

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET**

DATE: 28 JANUARY 2025

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LIFELONG LEARNING

LEAD OFFICER: JULIA KATHERINE - DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

SUBJECT: ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SURREY'S COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR SEPTEMBER 2026 AND SURREY'S RELEVANT AREA

ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

Purpose of the Report:

The purpose of this report is to ask Cabinet to make recommendations to Full Council on the admission arrangements that will apply for Surrey's community and voluntary controlled infant, junior, primary and secondary schools for admission in September 2026, as well as a determination on Surrey's Relevant Area.

Each year, Surrey County Council is responsible for processing approximately 30,000 applications for a school place from Surrey residents and coordinates offers for over 350 schools. The admission arrangements for each school determine which children will receive priority for a place.

Surrey County Council is responsible for setting the admission arrangements for 68 community and voluntary controlled schools for 2026. The remaining schools are academies, foundation, free, trust and voluntary aided schools and these are responsible for setting their own admission arrangements. As such admission arrangements for these schools are not covered in this report.

The local authority is also required by law to define the Relevant Area, within which admission authorities must consult with other schools on their admission arrangements.

This piece of work helps Surrey County Council meet its organisational strategy objective of 'No One Left Behind' by ensuring, as far as possible, that children are offered a place at a preference school.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Cabinet make the following recommendations to Full Council:

Recommendation 1

That the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Year 3 at Reigate Priory is reduced from 150 to 120 for 2026 admission, as set out in Appendix 1 of Annex 1.

Reasons for Recommendation

- It is supported by the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school
- It is supported by Surrey's Education Place Planning team
- There will still be sufficient places for local children if the PAN is decreased
- It will help the school maintain financial viability as they will be able to operate with just four classes
- It will have no impact on children who are currently on roll at the school
- The decision is not related to the future provision of places in Reigate

Recommendation 2

That a Published Admission Number (PAN) is not introduced for admission to Year 3 at Audley Primary School for 2026 admission.

Reasons for Recommendation

- There are spaces at other schools in the area which negates the need to introduce a Year 3 PAN at Audley Primary School
- Although a small number, the introduction of a Year 3 PAN of 2 at Audley Primary School could have a detrimental impact on other schools in the area
- It will have no impact on children who are currently on roll at the school

Recommendation 3

That the Published Admissions Number (PAN) for Reception at Earlswood Infant School is reduced from 120 to 90 for 2026 admission, as set out in Appendix 1 of Annex 1.

Reasons for Recommendation

- It is supported by the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school, having been requested by them
- It is supported by Surrey's Education Place Planning team
- There will still be sufficient places for local children if the PAN is decreased
- It will help the school maintain financial viability as they will be able to operate with just three classes
- It will have no impact on children who are currently on roll at the school

Recommendation 4

That the Published Admission Numbers (PANs) for September 2026 for all other community and voluntary controlled schools (excluding Year 3 at Reigate Priory and Reception at Earlswood Infant School, which are covered by Recommendations 1 and 3) are determined as they are set out in Appendix 1 of Annex 1.

Reasons for Recommendation

- Most other PANs remain as they were determined for 2025 which enables parents to have some historical benchmark by which to make informed decisions about their school preferences for 2026 admission
- The PANs provide for the sufficiency of places at community and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Place Planning team supports the PANs
- Each community and voluntary controlled school were given the opportunity to comment on the proposed PAN if they wished

Recommendation 5

That all other aspects of Surrey's admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for September 2026, for which no change has been consulted on, are agreed as set out in Annex 1 and its appendices.

Reasons for Recommendation

- The local authority has a duty to determine the admission arrangements for 2026 for all community and voluntary controlled schools by 28 February 2025
- The admission arrangements are working well
- The arrangements enable the majority of pupils to attend a local school and in doing so reduce travel and support Surrey's sustainability policies
- The arrangements are compliant with the School Admissions Code
- Section 20 of Annex 1 has been amended to remove reference to an offer of a place being withdrawn 'even if the child has already started at the school'. This is because registered pupils may only be removed from roll in the limited circumstances set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, as amended.
- Section 21 of Annex 1 has been updated to include the following wording in relation to travel assistance, which ensures it reflects the recent changes to Surrey's travel assistance policy:

'To be considered for travel assistance to a school that is not your nearest, you will normally be required to demonstrate that you have applied for and been refused a place at any nearer schools....'.

