

Determination of School Admission Arrangements for 2024/25

Date: 8 February 2023

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 2024. The admission policy applies to all Leeds community and voluntary controlled maintained schools (100 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 2024 must be determined by 28 February 2023.

Recommendations

Executive Board is requested to:

- a) Determine the school admissions arrangements for the academic year 2024/25 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 46 and 47
- 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 Admission Code, 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 2024 (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 2023, with the arrangements published by 15 March 2023.

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 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 2024, 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 100 community and voluntary controlled schools in Leeds (94 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 170 Leeds schools are academy, foundation, voluntary aided and free schools. These schools set their own admission arrangements annually.
- 5 The term “admission arrangements” mean 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 2023/24. The School Admission Code 2021 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 2024/25 are included in full at Appendices A, B, and C. They include each school’s priority catchment area map.

- 10 No changes are proposed to the admission policy for the community junior or secondary schools. Changes are proposed for the 94 community and voluntary controlled maintained primary schools. These are:
- a) A reduction in the published admission number (PAN) for 3 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 3 schools are:
 - i. Oulton Primary School - a reduction from 60 to 45 places.
 - ii. Greenhill Primary School - a reduction from 60 to 45 places.
 - iii. Gildersome Primary School - a reduction from 60 to 45 places.
 - b) Changes to the catchment areas of each primary school. Changes have been proposed considering the current catchment area, the predicted number of children living near the school in future years, the home addresses of pupils admitted in previous years, any recent or approved housing developments in the area, the location of all other neighbouring schools and the views shared in the public consultation. The proposed changes will ensure that children can still access a local school place.
 - c) There was one change we did not seek public views on as the change does not require formal consultation under the Code. This is a permanent increase in the published admission number (PAN) for St James' C of E Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Wetherby as we are expecting an increased demand for places across this local area.

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

☒ Health and Wellbeing

☒ Inclusive Growth

☒ Zero Carbon

- 11 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.
- 12 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'.
- 13 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?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

- 14 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 26 October 2022 and 7 December 2022. During this period, the consultation was available on the Leeds.gov.uk website with an online survey which was provided for ease of response. 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.
- 15 We notified all statutory consultee bodies by email. This included all Leeds primary and secondary schools, governing bodies of community and voluntary controlled schools, neighbouring LAs as well as representatives for religion/religious denomination for Leeds schools.
- 16 Prior to starting the consultation, we requested governing bodies of community and voluntary controlled primary schools to share their views about their school's catchment areas. For those that did, we incorporated any views as we prepared the consultation proposals. However, as they remain formal statutory consultees, governing bodies were able to share their views during the public consultation.
- 17 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.
- 18 We received 42 responses via the online survey. In addition, we received some email responses and school governors asked to discuss proposals with LA officers. We received responses from families, schools and other LAs. For those who responded via the online survey, over 40% of respondents identified themselves as parents/carers and/or Leeds residents.
- 19 Specific questions were asked in the online survey. The summary of responses and information about any specific feedback shared are set out below:
- 20 **Question 1 - The number of Reception places at Oulton Primary School should reduce to 45 from September 2024?** 25 (59.5%) of responses agreed the proposal and 17 (40.5%) did not agree. The Governors at the school have confirmed they support the PAN reduction.
- 21 **Question 2 - The number of Reception places at Greenhill Primary School should reduce to 45 from September 2024?** 26 (61.9%) of responses agreed the proposal and 16 (38.1%) did not agree. The Governors at the school have confirmed they support the PAN reduction.
- 22 **Question 3 - The number of Reception places at Gildersome Primary School should reduce to 45 from September 2024?** 24 (57.1%) of responses agreed the proposal and 18 (42.9%) did not agree. The Governors at the school have confirmed they support the PAN reduction.
- 23 We also asked respondents for their reasons for their views. Where respondents chose to provide these, some included the same feedback for each of 3 schools. Reasons included that mixed

classes may be needed if the PAN is 45 and the school may need extra support. For those that did not agree, some felt more places meant parents have more choice, that as schools were equipped to provide places for 60 pupils the higher numbers should remain, extra teachers should be provided if required, we should ensure parents had a school place in walking distance and PANs should not be reduced based on a cost saving exercise or because of the Government's drive to turn schools into Academies. One respondent felt they had insufficient data about pupil numbers so felt unable to provide reasons.

