

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

27 FEBRUARY 2024

SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR 2025/26, CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEMES 2025/26 & PUBLISHED ADMISSION NUMBER CHANGES FOR 2025/26

Relevant Cabinet Member

Councillor T Onslow

Relevant Officer

Director of Children's Services

Recommendation

- 1. The Director of Children's Services recommends that the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education:**
 - (a) approves the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2025/26 as set out in Appendices 1a and 1b;**
 - (b) approves the scheme for Co-ordinated Admissions for Primary/Middle and Secondary Schools for 2025/26 as set out in Appendices 2a and 2b, the in-year Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for 2024/25 in Appendix 2c; and**
 - (c) approves the Published Admission Numbers for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, including the proposed reduction, as set out in Appendix 3.**

Background

2. In March 2014, Cabinet agreed that where no significant changes are proposed to the school admission arrangements, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education has delegated authority for approving the Schools Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools and schemes for Co-ordinated Admissions in consultation with the Director of Children's Services. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education has therefore approved the arrangements on an annual basis.

3. Significant changes were made to those arrangements, including extending the delegated authority of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education to include approving the admission arrangements as a whole (meaning policy, Published Admission Numbers (PAN) and co-ordinated schemes) as well as the introduction of an In-Year co-ordinated scheme and a new Fair Access Protocol. Cabinet reviewed and approved those changes in January 2020.

4. There are no significant changes proposed to the 2025/26 Admissions Policy, with one PAN reduction. The arrangements were subject to full public consultation and require Cabinet Member approval for the academic year 2025/26.

Review of the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2025/26

5. Worcestershire Children First (WCF) School Admissions Team undertook full public consultation in line with the statutory requirements of section 1.45 of the Code on School Admissions. This included direct mailing to all schools in Worcestershire, neighbouring local authorities, Diocesan Boards, Trade Unions, and libraries. The information was also published on the School Admissions website. An advertisement was published in all the local papers alerting parents to the information on the website and directing them to locations where hard copies could be viewed, if required. The consultation was also shared on social media. Consultation took place between 9 October 2023 and 24 November 2023. The consultation document is attached as Appendix 4a.

6. As there are no significant changes recommended, responsibility for approving the arrangements remains with the Cabinet Member in consultation with the Director of Children's Services. It is therefore recommended that the Cabinet Member approves the admissions arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the academic year 2025/26, attached as Appendices 1a and 1b.

Co-ordinated Admission Schemes for 2025/26 and In-year Scheme for 2024/25

7. The School Admissions Code Section 2.20 states:

"Each year Local Authorities must formulate a scheme to co-ordinate admission arrangements for all publicly funded schools within their area. Where the scheme is not substantially different from that adopted in previous years there is no requirement to consult."

8. There are no changes to the closing and offer dates (see table below), with only minor amendments to the exchange of information dates with other admission authorities.

	Closing Date	Offer Date
Primary/Middle	15 January 2025	16 April 2025
Secondary	31 October 2024	1 March 2025

9. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet Member approves the Co-ordinated Admissions Schemes for primary/middle and secondary schools for the academic year 2025/26 as set out in Appendices 2a & 2b.

10. The In-Year co-ordinated scheme for in-year admissions for 2024/2025 remains unchanged from the scheme approved for 2023/2024.

11. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet Member approves the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for In-Year admissions as set out in Appendix 2c.

Published Admission Number (PAN) Changes

12. Worcestershire Children First keep under review the PAN for all community and voluntary controlled schools and consults with Governing Bodies annually to ensure there are sufficient places in an area for the number of pupils seeking to attend their local school.

13. Admission Authorities need no longer consult on an increase to the PAN if the school has sufficient accommodation. This change was introduced by the revised Code on School Admissions in December 2014.

14. The Local Authority, supported by the Governing Body of **Grove Primary School**, have consulted to reduce the PAN of the school from 30 to 15 for 2025 to allow the school to teach in line with infant class size legislation and to assist with the school's future financial viability.