Recommendation 6

That Surrey's Relevant Area is agreed as set out in Annex 4.

Reasons for Recommendation

- The local authority is required by law to define the Relevant Area, within which admission authorities must consult with other schools on their admission arrangements
- The Relevant Area must be consulted upon and agreed every two years even if no changes are proposed
- Setting a Relevant Area ensures that any schools who might be affected by changes to the admission arrangements for other local schools will be made aware of those changes
- No change has been made to Surrey's Relevant Area since it was last determined in February 2023

Executive Summary:

1. The local authority has a duty to determine the admission arrangements for all 68 community and voluntary controlled schools by 28 February 2025, having regard to the outcome of any consultation.
2. The remaining schools are academies, foundation, free, trust and voluntary aided schools. As these are responsible for setting their own admission arrangements, these schools are not covered by this report.
3. The proposed admission arrangements, including the proposed Published Admission Numbers (PANs) are set out in Annex 1 and its appendices.

Reigate Priory – Reduction of Year 3 PAN from 150 to 120

4. The reasons for reducing the Year 3 PAN at Reigate Priory are set out in Section 1 of Annex 2.
5. There was just one response to the consultation, from a member of the public. They were opposed to the proposal but declared that they would not be affected by it. Their reason for opposing the proposal was because of concern about new houses in the area and VAT on independent school fees, which could both lead to an increased need for more school places.
6. Place planning already takes into account the projected yield from new housing and current forecasts project a surplus of school places in the Reigate planning area. However, in the scenario that more places were unexpectedly needed in an area, admission authorities could choose to admit over PAN, without consultation, and the local authority would explore this with schools if that need arose.
7. The Headteacher and Governing Body support the change.
8. This change is reflected in Appendix 1 of Annex 1.

Audley Primary School - Introduction of a Year 3 PAN of 2

9. The reasons for introducing a Year 3 PAN at Audley Primary School are set out in Section 2 of Annex 2.
10. The number of responses to the consultation was low, with two respondents opposed to this proposal. One respondent was a Headteacher and one was a Governor, both from another local primary school.
11. The reason the respondents opposed the proposal was because they felt that it would be likely to impact admission numbers at other local schools, at a time when the local authority is indicating a fall in birth rate. In this way, both respondents felt that the proposal would negatively affect pupil admission numbers to their school, as well as others in the local area, potentially rendering them non-viable.
12. Audley Primary School has historically admitted two additional children into Year 3 and is currently operating at 32 in each of their year groups in KS2. However,

in reviewing the numbers on roll at schools in the local area, the local authority acknowledges that these additional places are not needed.

13. In addition, albeit the PAN that was proposed was small, the local authority recognises the potential impact that introducing a Year 3 PAN at Audley Primary School could have on other schools in the area, especially those with vacancies, by further reducing their number on roll.
14. As a result, the local authority is not recommending the implementation of this proposal.

Earlswood Infant School – Reduction of Reception PAN from 120 to 90

15. The reasons for reducing the Year 3 PAN at Earlswood Infant School are set out in Annex 3.
16. The number of responses to the consultation was low, with 2 respondents in support and 2 opposed.
17. The proposal was supported by the local parish council, and by a headteacher at a Surrey primary school. Both recognised the declining birth rate and commented on the challenges that this gives in ensuring the sustainability of schools.
18. Those opposed were a prospective parent worried about a reduction in parental choice and a council officer who queried if remaining capacity at the school could be repurposed to accommodate children with additional needs and disabilities.
19. The Education Place Planning team support the proposed reduction in PAN and are satisfied that the number of school places provided by the PANs of all schools in the area are adequate to meet the level of pupil demand to ensure that all children can be offered a school place.
20. The headteacher and governing body support the change.
21. This change is reflected in Appendix 1 of Annex 1.

Recommendation 4 - Proposed PANs for other community and voluntary controlled schools

22. Appendix 1 to Annex 1 sets out the proposed admission numbers for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2026 admission, with changes highlighted in bold.
23. The reduction in Year 3 PAN at Reigate Priory and the reduction in Reception PAN at Earlswood Infant School have already been referenced in Recommendations 1 and 3.
24. It is proposed that the PAN for all other community and voluntary controlled schools for 2026 will remain as determined for 2025. This will enable parents to have some historical benchmark by which to make informed decisions about their school preferences.
25. The Education Place Planning team support the proposed PANs.

