

Determination of admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools
for 2025-2026

Forward Plan reference number: FP/295/11/23

Report title: Determination of admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools 2025-2026	
Report to: Cllr Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability	
Report author: Clare Kershaw, Director, Education	
Date: 23 January 2024	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1. The Council, as the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools within Essex, is required to consult upon, and determine the admission arrangements for these schools each year. The arrangements for admissions in the 2025-2026 academic year must, by law, be determined by no later than 28 February 2024.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to fulfil the statutory requirement for the Council to determine the admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools in Essex for admissions in the 2025-2026 academic year. The arrangements, by giving priority to children with siblings at a school and those living locally, will help ensure fair access and promote healthier, reduced and more sustainable journeys to school. In providing access to school places, a clear and lawful set of admission arrangements is also central in contributing to high standards for all children and in improving educational outcomes.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To agree that the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2025-2026 be determined as detailed in Schedule 1 to this report.

3. Background and proposal

- 3.1. The law requires that the Local Authority (LA), as the admission authority, determines the admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools in Essex each year. The arrangements for the 2025-2026 academic year must be determined by 28 February 2024.

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- 3.2. The admission arrangements apply to community and voluntary controlled schools in all County Divisions.
- 3.3. Legislation prescribes the persons and groups that must be consulted when a local authority is preparing its proposed admission arrangements.
- 3.4. The Council, as required by the Department for Education (DfE) School Admissions Code, carried out the period of statutory consultation on the proposed published admission numbers for all community and voluntary controlled schools between 24 November 2023 and 12 January 2024. The consultation was shared with the governing bodies of all these schools. No objections were received.
- 3.5. There are no changes to any elements of the oversubscription criteria for any community and voluntary controlled schools proposed, with these recommended to remain the same as those determined for 2024-2025 admissions. Accordingly, no consultation was required in this respect.
- 3.6. The Council also consulted more specifically on changes (reductions) to the published admission numbers (PAN) for four schools, as outlined below. In these cases, as well as consulting with the individual schools, the Council also consulted with all other infant, junior and primary schools in the relevant Council district. These consultations were also publicised for parents via the schools and the Essex County Council website.
- 3.7. The Council consulted upon a reduction to the PAN for Langenhoe Primary School in Colchester, from 22 to 15. This is to enable the school to organise classes more effectively. There are sufficient school places available in the overall area to ensure a school place for every child. Langenhoe Primary School is currently undersubscribed.
- 3.8. The Council also consulted on a reduction to the PAN for King's Ford Infant School in Colchester, from 60 to 30. This is to enable the school to organise into one form of entry. There are sufficient school places available in the overall area to ensure a school place for every child. King's Ford Infant School is currently undersubscribed.
- 3.9. Similarly, the Council consulted on a reduction to the PAN for Oakwood Infant School in Clacton from 120 to 90. This is to enable the school to organise into three forms of entry. There are sufficient school places available in the overall area to ensure a school place for every child. Oakwood Infant School is currently undersubscribed.
- 3.10. The Council also consulted on a reduction to the PAN for Brightlingsea Primary School from 90 to 75. This is to enable the school to organise classes more effectively and efficiently. There are sufficient school places in the overall area to ensure a school place for every child.

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- 3.11. Good school organisation and place planning not only involves increasing the number of school places, but where appropriate reducing them to ensure that availability is in line with demand. The Council continues to invest in creating additional school places where required to meet local demand, for example Limebrook Primary in Maldon and Chapel Hill Primary in Basildon which are both due to open in September 2024. In contrast to this, the schools where the PAN reductions are proposed are in areas where the demand for school places is now significantly lower than the available capacity. Reducing the PAN will ensure that schools in those areas have more stable pupil numbers and do not have large levels of surplus, which can have a damaging financial impact. The overall capacity of these schools will remain unchanged (even though they will be admitting lower numbers of pupils), and so if the levels of demand grow in the future, the places can be made available again.
- 3.12. In all four cases of proposed PAN reductions, the schools are supportive of the proposed reductions which will enable them to organise, plan and deliver education more efficiently and effectively.
- 3.13. No objections to the proposed PAN reductions were received during the consultation period.
- 3.14. The recommendation to the Cabinet Member is therefore to determine the admission arrangements as detailed in the schedule appended to this report.

4. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1. The arrangements align with the Essex Vision which has a number of aims, one of which is to help keep vulnerable children safe and enable them to fulfil their potential. Fair and lawful admission arrangements will ensure that residents have access to school places and education and contribute to the aim of providing an equal foundation for every child.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. This decision has no direct quantifiable financial or resource implications. However, it should be noted that decisions from the admission arrangements could impact on the level of resources required for home to school transport.

6. Legal Implications

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- 6.1. The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 require the admission authority for each school to determine the admission arrangements which apply to that school.
- 6.2. For admissions in the 2025-2026 academic year, these regulations require that such arrangements be determined by no later than 28 February 2024.
- 6.3. In preparing the attached arrangements, officers have had full regard to the requirements of the School Admissions Code (2021) and other legislation relevant to school admissions.
- 6.4. The arrangements comply with the law and contain no prohibited criteria.

7. Staffing and other resource implications

- 7.1. No additional human resources beyond existing resources will be required as a result of this decision. There are no employment legislation implications.

8. Equality and Diversity implications

- 8.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when ECC makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
 - (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 8.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation.
- 8.3 The admission arrangements detailed in the attachments to this report do not unlawfully discriminate against any persons or group. The Council believes the arrangements are fair, clear and easy to understand (as required by the Code) and that they comply with all aspects of school admissions legislation.
- 8.4 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

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9. List of Appendices

9.1 Schedule 1 – Determined admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled infant, junior and primary schools for 2025-2026

9.3 Equality impact assessment

10. List of Background Papers

10.1 The School Admissions Code 2021

I agree the recommendations in this report for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Cllr Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability	12 February 2024

In consultation with:

Role	Date
Executive Director for Corporate Services (S151 Officer)	26 January 2024
Andrew Page on behalf of Nicole Wood	
Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)	9 February 2024
Paul Turner	
Director, Education	12 February 2024
Clare Kershaw	