

# Surrey County Council

## Consultation on proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for September 2024

### Introduction

Surrey County Council is consulting on proposed changes to admission arrangements for some community and voluntary controlled schools for September 2024.

Details of the changes being proposed are set out in this document.

The proposed admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools are set out in the following documents:

Enclosure 1	Admission arrangements for community & voluntary controlled schools
APPENDIX 1	Published admission numbers
APPENDIX 2	Schools to operate shared sibling priority
APPENDIX 3	Catchment map for Southfield Park Primary School
APPENDIX 4	Catchment map for Stamford Green Primary School
APPENDIX 5	Catchment map for Walton on the Hill Primary School
APPENDIX 6	Supplementary form for social/medical applicants
APPENDIX 7	Supplementary form for staff applicants

An equality impact assessment is included as **Enclosure 2**.

### What changes are being proposed?

#### 1. Southfield Park Primary School and Stamford Green Primary School – Epsom & Ewell

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 applied to any school which used 'nearest school' as part of their admission arrangements.

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.

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.

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, for Southfield Park Primary School and Stamford Green Primary School in Epsom & Ewell, 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.

As well as consideration of the points raised by the Schools Adjudicator, other reasons for reviewing priority on the basis of 'nearest school' are as follows:

- 'nearest school' is measured in a straight line from the child's home address. In this way, although this may be used to prioritise applicants, it does not necessarily reflect the school that is nearest by walking or road route or the one that is easiest for the child to get to
- having a school as a 'nearest school' does not guarantee a place can be offered
- the majority of schools do not give priority to children based on whether it is a child's nearest school

The impact of removing priority on the basis of 'nearest school' for Southfield Park Primary School and Stamford Green Primary School has now been reviewed and details of the proposals for these two schools for 2024 are set out below.

## **Southfield Park Primary School**

### **Proposal**

For September 2024, the local authority is proposing to:

- extend the catchment that already exists for Southfield Park to include the Parkview estate;
- remove priority on the basis of 'nearest school' outside catchment;
- amend priority within catchment to children living closest to the school based on straight line distance, rather than priority to those living further away;

Southfield Park Primary School will still be recorded as having school specific criteria, as set out in Section 8 of Enclosure 1 and the school's admission criteria would be as follows:

1. Looked after and previously looked after children
2. Exceptional social/medical need
3. Children of a member of staff
4. Siblings
5. Children living in the defined catchment area of the school
6. Any other children

### **Background**

Southfield Park Primary School currently has a catchment that serves the housing area to the west and northwest 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 reverse distance, with those children living further away from the school receiving 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.

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 Residents' Association so that, after applicants within the catchment were offered a place, children were prioritised on the basis of 'nearest school'.

### **Reason for proposal**

In considering options for this school for 2024, 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 (see Annex 1 to this document) 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 Primary) and may disadvantage children living very close to the school.

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 Primary) and may disadvantage children living closer to the school, whose next nearest school is further away.

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.

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.

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.

It should however be noted that home to school distance is not being removed as a category for admission. After siblings and children living within catchment, priority in criterion 6 would be based on straight line distance from the child's home address to the school and so, under this criterion, children living closer to the school would be allocated ahead of other children who live further away.

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.

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**

### **Proposal**

For September 2024, the local authority is proposing to introduce a catchment for Stamford Green Primary School as set out in Appendix 4 of Enclosure 1. The catchment will replace use of 'nearest school' as a criterion.

The school will still be recorded as having school specific criteria, as set out in Section 8 of Enclosure 1. The school's admission criteria would be as follows:

1. Looked after and previously looked after children
2. Exceptional social/medical need
3. Children of a member of staff
4. Siblings
5. Children living in the defined catchment area of the school
6. Any other children

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.

### **Reason for Proposal**

In considering options for this school, the local authority first considered the impact if priority on the basis of 'nearest school' was removed with nothing replacing it. Modelling for the last three years (see Annex 1 to this document) indicates that, in this scenario, impact on the intake might be significant. 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 Primary).

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'.

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.

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.

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.

It should however be noted that home to school distance is not being removed as a category for admission. After siblings and children living within catchment, priority under criterion 6 would be based on straight line distance from the child's home address to the school and so, under this criterion, children living closer to the school would be allocated ahead of other children who live further away.

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

## **2. Beauclerc Infant School – Spelthorne**

For September 2024, the local authority is proposing to reduce the published admission number (PAN) at Reception for Beauclerc Infant School from 40 to 30. This change is reflected in Appendix 1 of Enclosure 1 which sets out the proposed PANs for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2024 admission.

