

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING****DATE: 27 SEPTEMBER 2022****LEAD OFFICER: LIZ MILLS, DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING****SUBJECT: CONSULTATION ON ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR SEPTEMBER 2024****ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The local authority must consult on any changes it wishes to make to the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2024. Consultation must run for at least six weeks between 1 October 2022 and 31 January 2023 and admission arrangements for 2024 must be determined by 28 February 2023.

This report seeks authorisation to proceed to consultation on the following:

- Southfield Park Primary School – extension of catchment area; change to the tie-breaker within catchment, and removal of ‘nearest school’ (paragraphs 10 to 20)
- Stamford Green Primary School – introduction of catchment area and removal of ‘nearest school’ (paragraphs 21 to 29)
- Beauclerc Infant School - reduction of Reception PAN from 40 to 30 (paragraphs 30 to 34)
- Farncombe Infant School - reduction of Reception PAN from 50 to 30 (paragraphs 35 to 39)
- St Ann’s Heath Junior School – reduction of Year 3 PAN from 90 to 60 and removal of Meadowcroft Infant School as a feeder school at Year 3 (paragraphs 40 to 46)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Cabinet Member authorises the Service Manager for School Admissions to go out to statutory consultation on the proposed changes to admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for September 2024.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

There is a statutory requirement to consult on admission arrangements every seven years, or sooner if there is a proposal to change any part of a school’s admission arrangements. The local authority is proposing some changes to the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and, as such, there is a statutory duty to consult on these changes. The consultation will also seek views on the admission arrangements for which there is no proposal for change.

DETAILS:

1. 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.
2. Consultation must take place for a minimum of six weeks, between 1 October 2022 and 31 January 2023 and all admission authorities must then determine their arrangements by 28 February 2023, whether or not they have been subject to consultation.
3. Surrey County Council (SCC) is proposing some changes to its admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and as such is intending to consult on these changes between 10 October and 21 November 2022.
4. In October 2019, the Schools Adjudicator issued a determination on the admission arrangements for Stamford Green Primary School (ADA3589) which identified some concerns with the use of 'nearest school' and the objectivity and clarity regarding this. Although this determination applied to Stamford Green Primary School, its key message applies to any school which uses 'nearest school' as part of their admission arrangements.
5. The Schools Adjudicator set out that, by having 'nearest school' as a criterion within a set of admission arrangements, the admission authority creates a catchment area which is defined by a polygonal shape based on the location of the other schools surrounding the school. As a catchment area, admission authorities have a duty to consult on any changes, such as when the inclusion or location of 'nearest' schools change as these can result in a change to the polygonal shape/catchment area and thus which children may receive priority.
6. There are also other requirements in relation to catchment areas that admission authorities must comply with, such as being reasonable and clearly defined. In order to assess whether such a catchment area meets the requirements of the Code it would be necessary to understand the catchment boundaries that are created as a result of using 'nearest school' as an admission criterion.
7. Following a review of admission arrangements in 2021 and 2022, Surrey's Cabinet agreed to remove priority for children who have the school as their 'nearest school' for the majority of community and voluntary controlled schools for 2022 and 2023 admission. However, there are two schools where it was anticipated that the removal of nearest school was more likely to have a significant impact on the intake and, as such, the local authority undertook to carry out a further review for those schools ahead of consultation for 2024. The two schools were Southfield Park Primary School and Stamford Green Primary School in Epsom & Ewell.
8. The impact of removing priority on the basis of 'nearest school' for each of these schools has now been reviewed and a summary of the review is set out in Enclosure 2. Details of the proposals for these two schools for 2024 are set out in paragraphs 10 to 29.
9. Other proposals for change that do not relate to the removal of 'nearest school' are set out in paragraphs 30 to 46.

