

Determination of School Admission Arrangements for 2025/26

Date: 7 February 2024

Report of: Director of Children and Families

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

This report seeks approval of the Leeds City Council admission arrangements (admission policy) for September 2025. The admission policy applies to all Leeds community and voluntary controlled maintained schools (98 schools) to ensure places are allocated in a fair and transparent way.

These arrangements do not apply to schools that are an academy, voluntary aided, foundation trust or free school as these schools must set their own arrangements annually.

Admissions arrangements must be determined annually under statute. The admission arrangements for September 2025 must be determined by 28 February 2024.

Recommendations

Executive Board is requested to:

- a) Determine the school admissions arrangements for the academic year 2025/26 by approving the admissions policies for the Leeds Community and Voluntary Controlled maintained Primary and Secondary schools (Appendices A, B, & C).
- b) Approve the recommendation to exempt the decision from Call-In for the reasons set out in paragraphs 48 and 49.
- c) Authorise the Lead for Admissions and Family Information Service to take any actions should there be a need to revise these arrangements after they have been determined, where this revision is necessary to give effect to a mandatory requirement of the School Admission Code 2021, admissions law, a determination of the Schools Adjudicator or any misprint in the admission arrangements, under regulation 19 of the School Admissions Regulations 2012.
- d) Note the following:

- a. The Coordinated scheme for admissions arrangements for entry in September 2025 (Appendix D) has been set.
- b. That the officer responsible for this work is the Lead for Admissions and Family Information Service.
- c. That the statutory date for implementation (i.e. determination of the policies) is no later than 28 February 2024, with the arrangements published by 15 March 2024.

What is this report about?

- 1 The Local Authority (LA) has two distinct functions for Leeds School admissions:
 - a) It is the Admission Authority for community and voluntary controlled maintained schools and so must set the admission arrangements for those schools.
 - b) It has a duty as the LA in coordinating the normal round admission process, including sending out school place offers on national offer day on behalf of all state funded Leeds schools and coordinating the re-allocation process until 31 August each year.
- 2 This report seeks approval of the admissions arrangements for entry to voluntary controlled and community-maintained Leeds schools in September 2025, to meet the statutory requirements of the School Admissions Code (2021) (the Code). This relates to the function at 1(a) above.
- 3 There are currently 98 community and voluntary controlled schools in Leeds (92 primary, 1 junior, 4 secondary and 1 all-through school). Executive Board, as the decision maker, is asked to determine the admission arrangements as a whole for Leeds community and voluntary controlled schools.
- 4 The other 172 Leeds schools are academy, foundation, voluntary aided and free schools. These schools set their own admission arrangements annually.
- 5 The term “admission arrangements” means all the documents that make up a school’s admission policy. It includes any supplemental information forms and catchment maps. In this report going forward, for simplicity we will use the term “admission policy” to mean admission arrangements.
- 6 Each school’s admission policy sets out how applications for places are prioritised if there are more applications than places (called oversubscription). All admission policies must use oversubscription criteria that are reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation.
- 7 The body who set the policy must ensure the oversubscription criteria will not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational needs.
- 8 This report proposes the admission policy is changed from the policy set for 2024/25. The Code requires an admission authority to publicly consult on their proposed admissions arrangements, whenever any changes are proposed. Public consultation was carried out and the consultation responses are summarised in the section headed *What consultation and engagement has taken place?*

What impact will this proposal have?

- 9 The admission policies for the academic year 2025/26 are included in full at Appendices A, B, and C. They include each school’s priority catchment area map.

