

PROPOSED CHANGES TO ADMISSIONS CRITERIA FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Susan O'Brien
Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education
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Papers with report	N/A

HEADLINES

Summary	<p>Hillingdon Council has a statutory responsibility to secure sufficient early years and school places for children resident in Hillingdon. Over the last eleven years the Council has worked closely with schools in Hillingdon to successfully deliver an ambitious programme of school expansion to ensure every child living in Hillingdon can be offered a school place as close to home as possible.</p> <p>Following review and discussions with the schools, the Council is proposing to reduce the Published Admission Number for Coteford Infant School from 81 to 60. This PAN reduction will come into effect from 2024 and there will be sufficient places to ensure that local residents and siblings can access the school. This reduction in PAN will also reduce the distance priority radius from 1000m to 750m in line with the Council's admissions arrangements.</p> <p>In addition, the Cabinet report details known information on two non-community schools, that are likely to consult to reduce their PAN. The Council will be formally invited to respond, and the Cabinet Member will determine the Council's response.</p> <p>Cabinet is, therefore, asked to consider the proposed change to the PAN for Coteford Infant School to address the findings of the review to provide continuing access for residents to their local school and improve stability of pupil numbers and budgets.</p>
Putting our Residents First	<p>This report supports the council objectives of: <i>Our People and Strong financial management</i>. The recommended changes to the school admissions criteria contained in this report will support the aim that all children in Hillingdon can be offered a local school place as close to home as possible and ensure effective, and best use of the investment the Council has made to expand primary schools across the Borough.</p>

Financial Cost	There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, schools with excess places above the local demand can experience part-empty classes which are not financially viable, stretching school budgets to cover the staffing and limiting resources available to all pupils. This can lead to an overall deficit and the school seeking a loan from the council Dedicated Schools Grant for maintained schools (community, foundation, and VA) or to their Academy Trust.
Relevant Select Committee	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Ward(s) affected	Eastcote / All

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. **Considers the proposal to reduce the Published Admission Number for Coteford Infant School from 81 to 60 and authorises officers to undertake a full consultation exercise in relation to it.**
2. **Agrees to receive a further report at its 16th February 2023 meeting for the purpose of considering the consultation responses for a new Published Admissions Number for Coteford Infant School which is set to take effect from 1 September 2024.**
3. **Notes the proposal likely to be submitted to the Authority following formal consultation from the following non-community schools, Grange Park Infant and Nursery School and Grange Park Junior School to reduce their Planned Admissions Numbers by 30; and delegates authority to the Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education, in consultation with the Executive Director of Education and SEND, to make the final decision as to whether the following proposals should be supported:**
 - **Grange Park Infant and Nursery School from 120 to 90.**
 - **Grange Park Junior School from 120 to 90.**

Reasons for recommendation

4. As an education authority, the Council must plan for a sufficiency of places and efficient use of resources. There has been a slight decline in demand across the primary sector since 2018, with some fluctuations, but the overall level of primary surplus places continues to be too high and is pooling in a few schools. Each year the Council reviews the number of places against pupils rolls and projections and considers changing Published Admission Numbers (PAN) in some schools. Across the Borough, small annual changes are needed to meet parental demand, up and down. This ensures schools and

the authority best meet the needs of all pupils across the Borough and make effective use of resources in schools and between them. The PAN is the 'operating figure', and the physical building remains the same. Academy, Foundation and Voluntary Aided (VA) schools make their own decisions, and they must consult the Council and others on proposed reductions, but their Governors/Trusts can agree temporary or permanent increases. The review has included all primary and secondary schools. The Cabinet is the relevant authority for the community primary schools.

5. The Local Authority now recognise a need to reduce the published admission number in one of our community infant schools, by 21 places. This is due to demographic changes leading to declining pupil rolls and Reception intakes, and into Year 3 into the Junior school, over the past few years which is projected to continue for another few years. There would be no difference for current pupils after the proposed change takes effect from Reception 2024, and there would be sufficient places to meet future demand from their siblings and other local parents.
6. Following a review of school places, it is proposed to consult to reduce the Published Admission Numbers for:
 - Coteford Infant School - from 81 to 60 from 2024. All local residents will still be able to access places there. This reduction will also reduce the distance priority radius from **1000m to 750m** in line with our admissions arrangements.

