

Report to Cabinet

17 January 2024

Subject:	Determination of Admission Arrangements for Sandwell’s Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2025/26
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Education Councillor Simon Hackett
Director:	Director of Children’s Services and Education, Michael Jarrett
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Donna Williams, Team Lead, School Admissions donna_williams@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations


- 1.1 In accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021 (“the Code”) and School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 (“Regulations”) the Director of Children’s Services and Education be authorised to publish the Local Authority’s Admission Arrangements for 2025/26 academic year for places in all community and voluntary controlled schools as set out in Appendix 1.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Local Authority (LA) must abide by the requirements of the Code and associated Regulations and determine admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools each year. This report relates to the proposed arrangements to apply for the 2025/26 academic year and the LA has fulfilled its obligation to consult as some proposed changes have been made to the Policy since the last consultation was undertaken in October / November 2017. The proposed arrangements are in line with the requirements of the Admissions Code.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people
	The recommendation in this report supports the desire of the council to focus resources on the specific needs and aspirations of the community. This contributes to the Council's Vision 2030 Ambition 1 – Raising aspirations and resilience, Ambition 3 – Young people to have skills for the future, Ambition 4 – Raising the quality of schools.

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Purpose of the Report

- 4.2 The Code published in September 2021 requires the LA (as the admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools), to formally agree admission arrangements for those schools every year, even if the arrangements have not changed from previous years. Admission authorities must determine admission arrangements for entry in September 2025 by 28 February 2024.

The Code also requires the LA to consult governing bodies of community and voluntary controlled schools where it proposes either to increase or keep the same Published Admission Number (PAN). The proposed admission arrangements and PANs are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.



Background and main considerations

- 4.3 The LA last consulted all stakeholders on its admission arrangements in October / November 2017, and Cabinet has continued to agree to publish these arrangements for subsequent years as there have been no material changes. At its meeting on 18 January 2023 Cabinet agreed to publish the arrangements for the 2024/25 academic year (Minute No. 5/23).
- 4.4 The arrangements for 2025/26 are attached in Appendix 1, and have been consulted upon to take account of the proposed changes as detailed in paragraph 4.8.
- 4.5 The consultation included the proposed reduction of the PAN for Ferndale Primary School from 90 to 60 places, and the amended PAN's for both Cape Primary and Uplands Manor Primary Schools following approval by the Schools Adjudicator in July 2023.

4.6 The current position

The LA's oversubscription criteria for the academic year 2025/26 for community and voluntary controlled schools has been consulted on in accordance with the Department for Education's 2021 statutory 'School Admissions Code' guidance and it is recommended that the new policy be adopted / approved.

4.7 Consultation (Customers and other Stakeholders)

- 4.8 The consultation process took place between 30 October 2023 and 11 December 2023 to take account of the following changes:
- Change of PAN at Ferndale Primary School from 90 to 60 places from September 2025.
 - Reintroduction of a waiting list for schools.
 - Changing or adding new preferences for schools will not be possible once an application is submitted online but can still be made by contacting the LA's School Admissions Team.
 - Update to a 'Tie Breaker' from the toss of a coin to a random number generator.



- Update in terminology from ‘midyear admissions’ to ‘in-year admissions’ in line with the School Admissions Code 2021.

4.9 All community and voluntary controlled schools were notified of the consultation, in accordance with the Admissions Code, as the revised policy will include the reduction of PAN for Ferndale Primary School.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 There is no alternative option open to the LA in relation to its responsibilities for agreeing and publishing oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled schools. The LA must abide with the requirements of the Admissions Code. Further, determining the admission arrangements enables the admission authority, the LA, to meet its duty to provide sufficient school places and to allocate school places within a reasonable distance.

6 Implications

Resources:	No strategic resource implications have been identified.
Legal and Governance:	<p>The School Admissions Code (issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) was published in September 2021 and associated regulations require all admission authorities to determine (formally agree) admission arrangements every year, even if they have not changed from previous years and a consultation has not been required.</p> <p>The Local Authority must also ensure it has consulted on its determined admission arrangements at least every 7 years, or when material changes are proposed to its policy</p> <p>Following determination of arrangements, any objections to those arrangements must be made to the Schools Adjudicator. Objections to admission arrangements must be referred to the Adjudicator by 15 May in the determination year.</p>



<p>Risk:</p>	<p>The Corporate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) has been complied with. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to determine admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools in accordance with the Admissions Code and associated regulations. Based on the information provided, it is the officers' opinion that there are no current "red" risks that need to be reported with regards to this proposal.</p> <p>If this report's recommendation to publish the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools is not approved the LA will be in breach of its statutory duty as determined by the Admissions Code.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment initial screening has been undertaken and a full Equality Impact Assessment was completed.</p> <p>The Policy ensures we have a fair and equitable procedure for children needing an admission to Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools</p> <p>It is proposed to reduce the Published Admission Number at Ferndale Primary School from 90 to 60 places. The proposal is in response to a falling roll in the local area and the school will over the course of the next few years make adjustments to its staffing and budget to reflect the reduced pupils on roll.</p> <p>Once complete the reduction in PAN will result in the school capacity reducing from 630 to 420 primary school places</p> <p>The further proposal to retain waiting lists for each school will provide a positive benefit to all children and families as their preference for a particular school will remain on record should any places become available</p>



Health and Wellbeing:	This proposal supports the prioritisation of applications from the local community and gives clarity to parents and carers about how their applications will be considered, including how they will be measured under the distance criterion.
Social Value	In supporting the prioritisation of applications from the local community the proposal will ensure that children will be educated and develop within their residential and social communities.
Climate Change:	No impact on climate change
Corporate Parenting:	Adoption of the proposed Admission Arrangements for 2025/26 will ensure the Local Authority fulfils its Corporate Parenting responsibilities by supporting all children applying for a school place at a community or voluntary controlled school.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in Sandwell for 2025/26.

8. Background Papers

None.