- 10 We consulted on changes to reduce the published admission number (PAN) for 4 primary schools. The Local Authority has a duty to ensure sufficient school places and works with schools and Trusts to manage the number of available places when pupil numbers rise and when they fall. The birth rate in Leeds has been declining over recent years and in the locality of these schools, we are expecting less demand for places in future years. The PAN reductions that have been proposed align with the changing birth rate and will help schools to plan their budgets based on lower pupil numbers. The 4 schools are:
- Hunslet Carr Primary School - a reduction from 60 to 45 places.
 - Rothwell Victoria Junior School - a reduction from 45 to 30 places.
 - Moor Allerton Hall Primary School - a reduction from 90 to 60 places.
 - Hawthornthwaite Wood Primary School - a reduction from 60 to 45 places.
- 11 In summer 2023, the local authority applied to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) for a variation to reduce the September 2024 PAN for Moor Allerton Hall Primary School. The decision [VAR2360](#) was a refusal due to potential for a significant frustration of parental preference in 2024. The OSA confirmed a new variation request can be made in early 2024 once the number of actual applications for Reception places at the school for September 2024 are known, and after we have been able to consult on a PAN reduction for 2025 following the normal procedures for making changes.
- 12 In the Variation decision, the OSA found 3 points of the policy where the precise wording was not considered compliant with the Code. The 2024 policy has been amended to change the wording within the set timescales. The same wording changes are included within the 2025 policy Executive Board is being asked to approve.
- 13 There were 3 changes we did not seek public views on, as these changes do not require formal consultation under the Code. They are:
- A permanent increase in the PAN for Aberford C of E VC Primary School from 14 to 15 places to align with their class organisation.
 - An increase in the PAN for sixth form places at Allerton High School from 20 to 30 places to align with their sixth form organisation.
 - Removal of some policy wording about in-year applications. In-year application are those made for places once the school year has started, in any year group. The Code provides local authorities must publish on their website by 31 August each year, how in-year applications can be made and how they will be dealt with from 1 September onwards in that school year. We had been including the process detail in the admission policy and coordination scheme, which limits our ability to respond to changes, especially technological ones, when needed. Instead, we will provide an in-year coordination scheme by 31 August each year on the www.leeds.gov.uk website.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 14 Health and Wellbeing and Inclusive growth: The admissions policy continues to ensure children receive fair and consistent treatment and have reasonable access to local schools. This supports the Best City Ambition of ensuring children in all areas of the city have the best start in life and enjoy a healthy, happy and friendly childhood. It also supports the ambition of ensuring young people and those changing career in later life have the skills and job opportunities which enable them to realise their potential and thrive.

- 15 A key objective within the Leeds Children & Young Peoples' Plan is for Leeds to be the best city in the UK and the best city for children and young people to grow up in. We want Leeds to be a child friendly city. The delivery of pupil places through the admissions policy is one of the fundamental entitlements in a child friendly city. A good quality school place contributes to the achievement of targets within the Plan such as our obsession to 'improve achievement, attainment and attendance at school'.
- 16 Zero Carbon: For many years, the Leeds admission policy has been focused on local children attending local schools and so being able to walk to school. All Leeds community and voluntary controlled schools prioritise admission based on having a sibling at the school or living in the school's catchment area and this supports more children to attend a local school, reducing the need for transport and reducing the carbon footprint. This links with the Zero Carbon ambition which aims to create vibrant places where residents have close access to services and amenities.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 17 Before any changes can be implemented to an admission policy, public consultation is a mandatory requirement of the Code. We carried out public consultation for 6 weeks between 23 October and 4 December 2023. During this period, the consultation was available on the Leeds.gov.uk website with an online survey which was provided for ease of response.
- 18 Our website and the online survey are both accessible and can be accessed using screen readers and online translation services to support families who have additional needs including English as an additional language.
- 19 We notified all statutory consultee bodies by email. This included all Leeds primary, junior, secondary, and all through schools, as well as governing bodies of community and voluntary controlled schools, neighbouring LAs and representatives for religion/religious denomination for Leeds schools.
- 20 Parents of children aged 2-18 are also a statutory consultee. To engage with this group, we shared the consultation via the Leeds.gov.uk website and the council social media channels, and requested that Leeds schools, early years childcare providers, Ward and Parish Councillors, all community committees and parish councils in Leeds, and other interested parties (including EPIC, Migration Yorkshire, Leeds Local Offer and Leeds Jewish Council) share the consultation with their local communities if possible. These bodies will also have existing communication mechanism for communicating information with hard-to-reach Leeds families. We know many of the above bodies hold local knowledge, so we asked for their views.
- 21 We received 78 responses via the online survey and over 91% of these respondents identified themselves as parents/carers. Other respondents identified themselves as Leeds residents, school governors, Leeds school staff and/or Councillor.
- 22 Specific questions were asked in the online survey. For the specific PAN reductions respondents could agree, disagree or be neutral (neither agree nor disagree) and they were asked for their reasons, but this was optional. The summary of responses and information about any specific feedback are set out below:
- 23 **Question 1 - The number of Reception places at Hunslet Carr Primary School should reduce to 45 from September 2025?** 17% of responses agreed, 81% were neutral and 2% did

not agree with the proposed reduction. The Governors at the school have confirmed they support the PAN reduction.