Alternative options considered / risk management

7. The proposals presented in this report are intended to be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair and comply with all relevant legislation to mitigate the potential future risk that a small number of children living in Hillingdon may not be guaranteed a school place as close to home as possible. Options have been considered to address this risk, some of which are specific to a location in the Borough. Where alternative options have been considered therefore, these are set out in the body of the report.
8. The proposals for a reduction in PAN are to improve schools' ability to efficiently plan their staffing and educational provision and not reducing could lead to schools suffering financial pressures leading to deficits, which in the community schools could then require a loan, further adding to the deficit in the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Select Committee comments

9. The Children, Families & Education Select Committee has scheduled this matter on its multi-year work programme and will consider the proposals as part of the consultation process, before a final report is brought back to Cabinet in 2023 for decision.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Statutory School Admissions Code

10. The purpose of the statutory School Admissions Code is to ensure that all school places for maintained schools (excluding maintained special schools) and academies are allocated in an open and fair way. The Code contains mandatory requirements, such as setting a Published Admissions Number for each school. The admission arrangements to community schools are determined by the Local Authority as the 'admission authority.'
11. In drawing up the admission arrangements to schools, admission authorities must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. Parents should be able to look at a set of arrangements and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated. All schools must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted. The admission authority for the school must also set out in the arrangements the oversubscription criteria against which places will be allocated at the school when there are more applications than places and the order in which the criteria will be applied.
12. To ensure that the criteria applied in prioritising access to community schools which are oversubscribed remains procedurally fair, objective and clear, a review of the criteria has been undertaken using three four years of Hillingdon admissions data to primary school reception places. The focus of the review sought to identify any residual risk that the Council would not fulfil its statutory duty to ensure every child is offered a school place.
13. The review considered the following area:
 - Ensure there are sufficient school places in Hillingdon and eliminate financial constraints where evidence shows a continued and sustained reduction in admissions.

Reduction of Published Admissions Numbers

14. All community schools have a Published Admissions Number (PAN) in accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021. This is the number of school places that the admission authority must offer in each relevant age group (Reception, Year 3 for Junior and Year 7 for secondary) of a school for which it is the admission authority. Admission numbers are part of a school's admission arrangements.
15. As an education authority the Borough must plan for a sufficiency of places and efficient use of resources. The demand and capacity across the primary sector have been variable from year to year since 2012. Currently there are unusually high levels of movement in, out and around the Borough following the Pandemic and Brexit and new arrivals into accommodation near Heathrow airport. However, it is clear that the level of overall surplus places in the primary sector continues to be too high and is concentrated in a few schools. To ensure schools and the authority best meet the needs of all pupils across the Borough and make effective use of resources in schools and between them, this reduction in a Community school PAN is proposed.

16. Currently there are 16% of vacant places across all primary schools (May Census 2022). Pupil numbers will always fluctuate but the aim is to have around 8% vacancies which will ensure there will be places to meet parental demand in each area and for those moving in mid-year, and secure stability for all schools. Having any schools with a PAN over 30 pupils above the level of their local demand, (21 in the case for Coteford Infant school) means some schools attract a few pupils from further away requiring more classes to be run, but they are not economic, with a risk that if pupils join or leave, a class may need to be opened or closed. This disrupts education for all the pupils in the year group. To balance school budgets, classes need to include 25 or more pupils. Schools with declining or volatile rolls face big changes in their annual budget, and consequent cuts in staff and risk financial deficit. The aim of PAN reductions is to match the operational level of schools to local demand and improve the focus of resources in each school on their pupils and reduce the risk of deficits. Meanwhile the physical capacity will remain available if demand rises, when it is possible to increase the PAN immediately, without consultation. It is considered prudent that in future PANs should be increased temporarily a year at a time, whilst parental demand is kept under review.
17. Coteford Infant School is concerned about changes in their local demand and the governing body supports the reduction since it will enable the school to focus their budget and resources better for pupils, so supporting school improvement. The governing body will agree an increase should local demand for places rise. Importantly, though the process to reduce PAN requires considerable data and consultation, it is easy to reverse, so admissions authorities can quickly respond to a rise in demand and decide to admit over PAN on a temporary or permanent basis.
18. Separately, two Foundation schools may also propose to consult on a reduction of 1 Form Entry (FE); Grange Park Infant and Nursery School and Grange Park Junior School from 120 to 90. This has been discussed with officers and would not impact on residents' access to their local schools and proposals reflect that the schools are already operating in most year groups at 1FE under their current PAN. If a consultation is carried out by Grange Park Infant School and Grange Park Junior School in this period and is approved by the governing body as the admissions authority the school will be able to reduce their PAN effective September 2024.
19. Hillingdon has one of the largest pupil populations in London with growth in some areas and 52,873 pupils in the May 2022 census. The past few years of roll volatility now require annual review and regular changes in PAN, up and down, to adjust the 'operating capacity' of the schools since school finances are so challenging. Most London local authorities have agreed or are planning reductions in primary capacity and increases in secondary places. As the birth rate has slowed, reception numbers have plateaued since 2016 and new pupil roll growth will be from new housing and migration into various year groups, not just to reception. Over half of primary schools are full to capacity but the pockets of surplus places in a few schools continue to grow. The demographic changes in the Borough, short and long-term effects of Brexit, Covid and employment and affordability of housing are all factors being monitored.