26. Each community and voluntary controlled school was given the opportunity to comment on the proposed PAN if they wished.

Recommendation 5 – Admission arrangements for which no change has been consulted on

27. The local authority has a duty to determine the admission arrangements for 2026 for all community and voluntary controlled schools by 28 February 2025, even if there are no changes proposed.
28. Other than changes already referenced in Recommendations 1 and 3, the only other changes are points of clarification as follows:
- Section 20 of Annex 1 has been amended to remove reference to an offer of a place being withdrawn ‘even if the child has already started at the school’. This is because registered pupils may only be removed from roll in the limited circumstances set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, as amended.
 - Section 21 of Annex 1 has been updated to include the following wording in relation to travel assistance, which ensures it reflects the recent changes to Surrey’s travel assistance policy:
 - ‘To be considered for travel assistance to a school that is not your nearest, you will normally be required to demonstrate that you have applied for and been refused a place at any nearer schools....’.
29. The admission arrangements for Surrey’s community and voluntary controlled schools are generally working well. This is demonstrated by the fact that, in 2024, on average, 86.6% of applicants for a place in Reception or Year 7 were offered a place at their first preference school and 97.4% were offered a place at one of their preference schools.
30. The admission arrangements enable the majority of pupils to attend a local school and in doing so this reduces the need for travel and supports Surrey’s sustainability policies.
31. If a community or voluntary controlled school converts to academy status after submission of this report but before the arrangements have been determined by Full Council, the determination decision will become the responsibility of the school or Trust, as admission authority for the school.
32. **Recommendation 6 – Surrey’s Relevant Area**
33. The Relevant Area that Surrey intends to publish for schools for the next two years is set out in Annex 4.
34. The Relevant Area is the area in which admission authorities must consult with other schools regarding their proposed admission arrangements, before determining them.
35. The School Standards & Framework Act 1998 requires local authorities to establish Relevant Area(s) for admission policy consultations.

36. The Education (Relevant Areas for Consultation on Admission Arrangements) Regulations 1999 requires the local authority to review and consult on its relevant area every 2 years, and thereafter to determine if any changes are required.
37. The Relevant Area has no bearing on the admission criteria that will be used to determine the order of priority for each individual school.
38. The proposed Relevant Area for 2025 remains as it was determined in 2023.

Consultation:

39. The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2014 require all admission authorities to consult on their admission arrangements every seven years, unless they are proposing any changes to their arrangements, in which case they must consult each year they are proposing a change.
40. Consultation on the admission arrangements for 2026 must take place for a minimum of six weeks, between 1 October 2024 and 31 January 2025.
41. On 9 July 2024, all community and voluntary controlled schools were emailed details of the Published Admission Number (PAN) that the local authority intended to propose for 2026 admission. Schools were asked to respond if they did not agree with the PAN that was to be proposed.
42. On 24 September 2024, the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning agreed to consult on a reduction in PAN at Reigate Priory, from 150 to 120, and the introduction of a Year 3 PAN of 2 at Audley Primary School.
43. A consultation on these changes, along with the admission arrangements for which no change was proposed, was published on Surrey Says on 2 October 2024 and ran for six weeks until 13 November 2024.
44. The document setting out a summary of this consultation, which was made available to all consultees, is attached at Annex 2.
45. On 4 November, after publication of the initial consultation, the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning subsequently agreed to consult on reducing the PAN at Earlswood Infant School, from 120 to 90.
46. A consultation on the change for Earlswood Infant School was published on Surrey Says on 5 November 2024 and ran for six weeks until 17 December 2024.
47. The document setting out a summary of the consultation for Earlswood Infant School, which was made available to all consultees, is attached at Annex 3.
48. Details of both consultations were shared with Surrey schools through Surrey's Schools Bulletin and with all Early Years providers through the Early Years Bulletin. It was also sent by direct email to Diocesan Boards of Education, neighbouring local authorities, Surrey County Councillors, Borough and District Councillors, Parish and Town Councillors and Surrey MPs.