Southfield Park Primary School – Epsom & Ewell

10. Following a review of the intake for the last three years at Southfield Park Primary School, as set out in Enclosure 2, it is now proposed to:
 - consult on an amendment to the catchment that already exists for Southfield Park;
 - amend priority within catchment to children living closest to the school based on straight line distance, rather than priority to those living further away;
 - remove priority on the basis of 'nearest school'
11. The school would still be recorded as having school specific criteria, which are set out in Section 8 of Enclosure 1. The amended catchment can be seen at Appendix 3 of Enclosure 1, with the new area being added to the catchment being shaded.
12. Southfield Park Primary School currently has a catchment that serves the housing area to the west and north west of the school. This catchment was introduced to provide priority for children who would not have easy access to another alternative school and included the area of Clarendon Park, a development built on one of the old hospital sites in Epsom. Children living within catchment are currently prioritised according to their reverse distance. In this way children living further away from the school within catchment receive the higher priority. This was introduced to ensure children living in Clarendon Park were not disadvantaged in the admissions process because, at that time, these children did not have access to another primary school.
13. Priority for children on the basis of 'nearest school' was introduced at Southfield Park Primary School for 2014 admission following representation from the Parkview Epsom Resident's Association so that, after applicants within the catchment were offered a place, children were prioritised on the basis of 'nearest school'.
14. In considering options for this school, the local authority first considered the impact if priority on the basis of catchment and 'nearest school' was removed. Modelling for the last three years indicates that, in this scenario, impact on the intake would be small, but this would open up priority for children who would have another nearer school (Epsom Primary or Stamford Green) and may disadvantage children living very close to the school.
15. The local authority also considered the impact if the catchment were retained but priority on the basis of 'nearest school' was removed. Again, whilst the impact would be small, this too would open up priority for children who would have another nearer school (Epsom Primary or Stamford Green) and may disadvantage children living closer to the school, whose next nearest school is further away.
16. In recognition of the close proximity of Southfield Park to Stamford Green and Epsom primary schools and in recognition of the distinct area that the admission arrangements for the school currently serve, it has been proposed to remove priority on the basis of 'nearest school' and instead extend the catchment area for the school to incorporate the Parkview estate, which was the area that 'nearest school' was introduced to serve. Other than this change, which is shown as the shaded area in Appendix 3 of Enclosure 1, the catchment would follow the same boundary as the current catchment area.
17. Whilst current forecasts indicate that there will be between 24 to 35 surplus places in the North West planning area of Epsom for five years from September 2023, if pupil numbers increase, children living on the Parkview estate may be displaced if priority on the basis of 'nearest school' is removed. In this way, extension of the

catchment to this area would ensure children living on the Parkview estate would continue to receive a higher priority for a place at the school.

18. The removal of 'nearest school' and extension of the catchment area makes the admission arrangements for this school simpler and more transparent as it enables every family to understand how their application will be considered.
19. It has also been proposed to amend the tie breaker for children living within catchment so that children who live closest to the school (when measured by straight line) are given highest priority as opposed to children who live furthest away. The local authority does not feel that is necessary to retain reverse distance as a tie breaker within catchment because, although it can't be guaranteed, we would expect that based on current application numbers and forecasts, all children within catchment who want one would be offered a place.
20. This proposal is supported by the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school and by Surrey's Education Place Planning team.

Stamford Green Primary School – Epsom & Ewell

21. Following a review of the intake for the last three years at Stamford Green Primary School, as set out in Enclosure 2, it is now proposed to consult on the introduction of a catchment to replace use of 'nearest school'. The school would still be recorded as having school specific criteria, as set out in Section 8 of Enclosure 1.
22. The introduction of a catchment area in place of 'nearest school' makes the admission arrangements for this school simpler and more transparent as it enables every family to understand how their application will be considered.
23. The catchment that has been proposed has been modelled on the area created by use of 'nearest school' and is shown at Appendix 4 of Enclosure 1.
24. In considering options for this school, the local authority first considered the impact if priority on the basis of 'nearest school' was removed. Modelling for the last three years indicates that, in this scenario, impact on the intake might be significant.
25. Further analysis of the children who would be displaced if 'nearest school' was removed indicated that the greatest impact would be on children living on the Noble Park estate to the west of the school and the Wells estate to the south of the school. Both of these areas have limited options for an alternative school. Those who would benefit if 'nearest school' was removed would be children to the east and north of the school who would have had another nearer school which they could have accessed (Epsom Primary or Southfield Park).
26. In recognition of the close proximity of Stamford Green to Southfield Park and Epsom primary schools and in recognition of the distinct area that the admission arrangements for the school currently serve, it has been proposed to replace priority on the basis of 'nearest school' with a catchment to incorporate the area that is created by use of 'nearest school'.
27. This would ensure that the pattern of admission to the school would not change significantly and that the school could continue to serve the Noble Park estate to the west and the Wells estate to the south of the school which are more poorly served by alternative schools.
28. The School Admissions Code sets out that catchment areas must be designed so that they are reasonable and clearly defined. Due to the requirements around