20. The Headteacher has updated parents over the summer term in newsletters that a reduction in PAN was being considered, referencing that the school already have many year groups operating at the proposed lower PAN and this proposal would give stability to classes and benefit pupils, and that siblings and other local parents would still be able to access the school. No parents expressed concerns. This was in advance of the formal consultation now being proposed.

Next Steps

Proposals to reduce Planned Admission Numbers in 1 community school.

a. Coteford Infant School from 81 to 60. Primary Planning Area 3 – Eastcote

The proposal for consultation is to reduce the Published Admission Number for Coteford Infant School from 81 to 60 from 2024. The school is located close to the boundary with Harrow and there are many primary schools within one and two miles walk. Rolls have fallen over the past few years with several year groups below the existing PAN and the September Reception number is 59. It is clear the school should have a PAN of 60, until local demand rises. Coteford Junior school converted to an academy within Vanguard Trust in September 2021 and currently has higher year groups. Officers will discuss the current projections and future demand for Year 3 places with the Trust as they will be directly impacted by the pupil numbers coming through Coteford Infant School.

PRIMARY PLANNING AREA 3		CENSUS MAY 2022 ROLL										CONFIRMED RECEPTION/ YR3 NUMBERS IN SEPTEMBER 2022
SCHOOL	PAN	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	TOTAL	IF FULL	% vacant	
Coteford Infant School	81	57	64	65					186	243	23.5%	59
Coteford Junior School	81				76	71	69	80	296	324	8.6%	64
Bishop Winnington Ingram CofE Primary School	30	22	22	30	28	33	29	35	199	210	5.2%	26
Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School	90	89	80	90					259	270	4.1%	72
Whiteheath Junior School	90				80	75	85	86	326	360	9.4%	90
Warrender Primary School	60	60	55	60	60	29	30	30	324	330	1.8%	60
Planning Area 3 Total	432	228	221	244	244	208	213	231	1590	1737	8.5%	371

Process For PAN Reduction

21. The process is statutory and must follow the Admissions Code, as amended in September 2021. It requires a six-week consultation between October and January. The Local Authority has reviewed the demand for the school within their local context and discussed with the

school and meetings of their Full Governing Bodies will formally resolve they support the proposals.

22. Full Cabinet has to consider the proposal to reduce PAN in the community school as it affects residents access to local schools.
23. If Cabinet approves the consultation, it will then take place from 24th October 2022 until 19th December 2022, a total of 8 weeks. Consultees will be invited to respond via a dedicated email address and online questionnaire. The statutory requirement for consultation in this case is a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1st October 2022 and 31st January 2023 for a reduction in the PAN to be published in March 2023 for applications for pupils to start in September 2024 in Reception (or Year 3 in Junior schools and Year 7 in secondary). The outcome of the consultations will be reported to Cabinet in February 2023 to take the final decision. Separately the Council will be a formal consultee of formal consultations carried out by non-community schools.