24 Response: The PANs are proposed to reduce to 45 for each school and the Governors support the reduction in PAN at each of the 3 schools. The reduction supports each school financially considering reducing pupil numbers. School funding is set by the Government and is paid on a per pupil basis, meaning that any school with high levels of vacancies may experience greater financial pressures on their school budget, which in turn can impact on schools' ability to deliver the scope of the National Curriculum in its broadest and fullest sense, ensuring that all children have rich opportunities and experiences across all ages and stages of their schooling. Whilst any reduction means there are less places available across the city, in the local area for each of the 3 schools we believe the reduced PANs will be better aligned with pupil numbers. In addition, if there was an unexpected change in pupil numbers in the future, each school could admit above the PAN if there was a need to do so.

25 ***Question 4 - Please provide your comments on the proposed catchment areas for Leeds community and voluntary controlled primary schools? Please tell us the name of any school(s) you are commenting on.*** 34 responses provided comments, and these have been broken down by school.

26 Churwell Primary School: 24 respondents opposed the changes to Churwell's catchment area. We had proposed to remove the area to the northeast around Ibbetson Oval and place these streets within Asquith Primary School's catchment area. The reasons this was opposed included that the removed streets were very close to the school, and within walking distance of Churwell Primary School. Some respondents felt it was not safe to walk to Asquith, others highlighted there was a convoluted driving route to Asquith Primary and some felt the newly built housing further away from the school was being prioritised.

27 Fountain and Asquith Primary Schools: In addition to the feedback about Churwell, both Fountain Primary School and Asquith Primary School requested extensions to their proposed catchment areas. Asquith felt that families living in the Ibbetson Oval area could access their school easily and had current pupils who live in this area already. Both schools felt the catchment area proposed had omitted specific streets where the school regularly drew pupils from and sought these areas be included.

28 Response: The catchment areas for Churwell, Asquith, and Fountain Primary Schools have been extended further than the proposals we consulted on. We have also not removed the area to the northeast (around Ibbetson Oval) from Churwell's catchment area as was proposed.

29 Morley is densely populated with 4 primary schools in very close proximity, and we have not reduced any other school's proposed catchment area; this means some addresses in Morley will fall into the catchment area of more than one primary school. Whilst the catchment areas for these Morley primary schools have enlarged from what was proposed, they remain reasonable and are not at risk of becoming a meaningless priority for some children. A catchment priority becomes meaningless if there are significantly more children in the area than the school could accommodate in most admission years, as if too many children live within the area, those who live on the edges may not have a reasonable chance of securing a place at the school. The changes made mean all families in the area can access a local school place if they preference their local schools and use all 5 preferences.

30 Pudsey Bolton Royd Primary School: Bradford LA and Thornbury Primary Leadership Academy responded requesting Thornbury Primary Leadership Academy be removed from the school's

proposed catchment area. Response: The catchment area has been amended to remove the school, but to continue to include the housing around the school.

