

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET**

DATE: 30 JANUARY 2024

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

LEAD OFFICER: RACHAEL WARDELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LIFELONG LEARNING

SUBJECT: ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SURREY'S COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR SEPTEMBER 2025

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 2025.

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 78 community and voluntary controlled schools for 2025. 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.

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:

1. That the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools, including the Published Admission Numbers (PANs), for September 2025 are agreed as set out in Annex 1 and its appendices.

Reason for Recommendations:

- The local authority has a duty to determine the admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools by 28 February 2024
- 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 changes highlighted in bold red text in Sections 10, 11, 14 and 19 of Annex 1 have been made to add clarity to the arrangements and reflect existing practice
- The arrangements remain as they were determined for 2024, which enables parents to have some historical benchmark by which to make informed decisions about their school preferences for 2025 admission
- The arrangements are compliant with the School Admissions Code

Executive Summary:

1. The local authority has a duty to determine the admission arrangements for all 78 community and voluntary controlled schools by 28 February 2024, even if there are no changes proposed.
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.
4. It is proposed that the admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2025 will remain as determined for 2024. This will enable parents to have some historical benchmark by which to make informed decisions about their school preferences.
5. The only changes are points of clarification within Annex 1 as follows:
 - Within the second and third criteria on pages 3 and 4, and Sections 10 and 11 on pages 8 and 9, the wording has been updated to say 'should' rather than 'must' to ensure applicants who do not complete the supplementary form are not precluded from being considered under these criteria
 - Within Section 14 on page 12, a description of how the tiebreaker of random allocation will be applied when two applicants have equal priority for a place has been added
 - Within Section 19 on Nursery admissions, wording has been updated on page 14 to reflect the correct terminology in relation to 'funded' places
6. 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.
7. The admission arrangements are standardised, as much as is reasonably possible, such as ensuring all schools give priority to looked after and previously looked after children, social/medical need, children of staff and siblings. However, there is sometimes a need for school specific criteria to respond to local need,

such as feeder links and catchments and, where these exist, this is set out in Section 8 of Annex 1.

8. The School Admissions Code requires admission arrangements to be fair, clear and objective and for parents to be able to look at a set of arrangements and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated.
9. The Education Place Planning team support the proposed PANs.
10. 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.

Consultation:

11. Regulations require consultation to take place where:
 - A change is being proposed; or
 - the local authority has not consulted on the admission arrangements in the previous seven years
12. The Local Authority last consulted on its admission arrangements for 2024 and so the seven-year threshold has not been met for consultation. In addition, the admission arrangements that have been proposed for 2025 are the same as for 2024.
13. As such, no consultation has been undertaken on the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2025.

Risk Management and Implications:

14. The risks of implementing these arrangements are low. However, any parents who feel unfairly disadvantaged by the arrangements can object to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator.

Financial and Value for Money Implications:

15. 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.
16. 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 and none are proposed for 2024/25. The council will consider its policy on this issue for future years in due course in consultation with schools forum and those schools affected.

Section 151 Officer Commentary:

17. 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.
18. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2023/24 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.
19. 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, as such the S151 supports the recommendations of this report.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:

20. The admission arrangements comply with legislation on school admissions and the School Admissions Code.
21. There was no statutory requirement for consultation as set out in The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 as no changes, other than the minor points of clarification as detailed at paragraph 5, have been proposed and the seven year threshold for consultation has not been met.
22. 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:

23. The Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed in full and is attached in Annex 2. 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.

24. 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:

25. 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:

26. 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:

27. 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:

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

29. 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.

30. 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.
31. 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 2025 admissions arrangements as agreed by the Cabinet will be ratified by the full County Council on 6 February 2024.
- The determined admission arrangements will be published on Surrey's website by 15 March 2024 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 2024.
- The arrangements will be published in the primary and secondary admissions booklets in August 2024, which will be made available to parents online and in hard copy by request in September 2024.
- 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 2025 entry will also be published on Surrey County Council's website in September 2024.

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Annexes:

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| 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 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 Act 2002
 - School Admissions Code 2021
 - Equality Act 2002
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