Likely proposals from non-community schools

24. It is likely that two non-community schools will consult in the same timeframe on proposals to reduce PAN by 1 form entry. This has been discussed with officers and would still enable places for all local parents seeking them and reflect that they are already operating in most year groups at 1FE under their PAN, with intakes for September 2022 also 1 FE, or more, lower. The relevant Foundation Board would run their consultation and then decide on proposals. They must formally consult with the local authority and the Cabinet Member would then agree to support their proposal or oppose it, as provided through delegated authority in recommendation 3. In these cases, if no serious issues or objections are raised, officers would recommend agreeing the reductions, as they will support overall school improvement, stability and effectiveness:

a. Grange Park Infant and Nursery School (Foundation) from 120 to 90. Planning Area 8 - Belmore

Intakes for at least one year group have been around 90 for the last couple of years increasing to all three year groups in September 2022. Both schools would increase to 90 if local demand significantly rises to fill that.

b. Grange Park Junior School (Foundation) from 120 to 90. Planning Area 8 - Belmore

Intakes for at least one year group have been around 90 for the last couple of years and the Grange Park Junior School will be requesting to reduce their PAN as the school will be directly impacted by the pupil numbers coming through Grange Park Infant School

25. The table overleaf shows Primary Planning Area 8 indicating current school place numbers in the area:

PRIMARY PLANNING AREA 8		CENSUS MAY 2022 ROLL										CONFIRMED RECEPTION/YR3 NUMBERS IN SEPTEMBER 2022
SCHOOL	PAN	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	TOTAL	IF FULL	% vacant	
Charville Academy	90	46	53	49	70	55	61	68	402	630	36.1%	43
Grange Park Infants	120	88	87	109					284	360	21.1%	85
Grange Park Junior School	120				106	88	108	99	401	480	16.5%	111
Hayes Park	90	80	86	90	89	91	91	91	618	630	1.9%	72
Hewens Primary	60	58	56	47	56	55	60	60	392	420	6.7%	56
Planning Area 8 Total	480	272	282	295	321	289	320	318	2097	2520	16.8%	367

Financial Implications

26. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, it will help reduce the financial pressure on this individual school and the risk of this school running into deficit. Additionally, it will also reduce the risk of maintained schools requesting contributions from the council to meet redundancy costs in relation to staffing restructures. The spare physical space can be used in future if rolls rise in the relevant areas, and will be used by the schools meanwhile, or kept empty.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

27. The proposals set out in this report will help to mitigate the residual risk of Hillingdon children not securing access to a place at a local school close to where they live. Local families can access primary places nearby. The rising vacancies in a few schools reflect residents are currently not choosing to fill the school to the level of the current PAN, so the places are not needed. The schools now risk a few more pupils turning up, from further away, requiring an additional teacher which destabilises school budget and staffing and affects all the pupils. The proposals will enable better targeting of resources to priorities to help pupils, in line with the Council's vision to put our residents first.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

28. The statutory School Admissions Code sets out that admission authorities must set ('determine') admission arrangements annually. Where changes are proposed to admission arrangements, the admission authority must first publicly consult on those arrangements. If no changes are made to admission arrangements, they must be consulted on at least once

every 7 years. For admission arrangements for entry to school in September 2024, consultation must be for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1st October 2022 and 31st January 2023. The Code states that this consultation period will allow parents, other schools, religious authorities and the local community to raise any concerns about proposed admission arrangements.

29. To ensure compliance with the Code, the Local Authority will 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) Any adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the local authority:

30. Subject to agreement from the Cabinet, the proposals will be available through the Council's established communication channels for comment. It is proposed that the consultation will last from 24th October 2022 until 19th December 2022.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and confirms that there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommended amendments to the school admissions criteria. Broader financial implications associated with the Council's strategic education function are managed through the wider Medium-Term Financial Forecast.

Legal

If an admission authority of a mainstream school wishes to increase or decrease PAN, without increasing the overall physical capacity of the buildings, this would be classed as an admissions change. Admissions authorities must follow the processes set out within the School Admissions Code in order to make an admissions change. Details of the processes that must be followed are summarised within the body of this report. There are no other legal implications arising from the recommendations set out at the beginning of the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[School Admissions Code 2021](#)