire is available on Shropshire Council's website [www.shropshire.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/schooladmissions) or by clicking on this link [Parents' Guide](#). Parents were required to confirm they had read the Parents' Guide before making their application.

**Preference** – The statutory report to the DfE shows that in 2023, 89.7% of Shropshire parents have been allocated a place at their first preference school. Shropshire Council has always met a high percentage of first preference requests and is usually ranked amongst the top three West Midlands authorities. Parents are invited to submit three preferences, and 96.5% of Shropshire parents have been offered a place at one of their preferred schools.

**Review Stage** – Parents who were unsuccessful in application for their first preference Shropshire school are signposted to the appeal process via their allocation notification. By completing an appeal application online or an appeal paper form and returning it to the Admissions Team by 10 March 2023, applicants can be added to the school's waiting list, which is ranked in order of oversubscription criteria. Any places released (e.g. where allocated pupils opt for private education) are then re-allocated to those on the waiting list on 17 March 2023 onwards. Please note for the Shrewsbury schools, for this year only, any released places will not be re-allocated until the number on roll has reverted to one below PAN.

## **Area by Area Summary**

### **North**

**Grove School** and **The Marches** have vacancies and all applicants to the schools could be offered places.

**Lakelands Academy**, admitted to their PAN, 14 on time, out of area applicants and 4 late applicants have not been offered a place.

**Thomas Adams** admitted to their PAN, 15 on time, out of area applicants and 10 late applicants have not been offered a place.

**Corbet School** reached and exceed their PAN to accommodate all on time applicants to include feeder schools. 14 on time, out of area and 4 late applications have not been offered a place.

**St. Martin's** reached and exceeded their PAN to accommodate all on time applicants to include feeder and staff child criteria. 18 on time, out of area applicants and 5 late applicants have not been offered a place.

**Sir Johns Talbot's School** reached and exceeded their PAN to accommodate all on time applicants and 7 late in catchment with a sibling applicants'. 9 late applicants have not been offered a place.

### **South**

**Ludlow School** admitted to their PAN and have accommodated both on time and late applications.

**The Community College, Bishops Castle** reached their PAN and exceed to accommodate all on time and late applications.

**Lacon Childe** admitted to their PAN, 8 on time, out of area applicants and 4 late applicants have not been offered a place.

**Oldbury Wells** reached and exceeded their PAN to accommodate all on time applicants. 8 late applicants have not been offered a place.

**Idsall** admitted to their PAN, 13 on time, out of area applicants and 6 late applicants have not been offered a place.

**William Brookes** admitted to their PAN, 18 on time, out of area applicants and 3 late applicants have not been offered a place.

**Church Stretton** reached and exceeded their PAN to accommodate all on time and late applicants.

**Bridgnorth Endowed Schools** reached and exceeded their PAN. 41 on time, out of area and 8 late applicants have not been offered a place.

**Mary Webb School** reached and exceeded their PAN to accommodate all on time applicants to include feeder school applicants. 7 on time, out of area applicants and 2 late applicants have not been offered a place

**Shrewsbury** (The Shrewsbury secondary schools share a whole-town catchment area.) The oversubscription criteria for Shrewsbury are slightly different in that applicants are given priority for their nearest school rather than an individual designated catchment area for each school. All four Shrewsbury schools are full:

**Shrewsbury Academy (133 first preferences for 253 places)** has reached and exceeded their PAN to accommodate applicants who reside in Shrewsbury.

**Belvidere – (201 first preferences for 168 places).** Reached and exceeded their PAN by 12. 63 on time applications, of which 17 on-time nearest school applicants and 6 late applicants were not offered a place.

**Meole Brace – (251 first preferences for 270 places).** Admitted to their PAN, all on-time nearest school applicants' resident on the west side of Shrewsbury were successful in gaining a place. 89 on time applicants and 5 late applicants were not offered a place.

**Priory School – (280 first preference applicants for 168 places).** Reached and exceeded their PAN by 12. 40 on-time nearest school applicants have been refused. These applicants have all been offered Meole Brace, if listed as a preference school. 158 on time and 5 late applicants have not been offered a place.

Late applicants will be considered at the review stage on 17 March if not included above.

### **What Happens Next?**

Unsuccessful applicants will have been informed of their right to appeal to an independent panel and invited to apply for an appeal electronically or to fill in the form. Unsuccessful applicants who make an appeal application before 1 March will be held on a waiting list and considered at the review stage. Any places released will be allocated from the top of the waiting list. Please note that for the Shrewsbury schools, for this year only, any released places will not be re-allocated until the number on roll has reverted to one below PAN. The review stage will check that admissions criteria were correctly applied and that all relevant circumstances were considered. Late applicants not yet allocated may also be considered at the review stage.

Applicants who are unsuccessful at the review stage will be held on the waiting list until appeals take place in the summer term. In previous years, a small number of places have arisen before the appeals. These will be allocated to applicants **on the waiting list** according to the oversubscription criteria. Applicants who are not successful at appeal can opt to remain on the waiting list over the summer and through the autumn term. Those on the waiting list would only be offered a place if a vacancy arises when a place is released. Parents may opt to accept the place offered in the interim.

