

Determined Admissions Arrangements for the 2026/27 academic year

To: Children and Young People's Committee

Meeting Date: 14 January 2025

From: Sarah Callaghan Service Director Education

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: Not applicable

Executive Summary: To approve the co-ordinated scheme for admission to a school and changes to the admissions arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools which would affect the admission of children in the 2026/27 academic year. By agreeing to approve the admission arrangements for 2026/27, the Committee will be ensuring that the Council is meeting its legal obligations.

Recommendation: Children and Young People Committee is recommended to determine the co-ordinated qualifying scheme and admission arrangements for all schools for whom the Council, as the Local Authority, is the admission authority as published in the consultation documents for admission to school in 2026/27.

Voting arrangements: Co-opted members are eligible to vote on this report.

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1. Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

1.1 The report relates to Ambition 7 – Children and Young People have opportunities to thrive.

2. Background

2.1 The Local Authority (LA) is responsible for formulating, each academic year, a qualifying scheme in relation to the transition of children to each primary and secondary school in Cambridgeshire. The LA must consult in respect of the proposed scheme, where it is substantially different from the qualifying scheme adopted in the preceding academic year, or where the LA has not consulted on a qualifying scheme in the previous seven years.

2.2 In addition, the LA, as the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools in Cambridgeshire, must determine the admission arrangements for these schools every year. Consultation of those arrangements is required when the following changes are proposed:

A decrease in the Published Admission Number (PAN); and/or

- A change to the catchment area; and/or
- A change to over-subscription criteria.

2.3 There is no requirement on admission authorities to consult on any proposed increase to a school's PAN.

2.4 The statutory School Admissions Code 2021 ("the Code") requires that the consultation period must be for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year.

2.5 All admission authorities must consult with:

- (a) parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen.
- (b) other persons in the relevant area who, in the opinion of the admission authority, have an interest in the proposed admissions.
- (c) all other admission authorities within the relevant area (except that primary schools need not consult secondary schools).
- (d) whichever of the governing body or the local authority is not the admission authority for the school; any adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the LA; and
- (e) in the case of schools designated with a religious character, the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination.

2.6 Following the consultation period for admission to school in 2026/27, all admission authorities need to have determined their admission arrangements by 28 February 2025 (the determination year) and then notified all consultees of this within 14 days of that date. Once determined, all admission authorities are required to publish a copy of the determined arrangements on their website by 15 March 2025 (the determination year) and continue displaying them for the whole offer year (the school year in which offers for places are made (2026/27)). All other admission authorities must send a copy of their full, determined arrangements to the LA by 15 March 2025 too. Admission authorities for schools

designated with a religious character must also send a copy of their arrangements to the body or person representing their religion or religious denomination on this date.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The consultation documents including the proposed co-ordinated qualifying scheme and admission arrangements for schools for whom the LA is the admission authority for 2026/27 were published 14 November 2024. The six-week consultation period will conclude on the 31 December 2024. Prior to this date all foundation, voluntary aided and academy schools in Cambridgeshire had been contacted to remind them of the need to follow the consultation and determination process as set out in the Code.
- 3.2 The LA's consultation was in respect of proposed admission processes and these arrangements / proposals have been consulted on. A decrease in the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the following schools:
- 3.3 **Meridian Primary School** – Meridian Primary School – Cambridgeshire County Council applied to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) for a variation in the school's admissions arrangements for the 2025/26 academic year to reduce the school's Published Admission Number (PAN) from 45 to 30. This will bring the numbers in line with the size of recent reception intakes and give more efficient class organisation for the school. The OSA approved this on 13 December. It is proposed to keep the PAN of 30 for 2026/27 because information on the pre-school population indicates that future intakes will be below 30. If in-catchment year groups do exceed 30, the school has agreed work with the Council and to over-admit if necessary.
- 3.4 **Wilburton Primary School** – reduction of PAN from 20 to 15. This is supported because it allows the school to operate a more efficient class structure with the school only having to mix two-year groups with a PAN of 15. Officers have been working with the Headteacher to manage year groups and an operational PAN was agreed of 15 for Years 1 to 6 in 2024/25. The school admitted 10 in September 2024 and 12 the previous September and information on the pre-school population indicates that intakes from 2026/27 will be similar.
- 3.5 **Thorndown Primary School** – reduction of PAN from 90 to 60. This is supported because there has been a fall in the pre-school population in St Ives and intakes for the school from 2026/27 are forecast to be at or below 60. With a PAN of 60, the school would be able to admit all catchment children. The school is planning to restructure because of falling rolls and officers have been working with the Headteacher to manage year groups. An operational PAN of 60 was agreed in Year 2 for 2024/25. There is capacity in the other town schools if any pupils are displaced (Eastfield Infant, Westfield Junior and Wheatfields Primary).
- 3.6 Please note that the LA does not publish details of proposed admission arrangements for own admission authority schools (where the LA is not the admissions authority). However own admissions authorities must notify the LA of their intention to increase the school PAN and reference the change needs to be made on the school's own website.
- 3.7 The proposals compare well with best practice/performance and meet the views of those consulted. There were no objections received regarding the changes above during the consultation period.

4. Alternative Options Considered

4.1 Not applicable.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 Admission authorities are responsible for admissions and must act in accordance with the Code, the School Admission Appeals Code (2022), other laws relating to admissions, and relevant human rights and equalities legislation.

6. Significant Implications

6.1 Finance Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

6.2 Legal Implications

Once the Committee's approval has been secured, and the Admission Arrangements are 'Determined' the Council will be able to demonstrate it has met the requirements of the relevant codes, legislation relating to admissions and the relevant human rights and equalities legislation.

6.3 Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

7. Source Documents

7.1 None