

## Determination of School Admission Arrangements for 2026/27

Date: 12 February 2025

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 2026. The admission policy applies to all Leeds community and voluntary controlled maintained schools (95 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 2026 must be determined by 28 February 2025.

### Recommendations

Executive Board is requested to:

- a) Determine the school admissions arrangements for the academic year 2026/27 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 35 and 36.
- 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 2026 (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 2025, with the arrangements published by 15 March 2025.

## **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 at least 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 2026, 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 95 community and voluntary controlled schools in Leeds (89 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 175 Leeds schools are academy, foundation, voluntary aided and free schools. These schools set their own admission arrangements annually and are routinely invited to join our consultation process should they wish. The reason is many of these schools mirror the community and voluntary controlled school policy and by consulting jointly this allows families and interested parties to fill in one single response. 6 schools joined the consultation, and we have shared the consultation feedback with them. The school's admission authority (either the Governing Body or Trust Board) must now determine the school's 2026 policy. This report does not cover those schools.
- 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 the remainder of this report, 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 criteria). 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 which sets 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 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 proposed for determination for the academic year 2026/27 are included in full at Appendices A, B, and C. They include each school's priority catchment area map.
- 10 The only substantial change is with regard to the primary school arrangements, (Appendix A) which include a reduction in the published admission number (PAN) at Greenside Primary School - a reduction from 45 to 30 places. This will reduce the number of places available in the local area and due to the falling birth rate, it is not expected to have any impact on parental preference being met.

## 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?       Yes       No

- 14 Before any changes can be implemented to any mainstream school admission policy, public consultation is a mandatory requirement. We carried out public consultation for just over 6 weeks between 30 October and 15 December 2024. During this period, the consultation was available on the Leeds.gov.uk website with an online survey which was provided for ease of response.
- 15 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.

- 16 We notified all statutory consultee bodies by email. This included all Leeds primary, junior, secondary, and all through schools, asking schools to share the notification with their chair of governors to reach the Governing body of any community and voluntary controlled schools, neighbouring LAs and representatives for religion/religious denomination for Leeds schools.
- 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
  - via the council social media channels,
  - 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, SENDIASS 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 bodies in c) hold local knowledge, so we also asked for their views.
- 18 Two proposals were made during the consultation process.
- To reduce the PAN at Greenside Primary School from 45 places to 30 places
  - To remove the priority offered for children with exceptional social or medical needs that can only be met at a specific community and voluntary controlled school.
- 19 We received 11 responses via the online survey and 2 responses from neighbouring LAs. The neighbouring LA responses were neutral. Over 73% of the 11 respondents identified themselves as parents/carers and the other respondents identified themselves as Leeds residents or school governors.
- 20 Specific questions were asked in the online survey. The summary of responses and information about any specific feedback are set out below:
- 21 **Question 1 - The number of Reception places at Greenside Primary School should reduce to 30 from September 2026?** Respondents could agree, disagree or be neutral (neither agree nor disagree) and they were asked for their reasons, but this was optional. 82% of responses agreed or were neutral and 18% did not agree with the proposed reduction. The Governors at the school have confirmed they support the PAN reduction.
- 22 For those that agreed or were neutral, reasons included the school budget and less applications being received. For those that opposed, the reasons were that there was significant construction of family sized homes in the area and people will move here to access good schooling.
- 23 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 this school, we are expecting less demand for places in future years. The PAN reduction aligns with the changing birth rate and will help schools to plan their budgets based on lower pupil numbers.
- 24 A reduced PAN does mean fewer places at the school, and 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.
- 25 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.
- 26 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.

27 **Question 2 - Please provide your comments on the proposal to remove the exceptional need priority in light of the SEND transformation programme.** The feedback raised some concerns around removing this admission priority too soon in the SEND transformation timeline, and that it should remain as a back stop for occasions where delays may occur in children receiving assessment, diagnosis and intervention around SEND. Having considered the responses, the limited appetite for making this change, and the need to ensure that any child needing this priority for admission can continue to receive it, Children and Families Leadership Team are recommending that **this proposal is not included in the admission arrangements for 2026-27.**

28 **Other comments:** All feedback has been carefully considered. One respondent requested that the secondary school policy included an explicit reference in the admission out of age section to be clear this applies to summer born children who started reception at compulsory school age and were taught out of year group. This amendment has been included in the policy attached. No other amendments will be made in the 2026/27 Leeds community and voluntary controlled policy.

#### **What are the resource implications?**

29 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

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

30 There are no significant risks associated with the required approval of the policy for 2026. The risk relating to the management of sufficiency of school places is managed through the Children and Families directorate risk register.

31 The policy can be referred to the Office of School Adjudicator as described under paragraph 33 below.

#### **What are the legal implications?**

32 As the admitting authority for Leeds community and voluntary controlled maintained schools, Leeds City Council Executive Board is required under School Admissions Regulations 2012 and the School Admissions Code to determine the 2026/27 admissions policy by 28 February 2025.

33 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.

34 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 2026/27 Scheme must be set by 1 January 2025, 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. No changes were proposed for 26/27.

35 A recommendation is made that this report be exempt from call-in. This is because the Code requires that all admission arrangements are determined annually by 28 February. 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.

36 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?**

37 The admission authority has a duty to keep the admission policy under review and that it remains compliant with the School Admissions Code. The admissions policy could have remained as it was for the 25/26 school year without lowering the PAN at Greenside Primary School.

38 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?**

39 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?**

40 The statutory date for implementation (called 'determination' in the School Admission Code) is no later than 28 February 2025, with the policy published by 15 March 2025.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A (Parts 1 & 2) Primary (reception) 2026 admission policy with catchment maps
- Appendix B Junior (year 3 at junior school) 2026 admission policy with catchment map
- Appendix C Secondary (year 7) 2026 admission policy with catchment maps
- Appendix D Leeds coordinated scheme for 2026/27
- Appendix E EDCI screening form. No adverse implications are anticipated.

## **Background papers**

- None