- 24 For those that agreed or were neutral, specific relevant reasons were not given. 14% of neutral responses shared they were not local to the area or school. For those that opposed, their reasons included that the reduction in birth rate was short term, and it may affect those who are employed at the school.
- 25 **Question 2 - The number of Reception places at Rothwell Victoria Junior School should reduce to 30 from September 2025?** 17% of responses agreed, 79% were neutral and 4% did not agree with the proposed reduction. The Governors at the school have confirmed they support the PAN reduction.
- 26 For those that agreed or were neutral, specific relevant reasons were not given. 12% of neutral responses shared they were not local to the area or school. For those that opposed the reduction, where reasons were given, they included that the reduction in birth rate was short term, a reduced PAN could result in siblings attending two different schools and it may affect those who are employed at the school.
- 27 **Question 3 - The number of Reception places at b) Moor Allerton Hall Primary School Primary School should reduce to 60 from September 2025?** 86% of responses agreed, 8% were neutral and 6% did not agree with the proposed reduction. The Governors at the school have confirmed they strongly support the PAN reduction.
- 28 For respondents who agreed with the proposal, where reason were given they included that it would allow a better-quality education, smaller class sizes, and ensures the school can support all pupils better with the limited resource pool. Several responses shared that a smaller PAN would be financially better for the school, a 3-form entry primary school was too large and a 2-form entry, rather than mixed classes, would be better for all pupils to receive a good quality education. Multiple responses shared that the pupil movement seen within the school meant it was never full and has high in-year pupil movement with multiple examples given of children starting at the school because it has space but moving to another more local school as soon as a place becomes free there. These respondents felt such significant pupil movement detrimentally impacts on pupil friendships, pupil progression, used valuable resources in settling children who then left and overall reduced the quality of education that can be offered by the school to pupils.
- 29 For those that were neutral, specific relevant reasons were not given. For those that opposed the reduction, where reasons were given, these included that the reduction in birth rate was short term, it could reduce the chances of pupil siblings being allocated a place, it could increase class size, detrimentally impact pupil teach ratios and may affect those who are employed at the school.
- 30 **Question 4 - The number of Reception places at Hawksworth Wood Primary School should reduce to 45 from September 2025?** 18% of responses agreed, 79% were neutral and 3% did not agree with the proposed reduction. The Governors at the school have confirmed they support the PAN reduction.
- 31 For those that agreed or were neutral, specific relevant reasons were not given. 11% of neutral responses shared they were not local to the area or school. For those that opposed, their reasons included that the reduction in birth rate was short term, and it may affect those who are employed at the school.
- 32 **Response to the reasons given by those who objected to PAN reductions (as set out in paragraphs 24, 26, 29, 31 above):** The Code requires a school's admission policy is set every year. Each year, the policy must state a PAN is the number of places that the school can offer for the entry year group, which is reception at a primary school. A PAN can be increased at any stage in the future, meaning if there is an increase in the birth rate in the future, the PAN can be increased when that year's policy is set. Schools can also admit over PAN, for example as a 'bulge', if and when required.

- 33 Under the Code, there is no mandatory requirement for siblings to attend the same school. The admission policy that has been set for many years does not guarantee a sibling will be offered a place at the same school but does offer higher priority to those who will have a sibling at the school when the younger child starts, when compared to children who live in the catchment area or local to the school. A reduction in PAN alongside a reduction in the birth rate is unlikely to have any significant impact on the chances of a younger sibling being offered a place, provided the family apply for the younger child to start by the national closing date in the normal admission round.
- 34 A reduced PAN does mean fewer places at the school, but a reducing birth rate also means fewer children will be needing a place. If the school is oversubscribed, the admission policy exists to provide a means of deciding who is prioritised for places.
- 35 School funding is based on pupil numbers at October census each year using the funding formula. If the school has a high number of vacant places, it will not be funded for those, and this can negatively impact on the school's budget. The funding does not change the mandatory requirement under the Code that in the entry year a school must admit new applicants until they reach their PAN even if they receive applications after the census funding dates.
- 36 For the above primary schools, children in infant classes (reception to year 2) must be arranged to comply with infant class size legislation ratios which limits class sizes to 30 pupils per single teacher, other than in a small number of exceptional circumstances set out in law. When a PAN is set too high, the school may face budget pressures by having to admit and educate pupils without receiving funding. For key stage 1 classes this could include the cost of recruiting an additional teacher to meet infant class size legislation requirements even if the school only had 1 or 2 pupils over the 30-pupil ratio. By reducing the PAN, the school can better manage its budget and all staffing resources at the school.
- 37 **Question 5 - Are there any other comments you would like to make about the proposed admission arrangements for 2025?** The feedback focused mainly on the need for schools to be able to manage their admission numbers, so they are not financially disadvantaged and not to allow for excessive parental choice and pupil movement. They also suggested limiting empty places at one school and instead sharing them between all schools. There was a suggestion to widen one specific school catchment area to include specific addresses and one to change how teaching assistants were used in schools. Multiple respondents repeated their support for the Moor Allerton Hall PAN reduction.
- 38 All feedback has been carefully considered, and no other amendments that those proposed in the consultation will be made in the 2025/26 Leeds community and voluntary controlled policy. Some suggestions fall outside the remit of the admission policy as they relate to how a school is run, including how it is staffed. Others, such as vacancies being spread equally across the Leeds schools, would breach the School Admissions Code 2021 which provides the statutory framework for all school admission policies across England. Parental preference sits at the heart of the School Admissions Code and all schools have a statutory requirement to offer a place at their school if parental preference can be met. The consequence is places cannot be held back and a heavily oversubscribed school will likely remain full with those that are undersubscribed carrying vacancies.
- 39 The other changes to the 2025/26 policy are:
- A change to how we have worded the sibling priority definition. The proposed wording is clearer, creates less uncertainty and does not change how the sibling priority operates.
 - A permanent increase in the PAN for Aberford C of E VC Primary School from 14 to 15 places to align with their class organisation.
 - An increase in the PAN for sixth form places at Allerton High School from 20 to 30 external places to align with their sixth form organisation
 - Removal of some of the information about how to make an in-year application. The Admission Code states that how in-year applications can be made and how they will be dealt with from 1 September onwards in that school year, must be published on our website by 31 August

