

CABINET
4 FEBRUARY 2021**SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY
AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR 2022/23,
CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEMES 2022/23 &
PUBLISHED ADMISSION NUMBER CHANGES FOR 2022/23**

Relevant Cabinet Member

Mr M J Hart

Relevant Officer

Director of Children's Services

Recommendation

- 1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills recommends that Cabinet:**
 - (a) approves the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2022/23 as set out in Appendices 1a and 1b;**
 - (b) approves the scheme for Co-ordinated Admissions for Primary/Middle and Secondary Schools for 2022/23 as set out in Appendices 2a and 2b; and**
 - (c) approves the Published Admission Numbers for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, including the proposed reduction, 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 and Skills 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 (then) Director of Children's Services. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills has therefore approved the arrangements on an annual basis. There were significant changes made to those arrangements, including extending the delegated authority of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills 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.

3. The Published Admission Number (PAN) must be determined at the same time as the admission policy. The 2014 delegations in relation to the admission arrangements, apply to the admissions policy and the co-ordinated schemes. Following approval by Cabinet in January 2020, this was extended to cover the admission arrangements as a

whole (including policy, PAN and co-ordinated schemes) annually, unless prescribed alterations to maintained schools, through increases in physical capacity, are required.

4. There is however a change proposed to the Admissions Policy, as well as a PAN reduction. The arrangements therefore required full public consultation and require Cabinet approval for the academic year 2022/23.

5. In response to the Coronavirus Pandemic the Department for Education (DfE) required schools that have a practicing faith element in their admission arrangements to consider the impact Covid has had on church attendance, where that place of worship may have been closed for a period of time. The only Voluntary Controlled school this has implications for is Wolverley CE Secondary School. It was therefore determined to review the existing arrangements.

Review of the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2022/23

6. Worcestershire Children First (WCF) School Admissions Team undertook full public consultation in line with the statutory requirements of section 1.44 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 12 October 2020 and 4 December 2020. The consultation document and response form is attached as Appendix 4.

7. The current approved arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Middle and High Schools state:

“In the event of oversubscription at Wolverley CE Secondary School up to a maximum of 10% of places will be awarded to children living in the Wyre Forest District Council area whose parents have specifically asked for a place for reasons of religious affiliation. The definition of religious affiliation would be in line with the criteria for other CE Voluntary Aided schools in the County:

- Active members of a Church of England church:

(Active members are those that have attended church at least once a month for a period of at least 12 months prior to the application. Confirmation of attendance is required to be submitted with your application and must be in writing from the minister)”

8. The arrangements have been in place since 2007 and there have been no applications submitted on the above grounds to date. Following the DfE request to consider the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on applications dealt with under the faith criteria, discussion with both the school and the Diocese took place to consider the possibility of a number of options, including varying the arrangements to reflect different practices, including remote attendance, attending other venues that were used for temporary worship, or reducing the requirement from 12 months attendance etc.

9. Both the Diocese and school felt that attendance, in person or virtually, did not always reflect a person’s faith and was not as inclusive as they wished for the school. In order to

promote equality and inclusion, the Diocese over the last few years have encouraged schools to consider this when looking at their admission arrangements. Several Church of England schools have already removed the faith element from their admission arrangements and provide a Christian education for all attending.

10. The Diocese and school were keen to continue to provide an environment with a Christian ethos for every child applying in order to promote equality and inclusion. The faith element has been in place for 13 years, for Wolverley CE Secondary School, without a single application. It was therefore considered more appropriate and inclusive to consider removing the practicing element completely, rather than amending what was defined by practicing in the school admission arrangements.

11. This recommended change will not impact or influence the schools approach to or the content of religious education and collective worship or the expectation of a statutory inspection under the Church of England Education Office's framework for the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

12. The Governing Body of Wolverley CE Secondary and the Worcester Diocesan Board are fully committed to providing an environment which has a Christian ethos that provides an equal, fully inclusive education for all pupils irrespective of faith or belief.

13. Comments were therefore sought, during the full public consultation, on the proposal to remove the religious affiliation criteria from the admission arrangements for Wolverley CE Secondary School. There were no responses received to that consultation.

14. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet approves the arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the academic year 2022/23, attached as Appendices 1a and 1b.

Co-ordinated Admission Schemes for 2022/23

15. 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."

16. 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.

	Closing Date	Offer Date
Primary/Middle	15 January 2022	16 April 2022
Secondary	31 October 2021	1 March 2022

17. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet approves the Co-ordinated Admissions Schemes for primary/middle and secondary schools for the academic year 2022/23 as set out in Appendices 2a & 2b.

