

## **CABINET MEMBER DECISION**

### **20 FEBRUARY 2025**

# **SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR 2026/27, CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEMES 2026/27 & PUBLISHED ADMISSION NUMBER CHANGES FOR 2026/27**

---

#### **Relevant Cabinet Member**

Councillor David Chambers

#### **Relevant Officer**

Director of Children's Services

#### **Recommendation**

**1. The Director of Children's Services recommends that the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education:**

- (a) approves the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2026/27 as set out in Appendices 1a and 1b;**
- (b) approves the scheme for Co-ordinated Admissions for First, Primary/Middle and Secondary Schools for 2026/27 as set out in Appendices 2a and 2b, the in-year Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for 2025/26 in Appendix 2c; and**
- (c) approves the Published Admission Numbers for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, as set out in Appendix 3.**

#### **Background**

2. In March 2014, Cabinet agreed that where no significant changes are proposed to the school admission arrangements, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education has delegated authority for approving the Schools Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools and schemes for Co-ordinated Admissions in consultation with the Director of Children's Services. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education has therefore approved the arrangements on an annual basis.

3. Significant changes were made to those arrangements, including extending the delegated authority of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education to include approving the admission arrangements as a whole (meaning policy, Published Admission Numbers (PAN) and co-ordinated schemes) as well as the introduction of an In-Year co-ordinated scheme and a new Fair Access Protocol. Cabinet reviewed and approved those changes in January 2020.

4. There are no significant changes proposed to the 2026/27 Admissions Policy, and no PAN changes. The arrangements were subject to full public consultation and require Cabinet Member approval for the academic year 2026/27.

### **Review of the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2026/27**

5. The School Admissions Team undertook full public consultation in line with the statutory requirements of section 1.45 of the Code on School Admissions. This included direct mailing to all schools in Worcestershire, neighbouring local authorities, Diocesan Boards, Trade Unions, and libraries. The information was also published on the School Admissions website. An advertisement was published in all the local papers alerting parents to the information on the website and directing them to locations where hard copies could be viewed, if required. The consultation was also shared on social media. Consultation took place between 4 November 2024 and 13 December 2024. The consultation document is attached as Appendix 4.

6. As there are no significant changes recommended, responsibility for approving the arrangements remains with the Cabinet Member in consultation with the Director of Children's Services. It is therefore recommended that the Cabinet Member approves the admissions arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the academic year 2026/27, attached as Appendices 1a and 1b.

### **Co-ordinated Admission Schemes for 2026/27 and In-year Scheme for 2025/26**

7. The School Admissions Code Section 2.20 states:

*"Each year Local Authorities must formulate a scheme to co-ordinate admission arrangements for all publicly funded schools within their area. Where the scheme is not substantially different from that adopted in previous years there is no requirement to consult."*

8. There are no changes to the closing and offer dates (see table below), with only minor amendments to the exchange of information dates with other admission authorities.

	<b>Closing Date</b>	<b>Offer Date</b>
<b>Primary/Middle</b>	15 January 2026	16 April 2026
<b>Secondary</b>	31 October 2025	1 March 2026

9. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet Member approves the Co-ordinated Admissions Schemes for primary/middle and secondary schools for the academic year 2026/27 as set out in Appendices 2a & 2b.

10. The In-Year co-ordinated scheme for in-year admissions for 2025/2026 remains unchanged from the scheme approved for 2024/2025.

11. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet Member approves the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for In-Year admissions as set out in Appendix 2c.

## Published Admission Number (PAN) Changes

12. Worcestershire County Council Sufficiency and Place Planning Team keep under review the PAN for all community and voluntary controlled schools and consults with Governing Bodies annually to ensure there are sufficient places in an area for the number of pupils seeking to attend their local school.

13. Admission Authorities need no longer consult on an increase to the PAN if the school has sufficient accommodation. This change was introduced by the revised Code on School Admissions in December 2014.

14. There are no proposed PAN changes for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2026/27.

15. **Crabbs Cross Academy** have conducted public consultation on a proposal to reduce the school PAN from 45 to 30 for 2026. The Trust are also proposing a change of age range from 4 – 9 years, to 4 – 11 years, to convert from a First School to a Primary School. A reduction of the PAN at the school would be required to ensure this change could take place without the need for additional accommodation.

16. In November 2024, the Sufficiency and Place Planning Team responded to the Academy Trust/school on the proposed reduction in PAN. In responding to proposals of this type, Worcestershire County Council is required to ensure the changes do not impact on the duty to ensure there is a sufficiency of school places in the area, and that families can continue to access good school places, with an element of parental preference.

17. A full assessment of school provision within the area has been conducted to assess the ability of schools to continue to meet the forecast demand for places. The County Council seek to maintain a 5% surplus of places across an area to allow for in-year admissions or unexpected increases.

18. The Council has reviewed the current and expected future demand for places at the school and confirms that the reduction in the PAN from 45 to 30 will cause a concern for basic need. More than a half of the children living in the Crabbs Cross catchment attend neighbouring schools. Those schools are expected to receive additional pupils from new housing, and a shortfall of places is likely, local schools cannot meet the expected demand for places with the proposed reduced PAN of 30 at Crabbs Cross Academy, the local authority cannot support this proposal.