designing a catchment area, it is likely that some children who would previously have received priority on the basis of 'nearest school' will not fall within the proposed catchment area. However, it is expected that this number will be low and that these children would have other schools available to them.

29. This proposal is supported by the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school and by Surrey's Education Place Planning team.

Beauclerc Infant School – Spelthorne

30. It is proposed to formally consult on a reduction to the Reception PAN at Beauclerc Infant School from 40 to 30. This change is reflected in bold in Appendix 1 of Enclosure 1 which sets out the proposed PANs for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2024 admission.
31. This reduction in PAN has been formally requested by the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school as the school is not filling to its PAN. A reduction would enable the school to maintain financial viability as they would be able to operate with just one class.
32. There is currently a surplus of places in the Sunbury planning area. Whilst a reduction in PAN would leave the area forecast to have a surplus of only 2 or 3 places, there is also surplus in Ashford and Shepperton which could absorb any oversubscription in this area.
33. This decrease in PAN would have no impact on children who are currently on roll at the school.
34. Children from Beauclerc Infant School often apply to Chennestone Primary School at Year 3. Chennestone Primary School currently has a Year 3 PAN of 40. If this change goes ahead, the local authority and Governors at Chennestone will consider a reduction to their Year 3 PAN to 30 from September 2027, but this would be subject to consultation in the Autumn 2025.

Farncombe Infant School – Waverley

35. It is proposed to formally consult on a reduction to the Reception PAN at Farncombe Infant School from 50 to 30. This change is reflected in bold in Appendix 1 of Enclosure 1 which sets out the proposed PANs for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2024 admission.
36. Farncombe Infant School increased its PAN from 40 to 50 in 2015 to meet the needs of the local community at the time. However, this reduction in PAN has been formally requested by the Headteacher and Governing Body as, for the first time since 2015, the school did not fill to its PAN in 2022.
37. Retaining a PAN of 50 is challenging for the school because it necessitates mixed age classes. These are difficult to plan for and can lead to an increase in teacher workload and a compromise in educational standards. It is also difficult with mixed age classes to provide equality for children of different ages. Failure to fill to PAN will compound the challenge of mixed age classes, leading to a negative impact on the finances of the school which is not sustainable and will lead to the school experiencing an in-year deficit in 2021-2022.
38. Place planning forecasts indicate that there is a significant surplus of places for reception provision in Godalming with a surplus of 2FE being forecast from 2024/25. Should the proposal to reduce the PAN from 50 to 30 places at

Farncombe Infant School be agreed, the forecasts indicate that there will be a 1FE surplus across the planning area until at least the end of the planning period. As such, this proposal would aid the sustainability of the school as well as the sustainability of other schools within the wider planning area.