Published Admission Number (PAN) Changes

18. Worcestershire Children First 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.

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

20. The Governing Body of **Flyford Flavell Primary School** requested the Council consult to reduce the PAN of the school from 22 to 15 for 2022 following the school's conversion to a primary school. Flyford Flavell Primary School is a rural school at risk of falling into the category of 'At Risk' as per the Worcestershire Policy on Small Schools. For the last 10 years the school has had a falling roll, a trend seen across many small rural schools in Worcestershire. In 2020 the Council supported the school to extend their age range from First to Primary provision on the understanding that a reduction of the PAN at the school would be required to ensure this change could take place without any major accommodation changes.

21. The Governing Body recognise that a PAN reduction from 22 to 15 will ensure that the school can physically accommodate the extra year groups of Years 5 and 6, without the expense of extra accommodation or building works. The Council has reviewed the current and expected future demand for places at the school and agrees that the reduction in the PAN from 22 to 15 will not cause a concern for basic need. The Council is therefore supportive of the request for a PAN reduction. Full consultation has taken place on the PAN reduction and there have been no responses received to the proposed reduction. The forecast numbers for the school show the school will have an average intake of 10 pupils.

22. The reduced PAN is in line with past and future demand for places, following which the school will continue to be able to support all children living within the catchment to attend their local school should they choose to do so.

23. Mercian Educational Trust, the Academy Trust of **Northleigh CE Primary School** in Malvern, has conducted public consultation on reducing its PAN from 45 to 30 for 2022. The Trust wish to reduce the PAN due to falling numbers and to ensure financial sustainability. The number of pupils on roll in the North of Malvern Town has decreased in recent years as a result of falling birth rates. The reduction of the PAN at Northleigh CE Primary, until such a time as housing developments support a growth in the young family population in North Malvern, will support the sustainability of the school and neighbouring schools. The Council is therefore supportive of the proposal.

24. Endeavour School Trust, the Academy Trust of **St George's CE First School**, has conducted public consultation on reducing its PAN from 45 to 30 for 2022. 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.

25. St George's C.E. First School is in the centre of Redditch, with alternative schools within walking distance of the school. The Middle school pyramid of Woodfield Academy Middle School serving this area includes the first schools of St George's C.E. First,

Woodrow First and Oak Hill First. Around 50-80 children per cohort live within the catchment area of St George's First School, though intakes are far lower. This area experiences a significant level of cross catchment migration with several families living within the catchments that do not necessarily choose to attend their catchment area schools. A notable number of families living within the St George's C.E. First School catchment area choose to attend Oak Hill First, St Thomas More Catholic First, or Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic First Schools.

26. Based on the expectation that these historic trends will continue, it is anticipated that St George's C.E. First School will have intake numbers at Reception at between 29-31 children each year to 2024.

27. Worcestershire County Council seek to maintain a 5% surplus of places across an area to allow for in-year admissions or unexpected increases. Taking the forecasts for Oak Hill, St George's C.E. First and Woodrow First schools in total, allowing for the reduction to 30 at St George's CE First School, there will be 180 places available per year. The numbers coming into Reception for the next 4 years are forecast in Table 1 below. This clearly shows that the schools in the area will be able to meet the demand from families following the reduction of St George's C.E. First School.

Table 1. Forecast Reception Intake at Redditch central First Schools

	Reception	% of Surplus places
2021	155	13.9%
2022	152	15.6%
2023	168	6.7%
2024	153	15%

28. The proposal to reduce the PAN of St George's CE First School does not risk the sufficiency of school places and families in this area will continue to be able to access first school places following this change. Worcestershire Children First will monitor the situation going forward and work with the school to address any pressures in the future with the expectation of full co-operation from the school and consideration of increasing their PAN in the future when required.

29. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet approves the PANs for Community and Voluntary Controlled primary/middle and secondary schools for the academic year 2021/22 as set out in Appendix 3, which includes the PAN reduction for Flyford Flavell Primary School.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

30. There are no legal or HR implications as a result of this report. Some of the PAN reductions relate to measures being taken that have an impact on the financial sustainability of those schools. There are no financial implications for Worcestershire County Council that would occur as a result of endorsing the recommendations in this report.

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

31. An Equality Impact Assessment relevance screening has been completed on the Admission Policy for 2022/23. 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.

32. There are no Public Health and Privacy Impact Assessment implications that will occur as a result of endorsing the recommendations in this report.

Risk Implications

33. The delivery and consequences of the recommendations have been considered and there are no risk implications that are likely to occur as a result 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 - Co-ordinated Schemes for Worcestershire Schools
- Appendix 3 – Published Admission Numbers
- Appendix 4 – Consultation letter and Response Form

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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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

Agenda papers for the meeting of Cabinet held on 30 January 2020