- 31 Talbot Primary School: The school requested their catchment area should extend further south to include Lidgett Park Road, North Park Avenue, Talbot Road, Lidgett Mount, North Park Grove as families who live in these streets feel that the proximity to school means they should fall within Talbot Primary School's catchment area.
- 32 Response: We have not changed Talbot Primary School's catchment area from the proposals consulted upon. These addresses are currently within the catchment area for Gledhow Primary School. Gledhow School have concerns about any extension to Talbot Primary School's catchment which would mean a reduction to their own catchment area and felt that if these addresses were given more than one catchment priority, for example to overlap the catchment areas, it may have a negative impact on their school and also cause confusion to parents.
- 33 Increasing Talbot's catchment area as requested would add an extra 4 to 5 pupils into their catchment area each year, however, for the last 3 admission years on national offer day, Talbot Primary School has not admitted all pupils who live within the current smaller catchment area, despite the birth rate falling. There is a significant risk that if we added these addresses in, families who live further away from Talbot School but still within their current catchment area, would no longer have a meaningful priority for Talbot Primary School and those families living furthest away from the school would be unable to secure a local place.
- 34 Cobden Primary School: One respondent raised a concern that the catchment area has been reduced but did not provide further details. Response: Addresses in New Farnley have been removed from Cobden's catchment area and are now within the Lawns Park catchment area. Previously addresses in this area fell into either Lawns Park or Cobden's catchment area. Historic admission data and current school census data shows that very few pupils who live in the addresses that have been removed are attending Cobden Primary School, as pupils are attending Lawns Park Primary or Gildersome Primary. These addresses should fall within the Lawns Park Primary School catchment area as was proposed in the consultation.
- 35 Adel Primary School: There were no specific responses to the proposed catchment area, however, where the catchment area ends in the northeast corner has been amended following further information being available about new housing under construction. The edge has been amended to ensure the new estate is included in full in the catchment area.

36 All other catchment areas have remained unchanged from those proposed in the consultation.

What are the resource implications?

37 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

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

38 There are no significant risks associated with the required approval of the policy for 2024. The risk relating to the management of sufficiency of school places is managed through the city's corporate risk register.

What are the legal implications?

- 39 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 2024/25 admissions policy by 28 February 2023.
- 40 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.

- 41 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 and late applications for all publicly funded schools within their area. The 2024/25 Scheme must be set by 1 January 2023 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.
- 42 We have made 2 changes to the Coordinated Scheme for 2023. These are:
 - a) To open applications for secondary school (year 7) from 1 September 2023. This change means that the date the round opens would be aligned with the mandatory coordination duty which ends on 31 August, and the point when applications become in-year on 1 September.
 - b) To include clearer information about what a home address is and how we verify addresses. This would help clarify our process for verifying a child's permanent addresses and help us to identify address fraud.
- 43 Whilst public consultation is not required because any change of opening date for applications for year 7 places impacts families, we included this a specific question in the online survey in case there were any unintended implications for families. 34 (81%) of respondents agreed the proposal and 8 (19%) did not agree. Those in support felt that it fitted better with the school year and open days, and they did not want a change to the closing date; this is set nationally in the Code. However, some respondents appear to have misunderstood the proposed change, as comments were made about the date being moved earlier or it better supporting school organisation. The change is to move the opening to be one month later.
- 44 The date a year 7 application round opens is not set by the Code. It does not form part of the admission policy for Leeds community and voluntary controlled maintained schools. No schools or other LAs shared any objection to the change of date.
- 45 Both the above changes have been made in the Leeds Coordinated Scheme. The opening date change means the opening date of the new year 7 round on 1 September falls the day after the previous one closes on 31 August. Currently there is a month overlap when two year 7 admissions rounds are open simultaneously. This has been confusing for families who have been applying for year 7 places, and some have applied for a place in the incorrect year causing unnecessary delays in their child securing a place. The change to 1 September also fits better alongside other provisions within the School Admissions Code 2021 and more closely aligns our application process with our neighbouring local authorities who open applications for year 7 places each September.
- 46 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.
- 47 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?

48 The admissions policy could remain as it was for the 2023/24 school year.

49 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 in order to ensure the successful operation of the admissions arrangements. Changes were proposed to the 2024 primary admission policy based on the above considerations.

How will success be measured?

50 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?

51 That the statutory date for implementation (called 'determination' in the School Admission Code) is no later than 28 February 2023, with the policy published by 15 March 2023.

Appendices

- Appendix A Primary (reception) 2024 admission policy with catchment maps
- Appendix B Junior (year 3 at junior schools) 2024 admission policy with catchment map
- Appendix C Secondary (year 7) 2024 admission policy with catchment maps
- Appendix D Leeds coordinated scheme for 2024/25
- Appendix E EDCI screening form. No adverse implications are anticipated

Background papers

- None.