49. Surrey County Councillors, Borough and District Councillors, and Parish and Town Councils were asked to draw the consultation to the attention of any local community or resident group, to ensure it reached the widest possible group.
50. Schools were also sent a flyer which they were encouraged to make available to parents of children attending the school.
51. Full details of the proposed admission arrangements for Surrey's community and voluntary controlled schools, including the arrangements for which there is no change proposed, are attached as Annex 1 and its appendices.
52. In total, 3 respondents submitted a response to the consultation in relation to Reigate Priory and Audley Primary School.
53. A further 4 respondents submitted a response to the consultation in relation to Earlswood Infant School.
54. A summary of the responses to the individual school related questions within the consultation is set out below in Table A.
55. In relation to Surrey's Relevant Area, the local authority consulted with all Surrey schools through the Schools Bulletin, Diocesan Boards and neighbouring local authorities but no comments were received. This is to be expected as the Relevant Area is very much an operational document for schools and the local authority in relation to consultation and does not influence how places are allocated.

Table A - Summary of responses to admission consultation

Question Number	Proposal	Document	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
1	Reigate Priory - reduction of Year 3 PAN from 150 to 120	Annex 1, Appendix 1	0	1	2
2	Audley School – introduction of Year 3 PAN of 2	Annex 1, Appendix 1	0	2	1
3	Earlswood Infant School – reduction of Reception PAN from 120 to 90	Annex 1, Appendix 1	2	2	0

Risk Management and Implications:

56. The risks of implementing these arrangements are low. However, any parents who feel unfairly disadvantaged by the arrangements or believes that they do not comply with admissions law or the School Admissions Code, can object to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by 15 May 2025.

Financial and Value for Money Implications:

57. The admission criteria for the majority of community and voluntary controlled schools in Surrey conform to Surrey's standard criteria. The more schools that have the same admission criteria, the more the processes can be streamlined and thus present better value for money. However, where required, the

admission criteria for some schools vary from Surrey's standard but these can currently be managed within existing resources.

58. Normally schools are funded for the year based on the number of pupils on roll on previous October census date. However, where a school has reduced PAN there is often a planned reduction in the number of pupils and, where there is such a reduction, in previous years the Council has applied for a disapplication from the Secretary of State to reduce funding in year to reflect that planned reduction. No such reductions were made in 2023/24 or 2024/25 and none are proposed for 2025/26. The council will consider its policy on this issue for future years in due course in consultation with schools forum and those schools affected. If there was an overall shortfall of places in the area in September 2026 the council would have to fund additional places from the Dedicated Schools Grant growth fund allocation. However, current estimates suggest that that will not be necessary.

Section 151 Officer Commentary:

59. Significant progress has been made in recent years to improve the Council's financial resilience and the financial management capabilities across the organisation. Whilst this has built a stronger financial base from which to deliver our services, the increased cost of living, global financial uncertainty, high inflation and government policy changes mean we continue to face challenges to our financial position. This requires an increased focus on financial management to protect service delivery, a continuation of the need to be forward looking in the medium term, as well as the delivery of the efficiencies to achieve a balanced budget position each year.
60. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2024/25 remains uncertain. With no clarity on central government funding in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority, in order to ensure the stable provision of services in the medium term.
61. In this context the Section 151 Officer recognises the importance of a clear and compliant admissions policy. Funding for schools is allocated through the annual funding formula approved by Cabinet, the cost of which is contained within the Dedicated Schools Grant, as such the S151 supports the recommendations of this report.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:

62. The admission arrangements comply with legislation on school admissions and the School Admissions Code.
63. The local authority has carried out a consultation on the changes for Reigate Priory and Audley Primary School between 2 October and 13 November 2024, and for Earlswood Infant School between 5 November and 17 December 2024. Both consultations were for a period of 6 weeks, which is in accordance with statutory requirements.

64. There is a statutory requirement for consultation in this context as set out in The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012. Such consultation involved those directly affected by the changes together with relevant representative groups. The material presented to consultees provided sufficient information to allow for intelligent consideration and response in relation to the proposals and was presented in a way that consultees could understand.
65. The best value duty is contained in s3 of the Local Government Act 1999 as a result of which the Council is under a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The relevant guidance states that Councils should consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value when reviewing service provision.