Beauclerc Infant School currently has a Reception PAN of 40. However, 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 will provide the school with greater ability to maintain financial viability as they will be able to operate with just one class.

Surrey's Education Place Planning team are supportive of this proposal as 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. This decrease in PAN would have no impact on children who are currently on roll at the school.

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 separate consultation in autumn 2025.

### 3. Farncombe Infant School - Waverley

For September 2024, the local authority is proposing to reduce the published admission number (PAN) at Reception for Farncombe Infant School from 50 to 30. This change is reflected in Appendix 1 of Enclosure 1 which sets out the proposed PANs for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2024 admission.

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.

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.

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.

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

### 4. St Ann's Heath Junior School – Runnymede

For September 2024, the local authority is proposing to reduce the published admission number (PAN) at Year 3 for St Ann's Heath Junior School from 90 to 60. This change is reflected in Appendix 1 of Enclosure 1 which sets out the proposed PANs for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2024 admission.

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

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.

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.

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.

If the proposal for Meadowcroft Infant School is not agreed for September 2024 by the end of December 2022, then the changes to PAN and admission criteria at St Ann's Heath Junior School for 2024 will not be recommended to Cabinet. However, if it is agreed to expand Meadowcroft Infant School into a primary school after the end of December 2022, the local authority will consider submitting an in year variation to vary the admission arrangements for 2024 in line with this consultation.

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## **5. How can you respond to the consultation?**

The consultation on the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and these proposed changes will run until Wednesday 16 November 2022. If you would like to take part, please complete an online response form available at [www.surreysays.co.uk](http://www.surreysays.co.uk). Alternatively, if you would prefer to respond on a paper form, please telephone the Surrey Schools and Childcare Service on 0300 200 1004 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm) to request a copy. Please note that only response forms which are fully completed with the respondent's name and address will be accepted.

## **6. What happens next?**

After the closing date, responses will be collated and presented to the County Council's decision-making Cabinet on 31 January 2023. It will decide whether to proceed with the proposed changes as well as determining the admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools for which no changes are proposed. Cabinet's decision will then need to be ratified by the full County Council on 7 February 2023. Once determined, the final admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2024 will be placed on Surrey's website at [www.surreycc.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/admissions).

## Modelling for Southfield Park and Stamford Green primary schools

### Southfield Park Primary School

Modelling for Southfield Park Primary School based on the last three intakes would indicate that, if the criteria of 'catchment' and 'nearest school' were removed and priority had been based on straight line distance after siblings, the impact on the intake would have been as follows:

- In 2022, three children would have been displaced (one from within the catchment area and two children who had it as their nearest school) in favour of three children who lived closer. The three children who would have been offered all lived closer by straight line to Epsom Primary
- In 2021, three children from within the catchment area would have been displaced in favour of three children who lived closer. The three children who would have been offered lived closer by straight line to either Danetree Primary, Stamford Green Primary or Epsom Primary. The three children who would have been displaced each lived on the Clarendon Park estate and had Southfield Park as their nearest school
- In 2020, there would have been no impact

Modelling for the school for the last three intakes if only the criterion of 'nearest school' had been removed and, after catchment, priority had been based on straight line distance instead of nearest school:

- In 2022, three children would have been displaced (each who had it as their nearest school) in favour of three children who lived closer (but who had another nearest school). The three children who would have been offered all lived closer by straight line to Epsom Primary
- In 2021, there would have been no impact
- In 2020, there would have been no impact

### Stamford Green Primary School

Modelling for Stamford Green Primary School based on the last three intakes would indicate that, if the criterion of 'nearest school' was removed and priority had been based on straight line distance after siblings, the impact on the intake would have been as follows:

- In 2022, 10 different children would have been offered if nearest school had not been used and all of these had Epsom Primary as their nearest school by straight line. 10 children who lived nearer would have been displaced as a result and these lived on either the Noble Park or the Wells estate
- In 2021, six different children would have been offered if nearest school had not been used. Of these, five had Epsom Primary as their nearest school by straight line and one had Southfield Park as their nearest school. Six children who lived nearer would have been displaced as a result and nine of these lived on either the Noble Park or the Wells estate
- In 2020, 12 different children would have been offered if nearest school had not been used. Of these, seven had Epsom Primary as their nearest school by straight line, four had Southfield Park as their nearest school and one had St Martin's Infant as their nearest school. 12 children who lived nearer would have been displaced as a result and all of these lived on either the Noble Park or the Wells estate