15. Full consultation took place between 15 December 2023 and 29 January 2024, on the PAN reduction. The consultation included direct mailing to all schools in Worcestershire, neighbouring local authorities, Diocesan Boards, Trade Unions, and libraries. The information was also published on the School Admissions website. An advertisement was published in all the local papers alerting parents to the information on the website and directing them to locations where hard copies could be viewed, if required. The consultation was also shared on social media. There have been no responses received to the proposed reduction. The consultation document is attached as Appendix 4b.

16. The Council has reviewed the current and expected future demand for places at the school and agrees that the reduction in the PAN from 30 to 15 will not cause a concern for basic need or sufficiency of primary provision in Malvern.

17. The reduced PAN is in line with past and future demand for places, following which the school will continue to be able to support all children living within the catchment to attend their local school should they choose to do so.

18. Grove Primary School is subject to a Directed Academy Order (DfE direction) following an Inadequate Ofsted judgement in March 2022. The Governing Body, LA and DfE are working with a prospective Multi-Academy Trust to transfer this school as is required by the Secretary of State for Education. The reduction in PAN is a condition of transfer to the prospective Trust.

19. The school has received two Ofsted monitoring visits since 2022, both have judged the school to be 'taking effective action'.

20. It is therefore recommended that the Cabinet Member approves the PANs for Community and Voluntary Controlled primary/middle and secondary schools for the academic year 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 3, which includes the PAN reduction for Grove Primary School.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

21. The local authority is required to comply with The School Admissions Code ("the Code") which applies to admissions to all maintained schools in England. The Code is

statutory having been “*issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1988 and imposes mandatory requirements including guidelines setting out aims, objectives and other matters in relation to the discharge of functions relating to admissions by bodies listed below:*”

a) Admission authorities of maintained schools as defined in Section 88(1) (a) and (b) of the SSFA 1998

b) Governing bodies and local authorities (when not admission authorities)

c) Schools Adjudicators

d) Admission Appeal Panels.

These bodies have a statutory duty to act in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Code.”

22. It is the responsibility of the admissions authority to ensure that admission arrangements e.g. the overall procedure, practices, criteria and supplementary information to be used in deciding the allocation of school places are compliant with the Code so as to ensure that all school places for maintained schools are allocated and offered in an open, clear, objective and fair way. Parents should be able to look at the admission arrangement and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated.

23. The Admission authority must determine admission arrangements annually and where changes are proposed must publicly consult on those arrangements between 1 October and 31 January. Where the admission authority proposes a decrease to the Published Admission Number (PAN) in must consult in accordance with paragraph 145 of the Code. The proposed decrease the PAN at The Grove School is detailed in paragraphs 14 – 20 of this report. Community and voluntary controlled schools have the right to object to the Schools Adjudicator if the PAN set for them is lower than they would wish. In the case of the Grove School, the decrease in the PAN is a condition of the transfer to the prospective Multi-academy Trust.

24. There may be financial and HR implications for the Local Authority. HR are working with the Grove Primary School to determine current staffing and pupil numbers to assess staffing requirements to match the PAN and curriculum. The measures being taken to reduce the PAN at Grove Primary School relate to measures being taken that have an impact on the financial sustainability of the school and therefore this represents effective sustainability planning.

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments

25. An Equality Impact Assessment relevance screening has been completed on the Admission Policy for 2025/26. It shows that the recommendations do not have an adverse impact on children and young people or any of the protected groups and promotes equality.

26. There are no Public Health and Privacy Impact Assessment implications that will occur as a result of endorsing the recommendations in this report.

Risk Implications

27. The delivery and consequences of the recommendations have been considered and there are no risk implications that are likely to occur as a result of endorsing the recommendations in this report.

Supporting Information

- Appendices 1a & 1b - Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools
- Appendices 2a & 2b & 2c - Co-ordinated Schemes for Worcestershire Schools
- Appendix 3 – Published Admission Numbers
- Appendix 4a & 4b – Consultation letters

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

School Admissions Code