Equalities and Diversity:

66. The Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed in full and is attached in Annex 5. The adoption of determined admission criteria is a mandatory requirement supported by primary legislation. The policy relating to community and voluntary controlled schools does not discriminate according to age, gender, ethnicity, faith, disability or sexual orientation.
67. Measures have been taken to reference vulnerable groups both in terms of exceptional arrangements within admissions, the SEND process and the in-year fair access protocol. In addition, a right of appeal exists for all applicants who are refused a school place.

Other Implications:

68. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	Set out below
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	Set out below
Environmental sustainability	Set out below
Compliance against net-zero emissions target and future climate compatibility/resilience	No significant implications arising from this report
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report

Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications:

69. As required by the School Admissions Code, the proposed admission arrangements give top priority to children who are Looked After by a local

authority; children who have left care through adoption, a child arrangements order or a special guardianship order; and children who have been adopted from state care outside England.

Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications:

70. The efficient and timely administration of the school admission process, coupled with the equitable distribution of school places in accordance with the School Admission Code and parental preference, contribute to the County Council's priority for safeguarding vulnerable children.

Environmental Sustainability implications:

71. The County Council attaches great importance to being environmentally aware and wishes to show leadership in cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change.
72. Since 2017 the County Council's Safer Travel Team have promoted a new national online system called Modeshift STARS www.modeshiftstars.org. This system is supported by the Department for Transport. The Modeshift STARS website provides materials for schools to create a School Travel Plan. A school can choose a number of interventions such as Bikeability cycle training and the Golden Boot Challenge to help achieve their accreditation. Successful implementation of School Travel Plans will lead to improvements in road safety and more sustainable travel on school journeys. This will reduce congestion, improve air quality, and active travel will improve the health of children.
73. The admission arrangements will still enable the majority of pupils to attend a local school and so reduce travel and support policies on cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change.
74. Children will continue to be considered for travel assistance in line with Surrey's Home to School/College Travel and Transport policy and information on this is provided to parents in Section 21 of Annex 1.

What Happens Next:

- The September 2026 admissions arrangements as agreed by the Cabinet will be ratified by the full County Council on 4 February 2025.
- The determined admission arrangements will be published on Surrey's website by 15 March 2025 and all consultees will be notified.
- All Surrey schools will also be notified of the determined admission arrangements in the School Admissions termly newsletter, issued as part of the Schools Bulletin at the start of the Summer Term 2025.
- The arrangements will be published in the primary and secondary admissions booklets in August 2025, which will be made available to parents online and in hard copy by request in September 2025.
- The information on school admissions will be circulated to the Contact Centre, Surrey County Council Libraries and Early Years.
- Full information on school admissions for 2026 entry will also be published on Surrey County Council's website in September 2025.

Report Author:

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Consulted:

- Amanda Scally - Principal Solicitor – Adults, Education, Litigation & Employment
- Nikki Parsons - Deputy Strategic Finance Business Partner – Education & Lifelong Learning
- Schools affected by the proposals
- Julia Katherine - Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
- Trudy Pyatt - Assistant Director for Education, Access, Quality and Inclusion
- Mike Singleton/Sarah Jeffery - Service Managers for Education Place Planning
- Headteachers, Chairs of Governors, Parent Governors of all Surrey schools
- Early Years establishments in Surrey
- Diocesan Boards of Education
- Neighbouring local authorities
- Surrey County Councillors
- Parish Councils
- Local MPs
- General public consultation - via Surrey Says

Annexes:

Annex 1	Admission arrangements for community & voluntary controlled schools
• Appendix 1	Published Admission Numbers (PANs)
• Appendix 2	Schools which will operate shared sibling priority
• Appendix 3	Catchment map for Southfield Park Primary
• Appendix 4	Catchment map for Stamford Green Primary
• Appendix 5	Catchment map for Walton on the Hill Primary
• Appendix 6	Supplementary Form for social/medical applicants
• Appendix 7	Supplementary Form for staff applicants
Annex 2	Consultation document for Reigate Priory and Audley Primary
Annex 3	Consultation document for Earlswood Infant
Annex 4	Relevant Area
Annex 5	Equality Impact Assessment

Sources/background papers:

- School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012
 - School Standards and Framework Act 1998
 - Education (Relevant Areas for Consultation on Admission Arrangements) Regulations 1999
 - School Admissions Code 2021
 - Equality Act 2002
-