39. This decrease in PAN would have no impact on children who are currently on roll at the school.

St Ann's Heath Junior School – Runnymede

40. It is proposed to formally consult on a reduction to the Year 3 PAN at St Ann's Heath Junior School from 90 to 60. This change is reflected in bold in Appendix 1 of Enclosure 1 which sets out the proposed PANs for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2024 admission.
41. This change is linked to the current proposal to expand Meadowcroft Infant School to an all through primary school from September 2024, which would mean children would remain at that school after Year 2 and extra provision would no longer be needed at St Ann's Heath Junior School. This forms part of a larger reorganisation of school places in Runnymede, ensuring that provision is appropriately matched to the local area demand
42. This decrease in PAN would have no impact on children who are currently on roll at the school.
43. It is also proposed to amend the admission criteria for St Ann's Heath Junior School at Year 3 to remove Meadowcroft Infant School as a feeder school because, after expansion, children would not need to transfer to St Ann's Heath Junior School from Meadowcroft. This change is reflected in bold in Section 8 of Enclosure 1.
44. The reciprocal sibling link between Meadowcroft Infant School and St Ann's Heath Junior School would also be removed, so a child applying for a place at St Ann's Heath Junior School would no longer receive sibling priority if they have a sibling attending Meadowcroft Infant School, and vice versa. This change is reflected in Appendix 2 of Enclosure 1.
45. This proposal is supported by the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school. It is also supported by Surrey's Education Place Planning team who are leading on the proposal to expand Meadowcroft Infant School into a primary school.
46. The proposal to expand Meadowcroft Infant School into a primary school is due to be decided on by the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning on 29 November 2022. If the proposal for Meadowcroft Infant School is not agreed for 2024 then the changes to PAN and admission criteria at St Ann's Heath Junior School will not be recommended to Cabinet.

Points of clarification that are not subject to consultation

47. If the proposal to remove priority on the basis of 'nearest school' for Southfield Park and Stamford Green primary schools is agreed, Surrey would no longer have any community or voluntary controlled schools that give priority on this basis. As a result, the local authority would no longer have to confirm which schools will and will not be included in the assessment of nearest school. Historically, some faith schools were discounted from the assessment of 'nearest school'. As such, the explanatory text relating to 'nearest school' has been removed from Enclosure 1. In addition, Appendix 3 of Enclosure 1 has been removed as this set out a list of

academies and foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools that would be excluded when assessing nearest school and which is no longer relevant.

48. There are 17 own admission authority schools that give priority on the basis of nearest school within their admission arrangements for 2023. These schools have been advised that any 'nearest school' assessment carried out by the local authority for 2024 admission is likely to include all schools in that assessment.
49. Other clarifications to the admission arrangements in Enclosure 1 are as follows:
 - Section 12 on siblings has been updated to clarify that a sibling at the nursery will not count towards sibling priority for the main school
 - Section 15 on waiting lists has been updated to confirm that waiting lists will close on the last day of the summer term rather than the last day of July
 - Section 21 has been updated to refer to Travel Assistance as opposed to Home to School transport

CONSULTATION:

50. The Education Place Planning team has been involved in considering the proposals for change.
51. All schools directly affected by the proposed changes have been consulted.
52. All community and voluntary controlled schools have been consulted on the PAN that is to be proposed for 2024 admission.
53. Parents, schools and other stakeholders will have the opportunity to comment on the proposed admission arrangements, including any changes being proposed, throughout the six-week consultation.
54. As the local authority is only responsible for consulting on the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools, the details of any school that becomes an academy before consultation begins will be removed from the paperwork.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

55. The risks of consulting on these changes are low. There may be some local opposition to some of the proposals from those cohorts or groups that may be disadvantaged by the proposals, but it is important to identify those concerns as part of the consultation.

Financial and value for money implications:

56. 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.
57. It should be noted that there is no mechanism for managing the transition to a reduced PAN in the schools funding arrangements. Therefore, the individual schools listed in this report will need to ensure their budget plans contain appropriate levels of income in future years reflecting these proposed changes.

Section 151 Officer commentary:

58. Although significant progress has been made to improve the Council's financial position, the financial environment remains challenging. The UK is experiencing the highest levels of inflation for decades, putting significant pressure on the cost of delivering our services. Coupled with continued increasing demand and fixed Government funding this requires an increased focus on financial management to ensure we can continue to deliver services within available funding. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2022/23 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 stable provision of services in the medium term.
59. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports the proposed consultation to ensure the most effective allocation of school places.