19. Cabinet approved the criteria to assess all proposals, based on Department for Education (DfE) guidance for school organisation/prescribed alterations, in January 2020. Cabinet at that meeting also delegated authority to the Director of Children's Services (DCS) to respond to such proposals, where the Local Authority is not the decision maker. In the case of Crabbs Cross Academy, the DfE Regions Team are the decision maker.

20. The DCS has responded to the Academy Trust, to advise, there is no evidence of an agreed, clear and practical pathway for children to move on from each school affected by the change. Parents need to clearly understand all their options for future school places for their children. No pathway school has committed in writing to do so, so it is not

clear to parents that this is subject to a formal consultation on an admissions change by the pathway school.

21. The Change of Age Range to add Years 5 and 6 would potentially have a detrimental impact on Walkwood Church of England Middle School, serving pupils living in the Redditch Southwest Education Planning Area by reducing the middle school's Year 5 intakes. There is already forecast to be an oversupply of middle school places across Redditch Southwest and Northwest Education Planning areas, and additional Year 5 and Year 6 places at Crabbs Cross Academy will increase this oversupply.

22. The school is an academy school and as such the Trust are responsible for the decision to reduce PAN, this is reported for information purposes by the Cabinet Member. All schools have until 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025 to determine their admission arrangements. If the Trust do determine to reduce the PAN from 45 to 30, then an objection to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator can be submitted by the Local Authority.

23. The proposed change of age range is a decision to be made by the DfE Regions Team, this is reported for information purposes to the Cabinet Member.

24. **St Johns CE Primary School, Kidderminster**, have conducted public consultation on reducing the PAN from 60 to 30 for 2026. Based on known children data and forecast information, the Local Authority considers that the proposal of reducing PAN at St John's CE Primary School, does not risk the sufficiency of school places in the Kidderminster West Primary Education Planning Area. With a reduction to a PAN of 30 there would continue to be sufficient places across the primary planning area to accommodate all known children due to start school, living in the catchment areas and forecasted additional pupils from approved housing. The school is an academy school and as such the Trust are responsible for the decision to reduce PAN, this is reported for information purposes to the Cabinet Member.

25. **Welland Primary School, Upton**, have conducted public consultation on reducing the PAN from 30 to 20 for 2026. Based on known children data and forecast information, the Local Authority considers that the proposal of reducing PAN at Welland Primary School, does not risk the sufficiency of school places in the Upton Primary Education Planning Area. With a reduction to PAN there would continue to be sufficient places across the primary planning area to accommodate all known children due to start school, living in the catchment areas and forecasted additional pupils from approved housing. The school is an academy school and as such the Trust are responsible for the decision to reduce PAN, this is reported for information purposes to the Cabinet Member.

26. It is therefore recommended that the Cabinet Member approves the PANs for Community and Voluntary Controlled primary/middle and secondary schools for the academic year 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 3.

## **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

27. The local authority is required to comply with The School Admissions Code ("the Code") which applies to admissions to all maintained schools in England. The Code is statutory having been *"issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1988 and imposes mandatory requirements including guidelines setting out aims,*

*objectives and other matters in relation to the discharge of functions relating to admissions by bodies listed below:*

*a) Admission authorities of maintained schools as defined in Section 88(1) (a) and (b) of the SSFA 1998*

*b) Governing bodies and local authorities (when not admission authorities)*

*c) Schools Adjudicators*

*d) Admission Appeal Panels.*

*These bodies have a statutory duty to act in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Code.”*

28. It is the responsibility of the admissions authority to ensure that admission arrangements e.g. the overall procedure, practices, criteria and supplementary information to be used in deciding the allocation of school places are compliant with the Code to ensure that all school places for maintained schools are allocated and offered in an open, clear, objective and fair way. Parents should be able to look at the admission arrangement and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated.

29. Admission authorities must determine admission arrangements annually and where changes are proposed must publicly consult on those arrangements between 1 October and 31 January. Community and voluntary controlled schools have the right to object to the Schools Adjudicator if the PAN set for them is lower than they would wish.

There are no financial and HR implications that will occur because of endorsing the recommendations in this report.

### **Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments**

22. An Equality Impact Assessment relevance screening has been completed on the Admission Policy for 2026/27. It shows that the recommendations do not have an adverse impact on children and young people or any of the protected groups and promotes equality.

23. There are no Public Health and Privacy Impact Assessment implications that will occur because of endorsing the recommendations in this report.

### **Risk Implications**

24. The delivery and consequences of the recommendations have been considered and there are no risk implications that are likely to occur because of endorsing the recommendations in this report.

### **Supporting Information (available electronically only)**

- Appendices 1a & 1b - Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools
- Appendices 2a & 2b & 2c - Co-ordinated Schemes for Worcestershire Schools
- Appendix 3 – Published Admission Numbers
- Appendix 4 – Consultation letter

## **Contact Points**

### Specific Contact Points for this report

Tracey Wilson, Mainstream School Admissions Manager

Tel: 01905 843 033

Email: [twilson@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:twilson@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk)

## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

[School Admissions Code](#)

[Cabinet Papers 30 January 2020](#)