each year. We have been including this in the admission policy and coordination scheme which is set 18 months in advance of in-year applications being made. This limits our ability to respond to changes when needed and could prevent us introducing more streamlined and effective technological changes to processes quickly.

What are the resource implications?

40 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

41 There are no significant risks associated with the required approval of the policy for 2025. The risk relating to the management of sufficiency of school places is managed through the city's corporate risk register.

42 The policy can be referred to the Office of School Adjudicator as described under paragraph 44 below.

What are the legal implications?

43 As the admitting authority for Leeds community and voluntary controlled maintained schools, Leeds City Council Executive Board is required under The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) Regulations 2012 and the School Admissions Code 2021 to determine the 2025/26 admissions policy by 28 February 2024.

44 Any individual or organisation can ask the Office of the Schools Adjudicator to consider determined admission arrangements if it is felt they are not compliant with the School Admissions Code or if they are not consulted on properly, not set by 28 February or not published by 15 March. School Adjudicator decisions are binding and made public.

45 Coordinated scheme: Under the Code, the LA in the exercising the function set out at 1b) above, must set an annual scheme to co-ordinate admission arrangements for the normal admissions round, including late normal round applications for all publicly funded schools within their area. The 2025/26 Scheme must be set by 1 January 2024 and the Code requires that where the scheme is substantially different from the scheme adopted for the previous academic year, the LA must consult the other admission authorities in the area and any other LA's it determines are affected.

46 We have made 2 changes to the Coordinated Scheme for 2025. These are:

- a) To widen how we can make a placement offer to allow us to consider accessible transport routes where appropriate.
- b) To remove the section on the in-year application process as the Code sets a different timetable for setting this.

47 Both the above changes have been made in the Leeds Coordinated Scheme. The first supports the local authority duty to offer a place at a school that has spaces on small number of occasions where none of the family's preferences can be met. The second allows the local authority to change process quicker and easier, particularly important when responding to technological changes that may have saving for local authority resources.

48 A recommendation is made that this report be exempt from call in. This is because the Code requires that all admission arrangements are determined by 28 February annually. The LA is obliged to hold a statutory six-week consultation on any changes to arrangements within the statutory consultation window (1 October to 31 January) under the Code. The prescribed statutory window prevents this report being placed before an earlier Executive Board meeting for a decision.

49 If after February Executive Board meeting the decision is called-in, the timescales and possible outcomes of the Scrutiny Board process create a risk that the decision is made after 28 February. This would place the decision in breach of mandatory admission laws and the Code.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

50 The admissions policy could have remained as it was for the 2024/25 school year without lowering any school PANs, and without the changes set out at paragraph 39 above. The 2025/26 policy operates using the same admission process and oversubscription criteria as the 2024 policy. The admission authority has a duty to keep the admission policy under review and that it remains compliant with the School Admissions Code. This is the reason for the changes.

51 The School Admissions team and the Sufficiency and Participation team constantly review the admission arrangements considering any changes to birth rates, data from each school census and the outcome of each normal admission round. We propose changes (that require public consultation) when we feel the arrangements may need to be amended to ensure the successful operation of the admissions arrangements.

How will success be measured?

52 There is a statutory requirement for an admission policy to be set each year by 28 February.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

53 That the statutory date for implementation (called 'determination' in the School Admission Code) is no later than 28 February 2024, with the policy published by 15 March 2024.

Appendices

- Appendix A Primary (reception) 2025 admission policy with catchment maps
- Appendix B Junior (year 3 at junior school) 2025 admission policy with catchment map
- Appendix C Secondary (year 7) 2025 admission policy with catchment maps
- Appendix D Leeds coordinated scheme for 2025/26
- Appendix E EDCI screening form. No adverse implications are anticipated.

Background papers

- None