Legal implications – Monitoring Officer:

60. The proposed admission arrangements comply with legislation on School Admissions and the requirements of the School Admissions Code.
61. The local authority will carry out a consultation on all changes for a period of six weeks between 10 October and 21 November 2022, which is in accordance with statutory requirements.
62. The consultation will be carried out with all persons required under the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2014.
63. The local authority will give due regard to the responses to the consultation before considering the recommendations to put before Cabinet.
64. The public sector equality duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) applies to the decision to be made by the Cabinet Member in this report. There is a requirement when deciding upon the recommendations to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics, foster good relations between such groups and eliminate any unlawful discrimination. These matters are dealt with in the equalities paragraphs of the report and in the attached equalities impact assessment (EIA).

Equalities and diversity:

65. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is attached as Enclosure 3. The adoption of determined admission criteria is a mandatory requirement supported by primary legislation. The policy as it relates to community and voluntary controlled schools does not discriminate by age, gender, ethnicity, faith, disability or sexual orientation.
66. Measures have been taken to reference vulnerable groups both in terms of exceptional arrangements within admissions, the Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) process and the Fair Access Protocol. In addition, a right of appeal exists for all applicants who are refused a place at a particular school.

Other implications:

67. 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
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report

Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications:

68. As required by the School Admissions Code, the proposed admission arrangements give top priority to children who are Looked After by a local authority and to those children who have left care through adoption, a child arrangements order or a special guardianship order, including those who have been adopted from state care outside England.

Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications:

69. The efficient and timely administration of the school admissions 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

70. The County Council attaches great importance to being environmentally aware and wishes to show leadership in cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change.

71. The admission arrangements enable the majority of pupils to attend a local school and in doing so reduces travel and supports policies on cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

72. If approval is given to consult, the local authority will consult on the proposed admission arrangements for six weeks between 10 October and 21 November 2022.

73. As the local authority is only responsible for consulting on the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools, the details of any school that becomes an academy before consultation begins will be removed from the paperwork.

74. Details will be distributed to:

- all schools and nurseries in the county including a form of wording that they may wish to display on their website, in newsletters or on notice boards.

- out of County schools which are close to the border of Surrey
- each of Surrey's neighbouring local authorities
- each Diocesan Body representing schools in the county
- all Surrey County Council Members and Borough/District Members, asking them to share the details with local community and resident groups as appropriate
- Parish Councils within the area of Surrey County Council
- Surrey MPs

75. A paper summarising the outcome of the consultation and making recommendations will then be passed to Surrey's Cabinet on 31 January 2023 for decision and then to full Council on 7 February 2023 to ratify the decision so that the admission arrangements for Surrey's community and voluntary controlled schools for 2024 can be determined before the statutory deadline of 28 February 2023.

76. As the local authority is only responsible for determining the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools, the details of any school that becomes an academy before determination will be removed from the paperwork.

77. The admission arrangements for September 2024 will then be published by 15 March 2023 on Surrey's website and a notice will be sent to all those consulted.

Contact Officer:

Claire Potier, Service Manager, School Admissions
claire.potier@surreycc.gov.uk

Consulted:

Education Place Planning Team
 Schools affected by the proposals
 Director – Education and Lifelong Learning
 Assistant Director for Education

Annexes:

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| ENCLOSURE 1 | Proposed admission arrangements for C&VC schools |
| APPENDIX 1 | Proposed published admission numbers |
| APPENDIX 2 | Proposed schools to be considered for shared sibling priority |
| APPENDIX 3 | Proposed catchment map for Southfield Park |
| APPENDIX 4 | Proposed catchment map for Stamford Green |
| APPENDIX 5 | Proposed catchment map for Walton on the Hill |
| APPENDIX 6 | Supplementary Information Form for social/medical applicants |
| APPENDIX 7 | Supplementary Information Form for children of staff applicants |
| ENCLOSURE 2 | Modelling on the removal of use of nearest school |
| ENCLOSURE 3 | Equality Impact Assessment |

Sources/background papers:

- School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2014
 - School Standards and Framework Act 1998
 - Education Act 2002
 - School Admissions Code 2021
 - Equality Act 2002
 - OSA determination on Stamford Green - ADA3589
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