The Admissions Team can be contacted by email at [school-admissions@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:school-admissions@shropshire.gov.uk) or telephone 0345 678 9008 for further information.

Rachel Reynolds (Admissions Manager)

27 February 2023

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### Admissions procedures

Our procedures follow a regular annual pattern and the normal sequence is:

- Parents' Guide updated and issued in first week in September.
- Prospective applicants issued with letters advising how to apply (via primary school).
- Applications received by national closing date (31 October for secondary applications).
- Application information transferred to database.
- Own admission authority schools rank order their applicants.
- Exchanges of preferences made with neighbouring local authorities.
- Admission allocations made according to published criteria and decisions made on any medical or stated preferences.
- Allocation emails sent out to parents (on 1 March for secondary applications).
- Requests for reviews / appeals received where first preferences have not been met (by 10 March).
- Reviews carried out and further allocations made on release of places (on 17 March).
- Appeals statements prepared.
- Appeals heard in May/June.

### Oversubscription criteria

In some popular schools there can be oversubscription and, where this occurs, the Parents' Guide sets out the priority for places that applies. A key element of this process is the **published admission number** (see below). Once each applicant has been placed into the correct category, places available are allocated accordingly. (All Shropshire secondary schools are an admission authority, e.g. academies, and will have determined their own policy.) Shropshire Council's policy is listed below. The highest priority must be given to children with an Education Health & Care Plan, followed by children in public care, or formerly in public care and then adopted. After that schools tend to give consideration to:

- Children with medical conditions not covered with a statement where there is medical evidence to demonstrate that a particular school is the **only** one which would be appropriate.
- In-catchment children with sibling connections (siblings aged 5 – 16 years).
- In-catchment children without sibling connections.
- Out-of-catchment children with sibling connections (siblings aged 5 – 16 years).
- Out-of-catchment children without sibling connections.

Other criteria that schools prioritise might be children of staff working at the school. Secondary schools in north and south Shropshire give some priority to attendance at "linked" primary schools but this only affects children living out of catchment. In Shrewsbury a "nearest school test" is used instead of having individual catchment areas for each secondary school and this is explained in the booklet.

In each of the above categories distance is measured from the home address to the nearest school gate to determine the rank order. Most categorisations are done automatically by computer using the easting and northing of a property but there are instances where distance measurements are calculated manually. Some postcodes straddle the council boundaries, and it is then essential to ensure the correct catchment is applied.

As a Local Member or MP you may receive complaints that a child has been placed into the wrong category or that the distance we have calculated is wrong. If a mistake has been made, it will be rectified; but in practice such errors are extremely rare given the care taken to check the application details.

## Appeals

**Please note that appeals may be subject to change due to new regulations in response to the Coronavirus. Hearings may be required to be held virtually rather than face to face.**

Where it is not possible to meet the parental preference, we will offer an independent appeal, held in private, in which the parent is able to give the reasons why they wish their child to attend a particular school. The appeal panel of 3 will consist of at least one person with some educational background and at least one lay person. None of the people on the panel can have any association with the appellant or the school for which the appeal is being heard. They first have to consider evidence from an admission authority representative that the admission of a further child will be “prejudicial to efficient education” of those who have been allocated a space and others already in the school.

If the panel agrees that there will be prejudice, they then move to the second stage and consider the parent’s reasons for wishing to be admitted. If the panel consider that, on balance, the parent’s arguments outweigh that of the prejudice already agreed then they have the power to give a place to the child. That decision is binding on the school, parent and admission authority and parents cannot make a further appeal within 12 months unless their circumstances change (e.g. change of address).

Shropshire Council appeals are usually administered by **Legal and Democratic Services** who supply a clerk to the panel and legal advice where it is required. They can be contacted on 01743 257712 or 257719. The admissions authority can also seek legal advice if they wish but this has to be independent of any advice given to the panel. Most academies secure the services of Shropshire Council’s Legal and Democratic Services to administer their admission appeals.

The Admission Appeals Code normally allows local politicians to attend appeals in a supportive role with their constituents, as long as there is no conflict of interest. We recognise this may be difficult for members who are responsible for determining Shropshire’s admissions policy and who might be seen to be opposing such a policy by giving support at an appeal. It can also lead to accusations of favouring one constituent over another and it may be more appropriate for you, in order to have a consistent approach, not to offer such support.

You may also receive representations from constituents that the appeal panel decision was “wrong” but members should be aware that because of the panel’s independence and the fact that parents will have been given ample opportunity to put their case, the only redress for a parent would be the local government ombudsman (or Education & Skills Funding Agency) – ESFA – for academies) who would determine whether, given the evidence presented, the decision taken by the panel was perverse. Even if the ombudsman considers this to be the case, he is unlikely to overturn the decision made but would suggest a new appeal in front of a different panel. That is an extremely rare occurrence nationwide and it still does not give any guarantee that the applicant will be successful if a new appeal is agreed.